

REVIEWS

THEORIES OF PRACTICE

Richard Norman

Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*,
Duckworth - 1972; £3.95

One of the declared aims of Radical Philosophy is to draw on alternative philosophical traditions as a way of overcoming the inadequacies of analytical philosophy. This is not to say that any of the other dominant traditions offers a ready-made alternative, which could be adopted wholesale. In the first place, it would be wrong to neglect altogether the analytical tradition. It would of course be quite absurd to dismiss all the work that has been done within it as futile and irrelevant. And even where we are critical of analytical philosophy, it is important to assess it and reckon with it, not just to turn our backs on it. For, whether we like it or not, we live and work in a world where it is a significant force; many of us are in academic departments where analytical philosophy is the dominant mode, and all of us live within a culture of which it is an important determinant. (Its most obvious manifestations, I suppose, are an insistence on the piecemeal, and a consequent fragmentation of thought and rejection of any systematic understanding of man and society, all of which is backed up by a half-articulated positivism which, even if not explicitly avowed, is never far below the surface.)

But also it has to be recognised, I think, that all the main alternative traditions are themselves unsatisfactory in one way or another. Phenomenology and Hegelianism are both characterised by a pretentious obscurity which is not only objectionable in itself but also makes for bad philosophical work on the part of secondary writers, for whom the scholastic elucidation of texts tends to take the place of original thought. Both traditions are also flawed by a built-in conservatism; this feature may not be as simple and straightforward a matter as it is sometimes made out to be, but ultimately it is undeniable. In the case of Marxism, this criticism is not of course applicable, but here it has to be said that there simply does not exist an adequate Marxist philosophy. There are Marxist variants of independently existing philosophies (e.g. Marxist positivism and Marxist Hegelianism); and there are highly suggestive but undeveloped philosophical ideas in Marx's own writing; but in the end that is all. Thus, if one is looking for a satisfactory way of doing philosophical work, it cannot be found ready to hand. It has to be created - created, however, by drawing on whatever is valuable in all the existing modes of philosophy.

The point of this preamble (in what is already a rather introspective issue of *Radical Philosophy*) is to indicate the obvious relevance of Bernstein's book. First, his attitude towards analytical philosophy is absolutely right. He writes from within it; he recognises that important work has been done, and regards as especially significant the growing recognition of "the importance of social practices and institutions in understanding man - his language, his morals, and especially his activity. But", Bernstein adds, "analytic philosophers tend to stop the inquiry just where Marx and the Marxists begin to ask questions. There has been virtually no attempt among analytic philosophers to press further, to ask critical questions about the origin and development of these social institutions and practices which shape what we are." This failure has especially left its mark on social and

political philosophy, which have been "virtually non-existent", and on ethics, which "has tended to become an arid, scholastic jungle". And Bernstein therefore welcomes the signs that "younger students of analytic philosophy are growing restless with the artificial, self-imposed limitations of the movement." (p.28; cf. pp. 234, 302, 318-9).

On the positive side, Bernstein's book is an attempt to trace fruitful connections between work in different philosophical traditions, whilst recognising the disparity between them and explicitly disavowing any 'grand synthesis'. The four parts of the book are concerned respectively with Marxism, existentialism, pragmatism, and analytic philosophy. The principle of unity which Bernstein claims to find in them is a common concern with the concept of action, and secondarily a common relationship to Hegel. He writes: "The guiding principle of this study is that the investigations of the nature, status, and significance of praxis and action has become the dominant concern of the most influential philosophical movements that have emerged since Hegel." (p.xiii)

Now there is a clear danger that the unity with which Bernstein thereby endows his discussion will be a spurious unity. It cannot really be said that a relationship to Hegel constitutes a genuine common factor among these different forms of philosophy. It may be true that Marx, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Dewey, Russell and Moore all, at some stage, 'reacted against Hegel'. But, as Bernstein readily concedes, they reacted in very different ways. What he also claims, however, is that the way in which each of these four traditions has developed points to the need for a renewal of interest in Hegel. To see why he thinks this, we have to look at what he takes as the more important principle of unity: that each of these traditions has been characterised by a pre-occupation with the concept of action. However, the unity here is scarcely more genuine. Certainly writers in each of these traditions have had a lot to say about 'action'; the concept is such a general one that it would be surprising if they hadn't. But this, in itself, is hardly a significant point of contact. More specifically, the themes which Bernstein deals with are the following:

Part I is an attempt to demonstrate that central to Marx's work is the concept of 'praxis'; it underlies the economic analyses of *Capital*, as well as the discussions of alienation and objectification in Marx's early writings. Bernstein argues that it derives from the Hegelian concept of Geist, i.e. spirit which develops and objectifies itself through its own activity. He suggests that, by their employment of such ideas, both Hegel and Marx transcend the traditional materialist/idealist dichotomy.

Part II deals with the existentialist claim, in Kierkegaard and Sartre, that man, just because he is not only a thinking being but a being who acts and who therefore makes choices, can never identify himself with what he has become; that therefore all human projects are doomed to failure; and that the form of consciousness which Hegel calls 'the Unhappy Consciousness' is accordingly one which it is impossible to 'go beyond' in Hegelian fashion.

Part III is a discussion of Peirce's and Dewey's critiques of spectatorism and their development of an instrumentalist conception of knowledge and experience. *Part IV* looks at the concern of recent analytical philosophers with the alleged dichotomy between 'reasons' and 'causes', 'teleological' and 'mechanistic' explanations, and at the claim that the concept of human action is a fundamental category which is not reducible to that of a physical event or physical movement.

Of these themes, the second is unconnected to the other three, and Bernstein makes no significant reference to it in other chapters. There is an important connection between Parts I and III; in them, Bernstein does identify a very fruitful philosophical perspective. The attack on spectatorism which he finds in Marx and in the pragmatists is very relevant to our own current philosophical situation. Academic philosophy in this country is built around the assumption that its true centre is epistemology. This assumption is apparent particularly in the structure and content of academic courses. Now the approach to the various areas of philosophy via the problem of knowledge is one possible way of organising one's conception of philosophy. But the outcome has been the abstraction of 'man as knower' from the rest of human life, and in particular from human practice. This has been a distinguishing feature of the empiricist tradition - and epistemology is still dominated by that tradition: the so-called 'problems of knowledge' are the problems of the isolated individual knower confined to the world of his own sense-perceptions. Conversely it is essential to see the activity of 'knowing' as arising out of, and part of, man's general attempt to organise (cope with) his world, in order to vindicate the status of human knowledge as a meaningful totality rather than a series of discrete sense-impressions.

The significance of this position, linking knowledge to practice, can be conveniently indicated by mentioning Bernstein's discussion of the is/ought dichotomy (pp. 69-76). I also think it worth paraphrasing at some length because I think that his approach to the problem is the right one. It is contained within his discussion of Marx and alienation, and can be summarised as follows:

Marx has been criticised for using the concept of alienation as a morally evaluative term with which to criticise capitalist society, while failing to make explicit the positive moral values (i.e. the normative conception of what it is to be an unalienated human being) which it presupposes. This view of Marx as crypto-moralist has as its obverse the view of him as crypto-positivist, concerned solely with the factual scientific understanding of human society. Both views are equally distorted. They both assume a dichotomy of 'description' and 'evaluation' which Marx's writing calls into question. Marx measures alienation not against any implicit moral ideal but against those human potentialities which are revealed in the very analysis and understanding of alienation itself. This vocabulary of 'actuality' and 'potentiality' derives ultimately from Greek and especially Aristotelian thought, and it bridges the supposedly unbridgeable gap between fact and value. It therefore requires one to rethink the epistemology which supports that dichotomy. Hints of a 'radical epistemology' can in fact be found in Marx's early writings.* For Marx, there can be no such thing as a purely neutral human understanding of the world. All observation and description is 'theory-laden', articulated in terms of cognitive categories which have evolved in the course of human social life. These categories reflect the fundamental needs which determine men's practical orientation towards nature, and hence the world as men understand it is structured, 'shaped', from the perspective of these needs. (In this respect, cognition is one aspect of the general phenomenon of human work.) Consequently there is no overall separation to be made between the purely neutral reality which is immediately 'given' in observation and the subsequent 'evaluation' of that reality. Practical

* Bernstein's argument draws on an excellent essay by Leszek Kolakowski called Karl Marx and the Classical Definition of Truth, which develops at greater length the epistemology here attributed to Marx; it can be found in Kolakowski's Marxism and Beyond, which recently came out in paperback. Bernstein's discussion of Marx could also be compared with Lucien Goldmann's article in Radical Philosophy 1, and the book by Alfred Schmidt which Jerry Cohen reviewed in Radical Philosophy 2.

implications are necessarily built into our description of the world. And so 'when Marx describes the condition of man as an alienated one, he is not imposing arbitrary value judgements on a value neutral world; he is uncovering and revealing the social reality in which we find ourselves.'(p.74)

I want now to say something about Bernstein's discussion of the reasons/causes distinction. His attitude here is that though the category of purposive action may indeed be fundamental and independent, not reducible to that of physical movement, this does not necessarily make it sacrosanct. The issue of the status of action concepts cannot be settled by a priori fiat, i.e. by showing that such concepts are deeply embedded in everyday language and everyday ideas. The vocabulary of purposive action may not be reducible, but it may nevertheless be replaceable. Bernstein here invokes the 'displacement hypothesis' or recent writers such as Paul Feyerabend who stress the importance of developing alternative conceptual frameworks to those which are currently accepted, and who claims that "the conceptual framework in which we now think of ourselves and others as agents can be displaced by a radically different scientific framework" (p.282).

I am inclined to look rather more favourably on the reasons/causes distinction than Bernstein does, and I want to try and indicate why I take it to be important. Various philosophical concerns lie behind it, but one of them at any rate, I think, is a reaction against Stalinist 'vulgar' Marxism. I would think, for example, that this would have been one of the considerations weighing with Charles Taylor, who is quoted by Bernstein as one of the most effective proponents of the philosophical position in question, and who was active in the early New Left. Seen in this light, the emphasis on purposive action represents a project essentially similar to the kind of thing Sartre is doing in his attempted renewal of Marxism. There are two points in particular at which the philosophical and the political issues converge:

- Stalinist Marxism is reductionist not just logically but also culturally. The correct recognition that a human action does not always have the meaning assigned to it by the individual agent is exaggerated into a positivism which robs actions of their human meaning altogether. Whole dimensions of human experience are thereby simply eliminated. At its worst, the vulgar Marxist response to the area of moral behaviour, for example, has been not just to combat a narrow moralism but to eliminate the ethical dimension entirely; likewise in the area of cultural activity it has in effect deprived human behaviour of any authentic aesthetic or intellectual significance. This has had its all too apparent effect on the cultural policy of the Soviet Union, with the relegation of Soviet artists and intellectuals to the status of time-servers and propagandists.
- Vulgar Marxist 'explanations' of human behaviour have in fact served not to explain but to mystify. To assert for example that, because a particular writer or thinker belongs to a certain class, he can therefore be appropriately understood as representing the interests of that class, is so far to explain nothing about his activity; it is a mere dogmatic assertion. Genuinely to understand why he wrote or thought as he did, one would have to investigate his own conception of his situation and of his activity, and one would have to show how the attitude characteristic of a certain class could present itself to this particular individual as an appropriate one for him in the light of his experience, his aims and purposes. The mere categories of 'class membership' and 'class interests' are by themselves insufficient. (The above point is not confined, of course, to intellectual activity, which is taken simply as an example.)

Thus I regard the restoration to action of its human significance as a necessary prolegomenon to the development of an adequate Marxism. This is why I think the reasons/causes distinction worth defending.

The slogan 'Marxist humanism' is out of fashion on the left, but it remains valid.

Bernstein refers to the reasons/causes dichotomy as 'the new dualism'; and it has been thought objectionable just because it is dualistic. However, I do not think it needs to be presented as a dualism at all. On the contrary, it is the category of purposive action that is fundamental, and which itself underlies that of causality. Various philosophers have drawn attention to the fact that one can specify what is to count as a 'cause' only from the standpoint of purposive human agency and human intervention in the world. Such a standpoint is presupposed when men pick out particular physical events as significant and hence identify significant connections between different events. The very idea of a mechanistic universe is inseparable from that of men's utilising the physical world as a machine. Ironically, this is precisely the kind of philosophical perspective we found Bernstein discussing in Part I. It is a pity that he did not look more closely at the connection between Part I and Part IV. Had he done so, he might have been less inclined, after asserting that human cognition presupposes human agency, to take seriously the possibility of eliminating the latter category. The reason why one is entitled to be sceptical about such a possibility is not that the category of purposive agency 'underlines a great deal of our everyday thinking', but that it underlines precisely those categories by which it is supposed to be replaceable.

There are indeed more general grounds for such scepticism. For to eliminate totally the categories of 'reason' and 'purpose' from our comprehension of behaviour would preclude us from considering our own future activity in terms of our choices and intentions. Is it to be supposed, then, that one could stop making choices and assessing one's choices, stop entertaining intentions, survey one's own behaviour simply as a set of possible physical events more or less predictable? There is surely considerable force in the existentialist view of man as condemned to freedom, condemned to make choices and to bear the responsibility for his own decisions - the view that Bernstein discusses in his Part II. Once again, one could wish that he had looked more at the connections between the different sections of what is otherwise a valuable and interesting book.

CRITICAL THEORY

David Wood

Herbert Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy,
(translated by Joris de Bres), NLB 1972; £3.25

One of the advantages of having a long intellectual life behind you is that you can produce another book without actually writing anything new. But most of the essays collected in this book are new to me and all of them worth reading. Joris de Bres has successfully liberated many of them from foreign languages.

The centre of the book - A Study on Authority - is a series of six essays focussing on the stages through which the bourgeois concepts of freedom and authority have developed, within a socio-historical setting, from Luther to Pareto. Inexplicably, the reference to the *family* in the original German title is dropped in translation, but is a theme that is drawn in at the end of each essay, so widening its relevance.

Apart from the last essay - 'Freedom and the Historical Imperative' - the other chapters originally took the form of review-articles, of three quite different books. The first and most important is an excellent review of the first publication of Marx's

1844 Manuscripts in Germany in 1932, for which Marcuse was about the best placed person around, having just written a book on Hegel's Ontology. Next, he makes the very criticisms of Sartre's Being and Nothingness that eventually forced that author to take up a Marxist position. Finally, he wades into Popper deliciously viciously, accusing him of having history rather than historicism as the object of his attack.

In view of the recent English translations by Milligan and by McLellan, together with Mezaros' book on Marx's Theory of Alienation, the review of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (EPM) is very well timed. He produces about the best account of the Marx/Hegel relationship that I have read and convinces me of the impossibility of separating Marx's later work (especially the German Ideology and Capital) from their 'philosophical' foundations in the EPM. Anyone who has swallowed Althusser should read this as an antidote. Having said that about the literary context in which this work is important, we must add that both the EPM and Marcuse's review stress what is too often ignored, namely the revolutionary character that Marx's philosophical base gives to his later economic theories. (In comparison, Althusser's work can only be seen as the theoretical alienation of the critique of political economy.)

Marcuse spends most of his time sketching the view of man as a species-being that Marx is presupposing. He shows the pivotal position of 'alienated labour' in linking Marx's social critique to the essence of man; he shows how the problem of alienation demands a solution in practice, and the consequent limits that this places on philosophy. Finally he distinguishes where Hegel failed to distinguish (and Marx did) 'objectification' and 'alienation'. The latter is the form that the former takes on under capitalism. The former is universal to man, the latter is perversion. Hegel's failure to distinguish the two merely expresses the historical contingency of their identity under capitalism. The discussion of this very important distinction, and its explicit denial (in Hyppolite and Heidegger) can be carried on by referring to Mezaros' book (see above). The importance of the distinction is of course that one's arguments about the eliminability of alienation are often countered by the ineliminability of objectifications. But the two are quite compatible.

Marcuse's work on authority is concerned with the various ways in which the central contradiction between individual freedom and social order (= authority) was solved as bourgeois social theory emerged. In each case he shows how the family is ascribed a social role and justified in terms of its reproduction of a certain attitude to authority. One of the most interesting features of the whole analysis of the family (and of the state) is what one could call the convergence of the critical and the apologetic views of these institutions. That is to say - Marcuse often does not need to do more than quote (say) Hegel's own words to make his point. And these words are often astounding as we shall see.

The defiance of the old feudal order and the beginnings of bourgeois social theory are to be found first in Luther. Freedom and obedience are made compatible by confining each to its proper sphere. Freedom, reason, equality, independence belong to the 'inner person' (the Christian), while unfreedom, inequality and dutiful servitude are the conditions of holding office in the outer world. But the separation of the person from his office is only the first stage in the formal/legal attitude taken to the outer world. In its own terms, worldly authority cannot be judged by any individual man, being sanctified by God, and so Luther is led to the most violent condemnations of rebellion. For it not only seeks to evade punishment, but attacks the very institutions of authority and punishment. Luther meets the problem as to 'who shall judge'. Marcuse is not of course immune from this, and changes his mind in his last essay, from believing that

a constitution supported by the majority allows no minority right of rebellion to making the provision that the majority must not be a 'managed' one, otherwise it expresses the opinions of power not of people.

But the problems of restricting Luther's freedom to the purely private realm were clear. The sphere of personal relations, for example, could easily conflict with one's 'outer' life, if one acting out of love, sincerity and truth. Anti-authoritarianism had a constant tendency to escape the field of its original justification. It is here that Calvin entered with his union of freedom and obedience in the outer world. In his doctrine of predestination, our task is merely to discover our destiny. The family becomes a means of breaking a child's will, so that it learns what it is to be subject to the will of other men. And... the social function of the family in the bourgeois authority system has rarely been more clearly expressed. (It is worth mentioning at this point that Marcuse's own views are not, by contract 'permissive'. And his reasons illustrate the impossibility of judging family patterns *in vacuo*. Elsewhere ("The Obsolescence of the Freudian Conception of Man" in Five Essays) he attacks permissiveness as an expression of the way the previous mediating function of the father in providing the child with a superego has now been taken over directly by society. I think Marcuse wants some discipline in a family precisely so that the child can learn the will to resist later social pressures.)

Marcuse next deals with Kant, who believes both in man's natural freedom and in society's interests in disciplining men, and so again confronts the problem of reconciling them. His solution is like Luther's in being a doctrine of two realms, but he appears to invert Luther's arrangement. For Kant allows that there by *public* freedom and *private* obedience. But this is very misleading. For he conceives of the public realm as almost co-terminous with the realm of *publication* and rational discussion with one's educated friends. The private realm on the other hand, is that in which one holds office, which enjoins one to obedience. Kant nowhere mentions the freedom to march through the streets of Londonderry.

What Marcuse shows is that Kant's other doctrines - his theory of right, of transcendental freedom, the concept of the general community, and his very subtle justification of private property, all lead to his proscribing the right to resistance, and the legitimation not only of authority in principle, but any actual system of government to which one is subject. Freedom is freedom under the law, be it moral or civil. For Marcuse - 'This is the highest rationalization of social authority within bourgeois philosophy'.

Hegel however is rightly critical of Kant's conception of the 'general community'. While he agrees that it is the condition for individual freedom to become real, he does not see it actually realised in civil society. Where it is realised is in the *state*, which is conceived of legalistically, as the embodiment of universality, from the very beginning. And as freedom is embodied in the universality of the state, individual freedom consists in obedience to it. The importance of the family comes in bending individuals into this frame of mind. For Hegel it has three functions:

a) The family is the immediate context in which we learn communal living and to transcend individual egoistic impulses; b) it is the basis for the justification of private property. For a family, possession of property is not a greedy, selfish matter, but is 'transformed into "something ethical, into labour and care for a common possession" '; c) the 'mutual recognition' to be found in the family is the best example of the true relationship between *domination* and *servitude*, (which nonetheless has a dialectic which transcends the family).

It is a strange sort of contrast to this that the 19th century produced its theories of counter-revolution, with such figures as Burke, de Maistre, Bonald

and Schlegel. It is as if they recognised the validity of Hegel's critique of Kant and yet could not accept Hegel's solution, either because of the emergence of left-wing Hegelianism, or because Hegel's vision of the State did not inspire enough fear in people. For their theories involve total contempt for the individual, a smutty little creature, and the elevation of irrationality to, literally, a governing principle. Marcuse then shows how this is transformed into the theory of restoration, and how, yet again, the connection between the family, property and authority is stressed.

While the natural conclusion is to be found in the essay on Marx that follows, in which the totally social nature of authority and its basis in class domination is spelled out, Marcuse carries on to deal with Sorel and Pareto, and the theory of the totalitarian state. This was particularly appropriate, being written in the years of Hitler's rise to power (although published in Paris). The discussion of Sorel allows Marcuse to put some of his own views on authority, as he has already done in the Marx essay, in discussing Engels and Lenin on the same theme. What he objects to in Sorel is that his views on violence and elites are inherently ambiguous. That is, they justify both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary activity equally well, and the reason is that Sorel's theory is fatally severed from any economic foundation. In fact, exactly the same criticism can be made of Marcuse himself. From Engels and Lenin, Marcuse is drawn to accept authority in two senses 1. the internal order needed in a revolutionary party 2. the functional, organizational authority needed in any society, socialist or otherwise. But Marcuse is changeable when it comes to a third sense 3. the (external) imposition of one's (revolutionary) views on the class enemy.

In his essay on "Repressive Tolerance" (see Critique of Pure Tolerance, Cape Books) he originally argues for the legitimacy of 'a constitutional government sustained by a majority of the people', which would only allow minority groups the 'natural right' to demand their share of humanity, and no more. But in the Postscript to that essay, he demonstrates his so-called elitism by saying that the majority cannot be quite so sacred when its opinion is administered by vested interests. There follows his well-known arguments for intolerance to inhumanity. So it seems as though Marcuse does finally come down to accepting the third form in which authority is justifiable - the imposition of the views of a visionary minority of the majority. But just as Sorel's economic theories were rather woolly, so Marcuse has abandoned any connection with a real economic base. The groups towards which he looks in hope in no way share common economic problems. Marcuse's argument, as we shall see, is not economically rooted at all, but more psycho-biological. Marcuse's interests in psychological aspects of Capitalism draws him to Pareto, despite the latter's right wing leanings. When Pareto published The Mind and Society he himself called it a dangerous book. One assumes that he meant '... in the hands of revolutionaries'. But it could as easily be seen to provide a blue-print for modern Greece or German Fascism (though I don't identify the two). Pareto's most interesting feature is his display of the social function of irrationality in securing domination over a people. But whereas Marcuse might perhaps accept the link between irrationality and domination, he of course rejects the claim that domination is the universal form of social life. Pareto's psychologically manipulated society could have been the model of One-Dimensional Man.

The strange feature of these essays is that there is no conclusion. This is probably a consequence of their original position in a larger collected work. Marcuse's failure to deal with the place that authority has been accorded in the history of sociology - (one thinks eg. of Simmel and Weber on authority and legitimation) which would be just as revealing, is made in another essay, not published here in Authority

and the Family in German Sociology up to 1933 (1936). It is a shame that some summary was not given of this work.

Marcuse's attitude to existentialism is perhaps predictable, and is here recorded in his review of *Being and Nothingness*. His basic criticism is that Sartre's work is philosophical, and as such 'remains an idealistic doctrine: it hypostatizes specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics. Existentialism thus becomes part of the very ideology which it attacks.' (p.161) This is why it could appear under the German occupation.

As far as human freedom is concerned, a central theme of existentialism, Marcuse finds it to be crucially contradictory in Sartre's presentation. For the realm of freedom is that of the subject as a Cartesian ego, and as soon as Sartre (see "Materialism and Revolution") tries to fill in 'human reality', man becomes subject to the unfreedom of the external world. The central fact that we are always 'in a situation', surrounded by contingencies we never chose, is so far from being a possible constraint on Sartre's conception of freedom as to be the actual condition of freedom. This is explained by the analysis of the subject, the For-itself (*Pour-soi*) in terms of lack, negativity, and striving. Freedom becomes synonymous with the inability of the For-itself to ever coincide with itself fully, and, as such is inalienable. We are just as free at the hands of the executioner. But guillotine freedom tastes of idealism. The executioner beholds liberty. It is not that Marcuse totally rejects this form of transcendence. His view is that it only comes into its own in peculiar historical conditions (eg. at the time of a revolution) but is otherwise, that is, when not linked to action, enslaving.

Marcuse interpretes Sartre's analyses both of sexual and social relationships - examples of Bad Faith - as paradigmatic cases of reification. He criticizes the portmanteau use of the *Pour-Soi* in its role as both personal, social and historical subject, which leaves nothing to be desired in man's social existence, it having already been established as a 'metaphysical condition'. It is on this note that he concludes: man is not a *given* but an end towards which we must aim.

Sartre should have done the decent thing and given up philosophy when he came to account for human existence - as did Kierkegaard and Marx. In a post-script he acknowledges Sartre's radical conversion in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which was the natural consequence of Sartre's auto-criticism, which took much the same form as this essay of Marcuse's.

I shall not spend long on the Popper essay. He shows that Popper's understanding of historicism is utterly confused, that Popper shows no signs of any acquaintance with the whole historicist tradition in the 19th century, and finally that his rejection of holism is not so much a philosophical position as a political one. The most important point for me was to find Marcuse's 'answer' to MacIntyre's indictment of Marcuse for putting liberalism and totalitarianism on a continuum. Marcuse is not saying that the two are fundamentally the same. What he is saying is that the two are on a *historical continuum*. That the problems involved in liberalism can (and have) led to totalitarianism for their solution.

But the question of whether there are inexorable laws of history that merely use individual men as grist to their mill is still with us. In his essay "Freedom and the Historical Imperative" he argues that social change is not a process that occurs independent of men. Rather it depends on the fact that men have to survive, and so satisfy old needs, but also develop new needs constantly. Historical imperatives arise with the need to change existing conditions so as to allow the development of new needs. Societies change when they fail to satisfy felt needs. But the West is

so well managed that most of men's natural needs are satisfied. Impoverishment has not (absolutely) increased progressively. None the less, America (for example) is an intolerable place to live in, precisely because the field of free choice has become identical with the commodity market. What Marcuse hopes for is that *freedom* become a real *need*. It would then be impossible for its satisfaction to be administered, and the inability of the West to provide this need would lead to its downfall. At the same time, if the Achilles heel of capitalism is 'the self-propelling satisfaction of needs' and people actually start not to want, let alone need what it produces, then again, it will collapse. Marcuse's focus here is not on production, and the reappropriation of the means of production by the proletariat, but on the reproduction of society, in which the minds of its members are of crucial importance. It is in focussing on the possibility of intervention at this point that Marcuse has been called an idealist. This is not quite fair. He is a 'critical theorist'.

The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, which includes Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas, but especially Marcuse, takes the function of 'critical theory' to be that of bringing to light and making quite clear the contradictions present in society, while traditional theory on the other hand, merely serves to reproduce the status quo. The point of doing this rests on a refusal to accept any mechanistic theory of history, but rather to place a value on the subversion of ideas and the justification of subversive modes of consciousness. If the reproduction of society has to operate, at least at one stage of the cycle, by going through men's minds, then it is here that it can be made vulnerable.

Marcuse is the Marxist of possibility, not of necessity. There will be no *inevitable* collapse of capitalism, although (see New Statesman June 23, 1972) he still defends its likelihood. The shift is from prediction to hope; his hope is invested not in the working classes, and black America. The consciousness-raising task of Critical Theory (see NLR 63, Gbran Therborn "The Frankfurt School") has already been half accomplished. The unhappy consciousnesses of America are undergoing 'the radical political synthesis of experience' - in his own immortal phenomenological/Marxist words. To attack him for his intellectualism is quite mistaken unless one also attacks his claims about consciousness as a vital link in the reproduction of society, or shows that even if that is true, it is not a point at which one can usefully intervene.

As long as the only groups who actually do experience a 'vital need' to transform their consciousnesses are disaffected, non-integrated groups, and as long as society functions so as to keep these in a minority, there is no reason why their attitudes should spread. Radical consciousness is an important expression of a minority peripheral social position, and this restriction of the social base is serious unless one has a further theory about the autonomous appeal of reason by which one might spread one's theories around. But Marcuse explicitly links his hopes to the inability of the West to satisfy higher order needs. If these are only felt by a few, there can be little hope, on Marcuse's analysis.

He is also right in thinking that the material possibilities for an ideal society are already with us. Utopia is no longer just a dream but a real possibility. But the vast economic power that makes this a real possibility is matched by just as great a determination that its restricted ownership be preserved. One sees no 'weakening of the social fibre', 'revolt of the intellect, of the senses, of the imagination' among the captains of industry. Quite the opposite. Marcuse too easily allows his rational imagination to do the Sunny Jim over the real economic obstacles to his dreams.

Marcuse's fears about the management of society

are a little exaggerated. They make absurd the fight on the factory floor. The truth is that the battle has many fronts, and that Marcuse's emphasis of one front - changing human nature' - is logically independent from his pessimism about the other fronts.

This, like his other books, is well worth reading.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

Janet Vaux

R.M. Hare, Practical Inferences; Essays on Philosophical Method; Essays on Moral Concepts; Applications of Moral Philosophy; MacMillan, 1971-2; £1.95 each.

Over the past year, MacMillans have introduced a new series - "New Studies in Practical Philosophy" - of which four of the first six titles are by Hare. In fact Hare's four volumes collect together almost all his previously published essays. All the major Philosophy-journal articles are included, except "The Promising Game" (apparently because its been reprinted so often). And there are many papers not directed primarily at his academic colleagues (BBC talks etc.), and one or two new essays. So, together with his two first books, we more or less have a Collected Works. It seems, then, it is time to take a fairly general look at Hare.

Long before the post-war revival became moribund, Hare's reputation had become - in view of his historical importance - surprisingly low. Aside from a few scattered fans, almost no-one claims to take him seriously; yet most moral philosophy being done in Britain is influenced in some way by a reaction to him. He was most obviously influential after the war, when Oxford was full of young iconoclasts returned from the front or intelligence unit. Hare was one of them (returned from a Japanese prison camp) and at that time causing some excitement. His insistence on "the rationality of moral discourse" provided a way of taking moral philosophy seriously again, after the positivists had dismissed it or parodied it in emotivist theories. However, he seems to have been trying to accommodate, rather than renounce, many positivist assumptions. In particular, he held that there was an unbridgeable gap between "factual" and "evaluative" statements. He insisted that ethical theories cannot lead to "substantial" conclusions. And he used "naturalism" as a sort of bogey word. This continues throughout his writing, even though he openly supposes that his ethical theory can condemn such things as racial prejudice, and even though the drift of his latest writings is strongly "naturalistic".

He talks as though he had found a third way for ethics, besides providing moral conclusions or not providing moral conclusions - that of making things clear. He suggests, at length, in the complacent "A School for Philosophers", that Oxford philosophy really is much clearer than other sorts of philosophy - and that this is partly due to a stress on style:

"Enormous stress is laid on style, not in the sense of literary elegance - for this is esteemed of small value - but in the sense of an effective, unambiguous, clear and ordered expression of one's thought, which cannot be achieved unless the thought itself has the same quality". (EPM p.41)

Stylistically, this is an example of Hare at his best, with a sure command of clauses and sub-clauses. At his worst, he is a little like a children's reader. His sentences are never baffling; they are not just formally correct, but also never formally misleading. But stylistic clarity does not guarantee clarity of thought. In his failure to make his thought clear to others, Hare demonstrates this. It is easy to seem to move lucidly from one obvious point to another, simply

by ignoring difficulties in the "obvious points". The assumption that stylistic clarity requires clarity of thought is an example of Hare at his question-begging worst.

His attitude to clarity also provokes another sort of simplicity, giving a general background of unreality to his writing. Here is part of Hare's world:

"If all the advertisements were advertising the same brand of soap, as might be the case in a Communist country, then it would be time to get worried - though even in that case good would come of encouraging people to wash. But since they are all advertising different brands, the consumer soon realises that there is not much difference between the brands, and, though of course he will probably go on buying some heavily advertised brand, will not very much care which". ("Adolescents into Adults" APM pp.55.6).

Unfortunately these sorts of descriptions make for more than just comic relief. They also vitiate the psychology on which his ethics is based, and give a very curious air to his accounts of his own moral and political decisions. For example, in several essays he mentions his decision to sign a declaration condemning the Suez invasion - and this decision often appears mysterious:

"I signed the document, and I am sure that I was right to do so, although the reasons given for saying the action was morally wrong were almost as absurd as those given for saying it was morally right". ("The Practical Relevance of Philosophy" EPM p.100).

However he hints at reasons for calling the action wrong - in "Reasons of State" (AMP p.23) that it was reckless, that no regard was paid to consequences, and in "Peace" (AMP p.86) that it was a "selfish" policy:

"We ought not to support policies of our own government which, if the government of another state were to pursue them in similar circumstances, we are disposed to condemn".

Condemn for what reason?

"It may help if we imagine our own country at the receiving end of such policies".

This sounds like a piece of nursery moralising: "You wouldn't like it if Henry ate your cake"; "You wouldn't like it if your country was invaded".

What is, if anything, worse than this nursery moralising is the insinuation that any other sort of reasoning is "absurd"; he seems to be trying to paralyse the discussion. Part of the trouble is that he discovers a sort of moral lock-jaw in discussions about "facts":

"A communist and a non-communist may agree that in a free economy a man who has more enterprise, skill and initiative may get a good deal more than an equal share of the goods produced; the non-communist may think this a good thing, the communist an evil thing". ("Peace" APM p.81).

End of discussion; impasse. But *this* is absurd - there is much more to be said on both sides, and Hare seems really committed to the strange position that two people could be in complete agreement about their economic, social and psychological interpretations, and still be in important disagreement in their "moral opinions" of the "facts".

However, he is also suggesting that his own form of moralising is not absurd because it derives from his universalisability rule. This lies at the heart of his logical account of "right", "ought" etc. The only "facts" it requires are facts about what people

desire. It's not quite clear how desires achieved their cornerstone position in his ethics, but the assumption seems to be that, roughly speaking, you will call what you desire "right". He only offers arguments for this assumption in his latest writings - especially "Wrongness and Harm" - when he accounts for human interest in terms of the satisfaction of desires. Roughly the universalisability rule claims that if any action is called "right" then any similar action in similar circumstances must also be called "right". It seems correct in so far as it is based on the consideration that if you take two actions, call one "right" and the other "wrong", then you must show some difference between them. His problem is to show that it is never a relevant difference that it is, say, me rather than you performing an action. He does not, however, seem to recognise this as a problem. Initially, he seemed to suppose that the claim that moral judgements must be universal (i.e. bear no reference to "you" or "me") was contained in the universalisability rule. More recently he has produced a "truth of logic" that to be in the "same situation" as someone else involves having his desires and thus prescriptions. Then "reasonable" moralising would consist in ascertaining a few facts, especially about people's logic. This done, we seem to have a simple test to apply - "Would you like it....?"

But the test must really be impossible to apply. For a long time I had been puzzled by the "truth of logic"; it seemed to involve a parody of nanny's appeal, which was to you-with-your-desires. It also seemed to be Catch-22; the other person would always win. What would you desire if you were him? - why, whatever he desires, of course. Now an aside in "Wrongness and Harm" suggests that Hare did not have such a simple identity-switch model in mind. In any situation,

"we are one of the parties whose desires have to be taken into account." (EMC p.109).

You retain your own desires, call up the other person's in imagination, balance them out against one another, and act according to the strongest desires. And this seems impossible - it makes desires into sorts of discrete entities, such that I can entertain both a desire and its contrary without qualitatively altering either.

In fact, Hare is now effectively drifting to an almost classical form of Utilitarianism. The universalisability rule has provided an equivalent to the felicific calculus, enjoining the balancing up of different people's desires (winner takes all). Though Hare claims to be basing his ethics on human interests, this amounts to a grounding in the desires that individual people have. And what is in a man's interest turns out to be the gratification of the predominating felt desires in a number of real and imaginary situations. This is a value deriving from the descriptive psychology). Hegel, Marx, Freud - might never have written. In the 19th century, the Utilitarians may take some credit for contributing to the theory and intellectual background which generated the great social reforms. But it does not seem likely that the wholesale importation of their views into the 20th century will be much use to anyone. Our views of men and society, and the problems to be faced, are different. And this matters to Hare. As he says, he became a moral philosopher because he was troubled about practical moral questions. Also, as a committed liberal, he does believe that philosophy can in some way (by making things clear) further the liberal cause. He has a vision of what philosophy can do:

"It is perhaps true that, if philosophers had done their job better in the last two centuries (both the job of clarifying their ideas to themselves and the job of getting other people to understand them) there would not have been a Nazi movement?" ("Peace" AMP p.72)

But the vision is set in a dream landscape.

PHILOSOPHY WITH A MISSION

Bob Sutcliffe

Professor H.B. Acton, 'The Ethics of Capitalism', Foundation for Business Responsibilities, 50p.

You can't complain that Professor Acton of Edinburgh University (editor of Philosophy, and author of What Marx Really Said) isolates himself from social reality. He is a philosopher with a mission. Like Joan of Arc, he wants to inject some courage and moral zeal into his chosen heroes, the British capitalist class; and, like Dale Carnegie, he tries to give them some useful practical tips about how to come out on top without actually using the troops. This mixture of mystical sermonising and pop psychotherapy appears in 'The Ethics of Capitalism', originally a lecture to the Foundation for Business Responsibilities, now as eccentric pamphlet priced a lp for each 50 amazing words. I have only once seen anything at all like it before; it was published by the John Birch Society.

The big problem for the bourgeoisie, Acton says, is that capitalism is losing out everywhere to workers who no longer 'think of personal advancement, but surrender their future to a collective control quite unlike anything that Samuel Smiles and his readers could have thought possible'. 'The present day employer has to walk through valleys and face dangers of which his nineteenth-century predecessors knew nothing'. The capitalists don't fight back effectively because they are demoralised; they lack 'a sense of identity...a view of oneself, of one's links with the past and contributions to society, which is both reasonably coherent and morally acceptable'.

Why is it all so difficult? Partly because the state finances strikes through the social security system and Communists are in control of the trade unions. But more fundamentally it is a question of the powerful myths in the possession of the workers which even the capitalists have come to believe. First, the workers have the most romantic heroes - Keir Hardie, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Tom Mann, 'perhaps' Lenin - as well as the most inspiring stories - Peterloo, Mur des Federes, Black Friday, the October Revolution; and they have even gone off with the French Revolution which rightly belongs to the bourgeoisie. Second, a number of unscrupulous or misguided writers have spread myths about bad conditions under capitalism ('employers are said to have persecuted and oppressed their workers'), or have defamed the heroes of the bourgeoisies - the culprits are Marx and Engels who 'made selective use of official reports'; Tawney, Carlyle, Pugin, even Disraeli, who all said the bourgeoisie were selfish; Galbraith and Marcuse who say that modern capitalism manipulates demand.

Capitalists need a counter-myth and Acton gives it to them: an economic and political system based on the sovereignty of self-directed individual consumers (capitalism, in case you don't recognise it) is morally superior to one based on the decisions of producers and government in a collectivist economy where the consumer 'has to buy what some centralised body has decided..'. He does admit that, even where consumers are sovereign, 'what they want depends upon how they have been brought up. If they have been well brought up their patterns of demand will be morally acceptable'.

Acton's only hope for capitalism is that the workers will see all this and will stop believing such myths as the anti-capitalists put out:

'People can tolerate a lot of falsehood, but the stories of exploitation and cruelty can hardly go on being applied to present day industry in these times of widespread car ownership and holidays in Spain...

The workers will come to see that 'firms are more coherent and creative organisations than trade unions':

'Surely the profitability and development of firms holds out more promise for those who work in them than wage demands which lead to losses. If managements had more confidence in their status and functions they would make these things clear to the world. They would show how costly all the wage negotiating and striking is and would employ handsome men and beautiful women to explain this to television viewers, instead of putting forward the battered and tongue-tied veterans who appear today.'

If that prospect is not enough to seduce the workers, Acton arms his presumably rather bewildered audience of capitalists, taking a day off from the class struggle to hear him, with an inspiration summary of their historical identity;

'The bourgeoisie, more scupulous and pacific than the aristocracy, and less deferential than the peasantry, so improved the arts of production that the system of warrior lords and dependent serfs was replaced by one in which large populations of free citizens enjoy a scope of living which goes beyond what the aristocracy formerly disposed of. Free speech, free movement, free trade, free thought, exploration of the earth and oceans, an ideal of peaceful domesticity, water colour drawing, conversation pieces, the novel and omestic drama - these are some of the things that the capitalist spirit has contributed to modern civilisation. Whether the multitude who can increasingly share in all this will wish to do so, or whether they will prefer to bask in the exploits of a new aristocracy of entertainers while themselves acting on the maxims of 'one out all out', and 'one up all up' we do not know. Solidarity and monopoly are dangers before which a system of freedom might have to capitulate.'

Most of this is really too pathetic to argue with or too ridiculous to ridicule. But Acton is not as daft as from his pamphlet he looks (that would be nearly impossible). He sees the bourgeoisie as a class which obtained power through violent and revolutionary means, which might lose in the same manner, and which retains it only at the cost of constant struggle with a working class which grows in strength through greater organisation and solidarity and the possession of a socialist idealogy. Many a true word spoken in unintentional jest.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

● A philosophy department is being formed at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka. There is a vacancy for a person "preferably with interests in philosophy of science or epistemology", but more importantly with a concern for the problems of teaching philosophy in the Third World. Further details from: Richard Sturch, Department of Philosophy and Classics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

● BOOKS announce that the full range of books and pamphlets from the French left-wing publishing house of Maspero is now available in England. Orders can be quickly dealt with by post. Write for 'Maspero Catalogue' to BOOKS, 84 WOODHOUSE LANE, LEEDS 2. Phone 42483.

● RESURGENCE is a forum for libertarians to discuss and develop theory. Latest issue includes articles on: Blueprint for Survival, "The Post-Underground", and the Common Market. 25p from Resurgence, 275 Kings Road, Kingston, Surrey.

ISTVAN MESZAROS

The Canadian Government's refusal to grant Istvan Meszaros a visa to take up a post at York University, Toronto, was hardly mentioned in the British press. We are reprinting a statement issued by Professor Roy Edgley of Sussex University for those who are not familiar with the facts of the case. We regard the Canadian Government's action as a serious denial of academic and intellectual freedom; and we urge our readers to express their condemnation of the Canadian Government in whatever way they can: by sending letters/petitions to the Canadian Prime Minister or Minister of Immigration (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada), and by raising the matter for debate in local organisations (A.U.T. etc.). Professor Edgley writes: "anything that gets the matter widely known and protested about will be useful".

In February, Dr. Istvan Meszaros, Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Sussex, was offered and accepted a senior professorship at York University, Toronto. He applied for a visa, and soon after making enquiries in July he was informed that his application had been refused. Members of faculty at York told him that this was expected, that an appeal would be lodged, and that they were confident that the visa would be granted. On the strength of these assurances, Meszaros submitted his resignation to Sussex, but the University did not accept it until the approach of the new term forced it to do so at the beginning of September. At that time the result of the appeal was still unknown, but on 23rd September, the appeal was finally rejected. Meszaros is thus without a job either in Britain or in Canada, though York has agreed to pay his salary for the coming session.

The Canadian government has given no reason for its decision, but as Meszaros is a Marxist the assumption must be that he is regarded as a security risk. He is originally Hungarian, and as a student and friend of Lukacs he was one of the first citizens of a Communist to speak out publicly against Stalinism. He left Hungary in 1956. For the last 13 years he has been a teacher at British Universities and he holds a British passport. He has remained loyal to the views that forced him to leave Hungary and has never made any secret of them, but during this period of political unrest in the universities he has never acted in any way to foment disorder or to infringe the academic code. The inference must be that he is being penalised for his political beliefs. Many of us at Sussex conclude that the Canadian government's decision constitutes an unwarranted constraint on individual, academic, and intellectual freedom, and are urging the government to reconsider the case and revise its policy for the future.

