

## R.P. Day School on Dialectic

On 19 June Goldsmiths College played host to another Radical Philosophy Day School. The speakers were Istvan Meszaros (The Cunning of History in Reverse Gear); Joe McCarney (Social Science and Dialectic); and Sean Sayers (Materialism, Realism, and the Theory of Reflection). The presentations were exceptionally clear and provided a good basis for discussion. About 50 people attended and participated in lively debates (initiated in some cases by interventions from WRP members present). Altogether - a great success. For information about future events write to us or Madan Sarup at Goldsmiths.

## Hegel Conference

The Fourth Annual Conference of the Hegel Society of Great Britain was held at Pembroke College, Oxford on 15-16 September 1982. Five papers were presented on topics connected with the Conference theme of the *Phenomenology*. Among those of particular interest to RP readers was J. Hartnack's '*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft: an Interpretation*'. It argued that, since Lord and Bondsman represent not distinct social actors but merely aspects of a universal self-consciousness, the section has no social still less political significance. This view had a sceptical reception at the Conference. Nevertheless, it helps in a curious way with a difficulty raised by Chris Arthur's paper, on 'Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach and Negativity'. This highlighted Marx's criticism that Hegel knows only 'abstract, mental labour', a charge hard to square with the fact the Bondsman's labour in the service of the Lord seems as concrete and material as one could wish. Marx's neglect of the point may be intelligible on the assumption that he shared something of Hartnack's interpretation, a slightly ironic possibility since that interpretation was put forward in conscious opposition to all 'Marxist' treatments of the topic. Arthur's paper was a version of one given at the RP day school in June 1982, and makes a contribution to the debate which deserves speedy publication somewhere. A paper that should be mentioned on grounds of general excellence was R. Bernasconi's 'The Passage to Absolute Spirit in the *Phenomenology*'. Among other points of interest it advanced the surprising thesis that themes in the work of Emmanuel Levinas are foreshadowed in the remarks on language in Hegel's text. It was decided that the theme of next year's Conference will be 'Dialectics', and Professor Raymond Plant, Chairman of the Society, expressed the view that this should interest readers of *Radical Philosophy*. It is to be hoped that he is right, as dialectical interaction between RP and the Hegel Society must surely advance the kind of *Aufhebung* needed by both.

Joe McCarney

## Conference: The State of Literary Theory Today

(IAPL Summer Weekend Workshop, Middlesex Polytechnic, 16-18 July 1982)

The International Association for Philosophy and Literature, an American-based organisation which has been conducting annual conferences at universities in the USA for the past six years, held its first European meeting in London last July. A varied programme of workshop sessions and lectures on the theme of 'The State of Literary Theory Today' drew an international audience of around sixty.

A major preoccupation of the conference proved to be category distinction: as one of the workshop sessions posed the problem, 'Is Literary Theory the Domain of Literature and Philosophy?' Whether this question was (or can be) satisfactorily resolved is perhaps a moot point. At times over the course of the weekend the conference gave the impression of being an uneasy mixture of literary critics and philosophers with little common ground between them. Fairly traditional literary-critical papers, such as those by Michael O'Dea (Our Lady of Mercy College, Dublin) and Keith Fleming (Middlesex Polytechnic) on the subject of Wordsworth's poetry (from the workshop 'Conflicting Approaches to *The Prelude*') lay at one end of the spectrum; an overtly philosophical piece of work like Noreen O'Connor's (University College, Cork) 'Face to Face with Deconstruction' ('Uses and Abuses of Deconstruction' workshop) lay at the other. The connections were not always apparent, but the amount of *searching* for common ground which went on in the discussion periods was an encouraging sign: possibly the most valuable legacy of the weekend in fact. The other workshops covered Sartre's *Words* and Metacriticism.

The two more formal lectures by Catherine Belsey (University College, Cardiff) and Terry Eagleton (Wadham, Oxford) came closest to achieving the kind of synthesis the discipline of literary theory probably requires. Perhaps the wide range of approaches adapted to the conference's theme merely serves to illustrate the currently uncertain status of the subject in English academic life: a state of affairs in marked contrast to that of France, where Marxists, structuralists and post-structuralists have long since staked out literary theory as a field of predominantly philosophical enquiry. Macherey and Derrida are two of the more outstanding examples of practising philosophers who find literary theory a particularly congenial site of operations, and who cannot really be considered to have precise English equivalents. The IAPL conference might be seen as an attempt to synthesise the respective fields of enquiry on the continental model: or at least to address the problem of their apparent division in the Anglo-Saxon world (America, currently the scene of much experimenting with deconstructionist theory by such critics as Geoffrey Hartman, might be exempted from this latter judgement).

Several other issues tended to predominate throughout the conference besides the category distinction one, with feminism and deconstruction forming what amounted to a hidden agenda in many of the sessions. Derrida's influence on the current literary theory scene could be noted by the frequency with which his name was invoked in the discussions. The contributors to the Deconstruction workshop certainly acknowledged his influence, and all three papers here were more or less pro-Derrida in tone.

Eagleton too displayed some post-structuralist influences, albeit in a more tortuous way. He might be described these days as a reluctant deconstructionist. His contributions to the workshop discussions

very often suggested a pro-Derrida line, but one could hardly call it a case of unqualified support. It was a fascinating experience to observe him wrestling with deconstructionism in his conference-ending lecture, as it is too in his recent book on Samuel Richardson, *The Rape of Clarissa* (Oxford, 1982). Eagleton clearly feels there are major problems involved in reconciling Marxist and deconstructionist principles, and he can be scathing on the subject of Derrida's apparent reluctance to effect the accommodation between the two he promised several years ago. Yet as in the case of the critique on Richardson, Eagleton is perfectly capable of turning deconstructionist strategies to account - perhaps against his better Marxist judgement? - and he can do so in an ingenious and creative way.

This particular debate appears set to run for a while yet, and it could well be argued that the state of literary theory *tomorrow* will depend in large part on what kind of accommodation (if any) is eventually reached between Marxism and deconstructionism. Eagleton has certainly made some moves in that direction, but a less inhibited approach than his might pay more dividends. Deconstructionism has a great deal of potential as a means of confronting authoritarian elements in Western culture, and without wishing to sound too millenarian about the subject it would probably repay the not inconsiderable effort required to synthesise it with Marxist theory.

Probably the two most successful papers of the weekend came from Eagleton and Belsey, who delivered characteristically well-organised and thought-provoking pieces of work (although even here, in typically English fashion one might say, the bias was towards literature rather than philosophy). In many ways, however, the deconstruction workshop provoked the liveliest debate, since most of the underlying issues of the conference seemed to surface here, with Derrida's influence looming particularly large. If any current theory seems likely to bridge the gap between literature and philosophy it is deconstruction.

One of the participants in this workshop, Julia McCannell (University of California, Irvine) treated Bakhtin's work in some detail, and the latter also figured (in a more oblique manner, involving his brother's friendship with Wittgenstein!) in Eagleton's lecture. Bakhtin's star has risen of late, and his acceptance as a major Marxist aesthetic theorist was another notable feature of the conference, his name being bandied around almost as frequently in discussion as Derrida's. It seemed satisfyingly logical for the weekend to conclude with Eagleton's assessment of the use-value of these two figures to the modern literary theorist, since their influence had extended over so much of the proceedings.

In informal discussions before the final break-up the possibility of another conference next summer was considered, with feminism emerging as the likeliest candidate for an overall theme (this remains to be finalised however). A scheme to publish the conference papers in an inexpensively printed volume was put forward by the organisers. For details of availability contact Marianne Korn, Faculty of Humanities, Middlesex Polytechnic, All Saints, White Hart Lane, London N17 8HR.

Stuart Sim

# CORRESPONDENCE

## Heidegger Against Nazism

Dear Radical Philosophy,

Mark Tebbit's recent article on *Lukacs, Heidegger and Fascism* (RP, Summer 1982) makes certain erroneous statements about Heidegger which call for correction.

Tebbit's misleading equation of Heidegger's philosophy and fascism is summed up in his initial assertion that Heidegger 'remained an unrepentant adherent to the extreme right' and that his thought remained 'intrinsically ... bound up with European fascism' (p.14). Such a charge does serious damage to both Heidegger's personal and philosophical integrity. Since Tebbit offers no concrete evidence to support his accusation, but simply rehearses an unfounded rumour as established fact, I wish to set the record straight with regard to Heidegger's alleged fascism.

In a series of rigorously researched and documented articles published in *Critique* (Paris, 1966-67), the French philosopher François Fedier definitively exonerated Heidegger from the charge of unrepentant adherence to fascism levelled against him in three German publications: Guido Schneeberger's *Nachlese Zu Heidegger* (Berne, 1962), Theodor Adorno's *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (Frankfurt-on-Main, 1964) and Paul Hühnerfeld's *In Sachen Heidegger* (Munich, 1961). Fedier's studies had a considerable impact on the Continent and particularly in France and Germany where several of the journalists and authors responsible for propagating false accusations against Heidegger went so far as to publicly retract or apologize for their statements. And the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* permitted Heidegger to reply personally to his critics.

Since Fedier's studies have not been translated into English - a regrettable fact which has undoubtedly facilitated the continuation of inaccurate charges against Heidegger by such authors as George Steiner, A.J. Ayer and Tebbitt - I would like to take this opportunity to bring the English readers' attention to the true facts of the case.

In 1933, Heidegger replaced Professor Von Möllendorf, a radical Social Democrat, as Rector of Freiburg University. The Nazi authorities had called for Von Möllendorf's resignation because of his refusal to allow anti-semitic propaganda on the campus. Von Möllendorf and other liberal members of the university approached Heidegger, the *eminence grise* of Freiburg academia at that time and unaffiliated to any political party, begging him to take over the vacant post in order to keep the university free from the Nazis' campaign of anti-semitism. Heidegger was extremely reluctant to accept their offer, not only because it involved the compromise of mandatory membership of the party, but also because he remained sceptical of his chances of being able to resist the growing tide of Nazi fanaticism. However, the unanimous support of the predominantly anti-Nazi faculty finally persuaded him to accept the Rectorship.

Just two days after Heidegger's nomination, he was approached by the leaders of the Nazi Student Movement who demanded the resumption of the anti-Jewish campaign forbidden by Von Möllendorf. Heidegger flatly refused, despite unequivocal threats from the Nazi leaders. Several days after his refusal, Heidegger was summoned to the local Higher Education