

this book very valuable for students new to the field. It provides a comprehensive introduction to the field of the sociology of law.

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Lang, B. (1991). *Writing and the moral self*. New York: Routledge, 179 pp., \$17.50 (softcover).

This book is top drawer. Its underlying theme is both important and elusive: important in that the author seeks to bridge a long-standing gap between two kinds of essay writing; elusive in that he leaves to the reader the task of deciding whether or not the gap has been bridged. Following a brief description of both approaches (whose respective supporters tend to be highly critical of one another), he sets out in a series of essays to explore the territory between them. Thus, Lang assumes that readers will be able to detect the differences and overlaps through past experience with the existing forms.

His aim is for a "middle ground between the technical abstraction of 'learned' discourse designed to win a permanent foothold on a frictionless surface, and the consumable writing of journalism meant to glow and to disappear almost simultaneously" (p. 1). Contrasting the pitfalls of the two essay forms, it is his contention that "even the hardest facts cannot be too hard to be human," and that "even for the freest, most independent self, history is inescapable" (p. 2). In effect, he takes direct aim at yet another form of dualism, a kind of "Archie Bunker" mentality that tends to paralyse both writers and readers, "seeking instead a medium at once transparent and subservient that would not speak for itself but would do only as it was told" (p. 2). It is from such a backdrop that these essays illustrating the subtle relationships between language and ethics must be read. The 19 essays tend to follow a semiotic progression (syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics).

The first section, "The Ethics of Language," includes "Grammar as Morality," wherein Lang suggests that good writing tends to be judged primarily in terms of instrumental value, often at the expense of, or even discounting the fact that, writing can be good in and of itself. In another chapter, "Pre-literacy, Post-literacy, and the Cunning of History," he examines the prevailing view that literacy is an endpoint, that the only possible hope the preliterate people have if they expect to arrive at the endpoint is to divest themselves of their own rich culture. In a third chapter he deals with "The Rights of Black English" in which Lang suggests that language at its best must be "truthful, open, direct, sincere — not evasive or obscure or misleading" (p.36). He parallels two approaches to religion, one from a journal of sociology written in the academic passive style,

the other a prayer by Martin Luther King, Jr. spoken in the everyday voice of his own people. While both are understandable, it doesn't take a linguist to recognize which meets his test of language at its best. In other chapters he considers "Anti-Anti-Obscenity" and "Pronouns and Affirmative Action," dealing with the moral dimension of language from a syntactical perspective.

In the second section, "Rewriting in the Academic," he moves to a broader approach to language pertaining to matters of direct concern to higher education. The first chapter, "Academics and the English Language," is a carefully crafted indictment of the humanities, though other disciplines do not come off unscathed. His opening statement indicates that moral judgements are not to be limited only to what is written. "By 'academic writing' I mean writing done by academics (as well, by implication, the writing they do not do)" (p. 55). He goes on to say:

At its worst, it (writing) carried the stamp of the assembly line: technologically codified, indifferent to questions of how it came to be produced or what purposes it was meant to serve. It might well, like other commodities, have sworn an oath never to give itself away. (p. 56)

In my view, this essay is worth the price of the book. In the second chapter, "The New Scholasticism," Lang suggests that the modern secular university is on shaky ground when it condemns the old scholasticism as but an outgrowth of a parochial church. "Whether one counts the number of angels who can dance on the head of a pin or the number of sibilants in a stanza of poetry, the difference doesn't amount to much" (p. 67). The chapter is less than three pages long, but its central point is unmistakable: We neglect our roots at considerable peril. The remaining essays serve as vignettes, pictures of the negative ripple effects related to the myopia outlined in the opening chapters.

The third section, "Politics at More Than Its Word," is a catalogue of language abuse extending out to the wider world. In the first two essays, Lang assumes the position espoused by Orwell that "writing could not point to anything else without first pointing to itself" (p. 7). The need for a measure of humility also comes through in an essay dealing with Thoreau. The final two chapters, the longest in the book, are concerned with the language of Nazi genocide. The author acknowledges the human horror of those events. But he goes on to point out how the coinage of new words and the twisting of the meanings of old words worked to shape the attitudes of both the Jews and the German people to misconstrue, if not accept, the diabolical goals of the Nazi leadership. It would seem that the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis is not as dead as some would like to believe: The structure of a culture's language shapes the world view of its members.

Lang merits thoughtful reading and reflection. I am reminded of an item from ancient Chinese wisdom informing us that their maps reflected the four cardinal points with which we are familiar: North, East, South, and West. However they

added a fifth — the position of the observer, the four cardinal points always considered relative to where the viewer stood. Paraphrasing Lang, how do we fail to consider the position of “the observer” in the realm of writing?

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Calam, J. (Ed.). (1991). *Alex Lord's British Columbia: Recollections of a rural school inspector, 1915-36*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 212 pp., \$15.95 (softcover).

Alex Lord was a provincial school inspector for the province of British Columbia from 1915 to 1936 and principal of the Vancouver Provincial Normal School from 1936 to 1945. It was during his principalship at the normal school that Lord promoted the need for teacher training sensitive to the realities of rural life. It was to this end that he drew upon his own vast experience in creating a collection of stories and adventures designed to prepare the novice normalite for the prospect of rural appointment.

John Calam, professor emeritus of the Department of Social and Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, has organized these memoirs according to the regions throughout which Alex Lord travelled. He begins with a somewhat lengthy 32-page introduction in which he presents a biography of Lord, a description of the educational system of the time, and his own assessment of Lord's educational philosophy and its impact upon that system. Most importantly, the introduction shows why this book needed to be published.

Alex Lord's British Columbia was painstakingly compiled, edited, and notated by a large number of people who obviously have a great deal of affection for the man. Calam has organized and edited these memoirs with a loving and reverent hand. Unfortunately, Alex Lord's memoirs lack human interest. He writes in the plodding, bureaucratic style of a man who has produced many a government report. He painstakingly describes his method of transportation and the length of delay at each stop, so that many of his stories seem to be justifying why he took so long to get where he was going. There is scant fleshing out of the people he meets or even his own emotional state at the time. For the most part he seems bored and the feeling becomes infectious. Even experiences which were probably wildly exciting adventures at the time are described in such a way that they leave the reader flatly dissatisfied. For example, the emotions evoked while shooting the rapids through a canyon on the flood-swollen Fraser River are expressed thusly: “To the inexperienced, each time would bring a thrill of exhilaration or fear according to the condition of the passengers' nerves or con-