

## BOOK REVIEWS /COMPTES RENDUS

**Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; xxiv + 159 pages. ISBN: 978-0230237629.**

*Review by Nikolay Karkov, Lebanon Valley College, PA.*

The last decade or so has seen an efflorescence of anti-capitalist critiques. After the relative lull of the 1990s, provoked by the collapse of real socialism and the declared “end of history,” the new millennium has offered a plethora of critical analyses of capitalism, from post-operaist to post-Althusserian Marxism, and from radical psychoanalysis to a resurgence of interest in Marx’s *Capital*. *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell* is another welcome contribution to these debates. Originally written in 2004, it is the product of the collaboration of Philippe Pignarre, a French publisher, writer and activist in the pharmaceutical industry, and Isabelle Stengers, a Belgian philosopher and historian of science. Of the two, Stengers will be more familiar to an English-speaking audience, mostly with her contributions to the “science” wars of the last few decades (having published texts on physics, chemistry and psychoanalysis, among others), as well as with her analyses of authors such as Whitehead and William James. Along with her multi-volume *Cosmopolitics*, parts of which have been translated into English, this is her most explicitly political book.

Neither “an explanatory nor a theoretical text,” in the words of its translator (ix), *Capitalist Sorcery* is much more a speculative and conceptual, rather than an empirically oriented text. Written at a time of a relative low for the (Western) left, it seeks to make a political intervention, rather than just offer another “theory” (a term Pignarre and Stengers are quite suspicious of to begin with). Yet unlike more familiar discussions of capitalism, usually opposing a precapitalist modernity steeped in belief and superstition to a (post)modern capitalist rationality founded on science and technology, Pignarre and Stengers take an almost opposite route. They seek to show that neither capitalism nor any anti-capitalist politics are as rational as all that; and this lack of rationality is both a problem and a promise.

The critical side of the argument offers an interesting and rather unusual re-definition of capitalism. For Pignarre and Stengers, at its most basic, capitalism is a social system which depoliticises decision-making practices or, as they state eloquently, “a politics that kills

politics.” (15) Such depoliticisation, frequently disguised as a set of technocratic processes, tends to proceed through the production of “infernal alternatives,” or, “that set of situations that seem to leave no other choice than resignation or a slightly hollow sounding denunciation.” (24) The alternatives are infernal as they are the product of no centralised apparatus or coordinated logic, but rather of the convergence of the work of “many thousands of minions.” While incapable of and unwilling to question the system of capitalism itself (“being dumbstruck by a prohibition on thinking”), those minions (agents, institutions) are at the same time infernally creative, ever set on expanding the powers of capital.

Another way of saying this is that rather than being the realm of instrumental rationality and bureaucratic Reason, capitalism is in fact a “system of sorcery without sorcerers (thinking of themselves as such), a system operating in a world in which judges that sorcery is only a simple ‘belief,’ a superstition that therefore doesn’t necessitate any adequate means of protection.” (40) The argument, which presumably draws on Deleuze and especially Guattari’s work on “machinic enslavement” and “apparatuses of capture,” claims that capitalism does not reproduce itself thanks to the powers of ideology/illusion or alienation. Ideology/illusion separates a theater of appearances from an objective and truthful reality, as if by a screen (43), while alienation implies the existence of non-alienated intellectuals who are going to allow the masses to “become conscious” of the forces oppressing them. (106) By contrast, capitalist sorcery operates by “capture,” through a culture of “spells” that immobilise thinking and paralyse collective action. What anti-capitalist politics needs then is not so much demystification or dis-alienation, but a counter-magic capable of protecting its practitioners and breaking the spell.

The resistant side of Pignarre and Stengers’ argument is about how to develop such practices of protective counter-magic. This is where they part company with Marx, whose resolution to the problem, in their view, is still too invested in the scientific rationality of his time (“facing the world with somber senses”). For the authors, it was only natural that Marx would ask science for protection, as “he belongs to a world in which all the resources for thinking had already been destroyed or were in the process of being destroyed.” (53) For their part, Pignarre and Stengers choose a very different set of references. At the height of the global “war of terror” (2004–05), they declare themselves inheritors to the “event of Seattle” (1999), which gave word to the cry “another world is possible.” (3) What is attractive about Seattle is that it was a cry, and not a program; an opening toward a possible world rather than an articulation of explicit demands. The challenge that

Seattle poses then is to become “the child of the event: not being born again into innocence, but daring to inhabit the possible as such, without the adult precautions that makes threats of the type ‘what will people say?’, ‘who will they take us for?’ or ‘and you think that is enough?’ prevail.” (4)

The strategically non-linear development of their argument allows Pignarre and Stengers to draw a rather “heteroclitic crowd” in support of their thesis. Various parts of the text thus discuss the relevance of Afro-American spirituality (the concept/affect of “yearning”), the pragmatic inventiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous (aware “of the impossibility of getting free alone”), organisations such as the Association Française contre les Myopathies (involving the parents of sick children in its budget allocation process) or the role of the mutual societies for working class communities in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France. The last chapter of the book is dedicated to an extensive discussion of the neo-pagan witch movement, whose attractiveness for Pignarre and Stengers (in line with Stengers’ own radical constructivism) lies in the fabricated yet *real* nature of its rituals. The red thread that connects these otherwise highly heterogeneous collectivities is that they all develop techniques of empowerment, a veritable “culture of recipes” to counter capitalism’s universal designs and the “psychosocial techniques of adherence” subtending them. The pragmatic “successes” of these collective interventions lies in the fact that they are always local, interstitial, “defined neither against nor in relation to the bloc to which [they] nonetheless belong.” (110)

The book demonstrates a considerable number of strengths. To begin with, it is refreshing to identify capitalism as a system of sorcery operating by capture, rather than as an enormous hyper-rational machinery operating by the production of false ideas. Similar to their mentors Deleuze and Guattari, Pignarre and Stengers are aware that capitalism is not just about the “economy” or “society,” but also about the control of immense affective and energetic flows—hence the stress on practices and techniques of empowerment capable of “breaking the spell” of capitalism’s infernal alternatives and its army of hard-working minions. What is more, the effort at thinking and acting interstitially, by the middle, would certainly appeal to readers suspicious of grand theoretical designs and utopian blueprints, of the disposition to “pose questions from the outside.” In a world composed of multiple worlds and inhabited by a “heteroclitic crowd” of participants, Pignarre and Stengers’ political pragmatics avoids the pitfalls of not only simplistic structure/agency binaries, but also of the “capitalocentrism” (Gibson-Graham) that many well-intentioned leftists unwittingly subscribe to.

Still, it is precisely the text’s openness and effort at connection that pose significant problems. One is the problem of *organisation*, of the transformation and coordination of local struggles within a wider movement. Given the immense powers of the enemy, interstitial politics often runs the risk of remaining isolated, a local and thereby recuperable practice; and Pignarre and Stengers (purposefully) offer us few clues as to how such politics can move beyond the local level. Another and more pressing problem is that despite the authors’ efforts to the contrary, the text does not escape its Eurocentric bias. This is visible not only in its preference for Seattle (1999) rather than say Chiapas (1994), for many the opening that made Seattle possible; or in the extensive discussion of neo-pagan witch movement, which overlooks the significantly homogeneous racial composition of the witch circles. At its most concrete, the problem resurfaces in the uncritical pairing of lesbian feminist of colour Audre Lorde and Gilles Deleuze in the same paragraph. (108) To claim that “thought, for Deleuze, poses the same problem” as Lorde’s explicitly decolonial “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house” should raise more than a single eyebrow, in light of analyses such as Spivak’s, Karen Caplan’s and Christopher Miller’s on the persistence of colonial tropes in Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadology.

**Paola Marrati, *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy*, (tr.) Alisa Hartz. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008; xix + 138 pages. ISBN: 978-0801888021.**

*Review by Rachel Loewen Walker, University of Alberta.*

Paola Marrati has written and researched extensively on Derrida, Bergson, Deleuze and Cavell, and this foundation shows, as she is able to situate the text at hand within a rich field of Continental scholarship. It is for this reason that, although it only just breaches one hundred pages, *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy* sacrifices nothing in terms of its breadth and depth, nor in terms of its value as an introductory text to Deleuze’s philosophy of film. Relying most on *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, but also drawing from *Difference and Repetition*, *Bergsonism* and *The Logic of Sense*, Marrati provides a discerning account of Deleuze’s contributions to both the study of film and to the function of cinema in a Western political context.

Marrati’s central argument is that it is within the *Cinema* books that we find the most developed politics of Deleuze’s work, a politics which refuses modernity’s obsession with agency as the freedom and action

of the subject, and instead foregrounds movement and perception as contributors to the agency of *thought*. Hence cinema, as discussed through the movement-image and the time-image, becomes a primary frame of reference for the development of such a politics. As a secondary argument Marrati makes the case that the *Cinema* books contribute to a renewed understanding of *time* whereupon time is the frame “in which actions unfold.” (xii) Thus modern cinema is the means by which such a folding of agency and action into *time* is made possible.

The first and second chapters situate the profound impact of cinema on the 20<sup>th</sup> century as that medium through which we had become truly able to access the affective power of modern art. In contrast to a painting, a sculpture or even a photograph, the “putting-to-motion” of images on a static screen represents the shift from conceiving of movement as the distance between two points (the tortoise’s slow steps forward on a linear path) to conceiving it as qualitative duration (the tortoise’s methodic movements are understood to have a different quality and intensity than the erratic speeds of the hare).

Marrati then makes otherwise unlikely connections between Heidegger, Husserl and Bergson, noting that both Husserl and Bergson are concerned with bridging the gaps between consciousness and its images, the world and its things, and thus abandoning the debate between materialism and idealism in hopes of building an alternative, experiential philosophy. Their trajectories, however, do not follow parallel paths. For Husserl the analysis of consciousness leads to the intentionality thesis: consciousness is consciousness *of* something, it cannot exist apart of its relationship with the object toward which it is directed. (29) For Bergson, however, consciousness itself *is* something. The division between the sign and its object is null as the sign is itself a meaningful materiality. From this conception of consciousness, Marrati moves us to the movement-image as “a movement freed from any framework or anchoring in bodies.” (32) The movement-image includes a wide range of imaging activities such as the perception-image, the affection-image, or the relation-image, all of which enact, at base, particular *imagings of* (and hence, *creations of*) *movement*. The value of cinema, then, is its role in constructing and creating *real* social and political effects.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 address particular modes of cinema by focusing on their affective roles within political and historical systems. The first of these is the montage, one of the primary means of expressing time within cinema. Deleuze analyzes the montage extensively through the films of D.W. Griffith and Sergei Eisenstein. While Griffith uses the montage to set up binary relations (men and women, the rich and the poor), and in so doing names identity via difference, Eisen-

stein’s montage relies on comparisons of quantity (one ship, many ships), quality (land, sea), or dynamics (forward movement, backward movement), effectively putting things *in* time and space. Together, both Eisenstein and Griffith mobilize a particular reliance on agency, the image that “history is made through humans’ actions,” or what Deleuze calls the action-image. (51)

Again, like the movement-image’s critique of representation, the action-image (Chapter 4) runs counter to psychoanalytic and linguistic practices of looking “behind” images in order to find their underlying structure. Eisenstein’s dynamic montage as action-image serves as the making of a human temporality; it does not merely refer to an exterior mode of understanding. In fact, there is nothing behind the images; everything is in the images. (49) Nevertheless, as much as the action-image worked to make the time of history, postwar cinema meant a crisis of the action-image. As Marrati writes “The war...tore apart confidence in human action: we no longer believe that an action can have bearing on a global situation...we no longer believe in a human becoming of the world.” (63) This crisis of human agency gave way to enactments of the becoming of the world and the event, both of which indicated expressions of temporality that were not bound to human action. For Deleuze, this crisis meant that the concept of a universal history was no longer available and consequently that the time-image, or a cinema of time, was able to emerge from history’s demise.

The time-image (Chapter 5) indicates that an image is never in the present: “it is possessed by a past and a future that haunt it and that in no way coincide with the actual images that precede and follow it.” (68) In this way, Marrati wants us to think time directly, without being forced to ground it in a perception of the moving body. It is in relation to the time-image that Marrati works through the intricacies of Deleuze and Bergson’s philosophies of time, including Bergson’s infamous “cone” as the durational time in which the present, past, and future are contractions of one another. Within cinema, the time-image is enacted through cinematic “leaps” into the past, such as those dynamic movements through time that Orson Welles creates in the film *Citizen Kane*. Modern cinema’s direct thinking *of time*, thus creates a new way of connecting images (68) and compels us to think non-chronological time. (76)

In the final chapters, Marrati draws the many threads together in response to the question of cinema’s revolutionary capacity, as she recognizes the value that prewar cinema held as a site of transformation. With the a-historical time-image, Deleuze shows that the teleological narrative of transformation is no longer possible, and yet, Marrati does not want to leave the world without hope. It is here,

therefore, that she returns to her thesis that the *Cinema* books offer the clearest incarnation of Deleuze's political philosophy, a thesis which is bound to cinema's rethinking of time. She writes that the "greatness of the filmmakers of time is that they were able to create other *livable* configurations of thought in images themselves." (79) This means that cinema itself is able to *image* an alternative to the action-image, an alternative to Hollywood's dream of "a transformation of the world and the creation of a new nation." (79) By thinking a cinema of time, Marrati enacts a move from the belief in human agency to the possibilities of believing *in the world*, that is, of believing in an immanent, dynamic and changing world, rather than relying on a transcendent historical narrative. A Deleuzian politics, as expressed through the cinema books, then becomes a politics of immanence which believes in cinema's temporal ability to create new forms of life.

Paradoxically, *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy's* greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. Throughout the text, Marrati makes clear use of many of the most difficult terms within Deleuze's lexicon. Generous explanations of new technical language are paired with sophisticated engagement with the concepts, ensuring that the book will have value to the introductory reader of Deleuze and cinema, while still appealing to an audience that is well-versed in Deleuzian/Bergsonian concepts. However, such attention to detail ends up reading as though Marrati spreads herself too thin, particularly in the last pages where rather than strengthening what is a very compelling argument, she gets somewhat lost in the definitions. The result, therefore, is that as the book closes, its thesis seems to slip through one's fingers, even though Marrati has added great depth to the temporality of Deleuzian cinema studies.

**Jeff Mitscherling, *The Image of a Second Sun: Plato on Poetry, Rhetoric, and the Technē of Mimesis*. Amherst: Humanity Books, 2009; 468 pages. ISBN: 978-1591024316.**

*Review by Aaron Landry, York University.*

This book engages one of the perennial topics of Platonic scholarship—the presence (or absence) of poetry in the ideal city as constructed in the *Republic*. What is unique to Mitscherling's argument is the distinction between dramatic and non-dramatic forms of poetry, which is supposed to resolve the inconsistency between the early books and Book X. The book contains five chapters, ample endnotes and two appendices. The first appendix provides all of the refer-

ences—direct quotations and allusions—to the poets throughout the Platonic dialogues. The second provides all of the Homeric quotations in *Republic*. This is especially important given the role that Homer plays in Mitscherling's argument.

In the first chapter, Mitscherling introduces the puzzle of *Republic* Book X, which is notorious not only for its apparent inconsistency with the position expressed in Books II and III but also for the extreme nature of its charge—the banishment of the poets. The author rehearses six interpretations of Book X. They are: that the aim of Plato's critique is all art, illusionistic art, all poetry, only dramatic poetry, the Athenian educational system (*pace* Havelock) and finally the Sophists (*pace* Gadamer). The latter two are further specified to mean respectively: the way poetry functioned in Athenian education and the influence of the sophists on general culture. Finally, Mitscherling offers his own interpretation, which limns Plato to be exclusively focussed on the *technē* of *mimēsis* (imitation). This technique consists in "persuading by appearing to be what one is not, or by merely seeming to speak the truth." (71) Accordingly, insofar as the poets and Sophists participate in *mimēsis*, they are synonymous and constitute the object of Plato's critique.

Mitscherling proceeds to rehearse the pre-platonic conceptions to poetry—Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus and others—with the aim of identifying the degree to which poetry and *mimēsis* are historically linked. In Homer, for instance, we have a dual notion of poetry, one as the result of a *technē*, and one as divinely inspired. They function in tandem and there is no evidence to suggest that anyone thought the two conceptions were incompatible. Indeed, Mitscherling points out that this same bipartite account emerges in Hesiod and Archilochus as well, although with the latter the prestige of the Muses, often associated with inspiration, is beginning to wane.

During the tumultuous period of Socrates and Democritus, a new distinction was established between *technē* and *sophia* (knowledge or wisdom). Whereas in Archaic Greece, poetry had been treated, in part, as a species of *sophia*, that is, as exemplary knowledge, it is now treated as just another ordinary *technē*. One could respond to this division in two ways. First, one could think that the poets did not possess exceptional wisdom. Or, one could distinguish the poet's greatness from his skill, and bequeath his prestige by some other means. Democritus' notion of the poet as inspired follows this latter route.

In the third chapter, Mitscherling turns to the Platonic dialogues and examines the conception of poetry in dialogues other than the *Republic*. Poetry is ubiquitous in the dialogues and does not easily embody a unified account. For instance, consider inspiration in the *Ion*,

which Socrates claims is the origin of Ion's rhapsodic ability. As we saw in Homer, the notion of inspiration has Archaic origins but it is transformed in Plato. Inspiration is contrasted with *technē*, specifically the charioteer, the doctor and the general. In other words, poetry is not technical knowledge. Reason is completely absent.

Yet, when we turn to consider dialogues like the *Meno* and the *Symposium*, inspiration is identified as true opinion and occupies an intermediary position between knowledge and ignorance. That true opinion has practical value seems to contradict the hard distinction established in the *Ion*. Rather than explain these differences as developmental stages in Plato's philosophical life, Mitscherling introduces the distinction between lyric and dramatic poetry. Whereas the former is the referent in the *Ion*, the latter is discussed in the *Meno* and the *Symposium*. The *Phaedrus* is the final dialogue considered, and for good reason, since philosophy is now connected with poetry in that both are products of inspiration.

Mitscherling concludes the chapter by noting the sophistic influence on education at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This event privileged poetry's technical aspects and had the effect of uniting the genres of poetry—epic, lyric, tragedy, comedy—under one rubric. Thus, as Homer became perceived as a tragedian, his work was diminished because it was conceptualised as the result of inspiration. It could not compete with the sophistic *logos*, which enchanted with appearances of the truth rather than truth itself. Mitscherling sees Plato as responding directly to this cultural development.

In Chapter 4, Mitscherling turns to the *Republic's* conception of poetry. He first discusses Books II and III. One of the most noteworthy features of the *Republic* is its silence on the notion of inspiration. This is especially conspicuous given the continuities between inspiration and the youth's vision of beauty, which seems akin to a mystical experience. Furthermore, Mitscherling points to the various mischaracterisations of poetic genres. The most prevalent is Homer's association with dramatic poetry, which will become a full-scale identification in Book X. As well, tragedy and comedy are treated as wholly imitative. Since epic and lyric are conjoined with tragedy and comedy, as we see by the treatment of Homer, Mitscherling concludes that the radical conclusion of Book X is already latent in these early Books. Nevertheless, these considerations lead Mitscherling to note that Plato cannot be seriously advocating the banishment of all poetry. Indeed, recall the six possible interpretations of the poets in the *Republic*. For Mitscherling, the final four interpretations coalesce under the rubric of the *technē* of *mimēsis*; this is Plato's actual target throughout the *Republic*. This *technē* produces "appearances, mere images devoid of meaningful

content" (250), and it is this privileging of appearance over reality that necessitates ethical relativism, which is another harbinger Plato seeks to quash.

In the final chapter, Mitscherling sketches a Platonic aesthetics, which explicitly draws on the phenomenology of Ingarden and the hermeneutics of Gadamer. This cashes out as the division between human psychology and the mimetic nature of art. Again, further extrapolating the discontinuities in the *Republic*, Mitscherling argues that whereas Books II and III exhibit the frail psychology of people, Book X deals with the precise nature of *mimēsis* and why it is contemptible. The argument runs as follows: first, there is the familiar ontological criticism that *mimēsis* is distant from reality. Second, *mimēsis* has the potentially dire consequence of nurturing the non-rational parts of the human psyche. Consequently, censure is appropriate. Mitscherling then details aesthetic experience from a hermeneutical perspective. He draws principally on Gadamer and outlines three theses. First, the work of art is akin to a symbolic gesture. Second, it is a creation (*Gebilde*). Finally, it is self-sufficient. For Mitscherling, Plato's aesthetics embodies these claims.

As should now be clear, this book deals with a wide scope of material. In my view, this breadth has the regrettable consequence of making several sections irrelevant to the main argument of the book. In particular, I have difficulty seeing the relevance of extrapolating a Platonic aesthetics when there is so much more to defend. For instance, *contra* White and Havelock, who maintain that Greek poetry was inextricably bound to performance, Mitscherling holds that that the two are distinct. He cites Aristotle's *Poetics* as evidence for this conclusion. The problem is a diachronic one. Mitscherling fails to appreciate that from Archaic Greece down to Aristotle, there was a slow transition from an oral culture to a literate one, or in other words, from a conception of the poet as singer (*oidos*) to one of maker (*poiētēs*). Such a transition diminished oral features of poetry—intonation, costume and dance—but promoted textual features like meter and plot. Still, poetic performance remained integral not only to the Greek educational system, but also to how Plato conceives of the ideal city. It is the poets, after all, who will disseminate the appropriate content to the citizenry. The "hymns to the gods" and "encomia of good people" are both permitted *and* poetic in the ideal state. Such considerations, together with further continuities that exist between the *Republic* and the *Laws* on the function of poetry in the ideal state, may not end up being decisive against Mitscherling's account, but they do complicate it and deserve more treatment. So while the premise of the book is promising, the argument contains too many scholarly holes for

the reviewer to recommend. Finally, on the technical level, the table of contents does not match the page numbering.

**Christopher Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Quentin Meillassoux*. New York: Edinburgh University Press, 2011; xiii + 281 pages. ISBN: 978-0748640577.**

*Review by Jason Harman, York University.*

Upon surveying the salons of 19th century Europe, Søren Kierkegaard noted the eagerness with which hungry minds sought to go *beyond* the drab palette offered by religion. Abraham, however, he told his readers, did not seek to go *beyond* religion. In fact, for Abraham, faith was an endeavour that requires a lifetime. In reviewing Christopher Watkin's *Difficult Atheism*, I am reminded of these words, for, as Watkin shows, the task of overcoming religion is an arduous one that ultimately begs the question: what are we really going beyond? Watkin's text seeks to chart contemporary French thought's attempt to attain "a thinking that is truly without God" (1), through an analysis and critique of Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Quentin Meillassoux. It should be noted upfront that for sheer breadth and depth Watkin's work is astounding. Watkin, I am led to suspect, feels perfectly at ease inhabiting the minds of Badiou, Nancy and Meillassoux. Further, where contemporary French philosophy often dallies in the obscure, Watkin's rendering—with ample citations from a wide selection of primary texts—both clarifies and sharpens. Throughout this text, Watkin ushers the reader into the intimate circle of philosophy's leading minds—certainly no small feat.

Indeed, I can offer nothing short of praise for the text's descriptive and explanatory qualities, though I do have reservations regarding the method and criteria used to judge the philosophies in question. For starters, Watkin does little to actually clarify for us what God, religion, theology, or faith is. Though he reminds us early on that there are many atheisms (12), at least one for each of the prominent French philosophers whom occupy the text, there appears to be only *one* theology for which, "consensus" indicates, we must proceed beyond. (239) Watkin, following Nietzsche, whose name and philosophy he invokes early on, at times uses the phrase "Platonic-Christian" to designate the metaphysical structure that post-theological thought must overcome. (11) Yet, at other times—for example, in critiquing Jean-Luc Nancy for "Christian hyperbole" (240)—his concern seems to

be any connection whatsoever to Judeo-Christian thinking. Watkin does remind us not to confuse the utilisation of theological terms with theology proper: "If a philosopher uses terms such as 'miracle,' 'faith' or even 'God,' it does not necessarily follow that her thought is imitative" of theology. (3) Yet, he simultaneously criticises philosophers for the fact that every departure or partition (*partage*) is also a relation—a fact we will return to later. (85)

Watkin establishes as the pincers of his critique two criteria: imitative (or parasitic) atheism, and residual (or ascetic) atheism. Where a philosopher might escape the one, he or she is likely bound to fall victim to the other. Imitative atheism is defined as the practice of denying religion while erecting a new one in its place. Humanism, for example, replaced God with the adulation of Man, just as the Enlightenment replaced God with Reason. In each case the only thing that changes is the name of the deity. It is for this reason that Watkin reminds us that "parasitism keeps the fruit of the Platonic-Christian structure, but does nothing to attack its root." (11) "The fruit" includes the prizes of Truth, Justice and Equality—virtues which receive their force and effect from the inexplicable root of the system: the belief in a supra-rational power which grounds, or provides the reason for, everything else.

Residual, or ascetic, atheism is aware of the pitfalls of imitative atheism. In seeking to avoid squatting on the theological terrain it explicitly rejects, residual atheism ascetically contents itself with its own half of the universe. Clamouring for immanence at the expense of religious transcendence, as does Badiou, or contingency in exchange for divine necessity, as does Meillassoux, these philosophies become vulnerable to critique. Describing them as still ensnared within the matrix of a religion that divides the world into the sacred and the profane, Watkins argues that these philosophers proceed simply by forfeiting the former for the latter, leading to his charge of asceticism.

In concluding, Watkin tells us that none of the three philosophers fully lives up to the *post-* of post-theological thinking. This empirical fact "leaves a question mark over the possibility of moving beyond the parasitism and asceticism that still haunt Nancy, Badiou, and Meillassoux." (243) Yet, the question must be asked as to whether such a "question mark" was ever in doubt, and as such, whether an empirical examination, however revealing, was necessary? For the criterion which Watkin applies to his thinkers, and which declares that each has come up short, must itself be scrutinised as to whether it is itself *post-*theological. The criterion is, quite simply, the notion that one can "turn the page on religion" (13) and the twin criteria of imitative (parasitic) and residual (ascetic) atheism are the tools of Watkin's trade. Yet,

Watkin ought be wary after discussing Nancy's attempt "to avoid...a definite break, on pain of a gesture that imitates a quintessentially theological move." (87) Indeed, such a break is what Watkin himself describes as a form of parasitism: "the danger of declaring that...religion is *finished*, is that it constitutes the victory of the dialectical theology of the death of God, a return to imitative atheism." (87) Applying this very insight to his own project, Watkin must confess that the ideal of a fully post-theological philosophy entails a "definite break" and as such he is paradoxically criticising Badiou, Nancy, and Meillassoux for failing to adequately *imitate* theology by failing to completely *abandon* theology.

The source of Watkin's problem is that the "possibility of moving beyond" theology is not appropriately addressed and properly clarified. The danger of embarking with an ambiguous notion of theology is of course that it proves tremendously difficult to shed. Watkin's paradox of abandoning theology only to return to it shows us that the core of what he calls *theology* is precisely the logic of contradiction (or dichotomy) that begins in Plato and is absorbed by medieval Christianity. Though Watkin does identify Platonic dichotomies as a residue of onto-theology (46) and criticises both Badiou and Meillassoux for employing them and for becoming entangled in their parasitic webs, he does not affirm their centrality.

For Badiou, problems begin as soon as he declares himself an atheist and severs all ties to the transcendent realm. Advocating for the immanent multiple as against the transcendent One (45), the result Badiou achieves is simply the summary dismissal of the One. Yet this brash action does not prevent the One from constantly reappearing, haunting his mathematical ontology. In fact, Meillassoux implies that Badiou's void, which opposes itself to the being of the multiple, is characterised by the same sort of mystical properties one finds in mono-theism. (133) Watkin explains that the attempt to simply forget or forego transcendence in favour of a solely immanent ontology still leaves one caught within the matrix of opposition. Watkin cites Michel Henry's *L'essence de la manifestation*, which puts the matter plainly: "Immanence has been defined by reference to transcendence and through the exclusion of the latter from its internal structure." (19)

This omitted reference to transcendence reappears when Watkin questions how Badiou's immanent philosophy establishes itself. Badiou's axiomatic philosophy, by definition, cannot explain its own first principles: "Axioms are not deduced or induced, but asserted." (100) This, Watkin indicates, has generated critique from a number of sources including Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Rancière, and theologian John Milbank. The thrust of the arguments Watkin assembles is

that because the axiomatic system is inherently "arbitrary" it requires a decision that is fundamentally "unfounded." (103) He concludes that Badiou's philosophy ultimately "reveals the insufficiency of mathematics to connect us to the Eternal." (107) Badiou's mathematical ontology thus requires a faith that is "covertly religious" (108) to empower it.

Quentin Meillassoux is the other post-theological thinker who seems happy to embrace the logic of opposites and who, like Badiou, becomes ensnared in their trap. While Meillassoux seems to break new ground towards post-theological thinking by refusing to comply with the theism/atheism dichotomy that entangled Badiou (133), he nonetheless becomes entrapped within opposites of his own choosing. Meillassoux makes the dichotomy of necessity/contingency paramount in both his refutation of the existence of God and his insistence that hyperchaos governs the universe. (139) Meillassoux's discourse, as Watkin compellingly shows, contradicts itself by secretly relying upon an unshakable ground—be it time (153), logic (155) or reason (162)—that is kept safe from the hyper-contingency of the world.

It is Jean-Luc Nancy who goes the farthest to escape the Platonic-Christian structure that Watkin identifies early on. Like Meillassoux, he troubles the a/theism divide but does not stop there. His ontology of singular plurality *or, equally*, plural singularity, as Watkin helpfully points out, goes the farthest in eclipsing dichotomizing thought. (177) Indeed, it is for that very reason that I believe Watkin's text ultimately commends the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy, who alone indicates an acute awareness of the crippling power of contradiction, and who attempts to grapple with this paradox head-on. In order to do so, Nancy realises most fully that he must, in Watkin's words, "turn to religion in order to turn the page on religion." (13) Nancy's method of deconstruction is the only one that seeks to take religion seriously and in so doing it unabashedly borrows elements that do not wholly *part* with the place of their origin though, despite that, have nothing in common with the Platonic-Christian structure that Watkin (and Nietzsche) explicitly identify as constituting theology *per se*.

*Difficult Atheism* lives up to its title by highlighting the pervasive presence of theology in contemporary "post-theological" philosophy. However, it does not adequately treat the problem of the theology it wishes to escape. Though Watkin wisely takes pains to differentiate the usage of theological terms from the deployment of theological concepts, his efforts are undermined by failing to single out how Platonic theology is not identical to religion—as Kierkegaard distinguished Christendom from Christianity. As such, his project of identifying a post-theological thinking wholly free from all connection to theology is undermined from the start.

**Michael J. Thompson, ed., *Georg Lukács Reconsidered: Critical Essays in Politics, Philosophy and Aesthetics*. London: Continuum, 2011; 253 + x pages. ISBN: 978-1441108760.**

**Timothy Bewes and Timothy Hall, eds., *Georg Lukács: The Fundamental Dissonance of Existence. Aesthetics, Politics, Literature*. London: Continuum, 2011; 239 + xii pages. ISBN: 978-1441157904.**

*Review by Bryan Smyth, University of Memphis.*

Anyone interested in the thought of Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács would be pleased to know that Continuum recently published a new volume of essays devoted to his work. And they would be doubly pleased, if also slightly perplexed, to learn that in fact within scarcely more than a month not one but *two* such volumes appeared from the same publisher. This is a curious state of affairs. But as no such collection has been published in English for over two decades—i.e., *Lukács Reappraised*, edited by Agnes Heller (Columbia University Press, 1983), and *Lukács Today*, edited by Tom Rockmore, (Springer, 1988)—the dual publication amounting to almost 500 pages is certainly a welcome windfall for Anglophone scholarship.

The two volumes share a general basic aim, which is to re-examine Lukács' work in the light of more recent political and theoretical developments in order to show that it is still productively relevant to many contemporary issues. Related to this general aim, both volumes tend to reject as unhelpful and obsolete the standard periodisation of Lukács' work in terms of (a) his early Romantic neo-Kantianism (e.g., *Soul and Form, Theory of the Novel*), the tragic utopianism of which was supposed to be resolved by (b) his euphoric revolutionary Hegelian-Marxism (i.e., *History and Class Consciousness*), which is by and large his principal claim to fame, but which itself however ultimately collapsed into (c) his inglorious decades as, seemingly at any rate, a Stalinist philosophical hack (e.g., *The Destruction of Reason, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*). Although significant breaks and turns do exist within Lukács' development, in the post-1989 context it becomes clear that this threefold scheme is overly simplistic. For in retrospectively viewing it as pivoting around a failed revolutionary engagement, it effectively reduces Lukács' long career to a blind alley of dialectical errors in a way that occludes the innovative insights that belong to the deeper core of his work. The idea, then, is to salvage the latter from the historical vicissitudes with which Lukács' intellectual life was interwoven. In this sense, the common goal of the volumes—

and this is what sets them apart from those earlier collections—is to push Lukács beyond himself, or, as expressed in the blurb to the Bewes and Hall volume, to “liberate [his] thought from its formal and historical limitations.”

While both volumes aspire to approach Lukács afresh, there is nevertheless an important dissimilarity pertaining to the relation between aesthetics and politics. This relation was always a central concern for Lukács, whose work militates against any crisp distinction. (It should be kept in mind that with regard to aesthetics Lukács was concerned nearly exclusively with literature and literary criticism.) But what these volumes show is that his work may be approached anew in two different ways, by negotiating this relation by way of emphasising one of the *relata* over the other. Thus while the Thompson volume (hereafter, GLR) is on the whole more concerned with political-philosophical questions and the contribution that Lukács might make to a reinvigorated project of Critical Theory (which, to be sure, also includes some considerations on aesthetics), the emphasis in the Bewes and Hall volume (hereafter, FDE) is on aesthetic themes, albeit with some more directly political contributions. And in each case the respective emphasis is reflected structurally: *GLR* sandwiches a section of essays dealing with aesthetics between two others dealing with philosophy and critical theory respectively, while *FDE* does the opposite, positioning its cluster of more politically oriented essays between sections that address “Paradoxes of Form” and “Aesthetic Reframings.” These general editorial tendencies constitute the basic difference between the volumes. This difference is not trivial, but the nature of Lukács' work all but ensures some substantial overlap and complementarity.

*GLR* is ostensibly premised on the paradoxical claim that Lukács is at once “one of the truly great thinkers of modern times” (GLR, 7), and yet also someone whose theoretical contributions have fallen into “almost total neglect.” (GLR, 1) The idea here is that while Lukács is a major figure within the tradition of radical critical theory, that tradition itself has lately fizzled out due to the “collapse” of classical Marxism, upon the revolutionary perspective of which it was theoretically and normatively dependent. In this context, the general aim of the volume thus implies a reassessment of the theoretical viability of Lukács' efforts to retool that tradition—in particular, the account of reification at the heart of *History and Class Consciousness*. Thompson claims in his “Introduction” that such a “reconsideration” could revitalise Critical Theory by “giv[ing] foundation once again to a humanist ethical tradition with an objective understanding of social reality.” (GLR, 7)

Matters are somewhat different in *FDE*. Here the general theme (aesthetics) is more clearly defined, and tends to be approached on its own terms rather than within the general parameters of Critical Theory. As expressed in the blurb, the idea is that recent developments (e.g., neo-realism) in literary criticism have enabled “new readings of Lukács” that are “less in thrall to the positions taken by Lukács himself on political and aesthetic matters.” A radical and oppositional critique of contemporary capitalism and its cultural contradictions is still the aim, but there is a sense that Lukács’ commitment to the revolutionary intentions of classical Marxism may itself be one of the “historical limitations” that needs to be overcome. More attention is thus paid here to Lukács’ pre-Marxist work, and more effort is put into mining his later work—especially concerning realism—for specific methodological insights in a way that does not directly reaffirm in any substantive way the framework within which Lukács originally presented them. In contrast to *GLR*, then, here it is less a matter of recovering an eclipsed figure than of discovering a new, post-Marxist Lukács, and this as a resource for critical aesthetics rather than for radical social theory as a whole.

Given the nature and scope of its goal, the contributions in *GLR* addressing Lukács’ “philosophical legacy” are disappointingly one-sided. In a broad survey of Lukács’ career, Stephen Eric Bronner highlights the role of philosophical idealism in his original recasting of Marxist politics. This is important, but the message is ambivalent. For while granting Lukács’ view of consciousness as the “decisive moment” for revolution (*GLR*, 30), Bronner also dismisses Lukács’ early communism as a normatively ungrounded “politics of will.” (*GLR*, 19 ff.) Lukács’ later work may have attempted to correct for that, but Bronner holds that it yields no positive lesson whatsoever. The upshot is thus that the Lukácsian legacy boils down to nothing more than an “ethical commitment” severed from the objective political-economic analyses of the Marxist tradition. (*GLR*, 30) Tom Rockmore likewise emphasises the role of philosophical idealism in Marxism, and similarly—although more bluntly—tries to read Lukács out of and against the Marxist tradition. In his view, what value there is in a text like *History and Class Consciousness* lies in its potential contribution to a “non-Marxist” re-reading of Marx. (*GLR*, 36, 48) For Rockmore, this would ultimately mean locating Marx within the philosophical tradition of German Idealism, and Lukács’ theory of reification within a broader humanist concern with alienation. And although he would endorse a more dialectically balanced reading of Lukács’ turn to Marxism, even Michael Löwy’s brief discussion of *Tailism and the Dialectic* included here also comes across as a one-sided plea for the role of ethical sub-

jectivity in the revolutionary process. Conversely, Stanley Aronowitz takes up the unenviable task of offering a defence of Lukács’ 1954 work, *The Destruction of Reason*, which portrays post-Hegelian idealism *tout court* as a degenerate and ideologically dangerous irrationalism. Not without reason this text is often judged to be philosophically crude. So even if Aronowitz finds in it some anticipations of Adorno and Bourdieu (but note that his essay, rich in typos, lacks notes or references), he effectively admits that if the work has a virtue, then it may lie precisely in its “vulgarity” (*GLR*, 64)—yet no less than a depoliticised ethics, this is hardly what is needed for a contemporary revival of Critical Theory.

By contrast, the strongest essays in *GLR* are those in the final section dealing with “Perspectives on Critical Theory.” These tend to engage more productively with Lukács’ work, and they can be profitably read alongside the political essays in *FDE*.

Konstantinos Kavoulakos develops a nuanced re-interpretation of the philosophy of history that shaped Lukács’ early Marxism, and does so as a way to redress the “antinomies of formalism” that enervate second- and third-generation Critical Theory. (*GLR*, 152 ff.) Premised on an invigorated reading of the dialectical mediation of subjectivity and objectivity in *History and Class Consciousness*, Kavoulakos’ argument retains the concept of proletariat but reformulates it in post-class terms as the intersubjective process underlying the contingent historical emergence of universality. This revised approach to the thorny question of the “subject-object of history” may be usefully counterposed to Neil Larsen’s provocative contribution to *FDE*. Here a similar attempt is made to re-historicise *History and Class Consciousness*, except that Larsen, relying on the work of Moishe Postone and others, aims to do so by purging it entirely of the proletariat as a category of historical subjectivity, resting the possibility of immanent critique and social transformation instead on capital’s own objective tendencies toward catastrophic crisis.

Sharing with Kavoulakos a charitable reading of Lukács’ understanding of dialectical mediation, Andrew Feenberg provides an impressive reconstruction of some of the key arguments in *History and Class Consciousness* concerning reification. This enables him to show the inadequacy of Adorno’s influential critique of Lukács—“Adorno is tone deaf to the music of Lukács’ dialectic.” (*GLR*, 173) But more generally, it also allows him to indicate the essential need for Critical Theory to base itself on a more dialectically sophisticated approach of the sort that may be found—not, of course, without some shortcomings—in Hegelian Marxism *à la* Lukács. In a related but less rigorous piece in *FDE*, Feenberg develops this view in terms of social praxis as a

partial corrective to Axel Honneth's recent moral re-reading of Lukács' notion of reification as interpersonal misrecognition.

Timothy Hall challenges Honneth's reappropriation of Lukács from a similar angle, offering a radically historicist view of social praxis as creative "improvisation," basing this on an account of what he terms ontological "novelty." (GLR, 202; cf. FDE, 122 ff.) This exposes some of the transformational possibilities neglected by Honneth's account (among others). But more generally it challenges any reading of Lukács as an identity thinker by using his account of reification to question some of the usual ontological assumptions of historical materialism. In a related discussion in *FDE* (which he co-edited), Hall develops this improvisational view in terms of the link between social justice and the good life, thereby showing the relevance of *History and Class Consciousness* to questions concerning the normative content of Critical Theory. Inasmuch, however, as it takes Lukács as following Marx in the assumption that life as such can never be fully subsumed by capital, this view is challenged (as Kavoulakos' is by Larsen) by Stewart Martin's interesting but somewhat strained argument, also in *FDE*, to the effect that Lukács was on the contrary a consistent theorist of "capitalist life"—something like an early exponent of radical biopolitics—and that the implications of his work for Critical Theory need to be rethought accordingly.

Extending the ontological theme, Thompson's own discussion of Lukács' work foregrounds the late (and posthumously published) text, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*. The aim here is to show that Lukács' project is fundamentally a matter of ontology—specifically, a materialist ontology of social becoming through transformative praxis that is modelled on but not reducible to labour—and that precisely for this reason it is uniquely well-suited to grasp the dialectical relation between subjectivity and objectivity, and hence to serve as the basis for a radical renewal of Critical Theory. Although it unfolds at a very high level of generality, the discussion is strong in terms of its reproof of any attempt to articulate critical normative claims in abstraction from social ontology. But it remains unclear just how a new ethics would emerge from this. Helpful here, then, is an essay on the concept of *form* in which Katie Terezakis argues that the operative sense of Lukács' concept of *totality*—which is usually paid more attention—hearkens back to the philosophical romanticism of *Soul and Form*, with the implication that issues of aesthetic criticism—especially concerning narration, although this is touched on only briefly—would constitute the bridge between ontology and ethics.

Some aspects of this insight are investigated in excellent essays by Yoon Sun Lee and Patrick Eiden-Offe in the "Paradoxes of Form"

section of *FDE*. Lee looks at how Lukács' idea of form became increasingly conceived temporally, such that the "recurrence" characteristic of narrative form is able to represent the "temporalized invariance" upon which historical truth is based—this being how, for Lukács, aesthetic experience can mediate humans' understanding of their real historical possibilities. (FDE, 18 ff.) A key ingredient here is Lukács' notion of *type* or *typicality*, of which Eiden-Offe provides an important conceptual clarification. Based on an account of its Weberian roots, this shows from another angle the intersection in Lukács' work between literary criticism and class-based social analysis, in that both are concerned with the eschewal of direct naturalistic description in favour of historical narrative as a kind of typological interpretation.

These contributions help to shed new light on what is involved and at stake in Lukács' later conception—and staunch defence—of literary realism. *FDE* includes a translation of Lukács' 1926 article "Art for Art's Sake and Proletarian Writing" (for which Andrew Hemingway provides a historical and political contextualisation). In the same way as Lukács' contemporaneous (and better known) article on Moses Hess marks a political turning point, this text signals a turn in his aesthetic thought, in particular with regard to realism and the concomitant importance for Lukács of historical narrative. Several essays address this area of his work. Norman Fischer (GLR) and John Marx (FDE) take up Lukács' interest in the writings of Walter Scott. Both undertake to re-read *The Historical Novel* more consistently on its own terms, that is, decoupled from the theory of historical stages and Lukács' ostensible focus in his treatment of Scott on the prehistory of bourgeois individualism. In this way Fischer articulates in some detail a nuanced re-reading of Lukács' leftist intentions, whereas John Marx contends that the upshot of Lukács' analysis supports a broader notion of solidarity that invalidates class-based perspectives.

Probing more deeply, Peter Uwe Hohendahl (GLR) undertakes a detailed examination of the debates between Lukács and Adorno concerning literary modernism and realism. He shows that they share considerably more theoretical common ground than is usually thought, and that consequently this relation—so important for later generations of Critical Theory—needs to be thoroughly reassessed. Related to this at a general level is János Keleman's discussion (GLR) of the overall continuity and philosophical sense of Lukács' work as a literary historian (but note that some citations in this text remain in Hungarian), and Werner Jung's (GLR) brief discussion of time in *The Theory of the Novel* (but note that a poor translation leaves the piece only partly intelligible). Of more specific relevance is Michael Löwy's brief discussion (FDE) of Lukács' view of Kafka, which Löwy claims is

more complex than traditionally thought, and this in a way that could have important implications for Lukács' account of modernism. (In support of this essay, *FDE* includes as an appendix a translation of Lukács' 1964 foreword to Volume 6 of his *Werke*, in which he makes some brief references to Kafka.) Likewise relevant but more philosophically substantial and ambitious is an essay by David Cunningham (FDE) in which he argues that *The Theory of the Novel* provides a better account of the "real abstraction" intrinsic to capitalist society than Lukács' later work rooted in historical materialism. (FDE, 56) Bewes also returns to that early text and offers a new reading which, partly informed by Lukács' little-known contemporaneous thoughts on cinema, tries to liberate the radical method the book portends from the idealist historical ontology in which it was framed. Similarly, Gail Day (FDE) looks at the relevance of Lukácsian realism to contemporary practices of politicised art, arguing that many of Lukács' own theoretical formulations and corresponding aesthetic predilections were inconsistent with his deeper motivations, and that properly reinterpreted his work can serve militant artists today as an instructive model of "how emancipatory ambitions refract through aesthetic-political mediations." (FDE, 217)

There is clearly a lot going on in these volumes. Both are uneven in terms of the quality of their contents, but each contains some strong essays which, taken together, reaffirm Lukács as a figure to be reckoned with. Of course, many issues remain outstanding. Not the least of these concerns the status of revolutionary politics within the Lukácsian legacy—there is a big difference between recovering Lukács in post-Stalinist terms and discovering him anew as a post-Marxist thinker. Either way he comes across as a positively rejuvenated Hegelian, but whether the standpoint of critique thereby implied is still modulated through the figure of, say, Lenin, for example, is left unaddressed here. Yet inasmuch as concrete totality and the inherence of consciousness in social being are taken seriously, such questions cannot be avoided if historical subjectivity and aesthetic normativity are to be brought together without political equivocation. These volumes offer a great deal for those interested in these problems. But if his work is to have theoretical purchase and political bite in the contemporary context of global crises and growing anti-capitalist movements, then there is still a lot more work yet to be done with Lukács.

**Eduardo González Di Pierro, *De la persona a la historia. Antropología fenomenológica y filosofía de la historia en Edith Stein*. Morelia: Dríada, 2004; 215 pages. ISBN 970-9350471.**

*Review by Antonio Calcagno, King's University College at UWO.*

Eduardo González Di Pierro's work is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarly literature devoted to the philosophy of Edith Stein. Before arriving at Göttingen to study with Husserl and Reinach in 1913, Stein was enrolled in Psychology and History as well as German Literature at the University of Breslau. Her interest in history continued while at the Universities of Göttingen and Freiburg and it would be an understatement to claim that history played a significant role in Stein's early phenomenological works. But Stein's later works, including *Finite and Eternal Being*, also display an astute awareness of the place and roles of history in discussing various kinds of philosophical problems. Di Pierro's text is the first scholarly study I know that systematically traces the use and development of Stein's views on history. One of the classic critiques levelled against early phenomenologists concerns their seeming lack of historical awareness. However, this is a misreading of the early phenomenological tradition. There is great sensitivity to the role of history in shaping our sense of things, as is evidenced by Stein's work on values and politics, which Di Pierro nicely signals.

Di Pierro's reading of Stein's philosophical appropriation of history results in a very specific thesis: history, for Stein, not only helps us understand the nature of the human person as a unity of body, psyche and spirit but also as a social being who finds herself in the world. Consciousness of history as well as the specific science of history allows us to see the validity of this claim, so says Di Pierro. (25–26) In fact, the author begins in the first chapter by immediately discussing the importance of the question of the constitution of the person for Stein. (31) Here, one sees the influence of Angela Ales Bello, a leading Husserl and Stein scholar, who was Di Pierro's teacher and who has spent her scholarly life analysing and defending the centrality of the primacy of the person for both Husserl and Stein.

Di Pierro demonstrates how the structure of the human person is a central theme in Stein's work, beginning with her work on empathy, to her work on the humanities and psychology, culminating in her Münster lectures, published as *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person (The Structure of the Human Person)*. He highlights the importance of the body, psyche and soul as the key components of Stein's understanding of the person. The discussion of empathy or *Einfühlung* (34–38) is a

classic point of departure for Stein's phenomenology of the person. The distinction between inner and outer experience, one that Husserl makes in the first version of the *Logical Investigations*, is vital for the establishment of the realm of lived experience, consciousness, and the pure I. Stein's discussion of empathy not only leads one to understand analogically the mind or feelings of another person, but this knowledge of others is used to understand oneself: one understands oneself as a modification of the other. It is the knowledge of self and others that allows Stein to give a general eidetic description. It is also within the treatment of empathy that we learn about the nature of our bodies as they manifest themselves to us in consciousness, linguistic expression and emotions. In his treatment of Stein's discussion of psyche, as developed in her *Beiträge*, Di Pierro highlights two important facts about her position: Stein posits something like a soul, as does Husserl, that belongs to the psychic realm. Moreover, like the Stein scholar Philibert Secretan, he notes that she has a rich notion of a personality core or personal core (*Persönlichkeitskern*) that centres the life of psyche. (57) Finally, Di Pierro notes that, in Stein's later writings, her notion of soul is expanded to include more traditional views of soul as immortal and as a point of encounter with God. (67)

Having established Stein's view of the human person, Di Pierro moves in the second chapter to discuss the person's relation to the natural sciences and the *Geisteswissenschaften* or human sciences. This chapter is important as the author examines a rich but largely unstudied text, namely, Stein's *Einführung in die Philosophie* or *Introduction to Philosophy*, where she develops a sustained treatment of the connection between phenomenology and history. In particular, she, following Husserl, maintains that history must ground itself in phenomenology. What this means, practically speaking, is that history must become aware of the methodologies and tools it employs to arrive at its understanding of historical events and personages. This idea will be developed in the third chapter. The second chapter takes the notion of the human person developed in the first chapter and begins to show how it is to serve as the ground for all sciences: one cannot have genuine scientific understanding, if one is not aware of the operator and end of these sciences, namely, the human person. Di Pierro moves through Stein's treatment of space and time, which relies heavily on the work of Einstein and Planck (81–82), in order to show how a formal conception of space and time also conditions our understanding of our own bodily space and the environment in which we dwell. There is a marked difference from earlier texts in the way Stein treats phenomenological objects in the *Introduction*. In the texts on empathy and the *Beiträge*, Stein gives traditional eidetic descriptions: one sees

here the influence of both Reinach and Husserl. But by the time Stein writes the *Introduction*, she gives us a formal ontology of various phenomenological objects. One sees here the influence of the Munich school, other phenomenologists and, in particular, the influence of Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Jean Hering and Alexandre Koyré. The *Introduction* was a text that took form in the mid to late 1920s and Stein kept revising it through the 1930s. One could say that the *Introduction* marks a change in Stein's phenomenological method. That being said, the centrality of the person cannot be denied. One sees here Stein's attempt to connect the sciences with phenomenology through formal ontology. Di Pierro does a nice job explaining key elements in Stein's formal ontology and how they relate to the person.

The last chapter is where the meat of the book can be found; it is also where we see Di Pierro elaborate Stein's theory of history. He identifies five levels that refer to history, as Stein conceives it. First, there is history understood as a successive series or flows of successive events. Second, history is a description of a series of happenings: here we see Rickert's influence; here questions of historiography come to the fore. Third, there is history understood as reflection or philosophy of history as practiced by thinkers like Vico and Saint Augustine. Fourth, there are the larger questions that touch upon the previous three levels, but Di Pierro sees this fourth sense of history as a distinct question, namely, What is history? (126–27) Finally, he shows how, in Stein's later works, one can find a theological understanding of history. Obviously, here we are dealing with questions of eschatology and soteriology. (148)

Di Pierro certainly succeeds in showing the relationship between history and the human person. This is what the book intends to do. I would also like to note that Di Pierro presents a nice synthesis of Stein's views on history. This will be most useful to both phenomenologists and Stein scholars. One thing I would have liked to see, although there are references to it, but not in any developed or sustained way, is a treatment of how Stein stands *vis-à-vis* other philosophers and phenomenologists when it comes to history, such as Heidegger, Husserl or Dilthey. Di Pierro notes the sources and influences of these philosophers on Stein, but a broader dialogue with other philosophers of history would have made the text even richer. But perhaps I ask too much as this would require a more lengthy monograph. Finally, given Di Pierro's fine analysis, I wonder if Stein's views of history and their connection to the person and phenomenology have not already been taken up by other historical methodologies. In other words, I wonder what Stein's analyses of history offer contemporary historians. All in all, this is a fine book and I highly recommend it to those interested in

the philosophy of history, the connection between history and phenomenology, and those interested in Stein studies.

**Diane Enns, *The Violence of Victimhood*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012; 231 pages. ISBN: 978-0271052427.**

*Review by Michelle Ciurria, York University.*

*The Violence of Victimhood* is both a personal manifesto and a scholarly analysis of the ethics of victimhood, otherness and identity politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Begun as a response to a student's accusation of racism, Diane Enns' book argues that the "victimized other" has been elevated to sacrosanct status and defined as "the good," giving perceived victims epistemic and moral authority over issues of oppression. This authority, according to Enns, is misplaced, and prevents us from holding victims legitimately responsible for their complicity in systemic oppression and violence. Moreover, the urge to participate in the dichotomous language of victim/perpetrator gives rise to a reluctance to hold anyone responsible for anything, insofar as everyone is, on some level, both a victim and a perpetrator. This ambivalence, in turn, engenders a self-defeating moral relativism which stymies any attempt to formulate a pragmatic political program for resolving conflict in war-torn countries.

Enns' book is divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter, Enns accuses Continental philosophy, and particularly the scholarship of Emmanuel Levinas and Frantz Fanon, of venerating the "victimized other" as purely innocent and impervious to criticism. The unintended consequence of this view, she says, is a radical, perverse moral relativism and political impotence. This is also the chapter in which Enns describes the plight of having to defend her lectures, on two separate occasions, against formal charges of "racial discrimination and harassment" to the faculty dean and her colleagues. One cannot help but empathise as she relates this harrowing experience, which was no doubt an unintended consequence of her earnest disquisitions; but, at the same time, one encounters passages that are liable to cause discomfort in liberal-minded readers. For example, on the moral status of rape victims, she writes, "That victims are not all the same does not mean that someone deserves to be victimized, but it does mean that some victims take risks that increase that possibility." (90) Construed in the wrong light, this could be taken to mean that rape victims are responsible for eliciting male sexual interest and violence; but what

Enns seems to mean, more plausibly, is that all (or most) women are complicit in perpetuating the conditions of power that sustain patriarchal dominance. This claim is less discomfiting, but also less interesting, for it has arguably been the received view in Continental philosophy at least since the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.

In Chapter 2, Enns argues that we tend to justify the violence that victims inflict on others, and also to privilege the perspective of the victim in moral and legal discourse. This tendency, she says, is exemplified in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where commentators tend to choose sides and refrain from criticising their preferred faction. In Chapter 3, she examines the phenomenology of victimhood, and characterises victims as suffering from "pathological responses" to violence, such as vindictiveness, melancholy and resentment (in the Nietzschean sense). She holds that victims have a responsibility to relinquish these sentiments, or, at least, to "act as if" they have relinquished them. (72) Here, Enns considers resentment only in its strongest, pathological form; but later, in Chapter 6, she dismisses the common objection from transitional justice scholars that resentment can be a form of moral indignation that is both morally legitimate and conducive to reconciliation. She prefers to address resentment only as a negative emotion, intrinsically antithetical to forgiveness and reconciliation.

In Chapter 4, Enns appeals to Hannah Arendt to explain moral judgement, and to show that it can be appropriately applied to victims in certain circumstances. Enns finds in Arendt a kindred spirit, insofar as the latter was accused of "blaming the victim" after arguing that members of the Jewish Councils were responsible for cooperating with Nazis in World War II. Arendt correctly points out that victims can be held legitimately responsible for independent harms. For her part, Enns is particularly concerned with the judgement of moral responsibility, but she does not explicitly distinguish this kind of moral judgement from others, such as blame, liability, accountability and character ascription, which are often conflated or used interchangeably with responsibility in casual conversation. However, for philosophical purposes, these distinctions are critical. For instance, when Enns writes that victims can be held responsible for "choosing the lesser evil under duress" (97), one has to wonder if she means, rather, that victims can be held blameworthy, or accountable, or liable, or deemed vicious, for so choosing under duress. Ordinarily, duress is considered exculpating in considerations of responsibility and liability, but not necessarily in judgements of blame, character, and quality of will. One explanation for this imprecision is Enns' insistence that moral judge-

ment should be distinguished from “moralism,” which is characterised by an “obsession with moral regulations.” (99) Moral judgement, by contrast, is intrinsically messy, contingent, intuitive, contextual, uncodifiable, and vague. This distinction, in turn, explains why Enns does not attempt to articulate any formal criteria for when it is appropriate to hold someone morally responsible, instead preferring to rely on intuitive examples to provide rough guidelines for this process. At times, however, this approach can be vexing, particularly as her examples often go against widely held intuitions—such as in the case of wrongdoing under duress and in children.

In Chapter 5, Enns addresses the difficult issue of determining the moral status of child soldiers, who are normally excused of moral responsibility for their crimes. She gives a number of examples of former child soldiers, including the now-famous human rights advocate, Ishamel Beah, and contrasts them against other children who managed to evade ideological indoctrination at the hands of opportunistic warlords. Enns maintains that, “we must acknowledge, respect, and encourage children’s moral agency, like that of their adult counterparts, if we are to understand how war seduces—‘narcotizes’—its participants, effectively immunizing them from accountability.” (15) She makes it clear that she considers children to be full moral agents, sufficiently capable of discerning right from wrong to be held morally responsible for their behaviour, and she supports this claim with testimony from reformed child soldiers attesting to the fact that when they committed their crimes, they believed that they were acting rightly. In spite of this testimony, however, one has to wonder whether these children actually had the *capacity* to discern right from wrong, regardless of whether they believed that they were doing the right thing. Normally, in democratic societies, children are excused from responsibility on grounds that they lack the moral and epistemic capacities to make responsible decisions, and this places the onus on adults to provide children with a safe and hospitable environment. Enns wishes to shift the responsibility onto children themselves, but it is unclear what this is supposed to accomplish given that most children lack both the cognitive capacities and material resources required to administer their own lives. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that Enns’ account of responsibility comports with a popular view in moral philosophy, according to which individuals are responsible for actions that stem from their settled character traits regardless of whether they had a fair opportunity to develop normative competence. But this is at best a dubious view, and since Enns does not give us independent reasons to adopt it, we are left wondering what normative and pragmatic advantages can be had from holding

children responsible for decisions and actions which they might not have been in a position to critically evaluate or resist.

In her final two chapters, Enns emphasises the ambivalence that we naturally feel toward child soldiers and other victim-perpetrators, and argues that moral judgement must be tempered with compassion. This rebuts the popular belief that justice must be retributive, and supports an approach of leniency and restorative justice. One might think that excusing victim-perpetrators would follow from this view, but Enns insists that we must hold individuals responsible for their actions, even if there are extenuating circumstances. However, this approach is compatible with showing clemency. In her final chapter, Enns makes a case for “laying down our arms” and refusing to resort to violence even in the face of unimaginable brutality. While she does not use the word “pacifism,” this chapter seems to be a call for pacifism. It is here that Enns’ underlying purpose for the book shines through in its most appealing light, whereas elsewhere her arguments sometimes have the appearance of insensitivity, or, at least, of placing undue pressure on individuals who seemingly could not have done otherwise in their circumstances. Here, however, we see that Enns is ultimately concerned with generating the conditions for a post-violence world, one characterised by peace, love, compassion, friendship, and solidarity. Thus, even if we differ with her on the particulars of her arguments, we can identify with her ambition of fostering peace and reconciliation on a global scale.

All things considered, *The Violence of Victimhood* is an interesting and intelligent treatment of an important locus of moral thought: how to judge victims who perpetrate violence against others. What it lacks in analytical rigour, it makes up for in earnestness, eloquence and attention to compelling anecdotal cases from a range of sources.

**Rolf J. Goebel (dir.), *A Companion to the Works of Walter Benjamin*. Rochester, NY : Camden House, 2009; xiii+314 p. ISBN 978-1571133670.**

*Compte rendu d’Yves Laberge, Université Laval.*

Comme tout bon « *Companion* », ce recueil de douze chapitres ne comprend pas d’écrits du philosophe Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) mais plutôt une série d’études récentes et inédites sur différents aspects de son œuvre touchant à la fois la théorie sociale, la philosophie de la culture, les études urbaines, la sociologie de l’art, et la modernité en général. Penseur phare de la modernité, il reste une in-

fluence décisive sur des philosophes aussi divers que Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, et Jean-Michel Palmier. Le responsable, le professeur Rolf J. Goebel, est germaniste et encyclopédiste à l'Université de l'Alabama à Huntsville; il est déjà l'auteur de plusieurs livres en anglais et en allemand.

Pratiquement tous les textes de ce livre développent un thème ou un aspect très précis (et parfois ténu) provenant des écrits de Walter Benjamin, laissant le plus souvent de côté sa vie privée. Le but avoué du responsable est d'actualiser la pensée, les thèmes et les concepts de Walter Benjamin (16). A titre d'exemples, retenons deux chapitres. Dans l'un des chapitres les plus originaux de l'ensemble, Bernd Witte démontre que la théorie de Walter Benjamin sur l'actualité du narrateur (« Der Erzähler », 1936) anticipait déjà ce que Pierre Nora allait formuler en 1984 avec son concept des « lieux de mémoire » (95). Ailleurs, Eric Jarosinski démontre comment la part autobiographique de certains textes de Walter Benjamin se dissimule, se transpose, se métamorphose et réapparaît subtilement dans certaines chroniques de l'écrivain allemand. Le dernier chapitre évoque des aspects peu étudiés de l'œuvre de Benjamin touchant à l'identité sexuelle et au genre, ce qui permet de revenir sur la lecture que Benjamin a faite des œuvres de Baudelaire sur les passages couverts de Paris qui caractérisent, selon eux, le 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les autres chapitres du livre abordent, successivement, la critique du langage formulée par Walter Benjamin, le baroque, ou encore l'amitié entre Walter Benjamin et Adorno.

Il faut ici féliciter le professeur Rolf J. Goebel du choix des auteurs ayant participé à ce livre; bien qu'ils soient inconnus, tous sont des spécialistes de la pensée de Walter Benjamin et ils parviennent à illuminer ses idées principales ou à en donner des prolongements souvent rigoureux. J'ai rarement lu un ouvrage aussi précis quant aux citations et aux sources convoquées : les ouvrages de Benjamin mentionnés par les différents auteurs sont d'une grande diversité et les extraits sont toujours appropriés et très pertinents pour alimenter l'argumentation. Fidèles à la méthode même de Walter Benjamin, la plupart des chapitres adoptent des perspectives résolument transdisciplinaires, ce qui mérite d'être souligné. Il n'y a pas beaucoup de longueurs dans ce livre. Mon seul bémol serait le manque de citations provenant d'ouvrages en français de la part des auteurs de ce livre; on néglige par exemple les travaux fondamentaux de Jean-Michel Palmier qui a pourtant écrit tant de pages lumineuses sur l'Allemagne des années 1920 et sur Walter Benjamin en particulier.

Parmi la douzaine d'experts réunis ici, c'est probablement le Professeur Bernd Witte qui réussit le mieux à cerner en seulement quelques mots la personnalité et la marque indélébile laissée par

Walter Benjamin, qui est présenté comme rien de moins qu'un « initiateur de l'École de Francfort » et un marxiste « non orthodoxe » (91). Mais c'est Wolfgang Bock qui lui rend l'hommage le plus enviable, décrivant Walter Benjamin comme un déconstructionniste « avant la lettre » (23, en français dans le texte).

Ce livre étoffé confirme à quel point la pensée et les intuitions de Walter Benjamin demeurent d'actualité encore de nos jours, et à quel point ses écrits théoriques restent fondamentaux pour tout chercheur s'intéressant à la théorie critique. Certains aspects de sa pensée ne prennent du sens qu'à notre époque virtuelle, comme le soutient Lutz Koepnick au cinquième chapitre (113). On réalise aussi à quel point la contribution de Walter Benjamin demeure centrale dans l'enseignement de la philosophie en langue allemande et dans une moindre mesure en langue anglaise, mais beaucoup moins dans notre langue, en dépit du fait que ce philosophe francophile ait résidé en France et longuement écrit sur Paris.

Naturellement, ce *Companion to the Works of Walter Benjamin* ne prétend pas servir d'initiation à l'œuvre de ce grand penseur allemand; les livres de la plume de Walter Benjamin sont pratiquement tous disponibles en français et demeurent naturellement une porte d'entrée privilégiée. Cependant, les chercheurs déjà familiers avec les œuvres de Benjamin ou avec les représentants de l'École de Francfort ne pourront manquer d'être stimulés par les analyses et les prolongements contenus dans ces chapitres qui touchent les questions les plus centrales et actuelles des sciences de l'Homme : la langue, la ville, la modernité, le genre. La redécouverte, le questionnement, l'approfondissement des grands concepts propres à Walter Benjamin ne peuvent manquer de nous stimuler, notamment sa théorie sur la mémoire culturelle (voir surtout les excellents chapitres de Marc de Wilde et de Bernd Witte). Philosophe de la modernité et penseur intuitif, Walter Benjamin gagne à être relu.