
REVIEWS

Marxism, Black Power, Black Revolutionaries

C.L.R. James, *Notes on Dialectics, Spheres of Existence* and *The Black Jacobins*, Allison and Busby, £4.95 each

The publication of these three books, which the publishers have added to the already available *Beyond a Boundary* and *The Future in the Present*, makes available a range of essays, histories and philosophical discourses which previously have been unavailable, and coincides with the entry into his ninth decade of Cyril Lionel Robert James. To many, James, a West Indian born in Port of Spain in 1901, is a legendary figure - the organiser, with George Pedmore, of the Africa Bureau, meeting with Trotsky a year before his death and discussing blacks' need of Marxism, organising share-croppers in Missouri, acting as a delegate to the founding congress of the Fourth International, supporting Nkrumah as the African Lenin; at other times, writing on cricket for the *Manchester Guardian*, on art and culture for *New Society*, writing and producing a play on the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, warning Walter Rodney of his imminent assassination; and playing cricket in the West Indies, even once hitting 46 runs off the bowling of Learie Constantine.

James has a deep and essentially practical involvement with Marxism, and writes upon it with a fervour that makes much contemporary 'Marxology' seem, what it often is, sterile. This is especially the case with the *Notes on Dialectics*, which he sees as his most important work. The *Notes* is unique as a philosophy book in its often strident rhetoric and its empirical content. The dialectic in Hegel, Marx and Lenin is studied as a basis for examining the history of the workers' movement, of socialism and of the Internationals, and to provide two conclusions which are as contentious now as they were when they were voiced in the 1940s: firstly, that the Soviet Union has become state capitalism, has come to resemble other advanced capitalist societies; secondly, that the Leninist conception of the vanguard party must be rejected. This criticism of the vanguard party is in the name of a spontaneity of the masses and of a critique of bureaucracy. On page 339 of *The Black Jacobins* he writes: 'Once more the masses had shown greater political understanding than their leaders'; on page 224 of the *Notes on Dialectics* we read: 'Destruction of the bureaucracy is an impregnable basis for the unmistakable separation of the revolu-

tionary movement and socialism from stalinism and totalitarianism'. The wonder is that James' analysis is founded upon a consideration of Hegel's *Logic*; he comes to Marxism through that most impregnable of intellectual fortresses, and he comes to a humanist and voluntarist position through his own rediscovery of the early Marx. Even if many would disagree with James' conclusions, the *Notes*, although not a standard philosophical work, does make stimulating reading and does help in our understanding of the problem of the dialectic.

Spheres of Existence is a series of essays and of short stories, ranging from a consideration of the role of intellectuals, to a study of Black Power, to an analysis of the cricketer Learie Constantine. That is, they unite what are, in essence, James' three 'loves' - Marxism, culture and cricket. These three are not accidentally or frivolously linked: the Marxism is essentially practical, considering in 'Black Power' the actual strategy adopted by Stokely Carmichael; the concern with culture is often with those cultures which have been devalued or ignored by colonial powers, as in 'The Discovery of Literature in Trinidad'; the work on cricket is both understanding and critical, as in 'Learie Constantine', where not just his record is considered, but why he came to England and why the West Indies for so long lacked a black captain. Basically, then, Marxist 'readings' of racism, of literature and of cricket, involving the rediscovery or hidden and submerged aspects, the interpretation of silences.

The Black Jacobins presents a detailed history of the San Domingo revolution and its leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. In 1791, the slaves of San Domingo revolted, San Domingo being France's most important overseas market, and the greatest single market for the slave trade. The revolt lasted until 1803, and in that time the slaves were victorious over local whites, British and French expeditions, and Spanish invasion. Toussaint was a unique figure for James, created by, not creating a revolution. The lessons of *The Black Jacobins*, and the book is thoroughly didactic, are several: that revolution is possible; that blacks as a whole (slaves and mulattoes in San Domingo, and therefore Africans, coloureds and Asians in South Africa), however severely subordinated and oppressed, can develop their own political strategy and this can be successful; that leadership and organisation are necessary but not sufficient conditions

for action.

These books by C.L.R. James are to be unconditionally welcomed and recommended, in that they consistently present a humanism, a role for what is now called the 'subject', and a clarity of argument, all of which are often lacking in contemporary Marxist writing. As E.P. Thompson writes on the frontispiece to *The Future in the Present*:

When one looks back ... to those men who are

most far-sighted, who first began to tease out the muddle of ideology in our times, who were at the same time marxist with a hard theoretical basis, and close students of society, humanists with a tremendous response to and understanding of human culture, Comrade James is one of the first one thinks of.

John F. Bird

Defending Positivism

R. Keat, *The Politics of Social Theory: Habermas, Freud and the Critique of Positivism*, Basil Blackwell, 1981, £4.95 pb, £12.50 hc

The Politics of Social Theory is concerned to deny the kinds of connection between epistemology and politics which members of the Frankfurt School have sought to establish in their defence of Marxism against the methodological strictures of formal sociology. It argues that it is errors in the analysis of positivism which led critical theorists to reject the fact/value distinction and to adopt the mistaken position that the criteria of validity for a critical social theory are tied to the successful realisation of the values that guide it, and that the mistakes involved in this position are reflected in inconsistencies within Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, and are apparent in his account of Freudian psychoanalysis as a model for critical social theory. It defends the fact/value distinction on the basis of a Mannheimian 'relationist' or 'perspectivist' epistemology, and attempts to forestall its relativistic consequences by arguing for the possibility of an objective normative critique subject to its own standards of argumentation and rationality. It thereby opts for a 'humanistic' critical social theory which will 'investigate and explain those features of non-socialist societies which are significant from the standpoint of socialist values' (p.57).

The main problem with the book is its ahistorical approach to textual interpretation. Its failure to locate the work with which it is concerned in the intellectual context of its production results in serious interpretative errors which both undermine its defence of the fact/value distinction and mar its otherwise noteworthy treatment of Habermas. On the one hand, the Frankfurt School critique of 'positivism' and the fact/value distinction is misunderstood, because it is severed from its origins in the more general critique of neo-Kantianism; and an epistemological position which has been thoroughly criticised by critical theorists is presented as if it were a new way out of an old dilemma, without consideration of the fundamental objections which have been made against it. On the other hand, Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests is misunderstood, because it is taken to represent 'the most sophisticated and plausible development' of the views of critical theorists, while it actually represents a significant departure from Horkheimer and Adorno's ideas of critical theory; and the significance of criticising Habermas is consequently over-estimated. However, while these fundamental problems vitiate the general argument of the book, many of its

individual analyses retain a relative validity, and its criticism and elaboration of Habermas's idea of an emancipatory science is a real contribution to the development of the idea.

1 Value-freedom and the critique of positivism

The main failure of the critical theorists' critique of positivism is taken by Keat to be that it has 'generally failed to understand the distinct nature of various positivist doctrines, and the logical relations between them' (p.36). In rejecting certain doctrines, for example that of a scientific politics, it is seen to have been led to reject others, for example that of value-freedom, the maintenance of which, it is argued, is in fact quite compatible with the rejection of the former. In support of this argument, Keat identifies four distinct positivist doctrines, examines the historical and logical relations between them, and gives a brief textual demonstration of the fact that certain critical theorists have not discriminated between them. However, while this conceptual clarification of the variety of different philosophical positions which have been labelled 'positivist' is competently executed and of general interest, it is woefully inadequate to the task which it is employed to carry out - namely, the critique of critical theorists' conception of the epistemological structure of a critical social theory.

The reason for this is that, like many other commentators on the *Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (from which the whole debate over 'critical' social science originated), Keat puts the evident, and startling, lack of communication between the participants down to a failure on the part of the critical theorists to appreciate the details of their opponents' position, while it is actually the result of the fact that the two groups meant radically different things by the term 'positivism'. Accordingly, he fails to understand the nature of the critical theorists' argument, and hence their philosophical position, because he is unaware of the object of their criticisms. As another commentator has recently pointed out, for Habermas, as for Adorno, 'positivism' refers to *methodologism*.

.... any neo-Kantian kind of pure logic, which grants validity to an autonomous method and its objectifications, which is 'positive' in the general sense of suppressing the social and historical preconditions of its own possibility [1]

Such a 'pure logic' is taken to be objectionable for *epistemological* reasons (which have political consequences - the political argument against 'positivism' is about the social effectivity of forms

of misrepresentation; it does not proceed from political judgment to epistemology, but vice versa). It is seen to dehistoricise both the subject and object of knowledge, and consequently to replace the 'objectivity of truth' (Adorno) by a form of subjectivism [2] In other words, the critical theorists' argument against 'positivism' is independent of their confusion of the distinct doctrines which Keat takes to constitute 'positivism'. It is based on an objectivist and historical conception of truth. Keat's defence of value-freedom is based on an epistemology which denies this conception of truth, without arguing against it. Like Popper he fails to get to grips with his opponents.

Keat defines value-freedom thus:

First, the criteria of validity for scientific theories are logically independent of the acceptance or rejection of normative commitments of a moral or political kind. Second, it is not possible to establish such normative positions solely by reference to scientific knowledge.

(p.38)

He explains it in terms of Nagel's distinction between 'characterising' and 'appraising' value-judgments. It is argued that the validity of claims made by social scientists may be assessed quite independently of the normative commitments involved in the characterisation of their objects. To ensure the universality, as well as merely the formal validity, of such claims, it is further argued that, 'for any concept that appears to express or presuppose a particular normative attitude it is always possible to replace it by one that does not do this' (p.42).

So Keat rejects value-free reconstruction in favour of a modified Weberianism which retains the idea of value-freedom in a subjective form, as a theoretical postulate, in the idea that a variety of different-valued reconstructions are possible, such that conflict over values can be eliminated. On this view, apparent disagreements about explanatory adequacy may instead reflect divergent characterisations of the object of enquiry, and so involve no direct incompatibility between theories.

(p.54)

Value-freedom remains a *postulate* because no argument is produced to establish the possibility of concept-replacement of the kind required. We are merely offered an assurance of personal satisfaction with the results of previous attempts. Effectively, this amounts to the *assumption of a consensus*, since it is presumed that such replacements are possible - i.e. that the structure of the real object under consideration is such that a variety of characterisations are possible without that structure being misrepresented. But this is precisely what is disputed by an objectivist conception of truth. It is not the possibility of a plurality of representations of objects which is in question but the claim that each representation is equally valid as a representation of the essential structure of the object, is equally capable of revealing the determinations of the object.

Like the author of another recent 'sociological' attack on critical theory, Richard Kilminster, Keat misapprehends the Frankfurt School's attitude to empirical evidence. They were concerned to defend empirical science against romanticism, and accept the *formal* independence of the criteria of validity of empirical claims from normative commitments. What they do not accept is that the normative commitments constitutive or 'characteristic' of social reality are 'givens'. They see them as results of a deeper process of determination. What they reject is the reduction of social science to the sum of its 'empirical' claims. (As Horkheimer stressed, tradi-

tional theory is *preserved* within Critical Theory.) The underestimation of critical theorists' evaluation of empirical evidence is perhaps responsible for Keat's mistaken belief that Habermas is not a realist.

2 Knowledge-constitutive interests

Keat argues that we should reject Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests in favour of an 'objectivist, realist alternative', and that only if this is done will it be possible to achieve the aims which Habermas sets out for a critical social theory (p.87). In the light of the above discussion this seems a strange idea, since 'objectivism' is precisely what Keat's own epistemology lacks. Ironically, Keat's argument relies upon reading Habermas as a nominalist. The basis of this reading is the idea that Habermas's cognitive interests are ontologically constitutive:

Habermas argues that the object-domains of forms of knowledge, and their appropriate criteria of validity, are constituted by certain interests; and that the possible forms of practical application of scientific knowledge are determined by this interest-constitution. *Thus*, scientific knowledge is not neutral normatively, and *its objects do not belong to an independent reality*.

(p.66, emphasis added)

From this, Keat argues that

the naturalistic basis of Habermas's quasi-transcendental pragmatism is inconsistent with its human interest-constitutive conception of nature as the object-domain of empirical-analytical science

(p.78);

that Habermas is forced to deny the possibility of a hermeneutics of nature, which is in fact possible (p.72); and that an emancipatory science cannot be, as Habermas takes it to be, interest-constitutive since it would intrude upon the object-domains of empirical-analytic and hermeneutic science (p.87).

Despite Habermas's own ambivalence about the status of the theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, I think it is clear that the form of argument by which it is derived does *not* commit Habermas to the assertion that 'its objects do not belong to an independent reality'. If this is so, Keat's objections dissolve, for Habermas is *already* a realist; at least in so far as Keat is. Keat's idealist understanding of Habermas is the result of his conflation of two quite distinct senses of the expression 'object of knowledge': (i) the conceptually constituted representation which is the 'object of knowledge' in the sense that it is what is thought, that it constitutes thought; and (ii) the independent aspect of reality which is represented in thought as the 'object of knowledge' in the first sense. The idea of an 'object-domain' mediates these two senses of the 'object of knowledge' *within the first sense*. It denotes a delimitation of an aspect of reality which is independent of the individual cognitive subject in terms of a particular set of concepts. Such delimitation delimits a field of knowledge, an aspect of reality. So, in a crucial sense, its objects *do* belong to an independent reality. This is acknowledged by Keat later, when he says that 'at another level of analysis, there is a non-subject-dependent externality' (p.74). But he insists that this externality must be undifferentiated: 'There is no distinctiveness *within* that externality which determines the appropriateness of the differing categorial frameworks' (p.84).

This is the old problem of Kant's noumenal realm. It arises here, as it does in Kant, because of the ontological agnosticism of transcendental argumentation, by which the necessity of a particular categor-

ial framework to a particular activity or form of experience is established. It arises because the argument that a certain form of activity or experience presupposes certain categories or 'interests', which are deduced as conditions of its possibility, leaves the ontological status of these categories indeterminate. This is the result of the fact that the validity of the form of activity or experience under consideration is not demonstrated but presupposed. This does not mean, as Keat takes it to, that externality is unstructured, but only that its structure cannot be established without an additional argument in support of the epistemic status of the form of activity or experience in question. Habermas's interest-constitution doctrine is thus not a prescriptive theory about the necessary form of valid scientific enquiry into particular objects - though it may look like this. It deduces the possible social function of existing forms of science [3].

Once we realise this, we can reply to Keat's objections as follows: (i) 'nature as object-domain' and 'nature as basis of Habermas's pragmatism' are theoretically constituted at different levels of analysis, and consequently do not conflict; (ii) a 'scientific', as opposed to a 'speculative' hermeneutics of nature is not possible, not because of the nature of science, but because of the nature of nature! (i.e. it would be 'speculative' for purely empirical reasons); (iii) the interest-constitution of an emancipatory science does not prohibit it from sharing a real object with other sciences, it merely determines the different way in which it treats that object.

3 Emancipation

The second half of *The Politics of Social Theory* deals with the relationship between theory and practice in a critical social theory; specifically, with the question of emancipation. Keat works within Habermas's neo-Fabian conception of emancipation as enlightenment to exploit the ambiguity of his idea of a 'science of reflection'. This is the most interesting and successful part of the book. The section on theory-testing (pp.134-144) is particularly good. However, while numerous problems with Habermas's conception of the theory-practice relation are revealed, there are a number of problems with Keat's treatment of these problems which reflect inadequacies within his basic approach, and restrict his critique to a purely negative role.

Firstly, the claim that Habermas ignores the emotional or affective side of therapy, in favour of a purely cognitive model, and that his account cannot therefore deal with the 'Woody Allen Syndrome' - profound self-understanding but no change in behaviour (pp.152 and 208) - involves a misunderstanding of the function of Habermas's account of Freud within his philosophy of science. On Habermas's account Woody Allen would simply be a case of failed therapy. He quotes Freud on just this point:

The pathological factor is not [the patient's] ignorance in itself, but the root of this ignorance in his *inner resistances* ... The task of the treatment lies in combatting these resistances, informing the patient of what he does not know because he has repressed it is only one of the necessary preliminaries to the treatment [4].

Keat's mistake is a common one. He neglects the specificity of Habermas's interest in Freud. Habermas uses Freud as an *epistemological* model for a 'science of reflection', not as a model of therapeutic practice.

Secondly, Keat's discussion of therapy takes place within a neo-Freudian problematic which is oblivious to the social determinants of 'psychic' disorder.

This is the result of the restriction on theory imposed by the doctrine of value-freedom. His theoretical pluralism is matched here by a pluralism of therapeutic goals, which both denies the possibility of their 'scientific' determination and neglects the fact that certain goals may not be attainable by 'therapy' at all [5].

Keat's therapeutic pluralism commits the same error for which it reprimands Habermas's monism, except in reverse. It infers the *logical* independence of explanatory theory from therapeutic success and theories of technique from the *fact* that in practice these three things exhibit a degree of independence. This is to conceive of the relation between theory and practice as tightly as Habermas does, but to argue from practice to theory rather than vice versa. Both positions are equally undialectical. This lack of dialectics is evident in Keat's general argument against any attempts to establish a theoretical link between particular kinds of theory and particular forms of social practice.

Keat argues that 'one is either an "observer", or an "agent", and there is no way of bridging or transcending the gap between these two perspectives', and that consequently 'one cannot, as it were, theorise in the mode of agency' (p.207). But, surely, 'one' is *always both* an observer and an agent, and one always theorises in a mode of agency. Observation (and there are many modes of observation) being itself a mode of agency. The question is what are the relations between various modes of observation and other modes of agency? Whatever the inadequacies of Habermas's particular conception of a critical science - and there are many - it at least continues to pose this question, albeit in an abstract form.

The book ends with a discussion of the complexity of normative issues aimed at exposing the 'normative naivety' of a critical theory constructed in terms of such stark contrasts as those between autonomy and domination, freedom and necessity, and 'self-reflection and technical rationality. The desire to transcend the abstract categorial dichotomies of Kantian philosophy is seen to have led to this new set of abstract practical oppositions, inscribed within an all-embracing system of thought which is maintained in a precarious unity only through a conception of reason derived from idealist metaphysics (pp.199-201). Here again, Kant's objection is a valid one but he has no contribution to make to the solution of the problem he diagnoses, no suggestions as to how to provide the concrete mediations, lacking in Critical Theory, necessary to the conceptualization of actual situations. His double restriction of the discussion, to psychotherapy and to moral discourse, eliminates both politics and social theory, and so can be of no use to attempts to grasp the mediations between them.

While it will be of interest to those concerned with Habermas, psychotherapy, or the development of a purely empirical sociology, *The Politics of Social Theory* has little social theory and no politics to offer the expectant reader.

Peter Osborne

Footnotes

- 1 G. Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, Athlone Press, 1981, p.32.
- 2 Cf. Adorno, *Prisms*, Garden City Press, 1967, p.42: 'The thesis of the primacy of being over consciousness includes the methodological imperative to express the dynamic tendencies of reality in the formation and movement of concepts instead of forming and verifying concepts in accordance with the demand that they have pragmatic and expedient features' (from the essay, 'The Sociology of Knowledge and its Consciousness').
- 3 This is much clearer in the work of Habermas's collaborator, Apel. See K.-O. Apel, 'The A Priori of Communication and the Foundation of the Humanities', *Man and World*, Vol.5, No.1; especially the final section, section IV. The *meta-scientific* standpoint of the theory of cognitive interests is emphasised there.
- 4 Habermas, J., *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Heinemann, 1978, p.229.
- 5 For an account of neo-Freudianism in relation to the question of the social determinants of psychic disorders, see Jacoby, R., *Social Amnesia*, Harvester Press, 1975, Chapters 2 and 3. In this book Jacoby offers a stirring defence of Adorno's position on psychoanalysis - a position notably different from, and more sophisticated than, Habermas's.

Moving Forward

Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, London, Heinemann, November 1980, £8.50 hc

One of the most bizarre literary events of 1920 was the appearance of J.B. Bury's *Idea of Progress*, a book which must have required some courage, not to say rashness, to issue but which quickly established itself as a classic. While Pound, Joyce, Eliot and Yeats were prophesying death and decay, Bury with equal passion celebrated the idea and necessity of progress. His book remains to this moment a part of the conventional wisdom - a part of the history of the idea of progress - and its main thesis has been reproduced in scores of subsequent studies [1]. Bury worked in a strongly rationalist, free-thinking tradition, deeply indebted to Comte and Spencer (to whom the book was dedicated) which took Christianity as the final foe to be routed before the notion of progress could emerge in the seventeenth century. The classical and medieval worlds were flittingly depicted, and then summarily dismissed, as lacking any real conception of human progress on earth. This straightforward and enticing thesis was made on the grounds, first, that the ancient and medieval philosophies had no awareness of a long historiographical past within which progress could be discerned; second, that they were victims of their own belief in a theory of historical degeneration from a Golden Age; and third, that they were generally committed to the image of human history as endlessly and recurrently cyclical, thus making any thought of linear advancement through the ages quite impossible. Thinkers who might be considered exceptional were derided. It is true, Bury pointed out, that Seneca and Roger Bacon seemed to advance some notion of progress, but in both cases a closer examination of their work as a whole revealed this notion to be no more than a sporadic observation, inevitable at a certain stage of human reflection, which in no sense anticipated the fully developed idea.

Nisbet's latest book sets out to overturn that conventional interpretation. Its title seems well chosen: the author wants to supply a history which Bury saw fit to deny. So Nisbet spends much time trying to show that the Greeks and Romans *did* have a distinct awareness of the past, *did* see a measured progression in the arts and the sciences, and *did* refer to a future in which civilisation would have advanced. To do this he relies almost wholly and exclusively on secondary studies - especially those of Teggart, Lovejoy, Finley and Edelstein [2]. My main quarrel with this early part of the book is that it is unnecessary. I cannot enjoy the way Nisbet writes, nor the glib manner in which he summarises material. Indeed, before considering the overall effect of reading a book such as this from cover to cover, it is worth asking whether it is reliable in detail. Nisbet supplies no references, so it is important to know whether he is to be trusted to report findings accurately.

The very diversity and scope of topics makes this rather difficult to assess. It is certainly not without errors. It is disconcerting, for instance, to read that Julian Huxley, grandson of T.H. Huxley, was 'no less confident of inevitable progress than his forebear' (p.312) when that author published a well-known lecture to show that progress was *not* inevitable [3]. Nisbet also errs in detecting the

idea of progressive development in Heraclitus (p.21) - Heraclitus not only stated explicitly that the changes of things occur in a vast cycle of time, but gave this cycle a precise numerical specificity. I would also judge the opinion that 'it was but a short and natural step' from Trotsky to Stalin (p.265) as an error; but perhaps Professor Nisbet knows something every scholar of the Russian Revolution has missed. Such mistakes as these seem quite rare, and for the most part occur when Nisbet starts thinking for himself. But there are also some deep misconceptions which a little more thought might have corrected. Among these I would list the idea that Plato and Aristotle held substantially similar views of progress (p.32), that Marx was committed to a simple unilinear perspective of historical advancement (p.260) and that Malthus clearly and unequivocally believed in the progress of mankind (p.220). To this we should add some of the more blatant omissions from the book: Diderot, Helvétius, Cabanis, Shaftesbury, Turnbull, Wolff, Réstif de la Bretonne and Mercier spring to mind [4].

It may be more generous to see such errors, misreadings and omissions as part of Nisbet's overall strategy to inject the idea of progress with a religious and spiritual sense. He declares in conclusion that 'if there is one generalisation which can be made confidently about the history of the idea of progress, it is that throughout its history the idea has been closely linked with, has depended upon, religion or upon intellectual constructs derived from religion' (p.352). This is not a generalisation from the facts, but an axiom which informs each interpretation of period and thinker. With an astonishing disregard for evidence to the contrary Nisbet summarises the views of Rousseau and Saint-Simon and Comte and Marx as being 'as religious in essence as anything we could possibly find in any of the declared religions or sects in history' (p.266). The problem with this is not that it is right or wrong but that it is wholly trivial and uninformative. The same can be said for Nisbet's efforts to account for the 'present ills of society'. The growth of irrationalism and scepticism, the decline in the status of intellectuals and the debasement of literature, all of which monitor a denial of the concept of progress, derive from a lack of culture; 'fundamental to that lack,' Nisbet writes, 'is the disappearance of the sacred, always at the heart of any genuine culture' (p.354).

Of course, much of this intellectual stuff and nonsense amounts to amusing caricatures which simply interrupt the narrative. Nisbet gets quite enraged with the thought that anyone might have been engaged in unnecessary or uncritical striving for material progress or in unprofitable adulation of secular prophets. His prophets and progress point heavenwards and beyond time. The secular is really the sacred unbeknown to itself, the material only imagines itself the here and now.

Bury's notion of human progress was a theory which involved both a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future; he based this on an interpretation of history which gave due proportion to material and ideological factors. For Nisbet, progress in substantive terms is reducible to a simple duality which has persisted from the Greeks to the present time. This he codifies into two closely allied though distinguishable propositions. First of all, progress is

a slow, gradual and cumulative improvement in knowledge, the kind of knowledge embodied in the arts and the sciences. It is also something which centres on mankind's moral and spiritual condition on earth, on man's happiness, serenity and tranquility. The goal of progress is the increase of knowledge and the eventual achievement of moral values (the first naturally encourages the other). Both these aspects present problems for the historian - one needs to decide how to assess happiness, or morals, how to gauge increases in knowledge, whether to chart humankind's attempts to deal with the problems presented by his material and social conditions. Many of the thinkers cited in the book undoubtedly thought that there was no need to demonstrate empirically the fact of universal progress. Universal progress has at many times been given a status roughly equivalent to a geometrical proposition from Euclid or an injunction from the Old Testament. But to accept such notions is to deny that there is any historical problem associated with following the idea of progress through time. To spiritualise progress is to present it as a timeless axiom or dogma whose alterations appear only as changes of form or presentation or emphasis. It is a short and easy step to take from this view to asserting that Rousseau's 'civil religion', Saint-Simon's 'New Christianity', Comte's 'religion of Humanity', and Marx's 'faith in the dialectic' are equivalent (p.266). One would have thought it a platitude to say that 'progress' had different meanings to Plato, to Lucretius, to Newton and to Boyle, but Nisbet manages to collapse these differences under the

rubric of 'The Persistence of Progress'.

It strikes me as a necessary precondition for writing history to feel a tension between the past and the future. Sceptics and disbelievers in progress such as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Spengler reflected this tension in a peculiar way: they were fitted between a pessimism they were unable to shake and an optimism they could not believe in. Those who can believe in progress can never replace that pessimism with an inviolable respect for the past; to treat the past as sacred is to jettison the opportunity to change it. To treat both the past and the future as sacred, as Nisbet does, is to engage neither in politics nor in history but in theology. At the end of *History of the Idea of Progress* the author comes clean to link progress with providence. A title reflecting Nisbet's theological intentions would, one feels, have done a little to redeem what is after all a dishonest and inaccurate book not to be trusted.

Mike Shortland

Footnotes

- 1 Most obviously, John Baillie, *The Belief in Progress*; F.M. Cornford, *The Unwritten Philosophy*; R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*.
- 2 Frederick J. Teggart, *Theory of History*; Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*; M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*; Ludwig Edelstein, *The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity*.
- 3 Julian Huxley, *A Re-definition of Progress*, UNESCO lecture, 1948.
- 4 Nisbet also writes that 'Freudianism has lost most of the status it enjoyed a century ago'. In 1880, Freud was 24 and was still a student of medicine. Such carelessness is rare but does display the problems of Nisbet's untrustworthy approach.

Retrospect on the Radical Gay Movement

Gay Left Collective (ed.), *Homosexuality: Power and Politics*, Allison and Busby, 1980, £3.95 pb

This collection of seventeen essays is edited by the collective of gay men who produced the now defunct *Gay Left*. Rather than reprinted articles it contains a representative sample of the principal concerns of that journal. The contributions, most of which are published for the first time, come from two sources: members of the collective and a much more disparate group of external contributors, female as well as male. The book emerges a decade after the exuberant genesis of the radical gay movement in Britain and it embodies a critical, often painful scrutiny of the subsequent fate of that movement. It looks long and hard at the theories, strategies and tactics which emerged in the heady days of the late sixties and early seventies and questions their adequacy both then and now.

A major theme in the book is an attack on sexual 'essentialism', a position ascribed to, amongst others, the Freudian radicals, which conceives of sex as an overwhelming, elemental and identity-forming force in individuals, a source of liberation if correctly channelled, of repression if dammed up or wrongly diverted. Using this perspective many gay activists saw in the homosexual a specific embodiment of the creative, life-enhancing forces of sexuality against the sexually repressive, life-denying conditions of capitalist society. This perspective, it is argued (drawing heavily and explicitly on Foucault) fails to grasp that sex, far from being an actual force which generates human identities, is no more

than an 'ideological construct', a historically specific and limiting linkage of a whole range of unrelated human functions. Such a perspective, even in its radical form, remains firmly within the given: for the category 'homosexual' when lived by individuals is still only a partial experience in which all the possibilities of the human organism are not developed and the campaign for a gay lifestyle is a campaign for a still fragmented existence. As Jeffrey Weeks puts it:

What we must affirm ultimately is not so much the rights of the homosexual, but the pleasures and joy in all their multiform ways of the whole body. It is not just the end of the homosexual or the heterosexual we must demand but the end of the ideology of sexuality. We must dethrone King Sex, and replace him with the possibilities of pleasure and sensuousness which exist in the human animal.
(p.20)

Another important theme is the relationship between gayness and the theory and practice of marxism. A number of the contributors relate personal experience of the failure of left-wing groups to understand the struggles of gay women and men: Margaret Jackson and Pat Mahony, for example, recall the taunts of male left-wingers that they had betrayed their socialism by abandoning the class struggle for the bourgeois individualism of lesbian feminism. The common theoretical shortcomings amongst marxists are highlighted: firstly, an economic perspective which simplistically relates homosexual oppression to the capitalist mode of production and sees the abolition of the

former as flowing simply and directly from the abolition of the latter; secondly, and following on from the previous point, a lack of comprehension of the equation 'the personal is the political' and a consequent narrow and inadequate concept of the struggle for socialism; finally, the ubiquitous sexual essentialism which posits homosexuality as a real, discrete and enduring identity and homosexuals as a minority group whose special interests need to be tolerated.

The specific problems facing lesbians is a recurring theme in the work. Simon Watney chronicles the growing resentment of the Women's Group within the Gay Liberation Front over the naïve and sexist lifestyle politics of many of the men, a resentment which led to the group leaving GLF in 1972 and subsequently working in the women's movement. Sue Cartledge discusses the need for a lesbian feminist morality, Susan Hemmings describes the vicious and thoroughly unscrupulous way the press handled, or rather created, the Maureen Colquhoun and other

'lesbian stories' in 1978; and a number of contributors refer to the difficulties experienced by lesbian mothers ('Wanting to have babies and even stay at home with them does not bring us societal approval. It horrifies everyone.' (p.163).

This is a most welcome book, not simply because of the dearth of radical gay literature but also because it is a work of genuine quality. It casts its net far and wide. Derek Cohen and Richard Dyer on gay culture, John Shiers and Amber Hollibaugh on personal experiences of gay life, Allison Hennegan on lesbians in literature, John Marshall on the Campaign for Homosexual Equality ('The Politics of Tea and Sympathy') etc, etc. The analysis is both committed and consistently sophisticated. Above all, the search for concepts that can grasp unfamiliar experience is most impressive - theory as it should be, deriving from and in turn informing practice.

Vincent Geoghegan

Materialism and Linguistics

M. Pecheux, *Language, Semantics and Ideology*, Macmillan, 1982

Materialists have all too infrequently felt the need to turn to the study of linguistics. Nor has any satisfactory account been rendered of the constitutive relation of linguistics to philosophies of language, which in their turn have come to play so prominent a role in theories of society. Certainly the last two decades have seen a marked expansion of theories of semiology, on the one hand, and of communication on the other. What remains at issue, however, is the historical and linguistic adequacy of these theories. Neither the formal play of linguistic oppositions, for instance between paradigm and syntagm or metaphor and metonymy, nor the profusion of notions of 'intersubjectivity' and the consensual nature of meaning, can claim to be free of serious philosophical objections. It is one of the merits of *Language, Semantics and Ideology* to locate these difficulties historically. Admittedly it fails to provide more than a bare outline of the historical and ideological conflicts which produced the 'sciences of language', but then Pecheux has a more grandiose goal. It is that of proposing a materialist science of discourse as the means of explaining and bridging the gap between the formal study of linguistics and the ideologies of linguistic and discursive processes.

Despite severe differences in their conceptual terminology, differences which do not always reflect in the favour of the more recent theory, the need to provide a materialist account of linguistics was effectively formulated by Valentin Volosinov in the 1920s [1]. It was precisely in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* that the seminal work of Ferdinand de Saussure [2] was placed in the context of the antecedent conflicts of 19th century linguistic studies. At the conclusion of a lengthy historical survey, Volosinov relates Saussurian linguistics to an 'abstract objectivist' tendency in the 19th-century studies of language. This tendency is seen as the product of the success and dominance of studies in Indo-European philology, whose purpose was pedagogic and whose object was 'dead, written, alien language' and the 'isolated, finished, monologic utterance divorced from its verbal and actual context' (p.73).

As against what he designated the 'individualistic subjectivist' tendency, which had already returned to Wilhelm von Humboldt in its opposition to the formalistic study of language, Volosinov stressed the determinant fact of the verbal and extra-verbal context. In summary, Volosinov proposed that while linguistics was properly a science in its own domain (phonetics, grammar, lexicon), it was flawed by a thorough-going inability to account for the dialogic and contextual-historical nature of specific utterances. More formally, the new Saussurian linguistics, with its emphasis on the system of 'langue' as against 'parole', and its concern with the synchronic rather than the diachronic aspect of linguistic study, was void of any conception of the situational and historical constitution of semantics. In effect a residual 'objectivism' had ignored the ideological and socio-economic factors that determine the meaning of any given utterance.

Nearly half a century later, equipped with the whole artifice of post-structural French philosophy and the gruelling intricacies of nascent theories of discourse, *Language, Semantics and Ideology* is engaged in elaborating an essentially similar thesis. That is not of course to deny the peculiarly 'modern' character of the conceptual terminology and theoretical interests which Pecheux, perhaps unfortunately, evinces. Nonetheless he too, and equally laudably, commences with a philosophical history of linguistics. With great precision and a certain inelegance, a map is sketched of two antithetical, though both idealistic and as such complementary, tendencies in linguistic philosophy. On the one hand, metaphysical realism is the correlate of linguistic formalism, and on the other logical empiricism is the attendant philosophy of semantic subjectivism. The first tendency is traced back to the Port Royal Grammar of 1664 and reappears in the linguistic theories of Saussure, Harris and Chomsky. The philosophic perpetrators of the theory, aiming to achieve a universe of fixed and unequivocal statements, are, amongst others, Husserl and Frege. The subjectivist tendency in linguistics is treated as of secondary import. Its goal is a rhetoric of conviction, of intersubjectivity and consensus, rather than a knowledge of certainty. Its most egregious philosophical representative is the

later Wittgenstein. As is arguably clear in terms of Wittgenstein's own development from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations*, 'subjectivism' can be seen as the complement or cast off of a too rigid objectivism in linguistics.

The conclusion to be drawn from this history of linguistics is philosophically unsurprising: 'linguistics was constituted as a science (in the form of phonology, then morphology and then syntax) ... by a constant discussion of the question of meaning and of the best way to banish the question of meaning from its domain' (p.55). The critical contribution of Pecheux's work and the substantive core of *Language, Semantics and Ideology* takes the form of tracing the re-appearance of semantic and so also of ideological dilemmas within linguistics and the philosophy of language. While the system of language may be the same for all people, and so also constitutes the properly scientific object of linguistics, it is equally the basis of ideological discursive processes. Only by means of one or other of the idealistic solutions outlined above is it possible to separate the system or unity of linguistics from the historical context of language usage, its insertion in discursive processes. With considerable skill Pecheux examines the re-emergence of semantic problems in linguistics itself, as problems which most frequently adhere to the definition of a system of language and a universal logic of syntax. The formalist version of linguistics is forced either to ignore semantics - reference being made to an inherent and unfortunate indeterminacy or vagueness of language - or to resort to a radically subjective semantics outside linguistic study itself.

For Pecheux it is quite inadmissible to separate system and history in such a fashion. Linguistics will continue to be faced by insuperable semantic difficulties precisely because the problem of meaning and of discrepant domains of thought (discursive processes) re-emerge *within* language. They do so in the form of the phenomenon of 'syntactic embedding' and of the relations of implication and articulation. The former term refers to the fact that the description of 'utterances' will often necessitate reference to previous independent constructions (the preconstructed of discourse theory). While this reference may be productive of meaning, it constitutes an ideological discursive mechanism rather than a purely linguistic operation - thus, for example, anaphoric and indexical designation are evaluative terms. The notions of implication and articulation refer more specifically to the discrepant relationship of logic to linguistics. Linguistic relations of implication are frequently specific and it is only possible to generalise these by means of a 'continuism' that is forced to ignore the contingent or situational properties of the utterance by means of 'simulation', by treating

them ideologically 'as if' they could be unproblematically generalised.

To the terms introduced above Pecheux adds an extensive discussion of a materialist theory of discursive processes. This is not unequivocally enhanced by the immediate introduction of Althusserian and Lacanian axioms, but the function it is to perform is reasonably clear. The materialist theory of discursive processes requires a 'non-subjective theory of subjectivity' and thence of meaning. In brief, this takes the form of a theory of 'interdiscourse': the delineation of the relations between discourses - their institutional and ideological functions - as productive of the transparent meaning of a particular discursive formation (e.g. Ethics, Politics, Law) in its relations of 'equivalence' (e.g. of substitution, symmetry, paraphrase). This external 'interdiscursive' set of relations also produces the 'intradiscursive': the relations of implication and articulation whereby a particular discourse propounds its own meaning. Its internal syntagmatic operations necessarily assume, but do not acknowledge, their dependence upon 'interdiscourse'. It remains to add that in the last analysis 'interdiscourse' is an aspect of the ideological formation or conjuncture which, in its turn, is subordinated to the 'reproduction/transformation' of the relations of production. At this point we are explicitly returned to the Althusser of *Lenin and Philosophy* [3] and to intractable debates over the science/ideology distinction.

In conclusion, I believe that *Language, Semantics and Ideology* makes certain specific and valuable advances towards a materialist theory of semantics. It does so in many ways in spite of itself: in its too brief and frequently contentious discussions of the history of linguistics in its relation to the philosophy of language, rather than in its flighty and repetitive invocations of Marxist-Leninist axioms. It must be granted then that it is an extremely difficult and frequently aggravating work. It demands a great effort of understanding. Although I would hope to the contrary, I imagine that, for diverse reasons, it is an effort that many analytically inclined addressees will not be prepared to expend.

Peter Goodrich

Footnotes

- 1 Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 1973, Seminar Press. In 1960 G. Della Volpe (whose *Critique of Taste* was published in 1978 by NLB) made a further contribution in this field. Pecheux adverts to neither, though he does refer to a later work, Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Tavistock, 1972), from which high allusive text he has clearly drawn aspects of his own conceptual apparatus.
- 2 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Fontana, 1974. See also Timpanaro, *On Materialism* (NLB, 1975) for a useful and often more sensitive survey along similar lines.
- 3 NLB, 1971.

A Radical Theory on Classical Political Obligation

Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation. A Critical Analysis of Liberal Theories*, Wiley, Chichester, 1979

Practical philosophy, in the sense of a normatively oriented treatment of the substantive issues of ethics and politics, is undergoing today at least a modest revival. Through long decades it seemed that its subject is irretrievably lost in the great divide that growingly separates the empirical-nomological sciences

of human behaviour (in politics mostly that of voting behaviour) on the one hand, and the metaphysical inquiries dealing the the 'logic' of various norm- and value-expressions on the other. For a time it looked that the classical tradition can be upheld only by those who - like Leo Strauss or Hannah Arendt - have some deep misgivings about the whole process of historical development subsumable under the name of 'modernity'.

If today this trend is in a sense reversed, this

is due not merely to a growing methodological self-awareness in the light of which the strict positivist separation between facts and norms on the one hand, and between conceptual frameworks and historically constituted, changing social life practices on the other appears to be untenable. It does not demand much sociological ingenuity to see the connection between the revival of 'practical philosophy' and the shattering of the complacent belief in the unquestionable, 'natural' legitimacy of the institutions of liberal democratic state that was the result of the social movements of the late sixties and early seventies.

One of the greatest merits of Carole Pateman's book is that it consciously connects up anew the attempt to resurrect the central methodological thrust of the classical tradition with those social experiences that ultimately make it actual. *Because* it addresses itself to the practical social problems that emerged during this period, the book succeeds in re-joining the normative concerns of political philosophy, the analysis of the grounds and preconditions of the applicability of concepts like 'obligation', 'consent', 'authority' etc. to the realm of political activities, with the material, empirical issues and data, provided by, and dealt with in social and political sciences.

In this sense Pateman's book is undoubtedly an outcome of the sixties: its issues - practical discrimination, differential obligation, feminism, civil disobedience etc. - loom large in the work and represent those focal cases against and upon which the adequacy of various liberal theories of political obligation is to be judged. She succeeded, however, in writing not a political pamphlet, but - in the opinion of this reviewer - a significant and lasting contribution to political philosophy, because she addressed herself not merely to the issues of this period (some of which today may seem to be overshadowed by other ones), but to *the* issue underlying all of them, which is with us to stay: do the institutions of the liberal state provide adequate mechanisms for the possibility of democratic social and political change? Does, that is, the liberal state actually embody liberal ideals, and in general, can the concept of self-assumed obligation, central to these ideals, be given a practical expression within the context of liberal democratic institutions? By re-examining the whole tradition of modern political theory from Hobbes to Rawls from the viewpoint of this question Pateman arrives at an original and highly interesting criticism of liberalism.

Certainly, both in its central problem and in its historico-critical method of approaching it the book itself stands within a definite tradition of radical political theory - in the English literature it is especially C.B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* that comes immediately to mind. But, although the influence of Macpherson is indubitable and duly acknowledged by Pateman, the two books represent essentially different, and in some respects independent lines of argumentation. Against all its opposition to the vulgarised variants of a reductive class-analysis, Macpherson's central concerns are sociological: he is interested first of all in that set of socio-historical circumstances (and their subsequent erosion in history) that made the theories of 'possessive individualism' in a given period adequate and effective legitimating ideologies for the institution of liberal democratic state. Pateman's approach, on the other hand, is essentially philosophical: she is interested first of all not in questions of social effectivity, but validity. She argues not the fact that liberal theories are no more able to provide an effective justification for the practice of liberal democratic political institutions, but that they always made

and inevitably make a claim - that of a radical social voluntarism - which through this practice never could have been and can be realised.

Both Macpherson and Pateman stand in a double, both critical *and* affirmative relation to the legacy of classical liberalism. But while for Macpherson this seems to mean first of all a commitment to the liberal democratic forms of political organisation (and hence his question: what social transformations, primarily beyond the sphere of the politics, are necessary to give these institutions a new lease of life?), Pateman develops a fundamental critique of these forms and institutions themselves - a critique, however, from the standpoint of one of the central ideas of classical theories, that of a conception of social life as a voluntary scheme rationally created and critically kept alive by the freely associating among themselves individuals. In this way she develops and defends a theory of *participatory democracy* as the only way to reconcile the idea of individual freedom and equality with the existence of structured and legitimate political authority.

The fertility of this critique of liberalism is partially demonstrated by its ability to throw new light on its history. As a historian of political ideas Pateman in many respects fortunately unites the analytic approach characteristic to English historiography of philosophy, which takes the discursive-argumentative functions of philosophy in earnest, with the 'Continental' refusal to treat philosophical theories as a mere collection of timeless arguments concerning a number of disparate questions and emphasis on their character as global conceptual answers to problems that grew out from and simultaneously helped to constitute, specific forms of social life. By centring our attention on the *historical function of definite types of argumentation* she is able to show, on the one hand, the deep ambiguity of the 'classical' tradition, embodied not only in the now well-known confusion between, and condescence of, political voluntarism and abstract individualism, but also in the 'move' from radical to hypothetical voluntarism, from 'contract' to 'consent' which is central - as she brilliantly demonstrates - to the theories of both Hobbes and Locke. On the other hand, she convincingly argues that through the three-hundred-year-long history of liberal political thought, in which it freed itself from the most untenable presupposition of an abstract individualism, replacing theories of contract either by methodologically sophisticated variants of consent-theory or by the 'conceptual argument', it also eliminated the central, radical element of the 'classical' theories, the real commitment to the idea that free and equal individuals can be legitimately bound only by obligations that they themselves have rationally and voluntarily created and assumed. The price paid for a more 'realistic' understanding of the relationship between the individual and society was the liquidation of the very problem of political obligation, the silent reification of the liberal state as a natural feature and fixture of the modern world that neither can, nor ought to be transcended.

Through this methodology Pateman succeeds in connecting her historical-interpretative and 'systematic' argumentation. The basic conceptual distinctions which are crucial to the development of the idea of a participatory democracy - between ought and obligation, contract and consent, power and authority etc. - emerge, and become clarified and substantiated through an analytic discussion of classical or more recent texts; they throw light on these texts and simultaneously provide a basis for their criticism. An intellectual past is made to speak to us in this way as tradition, not because it is of timeless validity, but because it historically contributed to the constitution of these forms of social-political

life with which we are vexed - and not only theoretically - today.

In the present work Carole Pateman is not directly concerned with questions about the practical conditions of realisability of participatory democracy (she has dealt with this problem partially in her earlier book, *Participation and Democratic Theory*). However, she does not only present an argument for the desirability of participatory democracy (as the only political scheme within which the concept of self-assumed obligation, this integral element of the modern idea of free, rational and equal individuality, can be practically realised). At the general, philosophical level she points out that the idea of a social-political voluntarism (which is embodied and realised in the projected practice of participatory democracy) can in principle be divorced from the untenable conception of abstract individualism with which it is often confused. The self-assumed character of social-political obligations does not imply the denial that they 'depend upon, and arise from, the complex web of intersubjective meanings and constitutive rules of social life' (p.28). In wake of Pitkin Pateman underlines the fact that individuals are both superior to and subject to their obligations - they are enmeshed in a given background of social practices with their rules and meanings, but are not completely submerged in them, since they can and do use them not only to act voluntarily according to these rules, but also to judge self-reflectively upon their appropriateness and validity and even, if they deem it necessary, to break or transform them according to the critical judgement of their own. At this point she emphasises the necessity to differentiate between the various kinds of rules, and first of all between the concept of 'ought' and 'obligation'. There are certain basic practices of mutual aid and forbearance which individuals ought to perform, because 'it would be difficult to see, empirically, how social life could exist' without them (p.28). But obligation cannot be reduced to these 'oughts', not only since the realm of these two are not co-extensive, but also because any obligation conceptually involves something more than the morally binding or worthy character of the action concerned: a 'public' declaration of commitment to the given course of the action, which creates a new relationship, and, if individuals are thought to be free, they can be committed solely by their own words and deeds. The practice of self-assumed obligation is not that of a complete arbitrariness based on mere individual caprice and whim: it is reconcilable with a substantive political morality, and can provide a secure foundation for political life.

It is, however, at this point that some questions should be formulated about the 'positive' conception of the work, even from a standpoint which, like that of the present writer, is very close both to the fundamental philosophical position and to the political commitment of its author. Just because the book does not present a more concretely articulated discussion of participatory democracy, it is easier to formulate these questions in relation to the relevant treatment of that ideohistorical tradition to which Carole Pateman refers at this point - to the interpretation of Rousseau.

Pateman regards Rousseau as the representative of the other, non-liberal, but participatory theory of democracy. I have no doubts that this interpretation captures one, and perhaps the most essential aspect of Rousseau's political philosophy. Nevertheless, the treatment of this latter in the book is rather markedly one-sided, definitely in contrast with the well-balanced discussion of those philosophical traditions to which the author has a critical attitude.

To begin with, even the starting point of this interpretation: the ascription of a view to Rousseau,

according to which 'citizens are bound by the political obligations and political authority they have created for themselves...' (p.154) would demand further scrutiny. According to *Du Contrat social* people are not - in the literal sense - the creators of those laws which first make the association possible: this is the task and the role of the god-like, charismatic figure of the *législateur*. Rousseau quite explicitly states that the people are authors of these laws only in the sense of *consent* ('Rien de ce que nous vous proposons ... ne peut passer en loi sans votre consentement' - *Du Contrat Social*, II/VII). And since one finds the functional equivalent of this role of the 'law-giver' in all the social utopias of Rousseau (see e.g. the utopia of Clarens in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*), it can hardly be regarded as merely accidental and simply passed over.

In general, Carole Pateman finds two serious deficiencies in Rousseau - his treatment of women and his rejection of the right of dissent or resistance (see pp.157-161), and regards these basically as inconsistencies and contradictions in the fundamental tenets of his political theory. It is not difficult, however, to multiply such (from the viewpoint of any democratic theory) 'objectionable' features of his political utopia. It will suffice here merely to refer to the principal denial in his theory of any political pluralism (suppression of all particular associations within the state) - one of the necessary conditions of the emergence of the 'general will' out of the process of participatory, collective decision-making and voting. It is impossible to discuss major questions of Rousseau-interpretation in a review; but it seems to me that the author misses the link in Rousseau which binds together the project of a participatory democracy with proposals aiming at the complete *economic and political atomisation* of every and each individual (more exactly: of households, the male heads of which are the sole citizens), and in view of which many of the disquieting features of his political utopia appear not as regrettable lapses and inconsistencies, but as organic components of his theory. Since this view (certainly not shared by the author, who treats the state as free association of *associations*), which in general amounts to the *liquidation of civil society* as a precondition of genuine democracy, still can hardly be regarded as completely obsolete and without influence, it is rather unfortunate that Pateman misses the opportunity to discuss it in any way.

But the discussion of Rousseau raises not merely some questions regarding the interpretation of texts. It specifies a point made clearly earlier (e.g. in the criticism of Rawls): it is insufficient to characterize a truly democratic political association in merely procedural terms, since it has substantive preconditions, both economic and political-moral. It is these latter that the author finds exemplified in the Rousseauian concept of general will, providing the theoretical basis for a political morality of the common good. The most essential element of this internal-inherent standard of right that safeguards against the possible arbitrariness of the decisions of citizens, is the maxim according to which a collective decision is a binding law only 'if it benefits or burdens all citizens equally' (p.153). Leaving aside for now the question of whether such an interpretation correctly captures the meaning of the expression 'oblige ou favorise également' to which reference is made (one should not forget that, according to *Du Contrat social*, a law can validly establish privileges, but it cannot concretely, i.e. by name, determine whom they should pertain to), there are several substantive issues raised by the interpretation.

First, it is not quite clear what justificatory basis can be provided for such a substantive prin-

ciple of political morality as an objective standard of evaluation of the 'formally correct' decisions of the citizenry (and therefore also that of the right of disobedience). The only justification that the book seems to offer is the distinction made earlier between 'ought' and 'obedience'. But, rather self-evidently, at the very least the maxim proposed by Pateman cannot be regarded as an 'ought' in her sense, i.e. as a principle of actions that constitute a necessary precondition for the possibility of the empirical existence of a moral-social order as such. And in fact while Pateman sometimes uses the expression 'ought' in this context (e.g. pp.160-161), she does not follow, if I understand her correctly, this line of argumentation. She argues that the principles of political morality also 'must be created and agreed to by citizens themselves'. This, however, would give them exactly the same status as the one pertaining to concrete 'obligations' and 'laws' in the sense of the 'formally correct' decisions taken by the majority of citizens. It is then unclear how they could serve as criteria limiting the validity of these latter. Some of the problems connected with Pateman's theory of disobedience (which makes the rightness of an act depend primarily on the character of the *intent*) demonstrate that the question raised does not merely have an abstract, philosophical relevance.

Secondly, I doubt whether the main maxim of a substantive political morality as specified in the book is in general realisable (and even whether it

is desirable - but I will not argue this stronger point here). The demand that any valid law should benefit or burden all citizens equally seems to falter already upon the elementary fact that the short- and long-term effects of laws are, as a rule, different, while the citizenry consists of people of different ages and therefore of different life-expectations. Even the seemingly most neutral regulations, like a mere change in the character of metric system, in fact have quite different effects (both in their positive and negative consequences) upon young children and senior citizens.

That is the great dilemma whose constant re-occurrence characterizes the whole post-Hegelian history of practical philosophy, that of the choice between a universal, but formal proceduralism which is unable to account for the (substantive) conditions of its own applicability, and a substantivism which - at least in modern conditions - cannot make good its claim to universality. It remains unsolved in Carole Pateman's book as well. But the book proves, through its excellent critical overview of the whole tradition, from which this dilemma (or perhaps false alternative) grew, that its solution remains actual and vital for contemporary political thinking. By bringing to light many new aspects of this process and the practical and theoretical problem-situation created by it, the book can perhaps contribute also to a solution that is yet to come.

G. Markus

Freedom Without Effect

Hugo Meynell, *Freud, Marx and Morals*, Macmillan, 1981, £18 hc

People have 'effective freedom' to the extent that they are attentive, intelligent and reasonable in judging what is to be done, and capable of acting accordingly. This view, or rather definition, has been put forward and elaborated by the theologian Bernard Lonergan in his book *Insight - A Study of Human Happiness*. Hugo Meynell's previous study was an introduction to the work of this religioner; his new book takes a broader and, presumably more marketable, sweep at the problem of 'effective freedom'. It might be fair to suggest that, whereas the first dwelt on the factors affecting human judgement, this book treats the second part of the equation - the factors affecting our potential to action. The condition of 'effective freedom' is taken to be possible (it is stated, quite rightly, that it would be pointless to deny this) and then treated as desirable. This seems to me also pointless to deny since it amounts not to an argument, but to an opinion or inclination. A good deal of the objections I would levy to this book is that so much of it simply rehearses old views or dresses up inoffensive and dull opinions as arguments deriving from those views.

Meynell thinks that such things as states, religions, moral codes and customs are good in so far as they promote 'effective freedom' and its concomitant satisfactions. The book itself dwells mostly on the nature and the limits of those satisfactions; this it does by exposing the curtailments set by class, heredity and upbringing as these (and only these) act upon human nature. What is a good human action depends largely on what is a *good* human, and that in turn, on what *is* human. To furnish an answer to this question Meynell examines the work of Laing on schizo-

phrenia, Lorenz on humans' animal nature, Marx on the social factors which determine the human condition, and of Freud and Jung on the individual developments which do so. This is a very narrow and arguable selection (more so since Meynell generally uses only one or two writings by each thinker) which serves as little more than a thesaurus of quotes on human nature from which Meynell draws at will and without compunction. There exists a real problem in trying to reconcile, for example, Lorenz's view that people have an inherited predisposition to aggressiveness which education must control and which cuts down our reason and intelligence with Marx's view that there are no inherited predispositions to behaviour, and that humans are malleable to an almost unlimited extent by environment (these interpretations are Meynell's). But this problem is not tackled. Instead piling quotation on quotation, opinion on opinion, weakens each (to give a 'weak' interpretation of each thinker) and dilutes the whole. Marx, Lorenz, Freud and Laing are neither commensurable nor incommensurable; they are all parts of a rarified solution to a poorly-constituted problem.

What might have been a total disaster is slightly redeemed by Meynell's interesting treatment of traditional objections to naturalistic accounts of morality. He suggests a notion of 'loose entailment' - a value judgement loosely entails certain kinds of statement of fact, when to affirm the first and deny all the others is 'either to contradict oneself or to talk so eccentrically as to be unintelligible' (p.162). This notion and the use to which it is put deftly deflects Moore's and Hare's objections to deducing statements of value from statements of fact by seeing the naturalistic fallacy, when it really is a fallacy, as the assumption that this deduction involves a relationship of *strict* entailment. *Freud, Marx and*

Morals would have been a great deal more coherent and useful if it had centered this notion of loose entailment in the book as a means to link good human actions with human happiness, rather than drawing us through

an eternity of flexuous opinions to reach it.

Mike Shortland

Creativity Bugs Sociology

D. Layder, *Structure, Interaction and Social Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £9.50 hc

Creativity bugs sociology. It bugs it no end. Just when a Durkheim has painstakingly devised a 'scientific' grid of social facts to explain human action, or a Marx has forged a dialectical method to predict it, along comes creativity to foul up the proprietary elegance of the works. Much of the most puckish and stimulating recent sociology (to wit: symbolic interactionism and ethno-methodology) has celebrated this rogue factor. Red-faced positivists and wheezing old functionalists who acted as if they had explained everything and knew it all are tied to poles, twigs and branches are gathered from all around, the rumour of matches is sibilated between jubilant ethno's and dancing interactionists. There is much playful taunting, and exotic ribaldry, but the flame never goes up. For in recognizing that the problem of order is common to both camps, the ethno's and interactionists realize that they cannot discount orthodox versions of 'structure' without substituting an etiolated version of their own making. For without some notion of structure anything can happen and the routine or common-sense realities that interest them so much would be meaningless. Hence 'indexicality' - the necessity of grounding accounts of interaction in a locatable context. This may not be 'structure' in the positivist or functionalist sense of the term, but it is an admission of limits, a tolerance of the proposition that intentional action is constrained in the range and scope of its performance. And to go this far incites a backlash from the positivists and functionalists. Where do the rules which enable communication, interpretation and thus indexicality come from? For to suggest that no such rules exist is to deny that a sociological analysis of order is possible. And if this is what the ethno-methodologists and interactionists are saying, they confine their role to a critical assay of 'what is really wrong' with every conceivable account of 'what is really going on'.

Derek Layder spends the first half of his book enumerating how the confrontation has shaped-up. One by one, theories of social psychology, symbolic interactionism, ethno-methodology, functionalism, structuralism and scientific rationalism are tested, sometimes shredded, and occasionally dismissed. But only occasionally. Layder seems to have something good to say about all of the theories that he examines. He likes the commitment to structure in functionalist accounts, seeing in them an awareness of the extra-individual constraints that regularize individual actions. At the same time, he compliments phenomenological accounts for scrupulously insisting that human beings are pre-eminently sense-making and sense-testing. Action is not mechanically determined by external structures; neither is it entirely free and volitional. For Layder, it must be conceptualized in a system of constraints which, while not making actions inevitable, are nevertheless indispensable in accounting for their routine, predictable nature. Creativity is therefore seen as possible only within a closely

defined system of structural limits. Thus, for example, Layder is free to write his book only in congruence with the impositions associated with language, class, knowledge and other structures of the same order of complexity. These 'contextual' structures are prior and constraining to the individual act of writing the book. The latter phenomenon has a structural dimension of its own which cannot simply be 'read off' by referring to elements in the 'contextual structure'. Thus, it is related to the situation specific or indexical features particular to the act of writing. These features are collectivized in the term 'interaction structure'. The remainder of the book is addressed to exploiting and developing this distinction.

In pursuit of this task, data is enlisted from Layder's doctoral thesis on the acting profession. The concepts of 'contextual structure' and 'interaction structure' are illustrated by examinations of the market capacity of actors and the authority relations that obtain between a director and his company. Layder shows how individuals negotiate reality within a structure of objectively ascertainable restraints that is irreducible to the design or practices of the individuals themselves. All actors want to act; but they cannot, except in a rhetorical sense, create their roles or play them alone.

The individual/society duality is a stock-in-trade of sociological discourse, and these arguments have all been well rehearsed elsewhere. The distinction between contextual and interaction structures is proclaimed as a theoretical advance and yet, albeit under a different name, it is virtually a cliché of modern organization study (see for example the writings of Michel Crozier, Alvin Gouldner and Norbert Elias). Genuine theoretical advance is still harder to decry in the conclusion. Interactionist accounts of social existence are wrong because they assign too much autonomy to action; structuralist accounts are wrong because they present action as mechanically determined and therefore strip the human agent of creativity; projects that have hitherto been made to amalgamate the two into some form of equable synthesis (Bourdieu and Giddens) are wrong because '... the net effect of such a strategy is to emasculate the concept of structure, and thus to adopt an ontology of interaction and an epistemology geared exclusively to its explication' (p.141). Layder's solution is to recognize that interaction and structure refer to analytically distinct yet functionally interdependent levels of social reality. And to celebrate the 'discovery' by developing a single epistemology capable of accommodating the mutuality that exists between the two levels. Thus the distinction between interaction and contextual structures - a distinction which the author concedes may be insupportable in practice, but which is an indispensable heuristic device. There then follows the following sentence: 'I have argued that these two sets of conditions are interdependent viz-à-viz the generation of interaction but *that contextual conditions "overdetermine" situationally generated conditions*' (p.141 - italics mine). The sentence

fatally alters the balance of the foregoing thesis. For it can only mean that pre-constituted contextual structures are the primary shaping forces in interaction, and any 'mutuality' refers to a nexus of gross unequal exchange.

The heart of the text does suggest a set of very timely programmatics for sociological enquiry. These are: (i) a consideration of how access to structure can be accomplished without kowtowing to propositions of an essentialist nature, or succumbing to the self-defeating relativism of 'members' accounts; (ii) exploring how theory might reproduce the structuring and structured characteristics of interaction without transforming dynamic relations into a static variant of orthodox functionalism. But Layder does not adequately transcend the description of the problem or, more prosaically, the naming of parts. Nor is anything else possible. It is not in the announcement of the project to relate structure and interaction by a single epistemology that the book's failure lies, since this can generate interesting and suggestive insights, but rather it is in the implication that the categoric grid (the contextual/interaction duality) can finally resolve it. The unintended consequence of the text is to demonstrate that concepts cannot exist prior to and independently of their expression. For to say that they can is merely to invite the construction of an antonym that

says that they can't, and so on, *ad nauseum*. Each of Layder's contextual 'overdetermining' structures - class, economy, law and language - can be attacked in this way. Each line of attack ruins Layder's proposition that discrete contextual structures exist that are prior, pre-existent or in some other way in advance of the occasion of their use. For to take his view leads to the absurdity that social structures would continue to exist after all individuals had been wiped out. It may indeed be possible to have a recursive interpretation of structures which have disappeared, such as Nazism or the British Empire; but our knowledge is necessarily supplemented by that which exists now but which had no existence then. It would not be possible to have an understanding of structure if there were no individuals, since interaction is the only mirror that we have, to show us what is going on. Before interaction there is nothing, and what is there when it occurs is no longer there after it has gone. Interaction is therefore the sole context for any study of restraint or creativity. And the unpredictable shifts in integration and direction of development which it manifests over time constitute an outstanding challenge for theory-making. It bugs sociology. It bugs it no end.

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