

EDITORIAL



This is the fiftieth issue of *Radical Philosophy*. The first issue was published in January 1972, and we reprint below the statement that appeared in that first issue. The aims of the group were to publish the magazine, set up a network of local activities and groups, and hold national conferences. The magazine has appeared continuously since that date. Local groups were formed, and some met regularly for some years, though none exist at the moment. A number of conferences have been held; the last was in November 1986, and a further one is planned for the autumn of 1988, when the fiftieth issue is published.

The group hoped to challenge the narrow analytical concerns of philosophy in British Universities and to allow a forum for debate of alternatives to analytical philosophy, including Marxism and traditions such as Hegelianism, phenomenology and Existentialism. It aimed to challenge the isolation of the academy in general and philosophy in particular from broader social and political concerns, many of which were reflected in the student activism of the 1960s and early 1970s. The group was a pioneer in the general critical project undertaken by such other near-contemporaries as *History Workshop*, *Feminist Review*, the *Radical Science* journal, and *Capital and Class*.

A great deal has changed since then. We have seen the end of the era of expansion in higher education, the increasing dominance, under Thatcher, of technicist, narrowly 'vocational' and profit-oriented goals for education, and the virtual demise of student activism in its earlier forms.

Within the academy, philosophy itself, and other areas of intellectual activity which cannot easily be aligned to the new technicist goals, have increasingly come under attack. In the general process of cuts, closures and retrenchment, the philosophy departments in some universities have been closed, and others remain under threat. In 1972, members of the *Radical Philosophy* collective might have queried the value of philosophy in the academy at all, given its intellectually stultifying nature. They are now perhaps more likely to be making common cause with established philosophy in response to the cuts. The institutional base of philosophy in this country has always been small, and now it is deeply under threat.

Within those philosophy departments that remain, there have been some changes. The stranglehold of the sort of 'analytical' philosophy which derived its inspiration from the later work of Wittgenstein and from adherents of the 'ordinary language' school is no longer so total; and *Radical Philosophy* itself has been one of the reasons for this. Thus moral philosophers are less likely to suppose, for example, that it is possible to debate issues about 'the language of morality' without raising substantive moral questions. In many British universities and other institutions of higher education, there has been some rapprochement with Continental traditions, and it is now quite respectable for uni-

versities to offer courses on Existentialism or phenomenology. The question of Marxism is rather different; there has been something of a vogue for so-called 'analytical Marxism', but discussions of Marxism which are informed by socialist concerns are hard to find in mainstream philosophy.

Radical Philosophy has had a complex relationship to the academic institutions of this country. It is still regarded by some academics as not philosophically 'respectable', yet it has consistently generated articles of high intellectual quality which many students and teachers have found useful. It has been accused from time to time by readers of publishing articles of an academic impenetrability which outdoes that of some mainstream philosophical journals. But it has also published articles on a broad range of issues which, years on, still produce a steady stream of requests for back issues from student readers. It has been an important forum for debates about Hegelianism, Marxism, for articles about Continental philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger, about aspects of post-structuralism, and, increasingly in the last few years, feminist contributions to and interventions in philosophical debate.

The network of groups envisaged in the first 'manifesto' of the magazine, whilst active for a while, did not last in its early form. 'Radical Philosophy' has increasingly become identified with the magazine, and it has not remained a 'group' in the sense initially envisaged. Nevertheless, the magazine (and the conferences) have played a useful role not simply in providing a forum for debate of issues which it is often hard to get taken seriously elsewhere, but in lessening the feeling of isolation which many teachers and students have felt in some institutions of higher education; and members of the collective as well as readers of the magazine have been active in sponsoring and co-operating in various left initiatives, including conferences.

The fact that *Radical Philosophy* has survived at all is something of an achievement. It has weathered its share of acute financial crises, and is currently in a reasonably healthy state. Its cover is now a little 'glossier' than it used to be, and the quality of the typeface less damaging to the eyes! But it has remained in 'magazine' format, and resisted any pressures to go increasingly 'upmarket', and, in particular, to hand itself over to a commercial publisher. Much of its character is determined by the fact that the production process has been conducted directly by the collective, so that production problems have figured almost as much in the debates of the collective as financial and editorial ones. Many members of the collective have worked hard over many years to produce the magazine, and some current members have been there since the beginning. To them, special thanks are due, as well as to those readers who have subscribed for years, and other newer readers who have bought complete sets of back issues!

The magazine has of course had its share, at times, of strong

disagreements among members of the editorial collective. But it has generally adhered to its initial aim of not 'laying down a philosophical line'. Rather, it aimed early on to work for the widest possible front of radicals in the field of philosophy, and it has managed to offer something to a rather varied population of readers with diverse interests, and to attract articles from a very wide range of contributors. This policy has sometimes been criticised for being 'eclectic'. But it is the sort of 'eclecticism' which aims for as broad an alliance as possible of critics of the philosophical establishment, not the sort which hangs on to the coat-tails of any fashionable theory, or espouses one dogmatism after another. Radical Philosophy has subjected to criticism the work of many writers (such as Althusser, Lacan, Derrida or Lyotard) who have sometimes been accepted uncritically on the left. And in so doing it has often drawn on the traditions of academic

philosophy itself, even whilst these have themselves been the object of discussion and critique. This dialectical quality of the magazine has perhaps been the most distinctive thing about it.

When it first came out, *Radical Philosophy* met a real need for a forum in which some of the ideas and intellectual currents of the time could be expressed. The existence of a forum for the expression and discussion of different views is more than ever necessary at a time when the left itself is undergoing a difficult period of uncertainty and self-criticism, and when the present government seems intent on dismantling philosophy itself in many institutions. We thank all our readers and contributors over the years for their contributions to Radical Philosophy, and hope for their support so that we can continue our (usually) lively and (often) unpredictable course.

EDITORIAL RADICAL PHILOSOPHY NO. 1. JANUARY 1972

Contemporary British philosophy is at a dead end. Its academic practitioners have all but abandoned the attempt to understand the world, let alone to change it. They have made philosophy into a narrow and specialised academic subject of little relevance or interest to anyone outside the small circle of Professional Philosophers.

Many students and teachers are now dissatisfied with this state of affairs, but so far they have been isolated. The result has been that serious philosophical work outside the conventional sphere has been minimal.

The Radical Philosophy Group has been set up to challenge this situation, by people within philosophy departments and in other fields of work. We aim to question the institutional divisions which have so impoverished philosophy: for example, the divisions between academic departments which have cut philosophers off from the important philosophical work already being done by psychologists, sociologists and others; the division between students and teachers which has divorced academic philosophy from the radical activity and ideas of students; and, above all, the divisions which have isolated the universities and other educational institutions from the wider society, thereby narrowing the horizons of philosophical concern.

As well as exposing the poverty of so much that now passes for philosophy, we shall aim to understand its causes. We need to ask whether its barrenness is the inevitable

consequence of its linguistic and analytic methods as opposed to, for example, their application to trivial 'problems'. We shall examine the historical and institutional roots of recent British philosophy and investigate its ideological role within the wider culture.

But we do not want to become exclusively preoccupied with the inadequacies of this type of philosophy. Our aim is to encourage and develop positive alternatives. For this there are other traditions which may inform our work (e.g. phenomenology and existentialism, Hegelian thought and Marxism). However, the Group will not attempt to lay down a philosophical line. Our main aim is to free ourselves from the restricting institutions and orthodoxies of the academic world, and thereby to encourage important philosophical work to develop: Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom!

ACTIVITIES

The initial activities of the Group will be:

- (1) Publication of a journal: RADICAL PHILOSOPHY
- (2) Regular meetings to be arranged in as many different places as possible. Local groups are being formed in London, Glasgow, Oxford and elsewhere.
- (3) We also hope to organize Conferences and other activities at a national level.

In this issue we have, as usual, a varied list of contributions. Ted Benton explores an aspect of Marx's theories that has not often received much attention from philosophers, and that is extremely important in the light of pressing contemporary environmental and ecological concerns; namely, Marx's conception of the human relationship to Nature and to other species. He argues that Marx's conception of these things is quite problematic and needs substantial revision.

Chris Arthur explores some recent feminist suggestions that, despite Hegel's apparent denial of any substantial form of equality between the sexes, there are aspects of his theories that can be 'recuperated' for feminist analysis. Arthur argues that such attempts at recuperation are based on misreadings of Hegel. Pauline Johnson, rather similarly, discusses Jessica Benjamin's attempt to appropriate aspects of Horkheimer's work and apply them to important feminist debates about autonomy and dependence, and she argues that, in the attempt to use Horkheimer's work in this way Benjamin's own analysis suffers from some of the problems that Horkheimer's own work generates. Both of these articles follow a long tradition in *Radical Philosophy* of discussing and critically evaluating the ways in which social or philosophical theories can be used to illuminate particular social or political concerns; in this case, concerns which have arisen from contemporary feminist debates.

Graham Tuson's article is rather different. Philosophy is an activity whose nature can be debated, and which can perhaps be compared to other human activities. Tuson discusses Richard Rorty's distinction between 'systematic' and 'edifying' philosophy; philosophy itself has sometimes been seen as 'therapeutic', and Tuson argues that modern family therapy can provide an interesting model for 'philosophy as therapy', and that recent developments in the theory and practice of family therapy and recent debates about the nature of philosophy can provide illuminating contexts for each other.

Finally – in this issue we are publishing something rather different. Philosophy is often thought of as something which normally only happens in an institution of higher education. In fact, however, a significant number of students now study philosophy at 'A' level, and we have carried discussion of 'A' level philosophy in the magazine before. But who are these 'A' level students? Nadine Cartner, a member of the Radical Philosophy Collective, teaches 'A' level philosophy in Hackney College in London. Most of her students are **not** middle class students with 'successful' school careers and an expectation of progression to higher education. They have mainly 'failed' at school and left with few or no qualifications; many of them are black. What does philosophy have to offer these students and what do they think about it? Nadine has produced an edited transcript of the comments made by her students about this, which makes for very interesting reading in the light of the current pressure for all education to be narrowly 'vocational', and in the light of common assumptions that philosophy could not possibly be a 'suitable' pursuit for such students. What emerges from their comments, despite considerable ambivalence among some of the commentators, is a strong critique of narrowly technicist and 'vocational' goals for education, such as those promoted by much government policy, and a belief that philosophy has some part to play in the enterprise of developing a critical understanding of one's world. *Radical Philosophy* has not perhaps paid sufficient attention in the past to the experiences of those who study philosophy, and in so far as it has, the focus has been, perhaps inevitably, on students in higher education. We hope that the contribution of Nadine's students might create a precedent for devoting more space to these issues in the future.

Jean Grimshaw



RADICAL PHILOSOPHY CONFERENCE 5 NOVEMBER 1988

10.00 - 10.30	REGISTRATION AND COFFEE
10.30 - 12.00	OPENING PLENARY NATURE, RIGHTS AND REVOLUTION
12.15 - 1.30	WORKSHOPS (HISTORY) 1 1789 & THE RIGHTS OF 'MAN': ROUSSEAU, PAINE AND WOLLSTONECRAFT 2 PHILOSOPHICAL REACTIONS TO REVOLUTION (I) 1789: BURKE AND HEGEL 3 PHILOSOPHICAL REACTIONS TO REVOLUTION (II) 1848: MARX AND MILL 4 COLONIALISM AND LIBERALISM 5 REVOLUTION AND INTELLECTUALS: 1917 AND AFTER: LENIN AND GRAMSCI
1.30 - 2.30	LUNCH
2.30 - 4.00	WORKSHOPS (CURRENT DEBATES) 1 FREEDOM, INDIVIDUALISM AND THE MARKET 2 SOCIALISM, FEMINISM AND EQUALITY 3 MARXISM, DEMOCRACY, POST-MARXISM? 4 MARXISM AND ECOLOGY 5 ART INTO LIFE: POLITICS AND CULTURE IN THE 80's
4.00 - 4.30	TEA
4.30 - 6.00	CLOSING PLENARY MARXISM AND UTOPIA

CONFERENCE FEE £5 (WAGED) £2 (UNWAGED)

ADVANCE REGISTRATION
PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO RADICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SEND THEM TO
NADINE CARTNER (R P CONFERENCE) HACKNEY COLLEGE
WOODBERRY DOWN, WOODBERRY GROVE
LONDON N4 2SH

POLITICS REASON AND HOPE

PHILOSOPHY AND
HISTORY
IN LIBERALISM
MARXISM AND BEYOND

POLYTECHNIC OF CENTRAL
LONDON
MARYLEBONE ROAD
LONDON NW1

SPEAKERS INCLUDE :

Anthony Arblaster, Chris Arthur,
Ted Benton, Robin Blackburn,
Jay Bernstein, Rosalind Delmar,
John Harrison, Christopher Hill,
Ernesto Laclau, Ruth Levitas,
Istvan Meszaros, Doug Moggach,
Francis Mulhern, Richard Norman,
Peter Osborne, Noel Parker,
Carole Pateman, Anne Phillips,
Griselda Pollock, Mike Rustin,
Gayatri Spivak, Judith Williamson