capitalist society and its categories as absolutely subsumed, severing any ability to effectively historicise and resulting either in fatalistic depoliticisation or in a compensatory fetishisation of capitalism's 'outside'.

But what, in the end, is Saenz de Sicilia's theory of subsumption? He distinguishes three levels of subsumption operative in capitalist society: first, the elementary subsumption of 'socio-natural' objects through commodification; second, the three forms of the capitalist subsumption of labour in production; and third, the subsumption of social reproduction *tout court* under capital's relentless drive towards accumulation. Insofar as the dynamic of subsumption thus traverses every level of capitalist society, it must be recognised as '*the* concept of capitalist domination as such'. Beyond positing this new schema, however, it would be more accurate to say that he merely stipulates the criteria of an 'open' and 'dynamic' theory of subsumption that would resist diachronic or synchronic closure. This speculative project also bears a strong family resemblance to Søren Mau's *Mute Compulsion* (2023), which likewise offers a more expansive account of subsumption, critiques the abstract formalism of many value-form theorists from the perspective of a Marxian philosophical anthropology, and attempts to develop a new concept for capital's total – yet, crucially, not absolute – domination of our life-world through its stranglehold on social reproduction.

Yet the affinity between Saenz de Sicilia's and Mau's projects also prompts the question of whether it is really necessary to rethink Marx's critique of capital through this one particular Marxian concept rather than another, such as Mau's 'economic power'. Indeed, while it may make logical sense to speak of capital's subsumption of objects other than the labour process, doing so may also sacrifice much of the term's analytical precision – especially as Saenz de Sicilia himself admits that 'the classification of the forms of subsumption loses its explanatory power beyond the immediate process of production'. Moreover, his condemnation of 'speculative closure' at times verges into its own 'moralism of the abstract/concrete', and in emphasising the non-teleological character of the dynamic of subsumption, he arguably underrates its path-dependency, notably omitting any discussion of the rising organic composition of capital and the profit-rate's tendency to fall, as well as any engagement with crisis theory. Another significant omission here is any serious engagement with Marxist feminism, all the more surprising given that 'social reproduction' is the cornerstone of his rethinking of subsumption. Ultimately, however, such frustrations and disappointments index the fruitfulness of Saenz de Sicilia's intervention as both a definitive clarification and a provocative challenge for contemporary Marxist theorists. To embrace a more utopian form of speculative closure, then, perhaps this work may one day prove to have been a minor premise in a more practical syllogism: the revolutionary deduction that capital – as a logic, as a mode of social reproduction, as the tyrannical accumulation of humanity's own dead labour – is also mortal.

Christopher Geary

It's all in the landing

Melyana Kay Lamb, *Philosophical History of Police Power* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024). 220pp., £85.00 hb., 28.99 pb., 978 1 35020 404 1 hb., 978 1 35020 408 9 pb.

In the aftermath of a series of large pro-Palestine protests in the UK in 2024, the Metropolitan Police spokesperson responsible for protests, Matt Twist, gave an interview to the right-wing think tank the Policy Exchange, where he admitted that the police had not got everything right, but rejected that there were double standards when it came to policing certain groups over others. Much criticism of the police from the right has argued that there is a two-tier system. Leftist causes like BLM, environmental issues or Palestine protests are allowed to disrupt the general public, they claim, while patriotic causes are harshly policed. Twist rejected this, arguing that, in fact, there were infinite tiers of policing.

This phrase has stuck with me. It might be dismissed

as the vacuous ramblings of a bureaucrat who excels in saying absolutely nothing, but in attempting to say nothing Twist has accidentally arrived at a cogent description of the reality of policing. The received wisdom about police power is that the democratic organs of the state make laws, and the dutiful public servants of the police merely enforce them, in a value neutral manner. Yet even the most ardent cheerleaders of state violence cannot feasibly claim that there is only one, unified form of policing. Policing instead is something so dispersed and omnipresent that it is infinite in form and appearance. In order to understand the infinity of policing, we must try, as Goethe argued, to approach the finite from all sides.

Lamb's *Philosophical History of Police Power* is such an attempt. She argues that despite the presence of police power in our lives, policing has been incorrectly theorised. Consequently, political philosophy inevitably finds itself in a quagmire of aporia and contradiction without a theorisation of police power, which she adeptly demonstrates with readings of Hobbes and Foucault, Hegel and Fichte, Schmitt, Benjamin and Agamben, and da Silva.

Serious critique of the police is frequently cast as an extremist position, but I would argue that the police are the most universally repudiated of institutions, maybe only matched by border guards. Yet you will find few introductions to political theory that fail to mention policing at all, aside from reading Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, accompanied by an explanation that policing *(Polizei)* and police are very different, with policing referring to ordering and police the formal institution of police. One important rejoinder that Lamb makes early on is that this reading, which is heavily influenced by Foucault, diffuses an analysis of the police, so that the locus and power of the discrete institution itself is lost, and we move further, rather than closer, to a critique of police violence and power.

Lamb argues that theories of the police often historicise moments of rupture. Foucault is the most egregious of these, but Lamb artfully shows that Hobbes makes the same, widely accepted, claim despite the shaky ground that such a supposition rests on. Hobbes saw himself as making a fundamental break with the Aristotelian anthropology, which saw humans as political animals (*zoon politkon)* that mediates conflict through collective discussion. For Aristotle, order is the natural state. 'It is supposedly in Hobbes we find the transition from a natural/divine order to one that is "produced" – a transition, moreover, which has been widely understood as inaugurating the modern phenomenon of police.' For Hobbes, the Leviathan figure restrains the barbaric state of nature. The connection to the police is ingenious. Reading Hobbes against himself, Lamb rejects this typical reading, and shows that Hobbes' Leviathan does not abolish the violence of the state of nature, but rather subsumed it into his power. Hobbes' state appears historically after the state of nature, creating a fission between order and nature. Crucially, Hobbesian order 'becomes an incessant activity, and indeed the proof and product of a sovereign will.' The sovereign cannot, constitutionally, be condemned by the law, even for murder, and this is itself the foundational power of the police.

The chapter discussing Hegel and Fichte makes a similar move. In Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* the state and civil society emerge as opposites. For Hegel, this is a split between 'the sphere of the universal, that is the state, and the sphere of the particular, which is comprised of atomistic individuals in civil society.' The state can no longer be thought of as the point of discussion and action, but instead is extrinsic to the body politic, a point of mediation between factions that cannot feasibly directly communicate over every challenge, necessitating a mediating police power.

Hegel's notions of the police become clearest, for Lamb, in contrast to Fichte. Hegel, in *Philosophy of Right* sees *Polizei* as a 'union of security and welfare, an administration of civil society that raises it from the level of particularity to universality.' Fichte, on the other hand, sees '*Polizei* as a securitarian power designed to prevent the possibility of crime occurring.' Fichte's police force would be one that must always exert itself in protecting the rights of citizens, and they must command obedience. Fichte argued that for this to happen, citizens would have to be always transparent to the police, for example, by carrying a light with them in the dark or carrying identification.

Hegel fiercely rejects this, arguing it would produce 'a world of galley slaves' but Lamb argues that the authoritarian and totalising elements that Hegel strongly reacts to in Fichte's analysis are also present in his own. For Lamb, Hegel and Fichte are both concerned with the mediation of the universal state and the individual, and she shows that their thinking around the state of ex-

ception is closer than either thinker might like to admit. Police power, for Hegel, must also be unrestrained and omnipresent, especially in the state of emergency.

Lamb's argument is laid out with the precision of a lawyer. Every chapter is clearly signposted giving the text a tight flow. Few readers can expect to have Lamb's granular knowledge of each of these thinkers, so it is a welcome, if slightly unrelenting, structure. In just over 200 pages Lamb blasts through some of the most troublesome thinkers in the canon, and this can produce moments where this leads to conclusions that feel overly abstract, if not downright prosaic. Theoretical abstraction is an important method, but a work that remains at this register for too long can seem divorced from the life-denying violence it is discussing.

The chapter on Agamben is the most gnomic of these. I find Lamb's aim compelling. Trying to find a line between Schmitt and Agamben, who both theorise the state of exception, she charges Schmitt with a totalising notion of the emergency, such that it cannot exist in a meaningful, everyday way even under totalitarianism. Agamben attempts to redress the balance, but cannot escape the categories of law, meaning that attributes of normal law like the prison or the police do not fall within the state of exception at all. The most prevailing question of political philosophy is how can legitimate power be justified, and in Lamb's view Agamben effectively normalises the exceptional racist violence of the state that deviant racialised minorities live under.

Early on she explains her method, writing that she is not interested in a genealogical search for origins, or an etymological analysis of the police, but rather, qua Agamben's method, a philosophical analysis of the 'metaphysical grounds operative within political structures.' She terms this a philosophical history, clearly thinking with Agamben's historico-philosophical method in *Homo Sacer*, although it is unclear what the difference is. Both attempt to disrupt a historical narrative of mechanistic cause and effect, and complexify political sovereignty through an understanding of continuities that are as

much disrupted as they are continuous, showing how 'what is usually presented as secondary or derivative is in fact a founding power itself' so that we can think 'differently about the ontologies of power.' Unlike, for example, Mark Neocleous' work on the police, she is not so much interested in the 'historical specificities of *the police* as *institution* in different geographical and temporal contexts', but rather the metaphysical heritage of state violence.

This strikes me as a more limited, and less novel, approach than she makes it sound. Are the historical specificities so separable from the metaphysical heritage of state violence? Is this even a meaningful distinction? Agamben's historical method has been heavily criticised, in part because it can feel like his philosophy leaves little room for nuance or incompleteness, but also because he seems to tend towards passivity over action. We live in a time where police power has become a central topic of concern – in part evidenced by the many works dealing with this question, including Lamb's, as well as events outside the academy.

I welcome an approach that tries to understand the 'specificity of police as a concept and as an institution', rather than devolving in to the undifferentiated theory of power that Foucault theorised. However, in adopting Agamben's approach, some of the original criticisms that Foucault articulated in his own analysis of the police seem to return. Policing *does* seem to happen through various institutions, some of which are not clearly identifiable as police. Take for example, the case of teachers in the UK. Educators have a legal duty to report extremist views, which has included support for environmental movements, legally protected criticism on Israel, and, perhaps most importantly, ensnared many Muslim students in the bureaucracy and secrecy of anti-terrorism. Migrant students are surveilled through registers, which are submitted to the Home Office. The abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore, certainly no Foucauldian, calls this process deputisation, and points out that in fulfilling these duties, an expanding group of people have effectively been made to carry out the function of the police, even if they don't carry a badge. What is their role in the mediation between transcendence and immanence? How do these non-cop cops project the mythos of sovereignty and government? These questions are left unresolved by Lamb's relatively sparse definition of the police.

The concluding section of the book takes the phrase 'no drugs were found', which for Lamb becomes 'an excuse invoked in a process of ritual myth making.' For me, this misses something substantial and reproduces the Agamben's messianism and passivity. For Lamb, the claim that no drugs were found takes on the reverence of a prayer, absolving the police and assuaging the public that violent and invasive searches were justified because there *could* have been drugs, even when there were not. Couldn't we have another reading, one which motivates a praxis of resistance against the police? The statement could remain an expression of foundational sovereign power, but less a homily and more an insult – a lie so naked that it dares you to object, a fuck you. Wouldn't this be a more accurate understanding? It would also explain other justifications for police violence: resisting arrest; in fear for my life, etc. In this way, the same expressions of foundational sovereign power are outside the law but can be radicalised into an inducement. The more power is used the greater the resistance. Blackness, especially in the Black Radical Tradition, took on a revolutionary power because of the injustices that black people were subject to. The injustice of society, which necessitate police violence, is negated by a subject formation that emerges against police violence. Placing the illocutionary acts of the police as part of a transcendence obscures the immanence of their power, taking the speech act to be primary to the act itself.

Despite my scepticism of the Agambenian approach, there remains much to take away from Lamb's text. The interpretations are extremely sharp, and the analysis of police power in relation to sovereignty is advanced through her work. Her critique of the colonial boomerang explanation of racist police violence convincingly shows its insufficiency. Using da Silva's work, Lamb shows that thinking of colonial power as a 'frontier of new technologies of subjugation that eventually find their way back into the metropole', as Foucault and Marx did, falsely creates a prehistorical outside that reifies a false European exceptionalism. Once again, for Lamb, the genealogical approach fails to explain police power. Police violence becomes something that emerged 'back then', 'over there', an artifact of a more violent and unfair time, rather than a central component of contemporary police power. However, there are ample examples of precisely this sort of interplay, which few people would see as unidirectional.

Other works of police critique, such as Mark Neocleous' recent *Pacification*, Anna Feigenbaum's *Tear Gas* or Leah Cowan's *Why Would Feminists Trust the Police?* show a level of sophistication in discussing this question that cannot be wholly rejected by Lamb's account. What is more, these accounts often include the corollary, and show how resistance also exists within a dialectical relationship between the spaces of the colony and the metropole, something that is largely absent in Lamb's analysis.

Oscar Talbot

The consequences of infinity

Mohammad Reza Naderi, *Badiou, Infinity, and Subjectivity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2023). 350pp., $125 hb., 978 1 66693 104 4

It is likely that we have only seen the beginning of English-language scholarship on the work of French philosopher Alain Badiou. Though his work has been in circulation in the Anglophone world for close to thirty years, the third volume of his imposing systematic philosophy *Being and Event (The Immanence of Truths)* was only translated into English in 2022, and translations of his seminars continue to trickle in from Columbia University Press every couple of years. We are only just beginning to grasp the full picture of Badiou's thought.

Mohammad Reza Naderi's book, *Badiou, Infinity, and Subjectivity*, is a singular contribution to this project. It goes far beyond mere exposition – it unearths the at-times submerged coherence and the necessity of the various stages of Badiou's intellectual development, revealing the reasoning behind some of the claims and positions he stakes out in his mature philosophy that could otherwise appear arbitrary. But, as he does this, a new concept emerges as itself necessary for holding together Badiou's project – and not only that, but for understanding what thinking calls for now, as a consequence of Badiou's philosophy. This is the concept of *discipline*. Disciplines are areas of being – such as Badiou's four conditions for philosophy (love, science, art and politics) – marked out for thought through the use of axioms. They are underwritten ontologically by the axiom of infinity, meaning they can be infinitely stratified to both account for new 'events' in their thinking and overcome their own ideological impasses 'in interiority'. Axioms give disciplines their 'productive constraints' that allow them to think novelty while remaining within their disciplinary boundaries – and, if being is infinite according to the axiom, there is no 'natural' end to the thinking of a discipline; the resources in being for new thinking are properly endless. But this also means there is no proper beginning to thinking (or philosophy). Thus, with his theory of discipline, Naderi is making a strong claim about what form, in the wake of the event of the axiom of infinity and significantly informed by Badiou's theory, thinking must take.

Naderi's book has three parts. Part I addresses the debate between Badiou and Jacques-Alain Miller in the pages of *Cahiers pour L'Analyse* in the 1960s. Part II is an illuminating but extremely dense analysis of the early work *Theory of the Subject*, which entails a creative reworking of Hegel and Lacan that lays the groundwork for Badiou's mature understanding of the subject. Part III is focused on the consequences of infinity and axiomatic thinking for Badiou's conception of the subject, touching on *Being and Event*. This is also the section where Naderi coheres much of the previous work of excavation into his own constructive concept of discipline.

Naderi is untangling a knot of questions that Badiou's work addresses, the answers to which ultimately make up his mature philosophy. These include the question of the 'beginning' of philosophy, the relation between being and thought, and the possibility of thinking the new. But I want to say that, at the core of Badiou's system, there is a basic *political* question, which Naderi articulates as the stakes of even the seemingly arcane debate between Badiou and Miller that opens the book: 'What was at stake was a theory that could show how ordinary people could leave their places in society and form a collective agency together with a new, common