

# REVIEWS

## VESEY DOES IT! Jonathan Ree

Rene Descartes: Father of Modern Philosophy by Godfrey Vesey  
Open University Press, 1971. 80p

If you were a humanities student at the Open University, you would have to do a little philosophy as part of your 'foundation course'. One of your subjects would be Descartes. This would make up two 'units' of your course, which means you would spend two weeks on it. You would be expected to read a Descartes anthology (Anscombe and Geach), and to follow some radio and T.V. programmes. The focus of your work would be a booklet called Rene Descartes: Father of Modern Philosophy, by G.N.A. Vesey, Professor of Philosophy at the O.U. People not studying at the O.U. can buy the booklet, which contains only 48 pages for a very inflated price of 80p. Admittedly, the pages are quite large; but they have very wide margins and many of them are left wholly or partly blank for 'Notes'. The booklet has a floppy paper cover bearing a nice picture of the father of modern philosophy, together with a large facsimile of his signature; and this, together with the use of many illustrations to break the monotony of the text and blank spaces, gives it rather the same appearance as a piece of teaching material for primary schools.

But when one remembers that many O.U. students already have a full-time job, for example as teachers, one can see why this sort of approach has been adopted. So one begins by wishing Vesey good luck. With his clear and rigorous-seeming style, and his pronounced taste for whatever appears simple and easy to grasp, he might seem well qualified to write such a booklet.

In the event, however, the booklet is a complete failure. I got my copy of it second-hand, so I have had the advantage of seeing the reactions which some unknown O.U. student wrote in his copy. The first thing that struck this anonymous annotator was the patronising jolliness of his Professor's style. Vesey anticipates objections by using phrases like 'I can imagine you saying...' (p.13); he pleads, in block capitals, 'PLEASE MAKE A PRACTICE OF LOOKING UP WORDS YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND' (p.10); he provides ostensible aids to pronunciation, saying, for example, that 'Malebranche' is pronounced as 'MARL-ERBRONSH' (p.28), and repeatedly reminds his students of the importance of underlining things they don't understand WITH A WAVY LINE. (pp.13, 20, 35)

The comments of the anonymous annotator indicate an increasingly exasperated withdrawal of willing curiosity on his part. 'Rubbish!' 'Balls', he exclaims repeatedly. But would he have learned anything about philosophy if he had persevered more willingly? Vesey is modest and realistic about what can be achieved in the time at his disposal:

"You cannot reasonably expect to be a Bertrand Russell overnight. These things take time." (42)

Nor does he pretend to be able to impart any positive knowledge

"I have tried, in what I have written, to exhibit certain habits of mind. My job, as a philosophy teacher, is to develop these habits of mind in you." (10)

Vesey courageously attempts to 'formulate' these habits in eleven 'Principles of Philosophising'.

Vesey's 'Principles' include the following two:

"(b) Beware of questions which are formulated in such a way as to have only one answer ..."

"(f) In order to understand what someone is saying it is sometimes useful to know what would follow if what he said was true (or false)" (10)

It is hard to see how he got away with this; the more one thinks about these principles, the clearer it is that they simply don't make sense. But Vesey says that if the eleven 'Principles' seems obvious to you, then

"Good. In that case you are on the way to being a philosopher" (10)

But in fact it is hard to see how anyone who claims to under-

stand them can be 'on the way to being a philosopher'. Perhaps this doesn't matter much, though. Vesey assures us:

"Philosophers are not a breed apart. They merely have a peculiarly well developed taste for arguing about rather abstruse topics. If you enjoy intellectual games, you will enjoy the philosophy we shall be doing." (10)

But even an intellectual game will not proceed far if it has nonsensical rules.

His overriding desire to impart certain habits of mind has made Vesey very careless about almost giving accurate information about what the 'father of modern philosophy' actually thought. For example, there is a parathetical remark that 'Descartes uses the terms 'soul', 'mind', and 'consciousness' interchangeably' (5), which leaves out the fact that Descartes actually argued for the identity of the soul and the mind, and is just false as regards 'consciousness'.

The central weakness of Vesey's account is that it is built around a very confused notion of something called 'Dualism'. 'Dualism', according to Vesey, is what Descartes took himself to have proved by the method of doubt and the cogito, and also what troubled Malebranche and Leibniz, and also what Strawson argued against (in "Persons"). In accordance, perhaps, with his principled avoidance of questions with one answer. Vesey seems to propose at least two answers to the question, 'what is the dualist concept of a person?'. One is (rather surprisingly) that dualism is the denial that 'people are things who have at once body and consciousness' (40) and the other is that a person is distinct from his body (7). And this second answer is simply a conflation of two quite independent propositions. The first is that the self (the referent of 'I') is identified with the mind; and the second is that the mind is somehow a different kind of thing from the body. Neither of these propositions implies the other; and Vesey is just wrong to think that arguments against the first would, if valid, dispose of the second too.

This confusion in the concept of dualism can be traced back to the origins of the concept in the eighteenth century. A similar confusion, incidentally, is often embodied in the concept of idealism. But there is another equally gigantic confusion, of rather more recent origin. This concerns the relation of dualism to reductionist materialism - which is often thought of as contrary to it. Ryle's Concept of Mind is directed against the view that psychological language is used for talking about the occurrence 'inside' people of things like 'sensations' and 'volitions' which are only externally related to the objective world. But it is a pity that Ryle said he was specifically attacking 'the dogma of the ghost in the machine', since really his polemic applies equally to people like the eighteenth century French materialists who thought that sensations, volitions, and so on, occurred in a machine. But still, it has now become common to call Ryle's target 'dualism', and so Vesey quotes a passage written by a modern materialistic scientist, and without any apology or explanation to his students, says that this too exemplifies 'Cartesian Dualism'. All the more confusing, then that he goes on to remark quite falsely, that the conceivability of life after death implies dualism.

At the end of his booklet, Vesey remarks, 'Perhaps you have already decided you do not want to do any philosophy again'. 'Not this', says my anonymous annotator, adding touchingly: 'Puzzlement', and 'Bewilderment', both underlined. The tragic irony of the situation is that it seems to be Vesey's conception of 'the philosopher' as the man who is paid for inculcating sound and hygienic mental habits which has led him to bewilder and puzzle his student.

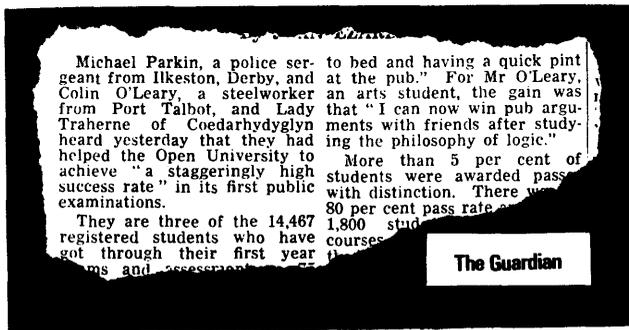
Vesey's practice of referring to several independent views as 'dualism' might be justified if some characterisation were given of a point of view from which they all took on the aspect of a unified theory. It may even be right to call Descartes a dualist, but if it is we ought to try and identify such a point of view in his work. But Vesey freely admits that he is not competent to do this:

"My aim is not to make you an authority on Descartes, I am not one myself, for a start. This part of the Foundation Course is really an introduction to philosophising." (12)

The reason for mentioning Descartes in the title, Vesey continues, is that Descartes' writings provide 'some of the best material for us to philosophise about'. Vesey assumes, then, that he can make sense of Descartes by simply reading a few extracts and applying the 'Principles of Philosophising'

to them; but in trying to expound Descartes, he offends against his own ideas of what philosophy should be, even though these are extremely unambitious.

The really worrying thing about the booklet is that so much that is confusing and obscure is presented in the course of a work which claims to be imparting the habits of clear thinking in which philosophy is supposed mainly to consist, and which treats its readers as though they were so ignorant and stupid that they couldn't be trusted to take a single intellectual step unassisted. So on the one hand, the students get the impression that philosophical argument ought to be childishly simple. And on the other hand, they either have to feel appallingly stupid because even so it doesn't make sense to them; or else they have to convince themselves that their puzzlement and bewilderment is really a form of philosophical understanding.



## VALIDITY AND IDEOLOGY

Ian Birkstead

La Fausse Conscience by Joseph Gabel, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1962, chapter 1.

It is time, I think, to rediscover that just as mind is not a ghost-in-the-machine, philosophy is not a disembodied subject-matter to be found in isolation. Just as existence is in the world, philosophy is in the world and should be about things in this world. Philosophy should not be a specified set of methods which its practitioners unpack to deal with all and any problems -- problems themselves circumscribed by these initially accepted methods. Philosophy should be a reflexion about human activities, including philosophy. Indeed, should not philosophy be reflexive for it to be anything? This is the position taken by Continental philosophers who characterise their reflexions with reference to their attitudes and purposes, whereas the Anglo-saxon philosophers characterise their inquiries in terms of methods. I think that Anglo-saxon philosophy, like Anglo-saxon social science, emphasises methods and thereby limits itself to method-applicable problems, and that this is precisely its intellectual tradition: the tradition of positivism becomes professional defense.

Related problems arise. What kind of reflexion should philosophy be? A reflexion different from other disciplines? This leads us to question the very nature of the professionalised and specialised contemporary academic disciplines. Here is a thorny and important problem to work out.

But I shall restrict myself to showing the importance of self-reflexion: what are we doing and why? I think it is even more important to do this in our age of large-scale allocation of resources to, and widespread institutionalisation of, inquiries and investigations. I myself find it impossible to justify my past philosophical inquiries when I think of the perfidies committed daily by my local County Council.

I am suspicious of any radicalism that finds a solution to its hitherto narrow-mindedness in a jump into the study of what Karl Marx, Lukasc, Habermas, etc., have to say. The step to be taken, I believe, is rather to ask ourselves what we are doing and why? A renewal, I think, comes not from applying our methods to other peoples' problems, but to try out their methods on our problems. This is certainly a more risky undertaking. This is truly critical truly radical. It has the value of trying to see one's intellectual endeavours in relation to current social problems. This Joseph Gabel sets out to do in his book La Fausse Conscience.

Gabel first poses the basic problem of the possibility of clarifying one's own position within society. To evaluate the extent to which we can do this, it is necessary to have a conception of the relationship between thought and social history. One can postulate a strict concordance between science and its social conditions and thereby undermine the notion of valid truth, as well as the possibility of getting perspective over one's ideas. If all science is never anything but a reflexion

of the social reality, then it neither has a legitimate and independent existence nor has it any value beyond its historical period. It then becomes impossible to be aware of one's position in society, in which case the sociology of knowledge becomes, like everything, absolutely relative. Since the whole scientific enterprise becomes relative, science becomes bankrupt. Thus, claims Gabel, if we study knowledge itself with the principle of social determinism of science, we gain but a doubtful victory. For Gabel, doctrinaire Marxism is caught by this logically incapacitating contradiction: either it sticks to "historical materialism" and thereby makes impossible awareness of its situation to which it finds itself reduced as ideology, or it somehow transcends this situational determination and thereby repudiates its very methodological principle.

Gabel then begins the argument of the book. He defines ideology and false consciousness as non-dialectical perceptions of reality:

*"False consciousness and ideology are two forms of non-dialectical (reified) perception of dialectical realities, that is, two aspects (or two degrees) of the repudiation of dialectical method" (Gabel, p.19).*

The dialectical method is thus one that does not reify, that is, to describe as natural and inevitable phenomena certain social features that are historically explainable, thus social in origin and in persistence. The dialectical method does not confuse nature with society and culture. (Gabel gives two examples of such confusion of thought. One is racism which describes characters emergent in social relationships as features inherent in certain categories of men.

*"... Racism naturalises a social situation, makes inevitable a temporary social situation, and reifies the racial adversary" (Gabel, p.18).*

Gabel's second example is that of the positivistic study of man by man, whereby the social scientist studies other men as objects. This is exemplified by the colonial social anthropologists who studied the 'primitive' natives and their non-changing cultures, ignoring the rigidifying effects of the presence of colonial powers on the natives.)

Gabel distinguishes false consciousness from ideology. He sees false consciousness as confusion of thought, whereas ideology is the intellectual elaboration of a confused position. Because the insufficient factors in ideological explanations, are frequently chosen in accordance with the interest of their protagonist, ideological constructions are generally justifying in character.

Gabel is careful not to simply reduce false consciousness to a non-quality and a non-activity, since, as he explains, "false consciousness, like delirium, implies a specific kind of rationality -- a sub-dialectical rationality..." (Gabel, p.IV).

Gabel's problem is the origin of false consciousness and of ideology. Can we adequately look to class-interests for an explanation of false consciousness, whereby individuals and groups of individuals are the creators of systems of thought that justify their position in society when it is in their interest to do so (for example when they wield power and wealth) Gabel claims that such an explanation is not adequate since it resorts to a simple psychological explanation without reference to the wider society and thus does not allow a social explanation. It is, I think, debatable whether the concept of 'interest' is predominantly psychological rather than sociological.

A possible solution to the problem of how to avoid false consciousness is that of the 'privileged vantage point' from which false consciousness can be transcended. For Marx, the privileged vantage point was that of the proletariat, while the bourgeois social position was founded on contradictions so profound that this social class was likely to disappear. For Mannheim, the privileged vantage point was that of the intelligentsia. Gabel does not mention another variant of this solution, that of Sartre who claims that men living in the wake of greatly creative thinkers, simply amending and expanding their ideas, are ideological whereas those who carry through a total and radical revolution are not (see Questions de Methode, Paris, Gallimard, 1960, p.14). Gabel argues that solutions to the problem of false consciousness by the use of the 'privileged vantage point' solution are not valid. They erect a non-dialectical polarisation which does not constitute an overcoming of the problem of false consciousness but, on the contrary, constitutes its establishment in its extreme form.

Gabel argues also that the 'vantage point' argument does not solve the problem of safeguarding the ideological character of science without doing away with the possible validity of such science. Indeed, though a theory may be ideological, it may also be true in that it is based on correct observations and interpretations: a reified and non-dialectical social science may correctly describe an alienated profit-oriented society.

*"Within the framework of such a false consciousness, an economist could find valid conclusions about the*

Gabel argues that false consciousness rests on an ignorance of the principle of historical materialism which makes it impossible for the scientist to be aware of his situation. Historical materialism does not remove the validity of science but provides the investigator with a method of understanding how ideas relate to other elements of the society in such a way that it is possible for him to become aware of this relatedness and thereby of his limitations and possibilities.

*"In other words, it is not the validity of the principle of historical materialism which creates false consciousness, but ignorance of this validity, and this ignorance is that of a non-dialectical structure" (Gabel, p.47).*

As for the problem of whether society constitutes or selects ideologies, Gabel answers simply that society constitutes the problems and selects the answers (Gabel, p. 34).

Gabel's analysis of false consciousness also relates directly to the problem of values. Since false consciousness and ideology are approaches that erect the objects of study into independent and natural phenomena not related in an interacting way with the observer, since they study their subjects as reified in a non-dialectical way, they do not take into account the processes that link observer and observed, and they thereby dissociate observed from observer, and the inquiry from the personal orientations and values of the observer. Thus positivistic inquiries are reifying since they remove human motivations and values, and place their findings in a depersonalised and dissociated natural world (Gabel, pages 27 and 64). As Laing writes:

*"No one can begin to think, feel or act now except from the starting-point of his or her own alienation" (The Politics of Experience, Penguin, 1967, p.11).*

I have summarised this chapter of Gabel's book as I feel that it is an extremely interesting example of how Continental philosophy can clarify notions of importance to me. Why I find Gabel's book important is that it does not present any panacea for accomplishing meaningful inquiry, either scientific or philosophical. It gives support to what I believe, which is that we cannot make either philosophy or any other intellectual discipline 'radical' except by becoming critical of ourselves, and subjecting ourselves to socio-psychological analysis. What, in my position, allows me and pushes me to do what I do and believe what I believe? Why do I want to be 'radical'? Did I do right to leave the university, or can one really be critical within the framework of specialisation and professionalisation? Can one's inquiries be effective within an institution which erects the motto "Be still and know"? This problem may seem far removed from current academic philosophy, but it does constitute a current problem for me, and as such I feel that philosophy, if it does concern itself with reflexion and with reasoned argument, should consider it.

#### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

George C. Robertson, first editor of *Mind*, resigned in 1891, saying that the journal had failed through attracting too much interest from "the lay student" and not enough from those "whose regular business is with philosophy".

## MARXISM: A PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE?

G. A. Cohen

Review of THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN MARX, by Alfred Schmidt, NLB, 1971 price £3.25.

1. The central preoccupation of Schmidt's very interesting book is a certain conception of the relation between man and nature, which the author attributes to the mature Karl Marx.

In this review I shall expound the conception, without criticizing or endorsing it. I shall, however, impugn the exegetical devices by means of which Schmidt ascribes it to Marx. I shall show that he distorts the meaning of crucial texts. Whether or not Marx had the conception he locates in his work, Schmidt's thesis that he did is inadequately supported.

There are a number of subsidiary discussions in the book, not all of which will be noticed here. The most important

secondary theme is the author's treatment of Engels' views of nature and science, which is the best I know. I have thought it more important to warn of the book's errors than to list its virtues. I need not fear that this largely negative review will prevent Schmidt from obtaining in Great Britain the wide readership he deserves.

2. Schmidt proposes a conception of man and nature which may be called "Marxian Kantianism". (He calls it "dialectical materialism", but these days the phrase means nothing more precise than "the methodology of Marx, whatever it turns out to be"). It is Kantian because it holds that we do not know the world immediately but only as it is given to and shaped by our activity upon it. It shares Kant's rejection of the possibility of direct congruency between thought and reality, which is cherished by idealists (Berkeley, Hegel) and realists (Locke, Feuerbach) alike. Our knowledge is a function not only of the world but also of our operations, not just because we must operate to obtain knowledge, but because the way we operate enters constitutively into the knowledge we have.

Schmidt's Kantianism is Marxian in at least four respects:

(1) The bearer of knowledge is not, as in Kant, an individual ego, but a social group.

(2) The activity which generates knowledge is not, as in Kant, exclusively mental. It has an irreducibly practical side.

(3) The forms of knowledge, as Kant did not see, vary historically, *de jure* and *de facto*, so that propositions valid at one time may be invalid earlier or later.

(4) The objective pole of the epistemological relation is not, as in Kant, an enigmatic *Ding-an-sich*, wholly inaccessible to us. It is the material world we live in, though we have only a very general awareness of it until we encounter it in and transform it through our *praxis*.

The first three theses would have enjoyed the approval of the young Lukacs, but not, according to Schmidt, the fourth. For it acknowledges that at one level we grasp the world as independent of us, whereas Lukacs treated our image of nature as entirely determined by social practice.<sup>1</sup> In disposing of Lukacs, Schmidt clarifies his own position:

*Although nature and its laws subsist independently of all human consciousness and will for the materialist Marx [this being what Lukacs supposedly missed--GAC] it is only possible to formulate and apply statements about nature with the help of social categories [this being the part of the truth which Lukacs mistook for the whole]. The concept of a law of nature is unthinkable without men's endeavours to master nature. The socially imprinted character of nature and nature's autonomous role constitute a unity within which the Subject by no means plays the part of 'creator' assigned to it by Lukacs. (p.70)*

Thus Marxian Kantianism separates itself from Marxian Hegelianism. Being Kantian, it also distinguishes itself from simple materialism:

*The fundamental materialist tenet could be summed up as follows: the laws of nature exist independently of and outside the consciousness and will of men. Dialectical materialism also holds to this tenet, but with the following supplement: men can only become certain of the operation of the laws of nature through the forms provided by their labour processes. (p.98)*

In my opinion there are no traces of this doctrine in Marx's later writings, even if he privately held it at the time. Schmidt's attempts to supply evidence of its presence are egregious failures. After offering the above characterisation of dialectical materialism, he solicits support from Marx's letter to Kugelmann of July 11, 1868:

*It is absolutely impossible to transcend the laws of nature. What can change in historically different circumstances is only the form in which these laws express themselves.*

This passage is supposed to treat of an epistemological relationship between social activity and the laws of the physical world. It is supposed to argue that the laws, which do not change, manifest themselves variously to human cognition as the social optic undergoes historical variation. But no one who studies the Kugelmann letter without bias can accept this reading of it. It does not concern knowledge at all. The "laws of nature" it discusses are those which ordain that the needs

1. Or so Schmidt says. He approvingly quotes a question Siegfried Marck directed at Lukacs, namely "whether the existence of nature is to be conceived as in toto the product of society" (p.213, note 36). But the question betrays a naive response to *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*.

of society must, one way or another, be met by the labour of society. Under capitalism this transpires indirectly, through the mechanism of the market and capital accumulation; in other societies the link between labour and needs-satisfaction is more direct. What varies is not how the law is conceived, but how it imposes itself upon men, whether they are aware of it or not, in different economic systems.

Schmidt appropriates a homely remark about the constraints within which society functions and turns it into a contribution to the theory of knowledge.

3. His handling of the Kugelmann letter illustrates Schmidt's usual procedure. On dozens of occasions he exhibits passages whose manifest burden is economic or historical and surrounds them with commentary intended to make them look like modulations on a philosophical theme. He proclaims his exegetical outlook in a footnote (p.214, note 43). We are told that Capital, though officially and outwardly a study of political economy, is (at least in major part) secretly and essentially a work of epistemology and philosophical anthropology; and that this becomes clear once we "disentangle" Marx's statements "from their economic disguise".

I shall demonstrate that the results Schmidt obtains by his peculiar method of interpretation are, as in the case of the Kugelmann letter, quite unacceptable. But there is reason to wonder about his procedure before inspecting its fruits. For it entails that Marx did not know, or else concealed, what he was doing. It is difficult to imagine a motive for concealment Schmidt remarks (p.214) that Marx was reluctant to admit the extent of Hegel's influence on Capital, and one can think of motives for that. But why should he have pretended that what he was doing, however it was influenced, was political economy not philosophy? Consider then the alternative, that Marx did not know what he was doing. There is only one way of taking this in which it is not flatly incredible: that we can profitably regard many of Marx's claims as transpositions into economic discourse of thoughts which are philosophical in character. The surface is economics, the deep structure philosophy.

But if an economic thesis is advanced because it is a transform of a philosophical one, then, barring a mysterious pre-established harmony between philosophical and economic truth, the economic thesis is likely to be false and is certain to lack appropriate justification. Perhaps Marx's economics is poor as economics. But then Schmidt should say so. What he does say implies what he shrinks from saying, that Marx was either a fraud, in pretending to be an economist when he was not, or a bad economist, because his economics was motivated by extra-economic concerns.

I do not think there is nothing of philosophy in Capital, and I accept that sometimes one may find suggestive parallels between economic and philosophical positions. But I emphatically reject Schmidt's contention that large areas of Marx's economics are amenable to a systematic philosophical rewrite.

4. I shall now substantiate my charges, by exposing the alchemical transformations Schmidt carries out on Marx's assertions, in his attempt to return him to the thought-context of German philosophy, which the author of Capital escaped. I shall give some examples of his faulty exegesis.

(i) On the first page of his Introduction Schmidt flagrantly reverses the sense of a rather obvious truth which Marx drew from the tradition of British political economy. He correctly reports that "Marx considered nature to be 'the primary source of all instruments and objects of labour'". He then infers that Marx "saw nature from the beginning in relation to human activity" (p.15). The inference inverts Marx's meaning. Marx was not, in a quasi-Kantian way, inserting nature within the framework of human activity. He was inserting human activity, realistically and traditionally, within the framework of nature. He meant merely that man-made tools and man-made materials cannot but be temporally subsequent to nature-bestowed tools and materials. The point is not unimportant, but no one could disagree with it, regardless of his philosophical orientation. Schmidt constructs an elaborate epistemology on the foundation of this and similar misconstructions of what Marx said.

(ii) The quotation considered in exhibit (i) is from The Critique of Political Economy. Equivalent formulations appear in other mature texts. The Grundrisse also emphasizes that production presupposes non-labour-produced conditions, and for Schmidt (p.211, note 3) the pages in question (384, 388ff) prove "Marx's strict theoretical realism with regard to the Object". But the relevant passages give no support whatever to the notion that something epistemological is their issue.

(iii) I referred to traditional political economy. Schmidt often (e.g. on p.66) cites utterances from Capital without realising that they faithfully reproduce material in Ricardo (for p.66, see The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, p.76), who, very significantly, is not mentioned in the book. If, as Schmidt contends, those utterances express a philosophy of man and nature which inherits classical German thought, then

so did Ricardo's, a consequence which is a reductio ad absurdum of Schmidt's contention.

(iv) On pp. 120-1 heavy references to Kant and Hegel decorate Marx's commonplace politico-economic remarks that "man can work only as nature does, that is by changing the form of matter", and that in different production processes "the proportions between labour and the material of nature are very diverse". Schmidt is original and arresting, but also irresponsible, when he maintains a connection between the latter statement, which is undeniable by anyone, and "Kant's thesis of the non-identity of Subject and Object", which, he claims Marx is implicitly telling us, "enter into changing configurations".

(v) Sometimes Schmidt tries to secure authority for his transformative procedure by juxtaposing superficially similar formulations from early and late texts, where the early one is uncontroversially philosophical, and the late, by virtue of the juxtaposition, is made to seem so. For example, these passages, from the Paris Manuscript and the Grundrisse respectively, are introduced in sequence (p. 30), as though they articulated a continuing philosophical position:

...nature, taken abstractly, for itself, rigidly separated from man, is nothing for man.

The material of nature alone, in so far as no human labour is embodied in it, in so far as it is mere material and exists independently of human labour, has no value, since value is only embodied labour...

The second excerpt cannot be read as an echo of the Manuscripts' philosophical claim or even as a replica of it in the discourse of economics. For the "material of nature" does have use-value for man, and is hence not "nothing for man". The value to which the Grundrisse here refers is the value of the market, exchange-value. Unwrought nature is economically worthless, but it is of great importance to man, who, for instance, must breathe some of it to survive. What we breathe has no value in the present sense but it is not "rigidly separated" from us.

(vi) Though Schmidt presents the Marx of Capital as a philosopher, he does not see him as primarily a theorist of alienation (see p.9). Nevertheless, since alienation is unquestionably a philosophical theme, Schmidt strives to find it in the mature texts. He quotes (p.67) a passage from Capital in which Marx indicates how in the social labour process what at one point emerges as a product enters elsewhere as a tool or raw material. "Products are therefore not only results, but also essential conditions of the labour-process". Schmidt subsumes this simple fact, which obtains in any economy including the most primitive,<sup>2</sup> under the Manuscripts concept of "objectification as loss of the object". But that is a description of alienation, which is not imposed by the universal conditions of the labour process.<sup>3</sup> The worker does not 'lose' the product, in the sense of the Manuscripts, just because it may pass into another labour process. The transportation industry does not promote the self-estrangement of mankind.<sup>4</sup>

(vii) Schmidt turns Marx into a philosopher even when he is deliberately mocking philosophy. He wants to establish that for Marx nature is, in the last resort, a "negative principle", resistant to human desire and design. So he reminds us (p.159) that, according to The German Ideology,<sup>5</sup> "the Spirit has the

2. For man-made tools are used in the most primitive economies.
3. If it were, it would be impossible to abolish alienation.
4. Schmidt writes: "The concept of 'alienation' is still found quite frequently in Capital and in Theories of Surplus Value, and indeed Marx's general abandonment of such terms does not mean that he did not continue to follow theoretically the material conditions designated by them". (p.228, note 7). Here Schmidt conflates questions which must be kept distinct. Labour is alienated (entfremdete) when by performing it the agent dehumanises himself. Labour is alien (fremde)--so Marx used the term--when it is not self-employed. In his early writings Marx argued that alien labour is of necessity alienated labour. It does not follow that when he subsequently discussed alien or hired labour, he was also occupied with the complex phenomenon of alienation. The questions which must be separated are these:
  - (1) Did Marx abandon the term 'alienation'?
  - (2) Did Marx abandon the concept of alienation?
  - (3) Did Marx abandon study of the condition he once designated as alienation?Schmidt concedes that the answer to (1) is, broadly speaking, yes. He correctly suggests that the answer to (3) is no, but this does not show, as he wrongly infers, that the answer to (2), which is the crucial question, is yes. In other words: Marx once considered alien labour alienated. He stopped calling it that. He may still have thought it was that. But not just because he continued to study it.
5. The passage is on p.41 of The German Ideology, not as note

'curse on itself of being "burdened" with matter!'. This is cited as evidence for Marx's philosophic pessimism, his belief in the ultimate inclemency of nature. But let us examine the whole sentence from which Schmidt drew the words quoted above:

*From the start the "spirit" is afflicted with the curse of being "burdened" with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language.*

In a mood of playful disdain, Marx uses the philosophic verbiage of the German ideologists he is attacking to make an interesting point about the indispensability of material processes to communication. To neglect the irony in the phrasing, and to treat the statement as a general philosophical one, is to display either gross misunderstanding or radical intellectual dishonesty.

5. I acknowledged that there is philosophy in the later work of Marx. My complaint has been that his economics is not philosophy, not even philosophy expressed in economic terms. One philosophical topic which does occur, sporadically, in his mature writings, is the question of the nature of science in general and of social science in particular. Schmidt takes up this theme, and I want to criticize the account he gives of it.

Marx said, many times, that if there were no difference between reality and appearance, there would be no need for science.<sup>6</sup> Nature does not present its essence to the senses, so physical science is necessary. A society like capitalism creates appearances which conceal its underlying anatomy, so a science of capitalism is required. As far as nature is concerned, the discrepancy between appearance and reality is irremovable. It is an unavoidable consequence of our finitude as sensory beings. But the discrepancy in society is relative and remediable, for it depends on illusions generated by reification and fetishism, whose permanence is not guaranteed. There is the promise that with socialism human relations will become transparent and immediately intelligible, so that social science will no longer be needed.

Marx's notion that scientific theorising presupposes a gulf between reality and appearance is an antecedent of the Frankfurt School's (Adorno, Horkheimer,<sup>7</sup> Marcuse) idea that a valid theory of society must be a critical theory, but I think critical theory misrenders Marx's concept of social science. Schmidt states its central tenet as follows:

*...the movement of thought in Marx is by no means limited to a mere mirroring of the factual. The uncritical reproduction of existing relationships in consciousness has precisely an ideological character for Marx. (p.56).*

This is highly misleading. For theory can do no better than to reproduce reality, the facts, existing relationships. Ideology is flawed not because it reproduces reality without criticizing it, but because it reproduces not reality but its illusory surface. The Frankfurt position is that a valuational dimension is necessary to social thought, if it is to be progressive, and practically relevant. But social thought is practical, I would contend, just because it correctly reproduces the reality beneath the mystification. If it is objectively sound, it requires the supplement of no critical valuations to achieve practical significance. When Marx showed<sup>9</sup> that the labour contract, which appears reciprocal and just, is in reality rigged, he did not have to add that rigged relationships are bad for the message to be clear. When he frequently complained about "vulgar" economists, it was not because they merely analysed without criticizing, but because they accepted the surface and failed to analyse the depths, since analysis would of itself have had critical import.

Because he does not recognise the intrinsically revolutionary bearing of objective scientific work, Schmidt underestimates the importance scientific discoveries had for Marx:

*As opposed to an empiricism void of concepts,*

42 (sic) states, on p.42. This (tiny) flaw is the only one I found in the excellent editorial work that went into this English edition, whose admirable translation is by Ben Fowkes.

6. See, e.g., Marx-Engels Selected Works, Volume I, p.424; Capital (Moscow edition), Volume I, pp. 74, 307, 316; Volume II, p.212; Volume III, pp. 205, 760, 797, 846-7. I have examined this problem in "Karl Marx and the Withering Away of Social Science", Philosophy and Public Affairs (Princeton, N.J.), No.2, (forthcoming).
7. Adorno and Horkheimer supervised the dissertation in which Schmidt's book began its life.
8. Capital, Volume I, Part VI.
9. The justification, not the origin. The origin does lie in his Hegelian training, beyond which Schmidt cannot see.

*which consists solely in the ordering of 'everyday experience', 'which only grasps the misleading appearance of things' (Wages, Price and Profit), Marx stressed the role of conceptual work, in the manner of Hegelian philosophy. On the other side, he did not hesitate to use the empirical discoveries of natural history against spiritualistic metaphysics of all shades, including the Hegelian variety. (p.206, my emphases, GAC).*

This reveals misunderstanding, and plays havoc with the text Schmidt is quoting. For the very examples used in Wages, Price and Profit to illustrate how everyday experience is misleading (that--contrary to appearances--the earth moves round the sun, water consists of two highly inflammable gases, and profits are derived by selling commodities at their values) are discoveries of empirical science. Such discoveries were not something Marx used 'on the other side', despite his critique of everyday experience. They were the justification<sup>10</sup> of that critique. Schmidt associates 'everyday experience' and 'empirical discoveries'. For Marx the latter expose the insufficiency of the former.

I have said that for Marx the study of society must resemble natural science to the extent that a gap between essence and appearance which is inevitable in nature, afflicts society because of reification and mystification. Schmidt gives due emphasis to the role of reification in generating the need for social science in the 1965 appendix to his book, which is available in this English edition. His original text is less satisfactory. On p.49 he writes that Marx held there was "no methodological distinction between the natural sciences and historical science" because he "admitted no absolute division between nature and society". But this conventionally positivist (in both 19th and 20th century senses) assimilationism was not Marx's position. For him history must be a science only as long as an essence/appearance rift pervades society, not because human history is an extension (though it certainly is) of the history of nature.

Now it is true that the social process unfolds with the necessity of a natural process<sup>10</sup> because society is still subordinated to nature. Reified social relations indirectly derive<sup>10</sup> from the hegemony over man of the physical world. But Schmidt (p.43) runs cause and effect together. He identifies the nature-like constitution of society with its subjection to physical nature, whereas the second is distinct from and explanatory of the first. That they are distinct is clear from the fact that the study of society does not resemble the study of nature in proportion to the sway of nature over man. Under capitalism man is less in nature's thrall than under feudalism, but advanced social science is more urgently required to understand capitalism, since it sponsors more elaborate mystification. The need for science varies with the degree of reification, and reification depends on but does not vary with the degree of technological immaturity. By compressing the explanation Schmidt falsifies it.

6. My objections to The Concept of Nature in Marx have been severe, and the reader may wonder why I nevertheless think the book deserves wide attention. Part of the reason is that there are good things in it, notably the discussion of Engels, which I mentioned, and also the fine interpretation of the Theses on Feuerbach. Schmidt's touch is more assured when he deals with extended stretches of the Marx-Engels corpus which are ex professo philosophical. His work is lamentable when he intrudes philosophy into economics, and shaky when he reads the wrong philosophy in Marx's philosophical asides.

Finally, it should be said that Schmidt is not boring, and that his writing is refreshingly free of the dictatorial intellectualism which is so repellent in recent French Marxology. He is an exciting scholar. It is a pity he is not more careful and more scrupulous.

10. Along some such route as the following: the hegemony gives rise to scarcity, which makes class division necessary, and reification, mystification and fetishism function so as to preserve class division.

