

This strikes me as a fair assessment of de Man's "philosophical" claims, despite Gasché's strenuous efforts to lessen the gravity of the charge by treating his work as a special case whose "singularity" places it far beyond reach of any such conventional judgement. By asking us to think of that levelling as "deliberate" – and not just the upshot of "oversight" or "naiveté" – Gasché is clearly banking on de Man's own distinction (propounded in the essay on Heidegger) between mere "mistake" and significant or motivated "error." But then we have to ask what could possibly *justify* so perverse and single-minded an effort to plunge philosophy back into the realm of chaos and old night. Gasché has written the best, most intelligent book we are likely to get on de Man from a critical standpoint closely aligned with its subject's ruling preoccupations. What is now needed is a more detached, resistant, or sceptical reading which holds out against the seductive power of de Man's nihilist rhetoric.

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NOTES, DOCUMENTS and REVIEW ARTICLES

Fantasia on a Theme of Tallis¹

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Les désastres, à vrai dire, commencèrent très tôt. Bertrand Russell raconte avoir perdu toute estime pour Hegel quand il lut le passage de "La science de la logique" consacré au calcul infiniésimal. Tout en prétendant, naturellement, dégager mieux que les mathématiciens le sens véridique de cette branche des mathématiques, l'illustre philosophe allemand démontrait surtout qu'il n'y avait rien compris, accouchant, nous dit Russell (dans "Human Knowledge, its Scope and Limits"), d'un "non-sens brouillon."²

I am willing to think as radically as is necessary to pursue the truth. I draw the line only at stupidity, error and dishonesty – in short, at bullshit. The utterly opaque muddle of theory lies beyond that line. Theory, incidentally, is about as dangerous in terms of impact in the real world as Noddy in Toyland.³

1 Raymond Tallis, *Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism. Irrationalism, Anti-humanism and Counter-Enlightenment*. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. 499. Raymond Tallis, *Not Sausure: A Critique of Post-Saussurean Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1988; 2nd edition, 1995. Raymond Tallis, *In Defence of Realism*. London: Edward Arnold, 1988.

2 Jean-François Revel, "Les pièges de la philosophie," *Le Point*, 21 March, 1998, 76-77. This quotation is from page 76.

3 Raymond Tallis, "Sausure, so far," letter in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 21 November 1997, 15. The reference to *Noddy in Toyland* is no doubt a remembrance of a passage from *In Defence of Realism* (1988):

The suggestion that the writing of 'space fiction' is always a response to doubts about the validity of any attempt to describe contemporary reality is as plausible as the claim that *Noddy in Toyland* (a classic novella in the genre of anti-realistic 'explicit' fiction written in the late 1940s) was Enid Blyton's admission of her inability to come to terms with the enormities of the Cold War. (Tallis 1988, 131)

Jean-François Revel's article in *Le Point* is a sage reflection on the eccentricities that have passed for philosophy, or thought, or theory, in some of the mandarin publications of French higher culture. He has great sympathy for the enterprise of demystification undertaken by the American physicist Alan Sokal and his Belgian colleague – also a physicist – Jean Bricmont in their *Impostures intellectuelles* (1997),⁴ and, unlike Julia Kristeva, does not take this public examination of (mainly) French intellectual chicanery as an instance of a francophobic transatlantic diatribe based on American liberal capitalism's loathing of the Left.⁵ Revel's amusing example of Russell's irritation with Hegel (Russell had funnier and meaner things to say about Hegel's pretensions in his *History of Western Philosophy*) is intended as an illustration of the longstanding tradition of philosophers being tempted by "scientificity" as if such a temptation could replace the paramount authority that had been theirs until the seventeenth century. Revel notes that Ortega y Gasset had long ago concluded that, from the end of the seventeenth century, philosophy had changed: "... la philosophie cesse d'être 'la' Connaissance et 'le' Savoir pour devenir seulement 'une' connaissance et 'un' savoir parmi les autres" (Revel, 76).

Tallis would probably accept as proper (and not before time!) this "modern" modesty of the limits of philosophical enquiry, all the while remarking that some scientific advances, in particular those related to the neurosciences, had – not quite inadvertently – opened a whole new field (in reality, a pre-existing one; but one poorly defined prior to modern technological

medical discoveries): that of the conception we have of human consciousness.⁶ In his 1991 volume, *The Explicit Animal: A Defence of Human Consciousness*, the most demanding, and the most "philosophical" of his works, Tallis argues very carefully against the findings of the "neuro" philosopher, Patricia Churchland and her husband Paul Churchland, as well as against the general tenets of the book edited by the distinguished English neurologist Susan Greenfield (with Colin Blakemore), *Mindwaves*, and the 1988 volume by P.N. Johnson-Laird, *The Computer and the Mind*. As he writes at the end of his introduction – or "Overture" as he calls it –, Tallis has precisely chosen these works:

... for their merits, not their deficiencies: they seem to me to provide the clearest, the most lucid, the most comprehensive and the most honest accounts of the current state of play in the philosophy of mind and cognitive neurobiology presently available. I have found them immensely helpful and am grateful to their progenitors. My enormous debt to these books is in no wise diminished by my disagreement with pretty well everything of theoretical substance that is contained in them. (Tallis 1991, 5-6)

Tallis' objections are specific and philosophical. Revel's are general, but also philosophical. The fascination with abstract thought and the notion that "systems" of thought (what are rightly called "ideologies") are, in some way, of transcendental significance and importance to humans will no doubt be with us for decades, if not centuries, to come.

Does it matter? If what the Nobel laureate Richard Feynman called "cargo cult science" (Feynman 1986, 340) proliferates, does this in any way damage the world in which it operates? The letter (quoted *en exergue*) that Raymond Tallis addressed to the *Times Higher Education Supplement* would suggest that the significance of obfuscating "Theory" was minimal for what he calls the "real world" – as dangerous, as he says, "as Noddy in Toyland." (This was intended as a rebuttal concerning the reader's sphere of interest, the Law; it is equally relevant, however, in the field of the empirical psychological tests used in the

4 Recently reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* by the Professor of Analytic Philosophy of the University of Geneva. See Kevin Mulligan, "The Symptoms of Gödel-mania: Parisian Abuses of Science and Postmodernist Discourse," *TLS*, May 1, 1998, 13-14.

5 In fact, in the second half of his article, Revel takes malicious pleasure in writing: "Je voudrais signaler à nos postmodernes 'de gauche' que leurs vaticinations antiscientifiques coïncident mot pour mot avec celles du regretté Adolf Hitler" (Revel, 77). To illustrate his point, Revel cites an extensive passage from the French translation of the "éminent épistémologue de Berchtesgaden" in conversation with Hermann Rauschning, where Hitler argues at length against the very existence of scientific objectivity ("Le slogan de l'objectivité scientifique" n'est rien d'autre qu'un argument inventé par les chers professeurs.") and where Hitler concludes:

Il existe bel et bien une science nordique et une science national-socialiste, et elles doivent s'opposer à la science judéo-libérale, qui, d'ailleurs, ne remplit plus sa fonction et qui est en train de se détruire elle-même. (Rauschning, 299; in Revel, 77)

6 The invention and development of the MRI scan does not, of course, answer the question of the status of human consciousness, nor does it offer – as yet – a technique for watching "thinking" (as opposed to mere brain activity) in operation. An MRI scan shows *structure* not functioning. The recently developed fMRI (Functional MRI) does show the brain in operation. The development of this technique demonstrates the possibility of technology successfully – and usefully – invading the metaphysical domain previously reserved to philosophy, or theology. (I am grateful to Dr. J.-P. Lluatré, neuropsychiatrist of Romans-sur-Isère, France, for reading this paper and providing this information.)

selection of flight-crews.⁷ Tallis' letter was a response to a reader's letter which had taken him to task for the full-page review article Tallis had written on the English translation of the biography *Jacques Lacan* by Elisabeth Roudinesco. The article, entitled simply, and provocatively, "The Shrink from Hell" (Tallis 1997a), is perhaps one of the most relentless and most well-informed demolitions ever carried out in print by one doctor against another.⁸

By the time "The Shrink from Hell" was written, Raymond Tallis had already completed the volume which is to be considered here, *Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism*, together with two of his earlier volumes on literature and critical theory. It may be helpful to those not familiar with the many lit.crit. productions of the Professor of Geriatric Medicine, University of Manchester (U.K.), and now the project director of neurosciences and allied disciplines for the Greater Manchester catchment area of some 2.8 million souls, to examine briefly his review of the Roudinesco book. For in this review Tallis presents – in miniature – three of his major concerns: (1) empathetic patient care; (2) diagnostic modesty and honesty; (3) lucidity and clarity in thought and expression. Tallis writes as a neurologist with extensive research experience in the fields of gerontology and rehabilitation and is currently editor-in-chief of the British journal *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology*.

Those who have not seen this review may wonder whether I may have exaggerated the "relentless" intellectual, moral, and professional critique that I have claimed for it. I can do no better than to reproduce the first paragraph, in which the tone – maintained throughout the article – is given. Before his detailed (and accurate) investigation of Lacan's career and writings, Tallis thunders in with an opening salvo which paradoxically – but seriously – recommends that

7 Professors, like Stanley Fish for instance, flying from campus to campus to proffer their (not merely non-empirical, but *anti-empirical*) theoretical versions of life as she is lived are living dangerously, if not (at least in its etymological sense) *schizophrenically*. Neither the empirical basis of the psychological tests for crew selection nor the empirically-based performance of the crew can have the least concordance with the "theoretical" vision of the world offered by what Tallis rightly calls the "theortheists." The latter should be duly grateful for this state of affairs; it is likely to ensure their safe arrival! The first extensive discussion, incidentally, of his polemical neologism will be found in: Raymond Tallis, "A Cure for Theortheia," *Critical Review*, 3, no. 1 (Winter 1989), 7-39.

8 At least in this century! In the nineteenth century, polemical verve was more common. One celebrated example is the swinging attack on the hocus pocus of Freud's Berlin otorhinolaryngologist friend, Wilhelm Fliess. See Dr. Benjamin Rischawy's 1898 review of Fliess' *Die Beziehungen zwischen Nase und weiblichen Geschlechtsorganen in Wiener klinische Rundschau*, 12: 240. The review was signed "Ry" but Frank J. Sulloway suggests Rischawy as the probable author (see Sulloway 1979, 144).

the likely reader purchase the book under review (the ironies implicit in this suggestion are made manifest when it is repeated with appropriate commentary at the end of the article)⁹ and that the intellectual and moral harm caused to humanities faculties by "Theory" is largely to be laid at Lacan's door. (I should add that Tallis has been a frequent observer and occasional participant at British literary/critical humanities conferences for the last several years and, hence, is not speaking from ignorance, or hearsay.) Here is that opening paragraph (fasten your seat-belts!):

Future historians trying to account for the institutionalised fraud that goes under the name of "Theory" will surely accord a central place to the influence of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. He is one of the fattest spiders at the heart of the web of muddled not-quite-thinkable-thoughts and evidence-free assertions of limitless scope, which practitioners of theorrhoa have woven into their version of the humanities. Much of the dogma central to contemporary theory came from him: that the signifier dominates over the signified; that the world of words creates the world of things; that the "I" is a fiction based upon an Oedipalised negotiation of the transition from mirror to symbolic stages; and so on. The English translation of this biography by one of his disciples is therefore an event of the first importance. It is a harrowing read, but no one who inflicts on students Lacanian readings of literature, of feminism, of the self, of child development, of society, or of life, should be spared the experience. (Tallis 1997a, 20)

Although Tallis' anger in this paragraph is primarily directed at the humanities faculties of the Western world and their responsibility for disseminating mistaken (and, in fact, grotesque) notions of human development, linguistic structures,¹⁰ and the adventitious mayhem produced by the jargonists,

9 Tallis' serious recommendation to purchase makes this review a very strange example of the genre. His complete demolition of the subject (Lacan) from the book of an evidently still credulous disciple (the author, Roudinesco) shows Tallis' abiding trust in the "common-sense" of the prospective reader who will be able to "read between the lines" and grasp the horrors of Lacan's conceits and deceptions. My own advice would be: read Roudinesco, but never forget Tallis!

Tallis was not the first to find irritation at Lacan's verbal charades. It is, in fact, the French Sartre scholar, François George, who deserves the credit for publishing in book-form the first serious critique of Lacan and his disciples for their abuse of language and of thought. See François George, *L'Effet 'Yau de poêle de Lacan et des Lacaniens*. Paris: Hachette, 1979. George, who compares Lacan to Humpty-Dumpty, has written one of the most hilarious – and well-informed – French put-downs of Lacan and his followers.

10 These are the main concerns of *Not Saussure* which carefully examines the many gross misreadings of Ferdinand de Saussure's course notes by the structuralist and poststructuralist academics in France and elsewhere.

he quickly returns to assess the beginnings and maturation of Lacan's medical career. And here, Tallis' anger is medical. Having dismissed Lacan's several ghastly blunders in neurology, Tallis presents Lacan's choice of psychoanalysis in this way:

Abandoning neurology was obviously a wise career move. Unfortunately, though he lacked all the qualities necessary to make a half-way decent doctor (e.g., kindness, common sense, humility, clinical acumen and solid knowledge), Lacan did not abandon medicine altogether, only its scientific basis. He chose to be a psychoanalyst where, instead of elucidating diagnoses, he could impose them. (Tallis 1997a, 20)

These "imposed diagnoses" were to produce Lacan's doctrines: "a magpie muddle of often unacknowledged expropriations from writers whose disciplines were alien to him, cast in borrowed jargon and opaque neologisms [that] were Rorschach ink-blot into which anything could be read." The man had a magnetic presence, or aura, which allowed him "like many physically attractive psychopaths . . . to command unconditional love. He exploited this to the limit in support of his boundless appetite for wealth, fame and sex."

It is interesting – and, I believe, accurate – that Tallis places "wealth" before sex, or even intellectual recognition – such a current feature of Lacan's presence on North American campuses.¹¹ Lacan died a multi-millionaire (the ultimate, and Parisian, illustration of *The Readers' Digest* adage: "It pays to increase your word-power"). The eventual decline of the man – a consequence of his "suffering from multi-infarct dementia"¹² – is given, not so much to diminish the portrait of someone whom Tallis clearly considers a monster, as to demonstrate the massive and influential gullibility of the intelligentsia who are, in effect, now responsible for the prolongation of this concatenation of confusion:

His quasi-mathematical, pseudo-logical fantasies – the culmination of the cargo cult science of his school – propounded in interminable seminars, were agonised over

11 Over twelve years ago (hence well before Tallis' diatribes), the French psychoanalyst, François Roustang, lectured at Johns Hopkins about his experience with Lacan and his ultimate deceptions. When his book, *Lacan, de l'équivoque à l'impasse*, appeared in France, Roustang was interviewed by *Le Monde*. Roustang stated categorically that on re-reading Lacan's works:

On s'aperçoit alors que l'ensemble ne tient que par des enchevêtrements d'équivoques, de confusions ou de fausses liaisons. Je ne souhaite pas recommencer cette expérience éprouvante, car le risque est grand d'y perdre l'esprit. (Roustang, 1986a)

12 Decreasing mental ability following a series of mini-strokes.

by his congregation who suffered appallingly from their inability to make sense of them. They felt unworthy of the Master. . . . Even now, 15 years after his death, this extraordinary charlatan can still command the adoration of the vulnerable and the gullible. Roudinesco, for all that she dishes out enough dirt to hang Lacan ten times over, seems to forgive him everything for his "genius" as a clinician and thinker. . . . His lunatic legacy also lives on in places remote from those in which he damaged his patients, colleagues, mistresses, wives, children, publishers, editors, and opponents – in departments of literature whose inmates are even now trying to, or pretending to, make sense of his utterly unfounded, gnomic teachings and inflicting them on baffled students. Aleister Crowley, the 20th-century thinker whom Lacan most resembles, has not been so fortunate in his afterlife. (Tallis 1997a, 20)¹³

That Lacan was indeed "this extraordinary charlatan" is, of course, by no means the whole import of *Enemies of Hope*; it is merely one minor, but very significant, aspect of a massive and well-researched diatribe against some of the major intellectual and cultural disasters of our century. The book itself is huge and wide-ranging, and its argument – for the integrity of human consciousness – goes far beyond the narrow confines of Parisian discussions about Lacan, or Foucault, or Derrida, or Althusser, or Lyotard, or Barthes, to name some of the most prominent of Tallis' pet hates. If the tone is on occasion petulant, that petulance is a consequence of the genuine anger Tallis has felt over the years at the *trahison des clercs*, which in humanities faculties has taken on an international academic dimension – a kind of "globalization" of rotten ideas.

Tallis is in good company. Another man, also trained in philosophy and medicine, John Locke, reserved the angriest part of his *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* for Chapter X of his Book III, whose succinct title – "Of the Abuse of Words" – gives due warning of the subject matter. Railing against the pretensions and the social and political uselessness of the Schoolmen of his time, Locke writes:

13 But then Aleister Crowley did not have Jacques-Alain Miller as son-in-law! As if to prove Tallis' point, a recent number of *Le Canard Enchaîné* (22 April, 1998, 6) reports in its weekly book-notes "Écrits et Échochortements" the publication by Le Seuil (Paris) of volume V of Lacan's *Séminaire* entitled "Les formations de l'inconscient," where the son-in-law, as editor, writes in his introduction:

On voit ici rougeoier la forge d'où sortirent dans un nuage d'étincelles les concepts les mieux frappés, les plus opératoires, du plus grand des freudiens.

The laconic comment of *Le Canard* is simply: "Lacan, un volcan?" *Le Canard Enchaîné* has been renowned since its pre-war inception for being the best informed and the least seduced (intellectually or politically) of French newspapers.

Nevertheless, this artificial ignorance and learned gibberish prevailed mightily in these last ages, by the interest and artifice of those who found no easier way to that pitch of authority and dominion they have attained, than by amusing the men of business and ignorant with hard words, or employing the ingenious and idle in intricate disputes about unintelligible terms, and holding them perpetually entangled in that endless labyrinth. Besides, there is no such way to gain admittance, or give defence to strange and absurd doctrines, as to guard them round about with legions of obscure, doubtful, and undefined words; which yet make these retreats more like the dens of robbers, or holes of foxes, than the fortresses of fair warriors: which if it be hard to get them out of, it is not for the strength that is in them, but the briers and thorns, and the obscurity of the thickets they are beset with. For, untruth being unacceptable to the mind of man, there is no other defence left for absurdity but obscurity. (Locke, 400-401)

Either Locke was, in addition to being an acute diagnostician of the situation of late 17th-century academia, a philosopher of quite unusual prescience (something he himself would never have claimed), or this last quarter of the 20th Century has witnessed a Joycean "riverrun" full-circle. For all our advances in real knowledge (technical, psychological, medical), we seem unable to relinquish the need for the mystifications regularly practised in the name of (and, too frequently, in the graduate courses of) the humanities. And these mystifications seem, without exception, to be premised upon a pessimistic (mis)understanding of humanity. We should note, in passing, the very real optimism evident in Locke's public scourging of the obscurantists – "For, *untruth being unacceptable to the mind of man*, there is no other defence left for absurdity but obscurity." This is how Tallis would argue (perhaps with his fingers crossed?); for him, as earlier for Locke, obscurity in human discourse is but evidence of the absurdity of those "not-quite-thinkable-thoughts" which have so paralysed the minds of the young intent upon discovering the meaning and the value (let alone the purpose) of the human experience.

In 1750, another Lockean, the Reverend Laurence Sterne, preached a sermon in the Cathedral Church of York entitled "The Abuse of Conscience." This was published in the same year. So well-received was the sermon that Sterne made it into the set-piece reading (with various interpolations by Dr Slop – the Catholic gynecologist – Captain Toby Shandy, and "my father") given by Uncle Toby's man, Corporal Trim, in Volume II of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-67). The text for the sermon was taken from the concluding paragraphs of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews: "– For we trust *we have a good Conscience*." (HEBREWS, xiii, 18). Much of Corporal Trim's reading of the sermon (later, and by the acute stylistic analysis of Walter Shandy, discovered to have been written by the Reverend Yorick – i.e., Sterne himself, fictionally

disguised) would be apposite to the arguments put forward by Raymond Tallis in *Enemies of Hope*. The *moral* arguments of Tallis are in fact *in ovo* in the readings of Corporal Trim.

The other Shandean shade present in *Enemies of Hope* is that moment of famous, and hilarious, exasperation where, in Volume III Chapter XII, the narrator, having asked Heaven to grant him patience when confronted with the modish asinities of art critics, suddenly expostulates (and one can readily imagine the Manchester neurologist applauding from the side):

Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world, – though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst, – the cant of criticism is the most tormenting! (Sterne 1967, 193)

"Clear your mind of cant!" said Dr Johnson (not an appreciator of *Tristram Shandy*). Tallis has followed this advice – to the letter. There is no cant in *Enemies of Hope*. There is, in effect, from the very outset a trenchant and rigorous examination of what it means to participate in our current world of art, literature and science. Let me rephrase those last two sentences. *Enemies of Hope* is *full* of cant from beginning to end. The whole enterprise of Tallis is nothing other than an extended and intensely detailed – the discursive endnotes alone take up 79 pages of dense secondary argument and citation – demolition of the various cants that prevail in the modern world.

The book is organized in two parts: Part I, "Pathologising Culture" and Part II, "Marginalising Consciousness." These two parts, the first of which is largely anthropological and/or sociological in nature, using as a textual sparring partner Dudley Young's *Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War*, and the second of which examines the leading varieties of the "Unconscious" – the Historical (Marx); the Social (Durkheim); the Instinctual (Freud); the Linguistic (the Post-Saussureans) – are framed by two important sections: a 60-page "Prologue" entitled "Isaiah Berlin's 'Yes-But to the Enlightenment'" and a 100-page "Appendix" (dealing with the thought of Frege, Husserl, Wittgenstein) and "Epilogue" (which concludes with "The Enlightenment Dream and the Hope of Progress").

In his Preface, where he pays due homage to the late Sir Isaiah Berlin's "brilliant and passionate essays" (xiii), Tallis presents the case for his book in a paragraph that deserves full quotation inasmuch as it gives an instance of his growing irritation with the spread and the subtle, invasive power of various anti-Enlightenment movements in our century:

In the pages that follow I take issue with a web of notions, attitudes and prejudices that have been important in Counter-Enlightenment thought over the last two centuries or so, and which seem at present to be again in the ascendant. Except in the first chapter, my focus is on twentieth-century Counter-Enlightenment thought, which is characterised above all by scepticism, or even hostility, towards the idea of a human being as a conscious, rational agent and of human society as susceptible to progressive improvement as a result of the efforts of conscious, rational agents. Out of this negative assumption, at the heart of the web, arise many disparate filaments: mockery at the hope of progress; rejection of technology; scornful dismissal of the claims of scientific truth and of the distinction between science and magic; contempt for the democratic process; a profound suspicion of rationalism, rooted in a debased view of the true nature of human beings; and a fixed and cynical belief that objectivity is a mere mask for vested interests and that the sense of justice and fair play is mere rhetorical mist. (Tallis 1997, xiv)

Although Tallis is careful to distinguish between the responsibility of famous thinkers of the past and their posthumous influence, he announces in his Preface a need, moral as much as intellectual, to reaffirm the hope of the Enlightenment project and the urgency of this task:

Just as I do not accept that the horrors of the mass slaughter, or the persecutions, imprisonment and enslavement, of individuals in modern times, were incubated in classrooms where a post-Enlightenment secularised conception of humankind has been taught, I likewise do not blame Darwin for the brutalised social practices legitimised by the writings of the Social-Darwinists, or Herder for *völkisch* ideology that the Nazis invoked to justify their *Judenpolitik*. Nevertheless, I feel that the contemporary attack on Enlightenment values carries great dangers. At the very least, it is part of a process by which contemporary humanity is talking itself into a terminal state of despair, self-disgust and impotence. The self-congratulatory pessimism of many humanist intellectuals who have "seen through" the pretensions of mankind, and dismiss science and, equally, the hopes of those who want to bring about a better future, is likely to be self-fulfilling. (Tallis 1997, xiv)

Tallis' run-through of the 18th-century Enlightenment in his "Prologue" is fine as far as it goes. It is no more than the cultured canter, with frequent doffings of the cap to the several outstanding Minds met on the way. It would make a good First Year introductory lecture (with excellent further reading material recommended in the endnotes) and a wise warning implied about the humanities at the present. But no more. It would certainly not persuade any of Tallis' presumed foes to re-think their opinions or their theories. And Tallis is

sometimes mistaken in his readings, and disingenuous in his presentation of some writers (e.g., Rousseau).¹⁴

However, once Tallis gets into his stride in "Part I, Pathologising Culture," he proves to be a remarkably alert and intelligent guide. His refusal of the 'Dudley Young' approach to human history is admirably shown in the last paragraph to the introduction of Part I:

At the heart of Young's (exemplary) muddle is a self-contradictory attitude towards human consciousness. If man is a sick animal, his sickness resides at least in part in his overdeveloped consciousness. So soul doctors, such as Young, who live by means of an extremely abstract mode of human consciousness, tend to think that human consciousness in general is a bad thing and abstract consciousness exceptionally bad. And this observation – of the enmity between soul doctors who earn their living by deploying advanced human consciousness and consciousness itself – connects the concerns of this first Part of the book with the overall theme of *Enemies of Hope*. (Tallis 1997, 74)

This is a preliminary to a full-scale demolition of the Freud and Frazer legends of prehistory with their emphasis of mankind's innate need to make violence sacred and to create taboos about sex, murder, and sacrificial victims which will organize the primitive horde in a dependency on magic and superstition. It is to this primeval (literally) state that one must return to rediscover the lost roots of our animal inheritance and our propitiatory relationship with the cosmos. We

14 For example, his quote (Tallis 1997, 22) from the Roman playwright Terence "Nothing human is alien to me" [*homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto*] taken from the Greek-entitled *Heautontimoroumenos* [The Self-Tormentor], is in fact a phrase uttered by the local busybody in order to justify his curiosity about the intimate lives of others. It was written ironically (as many of Tartuffe's speeches were, for instance). It is *in no way* to be read as an Enlightenment humanist statement (or 2nd century B.C. version thereof). It is far more the "nudge-nudge, wink-wink" rationalization of the town gossip. Tallis misses the psychological characterisation of the part by Terence and the humour of the situational irony. Perhaps Tallis has not read Terence?

In the same way, Tallis' silence on the quite disgusting treatment (abandonment in fact) by Rousseau of own illegitimate children deserves some attention. It may have been a mistake, incidentally, to include Rousseau in his pantheon (even as "a Counter-Enlightenment shadow"); Rousseau is the real, certifiable, anomaly among "Enlightenment *philosophes*," as Voltaire (or Hume or Diderot) could have told him. Tallis seems unaware that Rousseau was the one *philosophe* frequently quoted (as support for vicious and violent practices) in his speeches by Robespierre. That Robespierre does not once quote Voltaire or Diderot should not surprise us; but it should have alerted Tallis.

must find not merely our lost 'inner child' but our 'animal ancestry' and its associated magical strategies. Mankind has no other salvation.

Tallis finds this farfetched, scientifically; and unhelpful, ethically. It is strange, however, in a section which disputes and refutes the theses of Dudley Young's *Origins of the Sacred: The Ecstasies of Love and War* in such detail and with such (well-merited) sarcasm, that Tallis should write in an endnote (420) "I would not wish my critical account of the book, and my use of it as a springboard to a wider critique of the contemporary critic of culture, to discourage others from reading it. Quite the reverse." A few endnote pages later (425-426) Tallis notes:

In one of his more irresponsible passages, Young tries to add to the confusion by merging modern concepts of hygiene – rooted in microbiology – with ancient magical notions of pollution control[.]

and then quotes an extensive passage where "the primitive magician" is seen as a counterpart of the modern sewage engineer. Tallis' (judicious) comment, "To call this delirious association of ideas 'thinking' is too kind and to call it 'crap' would be perhaps over-determined" (426). This leaves the reader of Tallis' book in a quandary. Who, in their right mind, would *want* to spend their time ploughing through the inanities of Dudley Young so carefully retrieved by Tallis? And *why*? Is this academic courtesy? But, then, that is hardly Tallis' forte. And he, later on, certainly does not suggest that the reader spend extra hours reading the conceits of Derrida or Lacan. Perhaps he is merely softening us up for the real villains who make their appearance in Part II? This is only partly the answer (and, in fact, Derrida and Freud make their appearance towards the end of Part I).

The main reason why Tallis has so elaborately sifted through the Dudley Young detritus is because it contains so many elements of mischievous thinking and so many of the abuses of consequential and evidential thought that have become second nature in so many disciplines.¹⁵ Young, in short, is not merely a "sparring partner," he is, rather, a representative of the mess of many modern

disciplines. As Tallis writes in the chapter "Man as a Sick Animal" which introduces Part I:

In common with many contemporary humanist intellectuals, Young sees himself as (to borrow Merquior's phrase) a "soul doctor to a sick civilisation" and this gives *Origins of the Sacred* an additional importance; for, in his diagnosis (and his belief that there can be diagnoses) of society and in his prescriptions, the author typifies an entire class of intellectuals and his book is representative. (Tallis 1997, 73)

It may be imagined that this is a professor of medicine lording it over the lesser disciplines. And therefore to be taken *cum grano salis*, surely? But in the long penultimate chapter to Part I – "The Wisdom of Myths and the Myths of Wisdom" – Tallis, who finds the very notion of "wisdom" anathema (for the ignorance or incompetence it so often conceals),¹⁶ provides a succinct and terrifying account of the history of his own discipline, pre-twentieth-century medicine:

Medicine has been traditionally dominated by wise men, ever since the founding fathers – Aristotle, Galen et al. – laid down the fundamental misconceptions which it took physicians millennia to wake out of. Wisdom was the dominant attribute of successful physicians throughout the centuries during which doctors misled, poisoned, butchered, tortured and killed their patients. It is only a small exaggeration to state that, until the turn of the century, with the exception of certain, relatively simple surgical procedures, nothing doctors did for their patients contributed to their health or happiness; and frequently it damaged them irreversibly. This did not dent the confidence of doctors in the wisdom of their pronouncements. The dramatic success story of medicine – "the youngest science," as it has been called – in the twentieth century has been one of the retreat of personal, individual wisdom in the face of science that is open to all. (Tallis 1997, 170)

The reader may now, in passing, reflect on the serious reasons behind the demolition of Jacques Lacan's presumptions quoted earlier from Tallis' review of Roudinesco. They are of a piece with the arguments of *Enemies of Hope*.

15 Including, of course, literature! On the second page of his second chapter, "Falling into the Ha-Ha," Tallis notes:

The message of the biologists has inspired many creative writers: biological determinism is a dominant assumption amongst hugely influential twentieth-century writers as disparate as Gide, Hamsun, Lawrence, London, Hemingway, Golding, Céline and Nathalie Sarraute. Many twentieth-century novelists (and I have referred only to the most obvious examples) see the truth about character as being located in those immemorial primitive tropisms [the title of one of Sarraute's works] and animal instincts that really regulate behaviour and belief. (Tallis 1997, 91)

16 On pages 117-119, Tallis recounts his experience as a doctor in Nigeria in the 1970s where the tribal "wisdom" of the relatives of a young girl (married at age 13 to a 60-year-old leper) nearly resulted in her death. The vesico-vaginal fistula she suffered from, subsequent to a still-birth, led to her being regarded as "polluted" and to her ostracism from the group. She had the courage and the independent intelligence to make her painful way back to the regional hospital where a retired woman surgeon – a colleague of Tallis – specialized in repairing leaky bladders and succeeded in restoring the girl to health.

Citing the case of Virginia Woolf, Tallis argues once again for the value of disinterested science against the "wisdom" of the shaman figure:

To read a biography of a chronic invalid such as Virginia Woolf, who suffered all her life from manic-depressive psychosis, is to see the Great Names in action and marvel at their confidence as they prescribed quack and baseless remedies and exerted their oppressive authority. The shift from authority-based towards evidence-based medicine, and the demise of the special authority of the Wise Physician, is one of the great triumphs of science-informed humanity. (Tallis 1997, 171)

This leads naturally, and logically, into the first serious mention of the founder of psychoanalysis. Though a chapter will be devoted to Freud in Part II, Tallis rightly sees this early introductory presentation as a famous, relatively recent, instance of the "myth of wisdom" subverting the genuine progress of scientific medicine. As Tallis remarks:

The alibi of wisdom can be used to cover up a good deal of ordinary incompetence and to support the asymmetrical power relation between patient and doctor. Both of these are vividly illustrated by the case of Freud, the emblematic figure of medical wisdom, the doctor who saw "deeper" into the suffering soul of humanity, the paradigmatic healer. The truth that has slowly leaked out about Freud is that he was a monster – a monster of genius, but a monster none the less. He was a strikingly incompetent diagnostician, incapable of learning from his own mistakes because he could not acknowledge them, preferring to rationalise them away; and he was a bully who forced his patients to provide him with confirmatory evidence of the groundless notions he had thought up at a time when he was addicted to cocaine. (Tallis 1997, 171-172)

The nervous among us may take due comfort from this assessment by a senior neurologist. Those of us who have studied Freud's life and works carefully (in my own case, out of a growing irritation at the importance accorded "Freudian" interpretations of literature) will note that the professor of medicine has come to the same conclusion as the professor of Renaissance Studies at Zurich, who writes in the Epilogue to his *Appropriating Shakespeare*:

Freud's work is notoriously speculative, a vast theoretical edifice elaborated with a mere pretence of corroboration, citing "clinical observations" which turn out to be false, with contrary evidence suppressed, data manipulated, building up over a forty-year period a self-obscuring, self-protective mythology. (Vickers 1993, 418)

In the last chapter of Part I, Tallis is careful to distinguish between the genuine achievements of science (his heroes are the Nobel laureates Richard Feynman and, in medicine, Sir Peter Medawar) and the Potemkin frontages of pseudo-science erected by the Culture Critics – Barthes, Foucault and Derrida are seen as the chief malfesants (though, like Sokal and Bricmont, he is prepared to add Baudrillard, Lyotard, and, of course, Lacan) – for the mystification of the intellectual elite. With this "euphoric dream of scientificity" (Barthes' own words quoted, maliciously, by Tallis), it was possible to become, from the very beginning of one's academic career, "... a Professor of Things-in-General. It was possible to be multi-disciplinary from the outset, be a free-ranging intellect, who is an authority on absolutely everything – for form is invariant across a wide variety of content" (Tallis 1997, 183). In other words, the shaman Authority-figure returns to centre-stage, bearing occult texts, themselves occulted by his "wisdom" however disastrous in its consequences or empty in its significance. And this fake "omniscience" has the effect of a *pharmakon* on the listeners. Tallis, in the last chapter of Part I, "A Critique of Cultural Criticism," lets rip with a blast of healthy anger against what he sees as the impoverishment of the disciplines in the humanities faculties in a sub-section entitled "Hysterical Humanism and the Diagnosis of Society":

Since the passage from junior academic to intellectual guru has been so greatly accelerated as a result of the discovery of techniques of omniscience and the emergence of subjects, such as "Cultural Studies," that enable everyone who engages with them, however briefly, to be able to see deeper and further, to X-ray the very culture in which they live, it is hardly surprising that guruhood is no longer the privileged status of a few. Anyone who studies the works of a guru becomes himself or herself a guru-let of sorts. (Tallis 1997, 186)

Part II, "Marginalising Consciousness," begins, tongue-in-cheek, with a quotation from Foucault's *The Archeology of Knowledge*, where we are told that the "researches" of psychoanalysis, linguistics, and anthropology have "decentred" the subject in relation to the laws of its desire, the forms of its language, the rules of its action, the play of its mythical and imaginative discourse" (Foucault quoted in Tallis 1997, 221). In the concluding paragraph of this introductory chapter to Part II, Tallis explains in simple language the object of his critique:

It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out that the purpose of the present critique is not to reinstate the transparent, self-possessed, controlling Cartesian *cogito*. My aim is the more modest one of reasserting the centrality of individual consciousness,

of undecieved deliberateness, in the daily life of human beings. We are not absolutely transparent to ourselves but we are not utterly opaque either; we are not totally self-present in all our actions but nor are we absent from them; we are not complete masters of our fates, shaping our lives according to our utterly unique and original wishes, but neither are we the empty playthings of historical, political, social, semiological or instinctual forces. (Tallis 1997, 228)

Expressed thus, Tallis' claims certainly seem "modest" – virtually to the point of evident common-sense, or, even, to the banality of the obvious. One is tempted to respond irritably with something like: "Well, go on then! For Heaven's sake, don't most of us live our lives with these, perhaps unspoken, *lapalissades*?" And, perhaps, one recalls Horatio's ironic rejoinder to Hamlet's report of the truism vouchsafed him by the Ghost: "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this." Nor, by extension, do we need a 500-page book to provide such elementary matter. But Tallis' willed simplicity of style is in the nature of a courteous, multiple snare addressed at once to the reader (of course) and also to the jargonists with whom this second Part is largely concerned.

When I first read *Enemies of Hope* some months ago, with pencil in hand, I noted a seeming misuse of a philosophical adjective in this chapter. Tallis had written: "Methodological positions and problems dictate *ontological* prejudices" (Tallis 1997, 224; my emphasis). I had noted in the margin as a better adjective, more disciplined (I thought), and more closely relevant to Tallis' point (I thought): "*epistemological*." On later readings, it became clear that Tallis was claiming something far more important than I had realized and that, indeed, "*ontological*" was the *mot juste*. Now, go back to the "aims" quoted above. Whether we are dealing with Althusser on Marx, with Durkheim on society, or with Freud on the psyche, or indeed with Lacan on Freud, or with Derrida on the language we use to express our lives, it becomes apparent that *none* of Tallis' simple, and simply stated, aims can be applied to the vision of humanity offered by these pundits. Their very conception of the *being* of human beings is fundamentally (and, one might add, pessimistically) opposed to expression in Tallis' terms; it is *ontologically* – and not merely epistemologically – different. To the extent that the reader will have reacted as I have suggested (with appropriate irritation at Tallis), the reader will have unwittingly declared for Tallis and against the jargonists.¹⁷ This may be one of the benefits of a direct, uncluttered

style, even when it is deliberately used as a rhetorical device to counter the enemy and to convince the reader.

I should briefly mention four very important books, one of which (by the late J.G. Merquior) is frequently quoted by Tallis, that deal in their own ways with aspects of the dilemmas posed by the various obfuscators trounced by Tallis in his Part II. In the discussion on Marx, Tallis (who is sympathetic to many of Marx's struggles and appreciative of Marx's lucid, ironic, and very readable account of the 1851 coup d'état of Prince Louis Bonaparte: *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) takes to task the late *éminence rouge* of the École Normale Supérieure, Louis Althusser, and his readings of *Capital*. Tallis is correct in his (negative) assessment of Althusser's grasp of Marx's writings. But some twenty years ago, the English Marxist historian E. P. Thompson wrote the most devastating account of Althusser's intellectual liabilities. Thompson's little book is a *must* for any reader who still thinks that Althusser had (1) anything to say about Marx that was worthwhile, (2) had actually read and understood *Das Kapital*. E. P. Thompson's volume is entitled (with an appropriate contempt for the "theorising" of the Parisian intellectual elite that Tallis, or Sokal and Bricmont, would admire) *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (New York and London, 1978). One bravura passage describing the descent upon English universities of (Althusserian) Theory deserves quotation for its splendid imagery invoking the cultural devastation that is the very subject of Tallis' book:

A cloud no bigger than a man's hand crosses the English Channel from Paris, and then, in an instant, the trees, the orchards, the hedge-rows, the fields of wheat, are black with locusts. When at length they rise to fly on to the next parish, the boughs are bared of all culture, the fields have been stripped of every green blade of human

which underwrites everything, that is at issue; and this jargon – id, ego, libido, Oedipus, transference, primary repression, etc. – is a carefully constructed bamboozling technique (pretending to the rigors of *Naturwissenschaft*, or "hard science") whereby a new language (almost) is invented in which all the terms refer doctrinally to the hypotheses offered by Freud without a shadow of scientific evidence to support them. If one does not accept these terms, or this jargon, then one cannot read Freud's essays with any sense of coherence. They, literally, make no sense!

Ernest Gellner had an astute criticism of this very seductiveness of Freud's prose: "Sheer confident assertion, in a world . . . in which no one of any sense has any grounds to be confident of either certainty or doubt, makes a certain impact. . . . The fact that the confidence is devoid of visible means of support hardly seems to diminish its authority. In fact, were its means of support visible, they could be subject to evaluation; and the assertion would have . . . conceded its own ordinary, human status – making its own contentions arguable, negotiable. . . . But bare, brazen, unnegotiated assertion, if skillfully presented, can have a kind of stark authority." (Gellner 1985, 42-43)

17 If I include Freud among their number, I should explain that this is not by virtue of his expository prose's being "difficult" of access. Freud, in fact, is recognized as a major creative writer with a splendid capacity to employ flights of elegant, suggestive rhetoric, or homely, commonplace instances of his "observations" to convince his readers. However, it is the *jargon*,

aspiration: and in those skeletal forms and that blackened landscape, theoretical practice announces its "discovery": the mode of production. . . . [Althusser's system] constitutes the ultimate in reductionism: a reduction, not of "religion" or "politics" to "economics," but of the disciplines of knowledge to one kind of "basic" Theory only. (Thompson 1978, 166-167)

The second important book is not, in fact, mentioned by Tallis (and he may not have been aware of it when completing *Enemies of Promise*). In 1989, a professor of German at the University of California (Santa Cruz), John M. Ellis, now Emeritus, wrote a superbly documented and succinctly argued case entitled *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton U. Press). In a scant 168 pages, and seven major chapters, Ellis has written the most lucid and the most carefully documented argument against the importance (wrongly) accorded to the theories and writings – and indeed scholarship – of Jacques Derrida that it has been my pleasure to encounter. Brian Vickers refers to it as "a definitive demolition" (Vickers 1993, 100). No teacher of language or literature could possibly recommend to graduate students the reading of *Of Grammatology* or other "essential" texts of Derrida after studying this refreshing and meticulous "deconstruction" of Deconstruction. Many of Tallis' arguments take up those of Ellis, including the necessary confrontation with Jonathan Culler, whose *On Deconstruction* was often the American student's introduction to Derrida – but I am sure that this is an instance of intelligent and critical minds coming to the same conclusions from the evidence before them (indeed, what Tallis would see as an extension of the "scientific method"). Both Tallis and Ellis are courteous toward Culler and recognize his gift for clear exposition. Both, equally, are aware of Culler's embarrassment, intellectually and morally, when faced with some of the more devious stratagems of the North African Magus. The definition of Derrida that I have found most fitting (and most amusingly on the ball) is that of the English journalist Tom Shone in his review of *A Derrida Reader*:

The French writer Jacques Derrida is the nearest thing literary criticism has to a computer virus. He inserted himself into the academic circuit with a triumvirate of texts in 1967, and since then he and his many disciples have attempted to "deconstruct" – that is, to erode from the inside, – just about every sacred cow there is. . . . A computer virus not just because of the wanton perversity of this sort of thing, but also because, in the same way that the hacker's intelligence must outweigh that of the original programmer, so Derrida can clearly run intellectual rings around most of his detractors. (Shone 1991, 55)

Derrida as the lit.crit. equivalent of a computer virus is indeed a genuine *trouvaille*. I am not sure, however, that Derrida could "run intellectual rings"

around either Tallis or the (British) German scholar Ellis. Those interested may find a detailed itemization of Derrida's "maltreatment" of, *inter alia*, Charles S. Peirce, Saussure and E.R. Curtius in Tallis' half-page response to Anthony King's letter complaining of the favourable review (by Robert Grant) of *Enemies of Hope* in the *Times Literary Supplement*.¹⁸

The third important book is Brian Vickers' *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels*, published by Yale University Press (1993). This, too, is a "big book" (500+ pages) which lambasts the very approaches to Shakespeare by the Theorists, the New Historicists, the Marxists, the Structuralists, the Post-Structuralists, the Deconstructionists, the Feminists, the Psychoanalysts. As David Bevington of the *Shakespeare Quarterly* is reported on the back cover,

Brian Vickers, in this compellingly written, overstated, lively, unfair, learned, polemical, strident, feisty, maddening, informative, witty, tendentious, hefty, obsessive, repetitious book, goes about acquiring enough enemies for two lifetimes.

That Yale should have seen these comments as good "sales" material argues for a healthy continuance of intellectual debate in the United States. Tallis, who had read, and been delighted by, Vickers' book before completing *Enemies of Promise*, would no doubt have accepted comments of the Bevington calibre with good grace. His own work deserves a similar accolade. In fact, Vickers himself makes extensive use of Tallis' earlier book, *Not Saussure: A Critique of Post-Saussurean Literary Theory*.¹⁹ Vickers has had the wit and the integrity to

18 See *TLS*, 14 November 1997, 3-4 for Robert Grant's review entitled "No Conjuring Tricks"; Anthony King's reader's letter, entitled "In Defence of Deconstruction," appeared in *TLS* (18) on 5 December 1997; Tallis' response – under the same heading – appeared on 12 December 1997 (19).

19 The American scholar, James Drake, has recently launched a sustained attack on the linguist Roman Jakobson's deleterious influence on postmodernism. In his article, Drake salutes this decade-old work of Raymond Tallis:

More than ten years ago, in *Not Saussure* (1986), Raymond Tallis, after noting the persistent fraudulent air of postmodernism, characterized it as employing for evidence *obiter dicta* and "knowing allusions to what has been 'established elsewhere.'" When one tries to find what has been "established elsewhere," it usually turns out to mean one of the following: theoreticians interpreted in the light of other theoreticians; debatable hypotheses made the *a priori* premises of arguments; interpretations which, through question-begging terminology, presuppose what is being demonstrated; footnotes, without page references, which cite articles and books whose evidence has been established by doing the very same thing; citations limited to other members of a clique; and jargon employed to give clichés and commonplace an air of profundity (James Drake, "The Naming Disease: How Jakobson's essay on aphasia initiated postmodern deceptions," *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 September 1998, p. 14).

Enemies of Hope: A Critique of Contemporary Pessimism is a powerful and liberating work that should be a study-companion for any student who wishes to understand the elements that make up his/her cultural situation. Tallis has been well-served by his publisher, Macmillan, in that this work (so Tallis claims) would probably not have seen the light of day without their sustained support.

At the same time, it has to be said that Macmillan deserves two massive raspberries (and it is my hope that this review – which one of their directors has asked to see – will help to provoke them into action to reform their editing practices). The copy-editing is abysmal. On my first reading, I started to proof-correct with my pencil passages that made little sense as they were printed. A writer of Tallis' acumen and importance (indeed, any serious writer) deserves much more serious attention from his publishers. Macmillan should be properly ashamed of what they have allowed onto the public market – a brilliant book by a brilliant man travestied by those responsible for the typesetting and overall presentation.

The Index is disgraceful. It is, without question, the worst I have ever seen from a major publishing house, and far worse than many I have come across from the little presses. The numerous errors of the Index are twofold in nature: of omission and commission. The number of important authors and/or themes mentioned in the text and yet totally absent from the Index is breathtaking. I have rarely come across a more poorly representative guide to a substantial text. The entries actually to be found in the Index are either weirdly attributed or provided with a misleading (i.e., wrong) pagination, or both. The first entry I consulted was "Valéry, Paul" (a personal favourite, one I evidently share with Tallis) who has three page numbers attributed to him and every single one wrong! My further attempts to use the Index were frustrated by similar deficiencies. The endnotes, which are discursive and highly informative, are, by and large, well-presented. The references to them in the Index, however, are minimal. Brian Vickers, in the Yale University Press edition of his *Appropriating Shakespeare*, had access to conscientious professional copy-editors and index-makers. As a result, his book is a delight to investigate, as well as to read. The same cannot be said for Tallis' volume. And more's the pity. The absence of a bibliography may have been a financial decision by Macmillan, rather than a scholarly one by Tallis; but it is to be regretted. Once again, Yale University Press gave proper consideration to Vickers' desire for a serious, accurate, and inclusive bibliography. If Macmillan wishes to support scholarship, they should recognize that such a commitment implies serious copy-editing and serious book-production – which includes the proper preparation of indexes and relevant bibliographies. Macmillan has allowed me – and, by extension, many readers –

recognize that, as far as the understanding of the linguistic paradigms of Saussure is concerned, Tallis has got it right; and that many celebrated English (and American) scholars have been caught with their free-floating trousers around their ankles.

These two books, *Appropriating Shakespeare* and *Enemies of Promise*, should be required reading for all humanities graduate students in their first year of graduate study. Both works range widely beyond their apparent topics and each will offer the attentive student insights – and relief from the confusions of post-structuralism – that will stand him/her in good stead throughout the long years of thesis writing and the early years of professional activity. I do not see these books as "bedside reading" – they stimulate the mind too much – but I can imagine them becoming familiar, consolatory and challenging friends, ever prepared to oblige the recalcitrant owner to *think* more carefully.

The last important book to mention, and of which Tallis makes frequent and valuable use, is the late J.G. Merquior's *From Prague to Paris: A Critique of Structuralist and Post-structuralist Thought*. Vickers also found Merquior's reassessments invaluable. Merquior is an interesting example of the insider pupil (of Claude Lévi-Strauss) turned critic, later (when he changed careers from anthropology to law) turned lawyer and teacher at the London School of Economics. Balzac would have woven a wonderful tale from Merquior's brief and brilliant life (he died in his early fifties). The man had that uncommon combination of great intelligence, great acuity, and great integrity. As a consequence, the few texts he has left us are essential reading for students in the humanities, especially those studying anthropology, sociology, and literature.

By its breadth of scholarship, its unusual origins (the study of literature, culture, and philosophy by one whose 'official' career is medical), *Enemies of Hope* offers to the graduate and undergraduate in the humanities a marvellous lesson, by example, of intelligence at work. My suspicion is that Raymond Tallis would have a certain hesitation when confronted with the current phrase "role-model" – the more so, one might add, given that the term implies three qualities he has been at pains to undermine: guru, wisdom, Professor-of-Everything. And yet the fact remains that one wishes there were more Raymond Tallis, Brian Vickers, John Ellis, E.P. Thompson surrogates to help the contemporary student unravel the confusion from the curriculum. If there were, then the study of the humanities would be vastly improved – in integrity, in scholarship, in individual critical judgment. To the extent that the University is a place where critical thought, as opposed to the unintelligent mouthing of received and barely grasped notions, is still recognized as one of the achievements of civilization, the thought and the writings of people like Tallis will remain indispensable.

to savour the delights of the insights and intellectual and moral arguments of Raymond Tallis. Macmillan has also caused me to rummage through the Tallis volume in search of material that should have been indexed. If I still wholeheartedly recommend the book (and I most certainly do), it is a triumph for Tallis, and in spite of Macmillan.

One name missing from the Index (though not from the text itself), which must be mentioned here, is that of the Nobel laureate for Medicine, the late Sir Peter Medawar. Although Tallis opens his volume with a critical (and largely positive) appraisal of the writings of Sir Isaiah Berlin on the Enlightenment, the spirit which truly informs the whole of Tallis' wide-ranging arguments is that of Sir Peter Medawar. Indeed, the whole of the "Epilogue" (355-409) has the title "The Conscious Agent and the Hope of Progress" and carries from page to page the running-head "The Hope of Progress." That this is no mere printer's abbreviation will be evident to those who know the title of Medawar's 1972 collection of essays and lectures: *The Hope of Progress*. In his Introduction to that book, Medawar had written about his own choice of title for the collection:

The title of this collection comes from a paragraph towards the end of my Presidential Address in 1969 to the British Association "On 'The Effecting of all Things Possible:'"

To deride the hope of progress is the ultimate fatuity, the last word in poverty of spirit and meanness of mind. There is no need to be dismayed by the fact that we cannot yet envisage a definitive solution of our problems, a resting-place beyond which we need not try to go . . .
(Medawar, 1972, 9)

It is against this "ultimate fatuity" that Tallis has written the extensive examination of our present cultural, political, intellectual, and philosophical dilemmas to be found in *Enemies of Hope*. Medawar had quietly alluded in the title of his British Association address to the great Elizabethan experimenter, Sir Francis Bacon ("the effecting of all things possible"); Tallis, with equal percipience and modesty, has allowed his reader to discover the close intellectual and moral ties between his own writings and those of the spirit that has guided and encouraged him.

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Literary Play: Explorations in Hyperdimensionality

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When in 1795 Friedrich Schiller asserted the centrality of "play" to conceptions of what it is to be human, he had in mind the human capacity for variability, invention and zestful exuberance, a capacity associated with both body and spirit and manifest in a vast range of activities. Play is as old as culture and, in Johan Huizinga's view in *Homo Ludens*, it produces culture. There is a long history of attention to its definition, reach and importance. No longer defined in simple opposition to work or to seriousness, play is variable in form and register, multi disciplinary and endemic in the operations of language, discourse and communication. Whereas Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Derrida provide rich grounds for consideration of play in language, more recent mappings that have a specific interest in language and literature include studies from Bernard Suits, James Hans, Mihai Spărișu, Robert Rawdon Wilson and Brian Edwards. A leading concept in poststructuralist linguistics, it is also central in theorising postmodernism.

If play is often defined in contrast to notions of seriousness, work and reality, it takes only an eye-blink to perceive the terms not as oppositional but as interactive. Associated with activity, movement, process, invention, freedom and change, play affirms possibility against restriction, resignation and closure. As Rawdon Wilson suggests, for example, in his study *In Palamedes' Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game, & Narrative Theory* (1990):

Drawing with it a number of subordinate concepts such as self-representation, make-believe, role, rule, move, strategy, tactics, aleatory combinations, and so forth, play has shifted from a descriptive vocabulary appropriate to the activities of children and the leisure of adults. It may be used as a model to describe and explain all kinds of human activity: learning procedures, social interaction, personal expressivity, cultural formation and transformation, as well as a wide range of activities that involve the creation and reception of works of art, simulation, dissimulation, risk-taking, strategic thinking, tactical decision-making, structural experimentation, the testing or trying out of ideas. (28)

Once we acknowledge the distinction between word and referent, let alone such inviting complications as a writer's (and speaker's) personal perspective and