

Haacke's 'critique [of] the power of images', Joselit affirms how Ai 'exploited the power of art to transport people and things both spatially and imaginatively'. Joselit's joyful science certainly irons out any remaining contradictions among avant-garde projects – the art world is corrupt and it is also ineffective – but it does so at the expense of making its effectiveness identical with its corruption.

Putting aside the one-dimensional account of artworks as 'reifications' – 'mediums lead to objects, and thus reification' – it would take only a little reflection to see that the end of the distribution of wealth in the 'era of art', at precisely the moment Joselit's 'reframing, capturing, reiterating, and documenting' paradigm first emerged (a set of procedures exemplified for him by the work of Sherrie Levine), was also the moment at which the US economy began its most aggressive turn away from equality. In the period between 1932 and 1979, during what many economists call the 'Great Compression', the top 1 per cent's income share dropped from 24 per cent in 1928 to 9 per cent in 1970. The 'Great Divergence' first emerged in 1979 – in artistic terms we'll call it the 'era of formatting' – when the richest 1 per cent's income share began its exponential rise. Thus Joselit's

reiterated call for a 'currency of exchange that is not cash, but rather a nonmonetized form of *transaction*', which he defines as 'the *power* of connectivity', has a way of simply being the form art takes not *under* neoliberalism but *as* it. If art is, as Joselit says, 'the paradigmatic object of globalization' based on the nonmonetized exchange of 'cultural difference', then it is paradigmatic for neoliberalism as well, which, as ideology, can be defined by its capacity to turn every (monetary) exchange into culture (exchange), actively obscuring the former with the latter. And to call that mode of transformation *the* model of power today is certainly right, but it is wrong to celebrate it. The newly liberated 'users as shareholders' own stock in a company that makes them feel better about themselves, and when they feel better about themselves they tend to work harder for lower wages. Or maybe we should see things from Joselit's perspective and recognize the form of power hidden in the idea that the 'quantitative density of connections ... ultimately leads ... to qualitative differences'. If those qualitative differences mean greater inequality but also 'greater political openness', then Joselit has described a real achievement.

Todd Cronan

Third-way aesthetics

Christoph Menke, *Force: A Fundamental Concept of Aesthetic Anthropology*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2013. xiv + 111 pp. £14.99 pb., 978 0 8232 4973 2.

Christoph Menke has written a slim book, but one that, at least at first sight, seems to pack a big punch. It comes with the promise of both a neglected 'fundamental concept' – 'force' – and a brand new field, since 'aesthetic anthropology' seems not to have bothered anyone that much until now. Unfortunately, a bold intervention is not much use in a non-existent field, and this pretty much sums up the problem with this book.

Menke revives an age-old dispute as to the correct usage of the word 'aesthetics', arising out of the eighteenth-century conflation of aesthetics 'in the Greek sense' (referring to the things of sensibility) with the philosophical treatment of art. The book's main contention is that, however counter-intuitive, this conflation is not to be undone by prising apart art and aesthetics. (That would be what Peter Osborne has done, for example, in 'Art beyond Aesthetics' in his recent *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of*

Contemporary Art – a text that is almost a negative image of the one under review.) Menke goes for a third way: it is aesthetics itself that must be internally split. Menke's unsung hero here is Herder, and the thrust of the book retraces his critique of Baumgarten, to the point where at times it is unclear whose voice we are reading. To wit, the Baumgartian attempt to extend philosophical inquiry into the realm of the sensible backfired when it misrecognized its object. As a philosophical project *aesthetics* was stillborn when it mistook the animating 'obscure forces' of *the aesthetic* for 'subjective faculties'. Inheriting a Cartesian understanding of subjectivity that equated cognition with the capacity for action, it took aesthetic forces to be fundamentally practical, to be exercised so as to improve their performance and serve as self-guidance.

Against this Baumgartian 'aesthetics of capacity' Menke proposes an 'aesthetics of force'. Here, forces

must be understood as neither mechanical nor biological, as unconscious energies that cannot be trained or directed, that are purposeless and follow no laws. Therefore no 'aesthetic training' or refinement of taste is useful or possible. These forces are human, but *not yet subjective*. They are not at the subject's disposal for the performing of actions; they are at play and realize only themselves. And yet these obscure forces are understood as the *human ground* of the subject's capacities, as the precondition of reason. The challenge is to rethink the object of aesthetics as one that can only be negatively delimited, remaining stubbornly obscure and impervious to enlightening. For aesthetics to become the thinking of these forces as the ground of man (*sic*), a 'contraction of philosophy to anthropology' is required.

Moreover, inasmuch as Baumgartian aesthetics had made the preposterous mistake of taking as its starting point the human faculties that aesthetic forces had become, an aesthetic anthropology must be *genealogical*; albeit in an explicitly non-Foucauldian sense, for Foucault too is seen to be afflicted by the Baumgartian confusion. Needless to say, this is a socially blind genealogy. It must probe subjective faculties for the obscure forces out of which they emerge, which they carry within themselves and into which they are always in a process of turning. For the process is an ongoing one, and subjective faculties *emerging out of* obscure forces are always liable to *turn into* them again. Accordingly, aesthetic events – the object of study for an aesthetics of force – is the turning of faculties into obscure forces, through a process of aestheticization. With this insight, philosophy itself is transformed and a new quarrel between philosophy and aesthetics is inaugurated. This new quarrel is not based on mere antagonism (the Platonic rejection of poetry), nor on alternative accounts of the same object (as in Kant); instead it poses *the aesthetic* as a different and competing mode of reflection that cannot be a mere object for philosophy, but, as its ground, cannot be discarded. By turning to *the aesthetic* 'philosophy turns to something that calls into question the form of philosophical thinking itself'.

So far so good, but in a book of just six short chapters, the strange ahistoricity of Menke's narrative begins to grate by the end of Chapter 5 (not to mention his and his translator's anachronistic decision to stick to masculine pronouns, and the gendered 'man', in order not to 'compromise the brevity and fluidity of the language' – a gesture that is by now so violent it interferes unduly with the flow of reading). While it is true that Herder has not been in anyone's thoughts that

much of late, it is no secret that his 'aesthetic anthropology' comes out of Spinoza. But Menke chooses to write as if uncovering a long neglected alternative, as if there was no current Spinozist aesthetics in relation to which this book would inevitably be read. Indeed, Deleuze makes an appearance just once, in a footnote. The traditional disregard that French and German philosophies have displayed for each other can hardly excuse this fact. But, lamentable as this is, it is not the worst of the book's problems. This comes to the fore when we turn to the other half of the Baumgartian conflation, the philosophical treatment of art. Menke explains that 'the aesthetic cannot, and should not, concern art alone'. Our question is: how does it concern art *at all*?

As was also the case in Menke's previous foray into aesthetics, *The Sovereignty of Art* (reviewed in *RP* 94), 'art' remains gloriously foggy and conveniently unencumbered by any particular artworks. Menke's aesthetic force seems to be an updated version of the aesthetic negativity that in *The Sovereignty of Art* was a precondition of artistic autonomy. As was the case then, Menke not only denies the social embeddedness of artistic practice, he makes the negation of social praxis a precondition of art. But against the Hegelian charge of the 'objectless relation to the self' of the aesthetic, Menke argues that aesthetic play does not take place before, beside or above the praxis of determining; it is merely other to it. Hence, no Schillerian leap is required for 'aesthetic representation' (which presumably includes art-making); this is 'sparked' by their antagonism, by that becoming aesthetic of practical faculties that Menke calls aestheticization. The one factor that distinguishes artworks from mere beautiful things here is that the former 'also show the process of aestheticization'. Unfortunately, the only evidence of this we are offered is a dubiously apposite quotation from Schlegel.

Some time later, Nietzsche is dragged unreconstructed into Menke's ahistorical present. What he bears is an image of the tragic artist as the one with enough dexterity to handle intoxication without regressing to mere barbarism. In *his* intoxication the artist liberates *his* aesthetic forces to exceed or fall short of *his* practical faculties.

In the pleasure they take in their own aesthetic condition, the artists see another good revealed, one that differs from the practical goodness of actively realised purposes... The artist is always able to let his forces exercise themselves freely ... even in the face of fear, despair, and utter defeat ... even where his faculties are destroyed.

Who are these artists? The last time we saw them being described in these terms – heroic, intoxicated, and conveniently male – abstract expressionism was all the rage. But I digress; this heroic gesture discovers in tragic failure another good, which is not the practical good and is not subordinated to practical reason. With it, the book concludes (paraphrasing the *Twilight of the Idols*) that the ethical-political import of aesthetic experience lies in its providing ‘a freedom from practical freedom that is not a submission to an overwhelming outside power’. Given Menke’s previous engagement with Adorno, this version of autonomy seems intractably solipsistic.

After reading *Force* one might be tempted to recommend that Menke visit some biennials, but this would be idle since he has already been to quite a few. In fact, he was one of 100 thinkers (dead and alive) chosen to provide ‘100 thoughts’ for Documenta 13 last summer. Since the original German-language publication of *Force* in 2008 he has made the rounds of European museums from MACBA to OCA, and Sternberg Press has published his lecture ‘The Aesthetic Critique of Judgement’, bulked up by

a preface and Q&A session. One has to wonder how it is that Menke became a darling of the artworld. Ironically, it could be the trend for post-Deleuzian affect theory, which has been very much the thing of late. Whatever it is, the problem is that Menke’s theory does not take kindly to such close contact with actually existing artworks.

What is discouraging about books like Menke’s, when read alongside his artworld presence, is that these encounters – however brief – seem not to have engendered a minimal curiosity about the other partner. In this regard, philosophy is the guiltiest side. These days most artists consider reading and writing part of their practice; however feeble, most have some level of familiarity with the philosophical tradition. The artworld does not need philosophical homilies delivered as if from an otherworldly stage. That art and philosophy are both so eager to embrace the distortedly exalted view each has composed of the other does not bode well for the prospects of their respective fields. At this point, conjuring up obscure forces might be precisely the wrong thing to do.

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Shot/reverse shot

Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images*, Continuum, London and New York, 2011. 247 pp., £55.00 hb., £17.99 pb., 978 1 44112 257 5 hb., 978 1 44115 343 2 pb.

Recent years have witnessed a growth in publications seeking to stake out a newly defined and emerging territory named, by certain of its exponents, film-philosophy. Indeed, one of the primary exponents in an anglophone context, founder of the web portal *film-philosophy*, Daniel Frampton, precisely coined the term ‘filmosophy’ in his 2006 book of that title in order to describe the supposed immanence of the conceptual activity associated with the discipline of philosophy – let’s call it thought – to cinema. Nonetheless, this needs immediate qualification. For what is at stake is *some* cinema. There is an evaluative dimension that lies at the crux of the battle between cognitivism and film-philosophy in which Robert Sinnerbrink’s new book seeks to intervene. More particularly, *New Philosophies of Film* responds to what it describes as a need to ‘steer a successful course between the Scylla of dogmatism and the Charybdis of reductionism’ that would apparently arrange the battlefield at present. At the same time, for Sinnerbrink, the so-called Grand Theory which dominated academic film discourse in

the 1970s and 1980s, and which was a target of the most influential of the cognitivists, Noël Carroll and David Bordwell, is the main protagonist in stimulating the very reductionism and dogmatism which continues to dominate exchanges between cognitivists and film-philosophers today.

So what is film-philosophy? A good deal of impetus for one strand of it derives from the influence of Deleuze, and it is often characterized as indicating a switch from Lacanian orthodoxies – still represented, albeit in idiosyncratic Hegelian form and operating outside mainstream film studies, by Žižek’s writings on film. This strand is characterized by a commitment to immanence, tied to Deleuze’s insistence that films think, a view held by the other doyen of cine-thinking, Stanley Cavell. Philosophy departments, however, and at least certain film departments, at universities during the 1980s, also began to play host to a quite distinct approach to cinema, one fuelled by analytical philosophy, but sharing with Deleuze a sense of the limitations of both psychoanalysis and