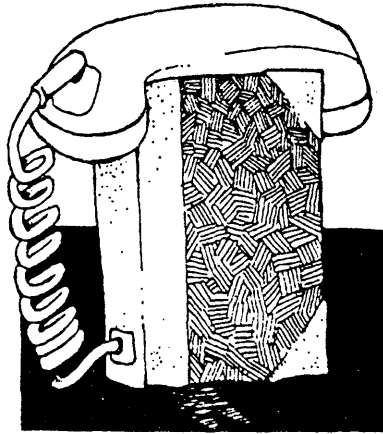


NEWS



BACK FROM THE BRINK?

The UGC Report on Philosophy

It has not been unusual during the past year or so to pick up the newspaper and find one or other of a variety of forms of rumination on the state of philosophy in Britain: from the parting shots of Oxford academics off to the greener pastures of the USA, through the moderate concern (and occasional national chauvinism) of the editorial pages, to the worried voices and justified anger of the letters' page. National coverage of the World Congress in Brighton last summer obviously helped to draw wider attention to the subject – however amused or mildly disparaging some of it may have been. And if Professor Griffith of the Royal Institute of Philosophy was embarrassingly revealed to be able to conceive of 'practice' only in the form of boiling cabbages, there was nonetheless the odd professional to be found who was prepared to defend philosophy as a form of practical activity, even if only in the narrower forms of 'applied ethics' and a computer-orientated cognitive studies. However abysmal the debate may at times have been, philosophy was at least being talked about, and in the main defended.

The Report of the UGC's Working Party on Philosophy, convened to make recommendations for the future provision of the subject at universities in the UK, was published in February, to what amounted to a huge collective sigh of relief. The National Committee for Philosophy, set up three years ago to defend the discipline, expressed its 'unanimous opinion' that the Working Party had 'done a magnificent job in presenting a positive view of the subject, and in providing a definitive base-line on which we can build for the future'. It gave it its 'unreserved support'.

The substance of the Review is three-fold. It sets out a general conception of the educational role of philosophy within British universities. It maps out a general strategy for its future. And it makes detailed recommendations about the state of each university philosophy department.

The most encouraging aspect of the report (apart from the detailed recommendations for new posts, to which I will return) is undoubtedly the generosity of the conception of philosophy which it outlines. Philosophy in Britain today, it argues:

is a very diversified subject (much more so than, for instance, in the period immediately after the war). It is much more ready to apply itself to practical issues. It is both analytical and systematic, taking its own history se-

riously, and more willing to extend itself geographically.... Philosophical questions include questions about human nature, human freedom – its presuppositions – and questions about the meaning of life. Philosophy also seeks to articulate the best available view of the overall setting of human existence – its cosmic environment.... [It] is not an isolated discipline: it interpenetrates with an extraordinary range of subjects.... In these enquiries philosophers today tend to see their own endeavours as closely related to the philosophy of the past.

There must be many a philosopher in Britain today who wishes that certain of his or her colleagues had so broad a conception of the character of the discipline.

It is interesting, furthermore, to see that it is the concentration on 'highly formalised and technical work ... in some areas of current philosophy' which is explicitly associated with the idea (which the report sets out to combat) that philosophy is 'less of a core subject than it once was'. It is also heartening to see the value of a training in 'the interpretation of demanding texts' asserted alongside that of 'the appraising and inventing of arguments and theories'. There can be few more conclusive symptoms of the final decline of the hegemony of old style analytical philosophy than this report.

The upshot of the emphasis on the breadth and variation of philosophical activity is 'to recognise and endorse diversity of types of department ... and to urge universities to accept and protect *all* of these types as valuable in their different ways'. There must, the report argues, be a 'significant number' of departments in which 'a substantially wider range of types of philosophy must be practised' in addition to 'the universally necessary subjects'.

The report delivers in more immediately practical terms as well. It recommends additional staff in 17 universities, assuming student numbers remain unchanged; although in 8 cases it is the appointment of a chair which is considered 'highly desirable'. Appointments within the lowest salary scale are recommended to counter the 'severe distortion to the age-profile of philosophy staff'. The number of recent job advertisements in England and Scotland, most under the New Academic Appointments Scheme – a veritable monsoon compared to the drought of the last 10

years – shows that departments do seem to be being able to exploit the change in climate. At Reading however, ear-marked for the chop by the Vice-Chancellor, but down for *expansion* in the report, there are rumours that the VC may consider defying the recommendations. (Institutions have been requested to inform the Committee by the end of July what action they are planning to take in response to the Review.)

There are, of course, omissions. Philosophy is defined exclusively with reference to its 'place within the *humanities*'. A discrete silence hangs over the very idea of the social sciences. And there is no mention of the relationship of university philosophy to the growing forms of philosophical activity outside—from

'A' and 'AS' Level Philosophy, through the variety of adult education and FE courses to the Polytechnics. It would be naive to expect too much. What the report has done is strengthen the hand of those who are concerned to defend the institutionalised existence of philosophy in Britain. It has also provided valuable material for those who would develop it in a more ambitious and progressive direction. It will be interesting to see just what appointments are made.

The Committee was convened by Professor Ronald Hepburn, Department of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh.

Peter Osborne

THE POLITICS OF 'ENTERPRISE CULTURE'

Report on the Cultural Studies Association Conference, held at Midland Arts Centre, Birmingham, on 18 March 1989.

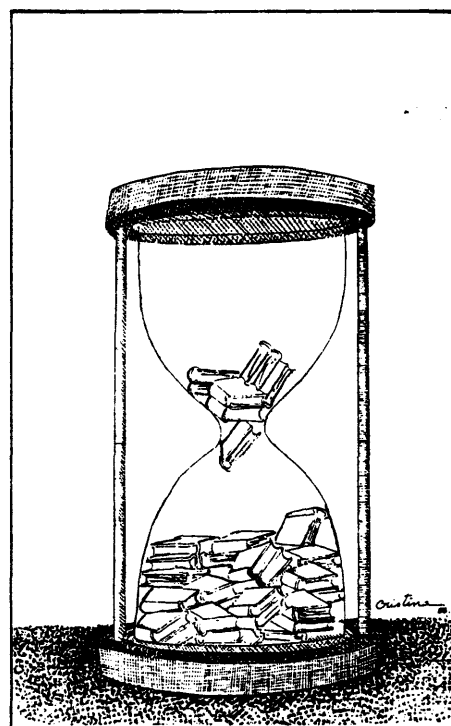
The hundred delegates who attended the Conference had all received, along with the Conference programme, copies of various documents relating to the Manpower Services Commission's 'Enterprise In Higher Education' Initiative. New courses, founded by the MSC and designed to introduce participants 'to a range of issues and methodologies which can be identified as important in the context of enterprise', are being devised in a number of universities and polytechnics. It is this initiative in (or assault on) higher education by 'the enterprise culture' which formed the immediate context of the Conference.

In an opening address to delegates, Sylvia Harvey and John Corner tried to translate the 'Enterprise-Speak' of these documents by probing into the definitions, origins and various manifestations of the concept of 'enterprise'. John Corner reminded us that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'enterprise' had at one time signified 'foolhardy', 'ambitious' and 'scheming', negative connotations that have been superseded by the 1980s version of 'enterprise', which now refers to the 'positive' qualities of 'opportunity' and 'individualism'. According to Corner, this positive reading of enterprise has its origins in the Thatcherite project of making capitalism popular. The objective of this project is to transform the old 'dependency culture' fostered by the bureaucratic state into a new 'market-fit' society in which both businesses and people will be 'flexible' enough to 'exploit' new 'opportunities'. One of the key strategies of this transformative activity is that of the 'scheme', whereby the old, 'unemployed' individual of the 1980s will be transmogrified into the self-employed, initiative-grabbing individual of the 1990s. We were not surprised to learn that the MSC and its replacement, the Training Agency, have been strangely silent about the high failure rate of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. This must constitute 'the unacceptable risk factor' of popular capitalism.

Sylvia Harvey considered the various manifestations of the 'Enterprise Culture' in Education, in the Arts and in Broadcasting. In all these areas, the idea of public service is being replaced by that of consumer choice. The 'sovereign consumer' is now the last court of appeal, and therefore functions as an essential strand of the enterprise culture's bid to become popular. However, the same market forces which produce 'opportunity' and 'choice' inexorably lead to economic concentration, and the reduction of choice, and to the disenfranchisement of those without the necessary 'buying

power'. In these circumstances, the popularity of enterprise may turn out to be a fragile and temporary phenomenon.

Sylvia Harvey concluded the opening session by inviting delegates to think about responses to these various aspects of the enterprise culture. It was essential, she argued, to adopt an international perspective and to avoid 'little Britainism'. There were other versions of enterprise (the Russian example was cited) which were not wholly negative. Decentralisation, self-government and self-sufficiency were ideas that could be mobilised as 'tools of restructuring' for the common good and



need not be tied to current conceptions of the capitalist economy.

With that thought in mind, delegates went to a series of workshops for further discussion of the issues raised in the opening address. The report-back of these discussions formed the basis of the first session of the afternoon's events. It may be that my note-taking is at fault here, but I recall a good deal

being said about the various manifestations of the enterprise culture: it has been presented as a popular response to the 'nanny state'; it comprises a good deal of empty rhetoric which might be given substance, paradoxically, by the E.H.E. Initiative itself; it involves the attempt to construct a new identity, 'the enterprising self'; and it has led to the coining of a language which suppresses notions of curiosity, understanding and cooperation. I can find very little in my notes, however, about 'responses', specifically those relating to the appropriation of the positive aspects of the idea of enterprise. More of this in a moment.

The final sessions of the Conference were a further series of workshops – on the enterprise culture as it impinges on cultural industries, consumption and lifestyle, popular fiction, the curriculum, the self and psyche and the international framework – and concluding addresses by Brian Doyle and

Anne Beezer. Again, ideas about how to respond to the enterprise culture, in either positive or defensive ways, seemed pretty thin on the ground. But this impression overlooks one of the main objectives of the Conference, which was to breathe new life into the hitherto ailing Cultural Studies Association. The organisers now possess a list of people who are prepared to play a much more active role in the running of the Association, and a new magazine, modelled on the lines of *Radical Philosophy*, is planned. Clearly, the idea of the self-motivating, market-fit individual was rejected in favour of greater cooperation and the dissemination of critical understanding. If these promises and plans come to fruition, these will constitute the response that the delegates at the Conference found so difficult to articulate.

Anne Beezer

RAYMOND WILLIAMS: MEMORIALS AND SYMPOSIUM

The death last year of Raymond Williams, Britain's foremost post-war socialist thinker, provoked widespread reflection on the importance of his work for our understanding of current cultural and political practices. Two funds have now been set up in his memory, with the aim of continuing his contribution to the creation of what he called 'an educated and participating democracy'.

The *Raymond Williams Memorial Trust* has been set up, with the status of a legal charity, in order to fund a series of annual Memorial Lectures to discuss and develop the continuing relevance of his work. The lectures will be delivered in London and the texts will be published. It is calculated that a capital sum of around £10,000 will be required to fund the annual costs. The first lecture is planned for October/November 1989. The initiative is being sponsored by Terry Eagleton, David Edgar, Stuart Hall, Graham Martin, John McGrath, Patrick Parrinder, Michael Rustin and Joy Williams, amongst others, and it is hoped that *Radical Philosophy* readers will sympathise with the plan and contribute generously. Cheques should be made out to 'Raymond Williams Memorial Trust' and sent to Graham Martin, Department of Literature, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

The *Raymond Williams Memorial Fund* has been started in recognition of Williams' importance to the development of the adult education movement. It was initially used to fund a presentation to the Wedgwood Memorial College at Barlaston in Staffordshire – a tree and a wooden bench inscribed to Williams's memory – as a simple and appropriate gesture. (The college is an adult education residential centre which the WEA helped to found in 1945.)

The overwhelming response to this idea encouraged those involved to appeal more widely for support, and the money raised will now be used to provide bursaries to mature students; to help first time, unwaged or educationally disadvantaged adult students who may be living in areas of urban deprivation or rural isolation, and adult students who wish to work in areas associated with Williams's work in which funding is difficult to obtain. Cheques should be made out to 'Raymond Williams Memorial Fund' and sent to Dr. Morag Shiach, 11 Hobart Road, Cambridge, CB1 3PU, with the enclosure of an s.a.e. if you require a receipt.

Meanwhile, a symposium on Raymond Williams was held on 22 February 1989 at Lancaster University, organised by the Centre

for the Study of Cultural Values. Ray Selden (Lancaster) chaired the symposium which was addressed by three guest speakers. Antony Easthope (Manchester Polytechnic) opened the proceedings with a characteristically trenchant analysis of Williams's politics; Derek Longhurst (Sunderland Polytechnic) followed with a more studied and nuanced account of Raymond Williams's contribution to and influence on media studies; and Chris Baldick (Edge Hill College of H.E.) paid a spirited tribute to Williams's revolutionary contribution to literary studies.

It was not intended that the occasion should be a pious celebration of Williams's work, and Easthope's opening paper ensured that hero-worship remained firmly under control. He argued forcefully for the view that Williams never overcame the humanistic limitations of his earliest work. Williams's characteristic idiom ('structure of feeling', and an emphasis on personal experience springing from his strong sense of personal marginality) remained an obstacle to his acceptance of the poststructuralist revolution. For example, Easthope explored Williams' failure to comprehend the structuralist theory of the sign or the subject. Baldick responded strongly by defending Williams' humanism which, he argued, was genuinely radical and effective in its challenge to the inanities of cultural work before the '50s. Longhurst's paper was more guarded and, while recognising that Williams (in *Communications* and *Television*) virtually started media studies single-handed in Britain, went on to point out that media studies have now developed beyond Williams's characteristic positions. Nevertheless, it was pointed out in discussion that current media studies work (using techniques of participant observation) has been strongly influenced by Williams. Several papers were keen to bear witness to the inspirational nature of Williams's work, and were clearly unhappy with Easthope's strongly anti-humanist tack.

The next public event to be organized by the Centre – which was set up last year to encourage interdisciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences on cultural values – will be a conference on 'The Values of an Enterprise Culture', the title of the Centre's current research theme. This will be held at Lancaster on 27-29 September 1989; and amongst the provisional speakers are Ted Benton, Mary Douglas, Geoffrey Hodgson, Bob Jessop, Raymond Plant, Kenneth Thompson, and Raphael Samuel. Further details about the conference, and the Centre, can be obtained from its Director, Russell Keat, Department of Philosophy, University of Lancaster.

JOHN MACMURRAY STUDIES

A New Series for Peter Lang Publishing invites authors from a variety of fields to contribute monographs dealing with the thought and influence of the Scottish moral philosopher and philosopher of religion John Macmurray. Macmurray's work has influenced scholars in theology, psychology, political science, ethics, education, and philosophy. Though he is best known for his work on agency and the person, summarized in the 1953–54 Gifford Lectures *The Self as Agent and Persons in Relation*, his writings on science, religion, language, education, psychology, economics, art, and politics, including extensive reflections on the Christian-Communist dialogue in the 1930s, have influenced scholars across a wide spectrum of disciplines.

This series seeks original and creative works which will illuminate the significance of Macmurray's metaphysics, explore the historical context of his thought, and, in particular, develop his contributions to cross-disciplinary and comparative studies. The series also welcomes manuscripts seeking to relate Macmurray's thought to topical issues.

Please send manuscript outline to: Prof. Frank G. Kirkpatrick, Series Editor, Department of Religion, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106, USA.



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An Alternative Vision of Europe

**A public meeting on the future of Europe to promote
Charta 77's call for a European Citizens' Assembly**

Speakers include:

- E.P. Thompson • Charta 77 spokesperson •
- Julia Szalai (Independent Hungarian trade unionist) •
- Sara Parkin (Co-secretary of the European Greens) • Mary Kaldor •

**Tuesday 30 May 1989 7pm
ICA The Mall London SW1**

This meeting has been organised by European Nuclear Disarmament.
The following organisations have agreed to sponsor the meeting and to
support discussion of a European Citizens' Assembly:

- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament • Charter 88 • The Socialist Society •