economism. I would argue that Marx is as much committed to the 'political' as the author is - Marx clearly shares Aristotle's belief that man is a 'political' animal - but that the kind of political freedom Marx envisaged is not possible except on the basis of a total human emancipation, and which is an emancipation that is only possible through a radical social and economic revolution of capitalist relations of production (see The German Ideology, C. J. Arthur, pp. 94-95). It is precisely here that Marx departs from Aristotle and becomes modern. I would suggest that Howard must either accept this fact and then greatly modify his criticism of Marx's economism, or he must abandon his pretensions to be espousing a recognisable Marxist philosophy of freedom. Marx without economism is simply not Marx, and for the fundamental and very important reason I have stated.

Keith Ansell-Pearson

Hammers And Nuts


Reflexivity purports to be an exploration of the post-modern crisis inaugurated by the appearance of reflexivity at the centre of the philosophical stage, by the realization that, for instance, to recognize the importance of language is to do so within language, and so on. Yet within this world without certainties, without absolutes, one thing at least is certain: the existence of the Great Tradition exemplified by the holy trinity of deconstructionism. One of the characteristics of traditions great and otherwise is that their exemplars are amenable to exposition, and Lawson accordingly presents concise accounts of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida, though the portrayal of the latter is unlikely to replace that given in Norris's Deconstruction (Methuen, 1982). In other words, the alleged destructive talents or potential of the trinity does not prevent them from being elevated in their turn to the status of philosophical masters. Lawson follows the example of the masters by over-indulging in would-be parodies, at least one of which falls into the classic trap. Thus, it is very difficult to read the inaugural claim that the book 'does not seek to present a fixed and final account'. Its claims, including this one, are not intended to be held, they do not attempt to stand without thinking of Freud's magisterial interpretation of the pronouncement: 'You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's not my mother.' Orthodoxies which deny their own name remain orthodoxies.

The 'Second of January Group' - the significance of the date remains unspecified and escapes me completely - plough the same furrow to produce a manifesto without a programme and without principles, a call for active nihilism. The same picture of the progression from relativism to reflexivity and nihilism is presented in rather more aphoristic style, culminating in the cry 'The rationalists have only interpreted the world, the point is to invent it.' Presumably the call to action will not reverberate far beyond the walls of the seminar room. Once again, revolt turns into style. Nietzsche called upon his disciples to become philosophers with hammer. In May '68, it was possible to dream of the appearance of a philosopher with an Armalite. The Second of January Group promise only that of a philosopher who denies that he is a philosopher. The hammers and the Armalite have become mere stylistic devices.

David Macey

Angst


Pride and solace: the terms may not be familiar, but the ideas will be. For they are used here to present a version of existentialism that has a positively dated feel about it. We fear freedom; we crave certainty and the assurance of truth in politics. The pride of the philosopher is his or her belief that he possesses the truth; and the reader, searching for fixed points in a world of doubt, finds solace in such theories. The book begins with accounts of the ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau. However, the main argument emerges only when we move on to the contrasting work of a group of modern writers: Orwell, Arendt and Camus. These three, according to Jacobson, refuse the comfort of easy answers: they have the courage to try to construct political theories 'without solace'.

There are occasional flashes of interest and insight in the chapters on the classical theories; but at the same time there is a great deal in them that is questionable. The style does not help. It is pretentious and rhetorical; too often concerned more with literary effect than with clarity or precision of expression. And then there is the whole tedious air of drama which is, it seems, an inescapable part of the mise en scene of existentialism. We are living 'the crisis of modernity' - 'the universe seems out of joint'. Do we have 'the strength to endure our freedom'? (pp. 13-15). Most of us, it seems, do not. We are 'utterly alone' and we seek the solace of certainty. And so: 'the theoretician who saw in the nations of Southeast Asia a row of dominoes ... knew everything, and killed everything he could. The revolutionary knows everything ... and plants his bombs!' (p. 134).

Our three heroes are different. They are the 'champions of a political theory free of solace' (p. 131). Of them, Camus is given the fullest treatment. 'The whole thrust of his work, and his life,' we are told 'is towards existing within messiness, learning to live in the absence of the assurance that one is right and one's opponent wrong' (p. 145). With courage and integrity he holds a middle way; with passionate reasonableness he shuns the extremes of both right and left. The whole thing is becoming quite SDPish, until, with a fashionable final twist, Jacobson reminds us that it is impossible to avoid commitment. For, as the existentialists are fond of pointing out, 'even our deepest silence is a social stance' (p. 133). And so the idea of a politics 'without solace' is itself revealed as a form of solace.

Jacobson ends up by toying with these paradoxes, but he does not seem to realize how deep they go. The problems are well known. The existentialist principle of living 'without solace' - without 'bad faith' - is a purely formal one. As such, it is incapable of generating or justifying
an any particular commitment, either to the mean or to an extreme. Mere good will or good faith are not enough; and the assumption that only political moderates are troubled by doubts is surely a picture of supreme complacency. Angst is not a liberal monopoly. It is quite possible to be a troubled extremist - a fascist or a communist in good faith, with all the doubts and hesitations which, for Jacobson, are the marks of the political theorist facing the world without certainty and without solace. In short, it is hard to give much credence to this picture of politics, or gain much solace from it.

Sean Sayers

Pride's Purge


The emotions have had a rough time in the history of philosophy, with little to stand in between their drastic systematisation in Spinoza's Ethics and Hume's more equal, but often reductive discussions. Taylor's target falls short of a complete theory of the emotions, but the fundamentally descriptive methodological employment commits her to some substantive theses about how they are to be understood.

The book's twofold achievement lies in making the emotions, as features of our lives that have, sentimentally speaking, every claim to philosophical attention, tractable and rewarding objects of analysis, dispelling any illusions that they are insufficiently hard-edged items to bear much weight; and in drawing our attention, through the selection of those particular emotions that figure in the book's title, to the existence and importance of reflexive attitudes that can only be focussed through emotions.

Guilt, shame and remorse are shown not to be adequately described by being branded as 'the moral emotions', and only to take on moral content through the pre-existence of a structure in which the subject takes itself as an object for evaluation. This structure, explored in the last chapter on integrity, is suggested to be a perspective that is peculiar to an individualist culture such as our own which has dispensed with sociologically based modes of evaluation or the schemes that operate in a multicultural society. Emotion is linked, through belief, with social forms, in a way that is reminiscent of Alasdair MacIntyre's attempts to relativise moral and personal concepts.

Taylor's procedure takes its cue from a paper of Davidson's on Hume's theory of pride, and consists in listing and cataloguing the beliefs that form the matrix of an emotion, in the sense of making it identifiable as guilt rather than shame or remorse as opposed to regret, and as explaining what causes that emotion. The practice of looking for such beliefs to some degree successfully demystifies emotions, contradicting Hume's view that they are atomic impressions. However, it is at the point where this project gets completed that the hot questions resurface. What more is involved in having an emotion than having certain beliefs? Is the extra of a rational or an irrational nature?

Taylor has some qualifications to make to Davidson's theory, but does little to temper his general assimilation of having an emotion to reasoning. One very good reason for doubting that this is the right principle of mental functioning on which to model emotions is this: some of the elements that form the background to emotions (thoughts of, Taylor herself notes, the self as deformed or whole) and which are crucial to their identity, are of a sort and of an obscurity that cry out for psychoanalytic interpretation. Similarly, the treatment of Sartre's account of shame identifies the presence of an audience-structure that is absent in the case of guilt, but leaves out any account of what could motivate or account for that structure. Explanation seems to run out too soon.

If Taylor's method eventually offends against our intuitive sense of the irrationality of emotions, it at least prepares the way for better answers to the other, intriguing questions.

Sebastian Gernder

Reich Cuttings


Wilhelm Reich had the dubious, if not unique, distinction of being expelled from both the International Psychoanalytic Association and the German Communist Party. Understandably, neither the Marxist nor the psychoanalytic tradition is comfortable with his work, although the early Character Analysis is still quite widely respected in analytic circles. It is, however, difficult to take his later work, with all the talk of bions and orgone, at all seriously, despite the cult status it acquired in the sixties.

Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger provide a brief and not inaccurate account of Reich's work and of his singularly unfortunate life, which ended with a decline into an unmistakably paranoid state. Their account is, however, infuriatingly incomplete and often grossly anachronistic. One example will suffice. In Character Analysis, Reich mentions the threat of jail which hangs over those who practise incest or homosexuality; the authors compacently note that in the West, 'homosexuality is rarely a crime in itself'. Reich was writing in the thirties, when homosexuality was quite definitely a crime in Britain. Within years, the pink triangle was to become a badge of death, but history simply does not impinge upon the authors' awareness.

There are many better accounts of Reich than this, but one senses that Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger are concerned less with presenting a reasoned critique than with condemning any departure from an orthodox acceptance of Freud's cultural theories. Marceau, Deleuze and Guattari, and libertarian educationalists all come under attack, and the underlying argument is always the same. Radicalism of any kind represents a failure on the part of the individual to master his or her internal conflicts. Psychic conflicts are then projected outwards on to an external and threatening world, which is seen as the source of conflict and unhappiness. The radical simply wishes to recover a lost unity. The belief that it is possible to achieve that unity is rather curiously termed 'ideology'. Whilst it is probably true that radical movements of all kinds do attract at least their fair share of neurotics and even psychotics, the logical implication of this argument is that all protests against unemployment are the expression of a maladjusted libidinal economy. Political complacency characterizes the entire book, of course the libertarian theories and practices of education which flourished briefly after 1968 left much to be desired. But the account of those trends given here could have been culled from any tabloid newspaper. The authors' silences also imply that they would have us believe that all was well in the world of conventional education.

Psychoanalysts have good reason to criticise Reich. He does depart from Fedud over a number of issues. He does reduce sexuality to genitality, thus destroying one of