

grasp Marx's thought 'did not succeed in their intentions,' above all because they 'approached Marx onesidely,' and deliberately 'isolated the economist, the philosopher, or the historian,' etc. Of course there is an element of truth in these remarks, since all scientific work is necessarily partial and needs to be complemented by the contribution of later researchers. But to our knowledge, no biography of Marx has previously had the idea, a ridiculous one to say the least, of radically separating the study of his thought from that of his political action. An 'intellectual' biography which speaks of 'the deep-rooted anarchism' of Marx (p 85), of his 'anarchist profession of faith,' (p 146), etc, but contains no mention of his struggle, in theory and practice, against Bakunin; a biography in which Marx is attributed with an ethical conception of socialism, but does not even mention the conflict with the German socialist leaders at the time of the Hochberg case, during which Marx and Engels resolutely took up a principled position against any collaboration with those who based socialism on morality; such divisions (which, however, derive naturally from Rubel's view which totally separates theory and practice) seem to us questionable in the biography of any thinker, but become purely and simply a distortion in the case of Marx, for whom thought was never separable from struggle and action.³⁰

30. Admittedly Mr Rubel writes (p 14) 'An examination of Marx's strictly political career would reveal these motivations even more clearly; however, we have deliberately excluded everything not immediately relevant to the subject in view. 'A second work will be devoted to this examination.' It is precisely this radical separation of the intellectual and practical which seems to us, from the methodological point of view, highly disputable. (LG)

We could add, in dealing with Mr Rubel's book, very many more criticisms of the same scope and kind. Obviously the dimensions of an article do not permit this.

Let us simply say that all this does not seem serious to us. Mr. Rubel has wasted a considerable effort in order to affirm, without proof, that Marx's thought is ambiguous, confused and contradictory, and in particular to write an 'intellectual biography' of Marx which scarcely touches on the real problems posed by a genetic study of Marxist thought. Doubtless he has read very many texts by Marx, but he did not possess the necessary philosophical, economic and political culture to bring to a successful conclusion the extremely complex and difficult task he had set himself. Further, he never discusses the works already in existence on the subjects he treats, being satisfied with sometimes indicating their key idea and passing value judgments on them (usually negative judgments in the case of Marxist works), which, however, he hardly ever tries to justify. By its dogmatism, its peremptory tone, the inadequacy of its conceptual equipment, Mr Rubel's book is simply the other side of the coin to the Stalinist works of recent years, for, despite its opposite positions, it shows just the same faults as the latter.

Thus the radical critique of works of this kind is an indispensable condition for a real rebirth of Marxist thought and the development of the scientific 'Marxology' which Mr Rubel, rightly, so keenly desires.

SANITY, MADNESS AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

Trevor Pateman

The republication of R.D. Laing and A. Esterton's Sanity Madness and the Family as a paperback (Penguin Books, 1970) made me buy it and read it again. Despite myself, I re-read the book as a philosopher, but in the event this proved to be fruitful. It is a philosopher's reading of the first case study of the book, the study of the Abbott family, that I present in this article.

A glance at the Appendix to the chapter on the Abbotts (pp.49-50 of the Penguin edition) will show that many if not most of the statements made by the parents about the 'schizophrenic' daughter, Maya, and by Maya about herself are factual statements. For example, Maya says that she worried over examinations; the parents contradict this: she did not worry. In general, both parties make claims to knowledge - the daughter about herself and the parents about their daughter - but claims which contradict each other.

Most of the argument which Laing and Esterton transcribe from interviews with Maya and her family and reproduce in the chapter on the Abbotts is also about matters of fact. The dominant feature of these arguments is, in my reading, conflict over what is or was the fact of the matter. In this conflict, the feature of the 'schizophrenic' daughter, as evidenced in her statements, which I wish to single out is her inability either to state or, more radically, to know what is true and what is false in a given situation. I shall suggest as a possible explanation that this could be because she has not learned to tell true from false. Despite the strange protestations of Laing and Esterton in the Preface to the second edition, there is good evidence in the text for inferring that this failure to learn must be explained in a way which involves reference to the behaviour of the parents and not simply by invoking some (undiscovered) organic deficiency in the patient, Maya. In short, Maya does not learn because she is unable to and she is unable to partly because of the way her parents behave.

Consider the following passage from Laing and Esterton's commentary on this case:

"An idea of reference that she [the daughter - TP] had was that something she could not fathom was going on between her parents, seemingly about her.

Indeed there was. When they were all interviewed together, her mother and father kept exchanging with each other a constant series of nods, winks, gestures, knowing smiles, so obvious to the observer that he commented on them after twenty minutes of the first such interview. They continued, however, unabated and denied.

The consequences, so it seems to us, of this failure by her parents to acknowledge the validity of similar comments by Maya, was that Maya could not know [my italics - TP] when she was perceiving or when she

was imagining things to be going on between her parents. These open yet unavowed non-verbal exchanges between father and mother were in fact quite public and perfectly obvious. Much of what could be taken to be paranoid about Maya arose because she mistrusted her own mistrust. She could not really believe that what she thought she saw going on was going on." (p.40)

My reading of this runs as follows. We learn to 'tell right from wrong' mainly from our parents. They are our chief moral authorities, from whom we learn not simply a list of particular rights and wrongs, but general rules of right and wrong (ethical principles) and, importantly, criteria for telling right from wrong where no general rule obviously applies or where it is a case of making an exception to a general rule. Of course, all of this, no doubt, goes on unconsciously.

Though there is no common phrase like 'learning to tell right from wrong' to express it, I suggest that we also learn, mainly from our parents, how to tell true from false - veridical from delusive perceptions, correct from incorrect statements. Here again we learn not just lists; we also assimilate criteria: we acquire an unconscious mastery of the criteria and the ways of applying them which indicate to us when, for example, we can legitimately say 'I know . . .' and when we can only legitimately say 'I believe . . .': when we have a right to be sure, when not, and so on. In other words, parents are our epistemological authorities, that is, authorities on questions like: what can we know? How can we know? How can we know that we know? When can we claim to know? and so on.

Maya, like most children, regarded her parents as epistemological ('cognitive' would be a possible alternative) authorities. In her case, as in all of the cases studied by Laing and Esterton, the degree of reliance she had to place on her parents was increased by the closed nature of the Abbott family. In addition, these families were often very Christian and this could add another reinforcement to the reliance on parents. For rejection of the parents as epistemological authorities could be construed as a breach of the rule: Honour thy Father, and thy Mother.

Maya's parents consistently deny the truth of her statements and thereby undermine any developing mastery of epistemological criteria and/or her perceptions themselves. She is thus disabled from achieving a cognitive mastery of the world. The growth of cognitive autonomy is inhibited or destroyed - it depends when and for how long these interactions continue. In the case of Maya the analysis is complicated by the fact that she was away from home from the age of 8 to the age of 14. In the absence of a clear knowledge of what happened in that period, my formulations of necessity vacillate a little. She remains epistemologically dependent on her parents, just as a child whose parents treated all cases of morality/immorality as unique and therefore failed to transmit any means of discrimin-

ating morally would render their children morally dependent. When Laing and Esterton say that she 'could not know . . .' (see quotation above) this 'could not' is a logical could not: it is not that the girl failed to exercise her cognitive skills; she simply had no sure cognitive skills to exercise - as the authors put it "Her difficulty was that she could not know when to trust or mistrust her own perceptions and memory or her mother and father". (p.43)

One could say that with Maya the educational process has broken down. If education is about leading out a child into autonomous existence, then epistemological education is about making the child cognitively autonomous. In transferring their cognitive skills to their children, parents dissolve the position of 'natural' (perhaps 'contingent' is a better word) authority which initially they have. It is precisely this and other dissolutions or abolitions of authority which Maya's parents will not tolerate. They cannot let their daughter grow up. (cf. parents who try to stop sexual growing up.) Here is Maya's mother speaking, the first and last sentences being those of Laing and Esterton:

"She recalled a 'home truth' a friend had given her recently about her relation to Maya.

'She said to me, you know, "well, you can't live anyone's life for them - you could even be punished for doing it" - And I remember thinking "What a dreadful thing to think", but afterwards I thought she might be right. It struck me very forcibly. She said to me, "You get your life to live, and that's your life - you can't and you mustn't live anybody's life for them". And I thought at the time, "Well, what a dreadful thing to think." And then afterwards I thought, "Well, it's probably quite right".

This insight, however, was fleeting." (p.47)

The study of the Abbotts shows how parents can maintain their children in dependence not merely by material means or control of the purse, etc. - but also by cognitive means. These means include, in particular, the failure to transmit epistemological criteria, the Knowledge of Knowledge. The parents keep these criteria to themselves, and in the conversations reproduced in *Sanity, Madness and the Family* one can see them using these criteria as instruments of control and coercion.¹

This is plain from the dialogues which daughter and mother have about daughter's memory. Memory is a source of knowledge, but can be invoked in justification for knowledge claims only to the degree that it is reliable. Our individual assessment of the reliability of our own memory is made not just on the basis of our awareness of how often and in what sorts of cases we can't remember something which we think we could or should be able to remember. It also depends on the frequency etc. with which other people in a better position to know (epistemological authorities) validate our memory claims. Maya's mother uses her position as an epistemological authority² with respect to her daughter's memory as a means of controlling and, hence, denying autonomy to her child. Thus, according to Laing and Esterton:

"Mrs Abbott persistently reiterated how much she hoped and prayed that Maya would remember anything if it would help the doctor to get to the bottom of her illness. But she felt that she had to tell Maya repeatedly that she (Maya) could not 'really' remember anything, because (as she explained to us) Maya was always ready to pretend that she was not really ill.

She frequently questioned Maya about her memory in general, in order (from her point of view) to help her realize that she was ill, by showing her at different times either that she was amnesic, or that she had got her facts wrong, or that she only imagined she remembered what she thought she remembered because she had heard it from her mother at a later date". (p.46)

Here I am reminded of George Orwell's 1984, where control over the records against which one could check the veracity of one's memory eliminates this as a possibility and throws people back entirely on their own resources. But without any inter-subjectively accessible sources, or inter-subjective confirmation of memories, each individual's memory capacity is itself weakened. The first act of defiance which Orwell's hero, Winston Smith, commits is to keep a *Diary* - an objectified record against which he can check his own memory and which is, in principle, publicly accessible. In philosophical terms, Orwell is working with a non-Cartesian conception of the thinking self: the thinking self for Orwell does not exist, essentially, in isolation from other thinking selves; its existence is interdependent with their existence. It seems to me that Laing and Esterton's work gives some sort of empirical

support to this non-Cartesian position which one can find, for instance, in both Hegel and Wittgenstein - authors whom Laing has read. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the section on the dialectic of Master and Slave, the non-Cartesianism is perfectly clear:

"Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only by being acknowledged or 'recognised'".³

But Maya does not appear to have adopted Winston Smith's strategy. There is no reference to her keeping a *Diary*. More to the point, she has not left home. Her way out has been to withdraw into her own world' though (significantly) 'feeling at the same time most painfully that she was not an autonomous person' (p.43). I say 'significantly' for her way out is doomed to failure. It is only in the intersubjective world that criteria for knowledge can be found, and hence only in this world that the distinction between real and imaginary, and the stability of perceptions and conceptions, can be maintained. Maya's withdrawal is an impossible project. It cannot (logically cannot) lead to autonomy. For autonomy is tied to knowledge and the knowledge of knowledge. Here again we have some sort of empirical illustration of the philosopher's thesis about the connexion between knowledge and freedom.

Without levity, one can suggest after this reading that if Maya needs anyone it is an epistemologist, not a psychiatrist. Unless, of course, some psychiatrists are really epistemologists.⁴

3. Hegel - *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie. (Allen & Unwin, 2nd edn, revised, 1949), p.229.

4. It would be better if some psychiatrists were really child-snatchers. For Maya and those like her are not in a position to take the obvious way out and leave home; they can perhaps only be taken away and certainly they need help in establishing their own independence. It would be even better to abolish the form of family which Laing and Esterton study; but I am trying to interpret the situation of its victims not simply from the point of view of proving the necessity of this abolition but also to discover what can be done in the situation with which we still have to live.

It will be clear from these remarks that I do not accept what Laing and Esterton have to say in the Preface to the second edition of the *Sanity, Madness and the Family*. The disclaimers they make there are so obviously contradicted by their own text as to appear simply bizarre. They have explicitly produced a theory of social causation in schizophrenia, though one which, admittedly, does not preclude the possibility of an organogenetic component. But whatever the constitution of Maya's brain cells, there is no good reason for accepting the behaviour of her parents.

PHILOSOPHY ON FILM

Michael Chanan

Michael Chanan has recently completed a series of six documentary films on Oxford Philosophy. In this article he discusses the project and the problems which it presented.

Can there be anything of interest in a series of films on Oxford Philosophy, especially to a group of philosophers whose relationship to Oxford Philosophy is essentially critical? I hope the answer is yes. In the first place, the idea of such a film series is sufficiently out of the line of thinking of both philosophers and television programme planners (for whom this series is initially intended) to make the outcome undetermined. In the second place, the films should serve a teaching purpose (they will also go to the American Campus circuit, and we hope to make them available for non-television screening in this country, too) by documenting graphically various aspects of Oxford Philosophy which otherwise remain vague in students' minds. I'm talking about the concrete way in which Oxford Philosophy is situated in the world. Transcribed on paper the content of these films may seem to have only a marginal interest. But to see and hear, not in strange surroundings but in their natural habitat, the Oxford philosophical sub-species, is one of the main opportunities these films are intended to provide. (They also have historical and archive value, and include a unique tape of Austin lecturing). Unlike the printed page, celluloid has a built in alienation effect always available

1. It is usual to add at this sort of point a phrase: "no doubt unconsciously". But in these families there is room for some doubt.

2. 'arbiter' is the word Laing and Esterton use (p.43).