

REVIEWS

HERMENEUTICS & BEYOND

Dilthey: Selected Writings, edited, translated and introduced by H P Rickman, CUP, £8.75

The main philosophical project of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) was to establish the possibility of knowledge in the human sciences, or 'human studies' as Rickman prefers to translate the term Geisteswissenschaften, thus marking a difference between these and the natural sciences, or Naturwissenschaften. Dilthey attempted to construct a critique of historical reason, on the model of Kant's three critiques, the first of which, the Critique of Pure Reason, had allegedly established the possibility of knowledge in the natural sciences, or rather of a paradigm case, Newtonian mechanics. This fourth critique was not completed, and the various drafts of the different sections found among Dilthey's papers after his death, as well as the published fragments, contain indications of the difficulties obstructing its completion. There are alternative explanations for this incompleteness: that the author was not equal to the task; or, more plausibly, that these difficulties are insuperable, and the task itself unrealisable. According to the latter explanation, the task includes various indefensible presuppositions: an opposition between two unified domains of knowledge, called the natural sciences and the human sciences; the grounding of the possibility of knowledge in these two domains in two opposing human faculties, perception and understanding; the adequacy of this grounding for the natural sciences; and a commitment to a philosophical anthropology, a system establishing on a priori principles a conception of the nature and destiny of the human race. The indefensibility of these presuppositions cannot be demonstrated here, but the purpose of studying could well be taken to be the exposure of the insuperability of the difficulties arising from these presuppositions, in Dilthey's writings.

Rickman makes it plain in his general introduction that he is broadly in sympathy with the orientation of Dilthey's epistemology and methodology, and with the philosophy of life, Lebensphilosophie, in which they are embedded. Dilthey's failure to complete the task of a critique of historical reason is suggested to be the result of his scrupulousness. The emphasis in the selection of extracts for translation is on Dilthey's 'contribution to the philosophy of the social sciences', on his attempt to establish 'a broad theoretical framework for the objective study of man'. Rickman however also conveys, in his briefer introduction to particular sections, that Dilthey's writings are fragmentary and apparently self-contradictory. Rickman writes of The Nature of Philosophy, first published in 1907:

It is a comprehensive and systematic account of Dilthey's conception of the nature and functions of philosophy. He considered that philosophy was man's most comprehensive form of thought by which means he confronts the mysteries of his life and reflects on himself and his doings. (p107)

Rickman goes on to describe Dilthey's The Types of Worldviews, first published in 1911:

In the light of historical perspective we see that philosophic systems assume typical forms which conflict and cannot be reconciled with each other. This insight Dilthey believes frees the mind from bondage to any one dogmatic system. It cures us of the illusion that philosophy can give an ultimate and comprehensive knowledge of reality which is many sided. (p107)

The latter quotation implies that Dilthey's own 'comprehensive and systematic account' can be seen 'in the light of historical perspective' as a typical form of philosophical illusion. There is no guarantee however against the illusion of freedom from dogmatic systems of philosophy, the dogmatism of which reemerges at another level through the language of sight, light and perspective. Thus Rickman identifies Dilthey, not without justice, as simultaneously affirming the systematicity of his own Lebensphilosophie, and denying the permanence of any such system. This is precisely an instance of the problem of historical specificity to which Dilthey's Fourth Critique was to have addressed itself. The problem to be examined emerges as an obstacle to beginning the examination; the specification of the possibility of knowledge in the human sciences is itself historically specific, emerging in response to particular problems, and in connection with particular forms of human science. A recognition of this specificity undermines the mode of universal prescription of method, prior to engagement in any particular investigation.

Dilthey established his reputation by publishing the first part of his uncompleted life of Schleiermacher, in 1866, which identified Schleiermacher as developing hermeneutics into a methodology for the human sciences. Rickman's selection of translated extracts begins with three fragments from this published volume. In this first section, entitled 'Dilthey as historian of ideas', Rickman also translates extracts from Dilthey's essay 'The great poetry of the imagination' (Die grosse Phantasie Dichtung). Rickman helpfully points out in his introduction to the piece that this 'great poetry' does not refer to a general type of poetry, but to the literature produced in a certain era, the 16th and 17th centuries in England and Spain. The identification of such a unity depends on the assumption that there is a single unifying structure underlying the productions of particular historical periods. This assumption depends on Dilthey's concept of worldviews, (Weltanschauungen), of which there are three, providing the stable basis for the interpretation of remnants from other eras. The three types of worldviews, naturalism, the idealism of freedom, and objective idealism, are outlined in an extract from The Types of Worldview, in Rickman's third section. Access to historical remains is assured by their location in an objective context, which, because it must take one of these three forms, is already known by the historian. It is not however clear in what context, with which form, Dilthey's own writings are to be located. The universal structure of human experience on which this typology is based is specified by the concept das Erlebnis, which resists translation as 'lived experience'. This concept was introduced by Dilthey in his essay 'Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung', first published in 1905, thus beginning its inglorious history as a covering term for confusions

in social theory. Unfortunately Rickman translates no extracts from this essay, even though a complete translation of this one essay would provide as much basis as Rickman's series of selections for an English assessment of Dilthey's theoretical contribution.

In line with the emphasis on Dilthey's contribution to the philosophy of the social sciences, the remaining three sections of extracts are designed to elaborate his theories in this area. The second section presents Dilthey's theories of psychology, in an extract from Dilthey's Ideas About a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology, of 1894. This descriptive psychology is not to be understood as empirical experimental psychology, but as a systematic account of the mental processes of human beings. In accordance with Dilthey's commitment to a philosophical anthropology, these processes, and the structures on which they depend, are taken to be specifiable for all time. The shift from concern with the structures of the individual's mental processes, evident in the Ideas, to a concern with the objective context in which individuals operate was made in response to the neo-Kantian objection that Dilthey's theories were psychologistic. In the third section, the introduction to which contains the passages cited above, Rickman translates extracts from The Nature of Philosophy and from The Types of Worldview, both of which have been previously translated but are sufficiently difficult to obtain to justify the duplication.

The fourth and last section contains extracts translated from Dilthey's An Introduction to the Human Studies (Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften), first published in 1883; and from the volume constructed by the editors of the collected works, from the drafts of the unfinished second part of that Introduction. This section also contains a translation of the essay 'The Development of Hermeneutics' from 1900, with a selection of Dilthey's alternative drafts. This essay has also been translated, in part, by Paul Connerton ed. Critical Sociology, under the title 'The rise of hermeneutics'. The essay consists of a summary history of the concept 'hermeneutics', and again identifies Schleiermacher as developing hermeneutics into a methodology of the human sciences. It is in this essay that the famous sentence appears:

The final goal of the hermeneutic procedure is to understand the author better than he understood himself: a statement which is the necessary conclusion of the doctrine of unconscious creation. (p259)

In the drafts for the second part of the Introduction, Dilthey begins to develop the analysis of the categorial structures underlying the production of knowledge in the human sciences. Dilthey rejects the conception of the epistemological subject as a pure consciousness, or transcendental ego, and insists that there can be no separation between this epistemological subject, and the empirical subject formed through historical contingency. Nevertheless he attempts to specify a finite number of concepts, named the categories of life, defining this categorial structure, on the model of Kant's twelve categories in the First Critique. Dilthey describes these categories as follows:

We must now demonstrate the reality of what is apprehended in experience: as we are concerned here with the objective value of the categories of the mind constructed world which merges from experience, I shall first indicate the sense in which the term 'category' is to be used. The

predicates which we attribute to objects contain forms of apprehension. The concepts which designate such forms I call categories... Among the real categories there are those which originate in the apprehension of the mind-constructed world even though they are then transferred to apply to the whole of reality. General predicates about a particular individual's pattern of experience arise in that experience. Once they are applied to the understanding of objectifications of life and all the subjects dealt with in the human studies, the range of their validity is increased until it becomes clear that the life of the mind can be characterised in terms of the systems of interactions, power, value etc. Thus these general predicates achieve the dignity of categories of the mind-constructed world. (p208)

Thus the categories which are applicable to the 'pattern of experience' of the present individual are to be extrapolated and applied to the 'patterns of experience' of past individuals. There is no question of allowing the terms of analysis of those past patterns to emerge from the encounter between the present individual and the remains of the past. Furthermore, although Dilthey asserts that 'time' is the most inclusive category of life, unifying all the other categories in a synthesis of consciousness, there is no suggestion that the understanding of the individual theorist, and the categories which he uses, are themselves subject to change. Dilthey's theory of how knowledge in the human sciences is possible assumes that the subject of that knowledge is unaffected by the acquisition of that knowledge. Thus it assumes that it is possible to specify the structure of the mental processes for all such subjects of knowledge. The ethnocentricity and ahistoricity of this theory is self-evident. The theory plainly reflects the dominance of the model of natural science, where it is more plausible although not without significant consequences, to assume that the knowing subject is not implicated in the knowledge which is produced. Thus the theory is both ahistorical, and a product of definite historical conditions.

The third and fourth sections suffer particularly from the distorting effects of translating in extract. The fragmentary nature of Dilthey's writings and the more fragmentary nature of Rickman's presentation of them give an illusory impression of more substantial theory than there is. For example Dilthey writes, in The Nature of Philosophy:

Thus the history of philosophy passes three problems on to systematic philosophy: it must provide a basis, a justification and systematisation for the sciences and come to grips with the never-ending desire for the ultimate reflection on being, ground, value, purpose and their relationships in a worldview - whatever form or direction it takes. (p132)

This is not, as might be supposed, the conclusion to the introduction to a work applying itself to these problems, but is instead the conclusion to the work itself, passing on the problems for future consideration. Dilthey does not construct a systematic philosophy, he projects it. In the existing fragments of his project, however, there are evident the theoretical obstacles which prevent the system being anything more than a project, completable neither by Dilthey, nor by a successor. The attempt to provide a basis, a justification for the sciences, presupposes a kind of knowledge which cannot itself be grounded, since it is itself the justification and

origin of knowledge. The justification cannot itself be justified.

In spite of his own stated aims, Rickman suggests, through his selection and commentary, that Dilthey's more valuable writings must be his studies of particular writers and eras, and not the fragmented reflections on general procedural principles. In the latter there is the insuperable obstacle identified in the previous paragraph, and the more individual difficulties indicated in connection with the particular parts of the incomplete system. It is however in the former body of writings that Dilthey

remarks casually, indefensibly, 'history did not need Nietzsche' (p117). It is tempting to respond, equally fatuously, 'history did not need Dilthey'. However, the writings of both Dilthey and Nietzsche have made a certain impact on their contemporaries and on their successors, and it is important to discover why there are revivals of interest in them; whether it is possible to read them now as they have been read, and why they were so read.

Joanna Hodge

MARX & LAING

Martin Howarth-Williams, R.D. Laing: His Work and its Relevance for Sociology, Routledge Direct Editions, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, 219pp +vii, £4.50

Andrew Collier, R.D. Laing: The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy, Harvester Press, 1977, 214pp+x, £8.45

Laing's work presents a number of difficulties: it draws on sources that are not always well known, and Laing rarely systematically relates himself to any of them; and it combines, almost incoherently, theoretical argument and speculation, description, analysis, and (not very good) poetry. Howarth-Williams offers us an elaboration of Laing's work and its sources (excluding Freud), breaking it down into stages and exploring its internal coherences. He ends with a discussion of the concept of 'intelligibility' comparing Laing first with Schutz and ethnomethodology and then with Levi-Strauss and structuralism. Unfortunately his discussion is unnecessarily verbose and his definition of the philosophical, theoretical and political issues is too general and naive; he just fails to produce the sympathetic introductory exposition of Laing's work that would be useful.

Andrew Collier's book is more readable and more philosophically acute, but in a sense he falls foul of Laing's refusal to engage in systematic theorising. Collier writes as a Marxist, presenting a sort of balance sheet of Laing's achievements and failures, and given the current fashion for epistemological hatchet jobs, perhaps his most impressive accomplishment is to remain scrupulously fair to the complexities and ambiguities of Laing's work. He situates Laing's theory in between psychoanalysis and Marxism; like Juliet Mitchell, he sees Laing as offering a description of the experience of the family without necessarily producing a knowledge of the family or its internal relationships. However, he argues that in the course of Laing's descriptions, we can find an analysis of the mechanisms of interpersonal relations which complements that of the mechanisms of intra-personal relations produced by psychoanalysis proper. Thus Laing identifies the social relations which produce a 'schizophrenic' reaction, but Freudian analysis is necessary to explain why an individual is unable to escape those relations in any other way. Collier acknowledges Laing's claim to make 'schizoid' behaviour intelligible, but argues that this is no substitute for a causal explanation; rather it is a conceptual complement or parallel to a causal explanation provided by Freudian theory. Beyond this, Laing is important because he maintains the socially critical dimension

of psychoanalysis, and offers the beginnings of an understanding of the way in which the family functions in the wider social formation.

On the other hand, there are distinct dangers in Laing's approach. His social phenomenology can lead too easily to the acceptance of the actor's point of view - the experience of 'schizophrenia' becomes part of the theory of 'schizophrenia'; and there is a tendency to dissolve 'process' - the independent working of social structures (and a term which Laing misappropriates from Sartre) - into praxis - individual action. These dangers are subsumed under the label 'personalism' - the acceptance of a misleading notion of the individual ego as an autonomous, free origin of social phenomena. This is seen as accounting for a number of tensions in Laing's work which lead to opposing and equally unacceptable prescriptions: the first is the moralistic encouragement, in the name of love, of an unattainable independence in relationships to others; the second is the encouragement of a mystical transcendence of the individual ego. Collier would seem to see both as unsuccessful attempts to escape the schizoid situation, mistaken by Laing as real solutions.

It would be difficult to disagree with any of this on the basis of Laing's own work, but the real problem is Laing's relationship to Sartre. Collier makes life too easy for himself in never coming to grips with that relationship in its most vital aspect: the critique of psychoanalysis. Now it is certainly true that Laing has an ambiguous attitude to the unconscious: he seems to employ the concept and to criticise it at the same time. Collier sees this as a sign of the deficiency of Laing's social phenomenology, indicating that the approach needs to be articulated with orthodox Freudian analysis. But there is another way of making sense of the ambivalence: as Laing's implicit appropriation of a distinction in Sartre's early phenomenology between a thetic and a non-thetic (a reflective and an un-/pre-reflective) consciousness. The latter is the equivalent in what Sartre calls 'existential psychoanalysis' to the unconscious in Freudian analysis - and indeed the pre-reflective remains unconscious until it is brought to light through analysis. Nevertheless, it is intentional, requiring comprehension rather than causal explanation.

Now it seems to me that Laing is opposing - albeit in an implicit and possibly confused way - a Sartrean notion of pre-reflective consciousness to a Freudian concept of the unconscious as a 'cause'. This presupposes an argument to be found in Being and Nothingness: the mechanisms of repression, projection etc, upon which Freudian explanation draws, must be understood in one of two ways: either they imply the intentional action of a non-thetic consciousness which represses, projects etc; or they are physical mechanisms operating on psychic material - a position which,

as far as I can see, would be unacceptable to anybody but an incoherent behaviourist.

If I am right, then much of Collier's critique of Laing becomes irrelevant. Laing is not proposing a personalism: the ego is a product of the non-thetic consciousness, and the 'unity' and 'freedom' of the latter is of a very special and limited form - certainly not sufficient for it to be taken as the source and origin of external social phenomena. It further becomes necessary to distinguish between the experience Laing is articulating and the actor's point of view (and in fact Laing always interprets as well as presents that point of view).

The simple opposition of conscious and unconscious ceases to be adequate in this sort of analysis.

I would not for one minute suggest that Sartre's critique of Freud is necessarily right, and in Laing's work it takes on all sorts of doubtful meanings. It does, however, raise more fundamental questions about the nature and status of psychoanalytic theory than Collier is willing to admit, and the problem of the 'meaning' of 'insane' behaviour cannot be settled as simply as he desires.

Ian Craib

VISIONARY MARXISM

E P Thompson, William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary, Merlin, 1977 (1955) £3.90

Thompson's revised biography is a wonderful book, essential reading for anyone interested in Morris, in the British socialist tradition and in the issues that Morris raises: in particular what could be called 'political aesthetics'. For, as Thompson shows from the book's earliest chapters on Romanticism and the Pre-Raphaelites, Morris' distinctive characteristic was to hang on to his artistic vision and to stand out against both an a-social aestheticism and an unaesthetic commercialism or state-socialism. (See, especially, the chapter on 'The Anti-Scrape' and the section: 'Necessity and Desire'.)

In his postscript Thompson indicates what seems true: that a measure of CP piety had led him to play down some of Morris' distinctiveness in the interests of emphasizing his 'genuine Marxism' (There is often a strange sense of Thompson congratulating Morris across the years on behalf of the Party.) In particular Thompson here mentions Morris'

utopian (or visionary) mode of writing, which connects with Morris' concern to fan the flames of the human spirit, literally to inspire, in order to promote the life-affirmation of socialist revolution and to help lift it beyond a mere drive for 'improvements' or a mere destructive outbreak. Thus his poetry, his architecture, his decoration, as well as his pamphlets, function - or strive to function - through embodying the values of beauty, life, love and care that are socialism's promise. This sense of the 'whole' of the way things, words and activities add to or detract from the 'commonwealth' helps explain Morris' following Ruskin in his stress on architecture as the art which shapes human life most obviously yet most deeply.

With their stress on 'qualitative' questions (e.g. about work) and his sense, as an activist, of the objective loss to the movement that comes with a mania for 'tactics', Morris' writings, despite the long-windedness characteristic of the period, are important. And Thompson's biography helps us understand that importance. (Asa Briggs' Penguin collection is probably the best, cheap introduction to Morris' own writings.)

T Skillen

PROLESCIENCE?

Carmen Claudin-Urondo, Lenin and the Cultural Revolution, translated from the French by Brian Pearce, Harvester Press, Sussex, England, 1977, 134pp

One of the most important issues to emerge after the Russian Revolution was the cultural revolution. Whilst everyone was at one on the importance of culture, there were controversies about its meaning, its content and function in the period of transition. One of the main questions at issue was this: As the proletariat was now the new ruling class should it create its own class culture, its own art, its own marxist science? Or should the proletariat utilize bourgeois culture inherited from capitalism? During the 1920s Lenin's point of view on these questions was dominant. The author therefore examines Lenin's writing and attempts to show how his views affected the fate of the Russian Revolution.

Lenin believed that the revolution was threatened because the masses lacked culture (as Knowledge). 'Civilization' was associated with the western countries with their highly developed productive forces, rationalized organization of labour, and advanced science and technology. They offered

Russia a ready-made model. Scientific and technological knowledge was an achievement of advanced capitalism and all that was needed was for it to be taken over so that the masses could 'learn' it. Lenin conceived science and technology as neutral entities, rather like tools, the function of which can change depending on the use being made of them. As there must be complete assimilation of scientific culture, bourgeois experts must be fully utilized. Claudin-Urondo describes how Lenin's rejection of the concept of proletarian culture brought him in conflict with Proletkult, the organisation whose aim was to create a new class culture. Proletkult maintained that bourgeois culture cannot serve the interests of the proletarian regime. Without science socialism is impossible, and it is also impossible with bourgeois science. Whilst Proletkult held that the new culture could be realized only by the proletariat itself, Lenin believed that the proletariat was incapable of building the new society without recourse to bourgeois culture and specialists. The proletariat could only develop trade union consciousness, and as it was incapable of liberating itself, it must be elevated to knowledge. Hence the need for a vanguard, the Party. The same lack of culture in the masses which makes the Party's intervention indispensable gives rise, at the same time, to the necessity for the Party to directly manage the State on their behalf.

The Bolsheviks took over from the Second

International the notion that western societies were the only model for the building of socialist society. Lenin wished to adopt the large scale industry of Western countries, to catch up and surpass them. He argued (as did Trotsky) that there was no need to invent some original way of organizing labour as capitalism had created and perfected one that was immediately usable. Lenin introduced the scientific management of industry (the system devised by F.W. Taylor and used by Ford), without examining its inherently alienating character. Just as the proletariat cannot acquire class consciousness by its own efforts, nor, it seems, can it acquire competence in 'management'. The proletariat was therefore expected to delegate its powers to the Party. This process of 'substitution' whereby the Party tended to substitute itself for the class, led to the proletariat being excluded

from power. Lenin did not realize that the stress on absolute subordination in production, and to the Party, contained the danger of influencing the general character of the new society at every level. It is argued that Lenin's view, to a certain extent, provided the legitimisation for the subsequent development of 'Stalinism'. Lenin's assumptions contributed to a process the consequences of which were alien to the aims of the Russian Revolution, and which he would have been the first to denounce. He would certainly not have approved of the fate of his own ideas. I hope I have said enough to make you want to read this book. It is very short, clear and forceful. I think it is an important book; it directly relates and clarifies many of the issues with which we are concerned.

Madan Sarup

NEWS

News from Dubrovnik

In August 1963, almost exactly fifteen years ago, the Korcula Summer School was founded by philosophers and sociologists from the universities of Zagreb and Belgrade, in Yugoslavia, for international discussion of social issues. In 1964 the journal Praxis was founded by the same group, in order to publish material arising from this discussion. As a result of a political crisis generated by problems surrounding the economic reorganisation of 1965-7, the Party organisation of the Department of Sociology and Philosophy at Belgrade University was dissolved. This was an indication of official displeasure with the department, and marked the beginning of a series of threats to the autonomy of the faculty councils (see RP8, 9 and 10), which were at the time, in accordance with Yugoslav principles, self-managed bodies. In 1973, ten years after the founding of the Korcula Summer School, the committee of the League of Communists finally demanded the dismissal of eight Belgrade philosophers, all of whom were connected with the journal, Praxis, and the summer school. As a result of local resistance, and international support, the dismissal was not easily achieved and the faculty councils had to be 'reformed' so that half the members of the relevant faculty council were appointed from outside the University, by the Party. A letter from the Belgrade eight, dated 28 January 1975, to the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, giving an account of this dismissal, appeared in RP11. For a time, some of the eight were in prison, and had their passports withdrawn. They were suspended from the University, forbidden to teach, publish or address public meetings, and the propaganda campaign organised against them was intensified. The Korcula Summer School was closed down, and instead philosophy courses are held at Easter at the International University Centre, in Dubrovnik, under the administration of Zagreb, and not Belgrade, University. As a result of the international status of the Dubrovnik centre, it is possible to invite members of the Belgrade eight to speak, although they are still forbidden to

teach and address public meetings in Yugoslav institutions. Two of them, Mihailo Markovic, and Svetocar Stojanovic, were scheduled for the opening session of the philosophy course this Easter, on Rationality in the Natural and Social Sciences. In contrast to the Korcula summer school of 1974, as reported in RP9, there were unfortunately very few Yugoslav participants.

The course directors were Richard Bernstein, of Haverford College, USA; Jürgen Habermas of the Starnberg Institute, West Germany; and Ivan Kuvacic, of Zagreb University, Yugoslavia. Other participants were Robert Cohen, of Boston University, USA, who opposed, and was a victim of McCarthyism, and is a long-standing supporter of the Belgrade eight; and Stephen Lukes, of Balliol College, Oxford, who was on his way to attend the Russell Tribunal in Berlin, on professional repression (Berufsverbot) in West Germany (see RP19). None of the participants are paid, since neither Zagreb University, nor the IUC have funds, and thus the discussions are predicated on a commitment to free enquiry, since the principle motive for attending is to support the Belgrade eight. This commitment to free enquiry had one unfortunate aspect, which was the freedom with which the participants interpreted the theme of rationality. Furthermore it is impossible to make demands on participants to commit themselves in advance to specific lines of enquiry, and thus the order of presentations cannot be satisfactory except by accident. Thus after the Marxist humanism of Stojanovic and Markovic, there came an elementary discussion of dialectics, followed by reflections on economic rationality in Smith and Marx, followed by a brilliant paper from Robert Cohen on Marx's and Engels' concepts of nature and science which, although containing the only substantial reference to natural science, among all the main presentations, had no direct connection with the theme. Nor was there a complementary paper, developing the argument for which this paper opened the way concerning the need to supplement the technical rationality embodied in capitalistic practice with a rationality not based on the exploitation and objectification of nature. Stephen Lukes presented his reflections on Ideology and Relativism, more about relativism than ideology, which were concerned with the problem of the underdetermination of theory by data and