

Letters

Dear Editors

The trouble with most Marxists, would-be Marxists, left-wing intellectuals, and banner-carrying hangers-on, is that they live outside the real class-struggle; they live in cloisters, like monks; and only very rarely do they ever descend into the suppurating wound where the organisms of inequality originate.

There is sound reason for the belief that no revolution will ever take place in this country because the intellectual forces which would be required to give such a revolution leadership are too busy arguing the trivial points of socialism to be bothered with anything as menial as a revolution. This attitude of the left-wing intelligentsia has done a great disservice to the movements of the left; lessening their credibility and weakening their forces.

I wonder how many readers of this journal, radical philosophers though they may be, have ever lived in a slum, or been at the receiving end of a charlatan factor's unscrupulous practices. Or how many of them have been at the brink of death, surviving only by eating pieces of cardboard. I suspect most of you have come from secure middle-class backgrounds, and the class-struggle presents you with a little spice; a little revolution of your own. Do you really care to dirty your hands investigating the realities of poverty?

A true revolutionary socialist should be with the workers offering them something which they

clearly lack - knowledge; how to fight the forces of oppression, how to recover the dignity which the workers have lost in this time of mass indoctrination. You should be at the factory gate, in the workers canteen; the workers will never come to you, you will have to go to them.

Endless hours of poring through masses of socialist literature will never right a social wrong, or fight a revolution. An old woman dying of hunger in Liverpool derives no consolation knowing that in the university round the corner there is someone talking about the wrongs that exist in this society which watched her die; but he is only talking about it.

So, as a working man, who incidentally was introduced to your journal through the carelessness of the cleansing department, I ask you to throw your copy of *Das Kapital* away, stop arguing, leave your monasteries, and go out into the streets. That is where the fight is all happening.

George Provan
Glasgow

Dear Editors

Are you actually trying to move in on the *Mind* market? Or is there so little movement inside British tertiary schools that you are forced into almost pure articlism? I don't object to the articles themselves - on second reading I understand most of them quite well, despite the

verbal flatulence radicals share with their straighter colleagues - but who is communicating to who?

The whole thing would start to look more serious if, just for a start (a) people started commenting on what goes on in the journal without feeling obliged to build verbal cathedrals; (b) the pages of the journal were actually used by people who need to get help from each other, or just to communicate ideas they are working on, about things they have read, even about courses they are trying to put on, with 'essays' or 'dissertations' they are writing. For example, I am trying to work out what dialectical materialism is, in the context of a third year course. I've read Engels, Stalin and Althusser. I am still 'very unclear'. Could someone send a useful bibliography to the editors so they could, if they would, publish it for me and others like me? Maybe some even have useful material they could remove from under their backsides, without solicitation. (c) it was not felt beneath the dignity of radical heavies to contest the terms in which politicians, the media etc, are now posing, e.g. 'the crisis we are all faced with', to descend to agitatioaal philosophy. Or do the masses need to understand the labour theory of value to know they are being taken for a ride?

I remain, but do not rest,
Neil Thorley

Reviews

Marx's metaphysics

Bertell Ollmann: *ALIENATION: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge University Press, hardback £4.00, paperback £1.80.

At a time when books on Marx and, still more, books on alienation, lie thick on the ground, I should like to point out that in my view Ollman's work is something quite special. It is what occurs depressingly rarely in the literature: a serious and lucid exploration of Marx's philosophical presuppositions. If its thesis is found convincing, then it constitutes a major original reinterpretation of Marx. If it fails to convince, then the exercise

of coming to grips with what Ollman says is still in every sense worthwhile and rewarding.

Alienation is divided into three main parts: (1) an account of Marx's philosophical position, (2) an account of Marx's view of human nature, and (3) an account of Marx's theory of alienation. It is Ollman's view - and he is surely correct - that one cannot understand Marx on a specific topic without having grasped his overall philosophical approach. Without this, we shall be continually asking of Marx the wrong questions and assessing him by the wrong criteria. It is in Ollman's account of Marx's general philosophical presuppositions that the originality of *Alienation* lies. In what follows, I shall comment on each of Ollman's three main

sections in turn.

1. Philosophy

In this, to me his most interesting section, Ollman starts by considering an interpretation of Marx to be found in the writings of H B Acton¹ and John Plamenatz². On this interpretation, Marx divides man's activities into a set of separate and mutually exclusive 'factors', certain of which are said to change independently of, and be ultimately responsible for changes in, the others. Having interpreted Marx in this way, these critics then object that social reality cannot be so divided, that one cannot conceive of a 'purely economic' base without introducing into it legal or even moral elements which Marx at the same

time supposes to be part of the superstructure. On this view, technological determinism appears as the most 'plausible' variety of Marxism, although of course it too is open to objection.

Ollman, rightly, will have no truck with this whole interpretation. Marx, he argues, was not trying to isolate a separate and independent 'determining factor' in society³. Rather, 'through its internal ties to everything else, each factor is everything else viewed from a particular angle (*Alienation*, p23). Strikingly, Ollman goes on to attribute to Marx a full-blown 'philosophy of internal relations' (p28) applicable to the social and natural worlds alike (p29). Concepts themselves are held to be internally related to their objects, and their meanings change both as their objects change and as our knowledge of their objects grows. Sometimes a word is used to denote a wider, sometimes a narrower, aspect of a given relation: and this is held to provide the key to certain contradictory usages in Marx's texts.

The philosophy of internal relations has a long and respectable history. Finding its fullest expression in English idealists such as F H Bradley, it is also evident in Spinoza and Leibniz. Hegel is frequently held to have advocated this view, but this is questionable. One commentator has pointed out that Hegel does not say there are no external relations, and that he acknowledges 'vast reaches of experience where contingency rages unchecked'.⁴

Holding that all relations between terms are intrinsic to the terms themselves, and that there are no externally related terms but only relations, the philosophy of internal relations faces certain serious difficulties. Of these, the most fundamental is the problem of 'individuation'. How can we refer to any one 'thing' if there are no 'things' at all but, ultimately, only a bundle of relations holding between each and every 'thing' in the world? And if we do succeed in pinning an object down, how do we communicate our findings when the distinctive meaning of each and every concept is eroded by the relations of which 'it' and its 'object' are comprised? All distinction in the world dissolves back into a blank and abstract monism, a 'night in which all cows are black' (as Hegel called it). In the case of Spinoza and Bradley this monism, in which the only 'thing' that exists is the sum total of all relations, is adopted as an explicit doctrine.

Ollman is aware of these problems, but holds that the philosophy of internal relations 'can be defended' (p42). His defence, as I understand it, is on an empirical level: people do in fact succeed in resolving the problem of individuation in their daily practice

because, fortunately there are sufficiently broad sets of similarities in nature for us to get a hold of. Similarly, the communicability issue is held to be settled if someone holding a relational view does in fact succeed in communicating his findings. However, it can be objected to this that such practical success is evidence against the relational view rather than in support of it, and the question of how individuation is possible remains.

Ollman gives a 'relational' interpretation of Marx's view of dialectics. His approach is that of 'subsuming the laws of the dialectic under the philosophy of internal relations' (p61, f.n.). This procedure is, I think, questionable. In the first place, since the philosophy of internal relations is itself metaphysical, it transforms dialectics into a metaphysic.⁵ Perhaps this is why Ollman sees no conflict between Marx's and Engels' views on dialectics, and indeed bases his own account of 'dialectic as outlook' largely on Engels. Further, this interpretation tends to underplay the critical and negating aspect of dialectical thought, seeing it rather as a means of dissolving all difference and dissonance into a homogeneous unity.

We have said that the weakness of a 'relational' conception of the world is that it dissolves all different kinds of object, and indeed all different kinds of relation, into a homogeneous and monistic unity. Of course, one might object to the philosophy itself and yet agree with Ollman that Marx presupposed such a philosophy. However, as I hope

the following sections will show, such a philosophy conflicts with some of Marx's most central concerns. Marxism is a philosophy of discrimination and separation in which all unities are structured unities.⁶ By contrast, Ollman's Marx is rather in the position of those 'Hegelians' whom Marx himself criticizes in the 1857 *Introduction*.⁷ If one has to choose between Marx and the attribution to him of the philosophy of internal relations, Marx himself must be given precedence over the attribution.

2. Human nature

I shall discuss only a few points in Ollman's account of Marx's conception of human nature. Marx presupposes, in Ollman's view, an anthropology of 'powers' and 'needs'. These powers and needs are of two sorts: 'natural' (i.e. those shared by men with animals) or 'species' (i.e. specifically human). It is with man's species needs and powers that his account is most concerned.

The relation between powers and needs is interesting: 'needs exist as the subjective aspect of powers'; 'Each power is coupled in man with a distinctive need for the objects necessary for its [i.e. the power's] realization... Likewise a power is whatever is used that "fulfills" a need'. (p78). Ollman does not appear to distinguish between powers which we 'need' to realize, on the one hand, and powers which we bring into play in order to bring about the fulfillment of the need, on the other. That is to say, he does not distinguish between powers as means and powers as ends.



From an 1842 cartoon of Marx as Prometheus tied to a printing press, with the Prussian eagle eating at his liver; used as the jacket illustration for *Alienation* by Bertell Ollman.

This, I think, has important consequences for the view of human nature he ascribes to Marx. For if means and ends coincide in Marx's anthropology, then communist society (in which man *qua species* is fully realized) can be envisaged as embodying complete internal and external harmony. This indeed is how the early Marx envisioned communism⁸, and it is on the writings of the early Marx that Ollman largely bases his own account of this topic. However, the mature Marx considered that even under communism man's relation to nature would remain antagonistic: a 'realm of necessity'⁹ would remain in which work is a means to an end outside itself. Work can never entirely become play¹⁰, and man's rationality must remain, at least in one of its aspects, what the Frankfurt school call a 'technology of domination'. Ollman is aware of Marx's discussion of the 'realm of necessity' in communism, and gives his own account of it (p118-19); my point is that, in his general interpretation, he does not give these passages sufficient weight.

Further, I would suggest that the reason he underplays them lies in his attribution to Marx of the philosophy of internal relations. If all terms are internally related, and indeed 'identical' (as Ollman frequently says, putting the term in inverted commas as though it left him uneasy), then certainly there is no basis for distinguishing powers as means from powers as ends. Nor is there any basis for regarding communism as anything other than a condition of blissful, explicit, harmonious unity. But the mature Marx does not regard communism in this way: already we can see Marx himself, and Ollman's Marx, beginning to diverge.

3. Alienation and society

Once again, I shall cover only certain points in Ollman's account. In general, I think that while Ollman's view is adequate for the Marx of 1844, it does not do full justice to the Marx of 1857 and later. I do not mean to suggest that there is any 'break' between the young and old Marx and, indeed, I agree with Ollman when he argues that the unity of Marx's thought throughout his life is fundamental. Nevertheless, some of Marx's characteristic concerns emerge explicitly only in the later texts, and any 'unified' interpretation of Marx must give them an appropriately central place.

Basic to the mature Marx, and in no way conflicting with his humanism, is his concern with 'scientific' enquiry. Running through all the mature texts is a distinction between the sphere of circulation and the sphere of production, between competition and coercion, exchange and appropriation, equality and exploitation, 'form' and 'essence', 'appearance' and 'reality'.

For Marx, the surface structure of capitalism is systematically misleading; the categories which it 'offers' (in the form of ideologies) for its own comprehension are hopelessly inadequate. The task of science is to penetrate to the deep structure of production relations, to reveal the human relations from which the misleading ideological appearances spring.

Again, Ollman is aware (see e.g. p197) of Marx's discussion of 'science' and, again, my criticism is that the attribution of the philosophy of internal relations to Marx prevents him from doing Marx's concern justice. A 'relational' view tends to treat appearance and reality as, so to speak, on the same 'level': they become just like any other two terms, and the relation between them becomes no different in kind from that between, say, two 'appearances', or between two terms having 'reality'. Appearance becomes absorbed into reality and vice versa. The critical dimension of Marx's science disappears.

My reservations here centre on Ollman's chapters on 'value'. In the first place he argues - correctly, it seems to me - that 'value is the relations of alienated labour, transmitted by such labour, as they appear in the product' (p178). It follows from this that 'value', as a category, has full application only to capitalist society, and with this, too, I agree. But Ollman then goes on to treat use-value and exchange value as two parallel and mutually necessary facets of value as such: 'the two facets of value [use- and exchange value] presuppose one another, and really cannot be conceived of apart. Like exchange-value, therefore, use-value expresses capitalist production relations' (p186). Thus use-value, as a facet of value *per se*, exists only under capitalism. In arguing thus, Ollman bases himself directly on 'Marx's relational conception of reality' (p185): use- and exchange value appear as parts of the same complex of internal relations which make up capitalist alienation.

Now it seems to me that Ollman is quite mistaken in his treatment of use-value. Marx does not regard use- and exchange value as two parallel 'facets' of value *per se*. I suggest that Marx makes a basic distinction between use-value (produced under all forms of society) and value as such (produced only under conditions of commodity production). Further, I suggest that the distinction between value as such and exchange value is a distinction between the reality (the concept of 'value' indicates the alienated nature of relations in the sphere of production) and the 'form of that reality when it appears in the sphere of circulation'. Failing to grasp the importance of the latter distinction goes hand-in-hand with denying the former: Ollman dissolves all terms

in the same reductionist, homogeneous, internally related unity.

Ollman's denial that the production of use-values is common to all societies flies in the face of Marx's pronouncement, which Ollman himself quotes (p186), that production of use-values is 'the ever-lasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather, is common to every such phase'¹¹. Ollman's denial is of course linked with his conception of communism, based on the 1844 as opposed to the 1857 Marx, which we considered in (2) above. It is because he plays down the 'reality principle' conception of communism in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, and overemphasises the 'pleasure principle' communism of the 1844 *Manuscripts*, that Ollman is led to deny the universality of the production of use-values.

This becomes clear if we consider the concept of 'use-value'. In producing a use-value man adopts an antagonistic relation to nature: he tears out of nature some part or thing which, from then on, exists only to satisfy his requirements. The being of a use-value lies outside of itself: it is 'for us', as producers. Conversely, our own being lies outside of ourselves in it: we 'recognize' ourselves in the world of use-values. This contradiction between man and nature is irresolvable, and this is the justification for calling man, as Marx does, an 'objective' being. To deny the contradiction is to collapse objectivity into alienation¹². Human rationality must always remain, in one aspect, a 'technology of domination'. Productive activity and products whose being or *raison d'être* lies outside themselves, which are means to ends other than themselves, remain necessary in all forms of society¹³.

So far, my discussion of Ollman has been mainly critical. I have tried to show that the attribution of a philosophy of internal relations to Marx involves a serious distortion of Marx's meaning. But, as I have said, a merely negative attitude to *Alienation* would be entirely out of place. Ollman's book commands our respect. It raises very basic issues and represents a courageous attempt to grasp by the horns the formidable bull of Marx's philosophy. Ollman might feel that certain of the points I have raised are incorporated in his book: I would accept this. Following him over some very difficult terrain, one may not always keep as close to the trail as, ideally, one would like.

Besides, much of what Ollman says in his discussion of alienation is extremely good. He is very much to the point when he argues that, in Marx's economics, 'labour is always alienated productive activity' (p171), and that 'grasping "labour" ... as "alienated labour"

in its full multidimensional sense is the key to understanding Marx's economic theories' (p172). The brief comments on class consciousness in his last chapter suggest a fertile and stimulating approach and his discussions of social class, the state and religion as modes of alienation are clear and useful.

Ollman's *Alienation* is, in the very best sense, a serious and important treatment of a serious and important subject.

Richard Gunn

NOTES

- 1 Acton, *The Illusion of the Epoch*, 1955. See the discussion of 'productive relationships', pp160-8. See also his exchange with G A Cohen, 'On Some Criticisms of Historical Materialism', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XLIV, 1970
- 2 Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, ch.5, section 2
- 3 cf. G Petrovic, who similarly rejects interpretations of Marx which reduce man and society to the sum-total of a set of 'factors' (*Marx in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, Doubleday, pp77 and 106)
- 4 J N Findlay, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Hegel', in his *Language, Mind and Value*
- 5 In 'Marxism and Dialectical Method' (*Marxism Today*, July 1973) I have attempted to clarify the relation between dialectics and metaphysics on the basis that each represents a characteristic style of thought. Dialectics is the attitude of the 'open' mind, metaphysics the attitude of the mind that is 'closed'
- 6 Althusser convincingly argues this (*For Marx*, p103 and 202ff); nor does Ollman wish to deny it (see *Alienation*, note 41 to ch.3). However, I think a 'relational' interpretation of Marx is in fact open to Althusser's objections. Regarding Hegel, I would suggest that, pace Althusser, a conception of structured unity is to be found in him too. As Findlay has argued, Hegel did not subscribe to a full philosophy of internal relations.
- 7 Marx, *Grundrisse* (trans. Martin Nicolaus), Pelican, p93
- 8 'Communism ... as fully-developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man...' (Marx, 1844 *Manuscripts*, Moscow, p95
- 9 *Capital*, Vol.III, Moscow, p820

- 10 *Grundrisse*, p611
- 11 *Capital*, Vol.I, Allen & Unwin, pp163-164
- 12 Already in 1844 Marx criticizes Hegel for doing this. But in this regard the Marx of the 1844 *Manuscripts* does not escape his own strictures
- 13 cf. Hegel's discussion of the 'useful' as the outcome of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, *Phenomenology of Mind*, Baillie translation, pp578 and 595

The myth of the enlightenment

Lucien Goldmann, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £1.50

The idea that the human race is just emerging from a dark night of superstition into a bright day of enlightenment has appealed to nearly every generation of thinkers since the Renaissance. But today the phrase 'the Enlightenment' is used only to refer to eighteenth century thought, particularly that associated with the philosophes and the Encyclopaedia.

But why is it assumed that eighteenth century thought is a unity which deserves to be entitled 'the Enlightenment'? From what point of view, if any, can doctrines as diverse as those of, say, Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau be seen as expressions of some common essence, called Enlightenment?

This concept of 'the Enlightenment' is inseparable from the idea that the most important watershed in the development of philosophy is Kant. Kant himself expressed the concept both in his 1784 essay 'What is Enlightenment?' and in his frequently reiterated statements to the effect that his own philosophy was the final outcome of a struggle between scepticism and dogmatism. The Enlightenment, for Kant, was the last phase of this struggle. In the present century, the Kantian concept of 'the Enlightenment' has been reinforced by the rich researches of the Kantian Ernst Cassirer (*Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 1932) and reinforced again recently by Peter Gay's impressive *The Enlightenment*.

In 1960, Lucien Goldmann wrote an essay which attempted to give an historical materialist account of the Enlightenment, with special emphasis on the role of Christianity in it. This essay is now translated as *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* and published as a book (a very slim book - the binding is nearly as thick as the text). In the first section, on 'the structure of the Enlightenment', Goldmann expounds a traditional,

Kantian version of what the Enlightenment was, and tries to throw light on it by referring to what he calls both an 'atomistic' and an 'individualistic' attitude to knowledge. This attitude, he says, is essential to all Enlightenment thought, and is the underlying assumption of both sides in the great struggle between 'the two great world visions characteristic of the European outlook, that dominated it up to the time of Pascal, of Kant, and even longer' (p18). These two visions are 'the rationalist and empirical traditions' - roughly the same as Kant's 'dogmatism' and 'scepticism'. Goldmann goes on to discuss what he regards as 'the fundamental categories of Enlightenment thought'. These categories, according to Goldmann, are: autonomy of the individual, contract, equality, universality, toleration, freedom, and property; and Goldmann's thesis is that eighteenth century thought consisted of permutations of these categories. This thesis is, however, fantastically untrue, if only because it ignores the development of ideas about cosmology, about materialism, about the shape and size of human history, about the power of an individual or a society to take charge of its destiny, about the artificiality or otherwise of human society, about the relation between private morals and social and political issues, and many other crucial eighteenth century themes. The categories Goldmann lists are in fact much more characteristic of seventeenth century thinkers like Hobbes and Locke than of the eighteenth century thinkers Goldmann tries to describe.

Having crammed eighteenth century thought into this package, Goldmann makes an easy transition to an interesting sort of structuralist explanation of it in terms of its material base in the economic individualism of early capitalism, arguing that 'the fundamental categories of Enlightenment thought have a basic structure analogous to that of the market economy' (p20). The bold simplicity of this theory is very attractive. It is a pity that it is based on such a stale thesis about what eighteenth century thought consists of.

In a rather disarming Preface, Goldmann owns up to 'lack of scholarly research', and mentions the fact that the essay was not originally meant to be published on its own as though this were an excuse. He even says that he puts forward 'certain hypotheses that I should hardly have ventured to advance in a more substantial work'. But the lack of scholarship is not the only thing that's wrong with the essay. The uncritical, unhistorical approach exemplified in Goldmann's unquestioning acceptance of the concept of the Enlightenment,

carries over into the strange moralising which occupies the latter part of the essay, which is mainly about Christian belief. At the end of this section, and in the brief third and final section, Goldmann tries to resurrect Christian values for the sake of socialism. He claims that the old choice between 'two world visions' still confronts 'us' today:

We have to choose between morally neutral technical knowledge and the synthesis of knowledge with immanent faith in a human community to be created by men ... between capitalism and socialism. It is for us to determine which of these is to be the future vision of mankind.
(p82)

Thus, for Goldmann, the prospect of socialism has to be seen in terms of 'our' choice between 'world visions', and this choice somehow takes us outside science into the realm of faith. The mistake of abstracting knowledge from action, and of treating knowledge a-historically, of which Goldmann unconvincingly accuses eighteenth century thinkers as a whole, is made by Goldmann himself.

Jonathan Rée

Anthropology and imperialism

Talal Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Ithaca Press, £5.50 hardback £1 paperback

Many social anthropologists undoubtedly have felt that Levi-Strauss and his structuralism brought new and vital theoretical manure to their wilting subject. It may be no exaggeration to suggest that for some - perhaps those most conscious of the crisis in their subject - structuralism somehow snatched anthropology from the jaws of general social science by which it seemed imminently to be devoured. Levi-Strauss, then, may be said to have done to social anthropology what Wittgenstein did to general philosophy: he offered an apparent panacea to a multitude of ills in the form of a new (if obscure departure which was at once rich and strange. If shifts in a discipline's account of itself have intrigued you, then *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* may offer some valuable demystification.

For Asad and most of his co-authors, British social anthropology needs to be treated as a problem in the sociology of knowledge. More precisely, it is situated in very specific relations to colonialism: funds, impetus,

and logistical conditions for the work were provided by British colonialism (notably in Africa), while the consciousness of the field-workers was informed by a colonialist society (anthropologists get socialized too!). And the theoretical positions of anthropology during its formative years (say, 1925-1946) no less than the methodology it espoused (and vis-à-vis which it tended to be defined) must be traced to the needs and conditions of colonial endeavours: the functionalism of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown as well as emphasis on participant observation are related most effectively by Stephan Feuchtwang to specific ideological and political necessities within imperialism of that period. The question of anthropologists' direct contribution to colonial activities also recurs: all are charged with a degree of (perhaps unwitting) complicity, and some are directly accused.

The essays, however, are not in clear agreement with one another: there are hard and soft-liners, with some attempt at salvaging both the subject and the reputations of some of its most influential practitioners - most of the contributors are, after all, teachers of anthropology themselves. The salvage operation has two arms. It is argued (by e.g. Wendy James and Talal Asad) that anthropologists have necessarily developed genuine commitment to people among whom they lived, and therefore were strongly inclined to protect them against the crude racism of both colonials and 19th century evolutionist theory. Moreover, they mounted such protection in the shape of monographs which aimed at revealing the integrity and rationality of language, law, and economy of so-called primitive peoples. Cultural relativism constituted something of a moral weapon against both colonial ideology and practice. During the inter-war years, therefore, field anthropologists were in some degree radicals, only subsequently becoming reactionaries relative to nationalist and revolutionary movements among the colonized. The second arm of defence (suggested by Stephan Feuchtwang and John Clammer) lies in indicating what anthropologists did *not* do, but could well still do.

The essays inevitably are strongly historical, and provide an excellent patchwork of background - though it sometimes seems that the achievement of the contributors (e.g. Roger Owen) lies in showing how history should be written rather than in exposing the contradictions in bourgeois ideology as they are expressed in anthropology and its theory. That complaint would be less serious if the volume included a confrontation with (or at least an assessment of) the most recent developments in anthropology. Of the

contributors to *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* only Peter Forster raises the problematic of British versions of Levi-Straussism. Students (who will after all be the main readership) are already armed with critiques of British and American functionalism and empiricism; sorely needed is a reckoning with structuralism, which has become the principal mystification and no doubt is hardly less an embodiment of bourgeois ideology than its theoretical antecedents. British anthropologists will have to desert historical essays if they are to confront or even explain that ideology in its contemporary forms.

Hugh Brodie

Colletti's Marxism

Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, tr. Lawrence Garner, New Left Books, £5.25

The philosophical doctrines of dialectical materialism have too often been argued in a spirit of factional heat. Its leading propositions are usually defended in scruffy and hastily-published pamphlets, to be refuted at leisure and with scholarly fastidiousness by plump and articulate professors. Leading Marxists seem to have recorded their views on the nature of the universe only in time snatched from barricade rhetoric or sectarian political infighting. It is therefore a pleasure to pick up a copy of Lucio Colletti's *Marxism and Hegel*, in which an unhurried and mainly sympathetic scrutiny, free of political partisanship, of the main ideas of the Hegelian and Marxist philosophies, is contained between New Left Books' solid and luxurious covers. It would be a double pleasure to be able to report that the book's author is as much master of his material as its binder - unfortunately this is not so.

Colletti's main thesis is striking and simple: that the idea of a dialectical materialism is a contradiction in terms, and therefore, from the standpoint of philosophical coherence or truth, a chimera. Hegel's philosophy was authentically dialectical only because he was an absolute idealist; those who, like Engels and Lenin, thought they had discovered in Hegel's dialectic a method valid for modern materialism were guilty of an 'error which by now lies at the basis of almost a century of theoretical Marxism' (p27). Dialectic, the assertion of real contradiction, *requires* idealism; thus 'Hegel, who affirms logical contradiction, does so by making it the substratum of opposition in reality ... just as objects are only the incarnation of reason, so all ob-

jective or real oppositions, all specific oppositions, become the 'existence' or the 'phenomenon' of rational opposition, i.e. generic opposition. (pp100-101)

A review can touch only on some of the main shortcomings. Colletti accuses Engels (with Lenin hard on his heels) of ignorantly copying Hegel's 'dialectic of matter' in the belief that it stemmed from a latent materialism. Their 'mechanical transcription', he argues, resulted in a 'dialectical materialism' worthy only of relegation 'to the museum, alongside the stone axes'. They become, in Colletti's account, the first of the 'Marxist heretics', responsible for having desecrated modern materialism by smuggling into it an untransubstantiated chunk of Hegel's Christian metaphysics.

The nub of the case for the prosecution expresses itself as a simple misrepresentation (p22 et seq). Colletti lumps together (a) Hegel's insistence on the absolutely self-contradictory character of finite material objects, on their movement, on the fact that they are and are-not, that a logic is required to embrace them in their movement, and that this logic consequently cannot accept as absolute the law of non-contradiction (these being the essential points 'annexed' by Engels and Lenin); with (b) Hegel's attempt to escape from the movement resulting from contradictions into the Absolute Idea, stably residing and free of the self-contradiction of the finite. Ironically he cites in his support the very passage in which Hegel idealistically proposes to move on from the transcendence of nature and life ('the non-being of the finite') to the permanence of God ('the being of the absolute'). (see Colletti p25 and *Science of Logic*, p443). But what Colletti fails to do is examine whether this movement is legitimate or scientific. For the self-contradiction of finite objects does not self-evidently entail the existence of God; Colletti merely quotes Hegel to the effect that the one is the other. Both reason and the understanding require him to demonstrate that Engels' extraction of a materialist logic of becoming from Hegel is incorrect.

If one can apply a single term to the cast of Colletti's thinking it is that it is itself idealistic, tending always to erect a complete and consistent structure from those elements of Hegel's thought which are most visible to him and to which he is most partial. Thus he fails to set against Hegel's transition from the dialectic of the finite into theology the well-known paragraphs from the *History of Philosophy* in which Kant is reproached with finding things too fragile to endure contradiction, even though the ego itself 'does not melt away' by reason of its contradictions, 'but continues to exist ... for it can bear them' (*Lectures on the*

History of Philosophy, Vol.III, p451)

This restriction of dialectic to subjectivity explains why Colletti declares himself unmoved by possible accusations of Kantianism. Such accusations would be in some measure correct. The 'dialectic' which he perceives in Hegel is only a pale, paradoxical reflection (a cerebral 'tautoheterology', to use his term) of what is to be found there. The essential paragraph is worth citing:

In so far as it is dialectical, the finite negates itself, sublates itself, and disappears; i.e. if one wants to consider the finite, one must not consider the finite, but rather the infinite; in order to grasp being one must grasp thought, the Idea; there are no things, there is only reason; there is no exclusive determinacy, a 'this right here', that excludes its opposite, but a rational inclusion, a 'this together with that' - i.e. the unity of 'sameness' and 'otherness', of 'being' and 'non-being', of finite and infinite, in the infinite.

(p18, Colletti's emphasis)

Excluded here are Hegel's many analyses of the dialectical development of determinate objects in which the outcome is not the infinite but a new or altered determination - analyses wholly within the spirit of dialectical materialism, if one may thus express it. Colletti does not justify (except by quotation from Hegel) the view that the finite material object may be truly negated only in the infinite. And he accepts an (approximately Hegelian) equation of the finite with the material and of the infinite with the ideal. Yet it is precisely this equation which contains the fundamental difference with dialectical materialism, for which the ideal is finite and imperfect relative to nature's infinitude. The fact that this point of opposition is explicitly indicated (for example in Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, p182) is what makes the accusation of a 'mechanical transcription' so misleading. If there is a single 'error' lying at the foot of the many facets of the book which could be criticised, it is a systematic ambiguity on the opposition between materialism and idealism.

Almost any writing about the philosophical positions of others tends to become a platform for the author's own; Colletti's book and this review are no exceptions. It is very probable that the book will generate considerable resonance - both philosophical and

political - among the left intelligentsia in Britain. It has already done so in the circles of the New Left Review - widely seen as the main arena of philosophical debate among socialists. The philosophical affinity with NLR is crystallised in an article by Gareth Stedman-Jones ('Engels and the End of Classical German Philosophy', NLR 79, May-June 1973) which is largely a preview of Colletti (in whose early chapters virtually all Stedman-Jones' quotations from Hegel may conveniently be consulted). Yet there is also a commonality of political stance. NLR is something of a no-man's land in which the favoured intellectuals of various left political organisations meet on terms of amiable dissonance. The dissonance accounts for its continued separate existence; the amiability explains why it has never established any political independence from Stalinism or Social Democracy. Essential to the milieu is the polite separation of philosophical discourse from the minutiae of individual political affiliations - a separation also evident in the eclectic spirit in which Colletti draws on his many 'authorities'. In the long run, though, politics cannot be excluded. Colletti (a member of the Italian Communist Party from 1950 to 1964) himself concedes more to Stalinism than would most in his assertion that dialectical materialism has become 'a state philosophy'. And his claim to have identified the error at the origin of 'almost a century of theoretical Marxism' rings strangely in a book whose index mentions Croce sixteen times and Trotsky not at all. If you think (as I do) that a prudent agnosticism in philosophy and in politics are Siamese twins, Colletti's book will confirm your opinion.

There are also, unfortunately, some secondary but important faults. The appearance of careful erudition is marred in a number of places - for example by the attribution to Hegel of Jacobi's view regarding Spinoza (p28, line 5). For a book intended to have an impact in the labour and socialist movement it is - at £5.25 - exorbitantly expensive. Disappointingly, NLR's usually creditable standard of translation is not maintained. The essential object of a translator from the Italian should be to shed the baroque while preserving the sunlight; in this case the opposite has been achieved. As a result long passages read like a recitatif from 'Pseud's Corner', making even the book's tone remote from what the imprisoned Gramsci wryly called 'the philosophy of action'.

Adam Westoby

Owenism

Robert Owen, *A New View of Society*, Macmillan, £4.50

These four essays published in 1813-14, midway through Owen's long life, represent the first detailed exposition of his social ideas. The arguments, though not in essence original, were in sharp opposition to the received ideas of the time. Man's character, he insisted, was socially determined; hence deliberate social policy, which was concerned solely to punish crime, might more effectively seek to create characters averse to criminality. The young child was totally malleable; but because upbringing was normally based on wholly erroneous principles, the outcome was vice, disorder and irrationality. By contrast, the system introduced by David Dale (and developed by Owen himself) at the New Lanark mills showed the valuable results of more rationally based education. Other employers should follow this example, while the government itself should institute a national educational system. Among other desirable consequences, the proper training of the young could be combined with limited state intervention in the labour market in order to eliminate unemployment.

This 'New View' comprises many ideas which were to become uncontroversial elements of social policy. At the same time, the theories which were so powerfully to influence early British socialists - in particular the notion of co-operative production - scarcely appear in these essays: they were first explicitly elaborated in the *Report to the County of Lanark* in 1821. Yet many of the weaknesses of Owenism were already clearly apparent. The rigid deterministic materialism with which he explained the formation of character contradicted his belief in rational intervention to reform society; as Marx commented, 'this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society'. It is a commonplace that the working class, the main victims of the political economy then developing, were seen by Owen as the passive beneficiaries of social reform; its agents would be members of the ruling class, whose enlightened self-interest would perceive that an educated proletariat would provide more efficient employees and more governable citizens. The notion of the proletariat as the revolutionary class whose interests were antagonistic to those of the capitalists was altogether foreign to Owen (which in view of his own position as, at this time, a highly successful capitalist is readily comprehensible). Hence the contradiction inherent in his

social philosophy: while the emergent socialist movement was to draw inspiration from many of Owen's insights and develop these into a radical critique of capitalism (as, example, in the writings of Smith and Morrison), his own analytical perspective was far closer to that of such conservative critics of early capitalism as Carlyle.

This republication, a facsimile of the first edition in book form in 1816, includes an introduction by John Saville which is short but clear and useful. Those who consider the price outrageous can always buy the Penguin at 35p, which includes the *Report to the County of Lanark* and in addition a lengthy and provocative introduction by V A C Gatrell.

Richard Hyman

Intellectual archeology

Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated from the French by A M Sheridan Smith, Tavistock, £3.00 ISBN 44 73650 3

There are hundreds of wonderful treasures in this book. It is an attempt to explain what ought to become of the study of the history of ideas in the aftermath of structuralism. Foucault says that what ought to come is 'archaeology' - his name for the study of the fragmented 'discursive formations' and 'discursive practices' within which theoretical options arise: 'It is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a monument. It is not an interpretative discipline'. (p139)

There is plenty in this book which will irritate many readers of *Radical Philosophy*: a parochial and self-indulgent academicism; an obsessional worry about the constitution of intellectual 'disciplines'; an amazing sketchiness in the main, central, theoretical chapters (which discuss the theory of meaning without any reference to Frege or Wittgenstein); and a lot of wordage generated by the metaphorical deployment of ideas about breaks, continuities, points, series, levels and thresholds. Most annoying of all, a lack of historical concreteness: Foucault attacks conventional notions of the history of ideas, but makes no attempt to locate them, to explain why they might seem attractive, or to work out what function they perform; and he discusses history writing without ever mentioning any actual historians.

But it's worth it for the development of remarks like these:

Can one accept, as such, the distinction between the major types of discourse, or that

between such forms or genres as science, literature, philosophy, religion, history, fiction, etc., and which tend to create certain great historical individualities? We are not even sure of ourselves when we use these distinctions in our own world of discourse, let alone when we are analysing groups of statements which, when first formulated, were distributed, divided, and characterised in a quite different way: after all, 'literature' and 'politics' are recent categories, which can be applied to medieval culture, or even classical culture, only by a retrospective hypothesis, and by an interplay of formal analogies or semantic resemblances; but neither literature, nor politics, nor philosophy and the sciences articulated the field of discourse, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as they did in the nineteenth century. In any case, these divisions - whether our own, or those contemporary with the discourse under examination - are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalised types: they, in turn, are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others... (p22)

Jonathan Rée

ON TREATING THE END AS A MEANS

'All *crimina carnis contra naturam* (masturbation, homosexuality, bestiality) degrade human nature to a level below that of animal nature and make him unworthy of his humanity. He no longer deserves to be a person. From the point of view of duties towards himself such conduct is the most disgraceful and the most degrading of which man is capable. Suicide is the most dreadful, but it is not as dishonourable and base as the *crimina carnis contra naturam*. It is the most abominable conduct of which man can be guilty.'

(I. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*)

NOW BREED ON

'Contraceptive intercourse is worse - is a graver offence against chastity - than is straightforward fornication, or adultery.'

(G E M Anscombe, *The Human World*)

KEEPING PHILOSOPHY PURE

'I see nothing harmful about mythologies myself - as long as people like them.'

(M. Warnock on the Virgin Birth etc - TV comment)

Ideology and economic theory

Maurice Dobb, *Theories of Value and Distribution since Adam Smith; Ideology and Economic Theory*, Cambridge University Press, £3.60

On the face of it, Maurice Dobb's new book is a re-examination of the history of economic thought in the light of the modern controversy over capital theory. But the subtitle, 'Ideology and Economic Theory', gives a clue as to the point of undertaking this awesome-sounding task: to show that modern, post-neoclassical economic 'science' is not supra-ideological, and thus gain some recompense for the snide asides suffered over the years by academic economists who have attempted to take seriously any of the 'unorthodox' figures in the history of political economy.

The possibility of this project is the now well known collapse of the notion that the income of 'capital' (in the aggregate) is equal to, and can be seen as a reward for, the additional increment of output obtained through the proportionally greater employment of means of production. The difficulty is that there is no way of aggregating the heterogeneous means of production to make a fund of 'value' without first postulating a rate of profit. This is an important result, and while inconsistency within a theory (or complaints of its lack of realism) merely shows it to be inadequate, not ideological, it is suspicious that academic economists in capitalist societies should so long have systematically confused 'capital' as a fund of value and source of income and 'capital' as produced means of production, particularly as Marx made the distinction clear over one hundred years ago.

Dobb recognises that it is inadequate to his purpose to leave the question at the level of internal inconsistency. But by telling the history of economic thought in such a way that the continual 'inability of post-Ricardian economists to appreciate the dependence of price-structure on distribution' was due to 'their preoccupation (at any rate since Jevons and the Austrians) with the converse dependence of distribution upon a demand-determined price-structure' one really is posing hard questions about the scientificity of modern economic analysis. So Dobb's historical discussion is an attempt to establish the reality of two traditions of approach to analysis (one starting with production and the other with exchange) where previously only one had been recognised. Anyone who has been fed on exchange-oriented analysis and is

finding it difficult to discern where the science leaves off and the ideology begins would be well advised to take Dobb's antidote.

Whether *Theories of Value and Distribution* is to be taken as more than an antidote, is not so clear. For all the acute, even witty, things Dobb has to say about the partiality of even the most (apparently) pure analytic statements, he does not press his discussion of 'ideology and economic theory' towards the foundation of a more definitively scientific political economy, but is content to show all theories of value and distribution to have been socially and historically conditioned, hence 'ideological'. Dobb is really raising questions about the possibility of 'social' science, but in his eagerness to clear the ground of any supports for the theory he is attacking he is in danger of leaving nothing standing but arbitrary choice or agnosticism.

Dobb sets aside his first chapter to an account of ideology and science in economic theory. He begins by rejecting any refurbishment of the old verification/falsification criterion, and thus disagrees with Joan Robinson's dismissal of both 'labour' and 'utility' theories of value as 'metaphysical'. His real starting point is Schumpeter's contention that theory begins with vision, a preanalytical cognitive act that is necessarily ideological. What he doesn't accept is Schumpeter's view that what is ideological about preanalytical vision is an 'emotional commitment prompting men to draw pleasing pictures of themselves' and that this is overcome by the development of 'a hard core of formal techniques and instruments'. For Dobb, historical relativity is what is meant by calling pre-analytical vision ideological, and this is not transcended by formalisation: 'Either the 'analysis' of which Schumpeter speaks is a purely formal structure without any relation to economic problems or sets of questions to which it is being designed as an answer (or aid to answering) - in which case it does not constitute a set of propositions or statements with any economic content - or else it is a logical system designed as the vehicle of certain statements about economic phenomena or activities'. There is a suggestion here, and elsewhere, of a blurring of the distinction between analysis and its preanalytical problem and the logical separation of analytic techniques from applications, insisted upon by the 'box of tools' approach - leaving a doubt as to whether Dobb is against each for different reasons, or thinks they amount to the same thing.

The impression of almost unqualified relativism gained from this opening chapter is more than

slightly at odds with the historical discussion of theories of value and distribution, which implicitly presents one central problem for economic theory. The Introduction may be taken as implying that the disaggregation of the history of economic thought into distinct problems ought to be taken much further than it is by Dobb himself, while the historical discussion suggests that there are grounds for preferring one theory, or problem, to another, which are not discussed in the 'methodological' Introduction.

Both these implied self-criticisms have point. To take the most obvious and important example of the need for disaggregation, it hardly does justice to Marx's 'theory of value' to treat it as being solely, or even primarily, directed to Dobb's and Ricardo's problems of value and distribution. 'If things were exchanged in proportion to labour expended, changes in this rate (surplus value) could not *per se* affect relative exchange values, nor could changes in the latter react upon the exploitation rate when represented in this way.' This interpretation completely sidesteps the crucial importance (for Marx) of showing that exchanges of commodities are exchanges of social labour, which is the real reason why the discussion of value comes first in *Capital*. Secondly considering theories in relation to distinct problems would enable one to recognise the usefulness of certain neoclassical arguments for dealing with particular problems of the allocation of scarce resources within a socialist plan, without fear of conceding something to neoclassical claims to timeless truth.

Only after the full extent and significance of the problem orientation of social theories has been recognised can the question of the basis of 'economic' or 'social' science be adequately posed. Arguments about the grounds for preferring certain theories, or problems, as better science than others must be able to comprehend the nature of the partiality of those set aside as ideological.

Tim Putnam

