

half-hearted attempts to make the lower classes feel at home, the economic bottom line remains: artistic institutions wish to cultivate high-rollers. It is not that the lower classes naturally feel uncomfortable around art and do not embrace it; rather, institutionalized art refuses to embrace the lower classes.

The third section is concerned with the process of building boundaries and how those boundaries are used to accomplish social and political distinctions, "how boundaries are built and used by groups whose identities are based on ascribed characteristics." The contributors in this section take their cue from the suggestion that culture repertoires (both high and low) define individuals rather than the other way around. The stress on difference and inequality is focused primarily in race and gender. Difference really is a self-propagating illusion, and writers like Cynthia Fuchs Epstein argue that it is time to move beyond the binary oppositions that define women and minorities as *Others* and outsiders. Epstein focuses on the impediments to inclusiveness and presents a strong case for a more thorough examination of these social demarcations.

The final section specifies how phenomena of exclusion appear in the political world and demonstrates how individuals remain members of larger constructs that filter into the creation of privilege. Most interesting here is Alan Wolfe's case for inclusiveness, in which he argues for required demarcations and examines the kinds of boundaries that must be maintained. Boundaries are here to stay, Wolfe says, and we must learn to live with them instead of trying to jettison them all. The essayists in the final section offer a fine-tuning of many of the ideas of those in the third, often arguing that difference is good, though the concepts of "high" and "low" may be more suspect.

Cultivating Differences is an impressive collection in both its scope and presentation. Even readers who disagree with the general thesis on the creation of inequality will find the case presented in a clear and straightforward manner with no deliberate opaqueness or clever sophistries to obscure the writers' arguments.

Leszek Kolakowski. **The Presence of Myth.** Trans. Adam Czerniawski. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Pp. 135, index. \$19.95 cloth.

Nathan Light
Indiana University

In this essay the Marxist philosopher Leszek Kolakowski has given us a perceptive treatment of the dialectic between fact and value: he explores the social dimensions of the conflict between the "mythologico-symbolic" beliefs and values through which people give their lives meaning and

purpose, and the "technologico-cognitive" approach to the world that generates useful knowledge. First published in Polish in 1972, this book on myth continues Kolakowski's study of the vital role of religion (and analogous "faiths" such as historical materialism) within society. Such faiths cannot merely be set aside in the quest for a more rational foundation for political and social orders because, he argues, cultural creativity only arises from the mythopoeic imagination and cannot be made to follow reason.

Although Kolakowski avoids a precise definition of what he means by myth because he hopes his meaning "emerges from [his] discourse as a whole" (ix), he does tell us that he "calls 'mythical' every conviction which . . . transcends finite experience." Myth is not a description of physical experience, but creates a reality that neither explains nor is determined by the "realities of experience" (26). His discussion of the dichotomy between myth and experiential facts is founded on the conviction that philosophy cannot provide a "noncontingent resting point for thought [that] can be validated as an achievement of discursive reason" (132), because it is mythopoeic activity alone that creates such truth. In good Marxist fashion he defends a dialectic consisting of both conflict and attempts to find common ground for reason's "facts" and faith's "values."

After establishing his grand dichotomy between the mythical and the real, between the meaningful or intelligible and the determinate or causal, Kolakowski uses the rest of this short book to suggest how these incommensurable realms interact within our lives. He examines the role of convictions about the nature of truth and experience within modern philosophy, especially phenomenology, and within natural and social sciences. While he feels that religious and political faiths are vital to the support of community integration and the organization of the individual consciousness, he still argues that "a mythology can be socially fruitful only when it is unceasingly suspect, constantly subject to vigilance which would frustrate its natural tendency to turn into a narcotic" (105).

Although not an anthropologist or folklorist, Kolakowski's ideas make this book productive reading for all students of culture because his ideas illuminate the nature of the gap between social science and social philosophy, and between materialist and idealist visions of social order. His discussion of phenomenological, structural, and functional ideas about society is allusive, rather than expository, because he is interested in the philosophical underpinnings of these approaches to knowledge—e.g., Piaget's "developmental epistemology"—but by extending the scope of the term *myth* to include all kinds of spiritual and political commitments he offers a valuable synthetic perspective that refuses the narrow specializations found within anthropology and sociology.

To illustrate the scope of Kolakowski's concern with myth I set out some research questions suggested by his arguments. Concrete research

using ethnographic methods to answer these questions would advance the philosophical project that Kolakowski outlines by finding realities corresponding to his abstractions and generalizations about society:

- 1) How do we ground our faith in human reason (41)? How can we distinguish reasoned facts from myths projected upon them (32)?
- 2) Does the human tendency to think in structured oppositions cause us to imagine a transcendent world of the sacred simply to balance our concept of world of experience as a whole (61)?
- 3) How does meaning arise both from the experiential needs of survival and from arbitrary convictions about the world? How can we distinguish the functional from the chosen or created aspects of our interpretations (64)?
- 4) How do people overcome the world's indifference? Why do we seek meaning made by intending beings, but project such intentions onto that which our experience tells us is indifferent to us (69-78)?

A series of questions that primarily address the issues of modernity arise from Kolakowski's work:

- 5) How do property rights and the possession of things overcome the indifference of the inanimate, and the uncertainties of social relations (77)?
- 6) How do mass production and mass media establish the conditions for the constant mutability of fashion (93)?
- 7) Why has suffering lost the social and spiritual value it may once have had (88-91)?

Only by exploring Kolakowski's dichotomy of faith and reason within social life can his assumptions be subjected to the necessary "unceasing suspicion." The difficulty Kolakowski has in maintaining this dichotomy as an absolute division of existence is seen when he says myths are useful for organizing consciousness and integrating society, while also maintaining that myths are not part of the useful and functional (104).

In his constant recourse to ideas about the priority of environmental adaptation in selecting cultural traits, and of modernity conceived of as a homogeneous experience, Kolakowski, like many before him, leaves himself open to the critique that his philosophy of human Being is a philosophy of Western Intellectual Being. He is in the predicament of all philosophers who attempt to talk about the foundations of knowledge, since he cannot transcend his own assumptions and ideas to explain all knowing, and so is necessarily bound to his own concerns and historical context. Nevertheless, the vast scope of this work's consideration of human needs and passions can invigorate the ideas of those of us who actually look closely at their expressions.