did not conceive of as a property specific to musical representation alone – is primal to nature and the universe itself, 'pure movement, separated from the object' making visible the original identity of the absolute. Wellmann briefly describes how Schelling's Naturphilosophie fulfils this philosophical task. However, she ultimately stops short of expounding the fuller epistemological and critical implications of this development in the history of ideas. There is, for example, only a passing reference to how Hegel's subsequent *Phenomenology of Spirit* 'overshadowed' Schelling's work at this point.

Perhaps inevitably for such a wide-ranging project, the philosophical considerations are often handled briefly, and, read from a contemporary perspective, may beg more questions than they can possibly answer. The reflections on the inheritance of German romanticism, for example, stop short of any detailed discussion of dialectical philosophy, or any prolonged consideration of how this new episteme may actually have been picked up by other radical or scientifically-minded philosophies of temporality from the mid twentieth century onwards. Overall, one should treat this fascinating project as a philosophically-cognisant and visually-literate history of ideas rather than a work of philosophy per se. It will be up to others to capitalise on its historical foundations, particularly the multidisciplinary connections it makes and the close visual analysis it offers of early iconographical experiments in capturing becoming.

Nick Lambrianou

Kojève's death

Jeff Love, *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). 376pp, £30.00 hb., 978 0 23118 656 8

In the notebooks Alexandre Kojève wrote on his way to Germany, he sketched a structure of all relevant fields of knowledge, with each field labelled 'bolshevism in …': 'politics', 'religion', and so on. This is a particularly interesting series of notes for Kojève to have written, given that he was himself heading from Soviet Russia to Germany to pursue his intellectual path. Evidently Kojève attributed a central importance to the revolutionary events in Russia. Yet, it is difficult to ascertain from this outline whether he saw bolshevism as particularly relevant to his own intellectual development as someone of Russian origin, or took bolshevism as a phenomenon of world-historical significance, or whether, indeed, he had totally different aims. The inscrutability of Kojève's relationship to Lenin's leadership certainly seems apparent in the fact that he was not able to identify in his notebooks a theorist for 'bolshevism in politics'. (It seems that Kojève did not intend to take up that role for himself, since the last entry in his scheme was 'bolshevism in philosophy = me'.)

Later in life, Kojève declared himself to have already been a convinced revolutionary by the time he left Russia. Yet, while it is clear that Russia played a central role in the early Kojève's stance towards his own time, it remains difficult to discern his specific position towards the revolution. It is particularly surprising, then, that most of the secondary literature on Kojève's work has paid little if any attention to his Russian context, especially given his later propensity to refer to himself, according to Raymond Aron, as a 'Stalinist of strict observance'. Similarly, little attention has been paid either to his upbringing in Russia prior to the revolution, nor to his regular contacts with some prominent figures in the Russian diaspora. Jeff Love's new book *The Black Circle: A Life of Alexandre Kojève* is welcome, then, in so far as it promises to begin the work of engaging with a key aspect of Kojève's Russian background and influences, namely his interest in Russian literature and theology. While this limited scope has its drawbacks, there is little doubt that several of the figures to which Love refers possessed a considerable importance for Kojève. However, the Russian context of *The Black Circle* is not as clear-cut as one might assume. As such, Love's book also promises to become a controversial one.

The subtitle of the book is *A life of Alexandre Kojève*, but, in fact, there is little discussion of Kojève's own lifetime. (Marco Filoni has already provided what is likely to remain, due to the reduced availability of sources, Ko-

jève's definitive intellectual biography). Indeed, even Love's discussion of Kojève's theoretical life devotes far more attention to death and suicide than it does to any notion of life. The main title of the book is taken from a painting by Malevich that, as far as we know, Kojève never laid eyes on. As we shall see, this is the most telling aspect of Love's narrative: that it unfolds outside of Kojève's own gaze.

Despite this, the book is organised as if Kojève's Russian context was at its centre: it is divided into three sections, the first of which is entitled 'Russian Contexts', with the following two entitled 'The Hegel Lectures' and 'The Later Writings', respectively. The last two sections are followed by an epilogue called 'The Grand inquisitor', alluding to Dostoevsky. While this arrangement suggests some sort of dialectical structure, the sections remain significantly unconnected. In fact, the book presents two disjointed narratives: the first advances Love's reading of some Russian authors (Dostoevsky, Soloviev and Fedorov), while the second focuses on Kojève's works, beginning with a presentation of his early works, which are mostly reduced to the seminar on Hegel, followed by his 'later works', a category under which Love subsumes anything that Kojève wrote after the Hegel seminar. Yet, from the early, more draft-like writings to the later, more systematic ones, Love fails to recognise any change across Kojève's oeuvre. Instead, Love argues, the later writings are nothing but a 'painstaking development' of the earlier work.

Kojève's path towards philosophy was significantly influenced by his early formal education. Like most other intellectuals educated in imperial Russia, no explicit engagement with philosophy was provided, and it was through Russian literature, particularly Dostoevsky, that philosophical ideas were first presented. (Levinas recounted, for example, that this was the case for his education too). There is little doubt that Dostoevsky's influence on Kojève was paramount. However, this is never properly explored in *The Black Circle*; instead, there are mere extrapolations of ideal types taken from Dostoevsky's books – for example, the tension between theory and practice in the man from the underground, or the relation between suicide and theory in Kirillov - that are later associated with Kojève. No reference is made to Dostoevsky's legacy or the various interpretations of his work. Kojève's own references to the novelist are equally ignored. Love merely acknowledges in two footnotes that Kojève's biographers – Marco Filoni and Dominique Auffret – have already established the relevance of Dostoevsky for Kojève's work.

Love's analysis of Vladimir Soloviev, on whom Kojève wrote his thesis and published a few articles, is undertaken in a similar manner. Love presents Soloviev's conception of Sophia and the Godman, but there is no discussion of Kojève's own writings on Soloviev. In addition, the context in which Kojève wrote and published on Soloviev is totally ignored. It is irrelevant for Love that the discussion of Soloviev's Sophia was of central importance for the Russian diaspora in Paris, including Lossky, Berdyaev and Bulgakov, with which Kojève is known to have been in contact when he published his two French articles on Soloviev. Similarly, in discussing Fedorov, the last Russian reference in his book, Love offers no explanation for his influence on Kojève, and his inclusion seems to merely advance one further ideal type, namely, the removal of death from human life and the overcoming of the dependence on biology. Certainly Kojève dwells extensively on death, but the inclusion of Fedorov is only justified once the Russian context has been reduced to a debate about death. What at first sight may seem mere methodological inconsistencies in *The Black Circle* later become the basis for Love's arguments. The ideal types provide the foundations for the narrative under which Kojève is read, and Kojève's dialogues and more layered positions are repeatedly set aside in order to restate the centrality of Love's own concerns.

Love's interpretation of Kojève's own work is slightly different. Here he does break some new ground. Unlike the majority of Kojève's twentieth-century readers, Love does not restrict his attention to the Hegel seminar, dedicating some consideration to the *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, as well as to the books Kojève wrote during his work as a French bureaucrat. Even when Love's analysis turns to the Hegel seminar, he draws out some of the crucial steps that are usually overlooked or ignored, particularly in the Anglophone world, where the book that resulted from the seminar was only partially translated, and where the debate with Leo Strauss has guided most interpretations. Here Love sheds light on Kojève's approach to death and focuses his interpretation through Kojève's notion of Wisdom as the basis for an overcoming of the distance between theory and practice.

(This section of the Hegel lectures is available in the English translation, but the influence of Soloviev's Sophia, as well as its importance for the debate concerning the end of history, make it more relevant than has previously been recognised.) This is no small feat in the interpretation of an author who is so often remembered only for his presentation of Hegel's 'master-slave dialectic' and the end of history thesis. No doubt the increased availability of many of Kojève's previously unpublished texts has made this shift of emphasis easier, but realising the promise of these texts is only slowly gaining pace. The problem is, however, that Love does not perform this shift in order to provide any in-depth, philological or conceptual analysis of Kojève's proposals. Instead, Love redirects the attention to these other elements in order to construct a new, overarching narrative about Kojève's works, in which Kojève is presented as the introducer of an as-yet-unexamined criticism of the modern, free, historical individual.

According to Love, Kojève's criticism of individualism was the starting point of his reading of Hegel. The centrality of death in Kojève's reading of the master-slave dialectic would here be the most radical critique of individualism. That is, if the individual is to be perceived as totally free, it must be equally free from death. Love engages elsewhere with other elements of Kojève's criticism of individualism, but they all end up returning to death, as he reduces every action other than suicide to a form of animal self-preservation. In fact, the last paragraph of *The Black Circle* before the epilogue presents Kojève as an open apologist of suicide. From this perspective, Kojève's focus on the master-slave dialectic should be perceived not so much as a philosophical engagement with Hegel, but as the starting point from which to narrate the history of the abandonment of human subservience to preservation. Assuming that Kojève is able to overcome this submission to the power of death, the human form that is left is no longer a self-asserting being that takes its conservation as its ultimate goal. Yet the main problem with Love's analysis is that once he establishes the relation to death as that element which separates human from animal, he forces Kojève into the schema of ideal types he presented in the section on the Russian context. According to this point of view, Kojève would either have to defend a Fedorovian overcoming of the biological determinants of human life (i.e. achieving eternal life), or a Dostoevskian/Kirillovian refusal of the subjection to biological death (i.e. suicide).

This criticism of individualism that is attributed to Kojève would simultaneously avoid the pitfalls of liberal individualism and communist collectivism. But, while it is relevant to recognise this contribution of Kojève, one can find plenty of other parallel projects in the French culture of the time, from Georges Bataille's *Acéphale* to Emmanuel Mounier's personalism. Love neither relates Kojève to the pervasive criticisms of liberal individualism during the period, nor does he delineate those ideologies that Kojève would be opposing. Even without following a historicist path, it would be relevant to inquire as to how Kojève followed such a course without falling into the fascist trap that became so dominant in the inter-war period. However, not even in Love's presentation of Kojève's work as an open polemic against Heidegger is there any reference to such debates.

Love is correct in stating that several of Kojève's works stand as a direct response to Heidegger. In 1931, Kojève wrote a book on atheism (recently translated into English by Love himself) whose terms are clearly in dialogue with Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and Kojève spent the rest of the 1930s writing book reviews that presented Heideggerian phenomenology as the most promising branch of contemporary German philosophy. It is true that in the introduction to his 'Introduction to the System of Knowledge', Kojève says that Heidegger took a wrong turn, but he still acknowledges the influence of the 'ex-Heidegger'. Most importantly, the appendix to Kojève's seminar on death – to which Love rightly devotes considerable attention (but over-biologising it and therefore missing Kojève's point) – is a clear dialogue with Heidegger.

The briefest way to indicate how Love misses Kojève's point on death – by associating it with a need to commit suicide – is to look at Kojève's analysis of Kandinsky's work; a text that Love does not analyse. In Kojève's approach to Kandinsky's 'concrete art', as he called it, Kojève claimed that it was the first to fully overcome the attempt to transcribe the given into art. This would eliminate the unavoidable shortcoming of an art that would try to be wholly faithful to what it represents, abstracting from what constitutes it: its life. Only once art is assumed to be this death, as the removal of life from the given, can art become fully concrete and produce

artworks that retain their full value only in and through the artwork, therefore embracing an attributelessness through abandoning the given as its object. The main argument of *The Black Circle* remains at the abstract level (i.e. biology), without stepping into the concrete (i.e. discourse). As a result, the contradictions that Love explores in Kojève's work miss their target. To focus on the actual contradictions in Kojève's texts would require, not Love's abstractions, but a concrete presentation of Kojève's ideas.

Unlike Kojève's own book reviews, I will not finish this one by arguing that Love's book should not be read. Instead, I will conclude by cautioning the reader not to expect to find in Love a dialogue with either Kojève or the history of Russian or twentieth-century thought, but rather a contentious use of Kojève to construct a contemporary argument against individualism. To properly engage the latter would require a much more refined reading than I have provided here, showing how it is current political debates that ultimately inform *The Black Circle*'s account of Kojève.

Jorge Varela

How can a word be bad?

David Sosa (ed.) *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). 256pp., $60 hb., 978 01 98758 655.

'Slurs' - understood here to be particular words designed by convention to derogate targeted individuals or groups - are a puzzling category of speech, which raise a variety of philosophical questions pertaining to their mechanics, meaning, use and moral/political effects. They constitute a particular sort of speech act – slurring words *do something*, namely, harm individuals or groups in particular ways. David Sosa's collection, *Bad Words*, brings together leading voices in the philosophy of language in an effort to begin to solve some important puzzles: in particular, the question 'How can a word be *bad*?' (and consequently, 'How can slurs be *bad words*?').

The first chapter by Luvell Anderson, 'Calling, Addressing, and Appropriation', offers an account of the difference between Black and non-Black uses of 'the N-word', and specifically, how it can be the case that Black uses of the word can be non-derogatory in some instances. Dominant understandings of slurs, Anderson contends, are unable to account for the non-derogatory use, and why it is restricted to certain linguistic users (i.e., why it can only be non-derogatory when uttered by certain people). With the important caveat that acceptance of in-group uses of 'the N-word' is far from universal amongst Black people, it is nevertheless the case that there are members of the Black community who see the term as, in some contexts, an empowering expression of camaraderie, relatively autonomous from White misuse. After surveying three possible answers to this puzzle, and identifying shortcomings of each, Anderson draws on the concepts of *speech communities* and *communities of practice* to develop a distinction between *calling* and *addressing,* which he contends has the explanatory power to make sense of the specific illocutionary act undertaken by in-group members, and which allows for neutral or even endearing uses of the term.

Though Anderson restricts his analysis to an explanation of only one slur (and the appropriate contexts for its non-derogatory use), his argument has the potential for broader application than this one particular case. For example, his theory might be adaptable to cover in-group uses of other slurs, including, perhaps, non-derogatory uses of 'queer', 'butch', 'faggot' or 'dyke' among members of the LGBTQ+ community. To *address* a fellow in-group member as a 'dyke' might carry the exact opposite valence as when an out-group member *calls* that same person a 'dyke', where the former has a potentially positive (but at least neutral) connotation and the latter likely has a negative one. Overall, Anderson makes a compelling case that one must have the proper standing to perform certain illocutionary acts (i.e., must be part of the relevant *community of practice*), which has additional potential applications not taken up here.

Elisabeth Camp, in her 'Dual Act Analysis of Slurs', contends that the use of a slur effectively performs two