

ultimate reality? Other problems arise in regard to White's analysis of modernity, for although he is critical of modernity he often fails to get behind the alternatives modernity proposes. For example, against modernity he notes the need for tradition in developing our identity through faithfulness, but equally he seems to see tradition and creativity as opposed.

The prevalence so many questions point to weaknesses in White's theory, but at the same they show that the merit of the work is to bring together debate across a wide intellectual landscape, and leave the reader hoping that White will continue to explore these themes in future works.

DAVID GOODILL OP

AFTER THEORY by Terry Eagleton, *Allen Lane, imprint of Penguin Books, London, 2003, Pp. ix + 225, £18.99 hbk.*

For Terry Eagleton, the golden age of cultural theory is over, because not much has been written that matches the ambitiousness and originality of the innovative theoretical currents of the 1960s and 1970s.

His new book is fundamentally about what kind of fresh thinking our new era demands after the golden age of cultural theory. 'Theory' for Eagleton is the most general form of critical self-reflection. Reflecting critically on our situation is a feature of the particular way we belong to the world, and without it humanity would not have survived as a species. As linguistic animals we have the ability to ask ourselves the moral question such as whether our beliefs are sound or whether their reasons are good ones. Eagleton notes that recent theory on the whole fails to deliver: 'It has been shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations, and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness' (pp.101–102). *After Theory* seeks to remedy those deficiencies.

Eagleton advocates a form of essentialism inspired by the thought of Aristotle and Marx. The essence of human beings is to realize their nature as an end in itself. 'Nature' is here understood as the way we are most likely to flourish, which brings happiness. The justification he offers for this argument is that it is 'natural'. 'Nature is a bottom-line concept; you cannot ask why a giraffe should do the things it does. To say 'It belongs to nature' is answer enough. You cannot cut deeper than that. In the same way, you cannot ask why people should want to feel happy and fulfilled. It would be like asking what someone hoped to achieve by falling in love. Happiness is not a means to

an end' (p.116). The virtuous life is a particular way of living which allows us to be at our best for the kind of creatures we are. Virtue is thus implicit in our own nature, as opposed to transcendent in origins. Happiness is not the reward for virtue, being virtuous is to be happy.

For Eagleton virtue is a reciprocal affair, it is a function of social relationships. 'We live well when we fulfill our nature as an enjoyable end in itself. And since our nature is something we share with other creatures of our kind, morality is an inherently political matter' (p.124) This is why he refuses to separate ethics and politics. For Eagleton, we have to try to organise political institutions so that self-realisation can become reciprocal. You realize your nature in a way which allows other to do so too. For Eagleton, socialism makes that fulfilling life of a kind proper to human beings possible. To quote the Communist Manifesto, it is 'an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.

One of the most original ideas in the book is how Eagleton argues that ethics and politics are ultimately rooted in corporality, our shared material nature. It is true that as labouring, linguistic and sexual animals our bodies are materially geared to culture because meaning, symbolism and interpretation and the like are essential to what we are. Culture is what is natural to us, but we are above all bodily creatures. This is why Eagleton argues that 'it is the mortal, fragile, suffering, ecstatic, needy, dependent, desirous, compassionate body which furnishes the basis of all moral thought' (p.155). He roots universality in the body and shared material practices. The material body is what we share most significantly with the rest of our species, extended both in space and time. 'Our material bodies are such that they are, indeed must be, in principle capable of feeling compassion for any others of their kind' (p.156). This is based on our material dependency on each other. We need to work together to survive economically, and sexuality is necessary for the species to be reproduced. Human beings share a 'species being' in common, which makes solidarity (and simultaneously conflict) possible. 'It is a material fact that we are dependent on others for our physical survival, given the helpless state in which we are born. Yet this material dependency cannot really be divorced from such moral capacities as care, selflessness, vigilance and protectiveness, since what we are dependent on is exactly such capacities in those who look after us' (p.169).

For Eagleton human existence is essentially contingent, rough-textured and open-ended, and a certain fundamentalist ideology has sought to fill it with dogma, first principles, fixed meanings and self-evident truth: 'It is the fear of the unscripted, improvised or indeterminate, as well as a horror of excess and ambiguity' (p.203). This fundamentalism fears the 'non-being' which haunts human existence.

Examples of 'non-being' are death and desire; they show us the ultimate unmasterability of our lives. For Eagleton what is necessary is to oppose a bad sense of non-being with a good one – 'non being as an awareness of human frailty and unfoundedness' (p.221). 'It represents the non-being of those who have been shut out of the current system, who have no real stake in it, and who thus serve as an empty signifier of an alternative future' (p.220). It is not surprising that as a left-wing Catholic, there is room in Eagleton's thought for religion, albeit as a form of spirituality without fetishes or idolatry.

After Theory is overall an excellent book. The author is able to present highly complex and controversial ideas in a very accessible format. Eagleton is definitely not one of those 'Meaning of the Universe Merchants'. This is a genuine work of popular philosophy.

LIAM O RUAIRC

SPIRITUALITY, PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION edited by David Carr and John Haldane, *Routledge Falmer, London, 2003*, Pp. ix + 229, £75.00 hbk.

This collection of thirteen essays is very much a mixed bag. There is considerable variation in the quality of the essays and it is surprising that one or two have been included, especially when they have already been published over a decade ago. The essays do not all hold together, and the title of the book is perhaps too general for us to expect any coherence or unity of theme between all the chapters.

Nevertheless, some of the authors provide us with useful clarifications of what 'spirituality' means in the context of education. The opening and closing chapters by the editors provide excellent introductions to the complex field of spiritual values and education and they guide us through the different understandings of spiritual education, both in the religious and secular operations of the term. Nancy Sherman provides another excellent chapter on character, but, whilst this chapter is written by an international scholar, her selected theme does not sit easily in this collection. In contrast, the essay by Jonathan Jacobs on spirituality and virtue fits perfectly and provides us with much to reflect upon. He details his belief that there is such a thing as a non-religious conception of spirituality and makes a very convincing argument for this. Both Mark Halstead and Terry McLoughlin contribute insightful essays to this collection and extend the debate on spirituality and education within state schools.

However, the essay on Spiritual Development and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority by John Keast simply presents a narrative of how education policy has been developed in this area. It adds little to the debate or our understanding, and much of this has