Introduction

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In an essay first published in 1966, Charles Taylor remarked on the fact that Marxism has had very little impact on philosophy in Britain. It was true, he said, that a lively interest in Marxism was displayed in British universities, particularly by students of political thought. All this, however, represented 'a study of Marxism from the outside . . . Marxism may be of burning interest for all sorts of reasons, but never because it might be *true*'.[1] In the years since Professor Taylor wrote this, there has been a striking change. Numerous academic works have been published in Britain, often under the imprint of famous publishers, which argue for the truth of Marxist doctrines. Despite this, what Taylor wrote in 1966 remains substantially true as far as philosophy is concerned. Certainly, the last fifteen years have seen the publication of many works which defend Marxist philosophy; yet these works have had little impact on British philosophy in general, or on the philosophy of the English-speaking world as a whole. Marxists would have their own explanation of this. They would say that the majority of Western philosophers (whether they know it or not) work in the interests of the class that is dominant in their society, namely the bourgeoisie. It is understandable, then, that such philosophers should avert their eyes from a way of thinking that is fundamentally hostile to bourgeois interests; a way of thinking that (as Marx put it) is 'a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen'.[2] Non-Marxist philosophers, for their part, would probably reply that Marxist philosophy is scanty, stale and uninteresting. The aim of the Royal Institute of Philosophy lectures for 1979–80, which form the basis of this volume, was to bring the two sides together by asking both defenders and critics of Marxism to discuss Marxist philosophy.

The title of the book, *Marx and Marxisms*, draws attention to two main features of Marxist views. First, all who call themselves Marxists by that very fact acknowledge a debt to the ideas of Karl Marx. Probably no Marxist will claim that everything that Marx said is true; but every Marxist will claim that there is a core to Marx's thought that is both true

[1] Charles Taylor, 'Marxism and Empiricism', *British Analytical Philosophy*, B. Williams and A. Montefiore (eds) (London, 1966), 229.

[2] *Capital*, Afterword to 2nd edn, trans. E. and C. Paul (London, 1930), 874; Marx/Engels, *Werke*, XXIII (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956–68) (abbreviated MEW), 27–28.

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and important. So the question, 'What did Marx really mean?' is one that the Marxist constantly asks; and not out of a merely academic interest, but because he sees the correct answer to it as having an important bearing on the issues of the present day. Second, by speaking of 'Marxisms' the title draws attention to the fact that the question, 'What did Marx really mean?' has not received an agreed answer; Marxists have been, and still are, divided into a number of opposing groups, each of which claims to propound the real doctrines of Marx. Professor Edgley, in the first paper in this collection, remarks that 'Marxism is a historical movement', as indeed it is. But it is a movement in the sense in which Christianity is a movement; one in which there are important disagreements as to what the message of the founder really was.

The disagreement between Marxists about the true nature of Marxism has a history that is almost as long as that of Marxism itself; Marx himself is reported as having said, of some French Marxists of the 1870s, 'All I know is that I am not a Marxist'.[3] But during the years in which Stalin was dominant in the USSR, and the USSR was dominant in world communism, there was one generally accepted view about the nature of genuine Marxism, and this was Stalin's view. Dissentient opinions there were, but they were few and relatively ineffective. Since Stalin's death, and more especially since Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1956, the situation has changed radically. In a way, the new situation parallels the position in the Christian world in the period during which the Reformation was challenging the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to be the sole authentic interpreter of Christian doctrine. Just as numerous Protestant sects emerged, so the last twenty-five years have seen the emergence of many new versions (and sometimes the re-emergence of some older versions) of Marxism. These versions of Marxism are lumped together under the title of 'Western Marxism', as opposed to Russian or Soviet Marxism. It is, in the main, Western Marxism that is the subject of the papers in this volume. But it is important to realize that not all Western Marxists think that the views of Russian Marxists are completely wrong. This fact is illustrated by Professor Edgley's paper 'Revolution, Reform and Dialectic'.

Edgley considers some philosophical aspects of the movement known as 'Eurocommunism', a movement which has recently won some following among the communist parties of Western Europe. The movement is distinguished by the view that communism can and should be brought about peacefully, by parliamentary means—a view that it holds in conscious opposition to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Edgley writes as a Marxist, and as one who is by no means an out-and-out supporter of the USSR; at the same time, he argues that the views of the

[3] Quoted by Engels in a letter to C. Schmidt, 5 August 1890.

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Eurocommunists are incompatible with genuine Marxism. Eurocommunism may only be a passing phase,[4] but whether this is so or not does not affect the abiding relevance of Edgley's arguments. In essence, his thesis is that Eurocommunism either fails to grasp, or actually rejects, the true nature of Marx's philosophy, his 'dialectic'. Edgley argues that the Eurocommunists, in rejecting violence as a means of social change, are at one with the ethical socialists; and what is philosophically wrong with ethical socialism is that it posits an absolute distinction between fact and value. This leads Eurocommunists and ethical socialists alike to a kind of moral scepticism, and to the view that all ideas should be tolerated and that any social changes that are introduced should not be introduced forcibly. The ethical socialists can take up this position consistently, in that they reject Marxism; but the Eurocommunists claim to be Marxists. Now Marxism, Edgley argues, is a science, the science of society, and this science is not value-free. There is, then, no room for Marxist scepticism about values, and no room for a rejection of violence that is based on such scepticism.

This gives rise to several questions. It will be asked why a denial of moral scepticism should lead to a defence of violent revolution; it will be asked, too, what are the grounds for the assertion that Marxism is a science, and that this science is not value-free. Edgley does not discuss the view that Marxism is a science; he doubtless assumes that Eurocommunists will agree with him that it is. He answers the other questions by pointing to the specific nature of Marxist dialectic. Hegel called his logic a 'dialectical' logic, or simply 'dialectic', and since for Hegel thought is reality, the laws of logic are the laws of the world. Marxists reject Hegel's idealism, but retain the view that reality can be called dialectical; the connection with Hegel's dialectic is preserved through the idea that change proceeds by way of internal contradiction. At this point, it is necessary to refer to a problem which first became prominent in Marxist circles in the 1920s: the problem of the *range* of dialectic. Engels followed Hegel in thinking that the dialectic applies, not only to society, but also to the subject-matter of the natural sciences. Later Marxists—notably Lukács, in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923)—argued that Engels had misrepresented Marx's dialectic, which was intended to apply to society alone. Soviet philosophers still follow Engels in this, but for Edgley, as for most Western Marxists, there is a fundamental difference between the natural sciences and the science of society, such that only the latter can properly be called 'dialectical'. To grasp this difference, it is necessary to consider further the Marxist account of social change. When Marxists say that social change proceeds by way of internal contradictions, they mean that such change

[4] Since Professor Edgley read his paper in October 1979, the French Communist Party has given its support to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and it has been argued that Eurocommunism has little political significance without French support (*The Times*, 10 and 16 January 1980).

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has to be explained in terms of conflict, conflict that occurs at various levels. There is a conflict within a society's class-structure, i.e. a conflict between classes; this in turn has to be explained in terms of a deeper conflict within the economic basis of society. These conflicts issue in revolutionary change; that is, in Edgley's words, in 'a sudden explosive change that is a change of structure, the destruction of the existing order'. But why should one not say, as Engels would have said, that such explosive changes, the result of internal contradictions, also occur in the subject-matter of the natural sciences? And if they do, why should not the natural sciences, too, be called dialectical? Some Western Marxists would reply that talk about internal contradictions has not proved fruitful in the field of the natural sciences; Edgley makes a different point. He argues that the *relation between* the science of society and the modern social revolution is different from that between (say) a revolution in climatic conditions and the science of geography. The modern social revolution, he says, *involves* the science that is Marxist dialectics. This science, unlike the natural sciences, does not merely reflect its subject matter, as in a mirror. Rather, it *expresses*, it *speaks for*, a social movement, and this is what Marxists mean when they speak of 'the unity of theory and practice'. It is now possible to see how Edgley can speak of a link between fact and value. The social movement for which dialectics speaks has as its aim the revolutionary transformation of society; dialectics, then, is critical, and not merely descriptive. This, says Edgley, is the point of Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach (1845): 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it'. This criticism, this call for society to be changed, is not based on *a priori* moral commands, as Eurocommunists suppose; it is bound up with the science of society.

Edgley's paper raises many questions. When he speaks of Marxism as the science of society, he outlines the theory commonly known as 'historical materialism'. One may ask: precisely what is historical materialism? Is it a science? Again, what Edgley says about fact and value is highly controversial. Many philosophers have denied any link between the two; is there really such a link in the case of Marxist dialectics and its subject matter? All these are important questions, which are taken up later in this volume. The next four papers—those of Dr Ruben, Professor Atkinson, Dr Gray and Mrs Warnock—are, in various ways, concerned with general aspects of historical materialism. Dr Ruben writes as a Marxist and, like Edgley, is concerned with inter-Marxist disputes. His paper 'Marx, Necessity and Science' discusses questions of ontology, in that it asks: given that Marxism is a science, what is there in reality that corresponds to the true propositions of this science? In particular, when a Marxist speaks of 'modes of production' and of 'tendencies', what is there in reality that corresponds to what he says? Dr Ruben argues, against the Marxist philosopher Roy Bhaskar, that tendencies are not ontologically basic; talk

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of tendencies merely indicates one's current inability to state sufficient conditions. Ruben also argues against a Marxist school of thought when he discusses 'modes of production', and here his arguments require more extensive comment. His criticisms are aimed at some of the views of Maurice Godelier, which show the influence of Althusser's ideas. The philosophy of Louis Althusser is one of the most important developments in recent Marxism, and it is fitting that three of the papers in this volume are concerned with various aspects of it.

Althusser writes in conscious opposition to what he calls the 'humanism' of some Marxists and interpreters of Marx. This view of Marx was particularly influential in the fifties; it laid great stress on some of Marx's early work, and especially the Paris Manuscripts of 1844, with their doctrine of human alienation. This was taken to be an *ethical* doctrine; Marxism, it was argued, is not a science, but is a moral point of view. Althusser replies that Marxism is a science. It is significant that one of his most important books (written in conjunction with Etienne Balibar, and published in 1965) was entitled *Lire le Capital*—the point being that Marxists should study the scientific doctrines of *Capital* and should not lay almost exclusive stress on Marx's earlier, and immature, work. Such a view is not peculiar to Althusser; it is shared, for example, by Soviet Marxists. What is distinctive about Althusser is the view that he takes of Marxist science, and it is this that is relevant to Ruben's paper. Marx's science, Althusser argues, is a study of *structures*, and such structures are not to be reduced to relations between men[5]. This view is reflected in what Godelier writes about 'modes of production'. This is one of the technical terms of historical materialism, and its meaning is not uncontroversial. However, there will be no harm (as far as the paper under discussion is concerned) in accepting Ruben's view that a mode of production is a type of economic structure, involving both producers and means of production. Now, it is Godelier's view that, within a mode of production, there is an internal relationship between structures, and also (and this is the important point) that these structures may be regarded as moving. Ruben replies that to say this is to ontologize structures. A structure is a universal, and as such it cannot change in time. Nor, he adds, did Marx ever suppose that it could; to suppose the existence and movement of such structures is to side with Hegel against Marx. In sum, it is societies, not structures, that change, and it is societies and their changes of structure that are the real subject matter of Marxist science.

Ruben's paper is not critical of historical materialism as such; his criticisms are directed against a mistaken view of its nature. The next two papers provide a critical examination of some of the basic doctrines of the theory. In a way, historical materialism has two faces, one looking

[5] Cf. *Lire le Capital* (*Reading Capital*), English translation (London, 1970), 180.

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to the past and one to the future. On the one hand, it claims to explain the past, and it can therefore be considered as a theory of historical explanation. On the other hand, it claims (or is often thought to claim) to provide accurate predictions of the future, and one can consider the soundness of this claim. In his paper 'Historical Materialism', Professor Atkinson considers the theory as a thesis in the philosophy of history. He first tries to determine just what the thesis is, taking as his starting point Marx's famous summary of the theory in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Marx's observations are brief, and their correct interpretation is a matter of controversy. Stated in the very broadest way, the theory asserts that 'the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general'. Filling in the detail, Marx draws a famous distinction between a 'basis' and 'superstructure', and this gives rise to serious problems of interpretation. (a) Precisely what is the basis? Does it consist simply of what Marx calls the relations of production—i.e. the relations into which people enter when they produce things? This, indeed, is what the passage appears to state; but did Marx perhaps mean that the basis also includes what he calls material productive forces—which seem to include, not just tools and machines, but the skills of those who make and use them? (b) How much is contained in the superstructure? Does it consist of legal and political institutions only, or does it also include what Marx calls 'definite forms of social consciousness'? And how are these related to the 'intellectual life process'? (c) What are the relations between basis and superstructure? It seems clear enough that the basis 'conditions' or 'determines' the superstructure; but is this a one-way affair? Can the superstructure affect the basis?

In response to question (a), Atkinson argues that material productive forces and relations of production together constitute the 'basis'. 'Economic factors generally, organizational as well as technical, are the fundamental causative factors in history'. With regard to (b), he remains agnostic; as to (c), he notes that Marxists themselves recognize that features of the superstructure not only escape economic determination, but even affect the development of the basis. Questions of interpretation answered, Atkinson goes on to ask how useful historical materialism is as a thesis in the philosophy of history. He agrees with Marxists that there are many historical questions the answers to which must be in economic terms; but, he says, these are not the *only* historical questions, nor are they always the most important ones. Intellectual history, for example, must appeal mainly to *internal* considerations, in the sense that the historian of (say) philosophy must explain philosophical change by reference to the arguments provided and not just, or even mainly, by reference to social forces. A historical materialist might concede this point, whilst claiming that the heart of the Marxist position is not touched. Historical materialism (he might say) is an account, not of the detail, but of the main lines of

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historical development—for example, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, which Marx explains in the first volume of *Capital*. Atkinson admits that nothing that he has said in his paper would refute such a a version of historical materialism. Philosophers influenced by Karl Popper might be inclined to say that the thesis, as so formulated, is so vague as to be unfalsifiable, and therefore meaningless or (as Popper himself would say) at best unscientific. Atkinson does not say that the thesis cannot be stated meaningfully, nor is he concerned with its scientific status; but he does say that its generality means that its truth is very hard to establish.

Dr Gray's discussion of historical materialism takes place in the context of an inquiry into Marx's views about human nature, entitled 'Philosophy, Science and Myth in Marxism'. Marx, Gray argues, had three concepts of of human nature, each of which requires a different kind of backing. These concepts may be called metaphysical, scientific and mythical respectively, and Gray considers them as they have been developed by three Marxists—Herbert Marcuse, G. A. Cohen and Georges Sorel. I will comment only briefly on that part of Dr Gray's paper that concerns Marcuse and Sorel. Though Marcuse claimed that he was a Marxist, there has been considerable controversy about the extent to which that claim was justified; however, Gray argues that Marcuse had a concept of man which is certainly to be found in Marx. This is the concept of man as producer both of himself and of his world, a being who has a vital need for productive labour. Present in Marx, too, is Marcuse's view that human self-determination implies the subjection of economic processes to the human will. In Marcuse, these views co-exist with a rejection of historicism; the socialist future becomes, not something which is vouched for by the science of history, but what Gray calls a 'free-floating possibility'. In saying this, of course, Marcuse is in the tradition of that Marxist humanism which is rejected by Althusser and many others. Gray's point is that this 'metaphysical humanism' is present in Marx's thought, and that those who reject it are rejecting some of Marx's ideas. As to Sorel, there can be no reasonable doubt that his Marxism was highly unorthodox. For him, revolutionary socialism was a non-rational social force; the Marxist offers, not a science, but a myth. The vast majority of Marxists would reject this account of their doctrines, but Dr Gray, writing as a critic of Marxism, thinks that Sorel was right. Whatever Marxists may think about the status of Marxist doctrines, those doctrines contain an element of myth.

Between his discussion of Marcuse and Sorel, Gray gives a critical account of a recent defence of historical materialism, G. A. Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978). What brings Cohen's book within Gray's purview is its recognition of the part played in Marx's theory of history by a concept of human nature. This concept is different from, and also thinner than, Marcuse's. It enters into one of two theses

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about the forces of production, which Cohen calls respectively the 'primacy thesis' and the 'development thesis'. The primacy thesis is Cohen's version of Marx's view that productive forces are the fundamental factor in human history; the development thesis asserts (Cohen, op. cit., 134) that productive forces 'tend to develop through history'. The second thesis is the one that is relevant here; for it is in defence of the development thesis that Cohen appeals (and suggests that Marx tacitly appealed) to premises which state certain facts about human nature. These are: that men are 'somewhat rational', and that their intelligence is such that they are able to improve their situation (op. cit., 152). This view of human nature may seem to be true, indeed to be almost a truism. Gray, however, argues that if the view is not to be almost entirely vacuous, certain assumptions have to be made; and these assumptions are by no means universally true, but are bound to a specific culture—namely, that of capitalist Europe. Cohen, like Marx, is preoccupied with human mastery over the natural environment, and writes this into his concept of rationality. But we are not entitled to say that rational conduct has only one ultimate goal; and unless there is agreement on goals, to talk of the more or less efficient use of productive forces, or of men 'improving their situation', makes no sense. Faced with such a criticism, a defender of historical materialism might answer by reducing the scope of the theory. Instead of saying that the theory is true of all human history, he could argue that it is true of the capitalist epoch alone; there could then be no objection to using a concept of rational behaviour that is peculiar to this period. But it is doubtful, to say the least, whether a Marxist would take this escape route. It is true that Lukács said (*History and Class Consciousness*, English trans. (London, 1971), 238) that historical materialism must be applied with great caution to pre-capitalist societies; but he did not deny that it could be applied to them.

Cohen's defence of Marxism takes the form of a careful exposition of Marx's writings; Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which is the subject of Mary Warnock's paper, is a work of a very different kind. In this book, Sartre proclaimed himself a Marxist, but he was ready to go far beyond Marx's text. Mrs Warnock concentrates on the task of clarifying the views on historical explanation presented in the *Critique*, and does not ask to what extent these views really belong within the Marxist tradition; consequently, a few remarks on this topic may be appropriate. Sartre criticizes Marx[6] for failing to give due weight to the element of negativity in history, an element which in turn has to be explained by *scarcity*. It is scarcity, Sarte says, that sets man against man; but it is important to

[6] The passage discussed by Sartre is Marx's account of the development of Roman society, contained in his letter to the editors of *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, November 1877. Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow and London, n.d.), 379; MEW, XIX, 111.

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realize that scarcity is a causal factor in history *only in so far as it is mediated through human grasp of it.* In other words, human actions have to be understood in the light of the human grasp of scarcity. But this grasp is not something timeless. In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Sartre insists, in opposition to the more static view of human nature taken in his earlier work, that human beings have to be seen in a socio-historical context. Mrs Warnock outlines the four types of social group recognized in the *Critique* and notes an important feature of Sartre's views about social change: namely, that he does not regard the progress from one type of group to another as inevitable. Each type emerges by reason of the actual projects pursued by the individuals who make up the group. Sartre concludes that biography, which presents the world through the eyes of the people who made history, is a major way of making history intelligible.

Much of this can be placed within some Marxist tradition or other. In stressing the element of negativity, Sartre is in the company of those Marxists (and they include the young Marx himself) who have developed Hegel's views about 'the labour of the negative'.[7] Again, what he says about scarcity can perhaps be fitted into a Marxist framework.[8] Even Sartre's view that progress from one type of group to another is not inevitable has some Marxist support; many Marxists (one may instance Lukács and Marcuse) have stressed the importance of the free decisions of oppressed groups. Again, in saying that historical change comes about by way of the actual projects pursued by individuals, Sartre is saying something that has been echoed recently by the Marxist historian E. P. Thompson.[9] But in saying that one of the chief ways of making history intelligible is by presenting the world through the eyes of the individual subjects of historical change, Sartre (as Mrs Warnock observes) is closer to Dilthey than to Marx. He seems to overlook the thesis, accepted by most Marxists, that a man's consciousness may be a *false* consciousness, and that it is the historian's business to replace this by a true presentation of the historical situation.

[7] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 6th edn, Hoffmeister (ed.) (Hamburg, 1952), 20, 29. Cf. H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 2nd edn (London, 1955), 282: 'For Marx, as for Hegel, the dialectic takes note of the fact that the negation inherent in reality is "the moving and creative principle". The dialectic is "the dialectic of negativity".' See also Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844); Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, III (Moscow and London, 1975–), 332.

[8] Cf. Cohen, op. cit., 152. In defending his 'development thesis' Cohen appeals, not just to the view about human nature discussed by Dr Gray, but to 'one fact about the situation human beings face in history'—namely, that the historical situation of man is one of scarcity.

[9] In his book *The Poverty of Theory* (London, 1978). This point is made by a Marxist critic of Thompson, Perry Anderson, in his *Arguments within English Marxism* (London, 1980), 49ff.

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The four papers just discussed have considered historical materialism in its general aspects; the next three consider particular aspects or applications of the doctrine. W. J. Rees discusses a problem about the pattern of social development outlined in Marx's *Capital*, whilst Professor Duncan and Dr Eagleton consider two problems about the 'superstructure', in the shape of Marxist views about the state and literature respectively. Discussing the specific nature of Russian Marxism, Mr Rees points out that the Russian Marxists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found themselves faced with the problem of 'exceptionalism'. The problem was, whether the path of development traced in Marx's *Capital*—from feudalism to socialism, by way of capitalism—was applicable to all countries, or whether some countries, and in particular Russia, could avoid the capitalist phase. The problem was put to Marx and Engels, who did not provide a clear answer; however, the influential Russian Marxist Plekhanov argued against the 'exceptionalist' thesis. Capitalism could not be bypassed; there would have to be two revolutions in Russia, the first bourgeois and the second proletarian. Lenin's attitude to exceptionalism was complex, in that he rejected it as an economic doctrine but preserved many of its political consequences. Like Plekhanov, he conceived of a revolution in two stages, but these stages were different from those of Plekhanov. Lenin saw no need for a capitalist era, which would be rendered superfluous by an alliance between the urban proletariat and the poor peasantry. Rees argues that in saying that a socialist revolution could be carried through with the help of the poorer peasants, Lenin was returning to views advanced by the Russian 'Populists'; at the same time Lenin asserted, against the Populists and in line with the doctrines of *Capital*, that the major revolutionary force would be the urban working class. Rees notes also that Lenin's views about the part to be played in the revolution by the peasants exercised an important influence on his ideas about the nature of the Russian Communist Party. If the party was to express the interests of the poorer peasants, who were largely illiterate and scattered over a wide area, it must be paternalistic; it must guide rather than follow.

From problems about the nature of Russian Marxism we turn to the Marxist theory of the state in general, which is the subject of a paper by Professor Graeme Duncan. Duncan argues that the classical Marxist theory of the state is neither consistent nor complete. The theory in question asserts that the state is initially the product of class conflict, coming into existence to resolve the conflict of classes, and that it later becomes an organ of class conflict, a 'machine for the oppression of one class by another'.[10] It is the latter part of the theory—the view of the state as a class instrument—on which Duncan concentrates. He argues that the

[10] Lenin, *Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*; Lenin, *Selected Works*, VII (London, 1937), 149.

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theory is acceptable only in a modified form. It is true, he says, that the state has a class bias, but this does not mean that the state is nothing but a class instrument. For example, the politico-legal regulation of capitalism in Britain shows that the state is capable of at least some manipulation by subjected groups. Moreover (and it is here that the inconsistency in Marxist theory becomes manifest), Marx himself, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, gave an example of a state which did not express an exclusive class domination, but which asserted its own independence. This was the Bonapartist state which emerged in France after the collapse of the Second Republic. Duncan adds that although this state was not the tool of a particular class, this is not to say that it did not serve class interests. In fact it served the interests of a class—the bourgeoisie—better than the bourgeoisie could have done if it had taken power in its own name. The point is, however, that it was not a tool of the bourgeoisie.

It will be worth while to compare Duncan's criticism of the Marxist theory of the state with Atkinson's criticism of the Marxist theory of history in general. In effect, both critics argue that Marxists inflate what is true in some cases, or to some extent, into a truth that is universal or unqualified. Atkinson agrees that many historical questions have to be answered in economic terms, but says that these are not the only historical questions. Duncan is prepared to say that the state always has a class bias, i.e. is always in the interest of a particular social class, but he adds that this is not to say that it is always a class instrument (cf. the Bonapartist state) or that it acts exclusively in the interests of the dominant class (cf. the regulation of British capitalism).

I said that according to Duncan, the classical Marxist theory of the state is not only inconsistent; it is also incomplete. In saying that it is incomplete, Duncan has in mind that part of the theory that sees the state as belonging to the superstructure, conditioned in the last analysis by productive forces. His point is that the correspondence between state forms and the economic basis can only be very general. As Marx himself noted, there are many variations in the economic and class configurations on which the state depends, nor is there a single state form appropriate to capitalism in all its phases of development. The view that the dominant mode of production conditions the form of the state is, Duncan says, the starting point of analysis and not its end result.

The next paper is in the field of Marxist aesthetics. Dr Eagleton, himself a Marxist, discusses the literary theory of Pierre Macherey, whose ideas owe much to Althusser. This brings us to another aspect of Althusser's views: namely, his objection to what he regards as the undue reverence for Hegel displayed by many Marxists. For Althusser, the most important philosophical ancestor of Marx is not Hegel, but Spinoza. Macherey has written on Spinoza (*Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979)), and although one

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cannot say that the influence of Spinoza is obvious in his literary theory, his opposition to what Eagleton calls 'neo-Hegelian' Marxist criticism is clear. The neo-Hegelianism that Macherey opposes is perhaps best illustrated by the views of one of its leading exponents, the Hungarian critic and philosopher Georg Lukács. Like Hegel, Lukács sees art as a kind of knowledge of reality, or at least as involving such knowledge. Like Hegel, again, Lukács stresses the importance of the whole; a work of art is a totality which represents a totality. But whereas for Hegel the totality of which art gives knowledge is *Geist* ('spirit' or 'mind'), for Lukács the totality is a developing social whole. Sketchy as it is, this account is sufficient for a useful contrast with Macherey to be made. For Macherey, a literary work is *not* a unity, is *not* a complete and harmonious totality; rather, there is within it a conflict of meanings. Macherey means that the author, in trying to say one thing, is constrained by the ideology of his epoch to say another. This ideology has internal contradictions; these are not *stated* by the literary work—such a statement would presumably be the concern of historical materialism—but they are *shown*, shown by the work's own internal stresses. The task of the literary critic, Macherey argues, is not to complete what the work leaves unsaid, but is to explain why the work has to be incomplete; why it can only show, and cannot state, the contradictions that it displays.

Implicit in the account just given, and emphasised by Macherey, is the thesis that the critic is not concerned to establish norms. The attempt to set up standards of what a work should be, Macherey argues, would be a denial of the 'determinateness' of the work. The normative critic assumes, wrongly, that the work could have been different from what it is. Two comments may be made on this—one philosophical, one historical. The philosophical comment is that Macherey's reason for rejecting normative criticism seems a poor one. It is not clear why normative criticism should be incompatible with determinism. Even a rigid determinist like Spinoza uses terms such as 'good' and 'bad' in his philosophy, and there seems to be no reason why a determinist should not have a use for such terms in his aesthetics. The historical comment is that many Marxists have viewed art in normative terms. Following Engels, they have said that the mark of a good work of art is its realism, and they praise or blame works of art for their realism or lack of it.

Though Dr Eagleton finds Macherey's literary theory stimulating, he thinks that a weakness in the theory is its neglect of the concrete historical situation of the literary work. Macherey assumes that a literary work will automatically be subversive, in that it displays the contradictions of the ideology of its epoch, but Eagleton points out that it is possible for a work to underwrite an ideology. I take this to mean that it is possible for an author not to be constrained by the ideology of his epoch and for his work to have no internal tensions. The upshot of the argument is that Macherey's theory is not true of all literary works. We seem, in fact, to have another

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example of the tendency among Marxists, noted by Atkinson and Duncan, to inflate into a universal truth something which is true only in some cases.

After these discussions of various aspects of historical materialism we come to a topic which links historical materialism with the Marxist philosophy of action, and ultimately with Marxist views about ethics. Professor Edgley's paper drew attention to the Marxist thesis that theory (historical materialism) and practice (Marxist political activity) form a unity. When Marxists speak of that 'practice' which is united with theory, they commonly refer to it by the word 'praxis'; Dr Kilminster's paper 'Theory and Practice in Marx and Marxism' is concerned with some philosophical aspects of this concept. In Marx's early theory of knowledge, as stated in the rough notes that are known as the 'Theses on Feuerbach' (1845), 'praxis' means ordinary human social activity. Marx uses this concept in his argument that the idealism and the materialism defended by previous philosophers have elements of the truth, but that neither by itself gives the whole truth. Conscious man moulds nature by his labour, and to that extent idealists are justified in saying that the mind is not in a passive relation to the world; but conscious man is also a part of nature, and to that extent materialists are justified. But, as Kilminster notes, Marx is not interested in epistemology for its own sake. Since mankind makes its own world, it can also change that world, and this is where the political aspect of praxis enters. This aspect can be introduced by way of an answer to the question: 'Marx has insisted that people can, and do, change their world. But how *ought* they to change it?' Marx's answer, Kilminster argues, involves a view about the nature of human social activity, and more specifically about the way in which this activity develops in the course of history. It is a teleological view; history is a process which has a *telos*—an end or goal—and this telos is socialism, the rational social order. This means that human beings have a potentiality for rational social organization; but this potentiality is fettered by archaic class relations, in the way that historical materialism describes and explains. These archaic class relations not only ought to be, but will be, destroyed by 'revolutionary praxis'—political activity which is not purely spontaneous, but is impregnated by, 'informed by', theory. So, in Kilminster's words, 'the theory articulating the process' on the one hand, and 'a moral indictment of society' on the other, are necessarily the same thing.

If one views human history in this teleological (and, one might add, Hegelian) way, then one can bridge the gap between fact and value. But some Marxists would deny that Marx argued in this way; or they might say that, if Marx did argue like this, then Marx was wrong. It is not clear to me from Professor Edgley's paper how he views the matter, but it is clear that Dr Kilminster thinks that those Marxists who abandoned the teleological view of social reality were right.[11] But this left them with a problem:

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how is the gap between fact and value to be bridged if teleology is set aside? Kilminster concludes his paper by considering some answers given by two members of the 'Frankfurt school' of Marxism, Adorno and Habermas. These attempts at bridging the gap are, he thinks, failures, in that they lead respectively to nihilism and to the postulation of an ideal state of affairs which is unrealizable in practice. Kilminster's paper does not raise the question whether Marxist attempts to bridge the gap between fact and value are fundamentally mistaken, or whether the gap can be bridged, but by equipment which is different from that which Marxists use. In fact, he appears to hold the second view;[12] but this is a subject outside the scope of this book.

In his paper on Marxist dialectic, Professor Edgley stressed the difference between Marxism and ethical socialism; yet he would hardly deny that Marxists themselves often use ethical terms. What makes this interesting is the fact that, in using these terms, they may seem to contradict their own theories. On the one hand, Marxists say that concepts such as 'duty', 'right' and 'justice' have no independent validity, but are relative to economic and social conditions; on the other hand, they proclaim the coming of a new form of society which is not merely different from, but is also higher than, the old, and they are loud in their condemnation of the evils of capitalism.[13] In his paper 'Marxism, Morality and Justice', Dr Steven Lukes asks whether this is only an apparent contradiction, or whether a consistent Marxist approach to morality is impossible. He concentrates on Marxist accounts of the nature of justice. He points out that Marx and Engels regarded concepts of justice as relative to class interests and to the mode of production; that being so, they had to say that there need be nothing unjust about the way in which the capitalist exploits labour. The same can be said of the principles of *Recht* (roughly speaking, legal or moral rules) in general. They do not provide an independent set of norms by means of which one can evaluate social relations; rather, they arise from these relations. Now, as long as these principles are regarded merely in this relativistic fashion, there seems to be no way of reconciling the Marxist theory of moral concepts with Marxists' use of moral terms. But, Dr Lukes argues, there is in Marxism another approach to moral

[11] He calls this teleological view a 'mythological strand' in Marx's thought.

[12] In his book *Praxis and Method* (London, 1979), 259, he says that sociologists are mistaken in affirming that the analysis of society is one thing and that the making of value-judgments is another. But Marxists have been prevented, by the conceptual baggage that they have taken over from Marx, from developing a new theory that is appropriate to the present day.

[13] A recent and eloquent example of this is Dr G. A. Cohen's 1980 Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, 'Freedom, Justice and Capitalism' (*New Left Review*, No. 126 (March/April 1981), 3–16).

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concepts. Marxists often criticize systems of *Recht* on the ground that they are abstract and one-sided, in that they apply the same standard to different cases. But human beings are not condemned to be treated in this way for ever. In a communist society, there will be no more *Recht*—which is not to say that such a society will be without a morality of any kind. A communist society will recognize a fundamental human good, but this will not be abstract; it will be the concrete human good that is proclaimed by what Dr Gray calls 'Marxist metaphysical humanism'—'self-realization in community, freedom as the overcoming of alienation, mastery over nature and the maximization of welfare' (Lukes). Dr Lukes concludes that the Marxist is able to present a self-consistent view of morality.

Lukes does not, however, find the view a plausible one; in fact, he raises no fewer than five objections to it. To these five I should like to add another, which is related to the problem of fact and value in Marxism. The Marxist theory of morality sketched by Dr Lukes owes much to Hegel. For Hegel, the advance of thought (which is also the self-development of reality) is a movement both from the fragmentary to the whole and from the abstract to the concrete. Similarly, the Marxist would (according to Lukes) claim superiority for his moral concepts because they are more concrete than those of *Recht*. Faced with these assertions, one might ask why one *ought* to prefer the concrete to the abstract. Hegel has an answer, which involves his metaphysics. There is, he would say, no gap between fact and value; the concrete is superior because reality is moving in the direction of greater concreteness, and this movement is a movement towards greater rationality. But can a Marxist argue along these lines? To do so would be to accept a teleological view of reality, and we have seen from Dr Kilminster's paper that, although there may be elements of such a view in Marx, it is rejected by several modern Marxists.

One of these Marxists is Jürgen Habermas, who was discussed in Kilminster's paper. Habermas has paid attention to the problem that justice poses for the Marxist, and his answer is the subject of a paper by Professor Philip Pettit. As we saw, the problem for the Marxist is that on the one hand he wants his own criteria to be objective, but on the other hand he wants all concepts of justice to be relative to socio-economic conditions. Habermas' solution takes the form of a consensus theory of justice. A just social scheme, he argues, is one that would attract rational consensus. Now, there is nothing subjective about such a scheme; it is not one on which people of any sort happen to agree, but is one on which *rational* people *would* agree. This preserves the objectivity of justice; at the same time, however, we do not know *what* scheme would attract rational consensus, so such schemes as are offered can consistently be regarded as economically or socially determined.

Habermas' consensus theory of justice is paralleled by a consensus theory of truth, and this theory of truth provides Professor Pettit with his starting

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point. Habermas does not say that to call a proposition true *means that* it has secured agreement, or even that it has secured rational agreement. Rather, truth is a property of propositions, their 'warranted assertibility', which Habermas connects with the concept of an 'ideal speech situation'. He means that if a proposition is to warrant assertion, it must be able to stand up to criticism of the most radical kind. That is, the proposition must be discussed within the context of an ideal speech situation, in which questioning is permitted at every level. Pettit finds some obscurities in Habermas' formulation of his consensus theory of truth, but he concludes that the theory enables Habermas to preserve an agnosticism as to *what* is true; for if one is to establish that a theory would command rational assent one must have all the relevant evidence, and this is never available. But, Pettit argues, there is no good reason to suppose that a similar agnosticism can be retained in the case of a consensus theory of justice, where we are concerned, not with theoretical, but with practical discourse. There is a vital difference between the two sorts of discourse—in short, between talk about truth and talk about justice—in that what makes us agnostic about truth is the fact that we do not have all the relevant evidence. But in the case of practical discourse, our arguments are not vulnerable in the same way to novel empirical discoveries. Pettit concludes that this attempt to go between the horns of the Marxist's dilemma—moral objectivity on the one hand, socio-economic determinism on the other—is a failure.

Professor Pettit's criticisms of Habermas' argument—and his criticisms, in the concluding pages of his paper, of some supplementary arguments for agnosticism about justice—seem to me to be very powerful. One might also raise a further criticism: namely, that it is hard to see how Habermas' views about justice can be reconciled with what Professor Edgley has said about the revolutionary character of Marxism. Habermas leaves one in the position of being unable to say, in concrete terms, what the just course of action in a given situation really is. There is, he says, a just course of action; i.e. there is a course of action on which rational people would agree. But we cannot know of any course of action which is actually recommended as being just, that it really is just. In short, Habermas defends a kind of moral scepticism; but it will be remembered that, for Edgley, moral scepticism is an integral part of Eurocommunism (which claims falsely to be Marxist) and of ethical socialism (which does not even claim to be Marxist). It is because the Eurocommunists and the ethical socialists believe that the right course of action is not known that they argue that all points of view must be tolerated, and that no social changes should be brought about by violent means. It may well seem to Marxists such as Edgley that Habermas, in trying to reconcile moral objectivity with historical materialism, has abandoned Marxism.

Dr Lukes mentioned, as one of the components of the Marxist concept of the fundamental human good, the idea of freedom. Marx's views about

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freedom are discussed by Dr G. W. Smith in his paper 'Marxian Metaphysics and Individual Freedom'. Dr Smith points out that Marx made two important claims about freedom: first, that the revolutionary proletariat is more free than the bourgeoisie, and second, that the members of a future classless society will enjoy complete and absolute freedom. The revolutionary proletariat is more free than the bourgeoisie in that the proletariat alone can change the conditions that determine it, and so can change itself. But the proletariat is only relatively, and not absolutely, free; for although it can change circumstances, its actions are determined by its position in society as a whole. Only in the classless society, i.e. only under communism, will there be complete freedom, for only there will social circumstances be brought wholly under control, and human beings will live and work within conditions that they alone have set. There will then be no opposition between man and society; society will be the medium through which men express themselves rather than an external obstacle to their activity.

Superficially, the freedom enjoyed in the classless society might not seem to differ in kind from that of the revolutionary proletariat; the difference might appear to be only one of degree, in that human beings in a classless society have *more* power than the revolutionary proletariat. However, Dr Smith argues persuasively that different concepts of freedom are involved. Freedom under communism is not a matter of the ability to change circumstances; it is a matter of self-determination, as opposed to determination by external factors. Smith places this concept within the idealist tradition of Kant and Hegel, but in fact it goes further back than this; we are dealing with what Isaiah Berlin, in his essay 'Two Concepts of Liberty',[14] calls the concept of positive freedom, which includes Spinoza among its adherents. To be free, in this sense, is to be one's own master. I am free if I am 'a doer—deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role' (Berlin, op. cit., 131). Berlin objects that this concept has been used to justify totalitarian regimes (some of them claiming to be Marxist); Smith approaches the concept from another angle and asks whether, in a free society of this kind, there can be any place for the concept of an individual person. The problem arises in this way. Marx sees the common-sense concept of the individual person as an abstraction. It assumes that social relations are external to the individual; but this, says Marx, is not so. Rather, the individual is constituted by them, in the sense that he would not be *what* he is if he were isolated from his social relationships. A problem arises when we ask: how can an individual be said to remain the same through the series of changing relationships that constitute him as an individual? Dr Smith argues that Marx, with his theory of freedom under

[14] Reprinted in Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969).

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communism, does what Spinoza and Hegel have been accused of doing—that is, he dissolves the individual in the whole.

The final paper in the volume—Dr O'Hagan's 'Althusser: How to be a Marxist in Philosophy'—brings us back to some important issues discussed earlier: that is, historical materialism and the revolutionary character of Marxist philosophy. O'Hagan is concerned with Althusser's views about the nature of philosophy, or at any rate with his most recent views. These are closely related to classical Marxist sources, and it will be helpful to approach Althusser by way of Engels. Engels argued that philosophy, in the sense of a speculative account of the nature of things, came to an end in the nineteenth century—to be exact, it ended with the philosophy of Hegel; its place had been taken by science, 'real positive knowledge of the world'.[15] However, there was still a place for philosophy in one sense of the term, namely as a kind of logic, the theory of thought and its laws.[16] Althusser agrees with Engels that a sharp distinction must be drawn between science and philosophy, and also that there is still a place for philosophy. But he disagrees with Engels' view that this philosophy is really logic. Logic, he says, is itself a science,[17] so the nature of Marxist philosophy still has to be clarified. His answer to the problem is that philosophical 'propositions' are not propositions in the strict sense of the term, in that they cannot be called true or false. Rather, they are disguised injunctions and as such should be called, not 'true' or 'false', but 'correct' or 'incorrect'. They are correct in so far as they further the development of science, and incorrect in so far as they hinder it. This may seem to be a form of pragmatism; Althusser may seem to be denying the possibility of any rational argument in philosophy, and to be saying that a philosophical utterance is to be judged solely by reference to its utility. It would be suprising if this were what Althusser did mean; Marxists usually oppose pragmatism, and in fact O'Hagan argues that Althusser really means something else. In saying that philosophical assertions are not true or false, Althusser really means that they are not *demonstrable*; philosophical argument is not deductive argument, but resembles legal reasoning, where the lawyer is trying to influence action (i.e. secure a favourable verdict), but is doing so by means of rational argument. This is a much more plausible (though less dramatic) thesis than that with which we seemed to begin. The philosopher, it now appears, *does* state propositions; Althusser is saying that the arguments by which he supports these are of a special kind. What is lacking in Althusser is any detailed account of the nature of these arguments.

[15] Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, MEW, XXI, 270; Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, II (Moscow and London, 1950), 331.

[16] Engels, Anti-Dühring, MEW, XX, 24; English trans. (London, 1934), 31.

[17] Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, English trans. (London, 1971), 59.

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So far, it has emerged that when Althusser says that a correct philosophical argument is one that furthers scientific progress, he does not imply that 'correct' *means* 'furthering scientific progress'. His view is that a philosophical argument is assessed by rational, though non-deductive criteria, and if it is a good argument it will also further scientific progress. There may seem to be nothing distinctively Marxist about such a view; long before Marx, Locke had argued that in giving an accurate account of the human understanding he was clearing away rubbish that stood in the way of scientific progress. What makes Althusser's view a Marxist view is the fact that it involves a reference to the influence of social class on ideas. Althusser's position is linked with another well-known thesis about the nature of philosophy stated by Engels. Philosophers, said Engels, fall into two classes: idealists and materialists.[18] When he, and other Marxists who defend this view, speak of 'materialism' they seem to mean what would generally be called 'realism'; for them, 'matter' is (in Lenin's phrase) 'objectively real being', which is 'independent of the consciousness of humanity'.[19] Engels adds that materialism is the world-view of science;[20] it follows that any philosophical argument in favour of materialism will help science, and any philosophical argument in favour of idealism will hinder science. Althusser, like other Marxists, adds the important proposition that idealism is the philosophy of the bourgeoisie, and materialism the philosophy of the proletariat. So, in Althusser's words, philosophy 'represents politics in the field of theory'; philosophy is 'basically a political struggle: a class struggle'.

This must not be misunderstood. Althusser is not saying that materialism is true because it is the philosophy of the proletariat; he says that he agrees with Spinoza that truth is its own standard, which means, in effect, that philosophical arguments are to be evaluated by philosophical, and not by political standards. His point seems to be that the truth of materialism is something that the bourgeoisie *cannot* recognize, and which it must therefore try to obfuscate by means of ideology. Conversely, the truth of materialism is something that the proletariat can recognize and must try to further. Althusser seems to have in mind here, not materialism as a general philosophical theory, but *historical* materialism, i.e. the Marxist theory of society. It is the existence of the class struggle, and the factors that determine it, that the bourgeoisie cannot recognize without abandoning its own position of domination within society as a whole.

Commenting on this view of philosophy, Dr O'Hagan notes that much work will have to be done if it is to be made acceptable. There is need of

[18] Ludwig Feuerbach, MEW, XXI, 275; Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, II, 335. Compare Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 55.

[19] Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*; Lenin, *Collected Works*, XIV, English trans. (Moscow and London, 1962), 326.

[20] *Anti-Dühring*, MEW, XX, 129; English trans., 155.

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(i) a general explanation, within the framework of historical materialism, of the roles of science and ideology; it has to be shown that the ruling bourgeoisie necessarily relies on mystificatory ideologies. There is also need of (ii) particular explanations of the role of philosophy in relation to politics and the sciences. Dr O'Hagan is, I believe, quite right in his statement of what Althusser's view needs if it is to be established; there is the further problem of whether what it needs can ever be provided. One may be reminded of Professor Atkinson's comments on historical materialism, viewed as an account of the main lines of historical development: namely, that the thesis is so very general that complete verification is extremely difficult.

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