



# REVIEWS

## Whitehead Revisited

A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*. London: Free Associated Books, 1985. £4.95 pb.

Free Association Books have brought out a new edition of Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, first published in 1926. It is some years since it was last available in the UK. The initiative for this facsimile reprint was taken by Bob Young, of the *Radical Science* collective. This may occasion some astonishment. Whitehead has his followers - for example among the advocates of *Process Theology* - and he was clearly regarded as a towering figure in his adopted land, but it is surprising to find him associated with the perspective of *Radical Science*. The explanation for this association is to be found partly in Bob Young's autobiographical confession. However, it is by no means obvious that readers in the '80s can recapture the 'liberating' effect which reading Whitehead could have in the '50s and '60s. Indeed, if there are respects in which Whitehead's writings prefigure contemporary discussions, that fact itself robs us of the element of surprise. Why then is it important to re-read Whitehead? Is this republication simply an attempt to construct a *radical* tradition - *Radical Science's* search for aristocratic roots? Or are there pressing contemporary issues which require us to reconsider the significance of Whitehead's *Philosophy of Organism*?

Whitehead has not become a 'landmark' figure in the UK philosophy curriculum - at least not yet. He did not participate in positivism's self-styled Revolution in Philosophy, but engaged upon a vast project of his own. This project seemed immensely profound to those swept up in his train of thought, but others found it wrong-headed and scarcely intelligible. He is perhaps the very last victim of an historiographical tradition which treats all attempts at speculative metaphysics after Kant as adventitious nonsense. And his own suggestion that his thoughts represent a 'recursion' to the ideas of John Locke can hardly have evinced an impression of 'modernity'. The central philosophical concerns of Anglo-Saxon philosophy in the period in which his main writings were penned, and in the decades which followed, were set quite at variance with Whitehead's own.

He is most frequently mentioned simply as the co-author of the awesome edifice of the *Principia Mathematica*. As David Watson has put it, Whitehead is treated as 'a mathematical *cul de sac* on the route to logical positivism'. However, Whitehead was a remarkable thinker, with not one but several careers.

In the first phase, prior to his collaboration with Russell, he established himself at Cambridge as a

mathematician of sufficient distinction to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was impressed with the development of 'field' theories in physics and tried to show how physical geometry could be freed from its association with material particles in Absolute Space. After *Principia Mathematica* Whitehead became Professor of Applied Mathematics at Imperial College. In this Middle Phase he embarked upon a series of works in 'the philosophy of science' which addressed the problem of the relation of theory to the world of experience. These culminated in a philosophical critique of Einstein's general theory of relativity which Whitehead carried through to the point of proposing an alternative theory of gravitation in 1922. Whitehead, however, moved on. At the age of 63 this mathematician/logician/natural philosopher uprooted himself to Harvard to start a new life and to undertake the construction of what has been hailed as the most rigorous system of speculative metaphysics ever devised.

The main achievement of his 'Middle Period' was his *theory of extensive abstraction*, in which he tried to show how the rich, vague confusion of experience could support the apparatus of mathematical physics. Conversely this showed how the apparatus of mathematical physics could be used without a Cartesian style commitment to physical reality as a purely 'mathematical substance'. Geometrical abstractions, such as 'point particles', are not part of the content of experience and it is a fallacy to think they must be real. Concrete processes of becoming are extended in both time and space. But 'points', 'lines' and 'planes' can be defined in terms of converging series of smaller and smaller 'regions', and 'instants' can be defined in terms of converging series of overlapping 'events'. Whitehead showed that these series could constitute 'objects' for mathematical physics. We do not have to think of the real world as the 'idealised limits' of these series standing beyond what is given in actual experience. Thus the world may indeed be a 'community' of spatio-temporally extended processes rather than a succession of the instantaneous configurations of permanent and independent material particles.

This thesis as to how our knowledge of the external world comes to take on a geometrical character seems to imply that we impose 'uniform relatedness' upon experience. Thus space-time geometry must be uniform. Within this uniform framework physical processes exhibit contingent uniformities or non-uniformities. Thus gravitation is interpreted in terms of physical influences acting within a uniform, albeit non-Euclidean, spacetime.

Einstein's theory on the other hand developed an

'immanent' geometry of the physical world which gives particular significance to the behaviour of light rays in vacuo. Such rays are physical 'straightest lines'. Thus for Einstein gravitation becomes natural motion within a non-uniform space-time. Whitehead's philosophical objection to Einstein's theory is that it treats what should be recognised as a necessary feature of the way we organise experience as if it were a purely contingent fact about the physical world.

Most theoreticians were not impressed by Whitehead's alternative which seemed to generate the same predictions as Einstein's theory. 'Philosophical' arguments for it were not calculated to appeal to the community of physicists. Einstein himself had warned of the 'disservice' done to physics by philosophers who had raised the concepts of space and time 'to the Olympian heights of the a priori' - and now Whitehead seemed to be doing it again. The lack of any evidence against Whitehead was not sufficient for him to be taken seriously. In fact it had to wait until 1971 for someone to derive a prediction from Whitehead's theory which conflicted with known evidence! - and who is to say whether some other persons of ingenuity might not be able to negotiate a way around this 'anomaly'? Given the fact that Whitehead's theory has received relatively little serious attention, it is perhaps not surprising that it remains poorly articulated in comparison with Einstein's and hence offers no serious competition. It would be of interest to know just how firm are the connections between his general philosophical position and the physical theory he articulated. It is however doubtful whether the arrow of modus tollens reaches to the heart of the Philosophy of Organism Whitehead articulated in his years at Harvard.

During this past 'Metaphysical Period' Whitehead developed his most profound reflections on ultimate philosophical puzzles and demonstrated an encyclopedic knowledge of the history of ideas. The co-author of Principia Mathematica held him in enormous respect, but clearly felt that this metaphysical work was worthless. It was undertaken in a period in which all 'system building' was threatened with demolition. While venerated relics bequeathed by history might be taken seriously, to build a new monument must have seemed an act of folly. But positivist iconoclasm has passed into history with the movement itself; we are not bound to accept the negative evaluation given to his work by Whitehead's English contemporaries. By making one of the texts from the Metaphysical Period accessible again, Free Association Books invites a reevaluation of Whitehead's position in the philosophical canon.

Science and the Modern World arose from the Lowell Lectures delivered in February 1925. It contains material of different kinds: an essay in the history of ideas; discussions of the philosophical significance of relativity and quantum theory; and an early sketch of the 'philosophy of organism'.

As an historian of ideas there is no doubt about the synoptic scope of Whitehead's vision, but it is important to be alert to the nature of his historical writing. He explores the past in order to learn what is relevant to the present. He is strongly conscious of the progressive character of human knowledge, but watchful of ways in which our thought can be imprisoned by past philosophical errors. Though he can enter imaginatively into the 'world' of the past, this isn't the point of the exercise. His historiographical temper is teleological and normative.

Significantly ideas are given absolute primacy: there is little attention to social or economic conditions. It would be inappropriate to take this as a model and there are, of course, also respects in which more recent scholarship would modify his story. The book has interest as an outstanding exemplar of a particular type of historical writing, itself indicative of a particular period. And the variety of the material which Whitehead weaves into his story is a challenge to common assumptions about 'subject boundaries' - how many philosophers of science

discuss romantic poetry? But the main interest lies in the philosophizing for which the historical story provides the occasion.

One recurring target in Whitehead's writing is what he called the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, i.e. our tendency to take 'a theoretical abstraction' to be 'the real thing'. This tendency is responsible for a radical bifurcation of nature - the separation of 'primary' from 'secondary' qualities which has no warrant within actual experience. The idea that the 'world' is really nothing more than a swirling configuration of 'hard, massy, impenetrable, moveable particles' acted upon by forces involves taking the abstractions of Classical Mechanics to be what is real and concrete. All else - colour, taste, scent, sound and warmth - is the work of our minds; nature itself is dull and meaningless. But this is a 'world' in which there is actually no place for ourselves. Cartesian dualism expresses this consequence.

'Scientific materialism' involves imposing theoretical abstractions upon the richness of actual experience, in a way which is demonstrably inconsistent with fundamental facts about the world. A coherent and unified metaphysical scheme must give an adequate account of all facets of human experience. Both we ourselves and our experience are features of the process of nature.

The twentieth century revolution in physics however undermines the presuppositions of classical physics and, so to speak, loosens the grip of 'scientific materialism'. The Theory of Relativity abolishes the all-pervading mechanical aether. But more deeply it replaces the 'intrinsic characteristics' of independent objects by 'relational properties'. This interrelatedness of things is an explicit feature of Relativity, and as early as 1925 Whitehead detects that 'organic inter-relatedness' is a developing feature of the 'new' Quantum Theory. But, striking though these interpretations may be, his metaphysical theory is not intended simply to be a response to the revolution in physics. It is significant that it can cope with such upheavals in a natural way, but even had Newtonian mathematical physics remained unscathed by experiment and observation, Whitehead would have challenged its metaphysical interpretation. The ability to make sense of our scientific understanding of the world is an obligatory but hazardous test for a metaphysical scheme. Failure to comprehend current scientific thought is disastrous for such a scheme, but too close an accommodation will render it as vulnerable as the theories of the moment. On the other hand a scheme which avoids the possibility of conflict or refutation will seem



to lack relevance. This implies the adventure of speculative metaphysics need have no final conclusion - reworking and rethinking may be a permanent feature of the enterprise - but this is no cause for despair.

The 'Philosophy of Organism' needs the support of more general arguments, showing that it can make sense of the whole of our experience of the world in a way which is consistent with our understanding of how that world works. Thus Whitehead attempts to assimilate the way we experience the world to the way 'things' are constituted through manifold processes of interaction. In

'experiencing' we interact with the world and both alter it and are altered by it. In analogy with our conscious apprehension of other objects, 'objects' themselves prehend other objects. And this is more than analogy: ultimately the former must be seen as a special case of the latter. Furthermore the 'ingressions' of such 'prehensions' into 'actual occasions' are constitutive of those occasions. There are no fixed, immutable, material objects with their own intrinsic characteristics persisting in empty Space through limitless Time. Gone is Lucretius' world of 'Atoms and the Void!' The ingredients of Whitehead's world are organic processes in which we are participants.

This notion that the World is a Process is central to Whitehead's thought. He felt that if the history of nature is conceived as a succession of instantaneous configurations of particles then the idea of change is altogether lost. Now some objects are 'uniform' in the sense that they remain unchanged throughout a certain period of time, while others are 'non-uniform' implying that they cannot be defined except in terms of 'temporally extended processes'. If we fix our gaze on the abstractions of Classical Mechanics we tend to expect the ultimately real entities to be objects of the former type - like Democritus' atoms. On this viewpoint 'objects' of the latter type are treated as derivative and secondary. They are merely conveniently labelled bundles of the permanent entities in changing configurations. But it is arguable that, from the level of atoms and molecules to the level of large biological organisms and beyond, it is 'objects' of the latter kind that we actually encounter. All of these 'objects' are processes extending over other processes. In chemical combination the electron in the hydrogen atom has to be conceived in terms of three-dimensional 'orbitals' which are essentially 'spread' in space and time. The hydrogen atom has the potential to be an instantaneously localized electron associated with a localized proton. But once this is realised experimentally the 'atom' is totally disrupted. The biological metaphor of the 'organism' fits the actual atoms of physics and chemistry a good deal better than a metaphysics of instantaneous configurations fits organic processes.



In a world pictured as a creative process where everything exists in organic relationship to everything else there has to be some account of the emergence of the stable features known to experience. 'Objects' are more properly thought of as 'communities' of related processes persisting through time. But there are other stable features of experience which cannot be analysed in this way, viz what we usually refer to as 'universals'. Whitehead refers to them as 'Eternal Objects' but he does not think of them as things which exist independently of 'actual occasions', rather they are 'eternal possibilities'

or 'potentialities' of things. What then has to be explained is how these potentialities are realised in concrete processes. 'Eternal objects' appear as teleological factors in the 'creative advance of nature', preventing degeneration into an unintelligible Heraklitean Flux. This is surely one of the most problematic aspects of Whitehead's theory. If 'family resemblances' between objects show the way they express 'real potentialities' then there must be some notion of 'correctness' in the recognition of resemblances which is prior to and independent of socially constructed classifications reflected in language. How can the 'potentialities' which 'respects of resemblance' exhibit actually produce novelty? To explain this Whitehead has recourse to a creative 'Principle of Concretion' which brings novelty into being. The 'stuff' of the World is neither a featureless material substratum nor an abstract mathematical substance but Creativity, and the Principle of Concretion is 'God' considered as immanent, evolving and involved in the World. Moral purpose is thus infused into the very stuff of things.

This conception explains why Whitehead's metaphysics has been seized upon by theologians and religionists. Scientific advance constantly squeezes the gaps of ignorance in which miraculous intervention may seem to occur. In this situation only two metaphysical roles seem to remain for 'God' to fill. 'God' may remain as the Cause of an Original Miracle - the 'Creation'. But this is the humanly irrelevant First Cause of Deism. Or 'God' may remain as the Necessary Being which sustains a Perpetual Miracle - viz. the fact that contingent things continue to exist at all. But in either case 'God' is impaled upon the problem of evil and has to bear a terrible responsibility for the way the World has turned out. Thus this gentle late Victorian Anglican denounced the God of orthodox theology as an evil metaphysical monster and the projection of political domination - 'The Church gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar.' Whitehead invites us to participate in the Divine Work of a suffering God who is alongside us in the process of creation. This 'Galilean' God is neither the transcendent 'Pantokrator' or 'Universal Ruler' of Newton and Aquinas nor the immanent 'Brahman' or 'Absolute Ground of Being' of Shankara and Tillich. Though clearly metaphysical, Whitehead's theology has a moral impulse akin to that of the 'religionless Christianity' of the 1960s, and the present-day writings of Don Cupitt and the Bishop of Durham.

What then should we make of Whitehead? Should he have a central place in the philosophical curriculum? The increased volume of publications and theses in the USA in recent years may presage an explosion in Whiteheadian studies - some focussed on internal exegesis; some applying his ideas to perennial philosophical problems; some linking him to other thinkers from Hegel and Aristotle, to Ramanuja of the theistic Vedanta and Uisang of Hua-Yen Buddhism. Whitehead's own writings are a curious mixture of dense and tightly woven thickets of novel terminology mingled with lucid sweeps of sparkling aphorisms. There are challenges for the expositor; inexhaustible opportunities for comparative study; and enough 'misty profundity' (to borrow one of Whitehead's own cautionary remarks) to attract purveyors of the esoteric. But why Free Association Books? What is there about Whitehead's enterprise to hold the attention of the readers of Radical Science (or Radical Philosophy)?

Bob Young's view of the matter is that Whitehead provides a very acute diagnosis of what is wrong with 'scientific materialism', and that we can draw strength from this critique without committing ourselves to a version of the Philosophy of Organism. 'Scientific materialism' fails as a World View. It fails philosophically because it engenders a series of unbridgeable 'bifurcations' - mind/body; primary

quality/secondary quality; cause/purpose; freewill/determinism; fact/value - which threaten to excise everything of human significance from the real world. It fails politically for precisely the same reason: 'scientific materialism' implies all genuine knowledge is technical and instrumental and the ends we choose are arbitrary, and thus it serves as an ideology of domination.

However, it may not be quite so easy to accept Whitehead's critique without accepting his solution. If Whitehead did construe the problems of 'scientific materialism' in the right way, then his are possible solutions and must be taken seriously. On the other hand if there are doubts about solutions of the type he offered then there must be doubts about his diagnosis. You may feel Whitehead is right to criticise 'scientific materialism', but you should not regard him as an ally

unless you are prepared to grapple with his positive theses. Bob Young has done a disinterested service in putting one of Whitehead's more approachable books from the Metaphysical Period back into circulation again. Unfortunately it seems to me that many of Whitehead's positive theses continue to stand in need of 'translation' if they are to be fruitful for the resolution of concerns on the current philosophical agenda. Of course it may be that we should allow Whitehead to play a part in setting that agenda. If this reprint stimulates such reconsideration then Free Association Books will have achieved more than they seem to have intended, but anything short of this would be of little value.

Jonathan Powers

# The Idea of Socialist Right

Ernst Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity*, translated by Dennis J. Schmidt. London: M.I.T. Press, 1986. 323pp. £21.25 hb.

'Where everything has been alienated, inalienable rights stand out in sharp relief' (Bloch, p. xxvii).

This is an important book. No issue in socialist theory is so central to the project of socialist construction, and yet has been so persistently plagued by theoretical and political disagreement between socialists, as the question of rights. And few people have been in so favourable a position to address themselves to its reformulation as Bloch. At once a materialist and a metaphysician, a defender of the utopian tradition and yet an orthodox communist, and a resident of both East and West Germany in the post-war years, Bloch embodied many of the political and philosophical tensions and ambiguities that bedevil the question of 'right'.

Socialist debate on the question of rights has tended to be polarised around two sharply conflicting positions. On the one hand, taking its cue from Marx's location of the origin of political alienation in the very existence of a state separate from civil society, the Soviet Marxist tradition has conceived of 'right' (*Recht*) as an essentially bourgeois category, and as such, as something of strictly delimited historical significance. The libertarian, or more recently, 'pluralistic' socialist tradition, on the other hand, has tended to maintain the absolute validity of certain individual rights over and against the state; not just in relation to capitalist and pre-capitalist societies, but also, and even in particular, in relation to the socialist state. Furthermore, this tradition has tended to associate the idea of socialism itself with the extension and upholding of 'right'; especially 'human' right.

The problems which arise for each of these positions are distinctive, but they share a common feature: an apparent inability to give any substantive specificity to the idea of socialist rights. For the first position, the problem of socialist rights appears as an essentially technical one. There is no distinctively socialist 'right'. There are only socialist rights: the expression in a legal, formally universalistic, and hence bourgeois, form of the social content of the transitional socialist (class) state: a 'bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie' (Lenin) which acts to further the (universal) interests of the working class. The content and justification of socialist rights, in other words, appears as external to the form of right.

From the standpoint of the second position, on the other hand, it is precisely the universality of the form of right which gives rights their specifically 'human', and hence

socialistic, content. The problem for this position concerns the precise way in which such a content is to be derived. 'Human' rights, at least as currently generally understood, appear to be a form of natural right. As such though, there would seem to be no way of conceptualising them other than within the framework of bourgeois natural law theory; since it is precisely the abstract universality of bourgeois legal norms which, historically, gives them their specifically bourgeois character. The idea of a distinctively socialist right is thus as theoretically problematic for those who want to tie the idea of socialism to that of right, as it has been politically problematic for those who have conceived of socialism in terms of the 'withering away' of right.

*Natural Law and Human Dignity* (first published in German in 1961, shortly after Bloch moved to the West, and here translated into English for the first time) confronts this aporia of the idea of socialist right in two ways. Firstly (chapters 4-18), it reconstructs the social meaning of the natural law tradition through an account of its development from its origins in the Sophists' concept of physis, through its classical period in the early modern age, to its annihilation in the 'decisionism' of Carl Schmitt's fascistic legal theory. Secondly (chapters 19-25), it reconsiders the relationship between bourgeois and socialist revolutions, and lays the foundations for a materialist theory of socialist right as the heir to the radical natural law tradition.

The constitutive heritage of natural law theory, Bloch argues, is the postulate of human dignity implicit in the opposition of the idea of 'natural' or 'human' right to the positivity of existing legal norms. All natural law theories, he argues, 'are primarily directed toward dignity'. More specifically, natural law 'is orientated above all toward the abolition of human degradation'. It 'wants to do away with all that stands in the way of autonomy and its eunomia' (p. 205). As such, it is essentially revolutionary. It is 'the insurgent element in all revolution', 'the element that resists', 'the pride of the upright carriage' (p. 275). Its basic impulse is a materialist one, and the fundamental right it sustains is the 'right not to be treated like scum' (p. 220): the right to the recognition of one's essential humanity.

The concrete social meaning of such a 'right', Bloch argues, is always, in classless societies, 'justice from below'. The immediate means for its implementation is the 'necessary evil' of the revolutionary tribunal. But it can only be sustained in the long run through the construction of a new social order ('the main goal of revolutionary justice'). Without the revolutionary

tribunal, Bloch insists, 'there is no release of humanity' (p. 202). But 'the goods of the construction never support the tribunal', since the idea of natural law in terms of which they must be justified represents 'an instruction against all usurpation from above, all reification of the means of power, and all exercise of uncontrolled power' (p. 203).

There are three distinctive features to Bloch's appropriation of the idea of natural law. Firstly, there is the idea that natural law represents a form of justice 'that can only be obtained by struggle' (p. xxx). 'There are no innate rights' (p. 188). All rights are acquired, and acquired through struggle. Secondly, and consequently, there is the idea that the specific social content of natural law develops historically, within the parameters of its basic meaning, in a manner determined firstly by the historical process of the formation of human nature, and secondly by the possibilities for freedom afforded by the state of the development of the productive forces. Radical natural law, it is argued, 'posits human freedom in the solidarity that has become possible' (p. 243). Finally, there is the idea that the 'basic tenor' of natural law theory, its opposition to all reification of power, is the classless society; and that it 'only grows insofar as it is a prelude' to such a state of affairs (p. 275).

Bloch's aim is to recover from the natural law tradition a dialectical conception of 'right' which, historical without being relativistic, can provide the basis for the theorisation of the continuity between bourgeois and socialist revolutions, not just at the economic level, but in terms of their general 'human' significance. In this respect, he argues, the recovery of the natural law tradition's orientation towards individual dignity and autonomy is a necessary complement to the recovery of the utopian tradition's orientation toward the question of happiness: 'there can be no human dignity without the end of misery and need, but also no human happiness without the end of old and new forms of servitude.' Both 'issue from the empire of hope'. Furthermore, it is argued, 'the intended "emancipation of man" takes far less from the philanthropic affect of social utopias than it does from the pride of human dignity' (p. 208). Natural Law and Human Dignity, in other words, must be seen as both a continuation of, and a corrective to, Bloch's earlier work. In particular, it represents a response to those who have criticised Bloch's earlier work (especially the massive The Principle of Hope, reviewed in RP 45) for its complicity with an authoritarian form of state socialism; not so much despite its utopianism, as because of it. It is in opposition both to such criticism, and to certain aspects of Eastern European states, that Bloch here affirms the 'legal utopia' of natural law.

On the question of the relation of socialist to bourgeois right, Bloch's position is a twofold one. Firstly, he argues that, although 'bourgeois freedoms were always more bourgeois than freedoms' (p. 175), insofar as their basis in the right to exclusive possession (private property) transforms the universality of their form into an



effectively particularistic (class) content, they were never merely bourgeois. Socialism must inherit their general 'human' content. Secondly, it is argued, socialism must not only inherit the general human content of bourgeois right, but finds within it demands which remain, and indeed must remain, unsatisfied within bourgeois society. The 'utopian side of the bourgeois revolution', in other words, remains unfinished, and can only be completed through socialism. In this sense, 'the bourgeois revolution is at the root of the proletarian revolution' (p. 171). Its aim, at the political level, must be the retrieval of the idea of the citizen from the abstract, individualistic moralism of its bourgeois formulation, and its affirmation as a conceptualisation of the individual as 'the bearer of socialised freedom' (Marx), in a concrete programme of rights of citizenship.

Such rights will attain to individuals not with respect to their (abstract) 'humanity', but with respect to their socialised individuality as members of an historically specific social form, the political rationale of which is the 'withering away' of 'the political' itself (the state) as an institutional form standing separate from and above the economic activity of civil society. Socialist rights, in other words, derive both their essential meaning, and their justification, from the (human) goals and (necessarily democratic) means of socialist construction. The struggle for rights within socialism is thus, according to Bloch, essentially a 'search for the rights of an uncompromising practical criticism that intervenes in the interests of the goal of socialist construction within the framework of solidarity' (pp. 177-78).

To the extent that it is 'the goal of socialist construction' here that is the basis for the derivation of right, Bloch lines up with the orthodox Soviet position in opposition to the abstract humanism of its liberal socialist opponents. At the same time, however, he decisively distinguishes himself from Soviet legal orthodoxy by conceiving of that goal itself in terms of a materialist theory of 'natural' right. He is thus able to reappropriate a substantive concept of right without falling prey to the abstract universality of bourgeois legality; at least, at a philosophical level. The concrete content of socialist rights, it is implied, must be derived from (and fought for within) the historically specific forms and levels of development of the transitional social formations themselves. The basic meaning, though, is clear. Socialistic legal norms are to be understood as 'codified solidarity pro rata for the production of an economic-political condition wherein, as Lenin said, every cook can rule the state and the state itself would no longer require any codification' (p. 227). It is the idea of solidarity which is the key. For, Bloch argues, it is only solidarity (the free identification of the individual will with a collective project over and above its particularistic interests) that can 'bring to a happy conclusion the requisite liberal predominance of subjective rights (and the individual moral conscience) over objective rights (and their public, their social morality)' (p. 221).

This is not an easy book, in any sense. Its argument is neither fully developed (at a philosophical or political level), nor free from ambiguity. Yet in both the richness of its treatment of its historical material, and the subtlety and force of its dialectic, it provides an account of the radical implications of natural law theory which remains far superior in both its philosophical and political acuity to the majority of more recent, more direct analytical accounts. It is decisive in its rejection of the false absolutes of liberal humanism. Yet it refuses to give up the progressive aspects of its heritage. In its maintenance and mediation of this tension, Natural Law and Human Dignity stands as an enduring example of the continuing indispensability of the dialectical tradition to the construction of a materialist political theory.

**Peter Osborne**

# Surpassing Hegel

C.J. Arthur, *Dialectics of Labour: Marx and his relation to Hegel*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 182pp. £22.50 hb.

To regular readers of *Radical Philosophy* with reasonably retentive memories, much of this new book will be familiar, as most of the major arguments have already been rehearsed in previous issues of this journal (Nos. 26, 30, 35). Arthur's theme (to remind the forgetful or the recently converted) is the theory of labour and alienation presented by Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, and the influence of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on this theory. Both of these topics are considered with admirable care, clarity and attention to detail, although (as I shall make clear) I have some reservations over his discussion of Hegel.

Arthur begins his book with the claim that in the 1844 *Manuscripts* Marx for the first time recognized the fundamental importance of productive activity as the mediating element between man and nature, in so far as this activity enables man to realise himself in nature, and thereby objectify himself. However, over and above this first order mediation, the productive activity itself is mediated through a system of private property, division of labour, exchange and wages. This system of what Arthur (following Istvan Mészáros) calls second order mediations does not unite man with nature, but rather separates him from his product, with the result that he is now alienated from the results of his objectification and productive activity. Arthur then goes on to discuss in detail the place of private property in this system of second order mediations, and in particular Marx's odd-looking claim that private property is not the cause of alienated labour, but rather its result. Arthur argues that the private property system arises out of the dialectical relation of labour and capital, whereby each determines itself in opposition to the other, an opposition that eventually must be overcome. However, this opposition cannot be overcome through a unifying synthesis, but only by the revolt of the proletariat, which dissolves the private property system. This leads Arthur on to a discussion of communism, described by Marx as 'the positive supersession of private property as human self-estrangement'. He points out that Marx distinguishes this 'positive supersession' from purely negative sweeping away of private property that is called for in crude egalitarianism. Private property has a positive significance as the objectification of human productive activity and man's essential properties, and it is this aspect of property that must be retained in its overcoming by communism.

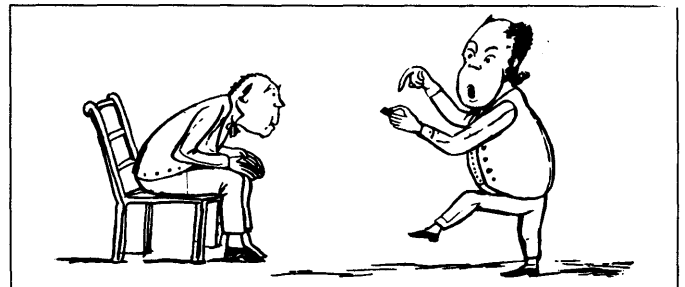
In the second part of his book, Arthur then moves to a discussion of how Marx's theory of alienation and of the reappropriation of man's alienated product is influenced by Hegel, and in particular by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Following Lukacs, he argues that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel describes the becoming other of spirit in the object, and then the overcoming of this alienation through the reappropriation of this otherness. Marx himself clearly held this interpretation of the *Phenomenology*, and Arthur rightly says that this account of Hegel was important for Marx in developing his own theory of labour and alienation.

What troubles me, however, is the ease with which Arthur accepts this reading of Hegel. As Lukacs himself points out, Marx arrived at this account via the interpretations of Hegel given by the Young Hegelians,

who tended to subjectivize Hegel's idealism (and thus to give spirit a fundamental role in positing all reality). If one looks at the *Encyclopaedia*, however, it is clear that according to Hegel's Absolute Idealism, the Idea and nature are independent of (though transparent to) mind, and that nature is the becoming other of the Idea, not spirit, as Marx's reading clearly suggests.

To be fair to Arthur, he does discuss in an appendix whether Marx's account of Hegel is in fact accurate, although he admits that he does not see this as crucial to his argument, which is only concerned with Hegel as 'the dialectically surpassed predecessor of Marx' (p. 74). It is not clear to me how he can judge whether or not Hegel has been surpassed, however, unless he makes every effort to understand Hegel fully, and not just take Marx's word for it, that in him Hegel's errors are overcome.

This failure to look closely at Hegel himself, rather than just at Marx's own view of him, leads Arthur to accept without any qualification Marx's well known criticisms of Hegel: that Hegel knows only 'abstract spiritual labour', and that (in Lukacs' terms) he confuses estrangement with objectivity. Both of these criticisms only stick, however, given a subjectivist reading of Hegel, so that his discussion of these criticisms would have been deepened if a prior assessment of that reading had been presented.



Before leaving Arthur's account of Hegel's influence on Marx, attention must be drawn to his striking claim that Marx's theory of labour is not in fact derived in any way from Hegel's account of the master-slave relationship in the *Phenomenology*. As a refutation of a persistently repeated claim made by several interpreters of both Marx and Hegel, I found his argument here convincing.

In the last section of the book, Arthur discusses Marx's relation to Feuerbach, and the influence of the latter on the 1844 *Manuscripts*. He argues (no doubt rightly) that in these manuscripts Marx was already beginning to move away from Feuerbach, partly as a result of his return to Hegel and Hegel's theory of objectification (as it was interpreted by Marx). In the following chapter Arthur then turns to an assessment of Marx's position in the 1844 *Manuscripts*, rebutting some criticisms, and adding one of his own: that Marx's picture of the relation of man to nature is too optimistic in this period (largely as a result of Feuerbach's influence), and that in the manuscripts 'there is no real recognition of the sheer recalcitrance of nature to human use' (p. 133). His point is that even if the

alienating effects of private property are overcome, the fundamental opposition of man to nature remains, and still requires mediation. He argues that when this became clear to Marx, he saw that the abolition of labour (as productive activity) is not possible, and that labour must remain in place as this mediating element. Arthur concludes by emphasising the importance of the 1844 Manuscripts for the later development of Marx's theory, and in particular argues that his picture of alienated productive activity presented here is vital to Marx's later critique of political economy.

Even without this lead into the 'mature' Marx, Arthur's precise and penetrating study does enough to reveal the intrinsic interest of the 1844 Manuscripts, as a place in Marx's thought where his economic and political analysis

is influenced by his philosophical background. The great virtue of this book is that it brings out very clearly the way in which these two strands come together in the manuscripts, and thereby helps to highlight the influence of philosophical questions and modes of thought on Marx's developing political and economic theories. My one criticism is that Arthur does not consider whether, in seeming to develop Hegel's ideas, Marx was not in fact guilty of misreading them. If he had considered this question, he might not have been so quick to conclude that in Marx Hegel is 'dialectically surpassed'.

R.A. Stern

## Jon Elster's New Clothes

Jon Elster, *An Introduction to Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 200pp. £17.50 hb, £5.95 pb.

Jon Elster, *Karl Marx: A Reader*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 345pp. £17.50 hb, £6.95 pb.

Jon Elster is one of the leading figures in the new school of 'analytical Marxism'. His massive Making Sense of Marx, which appeared last year, has already been the subject of a review and an article in Radical Philosophy [1]. Even where they have been critical, the responses have been sprinkled with respectful references to its 'formidable erudition' and deferential murmurings about it being 'an event of real importance on the intellectual scene' which is 'likely to dominate discussion for years to come'.

An Introduction to Karl Marx is a shortened and simplified presentation of the arguments of this weighty work, intended as a student text. On the basis of the shorter version, it is difficult to see what all the fuss is about. What Elster has done is to strip away the covering of supporting argument and discussion, the clothing of textual exegesis and commentary, to lay bare the outlines of his position, naked and unadorned. What is revealed is the emperor, so to speak, without any clothes. Sad to say it is a sorry sight, even by the low standards of Marx 'scholarship' set by such predecessors as Popper and Acton.

The book is intended for introductory courses on Marxism. Potential students and teachers should be warned that it is completely unsuitable for this purpose. Elster gives no overall picture of Marx's theories. He makes no attempt to describe any of the different schools and interpretations of Marxism, nor the debates and controversies they have generated. What explanation there is of Marx's views is brief and perfunctory. Indeed, at times they are presented in terms so far removed from Marx's own that it is difficult to recognize the passages in Marx referred to. There are short bibliographies at the end of each chapter, but these are idiosyncratic and eccentric in the extreme. Although they give some clues to the background of Elster's ideas, they will be almost no help to students in search of guidance about introductory reading on Marx.

All this is very puzzling; until one realizes that the book's title is seriously misleading. For Elster's first concern is to present his own views and theories. What Marx may have said is of secondary interest. Had the book been called 'An Introduction to Elster', this much at least would have been clear. However, it is still a mystery why

Elster should have chosen to present his own ideas via an account of Marx - a thinker with whom he has next to nothing in common.

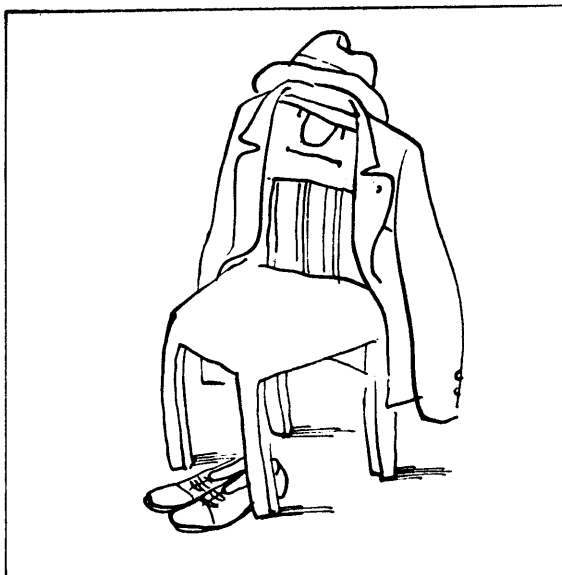
Elster's philosophy has three main strands. These are spelled out at the beginning of the book. The first is methodological individualism, also known as 'the search for microfoundations'. This involves the view that 'all institutions, behaviour patterns, and social processes can in principle be explained in terms of individuals only: their actions, properties, and relations' (p. 22) [2]. The second is 'rational choice theory', derived from marginalist economics. This is a version of the theory of homo economicus, which seeks to explain individual action on the assumption that 'people will choose the course of action they prefer, or think best' (p. 26). This is spelled out with the help of a smattering of games theory. The problem for such individualism is to give some account of collective action. In the jargon of 'rational choice theory', this is known as the 'free rider problem' and the 'Prisoner's dilemma', according to which 'the result of all [people] acting in an individually rational way is that the outcome is worse for all than it could have been had they been able to cooperate' (p. 29). The third element of Elster's outlook is an extreme hostility to teleological and functional patterns of explanation.

Armed with these assumptions Elster then proceeds to assess Marx's theories. Needless to say, given the initial assumptions, Marx comes off badly. For, although Elster's views may constitute the last word of sophistication in Chicago, they are quite alien to Marxism. In the first place, Marx was not a methodological individualist. Quite the contrary, a strong and ineradicable strand of 'methodological collectivism' runs through his work. To his credit it should be said that Elster never suggests otherwise. His conclusion, however, is: so much the worse for Marx. Likewise, Marx's social and economic thought is grounded in ideas of human action and human nature which implicitly and explicitly conflict with the extreme individualism and utilitarianism of 'rational choice theory'. To what extent Marx's work makes use of teleological and functional forms of explanation is a subject of considerable controversy. However, there is no discussion of these issues here - only a dogmatic assertion of Elster's view.

The final chapter is a reckoning of accounts. It takes the form of a catalogue of 'what is living and what is dead in Marx's philosophy'. Since Marx had both the misfortune and lack of foresight to disagree with Elster all down the line, the casualty list is impressive. 'Scientific socialism ... dialectical materialism ... teleology and functionalism

... Marxian economic theory ... the theory of productive forces and relations of production - perhaps the most important part of historical materialism' - are all pronounced 'dead' (pp. 188-93). Marx, we are told, 'was almost never "right"'. His facts were defective by the standard of modern scholarship, his generalizations reckless and sweeping' (p. 3).

But there are a few signs of life amidst the carnage. The aspects of Marxism which meet with Elster's approval mainly have to do with Marx's moral and political values. The list includes 'the theory of alienation and Marx's concept of "the good life for man" ... the theory of exploitation ... Marx's conception of distributive justice ... his theory of class consciousness, class struggle and politics' (pp. 194ff.). In short, Elster does not wish to



reject entirely the values of socialism, although he is anxious to disassociate himself from virtually all the substantial aspects of Marx's social, historical and economic theories.

One is reminded of Popper's verdict that Marx's 'moral radicalism is still alive ... "Scientific" Marxism is dead. Its feeling of social responsibility and its love of freedom must survive' (*The Open Society II*, p. 211). In other ways, however, Elster's book compares poorly with Popper's. At least Popper felt some obligation to present an account of Marx's theories in something like a recognizable form, and to give a coherent and argued critique of them.

The *Reader* that Elster has assembled is designed to accompany the text that I have been talking about. It consists of fragments and excerpts from the whole range of Marx's writings (Engels is excluded). However, only a very few pieces are included in their entirety. The choice of material and the way it is organized is designed to tie in closely with the arguments of the *Introduction*: the *Reader* thus stands - or rather falls - with it.

**Sean Sayers**

## Notes

- 1 See G. McLennan's review in *Radical Philosophy* 42; and J. McCarney, 'A New Marxist Paradigm?' in *Radical Philosophy* 43.
- 2 Elster's version of methodological individualism is noteworthy for its broadness. Whether it can remain a distinctive and significant position when extended to include also the relations of individuals is an important issue, not discussed by Elster in this book.

# Capital Class

Istvan Mészáros, *Philosophy, Ideology and Social Sciences: Essays in Negation and Affirmation*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986. 284pp. £28.50 hb, £9.94 pb.

Istvan Mészáros will be well known to readers of *Radical Philosophy*. His prodigious output has included the most penetrating analyses of Marx, Lukacs and Sartre and, in terms of philosophical discourse, one often turns to his work with a sense of relief - grateful for his refusal to take the accepted horizons of debate (particularly in this country) for granted. The present collection of essays, articles and converted lectures lies four-square in this Mészáros tradition. From his successful demolition of Daniel Bell's celebrated claims concerning the 'end of ideology', through to his discussion of the relationship between Marxism and human rights, Mészáros is always combative, scholarly and entertaining. In between lie cogent and instructive essays on the problems of class consciousness, Marx as a philosopher, and a quite brilliant piece comparing the philosophies of history of Kant, Hegel and Marx. The collection concludes with two essays, on metaphor and simile and on alienation in European literature, whose relevance seems only tangential to the title of the volume and which do not, I think, maintain the high standards of the rest of the collection.

A guiding theme of Mészáros' perspective is that the 'structural subordination of labour and capital' is 'a necessary feature of all conceivable forms of capitalism' (p. 70). The consequence of this subordination is fundamental social conflict, whose conscious expression takes the form of contending ideologies which represent the 'hegemonic alternatives' (p. xiii) of the interests of capital and the interests of labour (p. 241). The social expression of the subordination of labour to capital is a working-class subject to the vagaries of capital and sacrificed to the extraction of profit. The concrete historical expression of this subjection has been the succession of economic booms and slumps which are experienced by the working class as moments of material advancement followed by periods - generally temporary - of deprivation and unemployment.

Under these conditions, it is the unique relationship of the working class to labour which makes it the 'universal class' capable of bringing about 'universal emancipation'. The working class 'cannot impose itself on society as a new form of exploitative and parasitic sectional interest since it represents the condition of labour' (p. 208). Clearly, formulations such as this provoke the question: what constitutes the working class? In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx refers to the proletariat as 'a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital'. Generally speaking, the capitalist countries have, until now, been able to provide work (both manual and intellectual) often enough for labour expectations to be fulfilled, and so it has made sense to continue talking of a 'working class' as the vehicle for universal emancipation, even if capitalism has always been able to offer it enough rewards to stunt its revolutionary inclinations. Now, unemployment has always been structural in capitalism because the existence of Engels's 'industrial reserve army' is an essential feature of the strategy for depressing wages and increasing profits. What may be new to the post-industrial era (a term which Mészáros scathingly refers to as an expression of a wishful transcendence of the contradictions of contemporary capitalism without going beyond capitalism itself), is the existence of structural permanent unemployment and, more generally, capitalism's inability

even to hold out the promise of the fulfillment of labour expectations. Are we witnessing the birth of a new class, a class for whom the 'subordination of labour to capital' does not mean depressed wages and intermittent work, but no wages and no work? If this 'class' exists, and given the impossibility of its co-option by capitalism (because capitalism has nothing to offer it), does it possess greater revolutionary potential than the working class? Is there now a positive place in Marxist theory for these casualties of capitalism, peremptorily referred to by Marx in the Communist Manifesto as 'social scum' and 'that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society'?

Contemporary capitalism has thrown up many new forms of the reproduction of domination, and it is Mézaros' intention in these essays to go no further than the study of the 'active intervention of powerful ideological factors on the side of maintaining the order in existence' (p. ix) (my emphasis). But such is his standing now as a Marxian theoretician, and such is the evidence of expansive power contained in these essays, that one feels sure he must be ready to subject Marxism to the test of contemporary capitalism and see what lessons may be learnt. I, for one, would be delighted to see him confront the theoretical challenge for Marxism represented by the millions of European permanently unemployed.

**Andy Dobson**

## Confronting Modernity

Peter Dews (ed.), *Habermas: Autonomy and Solidarity*. London: Verso, 1986. 216pp. £6.95 pb.

The subtitle of this collection of interviews with Habermas suggests that the book has a substantive and political flavour. Unless 'autonomy' and 'solidarity' cover everything, this phrase is rather misleading, for those terms and issues are seldom directly addressed, and Habermas's political reflections emerge as less firmly based than, and secondary to, his principal theoretical concerns. There are judicious insights into contemporary politics, but Habermas shows considerable uncertainty as to progressive tasks and directions. However, when combined with his willingness to be corrected (and even improved) by his interviewers, and with his occasional humorous twinkle, this openness in the face of dilemmas and problems is attractively unpompous. The broad context and the spoken form therefore work well to bring about Habermas the person as well as Habermas the Thinker.

The author of the big books is here too though, and while it is not quite an introduction for the uninitiated, the volume does succeed in progressively encapsulating the main lines of Habermas's thought. Several of the interviews rather tediously re-run his early intellectual biography, but otherwise they complement each other well, considering they were conducted at different times by different people. The New Left Review interrogations towards the end are particularly full, probing and pushing their subject towards a coherence he is reluctant to admit to.

In an excellent introduction, Peter Dews sets up and tries to resolve the debate between Habermas and the post-structuralists. Dews does not underestimate the extent to which there is a real argument here, with Habermas cast as the defender of Enlightenment rationalism set against the forces of unreason and despair. But he does persuasively insist that the debate, or at least

Habermas's position within it, is more subtle than is often assumed. Habermas, it is allowed, defends the 'project of modernity' and the 'rationalist' goal of a co-operative society of complexity, freedom and undistorted communication. But Dews details how, in his view anyway, Habermas's theory of truth and validity is distanced from epistemological objectivism, the theory of social evolution from speculative philosophy of history, the theory of communicative action from 'crude' materialism, and a conception of subjectivity removed from preconceptions about a constitutive consciousness. In all these respects, Habermas appears not to fall into what are often taken to be typically modernist philosophical notions. In fact, Dews perhaps overdoes his defence of Habermas against the new philosophers here, for he seems to go out of his way to show how Habermas got to 'post-modernist' ideas first. Somehow, the idea of Habermas as the uncompromising last stand of the Enlightenment has more consistency and grandeur - worth paying the price of a subtlety or two.



In any case, each of the aspects of Habermas's work, and the way they are strung together in his thought, is given an airing in the course of the various interviews, as are the several major criticisms which can be laid against them single or as a theoretical juggernaut. The book is therefore a useful and engaging way of placing Habermas's strenuous, honourable, and unignorable contribution to social philosophy. For me, the picture which most clearly emerges is that Habermas, however impressive, remains a grappler with the problems of modernity and their theorization. Eclecticism and originality, rigour and mere speculation flow in and out of one another, even in this kind of systematic oeuvre. As he remarks in one interview, Habermas has not produced, nor intended to produce, a Weltanschauung.

**Gregor McLennan**

# Eggheads

Paul A. Bové, *Intellectuals in Power: A Genealogy of Critical Humanism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. 340pp. \$27.50 hb.

This book contains an intelligent and effective deployment of Foucault's work on power/knowledge. Its aim is to examine genealogically the formation of the institution of academic literary criticism. Bové is committed to the politicisation of the human sciences, arguing that 'intellectual work, the "truth" of scholarly production should be put in the service of political struggles for self-determination'. It is the book's central thesis that the theory and practice of critical humanism as carried out in academic and educational institutions today prevents the struggle for self-determination. He wants to reveal the contradictory nature of the humanist project, 'how the very powerful weapons of humanist scholarship can be made to operate for progressive and humane purposes; at the same time I shall show how they delimit such action and how, in fact, they do precisely because they are involved with some of the darkest aspects of modern history' (p. 37). He contends that humanism has become part of the disciplining machine of advanced capitalism. Humanism must be rejected because it fails to recognise its own complicity with the powers that be. Despite its progressive intentions critical humanism is antidemocratic and politically dangerous in ways it cannot acknowledge.

Bové argues that intellectual activity must be situated in a materialist context of interest, power, and desire, and in the context of the formation of a political culture. To this end he develops detailed, incisive readings of certain key figures in the history of academic literary criticism - I. A. Richards, Eric Auerbach, Edward Said - and places their work firmly in its institutional and cultural context. All three are seen to have played an important role in defining the function of literary and cultural studies for critical consciousness, but all three, despite the significant differences between them, Bové argues, remain entrapped in the delusions and political ineffectivity of the humanist project.

It is in Foucault's work that Bové sees the basis for a truly democratic cultural politics and one which will be antihumanist in its aims and objectives. Foucault's work, Bové argues, renounces the one major thing that constantly recurs in all forms of critical humanism, whether liberal or Marxist - it renounces the figure of the leading or representative intellectual and advocates instead a politics of decentralisation and self-determination. Foucault's antihumanist position, much misunderstood by disciples and detractors alike, Bové argues, is not one of political quietism as is frequently claimed; it is rather that his position is inimical to critical humanists because it is opposed to all forms of political and cultural elitism, and it thus attacks the very basis on which humanism rests - the idea of the sublime master and leading intellectual who arrogates to himself the right to speak for and represent others in the name of freedom and justice. Thus he argues that 'Foucault's thinking about and analysis of power is fully intelligible only when seen as a challenge to the legitimacy of the leading intellectual as a social subject' (p. 210). The role of the intellectual in power today should be, it is argued, one of challenging and changing specific forms of power by encouraging and fostering local struggles.

Bové's argument suffers from several weaknesses. First, too much seems to be taken for granted with the concept of the intellectual. Bové recognises that in order to concretise his argument further there is needed a full

materialist analysis of the interrelations between state, the ruling class, culture and academia, and which needs to be developed in terms of class, gender, race, etc. Second, insufficient attention is paid by Bové to the problems with Foucault's antihumanist position, problems with his understanding of power and problems which arise from the deep contradictions to be found in his ironic postures, and which work against the political effectivity and coherence of his antihumanism.

The book advocates a politicisation of the humanist 'disciplines' so as to raise important questions about how truth is produced and about the political role it plays. It is a work of genealogical analysis and historical reflection designed to enable one to question the why, where, and for whom of the human sciences, i.e. to reveal the will to power behind the will to truth and knowledge. It should be of interest and value to anyone engaged in the teaching and learning of the human sciences and who has a bad conscience over their supposed humanist function.

**Keith Ansell-Pearson**

## To Battle

Keith Graham, *The Battle of Democracy: Conflict, Consensus and the Individual*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986. 261pp. £8.95 pb.

This is very much a text-book designed for the student of political philosophy. It is clearly and concisely written and the arguments are well-presented. On the whole it is immensely readable and informative. The author is thoroughly familiar with the requisite secondary literature and he closes each chapter with suggestions for further reading. He is thus a very reliable guide.

The book and its argument are divided into two main parts. The first part - 'Pure Theory' - lays down the basis for a philosophical conception of democracy. The question it poses and explores is why should democracy secure our favour and preference as a model of social organisation? Should it be on grounds of liberty? equality? or interests? Graham wants to argue that the political struggles for democracy are pointless unless they are grounded in sound theory. The result of the inquiry in part one is that democracy can be valued intrinsically on the grounds that it provides the political space and expression for a belief in human beings as rational, autonomous agents, and, furthermore, that - in contradistinction to the tradition of liberal individualism which has achieved perhaps a monopoly of argument in this area - this conception of democracy can best be realised by adopting a collectivist and consensual view of human life and activity.

The second part - 'Applied Theory' - examines, from the perspective of the conclusions reached in part one, four leading political theories and their democratic pretensions. These are, in turn, elite theory, participation theory, Marxist theory, and Leninist theory. The merits and demerits of all four are examined and assessed, and it is argued that it is Marx's writings which contain a theoretical vision of society in which the philosophical conception of democracy argued for in part one can best be realised, for it is Marx's writings that contain a proposal for the entire social transformation of existing society in a way that will lead to the realisation of a fully

democratised society of economic and political equals: a classless society. The transformation of capitalist society through social revolution is also the transformation of politics under that society.

It is a fundamental contention of Graham's argument that Marx's relation to democracy has been poorly conceived. According to Graham we have seen Marx's theory being lost to history, largely through its deformation in the hands of Leninist theory and practice. He argues that throughout his life Marx was committed to the view that the emancipation of the working class must be an emancipation for and by themselves, and that this belief is enough to discredit Leninism. This 'loss' of Marx to history, however, he maintains, is no reason for abandoning Marx and consigning his work to the rubbish bin; the fact that his writings have been used and are still used to justify the existence of oppressive and highly anti-democratic regimes, the fact that class consciousness has not developed amongst the working class in the manner envisaged, etc., is, ultimately, no argument against the validity and appositeness of Marx's theory. Rather, it shows us what is to be done - the forging of theory and practice in a conception of revolutionary educative and democratic praxis.

Although the argument can sometimes be repetitive and arduous, it is more than worthwhile in the end to follow it carefully on account of the theoretical clarity that Graham brings to bear on what can fairly be regarded as one of these essential 'essentially contestable concepts'. It is on this level of theoretical clarity and rigour that the book will make, I believe, an important and substantial contribution to the recent flourishing of literature on democracy. Graham, it should be noted, is fully aware that the 'battle of democracy', as Marx originally envisaged it, is not simply a theoretical contest but a praxial one too. His book, therefore, should also succeed in enlivening a real, substantive interest in Marx's work from the perspective of a concern with democracy. Through powerful, persuasive argument Graham succeeds in showing in a highly refreshing manner that the battle of democracy, far from being lost, has only just begun.

**Keith Ansell-Pearson**

## Other Lands

Francis Barker et al (ed.), *Europe and its Others* (2 volumes). Colchester: University of Essex, 1985. 193pp. £7 per vol. pb.

The papers collected in these two volumes are the proceedings of the Essex Sociology of Literature conference, held in 1984. Their purpose is to attempt to 'break away from the narrowly European focus of much theoretical work' and deal 'with the relationship between Europe and other cultures'. The autonomy of these 'other cultures', however, is implicitly questioned by the title of the volumes, and the 1984 conference: *Europe and its Others*. And so, in a sense, it must be, considering that the central problematic tackled by most of the papers is that of colonial/imperial possession, and thus, according to Spivak, that of the near impossibility of a free intercultural dialogue after 'the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project' (Vol. 1, p. 131). The violence was (and is) more than epistemic, but it is the character of colonial discourse that is particularly being referred to in these papers.

Language, according to Marx and Engels, is 'practical consciousness'. It is useful to see these analyses of colonial and imperialist discourses as analyses of practical consciousness at its most practical: the process of imperial identity formation through the ideological subjugation - distancing and framing - of 'other cultures' as the Self's 'Others', in a sort of imaginary mirror reflection. These are discourses which, narcissistically, portray Europe as the subject and the Other' as the object of representations; which deny the latter their own narrative voices, and by extension their history. In so doing they also conceal 'Europe's' own ideological and socio-historical underpinnings.



The topics dealt with in the papers are quite wide ranging. The majority look at the way in which colonial discourses 'manage' the Orient and the 'New World', but others also discuss such questions as the dispersion of racist ideology throughout ethnopsychiatry and anthropology in South Africa (Chabani Manganyi), the internalisation of colonial discourses into racist policing practices in Britain (Feuchtwang), debates on multiculturalism in Australia (Gunew), the founding national romances of Latin American populism (Sommer), the problems of translation in anthropology (Asad and Dixon), Lévi-Strauss and Derrida's ethnocentrism (Brotherston), and the reporting of the Brixton riots of 1982 as a white racist fantasy (Rackett). Most of the general ideas, however, are to be found in what could be called one of these volumes' founding or 'classical' texts: E. Said's archaeology of a discipline, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).

Of the conference papers, Said's intervention, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', is by far the most programmatic. Taking it together with those of the conference as a whole, it is possible to see *Europe and its Others* as registering a turning point within cultural studies whereby some kind of 'answering back' by the dispossessed may be possible. Said's main point is that both ends of the grammatical structure ('subject' and 'object') need to be deconstructed and fragmented through historical and cultural analysis, in order to reconstruct a plurality of both objects and subjects around which alternative (liberationary) discourses may be produced: feminist, socialist, and anti-imperialist ones: discourses whose ground would be that of the deconstructed 'classical' Others: women, proletariat, the colonized...

This kind of perspective allows H. K. Brabha to note the fundamentally ambiguous character of colonial processes of legitimation. On the one hand they must portray the government as representing the whole of a colonized society, whilst on the other, legitimize this by parading their difference from it. He is also able to pinpoint how this ambiguity reappears in specific instances of cultural resistance to colonial discourses by describing the adoption of dominant insignia by certain subaltern cultural groups as a mockery of them. This forms part of his theory of 'colonial mimicry' (Vol. 1).

Two papers stand out as critical of the title of the conference, i.e. the implication that 'Europe' is presented

as a unified ahistorical subject: Ian Birchall reminds us of the class nature of these societies in his discussion of French intellectual solidarity (or lack of it) with the Algerian national liberation movements; and Jacqueline Kaye highlights Islamic imperialism in a colonized Europe in a historical critique of such founding texts as The Song of Roland.

**John Kraniauskas**

## Evol

Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion. The Codification of Intimacy*, translated by Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986. 247pp. £22.50 hb.

Luhmann's densely written study is an attempt to describe changes in the semantics of love from the seventeenth century to the present day. It construes love as a symbolic code which provides ground rules for the expression and formation of feelings rather than as a feeling *per se*, and employs a methodological framework deriving from systems analysis and communication theory. Luhmann sees society as a system consisting solely of communications, which in any given historical period is characterized by a dominant semantics which becomes plausible through its compatibility with the social structure. The transition from traditional to modern society - from stratified to functional differentiation of the social system - thus occurs primarily through the differentiation of generalized symbolic media of communication: the differentiation of the economy is a consequence of the use of money, but can only come about



given the availability of a semantics able to distinguish the use of money from, say, the use of power. A major consequence of the shift from stratified to functional differentiation is that society offers more opportunities to the individual for both impersonal relationships (modelled on economic or legal transactions) and more intensive personal relationships. Indeed, the extension of impersonal relationships seems to generate in the individual a need to develop a sense of inner self, while the increasing differentiation of intimate relationships in modern society is paralleled by distinct changes in the semantics of love affecting four areas of its codification in particular. The form of the code shifts from idealization in Medieval times, to paradoxicalization in the seventeenth century, to self-referentiality around 1800. The justification of love shifts from being based in the loved one's known characteristics, to his/her imagined attributes, to the mere fact that one loves. These changes in the code are provoked by shifting responses to sexuality. And the code's anthropological presuppositions are modified first by the seventeenth century's revaluation

of the respective status of reason and passion in human affairs, and second through the Romantic view that love comes from nowhere.

Although some two thirds of Luhmann's study are devoted to historical analysis, especially of the semantics of love in seventeenth-century France, his approach throughout is extremely generalized, refuting rather than confirming his claim that 'only highly abstract sociological theories of a very complex nature can bring historical material to life' (p. 10), and the aridity of his writing is not compensated for by the methodological rigour one expects of German sociological theory. His primary sources consist largely of literary works consciously chosen for their lack of aesthetic quality, and while this is consistent with Luhmann's view that motivation in intimate relationships is semantically determinate, his exploitation of textual materials lacks sophistication. He is quite right to argue that investigations into love must examine symbolic codes provided by cultural traditions, literary texts and situational images, but his own study rarely rises above the level of crude content analysis. At the same time, much of his argument is based on largely uncritical assimilation of secondary sources copiously referred to in footnotes yet not indexed, and it is difficult not to be sceptical about the reliability of materials which apparently support the view that in eighteenth-century Germany, 'any interest in sexuality was still rejected out of hand' (p. 115), when recent research has shown precisely the opposite to be the case. There are problems too with the overall status of Luhmann's claims. Although he concedes that his accounts of the semantics of love are class-specific, he manages to convey the impression that shifts in the semantics of love which refer only to the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie have the same general applicability to all social groups as his statements about the transition from traditional to modern society. Luhmann's study does not attempt an ideological analysis or critique of a crucial area of discourse, and is disappointing in its failure to give a convincing account even in its own terms of the relationship between transformations in social structures and shifts in symbolic forms.

**Steve Giles**

## Trotsky on Dialectics

*Trotsky's Notebooks 1933-35*, trans. and edited by Philip Pomper. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. 175pp. \$25 hb.

There is less than forty pages of Trotsky here. But we get it twice, in Russian and in English. The rest of the book is editorial annotations and commentary. The notes were in folders for Trotsky's biography of Lenin of which only the first part was ever written, and published as The Young Lenin. Besides the material on Lenin's character and biography there is material on dialectic intended as background for Trotsky's assessment of Lenin's dialectic. This includes a few pages on Hegel's Science of Logic and quite a lot of material on evolution, which Trotsky sometimes almost identified with dialectic.

It has to be said that all the Trotsky material is very fragmentary and of no use at all to a beginning student. But those with an insatiable appetite for anything on Lenin, Trotsky, or dialectic, are given some intriguing new material. The editor situates it in two essays of his own, the first covering Trotsky's relation to Lenin and the

second Trotsky's philosophical development.

What do we learn about Trotsky's dialectic here?

According to Pomper, this material has hitherto been overlooked by Trotsky scholars, and, while continuous with already published work, it is superior to such late essays as 'ABC of Dialectics' collected in *In Defence of Marxism* in which he observes 'a certain deterioration' in sophistication. According to his diaries Trotsky took a growing interest in philosophy in his later years but the pressure of political work left him little time for study, let alone for a serious book on it. Given this, his notes on Hegel and dialectics are impressively acute.

Trotsky takes the fundamental law of dialectic to be that of 'quantity into quality' and in his opinion 'Hegel himself undoubtedly did not give (it) the paramount importance which it fully deserves'. This connects with his obsession with Darwinism - to which he gives a revolutionary interpretation: rather than following the master himself in the belief that 'nature does not make leaps', Trotsky goes in for a strikingly modern catastrophist reading.

Trotsky is convinced of the importance of dialectics for scientific work. But, like many philosophers of science, he does not seem clear whether he is describing or legislating. Sometimes he asserts all scientists are 'unconscious dialecticians'. Other times, he reads people lessons, especially the Anglo-Saxon empiricists:

In the English scholar's head, just as on the shelves of his library, Darwin, the Bible, stand side by side, without disturbing each other. Anglo-Saxon thinking is constructed according to the system of the impermeable bulkhead. From this issues the most stubborn opposition in the conservative Anglo-Saxon world to dialectical thinking, which destroys all impermeable bulkheads (p. 89).

In another place he likens philosophy to tool-making, emphasizing that it is not production itself:

In order to use a tool one has to know a special area of production (metal work, lathe work). When an ignoramus, armed with the 'materialist dialectic' tries to solve complicated problems in special areas intuitively, he inevitably makes a fool of himself (p. 111).

The notes show that Trotsky's materialism is strikingly non-reductive, and his epistemology non-reflective.

The editorial work is highly scholarly - although sometimes descending to fact-grubbing:

"Hegel" is written on the front cover (without quotation marks) with Cyrillic letters in blue pencil and underlined. The capital is approximately 2 cms. high and the lowercase letters, approximately 1 cm. (p. 1).

Gripping stuff, no?

On the other hand, Pomper makes a very suggestive comparison of Lenin's, Bukharin's, and Trotsky's dialectics, which deserves to be taken further.

**C.J. Arthur**

## SHORTER REVIEWS

Erik Ohlin Wright, *Classes*, London: Verso, 1985. 344pp. £7.95 pb

This book firmly establishes Erik Wright as a leading exponent of 'game-theoretic marxism'. The first section of the book will interest philosophers most of all as it contains a re-theorisation of marxist class theory along game-theoretic lines. It begins with an overindulgent auto-critique, and concludes that class should be

theorised using concepts of exploitation rather than control as Wright had previously attempted to do. Via a critique of Roemer he develops his own classification of the four modes of exploitation corresponding to four sets of game-theoretic 'withdrawal rules' in relation to four types of economic assets. Unsurprisingly this yields four types of society: feudalism where exploitation is mainly around the asset of labour through the coercive extraction of surplus labour; market exchanges of labour power define capitalism with its unequal distribution of the means of production being the most significant asset; contemporary 'Soviet' societies are defined as statist with the state functioning as the mechanism of exploitation through the unequal distribution of 'organisation' assets; and finally socialism is redefined as having its own distinctive mode of exploitation where the negotiated distribution of skill assets will create an exploiting class of experts.

This analysis yields a typology of twelve classes for contemporary capitalist societies. This strange result occurs because Wright argues that contemporary capitalist societies combine elements of means of production, organisation and skill/credential asset based modes of exploitation. However, the good old 'contradictory class locations' remain with expert managers, for example, being in contradictory locations within exploitation relations.

All this is controversial and provocative, and although I have some sympathy with the goal of rigorously defending marxian theory, too much that is methodologically and conceptually distinctive about marxism is lost in the arid abstractions of game theory modelling. The second part of the book develops a comparative analysis of class structure and class consciousness which seeks to demonstrate the utility of Wright's new theory. Whilst one may disagree that these quantitative techniques can be used as proofs in the way that is sought here, this section is certainly a significant contribution to our systematic empirical knowledge of comparative class structures.

**Paul Bagguley**

Rick Roderick, *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1986. 194pp. £20.00 hb, £6.95 pb.

Not as comprehensive as McCarthy's study (1978), but more accessible than Kortian's (1980), this is a very good introduction to Habermas that is lucidly written and well-organised. The author has attempted not only to provide a lucid introduction to Habermas, but also to provide the basis for a critical reception of his philosophical project. The book is made up of five chapters: the first examines Habermas's work in the context of the Kant, Hegel, Marx tradition and the currently fashionable anti-foundationalism of Rorty et al, the second examines his early work in the context of the work of the Frankfurt School, the third examines his reconstruction of critical theory, the fourth looks at his attempt to construct a comprehensive concept of rationality, and the fifth and final chapter offers a critical assessment of the major theoretical task Habermas has set himself. In the final chapter Roderick shows how Habermas has misread Marx in certain key respects, but how his work needs to be understood as a supplement to - and not as a replacement for - Marx.

From this study Habermas emerges as a critical thinker continuing the work of the critical theory and Hegelian-Marxist tradition, and whose project is decisive for the philosophical Left in articulating its voice today.

**Keith Ansell-Pearson**