

REVIEWS

Marxism and the Problem of Needs

Kate Soper, *On Human Needs*, Harvester, 1981, £18.95 h.c.

It is a commonplace of socialist politics that socialism must be a society 'based on need, not on profit'. And in that famous aphorism, Marx's communism was to be one which inscribed on its banner, 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.' Kate Soper has written a difficult but very interesting book which attempts to unweave the enormous tangles in these conceptions of need, a book which respects Marx's *intentions* in the jobs he wanted the concept to do, but works to undo some of the knots in his arguments.

The book's point in time is pretty obvious. She writes with her eyes cast back over the clashes between humanist and structuralist Marxists; between those who saw Marx as building a critique of capitalism from a perceived essential human nature which was being distorted and alienated, and those who saw only history, the movement of structures and the constitution and reconstitution of human subjects in each period.

Between Scylla and Charybdis moves Soper's book, trying to show that Marx's writings contain the inconsistent and underdeveloped hints of a theory of need which is neither essentialist nor relativist. It is not a new idea to search for an escape from these two hard poles. Her book is an especially rewarding one for the subtlety of its attempt. But it is also difficult.

It is difficult, I feel, for several reasons. First, it rather avoids using empirical examples to explicate her account - something which not only contributes to a frequent feel of abstraction but also, I shall suggest, masks certain problems.

Second, there is a strange tendency for the book to present what seems a worryingly simplistic argument at one point - so that I rushed to make notes on it - only to undermine the simplistic position a couple of chapters later. The result is that it is difficult to track the development of her themes. Finally, the arguments are often mercilessly compressed, and make sizeable assumptions about our ability to follow a case that gets to its end via angular paths.

If I understand it aright, Soper's main argument runs as follows. There can be no politics without a theory of need, and all theories of need involve commitments to values and ends. This is not uncommonly

accepted among non-socialist theorists (for example, A.R. Louch), but Soper wants to avoid the tendency to subjectivism that many have seen flowing from this (because of a claimed impossibility of rationally deciding on the values or ends), and argues that Marxism has something essential to contribute to the ways we avoid this subjectivism. This is not because Marxism *solves* the problem of need but because 'it poses that question in the form of a problem' (p.20). What does this mean?

Posing 'need' as a problem consists in maintaining a necessary but not unresolvable tension between seeing needs as historically determined, and at the same time posing the goal of socialism as the creation and satisfaction of *true* needs. There is clearly a potential contradiction between these two views, and a substantial chunk of her book is given to discussing them. She maintains - quite convincingly, to me - that not only can we not understand Marx if we do not maintain these two halves of the argument, for all their tension, but also that, on general philosophical grounds, *any* theory of need must contain the two. The only theories of need that do not do this are those that make, in effect, a politics out of the denial of politics in needs - and that is for Soper the very ground of their illegitimacy (she sees liberal theories of need as particularly condemned by this, but also various biological and sociological approaches).

Her aim, then, is to develop an account, via interpreting difficult texts in Marx on need, (a) that will allow us to hold to the historical determination of need without collapsing into historical relativism, and (b) that will let us refer to capitalism failing our human needs without having to import a notion of essential human nature, which would be speculative, beyond history and prior to society.

In the first case, this is achieved roughly as follows. She argues that, despite quotations that seem to say it, Marx can't have meant that our needs are a direct function of the form of production. It is just as well that he doesn't, because she shows the view to be conceptually incoherent and factually untenable. Therefore we must put a different meaning on 'production determining consumption', that for each kind of productive system there is a different way in which the production determines consumption. And in the case of capitalism, this is via the operation of the market, which means that there is

only a *contingent* satisfaction of needs.

It is not the *goal* of capitalist production to satisfy needs; and in the process of its contingently achieving satisfactions, continual waste and over-production must result (the description of these processes, pp.51-55, is beautifully clear, and was for me a highpoint of the book).

This therefore not only leaves room for, but actually requires, a further concept of 'felt need'. And felt need is so often at odds with needs actually satisfied. But this is not, she insists, a category from philosophical anthropology; and from here she is able to turn to consider the import of Marx's anti-essentialist arguments. She makes a good case that the meaning of his anti-essentialism is not to debar all references to human needs either as limiting conditions on society or as goals for social change, but to make the significant point that human needs *naturally* accumulate and expand, not being given completely by some biological or species essence that we have.

It has a strong Lockean flavour, involving as she presents it a relation of the worker to her/his labour as a form of possession. The difference from Locke is, of course, that for Soper's Marx this relation is historically variable. And that fact again gives her her basis for a transcendent criterion. For she argues that in precapitalist societies 'The communal appropriation is always mediated by and presupposes the individual's relationship of ownership to the objective conditions of labour (a relationship which the community, in turn, itself mediates).' (p.126) But in capitalist society, the individual's relation to her/his labour is always mediated by exchange-value. Thus 'all personal ties are those of "indifference", "abstraction", "generality"' (p.128).

To me, the difficulty in this is its being seen as a theory of *personality*. If anything, it seems to me much closer to being a theory of natural rights.

The second side is thus introduced. Here she maintains that 'need' is always a critical concept in Marx, but that in addition it always has a *transcendent* element. In other words, it was never enough for Marx to criticise capitalism for not properly satisfying the needs itself produced, but also to show that it debased humans in its course, and other higher needs were stunted by it. 'Debasement' and 'higher/lower' require criteria beyond capitalism itself. Where are they to come from, if not from human essence? From Marx's distinction between 'historic-natural', and 'non-natural historic' needs. The first she sees as the developed, shaped forms of the bare human needs that are common to our species (in the way that roast pork eaten with knife and fork is a transformed version of raw meat eaten with hands and teeth).

In one of her most difficult sections she seeks to draw a clear distinction between such naturally developed needs, and those which are artificial, in the sense of being only a function of a specific social order or mode of production. To do this, she discusses 'money'. With a careful and close argument, she seeks to establish that 'greed for money' displays peculiar characteristics that reveal its artificiality. Following Marx's argument that money is the universal abstract equivalent for exchange-values which only reveals its nature as money, as value, she points up the paradox that to want money for its own sake is to want to abstract it from what makes it money: circulation. This paradoxical Uncle Scrooge need is thus a function, and a contradictory one at that, of capitalism's system of exchange.

Up to this point I have been avoiding critical comments whilst attempting exposition. But this

argument is a very odd one, and can't pass without comment. Even supposing that the distinction holds, and that we can separate natural from artificial historic needs, her argument about money still leaves us in a dilemma. Either she has to go on to argue that all false needs somehow partake of this paradoxical quality she has found in lust for money; or she has to show other criteria for the distinction. In fact her argument goes no further on the point, and it is not at all clear what has been established. When Marx, for example, referred to religion as a false need, could that be dealt with by application of the money example?

This is a particularly vulnerable thread in Soper's argument, and it is as if she knows it. For the next chapter offers quite different grounds for a transcendent criterion of need. This is a theory of the construction of personality, espoused and elaborated in Chapter 7.

This is not just a question of terminology. For the concepts of exchange-value and of the objective conditions of labour are hardly ones that can be directly empirically expressed or tested without mediation. The fact that my relation to a shopkeeper, considered as a relation of exchange, is one of 'indifference' and 'abstraction', does not mean that s/he cannot smile at me, know me, even like me. In calling it a theory of personality, Soper is definitely veering close to eliding the necessary mediations. This shows, for example, when she tries to derive predictions directly from her theory of personality under capitalism, in terms of what she calls 'a tension between an urge towards "privatisation" and an urge towards "sociality"' (p.132). She then cites the nuclear family as evidence of the first tendency, and the proliferation of groups like clubs, societies, and associations as evidence of the latter.

This is for her then a theory 'which seems to find a good deal of empirical support' (p.133). I am not convinced by this. For many reasons I do not see it as certain that her evidence supports the thesis in the first place. In order to know what 'privatisation' meant, I would need to know how it related to desire for privacy (not necessarily the same thing), to the legal, economic and political constraints that have fostered and helped to maintain the nuclear family, and so on. And is non-participation in clubs and societies a mark of a different 'personality' in her sense?

But apart from these worries, even if the evidence does correspond with the thesis, I feel it ought to have a much tighter relation with it, given that the prediction was a direct deduction from the basic categories for understanding capitalism, than 'a good deal of empirical support' suggests. I am certainly not attacking the idea of a theory of personality within Marxist terms. But Soper's is too barely constructed to be clear; and the eliding of levels is alarming.

The book ends with some thoughtful work on a number of questions really about socialism and communism. Why is Marx so certain, for example, that with the distortions of the exchange society gone, all major wrongs will be righted and the new needs that will arise will be finer, more social ones? Will there no longer be action based on anything other than selfless motives? She considers the implications of Rousseau's distinction between *amour propre* and *amour de soi*, roughly, a distinction between the selfishness that expresses the real conflicts of interests generated between us by our particular social structure (which therefore we may hope to eliminate), and an out-and-out selfishness that simply disregards others' interests; and she relates this to the challenge

posed by the dark elements in the Freudian picture of humans.

She concludes after a very interesting discussion that there isn't the slightest reason to suppose that all conflicts of needs between people could be abolished, or that each of us would have a tidy, self-consistent batch of desires to act from.

Therefore, she argues in her last chapter, even communism would not do away with the need for a politics of needs; and Marx was simply wrong to picture it sometimes without politics at all. Any idea that *planning for needs* could become automatic, or be done by experts, without value-based decisions about the kind of happiness being sought, for example, is horrendous. And right at the end of her last chapter, Soper briefly thinks about politics now.

Fragmentary though they are, insofar as her views are a result of her preceding analysis, they need to be looked at in this review. For they throw interesting light on the philosophical work just done, and seem to me to bring certain problems to the surface. Perhaps the most important element here is in fact stated almost as a personal view:

'Let me ... state my own commitment. I believe that the vast majority of people in Britain, as elsewhere, possess a potential for fulfilment that is so underrealised that it is deprived even of the forms of existence and possibilities of self-understanding that might allow it to be experienced as existing. There is a lack even of the means to understand the sense of lack and what it is that it lacks.' (p.217)

The implications of this are great for what are seen as the most optimistic trends, and the most potentially progressive movements. It means that her attention focusses on, for example, workers' action over the conditions and nature of their work, on ecology movements, on the women's movement and CND - in other words, on movements where *qualitative* questions are being raised. This is not simply her personal politics, since at the very least it recalls and responds to a conclusion at the end of Chapter 8, when she offered an explanation of our continued toleration of 'intolerable' conditions by means of this distinction:

'If you are deprived of food, you feel the pangs of hunger; if you are deprived of love, or of opportunities for creative activity, or of the space and time that are preconditions of self-development, you do not so much feel the loss as lose the power to feel.' (p.184)

If that were a watertight distinction, then the *only* acts of militancy nowadays with revolutionary potential would be the acts which overtly embody a qualitative challenge.

This is a big political conclusion and its threads are in fact woven all through the book. They are conclusions I personally would want to question hard. Therefore I would like to end this review by pointing to some problems in her analysis that led to those conclusions, as areas of debate. I would pick on three central ones: a problem of abstractness, a problem of idealism, and a problem of the absence of a concept of action. These are closely connected with each other.

Look again at those quotations from p.184 and p.217. They use a number of distinctions *within* the concept of need. These distinctions, which are valuable, have hardly been presaged within the book at all. They involve, among other things, an acknowledgement that there may be different *kinds* of needs, whose non-fulfilment affects us differently, and whose relation to consciousness and action may be markedly different. I remarked earlier that one

difficulty with the book was its non-use of empirical examples. If only the first chapter had done more straightforward philosophical analysis of kinds of needs, then the implications of these different kinds of need might have been clearer. Soper's total rejection of 'experts', for example, might look somewhat less certain if we had been allowed to consider needs related to psychosomatic diseases, or children's needs, or needs for kinds of information we are now ignorant of, and so on.

I said also that the book was difficult to review because of a tendency to posit baldly early on, and then surpass later. On page 8, Soper writes:

'I would want to maintain ... that it is a condition of an agent having a need properly speaking that the agent acknowledges it and is openly committed on the choice of values that it states.'

That, I am convinced, is an idealist definition of need, for it requires a notion of consciousness that veers to the contemplative; and, however I read it, it sits very uneasily with her later view which I have quoted, that there are definite needs which capitalism does not only not fulfil but actually prevents us recognising.

And yet, in an odd way, I think that the earlier judgement is concealed inside the later view, and emerges in its politics. For each of her preferred kinds of movement could be said to be 'consciousness-raising'. They are characterised by having 'wider concerns', as opposed to traditional, 'narrow' wage-bargaining and the like which Soper seems to see as unlikely any longer to lead to transforming militancy. It seems she has posed a conceptual problem - needs are only properly assigned when they are acknowledged by an agent, yet many of the most important needs are not acknowledged, and the structure of society works against their acknowledgement - and then, in finding a political resolution, has introduced conceptual distinctions that, had they been explored earlier, might have made the original problem look different.

There are serious political implications in her arguments. In effect she is working on the old territory of combating economism, even if with a new sophistication. But because she has inserted a rather contemplative notion of consciousness, a crucial possibility which many Marxists have seen and attempted to work on is lost. This is the possibility that workers, through the ways they organise to act on particular local grievances, can embody forms of active consciousness in their organised actions which are transcendent of the limits of acceptable bargaining. This is surely what was happening with Solidarity in Poland. That is how the seeds of revolutionary activity are planted within capitalism (which, to me, includes Poland - and that is another area of debate). Because Soper works with no worked-out notion of the relations between needs, action, and consciousness, she creates dilemmas for herself, and ends with a kind of idealist politics.

This is reflected, finally, in her presentation of Marxism itself, where there is a strong tendency for the theory to be praised for its theoretical agenda. We are told, for example, that the advantage of Marxism is its ability to balance between relativism and subjectivism, that the ability to *pose* the question of needs, not answer it, is its strength. Here, theory is moving away from practice and purely theoretical criteria now test Marxism itself.

These are areas of real worry I have with her arguments. There are many other smaller points where I would want to quibble. It seems to me that on a number of occasions she does less than justice to views she opposes, because of the brevity of her treatment (see from p.63 on biological and other

approaches, and p.77 on Hobbes, for example). And some of her individual arguments do not seem to me as definitive as they are meant to be.

On the other hand, I would not feel I wanted to pursue these points if the book did not first and foremost attract me because of the originality of its work. And some passages outside the main flow of the argument are wise and subtle and deserve much consid-

eration (for example, her analysis of Marx's 'Labour is life's prime want'). I mention these because I welcome the book as a whole, for all my disagreements with it. It is a very challenging attack on a set of problems that have been - and here I do completely agree with Kate Soper - very much ignored.

Martin Barker

Marx the Philosopher

Allen Wood, *Karl Marx*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, £13.50 hc.

This book, which takes its place alongside volumes on Plato, Wittgenstein, Russell, Kant, Hume and others in a series called 'The Arguments of the Philosophers', attempts 'to expound the philosophy of Karl Marx'. Some students of Marx will deny that he has a philosophy to expound, in the sense of a set of distinctively philosophical theses on behalf of which arguments are marshalled. After all, did he not expressly repudiate philosophy on behalf of science?

Yet there would seem to be philosophical aspects to, and assumptions behind, Marx's social theorizing, certainly, interpreting and evaluating his work raises philosophical issues. So, a book focusing on several more or less philosophical themes in Marx is to be welcomed, especially when, as in the present case, the author brings to the study of Marx the clarity, honesty, and lack of pretension that characterizes the best of English-speaking philosophy. Wood has written an intelligent guide to some key areas of Marx's thought - the five parts of his book treat alienation, historical materialism, morality, philosophical materialism, and the dialectical method - and while no treatise on Marx will please everyone, Wood is careful in his analysis, insightful in his commentary, and judicious in his criticism.

These virtues are clearly evidenced in Wood's discussion of alienation. Wood spells out what the concept meant for Marx and describes well its connection to Marx's ideas about species-being and the nature of human production. This is hardly new ground, but Wood's account of it is accessible and level-headed, and his sixty pages provide a more useful treatment than do many of the books devoted entirely to this topic. Wood does not exaggerate the importance of Marx's early work and avoids the temptation, to which many have succumbed, to interpret Marxism through the prism of 1844. He argues plausibly that in Marx's famous Paris manuscripts the concept of alienation was intended to be the explanatory centrepiece of his social theory, but that the concept is too vague and metaphorical to perform the function Marx assigns to it. Marx's concern with alienation remains in his later work, but there the concept serves only to describe mankind's lot: the theoretical core and explanatory basis of historical materialism lie elsewhere. Wood readily concedes that for Marx alienation is only one of capitalism's many evils.

Historical materialism itself is given a generally accurate and clear treatment. Wood's handling of classes, property relations, and determinism is good, as is his brief, three-page discussion of the different senses of 'ideology'. Wood hardly exhausts these topics, but what he does say is illuminating. Wood follows G.A. Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory of History* in endorsing a more traditional interpretation of historical materialism, one which views the development of the productive forces as the determining element in history. Their evolution explains why different socioeconomic organizations of production arise and fall. Wood sees historical materialism as proffering teleological explanations, but he needlessly and implausibly interprets teleological explanation as a rival to, rather than (as is the case in Cohen) a species of, causal explanation. (The type of explanation favoured by historical materialism, the nature and legitimacy of teleological or functional explanation, and Marx's commitment to the explanatory primacy of the productive forces are all warmly contested issues. Readers interested in pursuing these questions should consult the recent debate between Jon Elster and Cohen in *Political Studies*, vol.18, no.1.)

Wood's discussion of Marxism and morality is perhaps the most controversial part of his book since it defends the thesis, which Wood has elaborated elsewhere, that Marx's condemnation of capitalism does not rest on moral considerations, in particular that Marx does not criticize capitalism on grounds of justice. Put simply, on this view of Marx the principles of justice appropriate to a society are determined by its mode of production, and talk of justice or rights in the abstract is twaddle. Accordingly, since justice is relative to the mode of production and since the labourer sells his labour-power for its value and exploitation takes place within the normal frame of commodity exchange, capitalism cannot be attacked as unjust. (Wood's interpretation has engendered a vigorous debate, the latest round of which is available in the recent [1981] supplementary volume of the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*.)

According to Wood, then, Marx criticizes capitalism not because it is unjust but because of the poverty and alienation it promotes and the freedom and self-actualization it thwarts. On Wood's reading, though, these are non-moral goods (or evils), so that Marx's critique does not rest on any moral values. Clearly this thesis depends upon the ability to distinguish between moral and non-moral goods, but Wood's dis-

inction is not, in this context, compelling. While it is true that given the facts as Marx saw them one could criticize capitalism from a variety of normative perspectives, it is not clear how Marx's repudiation of capitalism can avoid value judgments altogether. Since on occasion Marx praises or blames individuals, Wood is led to write that Marx is not inconsistent 'if he morally condemns an attitude of complacency in the face of massive and remediable nonmoral evil, while refusing to condemn morally the nonmoral evil itself' (p.153). True, there is no logical inconsistency here, but can such a subtle view be plausibly attributed to Marx? If, as I think, Marx criticized capitalism, in part, on normative grounds, this fact undermines the ascription to him of a consistent ethical relativism. But it does not impair his diagnosis of the ideological nature of much of morality nor show that his scientific theories are value-based.

Wood has less to say about Marx's philosophical materialism, no doubt because there is less to be said. Marx was a naturalist, a realist and an atheist, but his views on metaphysical and epistemological topics are not finely honed. The final part of the book presents the Hegelian dialectic, contrasts the Marxian dialectic, and discusses briefly the

dialectical structure of *Capital*. Wood sees Marx as accepting Hegel's vision of reality as organically structured and characterized by inherent developmental tendencies while, of course, rejecting Hegel's underlying metaphysics. Wood writes clearly; so if the dialectical organicism attributed to Marx strikes readers as frustratingly vague, they probably have Marx to thank.

The five parts of *Karl Marx* could stand as separate essays; no overarching theme ties them together. Wood's book illuminates some interesting aspects of Marx's worldview, but he himself concedes that Marx's philosophical views are really peripheral or irrelevant to Marx's main theoretical concerns. Accordingly, beginners need a work that places Marx's social theorizing - historical materialism and the analysis of capitalism - more consistently at the centre of discussion. More advanced students, however, would clearly benefit from *Karl Marx*. The vast literature on Marx includes, of course, more detailed studies of many of the topics discussed by Wood, but his book is still to be recommended as a valuable and engaging secondary source.

William H. Shaw

In Defence of Marxism

A. Callinicos, *Is There a Future for Marxism?*
MacMillan, £15 hc

This is a work of amazing intellectual scope, ranging from political economy, politics, traditional philosophical concerns to psycho-linguistics, nouvelle philosophie and neo-popperian epistemology, and is a welcome stimulus to debate amongst the politically committed and not so committed circles at which it is aimed.

The writer takes as his point of departure the crisis facing French marxism mirrored in personal terms by the deaths of Helene Rytman (Althusser) and Nicos Poulantzas. The crisis of the left in France is seen, however, as an accentuated version of the fortunes of the left elsewhere in a period of 'down-turn'. The book is essentially a defence of Marxism in the face of the intellectual inroads made by the nouveau philosophes and their counterparts in Britain, amongst whom the post-althusserians might be numbered.

In some ways, however, it constitutes a kind of rapprochement with the post-althusserian 'counter-revolution'. Its emphasis on discourse *qua* the primacy of conceptual understanding resonates with elements of Derrida. At the same time, the tendency amongst Foucault and others to reduce all relations to those of power is criticised on the one hand for its denial of the validity of knowledge in its own right and on the other, because it fails to distinguish between the efficacy of production relations and the political power which is (only) sometimes used to reinforce them. The writer notes that even Poulantzas appeared to have succumbed to the power analyses of the nouveau philosophes, who see power as essentially a means of *manipulative* dominance.

Post-althusserianism in the UK has less to offer (in the guise of Hindess, Hirst et al of the *Marx's 'Capital' and Capitalism Today* period). Its logicised modes of analysis reject the possibility that empirical factors might have some effect on concept formation. This ultimately leads, via rejection of the concept 'mode of production' (on grounds of its logical inconsistency) to political revisionism, it is argued.

Callinicos counterposes post-althusserian structuralism to E.P. Thompson's 'humanism', and then proceeds to elaborate this 'opposition' on the political level as illustrative of a moment of politico-cultural unity which is deceptively represented by alternative ideological faces, both of which are instantiated as the same conjunctural feature viz. the drift of the left intelligentsia away from a marxist commitment. (The tendency of left intellectuals to identify with a statified [labourist] type of politics seems to have its origins in the mid-seventies with the election of a Labour government and the related collapse of rank and file activism.)

These left reformist tendencies also find expression in certain reductionist interpretations of *Capital*, Callinicos argues; the 'capital-logic' and commodity fetishism readings. The former reduce superstructural processes to relations of production, allowing them no contingent character. The latter interpret political and ideological relations as mystified forms of the capital-labour relation, reducing analysis of superstructure to a purely ideological critique. In both cases the superstructure appears as epiphenomenon and the social formation is read as an expressive totality re production relations. The fetishization view (in the strict

sense) is primarily ascribed to the early Lukacs, Colletti and Althusser (his account of ideology), and the related 'capital-logic' view to Clarke, Picciotto and Holloway. Callinicos concludes that these theoretical tendencies produce an evolutionist/voluntarist dipole; either social change follows mechanically from the requisite infrastructural developments, or the unmasking of ideological appearances automatically leads to workers' revolution (Lukacs).

The author's alternative to these reductionisms is to regard production relations as offering an explanatory framework for developments in base and superstructure, without the latter being logically deducible from or reducible to the former. Production relations provide a limiting epistemological framework for theorising possibilities within a social formation. The Althusser-Poulantzas and 'capital-logic' approaches are criticised here for providing a too limited theorisation of the relationship between production relations and the social formation, which, unlike Marx, reduce its complexity to the direct effects and supports of the mode of production. For example, categories of intellectuals tend to appear in the platonic guise of 'theoretical practice'. This solves the problem of how they are situated in the social structure and the constraints upon the production of knowledge by abolishing their *social* existence!

Although Callinicos uses a notion of dialectic in relation to his analyses of the various levels of abstraction/concreteness in the capital-labour relation, it is not employed in discussion of base-superstructure relations. While it is, I think, clearly wrong to suppose that all political and ideological activity can be reduced *a la* expressive totality, to 'master contradictions' in the productive base, it is also incorrect to suppose that there are not superstructural moments of identity with the base. For instance, in one moment, legal forms reflect the essentially private nature of capital, the state functions as an organiser of capital in general and so on. In rejecting the expressive totality view, Callinicos seems to have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. The shortcomings of viewing base-superstructure as an *heuristic* i.e. a purely explanatory device (shades of Kant's analogues?) are that when one instance in a social formation is momentarily identical with another, it is no longer adequate to suppose that one set of concepts has explanatory primacy over another.

Nevertheless, one virtue of the writer's critique of the expressive totality reading of *Capital* is its awareness of tendencies to collapse all Marx's categories into a conceptual system whose false concreteness explains everything and nothing. One consequence of this is a marxist catastrophism, constantly predicting the collapse of the economic system and totally unburdened by empirical articulation and mediation of its concepts (e.g. some presentations of the tendency of rate of profit to fall). Although

Callinicos is aware of the different levels of abstraction Marx uses in *Capital*, when he comes to stating the methodology Marx uses, there seems to be some confusion between starting point and goal. Marx specified in the *Grundrisse*, as the writer notes, that the correct approach to theorising was one which started with the abstract, rising to the concrete; from categories which express relatively few determinations to those which contain many.

Callinicos seems to conflate this concrete-abstract distinction with that between generality and particularity. The illustration he uses is the comparison between capital in general (abstract) and individual capitals (concrete). Now it is true that capital in general is the more general category, but it also seems, in terms of the causal mechanisms associated with it, to be the more concrete of the two. However, for Callinicos, the methodological principle is not a search for decisive *causal determinacy* but *explanatory richness*, and this is produced by beginning with a general ('abstract') category and embellishing it with empirical content ('concreteness'). The writer's explicit rejection of causality as a tool of analysis in favour of conceptual productiveness reinforces the suggestion that a conflation of the two distinctions has occurred by overlooking the point that the conceptually general is not necessarily the same as a relative absence of determinations in a given locus (abstractness proper).

The final sections of the book outline an argument in favour of the view that both Eastern bloc countries and Western states (apparatus, bureaucracy, government) are most correctly characterised as forms of 'state capitalism' in the first case and as individual capitals, in the second. One problem with this view, as applied to the USSR, is the absence of any mechanism for the equalisation of rates of exploitation between individual firms of 'capitals' and hence the lack of (uniform) exchange value and a concomitant 'autonomous' money capital. The idea of the state (apparatus etc.) as capital seems problematic for two reasons (at least). If the function of the state in capitalism is the (universalist) organisation of capital in general, how can the state also function effectively as an individual capital, and vice versa. Secondly, capital is by definition a self-expanding entity, through realisation of surplus value in its own reproduction. It can be argued that in the case of the state, capital realization works to the benefit of the private sector - via the distribution and circulation processes - more than the state enterprise 'artificially' inhibiting the reproduction process there but augmenting that of private capital.

The major difficulty with this work remains its methodological basis which owes much to a popperian epistemological pragmatism. The book works best in its analysis of politico-intellectual trends, which in themselves make it recommended reading.

Howard Feather



Political Philosophers of the Left

Keith Graham (ed.), *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, £12.50 hc, £4.50 pb

This volume consists of six separate essays, most of them written by philosophers connected with *Radical Philosophy*. There is an attempt by the editor to classify the essays into three groups, but it is somewhat artificial and unnecessary. In fact this volume presents us with six distinct essays on different topics and deserves consideration on that basis.

The first essay, 'Realism, power and objective interests' by Ted Benton, mainly deals with work on 'power' by Steven Lukes and William Connolly, as well as the latter's writings on 'interests' (see Connolly's 'The Terms of Political Discourse', D. Heath and Company, 1974). Benton has two main aims: Firstly to argue that a concept of power can be developed which is 'available for empirical research' (p.8); which can analyse areas closed off in mainstream social science; and yet which is not susceptible to the charge of moral bias. Secondly, to argue that no concept of 'interests' with the properties just outlined can be produced, and that therefore any attempt to link the concepts of power and interest will undermine the objective use of the former.

Related to these aims Benton makes an important distinction (made in various ways by others) between two types of discourse, one scientific, the other tactical or strategic - the concept of interest only being usable in the second of these two types. Unfortunately he does not indicate whether this distinction is exclusive, or if there are other types of political and social discourse. It would, however, on the basis of his argument, be reasonable to attribute him the view that this is the major distinction to be made.

By making a number of criticisms of the Lukes/Connolly concept of power Benton advances his alternative concept which can be stated as follows,

"A has the power to achieve A's objective" means "A has capabilities and resources such that if A utilises these capabilities and resources, A will achieve A's objectives". (p.18)

While this 'realist' approach, as Benton calls it, does avoid the problem of interests in its definition of power, and allows of a distinction between the possession and exercise of power, it is open to criticism on several grounds. Some of these criticisms can be made when examining Benton's attempt to develop his concept of power in order to take account of power 'over' as well as power 'to'. When we discuss A's power over B, even in terms of objectives, capabilities and resources, the whole range of problems about A's power being a consequence of B's not knowing or not being able to formulate what her/his objectives are because of A's control over the social and educational system reemerges. In the end, and somewhat ironically for those who have followed this debate through the various articles and books, Benton is forced to accept the idea of 'possible objectives' which B could have had were it not for A's power (pp.20-21). To continue by saying 'The meaning of "possible" here has to be defined rather closely, though' sums up many of the problems but does not advance the discussion a single step.

Further to claim that given 'theoretical assump-

tions' plus knowledge of B's situation allows us to 'predict' what B's objectives would be only reinforces the above point because it involves making a range of claims about B that cannot be confirmed or falsified (at the time of making them) and attempts to imply a scientific precision for these claims by using the term 'predict' when the use of such a term is not justified or indeed justifiable (p.21).

For these reasons and others the first aim of this paper is not achieved, though the second, and with it the distinction referred to earlier, is argued more fruitfully.

'The political status of children' is the title of John Harris's contribution and his argument is concerned to outline the unjustified discrimination against children in the field of political rights. Eighteen seems an arbitrary age at which to accord political rights, and more importantly does not mark a major distinction between the competent and the incompetent, or indicate an awareness of politics, social life, personal autonomy etc. Therefore we are faced with the problem of finding adequate criteria on which to accord citizenship rights.

Harris considers a number of solutions to this problem, such as using a 'capacity criterion' (p.36); or by examining the view that control by parents would prevent manipulation by groups in society (pp. 38-40); and by asking whether a child can be said to have a system of purpose (p.41). All of these are found to be inadequate. As he argues throughout, the use of tests and consideration of the parents' role all show that many children (apart from the very young) are more able and capable to exercise citizenship rights than many adults and so a new approach is needed.

By way of a positive alternative Harris advances a useful distinction between 'persons' and 'non-persons' and adds, 'This dividing line ... does not fall in a place that would justify the traditional disqualification of children' (p.45). At this point, perhaps inevitably, the argument becomes very discursive and open ended. This is because the distinction between person/non-person is advanced in terms of a human being's capacity to value his/her own life, that is, to see their lives as something worth leading beyond merely being aware of what a life is (p.47). Later Harris makes it clear that this involves being a language user (in the sense of understanding and using meanings rather than simply being able to speak). The really difficult problem, as this paper shows, is that a wide criterion of who will count as a citizen is very hard to specify or formulate in rules that can be applied. On the other hand a narrow criterion lends itself to a similarly narrow, elitist, and possibly repressive view of citizen rights.

Despite the problems with Harris's positive view of political rights the paper is stimulating and raises important issues about the rights and autonomy of young persons.

Russell Keat's paper argues that in a socialist society liberal rights would not be unnecessary and should be 'preserved' as well as 'transcended' (p.61). What precisely this means is argued through a close examination of parts of Marx's 'On the Jewish Question', and an application of some of the results to the writings of Kolakowski and Rawls.

While not uncritical of the ambiguities and inadequacies of Marx's position, Keat aims to defend it against Kolakowski's attacks. The most important of these is the charge that Marx attempts to overcome a necessary distinction between social loyalties and individual aspirations with his claim that the distinction between civil and political society can be overcome in a socialist order. Because, for Kolakowski, this distinction is necessary and cannot be overcome, actual socialist societies have always been reduced to coercion in attempting to destroy it.

Against Kolakowski's reading, Keat provides an alternative interpretation of Marx which shows how far Marx regarded political emancipation as limited mainly because it did not apply to most areas of social existence; and how far that non-application in some way undermined the political emancipation achieved. These points are developed by using Marx's views as a means of highlighting inadequacies in Rawls' model of liberal society.

Returning to the analysis of Marx, Keat argues the latter's position has serious weaknesses. Firstly it tends to identify rights of property with liberty, thus denying the possibility of using arguments based on liberty to criticize property rights. As a corollary, though Keat does not make the point, Marx's argument allows of the interpretation that in a society without property ownership there would be no need of or possibility for liberty. Secondly there is a neat exclusive distinction between egoistic and other-regarding beings in much of Marx's work when what is needed is a more balanced concept in which self concern and, relatedly, self-autonomy are given a role.

From these criticisms the points made are broadened out and developed to suggest that the alienation of capitalism has brought with it some positive benefits in terms of releasing individuals from pre-assigned social positions.

Finally a modified marxian view is used against Kolakowski to vindicate much, but not all, of Marx's original position. In particular Keat shows that Marx was concerned not with the redundancy of political rights but their extension to all aspects of social life, an extension which would make them concrete, instead of largely abstract and limited.

The relation of equality to liberty is Richard Norman's subject, and in particular the now often-heard assertion that the former is inimical to the latter. Against this Norman makes a stronger claim than their compatibility, namely that 'they are interdependent', and 'The ideal of a free society, properly understood, coincides with the ideal of an equal society' (p.85).

In a manner, in many ways similar to W. Connolly (mentioned above), Norman stresses the need for an agent to have a variety of choices between available alternatives and in this way goes beyond 'negative' freedom to argue that 'freedom does indeed depend on positive material and social prerequisites' (p.87). Choice, he claims, is necessary over the ends or goals of human activity rather than the means to those goals. Further if an extra choice is to be an addition to freedom it must be 'relevant' or 'meaningful' (p.89); for, as Norman points out, whether there are two or twenty brands of similar tasting coffee available to me does not affect my choices or my freedom.

Freedom on this account is something to be maximised and not an attribute which simply exists or does not. 'Freedom, then, I take to be the availability of, and capacity to exercise, meaningful and effective choice' (p.90).

Seen as social products, power, wealth and education increase people's real capacity to choose and

therefore can enable them to maximise their freedom. All three are closely examined as a means of expounding this viable and creative account of what freedom consists in. These three are seen as 'positive sources of freedom' (p.94), though not as freedoms in themselves, for they only enhance people's capacity to make choices, to benefit from these choices, and to have choices worth making.

Norman's account of equality specifies precisely the same three factors as important and therefore his argument to show how equality and liberty are necessarily interrelated can be advanced: Liberty is maximised by giving people equal access to the sources of positive freedom and 'what equalitarians are aiming at is equality of liberty' (p.97).

The symmetry this approach gives the argument, as well as the use of good contemporary examples, and thorough argument combine to make it one of the best in the volume. Reasons of space prevent a comprehensive reply, but some points can be made briefly. Equality, as Norman accepts (p.84) has nothing to do with 'uniformity'; instead the purpose of equality is to 'enable people to enjoy equally worthwhile lives' (p.97). If this is so it may require that they receive very unequal amounts of wealth, power, and education. In any case it is difficult to know on what basis you could assess and make the distribution, i.e. how to know in advance that simple equality of distribution of these goods (as Norman effectively suggests, p.102) would produce a more equal society.

Norman's case for equality then is not convincing in the way he needs it to be for the interdependence thesis, but it does provide good reasons for arguing that more equality is desirable; and certainly establishes the argument that both equality and liberty require 'satisfaction of the basic needs' for all regardless of financial, gender, racial or class differences' (p.102).

Keith Graham's contribution is concerned with the question of whether a rational moral agent can accept democratic decisions, and deals solely with the work of R.P. Wolff and his critics. The first half of the paper summarizes and defends Wolff, while the second half takes a more critical view of Wolff's position as it emerges from a confrontation with his critics. Graham looks at cases such as an emergency on a ship, or medical crises, or unanimous direct democracy, where agents accept a principle (e.g. that the captain of the ship makes the decisions) and abide by it without destroying their moral autonomy. As he shows, though, the features of these situations are not present in 'existing large-scale political arrangements' (pp.127-28). Must we then choose, as Wolff suggests, between democracy in all its forms except the 'unreal' unanimous direct democracy, and moral autonomy as a basis for our actions?

Making good use of Kantian moral theory Graham takes up the question of autonomy in more detail and argues that two of its essential features are universability and connection to action. Everybody's autonomy matters equally and that means they have an equal right to having the actions which issue from that autonomy realized. In this light, majoritarian as well as unanimous direct democracy can be defended because it helps maximize the moral authority of all as embodied in the political decision making process. It provides a democratic mechanism which does not undermine autonomy, or make judgements between the value of different autonomies.

Of course none of this justifies any form of representative democracy, and the paper ends merely with some general remarks on the prospects for direct democracy, the possibility of hybrid types of democracy, and the role of the delegate. The

paper is closely argued and does develop the Wolffian position but it remains highly removed from actual democratic systems and the general remarks at the end do nothing to dispel the view that another approach will have to be found for discussing moral autonomy in modern democratic society, as the Wolff/Graham approach remains far removed from such societies and has little to say about the institutions which structure them.

Finally Anthony Skillen's paper on freedom of speech attacks variants of socialist and liberal thought about what is involved in, and what are the conditions of, free speech.

Liberal views about fighting censorship or state intervention do advance freedom of speech but don't take account of the 'less formal economic and cultural dimensions of political freedom' (p.140). Against other popular positions he argues that tolerance cannot just be reserved for those who advocate it; and nor should views be censored because of their content (e.g. because they may advocate violent or racist positions). He points out in this context the harm done by suppression itself, and the fact that it always requires positive institutions for enforcing it which in turn have regressive consequences such as strengthening state control over the public space.

Absence of censorship, argues Skillen, 'is not a

sufficient condition of freedom of speech' (p.151), the conditions in which that freedom is exercised also directly affect its value and significance. On this basis a number of separate issues are taken up regarding the link between communication and speaking; blocks to communication (e.g. lack of media coverage); and why lack of an audience undermines free speech despite the fact that freedom of speech does not entail the right to be heard. The problem with philosophical discussion of these matters is that decisions about them are often 'necessarily substantial and particular' (p.155), hence making it difficult to find general rules or principles on which to evaluate particular instances and develop an argument with general application. Despite this problem, the essay does deal creatively and constructively with a whole range of issues and is highly recommended.

Overall the volume is a real success and it is certainly worth reading. It would, as the editor suggests, be a very useful text for teaching purposes in political and social philosophy. A suitable note to end on would be another suggestion, namely that on the evidence of this volume a second volume of radical studies in political philosophy would be worth producing in the not too distant future.

Peter Vipond

Analytical Marxism

J. Mepham and D. Ruben (eds.), *Issues in Marxist Philosophy Vol. IV: Social and Political Philosophy*, Harvester Press, 1981, £5.95 pb

Mepham and Ruben have maintained in this volume the standard of interesting work by Marxist-oriented philosophers established by the initial three volumes. This one contains seven essays devoted to problems that arise in the context of socialist politics - all except one published here for the first time. In a sampler such as this no generalisations are in order. Every reader will find different essays of interest, but everyone, I venture, should find something of value. All I can do is to record one reader's reactions, beginning with those pieces on which I have least to say.

Martin Barker's 'Human Biology and the Possibility of Socialism' takes some time to get going but provides some very solid arguments against tendencies on the left to downgrade the role of biology in human affairs simply because some rightists make use of it. He has some very original things to say in contesting the terms of the mind-body problem as traditionally conceived.

Keith Graham claims that his 'Illocution and Ideology' shows how Marxists can fruitfully draw on the work of Austin. To me it shows no such thing. It merely shows that the theory of illocution needs to be informed by the theory of ideology.

G.A. Cohen's paper 'Illusions about Private Property and Freedom', on the other hand, *is* a prime

example of using the enemies' tools against them. He uses no other method than the traditional 'What we would say if ...' It is a first-class piece of analytical philosophy dismantling Flew-type nonsense on freedom and property.

Allen Wood's 'Marx and Equality' first rehearses Marx's well-known opposition to egalitarian slogans in the class struggle, but then suggests that such egalitarianism *is* relevant in combating other forms of oppression such as racism and sexism.

Timothy O'Hagan's 'On the "Withering-Away" of the Superstructures' expresses some scepticism about the said 'withering'. The piece poses some problems as to its scope. It is not, so far as I am aware, a commonly held thesis that the 'superstructures' wither away with the achievement of communism; yet O'Hagan treats this large claim as his object of criticism. The phrase 'withering' has a very specific provenance in the discussion of the state and its future. As it turns out it is this domain that O'Hagan is concerned with. Nothing is said about morality, for example. So the piece is really contesting the withering away of the state. O'Hagan also speaks a lot of 'superstructural agents' - plausible in the case of the state, but morality and ideology generally do not necessarily require special agencies. The main bulk of the piece is about law and its enforcement - about rights and duties. Given this, it is surprising O'Hagan does not confront Pashukanis head on, instead of hiding behind a single quote from Schlesinger.

The two essays I found the most stimulating and provoking were those by Collier and by Keat, both of them concerned with socialist values. Collier advances the extraordinary claim that there are no specifically socialist values or ideals. Keat argues that the socialist vision should retain the 'progressive' elements of individualism.

Andrew Collier's 'Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values' (reprinted from the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*) starts with a review of the Humanism and Anti-Humanism debate - or rather non-debate.

'Althusser proclaims anti-humanism as the necessary foundation of a science of social formation, his opponents proclaim humanism as the necessary foundation of socialist values. Unless each contestant can be persuaded that the other is occupying a zone of some importance the debate can get no further' (p.7).

However that may be, Collier himself says that alongside the famous 'epistemological break' in Marx's development 'there was also an axiological break' (p.13). Scientific Socialism, for Collier, 'brings no new values'; it transforms the politics of the oppressed by its explanations of their oppression. Collier nowhere acknowledges that his thesis flies in the face of historical materialism which asserts the social specificity of values as well as the mode of production. As the Manifesto has it: 'The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.'

Collier could argue that Marx's insistence on starting from where we are, with people's existing desires and problems, might mean that the proletariat while working within the terms of its existing oppression might bring about a new social order with corresponding new values without its struggle being informed by such values; but this neglects the point that a shift from the Trade Union struggle to a frontal attack on the property system involves not just a reidentification of the facts of the matter but a sharp ideological struggle over values. If Collier thinks socialist struggle involves no new values, let him conduct a public opinion survey with the question 'Do you think it fair to socialise the property of individuals and corporations without compensation?' Ninety-nine per cent of the working class would answer 'No'. The same problem would arise with the Manifesto's proposal to abolish inheritance, although the Tories no doubt exaggerate when they claim there would be no incentive to accumulate without the satisfaction of passing on wealth to children.

The provocative character of Collier's argument may be seen from the following:

'I ... want to defend four theses which together, if correct, remove all motivation for talk about socialist values. They are: (i) that there are no *specifically* socialist values; (ii) that what is typically at stake in arguments between different political tendencies is not a conflict of value-judgements, but conflicting explanatory hypotheses; (iii) that any scientific analysis - including that involved in scientific socialism - must seek to eliminate evaluative suppositions; and (iv) that the attempt to incorporate "socialist values" into the socialist movement is a dangerous one' (p.22).

I have space just to expand on the first and last. If we look back in history it is clear that every social formation has its own normative ideology. Just take the contrast between feudalism and capital-

ism. Who now cares a fig for 'honour' and 'service'? How did 'usury' turn into 'thrift' and 'making money work'? Did not the Enlightenment, issuing in the French revolution, almost make itself dizzy with the intoxication of such epic struggles as that of 'reason against authority', 'citizen not subject', 'the individual and his rights' against the abnegation inherent in the traditional obligations to the hierarchy? It would be a poor sort of socialist revolution that did not give people a similarly new idea of themselves, their interests, and their social relationships.

Let us take the socialist value of cooperation rather than bourgeois competition. Collier makes the extraordinary claim that a socialist is not committed to condemning competitiveness as a psychological trait, only competition as an economic mechanism (p.26). In the first place, these cannot be separated. Competitiveness is a necessary condition for the economic mechanism to work and an ideological effect of this mode of production. Competitiveness is not just a (poor) technique for social reproduction but a way of relating to other people. It may be said that sometimes it has good effects and thus should be tolerated. For example, certain kinds of human excellence thrive on competition - as we see in sport. Two replies may be made to this. First that the competitiveness inherent in bourgeois society makes human excellence very much an also-ran in the era of the professional foul, the anabolic steroids, and the rampant chauvinism of the Montreal Olympics crowd. Secondly, one may just have to accept a certain loss of momentum in activities which have no point if people are not 'playing to win' as a cost of socialism. (The socialists themselves may well look back on somebody who devoted all his energy to becoming the best pole-vaulter in the world as a right idiot.)

As far as point (iv) is concerned this is quite contrary to the current drift of socialist thought today (given extra impetus by the feminist movement). There is nothing 'dangerous' about it as long as we start from where people are and their dissatisfaction with their lives. It does not necessarily issue in an elite programming the masses, as Collier fears; rather it is about the search by individuals for *self*-redefinition.

Collier's essay is of a 'programmatic' character, running rapidly through a large number of theses and arguments. I think it would be very educational for anyone who disagrees with any of it to spell out exactly where it goes wrong. However, this is more difficult to establish than it seems at first because right at the end Collier makes a *huge* 'concession' which rather unbalances the paper. He admits that, after all, he does set a value upon people controlling their own lives etc. etc. He now appeals briefly to a distinction between 'naturalistic ends' and alien axiologies. If this is admitted he is committed at least to socialists *having* values but grounding them in a particular way, and the paper should have devoted itself to an exposition of *this* distinction, how one discriminates what is 'natural' from what is not, and what is the character, historical necessity, and inadequacy of anti-naturalistic axiology. With this project I would have much more sympathy.

Russell Keat's 'Individualism and Community in Socialist Thought' attempts first to distinguish the socialist from the conservative critique of individualism, and concludes that individualism is a moment that must be retained in socialist thought and practice. He then borrows from G.A. Cohen some dialectic and applies it to this problem so as to give the following schema:

- (1) Pre-capitalist/feudal community
= undifferentiated unity
- (2) Capitalist individualism
= differentiated disunity
- (3) Socialist community
= differentiated unity

What is absolutely extraordinary is that, although minor conservatives are cited, no discussion of Hegel is conducted. It is indeed absurd that Keat quotes from Cohen instead of going back to the source in Hegel, who, after all, applied such dialectical schemas to the very problem of individual and community that Keat is concerned with. I am in general sympathy with Keat's approach, but regret the crying absence in his paper of Hegel; for it is a comparison of Hegel and Marx that throws most light on the matter in hand.

In the last part of his paper Keat seems to retreat a little from the idea of communism as 'differentiated unity' because he criticises Marx's concept of 'social individuality' for not recognising the diversity and possible incompatibility of each other's needs and desires. Neglecting the latter point, I take issue with Keat's exegesis of Marx's conception of species being (which he sees as retained in the *Grundrisse*) as replacing individuated needs with 'communal needs and purposes' which every

individual has in virtue of being 'human'. This abstract humanism seems to me quite contrary to Marx's conception in such passages as the conclusion of the 1844 notes on Mill. The humanness of needs and powers involves for Marx *differentiation* within unity. As a matter of fact it did even for *Feuerbach* who quotes Goethe approvingly - 'only all men taken together ... live human nature' - and goes on: 'whatever becomes real, becomes so only as something determined. The incarnation of the species with all its plenitude into *one* individuality would be an absolute miracle, a violent suspension of ... reality....' (*The Fiery Brook*, ed. Hanfi, pp.56-57).

True, Marx's conception of human being is of a 'universal', but not the instantiation of the abstract universal; it is a concrete universal. Once again one regrets the absence of an attempt to situate Marx's dialectical thought in the tradition of Hegel and Feuerbach.

In conclusion, one should note that, as the editors state, this volume is, by and large, in style and method, typical of Anglo-American philosophy, with very little reference made to Continental European traditions. This limits its achievement. Real progress demands appropriating Hegel at least.

C.J. Arthur

From Authenticity to Aesthetics

Vincent Geoghegan, *Reason and Eros: The Social Theory of Herbert Marcuse*, Pluto Press, 1981, £2.95 pb

Those nineteen-sixties radicals who warned each other against trusting anyone over the age of thirty have now themselves passed that watershed. For those of them (or, to be frank, those of us) who are still concerned with such matters the name 'Marcuse' recalls all the hopes and enthusiasms of a radical *temps perdue*. As Geoghegan notes, however, such nostalgia is likely to be mixed with a degree of embarrassment. The contemporary left tends to react to Marcuse as to '... a phase gone through ... the product of youthful folly, long surpassed by mature preoccupations - structuralism, for example' (Geoghegan, pp.1-2). The waning of Marcuse's star is considered by Geoghegan to present the marxist left with both a difficulty and an opportunity. The difficulty is that Marcuse's preoccupations with the various dimensions of human potential and of the obstacles to its realisation represent concerns which should be at the heart of a 'comprehensive and living marxism'. To the extent that marxism forgets Marcuse it must impoverish itself. The opportunity, on the other hand, is to be able to free the body of Marcuse's work from the misunderstanding, caricature and hype which surrounds it in the late sixties, and to begin the important task of sober and critical evaluation.

Geoghegan offers *Reason and Eros* as both an introduction to Marcuse and as a contribution to the reassessment of his work. Given the diversity of the influences on Marcuse's work and the wide range of his concerns, the main task facing any commentary must be to explicate Marcuse's successive shifts of position, and to attempt to locate such consistent themes as might give the whole *corpus* some degree of unity. To attempt this rather formidable task, and to seek to combine it with the beginnings of an evaluation, in a book of only 122 pages is to run considerable risks. It is to Geoghegan's considerable credit that he avoids the worst exegetical pitfalls, although there are inevitable lacunae and over-simplifications in the book. There are, perhaps, rather more problems in Geoghegan's tentative evaluation.

Geoghegan's analysis begins with a brief discussion of Marcuse's early encounters with Husserl and Heidegger, identifying in them the source of a lasting concern with the nature of 'authentic existence' and the obstacles to its realisation. Marcuse's commitment to marxism is held to allow him to 'materialise' this problem, as it were, constituting '... the only means of adequately grasping both the essence of authentic existence and the process of its realisation through praxis' (Geoghegan, p.6). There may well be important homologies between Marcuse's early heideggerian concern with 'authenticity', his later hegelian-marxist re-workings of the

categories of 'reason' and 'essence', and his post-war freudo-marxist commitment to the recuperation of hedonism and eroticism. The dangerous temptation, which Geoghegan does not wholly resist, is to portray Marcuse's engagement with existential phenomenology as a site from which the underlying and 'given' unity of his work can be extrapolated.

When he turns to Marcuse's hegelian-marxist phase, Geoghegan rightly notes the centrality of the category of 'labour' in its dual aspects as both a burden and a medium of human self-realisation. The relations between Hegel's and Marx's treatment of labour form a recurrent theme of Frankfurt School work (in Habermas, for example, the account of labour in Hegel's *Jena Realphilosophie* becomes a stick with which to beat the labour theory of value). Geoghegan appears to postulate a direct line of succession between Hegel, Marx and Marcuse in this matter. He asserts, for example, that 'For Hegel, labour was the means whereby individuals concert the objective world into a world for themselves' (Geoghegan, p.8). But this blurs the point that for Hegel, labour is only one of a number of media through which men appropriate the world. The hegelian authority for a postulated multiplicity of media lends some legitimacy to what might otherwise appear to be an outright heresy on Marcuse's part, the advocacy of 'play' as an alternative mode of relation to the world. As Geoghegan notes, for Marcuse '... in play one frees oneself from the alien quality of objects by totally determining them' (Geoghegan, p.10).

The importance of Marcuse's contribution to the 'Critical Theory' of the nineteen-thirties is often obscured by the *succès de scandale* of his post-war work. Within the limits of a brief book, Geoghegan gives due weight to this period, but he is unable to pay much attention to the development of Marcuse's critical *method* in this period. Instead, the reader is offered a series of propositions which are intended to sum up a definitive theoretical position. So, for example, Geoghegan asserts that for Marcuse '... reality is indicated by its potential. Using an implicitly value-laden analysis he distinguished between true and false forms of reality, in which the former is characterised as the essence' (Geoghegan, p.13). This is something of an over-simplification in two respects. First, the expression 'implicitly value-laden' begs vital questions about the substance of the Frankfurt critique of 'value-neutrality' and its relation to positivism. Second, Marcuse casts doubt on the validity of straightforward dichotomies between 'true' and 'false' reality, or 'essence' and 'appearance'. The antagonistic character of the historical process '... turns the opposition of essence and appearance into a dialectical relationship and this relationship into an object of the dialectic' (Marcuse, 1972, p.67).

Geoghegan is at his best when discussing Marcuse's conception of the 'transition to socialism' as a qualitative change in the character of social relations which may be 'prefigured' in capitalism. He suggests that this conception draws together the aesthetic, philosophical and political dimensions of Marcuse's work, and uses a quote from *Reason and Revolution* to locate the beginnings of Marcuse's concern with the hedonistic dimension of emancipation: 'The idea of reason has been superseded by the idea of happiness' (Geoghegan, p.37). Geoghegan does not, however, emphasise the extent to which Horkheimer's work in the thirties laid the foundations for this thesis. In common with many other commentators and critics, he conveys the impression that the concerns of the Frankfurt Institute were uniformly 'abstract' and 'philosophical'. In fact, Horkheimer's historical and 'sociological' investigations, notably 'Egoism

and the Struggle for Emancipation' (Horkheimer, 1968) and 'Authority and the Family' (Horkheimer, 1972) anticipated Marcuse's post-war work to a considerable extent. Horkheimer argued both that psychic and social repression are interdependent and that the emancipation which the bourgeois revolutions promised could not be realised because those revolutions rested upon the systematic repression of hedonistic demands.

On the question of political organisation and strategy, Geoghegan correctly points out that Marcuse was closer to Lenin than to the anarchists. Nonetheless, he is far from happy with Marcuse's political 'line', arguing that '[Marcuse's] ... sense of the qualitative leap in the transition to socialism led him at times to underestimate the revolutionary potential of ordinary working people and to overestimate that of marginal groups' (Geoghegan, p.37). There is good evidence that the charge of 'overestimation' is well founded, but the charge of 'underestimation' seems to require further argument.

At times, Geoghegan seems to evaluate Marcuse's work by comparing it with an unexplicated blueprint of an 'ideal' marxist theory, notably in his treatment of the post-war integration of Freudian themes. Marcuse is held to have '... accepted without question the validity of Freud's clinical findings, and granted them a scientific status which is on a par with Marx's findings in *Capital*; he made no attempt to analyse the work of Freud from an historical-materialist standpoint' (Geoghegan, p.44). This charge is curious since Geoghegan has noted earlier that the analysis of the human psyche is a 'traditional lacuna in Marxist theory' (Geoghegan, p.4). It is unclear what the 'historical materialist standpoint' which Geoghegan requires would look like, unless we grant the laconic formulations of the sixth 'Thesis on Feuerbach' a scientific status which is on a par with the complete 'Standard Edition' of Freud. The more pertinent critique of Marcuse's deployment of Freudian themes may well be Fromm's charge that in fact Marcuse knew very little about Freud's clinical methods and findings, and based his interpretation on the most speculative elements of the metapsychology (see Fromm, 1971).

Geoghegan follows established practice in his decision to treat Marcuse as an 'independent thinker' from the early 1940's on, and with some justification. But while Marcuse's contributions to social theory certainly become markedly idiosyncratic after the war, they can only really be understood in the context of a set of debates initiated by members of the original Institute. To neglect this context is to obscure both the originality and the difficulties of Marcuse's formulations. For example, Marcuse's attempts to comprehend the social psychology of post-war afflu-

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ence and pluralism is at one level both thematically and historically distinct from the pre-war Institute's engagement with the social psychology of fascism. But two considerations serve to blur this discontinuity. First, the specificity of Marcuse's freudomarxism emerges from retrospective appropriations and modifications of the work of Reich and Horkheimer, and from contemporary debates with Adorno and Fromm, among others. Second, some of Marcuse's more striking and globalising appropriations of instinct-theory, as in the explanation of the cold-war and the arms economy in terms of 'aggression', can be seen as part of a debate among ex-members of the Institute about the extent to which post-war democracy should be considered to be qualitatively distinct from fascism.

These reservations apart, Geoghegan provides a lucid account of the labyrinthine path of Marcuse's post-war development. As in earlier sections, he succeeds in demonstrating that a common thread can be identified in all of Marcuse's concerns. While it may not be appropriate to refer to that thread as a concern with the possibility of 'authentic existence', the general point is well taken and Geoghegan is alive to some of its difficulties. Commenting on Marcuse's aesthetics Geoghegan notes that he '... engaged in the dangerous procedure of not merely asserting the possibility of an authentic art, but of attempting to specify its content' (Geoghegan, p.76). And this point could be made more generally. Marcuse specifies the content not only of 'authentic art', but of 'authentic sexuality' and 'authentic politics'. The utopian moment which, as Geoghegan notes, is so characteristic of Marcuse is caught in a paradox. Merely 'formal' utopias, such as Habermas' model of an 'ideal speech situation' cannot transcend philosophy and are, in consequence, of limited popular appeal. 'Substantive' utopias, on the other hand, become over-determinate and thus denigrate the very distinction between past necessity and future freedom upon which they are premised.

Geoghegan does not take up the question of whether Marcuse found a satisfactory resolution to this paradox. A useful start would be to place Marcuse's work in relation and contrast to that of his former colleagues. Adorno, for example, was quite well aware of the paradoxes and pitfalls of utopianism. His rejection of all 'identity theory' and his exemplification of a 'negative dialectic' could be seen as an anti-utopian solution to Marcuse's utopian problem.

Geoghegan brings some order to Marcuse's frequent oscillations between profound gloom about the prospects for emancipation, as in *One-Dimensional Man*, and a rather more optimistic strain, as in *Eros and Civilisation*. He suggests that Marcuse had in mind a model of the relations between technical rationalisation and psycho-social repression which could permit two possible outcomes. In the first, technical progress leads to a reduction in the need for labour and hence in the need for repression. In the second, however, the 'logic' of technical progress ramifies into all areas of social life, leading only to increased conformism and 'one-dimensionality'. Geoghegan has no space to examine this model in detail, and the suspicion must remain that the two 'outcomes' depend on rather different models of the relations between technical, social and psychic processes.

It is clear enough, however, that after the ebbing of the 'events' of May '68 Marcuse retreated from any hopes of an immediate social transformation, while

retaining the belief that, in Geoghegan's words, '... capitalism would tend to produce its own determinate negation through a broadening of the base of exploitation and the fostering of transcendent needs' (Geoghegan, p.95). This retreat is well indexed, as Geoghegan notes, by Marcuse's eventual recantation of the 'end of art' hypothesis. In *Die Permanenz der Kunst*, published in English under the rather less illuminating title *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse argues that art will be necessary in any type of society as a relatively autonomous dimension which can embody and preserve the utopian and critical moment of human experience. Geoghegan could usefully have made more of this text, which indicates the difficulties inherent in any attempt to consider Marcuse's work in isolation from the concerns of other Frankfurt theorists. Thus, the suggestion that 'Aesthetic formation proceeds under the law of the beautiful, and the dialectic of affirmation and negation, consolation and sorrow is the dialectic of the beautiful' (Marcuse, 1979, p.62) can surely be understood only in relation to Adorno's conception of a *purely* 'negative' art. Marcuse's final paragraph opens with a motto from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which is given a characteristic 'twist': '"All reification is a forgetting." Art fights reification by making the petrified world speak, sing, perhaps dance' (Marcuse, 1979, p.73). The general lesson of *The Aesthetic Dimension* would seem to be that, however severe Marcuse's disagreements with Adorno and Horkheimer may have been, they were always family quarrels.

Geoghegan's brief conclusion suggests that there are two areas in which constructive criticism of Marcuse's work might be developed. The first is Marcuse's 'eclectic impulse', in respect of which Geoghegan delivers a brief sermon on the dangers which attend upon those who would sully the purity of marxism with bourgeois interpolations. The second area is Marcuse's insistence on the qualitative peculiarity of emancipated social life, as evinced in the concepts of 'absolute negation' and the 'great refusal'. This leads Marcuse to '... an excessive concentration on the marginal rebelliousness and an inadequate concentration on the complex dynamics of advanced capitalism in general' (Geoghegan, p.103). But these two 'areas' are not optional extras in Marcuse's project, they are the very heart of it. Take away the 'non-marxist' influences and the unhealthy preoccupation with 'negation' and little would be left of Marcuse but one more flaccid 'humanist marxism' and a 'peace, youth and friendship' socialism.

The brevity of *Reason and Eros* is responsible for its vices, and it is to be hoped that Geoghegan will have the opportunity to develop his criticisms of Marcuse and to assess Marcuse's relation to the Frankfurt institute in a format which does not demand over-simplification and occasional dogmatism. As it stands, the book can be recommended as a lively and serious introduction to Marcuse's work. It can certainly displace MacIntyre's vicious *Marcuse* from the reading list.

Steve Crook

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Conning Kuhn

Barry Barnes, *T.S. Kuhn and Social Science*,
Macmillan, 1982, £12 hc, £3.95 pb

It is difficult to imagine to whom this book is intended to appeal. It is too original to be a fair popularization and too unsubstantiated to be taken seriously by serious specialists. Moreover, it is poorly written, and pinched and hampered by chaotic organization. In reading Barnes one feels like Alice wandering through the Looking-Glass.

It is not that everything is obviously absurd and topsy-turvy, but that so much of the book simply seems to be so. Words, sentences and then whole paragraphs are like a kind of Jabberwocky, applied to something unknown that is doing something we know not what. A strong supporter of the relativism defended here will find little wrong with this book except that it is unreadable. But for anyone who wishes to learn something about the views of the 'Edinburgh School', this is not the place to find Scottish enlightenment. A somewhat clearer presentation is offered in Barnes' *Interests and the Growth of Knowledge*, and more lucidly in D. Bloor's *Knowledge and Social Imagery*.

Like anyone who has nothing new to say, and *knows* he has nothing new to say, the author here is very careful how he says it. An indigestible mix of confusing and inappropriate terminology, repetition *ad nauseam* and irrelevant illustration - the whole package put together in a form which does gross bodily harm to the English language - is likely to prove un nourishing to most readers. I confess that the book stuck in my throat.

Barnes opens with an epigraph taken from Kuhn: 'It is a truism that anything is similar to, and also different from, anything else.' Now, there are, as J.S. Mill said, luminous truisms and truisms best left buried. Barnes believes that he has unearthed a piece of profound wisdom which needs, despite its purported obviousness, to be stated and restated. This he does, and after a while settles on the formulation that natural affinities and oppositions between things are such as to leave us total freedom as to how we group them. This he terms 'finitism'. The relativistic follow-on is that every usage of a concept must be accounted for separately, by reference to specific, local and contingent determinants. In other words, the 'sociology of knowledge' exists to reveal how we construct a world, how we assign meaning to a world which offers itself to us uncluttered with signs or codes.

'Finitism' is launched to wage war against 'extensional semantics', which Barnes takes to mean the view that everything already lies within or without the extension of a term. Or rather, the enemy is a Platonic vision of independent concepts and a positivist vision of an independently valid science. A brief quotation gives a good indication of the demon he wants to demolish.

'Many theories of knowledge are morality plays

set in a Manichaeian cosmos. The source of light is experience; its agent "reason". The source of darkness is culture; its agent authority... Truth, validity, rationality, objectivity are to be seen among the many white-apparelled children of light; error and irrationality, custom, convention, dogma and many others are dressed in black' (p.22).

Barnes comments that 'there is nothing to be said in favour of this Manichaeian mythology'. This is certainly untrue. For one thing, if 'finitism' is true (which Barnes asserts), then the dual mythology cannot be ruled out of court; to do so would be to rule that in this particular case categories have already been decided in advance to be untenable, and that goes counter to 'finitism's' only tenet.

Perhaps it is wrong to dwell too much on this, or any of the many other, self-referential paradoxes which pullulate in the book. One major consequence of Barnes' view is that it occludes any differences which actually exist between different types of human knowledge. This is particularly serious since the aim is ostensibly to set out and develop Kuhn's work in the history of science. To say that science is no different from other human activities because in every case we make up concepts as we go along is to handicap any account of the development since the Scientific Revolution of systems of knowledge which purport to be rationalist.

Of course, science can be dismissed, but it remains evident that certain classifications and concepts have yielded better technological and industrial fruit than others. This fact, the fact of progress in mastering and understanding the world, has to be accounted for. To think that ethnomethodology is the great leveller, that personal idiosyncratic labelling is sovereign, is to encourage the production of a gobbledygook in which anything goes, in which alchemy is as valid a system of ideas as chemistry and astrology as useful as ecology. Barnes thinks as much but is incapable of explaining why he does, for 'a finitist account of concept application can never amount to an *explanation*' (p.113). It was once said of Samuel Clarke that everyone thought the existence of God a truism till he tried to prove it. The same might be said of Barnes' 'finitism'; the only difference being that this particular brand of voluntaristic nominalism is of little consequence.

The work of Kuhn however is important and a good exposition which seeks to remedy the discrepancies in his theory of science and scientific change is much needed. Barnes' book does not fit the bill: it is uninteresting, uninspired, dull and inaccurate. One has the impression that wherever Barnes turns he sees reflections of himself - Durkheim is a Barnesian, Mary Douglas a Barnesian, Mauss a Barnesian. This is the mark of an enthusiast in a world of superstitions.

Mike Shortland

On the Town

Harry Cowen, *The Crisis in Urban Planning: A Marxist Perspective of the Role of the Capitalist State* Gloucestershire Papers in Local and Rural Planning, No.11. Department of Town and Country Planning, Gloucestershire College of Art and Technology, 1981, no price

The old technocratic certitude of the town planners will no longer do in the face of the collapse of the post-war social democratic consensus. Planning is no longer universally held to be able to be a 'good thing', but is instead a besieged profession, unclear of its own purpose. No sooner had the planners got used to being insulted by community activists at planning inquiries and public meetings than they discovered that their masters, too, had had enough of them and were blaming them for everything from the construction of high rise flats and soulless housing estates to the decline of manufacturing industry in the urban cores.

The planners, however, are nothing if not flexible. As Cowen points out, they quickly admitted to insensitivity and now claim to be sensitive; they rejected large scale projects and now seek to recreate 'loving communities' (p.4); they were the first to jump on the local government industrial development bandwagon and have learned to love small firms in the inner city. But all this is defensive and, as Cowen argues, suggests that they have not yet come to terms with what is happening to them or to the system within which they work. With the help of a necessarily brief survey of marxist and neo-marxist literature of urban studies, Cowen tries to show them.

He certainly does enough to indicate that the crisis in planning is simply one aspect of a much wider set of problems for the management of urban areas stemming from the increasing economic difficulties facing British and world capitalism and the state's response to them. But too many issues are left unresolved and undeveloped, in the paper, perhaps as an inevitable result of overcompression.

Two points in particular need expansion or explanation. First, some explanation for the rise and fall of planning itself needs to be suggested. Did the profession create its own niche by a series of subtle political moves from Ebenezer Howard to the Town and Country Planning Association or was it in some way necessary or useful to post-war capitalist development? If so, how? Secondly, Cowen introduces the rather problematic notion of state capitalism and seems to place planners within the state machine as agents of state capitalism.

But this raises more questions than it answers. He needs to explain the precise dynamic of state capitalism rather more extensively, and indicate whether planners are directly involved in the state's production of surplus value, which he claims is one element of state capitalism, or in supporting private capital. Following on from this, it remains to be determined what exactly planners can then do to break from their roles as agents of one form of capital or another. Cowen suggests that they need to support workers' struggles which is an unexceptionable sentiment, but hardly provides them with much direction at

work. In other words, the question remains, can planning be transformed into a worthwhile activity or is it condemned forever to be a minor outpost of capitalist ideology or control?

It may be unfair to raise such major questions on the basis of such a short piece, but it is a measure of the value of the paper that it generates them so readily. If Cowen's paper is part of moves to generate some more informed theoretical debate within the philistine heartland of a profession whose highest contributions to political thought have in the past been limited to the bland, self-satisfied and pseudo-critical writings of Eversley and Hall, that can only be a good thing.

Allan Cochrane

Tom Bottomore (ed.), *Modern Interpretations of Marx*, Basil Blackwell, 1981, £4.95 pb

This is a useful source book for students lacking time or motivation to read extensively in the literature on Marx. It is a sequel to a similar volume, covering an earlier period, that Bottomore put out some time ago (*Karl Marx*, revised edition by Blackwell 1979). Obviously no such selection can be definitive. I might have made a different selection. But there is no doubt Bottomore has made an intelligent one. He also provides a useful introduction (concentrating on the two streams: 'humanist' and 'scientist') which has many notes pointing towards further reading. In the selection itself, pieces by Goldmann and by Hilferding appear in English for the first time. In addition we are given representative samples from Petrović, Gramsci, Wellmer, Althusser, Godelier, Meghnad Desai, Hegedus, Poulantzas, Habermas, Stojonovic, and Heller. Desai's review of developments in Marxian Economics aside, it is worth noting the absence of Anglo-Saxon commentators. Perhaps *Radical Philosophy* should propose to itself the task of producing material Bottomore will feel forced to include in his *next* anthology!

C.J. Arthur

T. Rockmore et al, *Marxism and Alternatives*, D. Reidel, h.c.

This book begins with a handicap: it equates marxism with official Soviet philosophy. Its manifest purpose is to provide a dialogue between Soviet 'marxism' and three other of 'the most significant (sic!) philosophic movements of the day', namely neo-thomism, pragmatism and phenomenology.

The text is a strange mixture of quasi-erudition and banality. It oscillates between, for example, discussion of the influence of aristotelian realism on Hegel and the following genre: 'In the proletarian Messianism of Marx's *Kulturkritik* is latent a "unified science" motif that was adumbrated by Engels at Marx's interment and which emerges in Lenin's Promethian electrification of Soviet Russia.' It is particularly banal on marxism.

Soviet interpretations of 'dialectical logic' and the 'dialectics of nature' receive an airing and it is comforting to be assured that the Party guarantees the unity of theory and practice.

The book might usefully be read as a genealogy of philosophical ideas by students of the history of philosophy/ideas - with the provisos I've mentioned!

Howard Feather