

REVIEWS

Bambrough: Moral Scepticism and Moral Knowledge

Renford Bambrough, *Moral Scepticism and Moral Knowledge*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979

I read this book with some nostalgia. It was through Bambrough's lectures and teaching on this and other topics that I was introduced to philosophy when I was a student. What attracted me then was his firm and bold commitment to definite philosophical theses. He was not afraid to advance general theories, at a time when too many philosophers were immersed in the minutiae of detailed analysis. This book has the same positive qualities. It is a vigorous defence of moral objectivism (and is interestingly read alongside J.L. Mackie's recent book *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, which does the same for subjectivism).

Bambrough's defence rests in part on an appeal to common sense, in the spirit of G.E. Moore. This has its obvious dangers. Readers of *Radical Philosophy* will not need to be reminded of the sorts of ideological rationalisations and prejudices that can masquerade as 'common sense'. 'I know that here is a hand' is all very well. There is a case for saying that, at this basic ontological level, to reject common sense is to reject the very possibility of shared rational discourse. Can we, however, be so confident of the dictates of moral common sense? Bambrough's moral example is 'We know that this child, who is about to undergo what would otherwise be painful surgery, should be given an anaesthetic before the operation. Therefore we know at least one moral proposition to be true.' But what about, say, 'We know that adultery is immoral'? This may be asserted with just the same degree of conviction, the same widely shared unanimity, and the same sense that this is epistemological bedrock, that further reasons neither need nor can be given. F.H. Bradley, indeed, used this very example in precisely this way. Clearly, however, one person's common sense is another person's nonsense.

To be fair, however, Bambrough does not rely straightforwardly on the appeal to common sense. He employs it only in the context of other kinds of argument. These other arguments are essentially concerned with responding to the claim that there are special features of moral discourse which rule out objectivism. Bambrough's response is two-fold. In part he accepts that there are features which

moral discourse possesses to a special degree, and to which an adequate objectivism must do justice. At a more general level, however, he wants to insist that these supposed special features are in fact shared by other kinds of discourse. Scientific discourse, for example, and indeed logical argument in general, is normative, involves emotional commitment, leaves the participants free to disagree and to form their own opinions, and so on. Therefore it cannot plausibly be claimed that moral discourse, because it has these features, must contain no objective truths. And in arguing this point Bambrough is, I think, at his best.

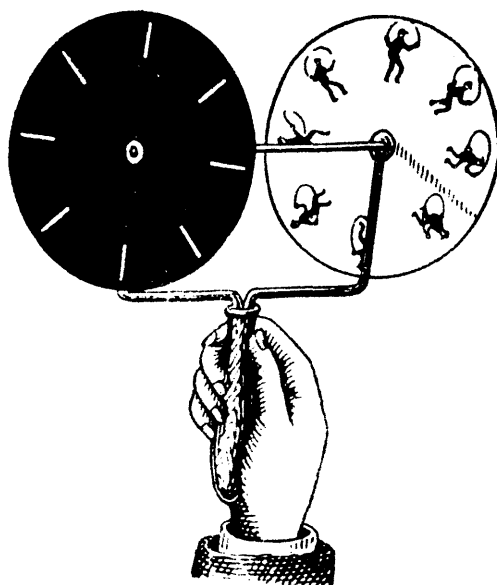
So far his point is a negative one: moral scepticism cannot be defended on the grounds of alleged differences between moral discourse and other kinds of discourse. I become more doubtful when he puts the same kind of argument to a more positive use, and seems to suggest that the parallels between morality and other forms of reasoning can actually serve to refute scepticism. He seems to imply that the absurdity of scepticism about, say, accepting the validity of a deductive inference may, as it were, rub off on moral scepticism. I am not sure that the parallelism can be used in that way. Scepticism about logical validity is surely more basic than moral scepticism, because it is concerned with the more formal features of arguments, and therefore applies to *all* arguments *including* moral arguments. As such it is more easily answered, for the sceptic is compelled to abandon it as soon as he engages in any argument at all. On the other hand, the moral sceptic can engage in some kinds of argument while still hanging on to his scepticism about specifically moral arguments.

No completely general arguments about the nature of practical reasoning can, it seems to me, establish the thesis of moral subjectivism, and Bambrough shows this very effectively. But I also think that no completely general arguments can establish the thesis of moral objectivism. The only way to try to settle the issue is to look at the actual *content* of practical reasoning, to *look and see* whether there are disagreements (e.g. between utilitarians and deontologists) of which we have to say that no further evidence or argument could conceivably resolve them. This Bambrough never does. His whole discussion remains relentlessly meta-ethical. Despite his insistence that we do possess moral

knowledge, he gives almost no indication of what the content of this knowledge might be. I suppose this is because he believes that it is essentially a knowledge of particular cases - he thinks that practical reasoning typically takes the form 'This action must be wrong, because it is like that one, and we know that that one is wrong.' Nevertheless this stress on particularity should not prevent him

from generalizing about what *kinds* of activity tend to be rationally defensible or unjustifiable. It did not deter Aristotle from doing so, and I would think that Bambrough would be happy to take Aristotle as a model.

Richard Norman



Schrader-Frechette: Nuclear Power and Public Policy

K.S. Schrader-Frechette, *Nuclear Power and Public Policy*, D. Reidel, 1980, \$19.95 hc, \$10.50 pb.

If there were a major accident in one of the present generation of US nuclear reactors, the devastation caused would be equivalent to that of 1000 Hiroshimas. There would be 45,000 immediate deaths, and 100,000 cases of cancer, genetic damage and other injury. A vast area of the country would be contaminated and property damage would run to as much as \$17 billion. There are now 65 nuclear plants operating in the USA, and 70 more are under construction.

This book explores the ethical and political implications of using nuclear technology to generate electricity. The author's aim is to expose inconsistencies and fallacies in the arguments of those who insist that we should follow the nuclear road. Two kinds of criticism in particular are levelled against them. They are accused of espousing a utilitarian ethic and of committing the naturalistic fallacy.

Utilitarianism is a convenient posture for those who believe that technology is an essentially liberating force. In this context it is wielded to argue that the harm done to the 'minority' (including future generations) who are damaged by a nuclear accident is outweighed by the benefits of the nuclear option to society as a whole. Against this the author argues that individual rights are inalienable, and enshrined in the American Constitution. In other words, she insists that the minority rights to health and safety in the case of a nuclear accident must be protected. She shows that current US legislation fails to do this, and is grotesquely biased in favour of the nuclear industry, whose interests allegedly correspond with those of society as a whole.

The naturalistic fallacy - deriving 'ought' from 'is' - also plays a significant role in the defence of nuclear power. On the basis of a contentious scientific estimate of the (allegedly low) risk of an accident, i.e. of what the risk is, it is asserted that the risk ought to be accepted. This does not follow. For the actual consequences of an accident, no matter how unlikely, may be so horrendous as to outweigh the argument that the risk is worth taking - particularly when alternative, safer forms of energy production have been proposed.

The rigid constraints imposed on a productive system by an 'advanced' technology are nowhere more apparent than in the case of nuclear power. Even if we wanted to, we could not shut down every nuclear plant tomorrow. In Britain there are 27 of them operating or planned into our energy grid. At this stage alternative energy sources cannot replace them - which is hardly surprising since in the USA, for example, 83% of government funds have gone nuclear's way. What's more, even if we did switch to alternative energy sources by 2000, say, the problem of disposing of nuclear waste will remain with us for literally thousands of years! No satisfactory storage system has yet been developed. In the interim we face considerable risks of contamination and genetic damage from leaks from the present storage facilities.

Some readers of RP may dislike Schrader-Frechette's emphasis on individual (bourgeois?) rights, as enshrined in the American Constitution, and the polemical use to which she puts it. It would be a pity if that were to prejudice their perception of this book. It is an invaluable and fascinating piece of applied philosophy in a crucial area of public policy. I found it compelling reading.

John Krige

Mouffe: Gramsci and Marxist Theory

C. Mouffe (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £9.50 hc, £5.95 pb

This is both an excellent collection of essays and one which is extremely valuable for the English reader. Translated here for the first time, in a readable, idiomatic English, are a number of recent and influential interpretative essays on Gramsci which for too long have been beyond the reach of an insular English eye. Thus the collection opens with Norberto Bobbio's classic analysis ('Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society') delivered to the first Congress on Gramsci studies in Italy in the late 1960s, and which has provided the reference point for a good many engagements with Gramsci in the past decade. It is clear that the editor of the collection, Chantal Mouffe, has a number of disagreements with Bobbio, as with many of the authors of the essays presented here. Some of these divergences are touched on, briefly but informatively, in the Introduction. But on the whole the reader is offered a range of conflicting assessments of Gramsci: true perhaps to the pluralist spirit of the editor, there is no attempt at synthesis, no attempt to conclude by presenting 'the' Gramsci. Side by side stands Leonardo Paggi's Gramsci ('Gramsci's General Theory of Marxism'), as recuperated and endorsed by the editors of the journal *Telos*, with Chantal Mouffe's own paper ('Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci') which has its origins firmly in post-althusserianism, and which concludes with an invocation to Foucault and Derrida. The only common element in these essays is the concern - as the title of the book emphasizes - with Gramsci's contribution to marxist theory, and without exception all of the essays carefully and usefully illuminate particular aspects of this theme.

This explicit attention to marxist theory, and the investigations into the philosophical framework of Gramsci's marxism, do nothing to obscure the politics of the project - which in many respects is sharpened by this serious attention to conceptual issues. I can think of no other work in English which tackles as cogently as this the specific theoretical transformations which occurred in Gramsci's rethinking of marxism. And it must be a tribute to Gramsci that theory and politics were so intimately connected in his own work that any assessment of the nature of his theoretical revolution carries with it quite immediate consequences for contemporary politics. In her Introduction, Chantal Mouffe raises the questions of Gramsci's relation to Lenin and leninism; the pertinency of his distinction between East and West, and to what extent Gramsci may be seen as a theorist of the West; the role of eurocommunism; and finally, Gramsci's conception of socialism itself. And, as she rightly notes at the very start of the book, the variant appropriations and claims on Gramsci have never been dissociable from the strategies of the Italian Communist Party and the legacy of the shifting elements of the Gramsci legend inspired by Palmiro Togliatti.

Out of this enormous variety of theoretical and political questions only a few can be mentioned here. The implicit weight of these essays, as a whole, tends to undermine the instrumentalism characteristic of some of the earliest commentaries on Gramsci which emerged from Britain and North America. The concept of the expanded or integral state - viewing the state as a complex formation, internally traversed by a set of antagonisms, constituted on the principle of universalism - is examined in its different aspects by the majority of the authors. The gravitational pull of this approach, which I think exists

in the logic of Gramsci's own theorizing, is towards a new theory of state power within marxism - although this is certainly not to ignore the fundamental precedents inaugurated by earlier marxists with whom Gramsci was in constant theoretical dialogue; the fact of this dialogue is clear not only from his early political journalism, but also from those magnificent and penetrating reflections recorded in his *Prison Notebooks*. Interconnected with his rethinking of the state is the problem of the consensual determinations within class domination, a dimension located not only within the private sphere (civil society), but of the state itself. This is raised most centrally in the essay by Chantal Mouffe. Paralleling many of the themes of Ernesto Laclau's *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* Chantal Mouffe insists on the non-class-belonging of ideological elements as a key moment in the theoretical shift away from a class reductionist analysis. Thus she tends to think hegemony not as a dominant world view, nor as cultural or ideological inculcation of the subordinate groups (propaganda reinforcing a false consciousness) but rather as the principle which articulates - for the benefit of the dominant class bloc - a whole range of ideologies. 'The unifying principle of an ideological system is constituted by the hegemonic principle which serves to articulate all the other ideological elements. It is always the expression of a fundamental class.' This offers one route away from instrumentalism and class reductionism. It is arguable that Gramsci never thought his own work in quite this way, and that this approach tends towards a superstructuralist reading of Gramsci which, in a different way, is proposed by Bobbio (and interestingly replied to by Jacques Texier in this volume in his essay 'Gramsci, Theoretician of the Superstructures'). But there is no doubting the fruitfulness of the theoretical issues raised by this reformulation.

No political *strategy* emerges directly from this or any of the other theoretical conclusions in the book, although the shared commitment of the authors to a politics conceived as a 'war of position' defines a particular sort of political activity - the contours, if not the content, of the political terrain. Some claim this as eurocommunism; others as a continuation and sophistication of the essentials of Lenin. Many to the left of the PCI insist on the latter position, proclaiming Gramsci's inherent leninism (as did, it must be remembered, Gramsci himself). The implication of Chantal Mouffe's contribution (although the relation with Lenin is not mentioned in detail) is to follow a rather more eurocommunist, pluralist Gramsci. What is of especial interest within this collection is the politically quite intransigent paper by Massimo Salvadori (the author of the recently translated biography of Kautsky): in 'Gramsci and the PCI, Two Conceptions of Hegemony', he argues, from a position to the *right* of the PCI, that Gramsci represents the highest and most complete point of leninism which cannot, with any political and intellectual honesty, be accommodated to the present strategic practice of the PCI, and thus urges the Party to drop its commitment to its gramscian dynastic past. Thus many of the politically and theoretically contentious issues which are crystallized in these essays hinge on the central question of pluralism. This again is touched on - perhaps rather too briefly in this instance - in the Introduction.

The last point which can be dealt with here relates to Gramsci as a theoretician and revolutionary of the West, a marxist whose theory is confined by both geography and conjuncture. Biagio de

Giovanni ('Lenin and Gramsci: State, Politics and Party') puts the strongest case for this 'Western Gramsci' (a point of view similar, in many respects, to Perry Anderson's in *New Left Review* 100). The tendency amongst most of the other authors is to stress more strongly the innovations within marxist theory, in general, which result from Gramsci. This is expressed clearly and firmly by Leonardo Paggi. It is apparent also from Chantal Mouffe's analysis of Gramsci's conception of the national-popular, suggesting that the very terms of the debate are

transformed by Gramsci (and thereby attaching less significance to the enigma which surrounds the Lenin-Gramsci question). And lastly, in an absorbing essay, Christine Buci-Glucksmann ('State, Transition and Passive Revolution') discusses at length Gramsci's analysis of a passive revolution operating administratively, within the apparatuses of the state, and looks to Eastern as well as Western Europe for a revolution in which the masses will be active and determining, an 'anti-passive' revolution.

Bill Schwarz

On Film Theory

B. Henderson, *A Critique of Film Theory*, New York, E.P. Dutton, 1980, \$8.95 pb

J. Petley, *Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933-45*, London, BFI, 1979, £2.45 pb

M. Chanan, *The Dream that Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain*, RKP, 1980, £12.50 hc

These three recent books signal not only the flourishing state of film studies, but also the diversity of interests contained within that rubric: the analysis of film texts; the sociology and economics of the industry; the history and prehistory of cinema. Additionally, and more importantly, they provide a context for reflecting on the thorny question of the relation between theory and empirical/historical research, not just in film studies but in the study of culture more generally.

Brian Henderson's *Critique of Film Theory* consists of a series of essays reproduced for the most part from the pages of *Film Quarterly*. These essays, dating back to 1970, are now presented, with a new preface and introductory sections, as a unified body of critical work. In the first section of the book, Henderson's objective is to examine the existing body of film theory, and he provides a thorough and insightful analysis of the work of Eisenstein, Bazin and Godard. This section

'concerns itself with a number of fundamental issues that recur persistently in the apparently very different theories of each.... They include the relations between film and reality, the relations between film and narrative, and the question of whether film is a language and, if so, what kind of language.' (pp.3-4)

Henderson seeks to establish what remains useful in these theories for his project of 'formulating a new, entirely adequate theory of film' (p48). The second part of *CFT* is taken up with a detailed discussion of film semiotics. An impressively thorough and meticulous examination of the work of Christian Metz - one of the most incisive diagnoses of the faults and inadequacies of his early work - aims to 'defend film theory and its study against the challenges of film semiotics' (p.xv).

Henderson does not elaborate his epistemological position at great length, but clearly it owes much to the position put forward by Althusser. Strongly objecting to 'empiricism', and ritually invoking 'discourses such as psychoanalysis and historical materialism', he argues that 'theory must construct its object and the field that defines it' (p134). Henderson moves along the familiar and well-worn tramway of theoretical practice, divorcing the production of film theory from its social and historical context. Rather, it becomes 'an autonomous realm of discourse'. Although he does not use the Althusserian terms himself, we can see Henderson's approach as the application of conceptual tools (GII) to

previous theoretical work (the GI of Bazinian, Metzian 'theory') with the aim of producing a pristine, unflawed GIII. In this 'structural approach', theory assumes a truly fetishised existence. An abstract and endless process - 'the continual improvement and classification of the principles and assumptions of film criticism' (p49) - it heads off in splendid autonomy, into the infinity of its own theoretical space.

Accepting the validity of undertaking an elaboration of film theory, it is nonetheless in its effective divorce of film theory from film criticism that *CFT* presents problems. The vitality of Bazin, Eisenstein and Godard comes from the integration of theory and criticism in a series of provisional, exploratory and suggestive formulations. Occasionally Henderson himself looks at individual films and directors - notably in his discussion of Godard - and he then produces many stimulating insights. Yet he constantly reverts to the 'metacriticism or philosophy of criticism' that is film theory.

Julian Petley's contribution to film studies is of a markedly different kind. In a broad sociological analysis, he aims to show how the 'structure and products of the German film industry during the Third Reich were largely determined by economic, ideological and political factors stretching back into the industry's early history' (p1).

Drawing extensively on the work of German researchers Wolfgang Becker and Jürgen Spiker, Petley gives most consideration to the 'economic dimensions' of the film industry. In a detailed and useful account of the process of economic concentration, his main object is to oppose 'those conventional writings on Third Reich Cinema which explain its organisation and structure in terms of Unilateral governmental control and restructuring of a largely hostile industry'. Against this Petley argues that the reorganisation of the film industry during this period was, rather, 'undertaken by government and the most powerful sectors of the industry working in closest co-operation and very much to the latter's advantage' (p1). After the crisis in the industry during the Weimar period, the most powerful forces in the industry saw the need for restructuring and rationalisation; they aimed, then, to set the cinema on a profitable basis through the development of a monopolistic structure. In this respect, *Capital and Culture* stresses the continuity between the structure of monopoly capitalism and that of fascism.

Of central importance, along with the discussion of the industry and of film production, is an analysis of film texts, the cultural commodities for popular consumption. Refusing the separation of propaganda and entertainment films, Petley establishes a body of films dealing with Germany's past ('to focus on the production of memory, that is to say on history constructed in a specific conjuncture, and on the positions which were set out for the contemporary subject' - p106). He goes on to stress that a study of these films shows that the sphere of filmic

ideology is relatively autonomous from the economic: 'the economic structure of the film industry was that of a monopoly capitalist enterprise, yet many of the films produced throughout the period in question ... quite clearly relate to petty-bourgeois ideological discourse' (p23). It was this 'petty bourgeois ideology which really penetrated the working class' (p24).

Whilst the descriptive detail of *C&C* is useful and informative, there are real problems in the theoretical structure that underpins it. Like Henderson - though in very different ways given his broader sociological interests - Petley turns to Althusserian theory for guidance: to the idea of the social formation as consisting of three levels or instances, each relatively autonomous from the others; to the related theory of ideological state apparatuses; to the theory of ideological interpellation. In fact, Petley draws less on Althusser himself than upon later, 'post-Althusserian', transformations of the original texts. A major inspiration is the Lacano-Althusserian synthesis perpetrated by the journal *Screen*, and *C&C* quotes extensively from Coward and Ellis' *Language and Materialism* as if it were holy writ.

It is in the attempt to integrate theory and empirical material that *C&C* flounders. In the space of a review this question can only be adumbrated, so I will limit my comments to two, related, points.

(1) It is a common observation that Althusserian theory is inimical to historical and empirical observation. Invariably, attempts to operationalise it lead to the external imposition of its mechanical categories upon resistant material. This process can be seen, to take just one example from *C&C*, in Petley's use of the term 'relative autonomy'. In attempting to provide a unified theory of the various aspects of the cinema within the social formation, he seeks to relate the ideological sphere of films to the economic 'level'. Little attempt is made, however, to explore this relation in its historical specificity. Rather, the concept of relative autonomy is introduced as a *deus ex machina*, providing a false solution - a logical rather than a historical solution - to the problem. The relationship is obscured, rather than illuminated, and a real examination of the historical materials is warded off. The two spheres - economic and ideological - remain in an (alienated) externality to each other, reflected in their distinct and separate treatments within the book.

(2) On the whole, in *C&C*, the failure of Althusserian theory to conceptually inform the historical materials results in the complete disjunction of historical and theoretical treatment. Thus, the empirical description of economic concentration (chapters 2-3) owes nothing to Althusserian theory. And it can hardly be said that the elaborate discussion of 'ideological practice' in chapter 1 is incorporated into Petley's chapter on films, which remains purely empirical and descriptive. Symptomatic of this failure, theoretical sections and empirical sections and chapters remain separate and distinct within *C&C*. Ironically, it is perhaps just this rift that redeems the book, allowing the historical material to remain useful, insofar as it is detached from theoretical concerns.

A major weakness of *C&C* resides in its failure to convey any sense of the experiential reality of the time - for both film workers and audiences - characterised as it is by the Althusserian view of history as a purely objective 'process without a subject', the abstract play of impersonal forces. In this respect, in its view of history, it contrasts markedly with the third, and by far the most interesting, of these books, Michael Chanan's *The Dream That Kicks*. The latter, characterised by its

attempt to combine an examination of the objective and subjective dimensions of film history, has a depth that is lacking in *C&C*. Although it is often oblique and mannered to the point of being infuriating, it succeeds in being stimulating and lively in a way that Henderson and Petley are not.

TDTK documents the prehistory and early years of British cinema, aiming to locate it in the social, economic, technical and cultural context of its genesis.

'The starting point for the history of cinema must therefore be an acknowledgement that cinema (or film), before it acquired any identity of its own, was immersed in a series of histories which conditioned the process of invention. These histories are those of the relevant aspects of science and technology, economics, aesthetics, and so on; and the prehistory (and, later, history) of cinema is interwoven with them.' (p10)

In undertaking this task, Chanan traces an intricate path through such fields as the development of optics and the invention of celluloid, the music hall and theatre, the commoditisation of culture and the patent system. In the space of a review it is not possible to detail the complex mosaic of phenomena, the dense network of relations in which cinema is captured, but clearly this account of the processes and relations constituting and surrounding cinema is of great importance, and the historical analysis of *TDTK* represents a (theoretical) advance from existing accounts of the early film industry.

Undoubtedly there are problems in Chanan's book. In many ways it is - to use a term that the author himself adopts to describe the early process of invention in the cinema - a 'bricolage': 'this means (crudely) knocking something together from whatever happens to be at hand' (p51). This is especially so in the section on 'the conditions of intervention' and in that on 'theories of perception', where Chanan turns to topics apparently far removed from the cinema, failing to really develop and adapt the topics to his central theme. The reader is required to make connections that Chanan suggests but does not pursue. His enthusiasms lead him to linger in recondite fields where he works over the available secondary sources. And it is this reliance on such sources that is perhaps the most serious problem in the book. Rather than upon a thorough examination of the primary materials of the time, *TDTK* rests upon an idiosyncratic fusion of disparate secondary materials. In this respect it certainly does not replace existing work, such as Rachel Low's *History of the British Film*, but forms an important companion volume.

Despite these problems, however, *TDTK* is an important book, and it is so within the terms we have used for discussing *C&C* and *CFT*. What is important about this book is the way theory is, properly, made into a research tool, subordinated to the task of historical research and analysis. Significant is Chanan's early declaration about his interest in ideology:

'I don't want to write a theoretical dissertation on the subject [of ideology] as a precondition for approaching the history of cinema.... I regard this as a mistaken approach, because I don't see how ideology and its effects can be studies apart from historical instances.' (p8)

This is not to deny that *TDTK* is a theoretical text: it is that. But it is not theoretic. Chanan aims to make theoretical abstractions concrete, to give them historical texture; the historical material is not present merely to substantiate and illustrate a theory of ISAs or of culture. Rather, the author uses theory to bring out the social relations embodied in the early twentieth-century cultural institutions, providing insights into the relation

between mass culture and time economy; the production of new modes of perception; individualism and collectivism; the relation between production and consumption, etc.

Marxist theory cannot aspire to produce a general, definitive theory of the cinema, ideology or culture. It can exist only as a research tool essential for penetrating the opaque 'second nature' of capitalist societies:

'It must dissolve the rigidity of an object frozen in the here-and-now into a field of tensions between the possible and the actual; for each of these two - the possible and the actual - depends on the other for its very existence. In other words theory is inalienably critical.' [1]

Such theory must be seen as heuristic and explanatory: 'a developing knowledge, albeit a provisional and approximate knowledge with many silences and impurities' [2]. Provisional because, as a moment of its object, theory necessarily submits to historical change along with that object. History is a process, and, as such, it subverts any fixity of concept. To attempt a general theory of culture (ideology, or cinema) in the positivist Althusserian

sense is to fetishise theory - to privilege its logical over its historical aspect, to privilege the scientific dimension over that of critique. This dehistoricisation of theory seems possible to Althusserians only because history itself has become frozen and static in their structural theory of the 'social formation'.

Against this kind of theorisation, *TDTK* opens the way for a historical, yet still theoretical, understanding of the cinema. One that views cinema (and culture generally) not in terms of base/superstructure models but as an aspect of the capital relation - an eminently historical relation - and in terms of the concrete relations of production, distribution and consumption that cinema mediates in specific historical contexts.

Kevin Robins

Notes

- 1 T.W. Adorno, 'Sociology and Empirical Research', in P. Connerton (ed.), *Critical Sociology*, Penguin, 1976, p.238.
- 2 E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, Merlin, 1978, p.242.

Vestiges of Positivism

E. Nagel, *The Structure of Science: Problems in the Logic of Scientific Explanation*, RKP, 1979, 4.95 pb

The overtly theoretical character of modern science has been a considerable embarrassment to positivist philosophies of science. Attempts to reduce theoretical concepts to observational terms have consistently failed either to offer a plausible account of the nature and status of theories, or to provide detailed reduction procedures for any of the important concepts actually employed in the sciences. Since it was unrealistic to suppose that the sciences would discard theory, positivists have laboured within a compromise. They have sought to discover whether these sciences might somehow be accommodated within a *modified* empiricism.

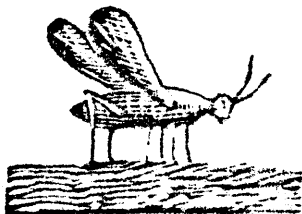
The fact that the philosophy of science is judged by a serious and respected publishing house to need a new issue of *The Structure of Science* seems to indicate the failure of that compromise. Alternatively, it provides evidence of the almost glacial progress of that discipline over the last twenty-five years. When this book first appeared in 1961 it was the most detailed, cogent and comprehensive defence of an empiricist philosophy of science. It should also have been the last. Instead, Nagel's problems remain by and large those of modern positivists. The yearly crop of books which examine and re-examine induction, verification, laws and theories still cling to the view that these problems must remain unchallenged and unchallengeable by developments in the sciences. It would therefore be tedious to repeat the general criticisms that have been levelled against positivism since these have been rigorously developed in popular texts (e.g. Hindess, *Philosophy and Methodology in the Social Sciences*; Keat & Urry, *Social Theory as Science*; Willer & Willer, *Systematic Empiricism: Critique of a Pseudoscience*). Instead this review will focus on some of the innovative features of Nagel's argument to show that none of

these cosmetic readjustments can be used to insulate positivism against such criticisms.

Nagel argues as persuasively as any positivist can for a kind of non-reductionist naturalism (though, as we shall see, his own arguments tend to collapse into a halfhearted variant of pragmatism). This means that he tries to show that explanations in the social sciences need be no different to those in the natural sciences but also that this doesn't necessarily imply that value-judgements need to be unreal or invalid. Correspondingly, whilst teleological explanations in psychology and biology can be replaced without loss of content by non-teleological equivalents, these sciences need not be reduced to the categories of physics and chemistry. But whatever the strengths of his non-reductionist naturalism, these are clearly dependent on his own understanding of the procedures of science. His discussion of methodological problems in the social sciences relies totally upon the hundred or so pages which make up the heart of the book. Here Nagel sets himself to show that the distinction between experimental laws and theories is a real and important one; to delineate the major components of theories and the relations between them; to discuss whether or not theories state anything, whether they can be said to be 'true' or 'false'; and whether they refer to 'real entities'. To continue the catalogue of means and ends a little further, Nagel's tools of analysis are the distinction between the logical and the empirical, the account of empirical meaning and truth in terms of 'observations of facts' and (here he introduces new terms) the account of theories as 'indirectly verified', and theoretical terms as 'implicitly defined', by the deductive connection of theoretical and observation statements.

The most important use to which this programme of action is put is undoubtedly Nagel's examination of the character and cognitive status of theories. He outlines the tripartite structure of theories as follows:

'(1) an abstract calculus that is the logical skeleton of the explanatory system, and that "implicitly defines" the basic notions of the system'; (2) a set of rules that in effect assign an empirical content to the abstract calculus by relating it to the concrete materials of observation and experiment; and (3) an interpretation or model for the abstract calculus, which supplies flesh for the skeletal structure in terms of more or less familiar conceptual or visualizable materials.' (p90)



Nagel's sedulous defence of this view of scientific theory is at times confused and, as the quote suggests, remains throughout good therapy for insomnia. But despite - or perhaps because of - this lack of precision and subtlety Nagel's arguments with their in-built obscurities, are easy targets for criticism.

Not surprisingly, the notion of an 'implicit definition' is never defined but simply described by example. Roughly speaking, scientific terms, for example 'point' and 'line', though drawn from the language of experience, are given meaning by being implicitly defined by the postulates of a particular theoretical discourse; in this case Euclidean geometry. The same (presumably) goes for terms like 'class' and 'mode of production': these are not to be understood in terms of imaginable models but solely as that which satisfies the formal conditions of the postulates of Marxist theory. This account, or something like it, is commonplace in logical analyses of science and suffers mainly from being based on ambiguity. For a start, it isn't clear whether these scientific terms are to be regarded as uninterpreted signs, as counters in the deductive game of science, or as the 'things which satisfy the conditions' of particular postulates (p.92, my emphasis). If the former, the postulates of the theory assert nothing, which means that theories could equally well be 'true' or 'false' or merely be instrumental. If on the other hand they are 'things', then it still remains for Nagel to show that all the *possible* conditions he speaks of can be known and that these conditions can provide a meaning for theoretical terms. His arguments seem to presuppose the first alternative. Thus theory regarded as an abstract calculus without interpretation becomes nothing more than an arbitrary device, unintelligible and quite incapable of being put to use. Even though he does seem to recognise, in the third characteristic of theories listed above, that interpretations of a theory have an important heuristic role to play, Nagel fails to see that they are relevant to the meaning of that theory.

Nagel elaborates the heuristic benefits of interpreting a theory (or calculus) in terms of a familiar model. This model has the function of adding 'surplus meaning' to the theory by virtue of what is known about it independently of the fact that it satisfies the postulates of the calculus. This surplus meaning would then be useful in suggesting extensions to the theory, and in showing how the theory could be related to new experimental observations. But once again, this presents us with an ambiguous interpretation of the 'meaning' of a theory. In speaking of the 'analogies' between a gas molecule and a billiard ball Nagel writes: 'The fundamental

assumptions of the kinetic theory of gases, for example, are patterned on the known laws of the motions of macroscopic elastic spheres, such as billiard balls' (p.110). But it is clearly impossible to think of a gas molecule as something other than an *interpretation* of a particular calculus. This being so, it is equally impossible to understand how the surplus meaning supplied by the billiard-ball model is related to the theory since there are, presumably, an indefinite number of conceivable, if not existing, models of molecular theory. Why should the 'patterning', or the billiard-ball model have a privileged status? Though Nagel accords it such a status, his theory withdraws it. Even so, this suggests that we should be able to rely on any number of models for predictions and for surplus meaning. But, if entitled to rely on any, then we cannot be *equally* entitled to rely on all since some may well contradict each other. Nagel's account at this point is strictly incoherent: he cannot tell us either whether the choice of model is arbitrary, or whether the predictions which are based on *any* model can be relied upon.

The empirical interpretation of theories which follows fares little better. Here again Nagel relies on an example, which, despite its complexity, cannot adequately substitute a clear analysis, and, to make matters worse, takes up the discussion of correspondence rules in connection with the problems of reduction. The account he offers refers equally to the relation between two theories, and the relation between theory and 'observables'. The example he uses is of the reduction of the classical theory of thermodynamics to statistical mechanics which, when simplified, requires the 'identification' in some sense of 'temperature' with 'mean kinetic energy of molecules'. This identification might be one, or a combination, of three things: a logical connection (by virtue of the meanings of the terms in the two theories), a convention (laid down by fiat) or a factual hypothesis (cf. p.354ff.).

Nagel rejects the first alternative by remarking that temperature in classical thermodynamics is clearly not synonymous with 'mean kinetic energy' and that its meaning cannot be extracted from that of 'mean kinetic energy'. The significance of this remark doesn't become apparent, however, unless it is related to Nagel's previous analysis of the meaning of theoretical terms. If we take both thermodynamics and statistical mechanics to be theories, so that both terms in the identification are theoretical terms, then the 'meaning' of both terms should be implicitly defined by the postulates of the theory in which it occurs. If these two theories are different, the meanings of the terms will also be different. All well and good. But this example assumes that thermodynamics has been *reduced* to statistical mechanics. This means that the difference of meaning arises from the fact that the calculus of thermodynamics is only part of that of statistical mechanics. If we were to analyse the meaning of the terms by means of the models which satisfy the postulates of both theories respectively, then there will be a difference of meaning if the models for statistical mechanics are not co-extensive with those of thermodynamics. Once again there is a disparity between what Nagel wants to do and what his theory as a whole allows him to do. If the models concerned are privileged in any way (which as we have seen may or may not be the case), then the reduction procedure would amount to the illogical assertion that the privileged models of thermodynamics are to be identified with only a selection, or sub-set, of those of statistical mechanics.

So Nagel rightly, but for the wrong reasons, rejects the idea that the two theories in his example can be identified through *logical* connections.

Hesitantly he adopts the second alternative, namely that such identifications may be regarded as co-ordinating definitions laid down by fiat. He does so partly on the grounds that the development of a theory sometimes leads to the re-definition of expressions previously used as observables. But this cannot be the case in the example he uses since the meaning of 'temperature', if it is to be identified within the 'kinetic theory of gases', is in no way equivalent to any subjective sensations of temperature. Even if he seems keener to give more forthright backing to the third alternative, there is little way he can escape the more general problems of the status of experimental law and theory. He concludes that statements of identification must be regarded as physical hypotheses, not in the sense of experimental laws, but as parts of the theory itself, to be justified by the coherence of the whole theory and its other identifications with a wide range of experimental data.

This brings us to the most central assumption underlying Nagel's arguments; his distinction between experimental law and theory. Once again there are three arguments presented to uphold this distinction. The first is self-destructive, the second invalid and the third wholly trivial. The importance of showing this is twofold: firstly, because the distinction arises inevitably from the pervasive empiricist view that there exists a 'basic' observation language and secondly, because the effects of it can be seen throughout texts on methodology in the social sciences where parallel distinctions are drawn between 'neutral facts' and 'value-judgements'. To be fair to him, Nagel does point out that there is no 'precise criterion' for the distinction (p83), saying however that 'it nevertheless does not follow that the distinction is spurious because it is vague, any more than it follows that there is no difference between the front and the back of a man's head just because there is no exact line separating the two' (*ibid.*). But this only goes to destroy his first argument for the distinction, that the terms of experimental laws are 'operationally definable' whereas theories have no 'identifiable instances' and must therefore be established 'indirectly'. To acknowledge that the boundaries of 'observability' between 'direct' and 'indirect' evidence are not sharp, and that it is unprofitable to try and define 'observable' too closely is thereby to empty the terms of any meaningful, practical content. Clearly, many concepts usually termed 'theoretical' satisfy his condition for experimental terms (for example, the 'mass' of an electron), while many terms usually regarded as experimental are not explicitly definable by any finite number of observation procedures (e.g. 'gas').

The second argument for the distinction is that

laws derive their 'meaning' from the 'observable' situations they refer to, whereas the 'meaning' of theories are only partially empirical owing to the connection between theory and law via the correspondence rules. What does Nagel intend by the term 'meaning' used in this context? The meaning of the terms of an experimental law should, according to the view he has of models, be given by the observable situations which satisfy that law, that is, *simply some of its models*. The theory which *explains* this law would then be associated with a number, or class, of *privileged models*, each of which contains the observable situations which are models of the law. This in effect removes the duality of meaning involved in Nagel's account of theoretical and experimental terms. It also takes with it the second argument for the distinction between theory and experimental law.

Only Nagel's third argument stands up to criticism. Theories are different to experimental laws, he says, because they are more general. This is quite true but wholly trivial. After all, there is no need to explain, as Nagel attempts to do, the generality of theories since this criterion has no conceivable effect on anything one might wish to say about the cognitive or logical status of scientific statements.

The criticisms we have presented obviously place a question mark over Nagel's attempt to establish what we have called a non-reductionist naturalism. If he cannot give coherent sense to the terms 'theory' and 'fact', present a rigorous distinction between 'theory' and 'law' or offer cogent arguments in favour of his notions of 'implicit definition' and 'model'; in short, if his structure of science is seriously defective, there is little reason to expect his discussion of 'truth' and 'falsity' to do more than play on self-inflicted ambiguities. He doesn't thankfully devote much space in this work to such a discussion except to suggest that there is only a *verbal difference* between asking if a theory is true and asking whether it is satisfactory. This being the case, what Nagel has in reality established is closer to pragmatic naturalism since, by extension, we can say that there is only a verbal difference between asking whether he is an instrumentalist or a naturalist [1] - a question which, though it may be of interest to positivist philosophers of science, shouldn't trouble any who subscribe to the critiques of positivism elaborated in the popular texts cited above.

Note

[1] I am indebted to William Reese for this point.

Mike Shortland

The Subject and the Legal Subject

B. Edelman, *The Ownership of the Image*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 218pp

With deference to the sometimes enigmatic density of Edelman's study, it is probably as well first to locate and then describe it.

The rules for the formation of structural marxist discourse generally revolve around the internal categories of a theoretical schema of dominance and over-determination. The philosophic object or 'problematic' is already mapped out and taken for granted; the terrain is henceforth that of ideology, of taking sides, in a theoretical struggle which is specifically distinct from, if not anti-

thetical to, the 'real process'. Reference to, or representation of, the real process is inadmissible outside the terms of the larger discourse which indeed constitutes it; the question is thus rather of various re-arrangements of discursive categories within a discourse on ideology. Specifically the theory of ideology designates the concept of the subject, the 'always ready made' subject (1), as formative of all ideology. It is by virtue of the opposition between the subjects, that is, the Subject (state) and the subject (isolated individual), that the determinant instance of the economic, of the collective subject (class), is masked. The

'juridico-political instance' directs attention away from the economic instance, the process of the real, to the effect of dispersing and immunising the threat of any genuine or scientific realisation of collective or class self-interest.

Taking these somewhat recondite philosophical formulae as 'read', Edelman's study attempts to concretise and explicate the functioning of the juridico-political instance on three different levels; namely those of the theoretical practice of the law, the actual judicial practice and finally that of the real process itself. To genuinely distinguish these levels we must assume the success of the study in advance.

Initially, at any event, there is nothing especially novel or difficult in Edelman's summary and critique of traditional legal theory. He attempts to prove materialistically that the juridical categories of the subject and of subjective right could not be otherwise than they are, namely that they create an already made or naturally given ideological subject whose essence is that of being 'capable of ownership'. Quite independently of his will the subject (he who belongs to himself) is necessarily endowed with the capacity of property, and bears the burden or privilege of rights and obligations. This natural essence of the subject as property owner is the hallmark of legal ideology and indeed of ideology per se. In abstract terms this position adds little to previous elaborations (2) and so the value of Edelman's work must rest upon how he evinces or proves this position in relation to the legal history of photographic and cinema rights.

The answer, in descriptive terms, is that Edelman provides a delicately filigreed map of the quasi-Hegelian movement by which the French courts changed their position from saying, in the first instance, that the 'real', which was the object of these novel modes of mechanical appropriation, was already privately owned, to saying that an artistic appropriation of the real in fact produces its object and hence that what is re-produced in a photographic or cinematic form belongs to the artistic agent who produces it. The analysis works remarkably well: the real which is already owned is 'over-appropriated' by the labour of the artistic agent who creates a new 'property'. This new property is subject, however, to the rights of the 'subject in law', in that the commodity produced must also account for the interest invested in the real which it has over-appropriated; it would otherwise steal the will or consent of the original owner and thereby negate the juridical definition of the subject at law who is necessarily a 'willing subject'. In dialectical terminology there is a subtle transvaluation from the subject to the Subject to the collective subject which is here the interest of profit.

If we translate the analysis it is in certain senses obvious, it elaborates and extends the categories propounded by the Russian jurist Pashukanis who first associated the necessity of the legal 'form' of human relationship with the circulation of commodities. The category of the legal subject was inexorably tied to the exchange of equivalents between formally 'equal' and 'free' subjects at law. To this insight Edelman makes an addition in terms of the circular or redoubled specular structure of all ideology, hereby proposing the thesis that legal ideology in part receives and in part creates the categories of the mode of production: 'by assuming and fixing the sphere of circulation as a natural given the law makes production possible' (p103). So be it, but Edelman in no way clarifies or resolves the diachronic or specifically historical issues that dog such a thesis, it is either trivially true (the linguistic ellipse is mistaken for a profundity) or it is tautological and in either case it fails to explain how this effect is reproduced (3).

At this point, however, the study is complete, the circle has been turned and we have achieved the aim of designating the formal structure of legal ideology. It is unclear as to whether anything more than this has been achieved. On the one hand Edelman merely reformulates and applies a scientific marxist metaphor for the ideology inherent in the process of the real. Alternatively he reads the categories of legal ideology out of the judicial practice itself. His reading, however, is symptomatic and it would seem, especially bearing in mind the important differences between the rationality of civil law and common law, that specific ideological excursions on the part of the judiciary are generalised into a theory of law which rests upon the implicit or constituted ideology behind the judicial dicta. The language of legal ideology is reformulated into the terminology of science and the opposition, of itself, is supposed to make the former crumble. The level at which this species of critique operates is none other than that of the science of the former science of law: 'theoretical practice gives us the very historicity of our combat. The critique of the ideological notions of the law carries within itself the death of bourgeois legal science' (p111). We may at least hope that such a sentiment is truer than is immediately apparent.

Peter Goodrich

Notes

- 1 cf. Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, in *Lenin and Philosophy*, London, 1971.
- 2 Cf. Pashukanis, *Law and Marxism*, Ink Links, 1978. Restricting oneself to marxist literature with a similar emphasis, Colletti, *From Rousseau to Lenin*, London, 1972, is relevant.
- 3 The appendix on Algerian workers is more illuminating in this respect and perhaps has a counterpart in the common law cases under the Race Relations Act 1968.

Ideologies

C Sumner: Reading Ideologies, Academic Press, 1979, £11 hc, £4.95 pb

Dear Colin Sumner,

I have just read your book in order to review it. It has given me a real problem. I cannot review it - at least not in the ordinary way. To do so would require me to set out clearly what it is about. And I am honestly not sure. All I can do here is to worry about it, and about the tradition in which it stands. Let this, therefore, be a dialogue with my anxieties.

Your book starts from a position I agree with, 100%. The current state of argument about ideology is quite awful. In particular your claim that there is really only an illusion of connection between theorising and examination of empirical material, I want to associate myself with. Your project therefore interested me; you sought to 'bridge that gap'. And I have learnt a lot from your critique of other approaches.

Sampling these, you note how often Marxists still use implicitly 'Napoleonic' notions of ideology as 'grand system', interference by 'bias' or 'prejudice' (eg p19). You provide a powerful critique of content-analysis, showing how its theoretical incompleteness as method allows arbitrary additions which contain its real politics (p68). Rightly, the assumption of 'shared meanings' between producer, audience and artefact is dismissed (though it's a pity that you didn't display how much this is implicit in semiological 'code'-analysis).

Still, semiology gets delightfully defeated. It is shown for what it is: ahistorical, abstract, or as you put it 'It takes the fight out of history'. All this I enjoyed, as indeed I liked the language of your critique. To sum up content-analysis and its associates, along with all the structuralist versions, as 'formless empiricism and empiricist formalism' (p145) is delicious.

And my reason for not wanting to do a dismissive review comes out here. For your book is dotted with important insights. Two favourites that I shall want to hold on to are: your comment on those who suggest that bourgeois ideology 'masks' the real relations of capitalism - you remind us of Marx's assertion that capitalism conceals itself perfectly well; and your careful insistence that both the technical and class divisions of labour are social in form and content - thus making, for example, Geras' calling them 'technical' and 'social' rather dangerous.

And, more than particular points such as this, your book continually makes interesting proposals on how to begin analysis of ideologies. You open by accurately listing 10 varieties of theory of ideology. All are

analysed. You open your own account (p16) by posing a distinction between ideologies, as specific beliefs and practices, and 'forms of social consciousness' as the bearers of these beliefs. It is an interesting distinction, and deserves attention. But it doesn't really get it. And here I reach my real problem with your book. Either I am seriously misreading it. Or your book doesn't do the very things it criticises others for failing to do. And the reason I can't be sure is that, over and over again, you offer propositions that, because never applied to live examples to show their significance, seem to be hopelessly unclear or ambiguous. I've tried to isolate some components of this, either from where they are implicit in your criticisms of others, or from where they emerge relatively explicitly.

There is a tendency to assume that some beliefs are obviously criminal. Thus in criticism; Althusser, you claim that he vacillates between polar opposite theories. In this context you note his difficulty in accounting for 'ideologies of resistance'. You conclude: 'He thus leaves a gap into which humanist ideas of "human nature" could be inserted' (p47). What is the sin involved here? Is it the same as when I am told not to talk of human beings as 'essentially purposive' (p35)? Over the last ten years I have learnt to hide my guilt-feelings at being interested in ideas about human nature - even perhaps about the consequences of biology for human nature. What exactly have I done wrong? You say that for Marx 'class character and social individuality are historically and structurally constituted by the social relations of a social formation in movement' (p49). I haven't an idea what that means. But I do know that you share an assumption with many others that to introduce any notion of 'human nature' is to be necessarily ahistorical and moralistic. An often associated term 'praxis' is assumed to be necessarily teleological. That may be true of Bauman (whom you quote, with dubious reference (p112)), but I deny that it is inevitably true for me. And you don't offer any arguments to prove me wrong.

I suppose I am suggesting that you are too blind to the tradition you inhabit. Personally, I'm up to here with people presenting their critique of Althusser, but then hastily adding things like: 'I would not like to leave this critical discussion of Althusser's lecture symptomale without registering the fact that, in my view, Althusser's reading of Marx is very valuable' (p175). Twang go my guilt-strings again... But I want to say that Althusser has been wrong, turgid, and unbelievably pernicious. I used to use the analogy of the stopped clock being right twice a day. I think, for Althusser, I prefer the one about the train

that's going in the wrong direction still has to pass through the stations. What disturbs me is that after your critique, there was no space left for this ritual obeisance. What does doing it signify, then?

When I first picked up your book, I happened on the quote on method that I've frontispieced. It's excellent. But you don't seem to follow your own advice. I understand you to mean that a decent method is both theoretically articulated and thought through, and knows how to confront the world - and therefore might just meet problems/resistance from the world it investigates. Surely one of the worst problems with current ideology-analysis is that it can never go wrong. For example, you attack (p68) content-analysis for a notion that sheer repetition of some elements has a cumulative effect. Good, and true. But the content of your criticism is only that it is left unspecified how we know which repeated bits might have effects. I would want to ask, differently, whether some denotations might not fail? Bad editorials can be written. Bad news items can be presented. Lousy arguments can be proffered. A theory of ideology that cannot differentiate such is a bad theory.

Your book seems to hesitate on the brink of seeing this. On page 226, for example, you are criticising notions of ideology as appearance, views which suggest we simply construct appearances of the world:

'One is often given the impression that what is visible is that which is in the mind of the observer already. In more sophisticated versions of this, it is argued that the social character of the visible thing is attributed to it by the observer's ideology, and that the observer only sees a physical entity. Both these phenomenological theses are at odds with the conception developed here, which insists that matter is seen spontaneously as it presents itself socially.' The view being criticised is nicely picked out; it definitely assumes that the world offers no resistance to our understanding. But once again, what am I to understand by the alternative?

This difficulty of grasping your formulations runs throughout. I hope I'm not being unfair, but I honestly don't know what to do with the following (or, if I do know, then I object violently): 'the precise selection and effectivity of the ideologies they (media-people) employ in the process of mass communications production is determined by the structure of that production and its place in the social formation' (p27); 'social ideologies (reflect) the interests and experiences of classes and groups constituted by the dominant social relations' (p75); 'Marxian theory holds that each ideology is generated within a specific social practice' (p190). All these quotations seem to me to give an illusion of clarity; if I probe I meet nothing but ghosts of Althusser.

I have criticised you for not practising what you preach. Too often you make claims which, from my own limited investigations, just won't stand up - if I am grasping their meaning. And I can't tell that because you never apply them to cases. You mention as 'the most fundamental thesis' in a Marxist theory of ideology, that 'the emergence of

an ideology or signification (or "designation") has as a necessary condition of its existence a particular social relation' (p216, your emphasis). Now, I have research sociobiology as a particular ideology, and it is clear to me that this scientific ideology is as much as anything a recommendation to create different social relations, and is therefore not dependent on their prior existence. I can't make out, because of the ambiguity of your formulations, whether I am contradicting you.

Or again. At the end of the book, you list a variety of 'developed commonsense' ways of analysing ideologies. (Your own example uses newspaper ideologies.) All your methods relate to a very peculiar question: is it really in there? In other words - if I'm not mistake again - after all the insistence on the social production of ideologies and their embedding in social relations, the questions you want to answer are primarily about 'objects out there' like newspapers. The activity of such ideologies within struggles has gone missing. From my work on children's comics, I would want to argue that investigating the activity of newspaper-ideologies cannot be a separate task from analysing the newspapers themselves. For we need to be asking concretely: into what relation with the newspapers are readers invited? (Thus, in juvenile comics, the readers are drawn into a 'kids conspiracy' by the comics themselves.)

This 'review'/letter is in danger of going on for ever. I'm trying to express disappointment and frustration. You do say what's wrong in many respects with the tradition as it stands; and then you join in. The result is that your own empirical suggestions look oddly unprotected. Why, for example (p96), do I have to agree that 'capitalism by its own logic is becoming more transparent'? (Indeed Eastern European state capitalism's ability to hide its nature even from most Marxists' eyes suggests the opposite - but that's polemical...) Or again, why should I accept that all capitalisms have required an ideology of contract? You offer some 'a priori' reasons - but what about Nazi Germany, or Pinochet's Chile? It's not that obvious.

Perhaps in the end there is a substantial political disagreement involved. Perhaps we want to study ideologies for rather different purposes. Actually, I was left in some doubt as to why on your account we do study them. Page 143 suggests that it is in order to be able to predict. And when I connect that with your recommendations for how we investigate the impact of ideologies on 'audiences', it looks very much observer stuff. We go and look, and if that isn't enough we ask as well. We compare and analyse. One thing that is missing is trying to change people's minds. But to me the core of Marxism is some notion of the unity of theory and practice. I doubt that there can be an adequate theory of ideology divorced from an adequate practice of combatting dangerous ones.

Yours fraternally,

Martin Barker

The Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin

Don Locke, The Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin, RKP, 1980, £13.50 hc.

For over a century Godwin has been remembered less as an individual than as an appendage to other figures. The husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, father of Mary Shelley, political educator of Percy Shelley - these roles have overshadowed Godwin's own work and consigned it to an undeserved obscurity. Such neglect has been a sad fate for a man about whose Political Justice William Hazlitt commented that 'No work in our time gave such a glow to the philosophical mind of the country'. In the last few years, however, an accessible edition of this text has appeared (Penguin 1976), and now in Don Locke's introduction to all of Godwin we have not merely a scholarly and readable book, but the best biography ever written on Godwin.

Any such attempt must begin with, and be compared to, C. Kegan Paul's two-volume biography first published in 1876, which, for all of its submission to various late-Victorian prejudices, drew extensively from original correspondence, manuscripts, diaries, and the like. Locke has used this material judiciously, and it is much to his credit that, if he often covers the same ground as Kegan Paul, he has at least struggled on foot among the sources themselves, and does not peer out from behind the curtains of a carriage drawn by someone else's opinions. Part of his success also lies in having made great use of Burton Pollin's excellent bibliography of Godwin Criticism, and in fact in being the first to employ it properly in this way.

Locke's concern is with the whole of Godwin, whose life, from fame to calumny, Calvinism to theism, and relative self-sufficiency to prolonged penury, is as much a fascinating reflection of the age as it is intrinsically dramatic. This interaction of character and zeitgeist is handled particularly well by Locke, who also demonstrates great insight into the relationship between Godwin's written work and his private life. Godwin is in fact the ideal choice for an historical, 'subjectful' reading of texts. He was, for instance, profoundly moved by Mary Wollstonecraft's tragic death in childbirth, having never known such emotional happiness as during their short marriage. This without a doubt strongly contributes to those revisions of Political Justice which in later editions tempered the doctrine that the opinions of men emanate solely from their reason. Instead, Godwin decided, their actions, at least, were under the direction of their feelings.

Godwin did not feel that this departure from a dogma of absolutely rational motiva-

tion undermined the basic conclusions of his philosophy. His target was always the view that self-love was the primary or even exclusive inducement to action, and here, if upon reflection he was forced to admit that virtue could not be universally engendered by a 'sentiment of general utility', he always maintained that altruism had to be conceded as an element of motivation. Hence men could be educated to it, and if nothing else could begin their benevolence with private affection. The possibility is thus left open for a society of virtuous and humane individuals, even if species-love is not the source of their morality.

The main theme in Locke's book is, in fact, Godwin's inability to live out in practice his own early doctrines, which forced successive modifications of his views. In the first edition of Political Justice, Godwin's whole approach to philosophy is marked by a deeply earnest and rigorously logical extension of his first principles into every conceivable situation where they might be applied. It is this honesty and Godwin's extraordinary deductive capacity which give the book its depth and genius, but which also leave Godwin so easily open to ridicule. The case of the famous fire in which, on utilitarian grounds, I ought to save the philosopher Fénelon rather than my own mother, was frequently used to demonstrate the coldness and inhumanity of Godwinism. While there are many possible criticisms of Godwin's view, however, the most incisive was that such circumstances hardly allow time for adequate felicific calculation. In a contemporary parody, the hero is left standing at the ladder beneath the burning house, unable to reach a decision and later accused of failing to save the lives of those inside, even of instigating the fire in the first place.

Locke's treatment of such issues is quite fair, however, and his general handling of philosophical problems, especially utilitarian ethics, is very good. But he has largely left untouched the dark mystery of Godwin scholarship: the degree of influence of Sandemanianism, the creed in which Godwin was brought up and which he briefly taught. The small sect of Glassites, as they were otherwise called, preached the superiority of intellectual over emotional faith, the elimination of private property, equality of status, and the attainment of universal agreement upon important questions by means of open debate. Locke mentions this, but relies upon Godwin's later statement that only the first characteristic - the praise of reason - influenced him.

This interpretation thus tends to ignore Godwin's reading of Ogilvie, Wallace, and other writers hostile to private property. Locke states that the only other Sandemanian of note was the chemist, 'the mild Michael

Faraday', when in fact Thomas Spence, the well-known and extremely active agrarian radical, was also brought up in this sect. The religious dimension merits a full-length study in its own right, but should not have been passed over quite so easily here.

Is Godwin only of historical interest, or does he have something to offer the present? In an age whose dangers demand great practical efforts, it is easy to see Godwin as the paragon of effusively naive optimism; if we waited for all people to agree rationally upon every possible change circumstances would quickly overwhelm us and leave little room for any choice at all. Godwin described himself as 'in principle a Republican, but in practice a Whig', and he opposed universal suffrage in his own time, believing the population to be inadequately educated. Nor was he the anarchist's anarchist, though he is often classed with this school. His closest association with actual political destruction came with his technical responsibility for the great fire which destroyed the Houses of Parliament on 16 October 1833. Maintaining the chimneys was among the duties of Godwin's post, the belated reward of long years of Whiggism.

But when one of these caught fire he was, characteristically, at the theatre, and thus this involuntary action emanated from neither reason nor the passions, merely neglect.

But Godwin was, nonetheless, an extraordinary political man in his thoughts, a political philosopher in an age which sought to thrust this tradition of discourse into the ravenous maw of 'economics' and 'administration', a task at which, despite chronic indigestion, it largely succeeded. Godwin's frame of reference was still precapitalist, and he did not accomplish the politicization of economic relations. This was left, in England, to Owenism and the working-class movement. But in marriage, education, anywhere that knowledge might become a function of domination, hence perverted from its true ideal, there Godwin worked to expose oppression and liberate enquiry from all restraints. In these areas, the relentless honesty of this apostle of Sincerity and Universal Benevolence is as fresh and applicable as ever, and Don Locke has contributed greatly to helping us see through Godwin's eyes once again.

Gregory Claeys

Education and Knowledge

K. Harris, Education and Knowledge, RKP, 1979, £7.95 hc.

*'We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control'
- Pink Floyd*

This book is one of the products of recent developments in Marxist theory in Australia. As such it owes its intellectual orientation at least partly to struggles waged within Sydney University. These culminated in the establishment of a Department of General Philosophy, some members of which have attempted to fuse Popper and Lakatos with Althusserian Marxism. Kevin Harris's book extends this approach into the sphere of education and does so in a way which is at once entertaining and instructive. While I find many of his claims contentious, and indicative of (what I take to be) the unsatisfactory restrictions of his framework, I was continually stimulated by Harris' challenging and brisk, no-nonsense approach.

The core of the argument is the now familiar anti-empiricist doctrine that, crudely, 'all facts are theory laden'. This thesis is defended with persuasive flair in the first chapter. Harris shows, for example, how the results of an attempt to count the number of people on Sydney oval can differ depending on concepts, motives and methodologies. Are children to be counted? What about unborn babies? Are people straddling the fence on the oval or not? Does it matter whether the people are

dead or alive, and if it does how do we establish this? Nor will the final answer to the question 'How many people are there on Sydney oval?' simply reflect theoretical presuppositions. Group pressures and psychological prejudices of various kinds also shape the outcome of the count. In short, the number of people on the oval, whatever it is, is not an unambiguous 'fact' about the world, lying in wait to be discovered using the appropriate empirical methodology. It is a 'fact' generated within a particular socio-theoretical context, and to that extent its truth is dependent on the particular meanings, methodologies and motivations of the people whose views define the parameters of that context.

If it be granted that knowing something about the world does not involve passively recording neutral data 'out there', but rather involves actively making sense of the world from a particular perspective, a new light is thrown on education. No longer is it seen as the transmission of value-neutral, apolitical knowledge; rather it emerges as the social process whereby a particular definition of reality is disseminated and adopted. That definition is the one sanctioned by those with power in an educational system. They decide what is worth knowing and, using their power, they ensure that their chosen view of reality is systematically inculcated into the minds of successive generations of children.

This is phase 2 of Harris' argument:

effectively it asserts that education involves imposition. Phase 3 develops the idea with specific reference to capitalist liberal democracies. Education in such societies, says Harris, implants a structured misrepresentation of reality in the minds of its consumers. Structured, because institutionalized education systematically transmits along carefully specified paths a particular conception of the world. A misrepresentation, because capitalist society is a society characterized by classes with conflicting interests. Education is under the control of the ruling class which, in order to secure its power, disseminates an ideological conception of the world. This serves to mask their real interests from the oppressed. In particular, it leads oppressed classes to think that their future lies in collaboration with the status quo, whereas in fact their real interests lie in the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society. In short, although they don't realize it, the basic aim of education under capitalism is to cement the working classes into the system - to ensure that, 'All in all, you're just another brick in the wall', as Pink Floyd would have it.

Harris is cautious to the point of pessimism when he comes to consider the possibilities for changing the present educational set-up, and he is justifiably hesitant to lay down a blueprint for an alternative. But his preferences are clear. He advocates a process of consciousness-raising in informal contexts in which the Socratic aim of knowing thyself is uppermost. As people become aware of how capitalist ideology distorts their perceptions of the world and of their place in it, so will they begin to change themselves and their society, and to develop new lived ideologies which reflect their real needs and not those of their oppressors.

I pointed out earlier that Harris' approach utilizes a framework which attempts to reconcile the work of Popper and Lakatos with Althusserian Marxism. To my mind there is little if anything in the above account of his views which reveals the specific effects of that framework. Yet it performs a crucial role in his argument. As its presence is stunningly manifested in Harris' discussion of consciousness-raising, it is there that I shall begin with a more critical evaluation of this book.

The key feature of education, says Harris, is 'imposition - deciding what someone needs to know, and then attempting to ensure that he comes to know it' (p.176). Consciousness-raising does not do this; here 'what the teacher is handing on is a new critical methodology which can be applied to the content of lived experience. Rather than saying "See the world my way", he is saying "Look at your world in a different way"... The aim, eventually, is for people to come to understand what was false about their consciousness, and then to take on a different theoretical perspective which provides a better picture of the world' (p.174).

Thus stated, this distinction seems to me to be hollow. Just consider for a moment the assumptions which inform the consciousness-raiser's project. Centrally, they are that capitalism is a society made up of classes with conflicting interests, and

that workers' inability to realize this is a consequence of ruling-class ideology generating false consciousness. This consciousness-raiser, in other words, espouses a particular theory of society which asserts that workers are mistaken in thinking that capitalism serves their interests. That many workers do think this Harris admits: 'Most people in today's capitalist liberal democracies are reasonably well off materially, and by and large they are happy' (p.165). If that is so, they can be excused for thinking that capitalism is in their interests. And it is not their 'experience', but a theoretical perspective, which claims that 'really' workers are exploited - though they don't know it. The aim of the consciousness-raiser is thus to get them to see that they are exploited, i.e. to get workers to adopt his or her theory of society and perception of the world in defiance of their lived appearance. In other words Harris has decided what workers need to know, and through the mechanism of consciousness-raising he hopes to ensure that they come to know it. These words are chosen with care: they are of course precisely the terms which Harris used to characterize education as imposition.

I cannot see how Harris can avoid the charge that, by means of consciousness-raising, he is attempting to win people over to the particular theory, and definition of reality, which he favours. He derives his confidence in the epistemological adequacy of his Marxism partly from Lakatos' work. His theory, he says, meets Lakatos' criteria for a progressive research programme: it is 'objectively' better than its rivals. And Harris often goes further: through Marxism, he says, we can grasp the world 'as it really is' (sic). It provides the Truth with which to counter the false consciousness of ideology-bound workers.

The idea that a theory can grant us access to the world 'as it really is' runs counter to everything that Harris says in Chapter 1 of his book. The roots of the contradiction lie, I suspect, in his adoption of an Althusserian distinction between science and ideology. The production of knowledge, he says, is a theoretical practice which can produce the real object. But if it is in-formed by particular social interests an ideologically distorted conception of the real is generated. It remains only to align Marxism with science (and to claim that it doesn't serve social interests?) for it to follow that through it one can know the world as it really is.

To be fair, Harris is (irritatingly) ambiguous in this area, and frequently says that historical materialism is simply a more progressive ideology than its rivals. Be that as it may there is a distinct puritanical streak in his work. He is emphatic that workers under capitalism don't know where their real interests lie, he is convinced that Marxism is 'progressive', and he sometimes goes so far as to imply that it gives us knowledge of the world 'as it really is'. On top of all this he admits that his conviction that we ought to do something about the structure of education in capitalist society is a moral one (p.167). What we have here is the intellectual baggage of the missionary zealot, fervently stepping out into the world with a view to

saving it. Missionaries cannot but impose. What's more they are in for a shock. For the odds are that the not-so-submissive or ideologically crippled workers in capitalist society will tell them to piss off and go preach their message elsewhere - to gullible members of academia, perhaps?

Where do we go from here? I am not quite sure. Harris' appeal to Lakatosian methodology is informed by his desire to avoid Feyerabendian anarchism and relativism. I am also uneasy about relativism, but I don't think that this is the way to escape it. Perhaps the framework that Harris is drawing on is asking the wrong questions though. Harris' conviction that people are oppressed by capitalist education derives from his adoption of Marxism and his conviction that it is a progressive ideology (?) which can give us a reasonably (totally?) undistorted view of the world. His determination to change that world is a moral one. There is, however, another way of showing that education oppresses. That way is by analysing the mechanisms of power whereby knowledge is selected and transmitted in the educational system, exposing their historical roots and their social functions. There is precious little analysis of power structures in Harris' work though, and no historical perspective whatsoever. If there were, one could hope for a concept of consciousness-

raising which recognized the importance of recapturing one's history as part of that process (as psychoanalysis teaches us). Furthermore the imperative to transform the educational system need not involve a moral decision; it can arise from a growing awareness by the consumers of education that their mode and manner of cognition is historically specific, and thus a candidate for radical transformation. What we need to do, in other words, is to put aside Popper, Lakatos and Althusser, and to pick up Thompson and Foucault.

If my argument is correct it follows that Harris' omission of the historical dimension and his associated 'Puritanism' are not accidental. Rather, they are the unavoidable consequences of his chosen framework, a framework which has a distinct and prevalent tendency to exclude the socio-historical dimension of knowledge production. Nevertheless, whatever its shortcomings, this book deserves to be read by all who are concerned to develop a radical critique of education. Whether one prefers to extend the Althusserian approach, or to reject it, Harris' book is an invaluable navigational aid in the treacherous waters of critical education theory.

John Krige

Just and Unjust Wars

Violence and Responsibility

Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, Penguin, 1980, £2.95 pb
John Harris, Violence and Responsibility, RKP, 1980, £8.50 hc

The amount of unjustified violence we are prepared to countenance is an important measure of our success or failure as human beings. Hence the quality of our lives depends upon our ability to distinguish carefully acts of aggression which are appropriate from those which are not. At a time when the use of seemingly gratuitous force is fairly widespread, both of these books are important because they examine various ways in which we might limit the more superfluous ways in which we perpetrate harm upon each other. Walzer is in particular concerned to delineate the cases in which moral choice is possible, and incumbent, in the conduct of war. Harris argues in favour of a general ethic whereby we are responsible for harm which we might have prevented, as well as that we have directly and voluntarily caused. Their discussions coalesce upon the issue of moral obligation, and, though Walzer's interest is exclusively in situations where the normal restraints of civil society are usually held to be in abeyance, his application of human rights theories to war favours a closer connection between our conceptions of war and peace than is often found in writers on the subject.

Just and Unjust Wars can rightly be said to stand in a class of its own. The actual conduct of modern war is often bemoaned but less frequently discussed in detail, except possibly among lawyers and theologians, and Walzer's is a first-rate account of the moral complexities involved in sieges, guerrilla conflicts, terrorism, reprisals, neutrality, and other issues or aspects of combat. War has never been a game played by honourable gentlemen, but we do generally recognise the existence of certain rules for its conduct, and it is greatly to Walzer's credit that he has clearly and systematically defended most of these, extending them where possible, without making their practice so absurdly difficult that moral advice loses all meaning. His primary theme is that, because 'just wars are limited wars', the tendency of modern conflicts to embrace ever-wider numbers of noncombatants must be halted wherever possible.

Hence, against the 'realist' view that 'all's fair in love and war', Walzer upholds the validity of a 'war convention' about which every soldier should be educated. If the only reason for fighting wars in the first place is a defence of rights, the means appropriate to this end must respect the rights of both citizens and soldiers during the conflict. Walzer is fairly condemnatory about the siege of Leningrad (one million dead) and the bombings of Dresden and Tokyo (100,000 each), but unequivocal

on Hiroshima, saying that only had the Allies faced defeat would such a measure have been justified. He favours the granting of soldier's rights to guerrillas, providing they carry their weapons openly and wear a visible emblem of their allegiance. Terrorism (the random murder of innocents) is virtually completely condemned, though the possibility of 'just assassination' is - very vaguely - left open.

As far as the justice of wars themselves is concerned, Walzer offers three (necessarily) ambiguous criteria for commencing: rescuing a population threatened with massacre (would Cambodia fit? or the Gulag?); intervening to counter the effects of a prior intervention (Afghanistan?); and in aid of a secessionist movement once it has established its representative character (Kurdistan? Tibet? Palestine?). I offer these questionable cases because Walzer isn't very specific about such examples. Any discussion of this kind is bound to be nightmarishly problematic, and Walzer avoids many disturbing questions by concentrating (too heavily, I think) on the second world war and national socialism. This is his 'paradigm case' of a justified struggle, but most wars have a rather more complex character. By asserting that aggression justifies war, and that any use of force constitutes aggression, he seems to argue that any forceful violation of rights in turn justifies retaliation. By remaining within what he terms 'the legalist paradigm', however (whereby such actions are construed as occurring only between states), we are left unsure as to the 'justice' of certain types of internal conflicts (the American or Russian civil wars). Nor does it seem necessarily true that no war can be just for both sides. This is presumed because one party must bear the responsibility for first breaking the peace, but since Walzer operates with several different definitions of justice, it seems difficult to say that 'justice' in a cause is ultimately decided by a factor which is in any case sometimes difficult to assess, as in the recent Sino-Vietnamese war.

John Harris's short book defends in detail one central thesis, that we are as equally responsible for harms we might have prevented, as for those we have actively perpetrated. This is (to me) an enormously attractive basis for a moral philosophy of violence. It is one of the most deeply radical concepts in any potential ethics, and was also held by Marx and Engels. Harris quotes Engels as a direct exponent of the idea of 'negative action': 'Murder has been committed if thousands of workers have been deprived of the necessities of life or if they have been forced into a situation where it is impossible for them to live.' The question is, how far does the circle of moral liability extend? Because it has not built up crop reserves, is the Indian government responsible for the deaths of peasants whose crops are ruined by drought? 'Killing' and 'letting die' are explored at length, with Harris mainly concentrating on the choices faced by doctors needing donors for organ transplants. He ends this section by proposing a very ingenious institution called 'the survival lottery', whereby we all become potential

donors. Given a genuine shortage of organs, and the possibility that any of us may require one, this scheme is by no means as implausible or unfair as it may appear at first sight.

When might responsibility for harm be subject to public sanctions? This question concerns both Harris and Walzer deeply, although Harris seems to feel that anything stronger than moral reprobation lies beyond the boundaries of his discussion; he wants to say who is guilty, not what to do about it. Walzer occasionally chooses to refer to the Nürnbeg trials, and some of the problems associated with them. Few of us have difficulties ascribing culpability to those who order mass murder, for example, but disagreements are frequent when we ask how far down the chain of command we should extend our indictments. Yet this is, it seems to me, the key issue in both war and peace, even though the question in everyday life is likely to relate to one's proximity to an act of violence (i.e. seeing someone beaten up on the street) rather than to more directly causal complicity. How morally neutral is it possible to be in such situations? This is the subjective side of the question of sanctions. Passivity is often taken as an indication of neutrality; the more privatised our roles become, the less we feel the duty to assist in matters of public peace and justice. Hence in America the legal obligation to help victims in accidents, etc. is less well-developed (or more deliberately underdeveloped) than in many countries, being positively hindered by a series of precedents which have established the liability of would-be Samaritans where their rescue attempts appear to contribute to the demise of the victim.

A more communitarian and frequently-practised ethics would render this type of coerced disregard less likely. To expect public representatives to maintain a low level of social violence on their own is merely to invite the growth of repressive power. Similarly, it is unlikely that government will refrain from aggression unless their citizens actively consult among themselves upon the justice of the cause. It is difficult to disagree with the view that we do share a high degree of collective responsibility for much of the social and international violence around us. How we describe that violence, however, bears upon what we will do about it, and Harris's account fails, I think, to give sufficient weight to systematic economic exploitation. His methodological individualism largely confines discussion to cases involving only a few people, which eliminates any serious analysis of structural causality. We are obliged, Harris says, to demand that corporations act according to the principle of negative actions, which is fine as far as it goes, but that isn't very far. Corporations tend to have somewhat less refined moral sensibilities than the readers of philosophical journals. Walzer is far more convincing in both his analysis of complicity and plea for public activity. He recognises that responsibility requires democracy, indeed that 'democracy is a way of distributing responsibility', and that the more democratic a society becomes, the more responsible we may hold individuals to be at

Marković and Petrović — Yugoslav Essays

M. Marković and G. Petrović (eds.), *Praxis - Yugoslav Essays in the Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. XXXVI, D. Reidel, 1979, \$55.30 hc, \$23.70 pb

This is a very valuable source book for students of the distinctive Marxist trend organized in Yugoslavia around the journals *Praxis* and *Praxis International* 1964-1975. It contains translations (many for the first time in English) of twenty-two essays first published between 1965 and 1974 (except for one previously published piece by Djuro Susnjić), organized under the headings: '1 Philosophy, Dialectics and Historical Materialism; 2 Society Politics and Revolution; 3 Culture Ideas and Religion; 4 Socialism Bureaucracy and Self-Management'.

I gather that Petrović was responsible for selecting the contributors from Croatia and Slovenia while Marković put forward the material from Serbia and other republics. It is clear that while Petrović draws on the mainstream of *Praxis* contributors, Marković interpreted his task much more liberally and includes a wider variety of material (not that the *Praxis* group itself ever evolved a dogmatic 'line'). In comparison, another useful book edited by Gerson Sher (*Marxist Humanism and Praxis*, New York, 1978) is more 'orthodox'. These two books, taken together with individual books by Petrović, Marković, Stojanović etc. translated into English, give us a solid basis for getting acquainted with the whole tendency.

The book under review contains two other useful features: a table of contents to the published issues of *Praxis International* Edition 1965-74; and notes, with bibliographies, on the contributors.

In addition Marković takes the responsibility for an Introduction sketching the background, history, and fundamental orientation of the movement.

He claims our attention on the ground that this philosophy is *new* in that: 'it had to be *radical*' for 'it was created by young people who had participated in a genuine, widely supported revolution, who were convinced that they were building up a new, just and free society'; and it 'had to be *humanistic*' for 'conflict with Stalinism generated a very critical attitude towards bureaucracy and any bureaucratic reduction of socialism ... to an impersonal, sheep-like collectivism in which human individuality was sacrificed'. It also had to be *critical*; he says:

'Yugoslav social Philosophy never challenged the initial forms of socialist participatory democracy which by that time were firmly entrenched and quite popular. On the contrary, in a much more competent way than conformist official science, it was able to show their deep historical significance. But, on the other hand, it was quite relentless and not in the least afraid of existing political power when it analysed the essential limitations that were also real: bureau-

cratic usurpation of power, rise of class inequalities, resistance to new socialist culture, petty-bourgeois acquisitiveness, nationalism as a surrogate for democratic socialist commitment.'

Inevitably repression followed.

'The year 1968 was a turning point. Students' mass demonstrations in Belgrade on June 2 and 3, and their occupation of all buildings of the Universities in Belgrade June 3-10, followed by similar events in Zagreb and Sarajevo, opened up the greatest political crisis in Yugoslav postwar society and produced a permanent fear that philosophical critical theory under certain conditions might inspire a mass practical movement. A series of measures were undertaken in order to thoroughly reduce the field of activity of the *Praxis* philosophers. Most of those who were members of the Party were expelled or their organisations were dissolved. They were eliminated from important social functions. Funds for philosophical activities, journals and other publications were cut off or became utterly scarce.... In spite of a tremendous pressure in the whole period of 1968-75, philosophers and sociologists from the *Praxis* group were able to continue to teach, to publish, to organize conferences and to dominate the Yugoslav theoretical scene. How was that possible?

First, and most important, after 1948 Yugoslavia has gone rather far in the process of democratization and in rejection of theoretical and practical forms of Stalinism.... Another relevant circumstance was that the *Praxis* group played an important role in keeping a complex ideological balance in Yugoslavia. It struggled against two dangerous conservative forces: right-wing nationalists (especially in Croatia) and Stalinist hard-liners (especially in Serbia). Disappearance of the humanist and libertarian left would inevitably strengthen both unless simultaneous steps would also be undertaken against them.... Third, the international status and reputation that the country enjoyed in the world also used to be a serious limiting factor.'

Finally, however, the journal had to suspend publication in 1975. Eight members of the group were dismissed from their University posts in Belgrade, after a long struggle in which their colleagues stood by them staunchly. (For material on the struggle see *Radical Philosophy* 8, 9, 10 and 11. It is possible, by the way, that *Praxis International* may soon be restarted outside Yugoslavia.)

It remains to congratulate the editors of the *Boston Studies* for providing another excellent volume in their series. (It is worth pointing out that they also published, in 1976, *Dialectics of the Concrete* by Karel Kosik.)

Chris Arthur

NB See News Section for information about the latest pressures on the *Praxis* group.

all levels and in all kinds of different situations. I don't think that a general theory of responsibility for suffering can avoid dealing with political and economic considerations. The issues are simply far too important. Harris, accordingly, is most incisive when dealing with the least political aspects of the problem, i.e. organ

transplants. Walzer's book is an excellent general account of the moral problems resulting from the conduct of war, and can be highly recommended to anyone interested in the subject.

Gregory Claeys

McCarney: The Real World of Ideology

J. McCarney, *The Real World of Ideology*, Harvester, 1980, £12.50 hc

Does the working class have or need an ideology? Does socialist or communist society have or need an ideology? These are difficult questions 'in the real world' for Marxists. The working class, on the face of it, already has an ideology (several perhaps). And if it has, then why should not its

society of the future also have one? But in that case, can it be stronger from a scientific point of view than the ruling class it confronts? Joe McCarney proposes that we switch allies in the face of these questions. Whereas a few years ago Althusser's rigorousness was the automatic recourse of Marxists embarrassed at the quaintness or sloppiness of their traditional statements, McCarney rehabilitates a commonsensical Lukács in preference to ill-founded and sterile Althusserianism.

The Althusserian position commits, McCarney argues, a crude category mistake in counterposing terms intended to refer to unrelated features of thought. Ideology, for Marx, meant simply the struggle between the classes in the realm of thought and knowledge, which in itself tells us nothing of the truth of any particular idea, theory or whatever. Marx's attack upon the German ideology of the Hegelians does not, for example, rest upon its being ideology. That fact alone has no epistemological significance. Hegelian idealism is epistemologically faulty in its own right, not because it is ideology; and (it follows) there is no reason to attribute to Marx the view that *all* ideology is epistemologically unsound and inherently idealist. McCarney backs up this interpretation with detailed commentary on the wording in the original of certain key passages normally thought to sustain the critique of ideology as such and the juxtaposition of ideology and science.

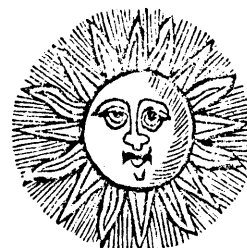
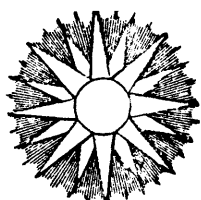
From this position my opening questions can be easily and clearly answered. Working class ideology can be admitted and then judged weak or strong in its own right. Ideology will persist so long as there is a class struggle which can be carried on in the sphere of ideas.

But then there remain reasons to hope that the ideological struggle by and for the working class will be (not by its essence but in the real world)

more productive of true science than bourgeois ideology can now be. For the increasing difficulty that bourgeois ideology has in accommodating the social reality the bourgeoisie has created has restricted the progress of science, which has to exist in the middle of the bourgeoisie's struggle for its continued dominance. Using a 'syntactic' conception of ideology (in which the structures in society are echoed 'syntactically' in theory), McCarney here takes up the approach of Lukács and renders it more sensible-sounding. 'The driving force of the debate,' he writes, 'is the wish to deprive bourgeois society of the intellectual authority of science' for 'capitalism and modern science have grown up together in the same environment and share its structural imprint'. McCarney re-runs Lukács' critique of the unified science of nature and society in which the inevitability of the natural is transposed into the social world. The bourgeois class retreats into mysticism about the irrational, i.e. that which cannot be assimilated into the natural as it conceives it. Wittgenstein is a handy example, for us, of this retreat. The living experience of the working class, on the other hand, is the source of precisely those ideas which are required to turn science once again in the direction of a comprehensive grasp of social reality: the existence of social classes, conflict of class interest, exploitation, the treatment of people as commodities.

But here I feel that McCarney's argument sounds suddenly less *realistic* than before. The reason, I think, is that its purpose is not consistent with his own view about the relationship between ideology and science. For if ideology is the class struggle in the realm of thought, then in pursuing work in the realm of thought he must either be looking to strengthen the position of a class, or, if not that, to force from science embroiled in the pressures of the struggle an acknowledgement of the experience of the class whose position he writes from. Perhaps it is the drawback of brevity (a virtue the book certainly possesses), but this list of concepts for the experience of the working class seems neither to touch immediately upon the felt experience of the working class (living in a welter of ideology too) nor by its precision to command the respect of scientists. Sadly, it *reads* like the same old list of Marxist terms.

Noel Parker



Rosenberg: The Genius of Ruskin

J. Rosenberg (ed.), *The Genius of John Ruskin*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, £9.95 hc

John Ruskin, the greatest critic and art theorist of the nineteenth century, was an absurd and contradictory figure. Like Johnson before him, much of his strength derived from lampooning his opponents, yet his own character and beliefs were fissured with superstitions, fears and absurdities which at times reached the borderline of insanity. A self-proclaimed 'Tory of the old school' (p461) who learnt his lessons within an empirical view of life which concludes that beings are created unequal in physique, personality, moral stamina and therefore unequal in intellectual capacity - Ruskin nonetheless reserved some of his fiercest invective for the 'money-making mob' which 'concentrated its soul on Pence' (p.305). An arch-aesthete who began his career with a sustained defence of Turner and later championed the Pre-Raphaelites and wedding-cake Gothic, he simultaneously maintained that art was a social value and taste 'the ONLY morality' (p274). His Christianity was typically hypocritical and derived from a deeply ingrained fear of vice rather than from praise of virtue. His socialism, though it exerted a strong (if rather unclear) influence on Morris, Shaw, Tolstoy and Gandhi, was thoroughly bourgeois and recoiled in horror at the prospect of equality - especially female. Even his writings on science were deformed by his belief that Darwinism was a pernicious affront to human dignity. Ruskin's autobiography *Praeterita* not surprisingly lurches from calm consistency to painful and compulsive chaos; it begins like J.S. Mill's, continues like Edmund Gosse's and ends up reading like a cross between Charles Lyell and Lewis Carroll - the prime example of the torture of the half-enlightened Victorian mind. Even in the field for which he is best remembered - his command of language - he managed to evade any semblance of consistency. As George Eliot put it, his writing combined passages of vivid and fluent prose (reminiscent again of Johnson at his best) with 'stupendous specimens of arrogant absurdity' (quoted in D. Leon, *Ruskin*, London, 1949, p.82).

The initial problem in dealing with Ruskin, and still more of compiling a selection of his writings, is therefore to take him seriously, or, as Rosenberg puts it: 'to replace the caricature with an authentic portrait' (Introduction, p12). Most studies of Ruskin pivot around his move from art critic to social critic. Rosenberg wisely omits the material which is commonly cited to 'explain' this transition (most of which is used to locate this move in some perverse psychological impulse; see, for example, D. Larg's *Ruskin*, London, 1932, p.95ff.), assuming instead that social criticism of conditions in Britain during the last century doesn't require explanation or justification. As with many other supposedly 'focal points' in Ruskin's career, Rosenberg leaves their motivation and importance an open question. Though this is undoubtedly a useful

emphasis, the result reads perhaps a little too smoothly, and is flawed in omitting some of the more ambiguous, but polemical and entertaining pieces such as Ruskin's lecture on Work, his Preface to *The Crown of Wild Olives* and long passages from *Of King's Treasures*.

This doesn't however detract seriously from Rosenberg's achievement (many of Ruskin's 'minor' works are readily available secondhand in the Everyman's Library, and can be used to supplement the five 'major' texts used in this anthology). Indeed, as a whole, the book conveys very clearly the root-quality of Ruskin's work: its profound admiration for order. It was this that led him to seek out and enunciate broad principles or theories whether in art, ethics or political economy, and which in effect weaves together the fragments of his own shattered design. The different facets of his work, which Rosenberg justifiably ranges under the headings Art, Architecture, Society, Solitude and Self, are all comprised in an allegiance to the same single term Beauty. This is virtually interchangeable with Ruskin's notion of Truth and like it rests fundamentally on his belief in a universal, divinely appointed order. Beauty even finds its way into his discussions on wealth, work and war; it is an energy, or creative force, which needs to be controlled and which functions as the morality to restrain and refine both sections of humanity, the idlers and the workers. Ruskin's socialism dissolves quietly into authoritarianism; far from offering the prospect of unlimited freedom, socialism (by which he means something analogous to workers' participation, rather than workers' control) is the best means to contain freedom and so prevent it demolishing all culture in adapting the world to man's primeval sensuality and selfishness.

Today many of the reforms advocated by Ruskin have been effected, and in retrospect it seems difficult to imagine why he was denounced for so long as 'a monger of heresies who must be crushed, lest his wild words open a 'moral floodgate ... and drown us all' (p.219). This book is important in providing an impression of the revolutionary form of Ruskin's teachings, and an indication of how he posed questions of economics in such a way as to link them with problems of politics, ethics and sociology. Though some of his work is archaic, not to say medieval (especially his comments on chivalry and on Plato's doctrine of love), his contribution to economics remains pertinent. Thus the whole argument of *Unto this Last* rests on Ruskin's attempts to humanize the concept of value. 'There is,' he writes, 'no wealth but life.... A strange political economy; the only one, nevertheless, that ever was or can be: all political economy founded on self-interest being but the fulfilment of that which once brought schism into the Policy of angels, and ruin into the Economy of Heaven.' (p270).

Mike Shortland