

Hunt 1991). I am not suggesting that religious programs are a panacea for inner development but the idea of turning people inward to another dimension of their lives is conducive, it seems to me, to the development of a world-view based on a perspective of self that has potential for improved self-worth and greater social interaction. Finally, though by no means exhaustively, family interactional therapy might be considered as a means of maintaining, recreating, or creating bonds between prisoners and their families, since this study reveals that families play a central role in prisoners' construction of reality.

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BOOKS: REVIEWS AND ESSAYS

L'investissement symbolique. By Pierre Lantz, with Ariane Lantz. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996. 249 pp. 128 FF.

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Social Thought & Research, 1998, Vol. 21, No. 1-2

Viewed from this side of the Atlantic, French social theory often appears far more limited in scope than in its actual unfoldment on native ground. This is because most Americans writing today confine their discussions of French theory to structuralists, post-structuralists, and postmodernists such as Althusser, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Kristeva, or Bourdieu. Not only have giant figures of the past on the more humanist and subject-centered side such as Sartre, de Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Goldmann, and Lefebvre faded nearly into oblivion in today's American discussions, but there is also a tendency to ignore even contemporary French theorists who are quite prominent at home, if their orientation does not fit into the post-structuralist wave. For example, while every utterance of a Baudrillard, no matter how idiotic, is rushed into English, a very well-known theorist such as Edgar Morin is little discussed or translated here. The same is true with regard to an important younger sociologist such as Michael Löwy, whose work on Marxism, the Frankfurt School, and Latin America has helped bring about the recent resurgence of interest in Marxism in France.

Pierre Lantz, a student of Lefebvre, is the author of two earlier books, *Valeur et richesse* (1977), a study of Marxian political economy, and *L'Argent, la mort* (1988), a work in which he moves toward his present concern with social psychology and the symbolic structures of power. The volume under review here was written in collaboration with his wife, Ariane Lantz. Both have been involved for years with anti-racist, labor, and democratic movements.

The title is difficult to translate, since it contains an allusion to Freudian theory which is not conveyed when one renders it literally as "symbolic investment." The "investment" to which the Lantz's are referring is not so much financial as psychological, cultural, and social in the broadest sense. It appears to refer to Freud's term "Besetzung," which is rendered as cathexis, the investment of emotional energy in something, in standard English translations of Freud.

This book is concerned above all with when and how social symbols become "invested" with power over individuals, and by individuals. Although I will be using "investment" below as the translation for "investissement," the sense of the term as used in this work is more related to secondary or even archaic meanings of "investment" in English, such as the investiture of officials, or even the investment (in the sense of besieging) of a town or city.

The Lantz's overall perspective is decidedly anti-structuralist, attempting to "avoid those theories which reduce symbolism to the play of social relations or forces" (p. 2). A wide variety of thinkers, including Lacan, Touraine, Castoriadis, Durkheim, and especially Cassirer are critiqued for falling into such a reductionism. However, methodological individualism in the Anglo-American sense is also dismissed with the wry observation, drawn in part from Boudon, that according to orthodox market economics, "they do not behave as individuals: they all act the same way" (p. 4).

The first half of the book is devoted to more individual-centered analysis, wherein "one is invested by those symbols in which one invests" (p. 27). Everywhere, they underline "that difference which constitutes the singularity of individuals" (p. 5) and wherein no human relationship is the exactly the same as any other. Here the Lantz's critique much current linguistic theory: "Even in the most formalistic or most constraining societies, social rules must be interpreted and not deciphered like a code" (p. 71).

Their critique of Mead and Goffman will be of particular interest to American sociologists. As against most American interpreters of Mead, who stress his subjective, individual-centered side – as in the rather sterile micro-macro debate which raged in American theory a few years ago – the Lantz's are critical of what they view as the way in which Mead ultimately ends up

with a position akin to "Durkheimian institutionalism" (p. 79) in his discussion of teamwork. They make a similar critique of Goffman. While many will argue with their assessment here, it is based on a close reading of a number of key texts, albeit one from a different angle from the usual American interpretations.

The second half of the book focuses more on the larger political and social world. But here too, the Lantz's argue that social meaning has to be created by each individual, citing Bachelard to the effect that: "The individual is not the sum of his general impressions [imprints], but of his singular impressions" (p. 116). In this instance the French term "impressions" contains more strongly than its English equivalent the objectivist sense of something being impressed or imprinted up someone or something, alongside a more subjectivist meaning of the individual forming an impression.

From Plato to Saint-Simon, and from Engels to Durkheim, they charge, social thinkers have too often sought to remove the give and take of political argument from an ideal administration of society. In a long and intricate historically based discussion, they take up the symbolic system of medieval Western Europe, especially its notion of the king's "two bodies" as sanctified by the Church.

Then, in a remarkable final chapter, they discuss Rousseau's political thought and the events of the French Revolution of 1789-94. Why, they ask, were the more rationally derived and austere symbols of the First Republic not invested with meaning more successfully, not implanted upon the population, despite the many efforts to do so from the top, and the wide support which the regime enjoyed? By here taking up a core event in modern history, the Lantz's bring far greater depth to their discussion than one finds in most works on social psychology.

This is a very erudite work, steeped in a large number of French, German, and English-language texts in philosophy and social theory. It is not only a theoretical study, but also one which offers insights into the symbolic investment found in contemporary capitalist societies, from above and below, in a nearly unbroken set of beliefs in the market, globalization, and scientific rationality. It is in this regard that they also refer to the work of Adorno and Horkheimer.

Upon finishing the book, my main criticism was that I wanted more. I wished for an explicit confrontation by the authors with, on the one hand, Weber's concept of legitimation, and, on the other, with Marx's concept of fetishism. Both of these core concepts would seem to be related to the subject matter of this work, yet neither is discussed.

Walter Benjamin and the Bible. By Brian Britt. New York: Continuum, 1996, 156 pages, \$29.95 hbd.

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Social Thought & Research, 1998, Vol. 21, No. 1-2

Walter Benjamin's works address a widely diverse, and seemingly unrelated variety of topics (i.e. the task of the translator, the use of allegory in the poetry of Baudelaire and in the German tragic drama of the Baroque era, surrealism, the philosophies of language and history, etc.). Furthermore, these writings utilize a variety of styles from straight prose to aphorisms to the extensive use of quotations. Among other things, Benjamin has been described as a philosopher, a mystic, a literary critic, and a Marxist. He was all of these things, and yet he was not, in an orthodox sense, any of these.

In *Walter Benjamin and the Bible*, Brian Britt suggests that Benjamin's work is not merely a mass of unorganized explorations lacking any particular focus or systematic approach. It is, he suggests, rather, a necessarily multifaceted attempt to attain a very specific goal which possesses its own sui generis systematic approach. "These compositional techniques," suggests Britt, "form the basis of an epistemological strategy of understanding history and experience that has philosophical, religious, aesthetic, and political dimensions" (113).

At the root of Britt's argument is Benjamin's theory of language. Benjamin felt that it was the goal of the philosopher, the critic, the historian, etc. to attempt (if only in principle) to recapture "pure language." In other words, Benjamin sought to recapture archetypal knowledge, as it was granted to Adam from God in the book of Genesis. In doing such, he sought the recovery a type of knowledge which is not expressible in the languages of man.

First elaborated in the 1916 essay entitled "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," Benjamin's beliefs regarding the nature of language suggest that he saw the languages of man as "fallen". Benjamin believed that The language of Eden; i.e. "pure language," had a mimetic relationship with nature. It was a language of naming in which the name itself communicated the