EDITORIAL

'The world grows old.' We live at a time when the intellectual scene increasingly resembles a mortuary or some nether region of etiolated successor states. The chief object of all this 'endism' and 'postism' is, of course, history itself. The starting point for Gregory Elliott's reflections in this issue is the recent egregious outbreak of posthistoire in the work of Francis Fukuyama. Elliott's purpose is to discover the rational kernel in the mystical shell of Fukuyama's 'ersatz Hegelian dialectic'. He finds it in the idea that the death of 'historical Communism' is truly a decisive defeat for socialism, its elimination, at least for the present, as a world-historical movement. Such a view leads naturally to an attempt to redeem the record of historical Communism from the neglect or disdain it now so widely encounters on the Left. Elliott locates its positive aspects in the defeat of European Fascism, the protection afforded the Third World and the promotion of the post-war meliorist compromise in the First. This leaves him with some reservations concerning Fukuyama's triumphalism. The New World Order may not after all turn out to be a Pax Americana and there may instead by a reversal of the international state system to the pre-1914 pattern with all its explosive potential. Having failed to deliver socialism, history may, it seems, have barbarism waiting in the wings instead. This message will seem bleak and unpalatable to many socialists. Its most disturbing aspect is, perhaps, the insistence that it was specifically Stalinism that vanquished Fascism and rescued liberalism. Hence, on the fiftieth anniversary of Stalingrad, what we celebrate is indeed the apotheosis of all that Stalin signifies in his very own and golden city. Clearly Elliott is 'bending the stick' sharply here. It is surely in a direction in which, however, it needs to go given the 'historical amnesia' the Left currently displays in the strange case of actually existing socialism.

A refusal to renege on the past is shown in a quite different way by the appearance here of Andrew Chitty's article 'The Early Marx on Needs'. A striking feature of our current loss of nerve is the withdrawal from scholarly engagement with Marx's work even by those who climbed on it to reach the glittering prizes of academe. It is entirely appropriate that a journal of socialist philosophy should offer some resistance to this Gadarene rush, more especially as there are, as Chitty demonstrates, still discoveries to be made. His thesis is that the 'false' needs of capitalist society are distinguished in the early Marx by their form rather than their contents or objects. This form is a contradictory one grounded in what Chitty calls 'conditional exchange', a relationship that embodies egoism, compulsion and estrangement while projecting the possibility of universality, free reciprocity and community. What socialist philosophy has to proclaim is that socialism is essentially the realising of this possibility, the overcoming of the formal contradiction in the social construction of needs.

For Theodor Adorno, German was, incomparably, the language of speculative thought. In the essay here by Axel Honneth, a leading representative of the 'third generation' of the School Adorno helped to found, we get a glimpse of how effective it can be in tackling the indispensable, clarificatory tasks of the understanding. Leaving aside the Gramscian conception of civil society as the cultural realm of opinion formation, Honneth distinguishes two traditions of thought. There is the Lockean, contractarian view of civil society as a network of individuals defined by their economic interests and connected by essentially legal relations. There is also the view of it, owing more to Montesquieu and Tocqueville, as the community of citizens, complexly associated in solidarity and public freedom. Honneth brings these traditions to life by considering a recent work, The Democratic Question, whose analysis is at least partly vitiated by a tendency to shift indecisively between them. It is an exemplary piece of conceptual analysis, differing from the products of our own dear analytical philosophy mainly in its recognition that the concept in question has a history, most immediately its use in the liberation struggles in Eastern Europe. It differs also in that it has an avowedly practical aim, though here Honneth is somewhat pessimistic about the prospects. This is the goal of securing a category that will be serviceable in what now seems to be the only game in town, the struggle for a more authentic form of parliamentary democracy. We are pleased to publish Axel Honneth's contribution to that struggle and hope it will be the precursor of a freer trade in ideas in our common European home.

The other contributions to this issue continue long-standing debates in Radical Philosophy. Michael Reid takes to task the 'foundationalism' of Ted Benton's article on Marx on humans and animals in RP 50, and in doing so seeks to develop a point made in Tim Hayward's reply in RP.

Radical Philosophy 64, Summer 1993
The starting point is the insistence that 'dealing discursively' with Auschwitz would be an outrage and that we must trust instead to our bodily sensations of practical abhorrence. The case of the suffering chickens in the factory farm 'similarly involves our affections', Reid suggests, and it is in terms of this kind of response, rather than discursive theorizing, that one should seek to orientate the practice of recourse to Adornian critical theory, an area in which provocative, even shocking is the project of generalising particularly effective. What is perhaps most obviously abhorrence. The case of the suffering chickens in the factory farm 'similarly involves our affections', Reid suggests, and it is in terms of this kind of response, rather than discursive theorizing, that one should seek to orientate the practice of the Green movement. This is a challenging argument and its recourse to Adornian critical theory, an area in which RP has in the past shown a treacherously fitful interest, is particularly effective. What is perhaps most obviously provocative, even shocking, is the project of generalising Adorno's anguished concern with the Holocaust. It is one thing, it might be supposed, to be struck dumb by Auschwitz and still another to respond in that way to a chicken farm. Here too some vigorous stick-bending is going on and this is surely another debate that must be continued.

The struggle between Enlighteners and their opponents finds an echo in the exchange between Tony Skillen and Sean Sayers. This has a complex theoretical background. It consists in part of the controversy about relativism that developed in the Anglo-American context from the late 1960s on as the social sciences met Wittgensteinian philosophy. In part it is compounded of the impact in the same context later on of the Hegel revival and then of postmodernism. Both Skillen and Sayers reject the anti-realism of much recent theory. Yet their disagreement about the relationship of truth to knowledge and the applicability of a concept of relative, as opposed to merely 'partial', truth demonstrates the extent to which the realist alternative remains an internally contested position. At stake here also is the viability of a dialectical tradition offering a historical materialist critique of postmodern epistemologies distinct from transcendental (Habermasian) and traditional realist responses alike.

Finally, we are pleased to publish Andrew Glyn's scrutiny of the 'economic' case for the pit closure programme announced by Her Majesty's Government last autumn. At a time when regimes throughout the world are making obeisance to market farces, Glyn reminds us that such instances of instrumental rationality are open to challenge on their own (let alone other) terms.

Joseph McCarney

PERVERSITY
NUMBER 19, SPRING 1993 Edited by Judith Squires

From Madonna's Sex to Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman in Batman Returns, the rubber and leather paraphernalia of sexual fetishism have become mainstream fashion items. Amid the current rash of vampire films perverse pleasures are coming out of the shadows. Where there was repression and fear, there is now a new fascination with perversity.

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