

REVIEWS

Apel: Transformation of Philosophy

K.O. Apel, *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980 (trans. Adey and Frisby), £12.50 hc

This book assembles some of the results of a sustained interplay between the broadly analytic and pragmatist traditions and traditions in German philosophy and critical theory, with the central aim of outlining a transformation of philosophy along the lines of what the author calls a transcendental pragmatics of language, or a transcendental hermeneutics.

Perhaps the guiding theme is a critique of the methodological solipsism which Apel finds presupposed by the unified theory of science, all forms of positivism, certain hermeneutic positions relying on empathy as a key concept, and the transcendental theory of consciousness since Kant. Methodological solipsism, briefly, amounts to the view that 'one alone, and only once' can follow a rule, and hence one alone can understand something *as* something of such-and-such a kind - or, in other words, can employ concepts - which understanding is required for the possibility of any thought. Wittgenstein is naturally important here, being responsible both for the introduction of methodological solipsism into the analytic philosophy of language, and for its supercession, by showing that the use of concepts, the understanding of something *as* something, is possible only within a social life-form in which agreement in meanings, or participation in a language-game, is embedded.

This is enough to show that the positivist attempt to integrate the social sciences into the programme of unified science cannot succeed; for the grasp of empirical data requires the use of concepts, and this necessarily presupposes communication between subjects in a language-game, and hence a cognitive interest in understanding others. Social interaction and communication cannot then be reduced to sets of causal relationships between objects (for example, in behaviourism), nor can the cognitive interest in understanding others be treated as merely one empirical psychological datum among others; for these attempts to establish a separation between the subject and its object, in accordance with a cognitive interest in the technical control of the object, always presuppose, in the very use of concepts, the cognitive interest in understanding the other as a communicant; a co-subject rather than an object.

Before bringing on the third in the triad of cognitive interests which Apel shares with Habermas, we need to see how the programme escapes the relativism of those like Winch, who, taking up Wittgenstein's themes, argued that the participation in a language-game required in order to understand a particular social life-form rules out any critical questioning of that life-form. We can understand a society only in its own terms; philosophy leaves everything as it is. Apel argues instead that, rather than take empirically given language-game as the starting-point of philosophy and accept the conservatism that goes with it, we should investigate the necessary conditions of the possibility of any communication, the structure required for any language-game to exist at all. The uncovering of these conditions is the work of a transcendental

pragmatics of language. Among the conditions is that a certain notion of communication - which Apel calls the transcendental language-game, and which involves, at least, subjects telling significant truths to others who are treated as equal members of the community - is a norm for participants in any given language-game. A norm not in that it is statistically the case that this is so (societies exist, as we know, where this does not hold), but in that this notion of communication sets an ideal of what is to be aimed at in social interaction. To illustrate: unless a child implicitly takes its parents to be saying something true and relevant to it, it will not be able to correlate utterances with states of affairs in the world, and so not be able to grasp their meaning at all.

In the light of this ideal communication community, critical theory takes actually existing social formations to task. It uncovers ways in which communication is obstructed or broken down by prevailing social, political, psychological and ideological structures: it does this in a language which cannot be restricted to the particular social life-form in question, but is nevertheless in principle accessible to, and its claims verifiable by, participants in that society through a process of critical self-reflection. In this way Marxist theory, psychoanalytic theory and the critique of ideology are seen to be governed by an interest in the emancipation of the self and others in order to achieve that ideal community which is presupposed, as an action-guiding norm, by any communication, or indeed thought, whatsoever. In this way also, the refusal of Marxists to divorce their theory from communist values is given a transcendental grounding: the Marxist critique is not just an account of capitalist society, but is necessarily a guide to its active transformation.

This simplified account of some basic themes necessarily omits Apel's insights on other related issues: the impossibility of a thorough-going objectivisation of language (as attempted in recent semantic theory), the structural transformations of transcendental philosophy from Kant through Peirce to Wittgenstein, and so on. It also perhaps suggests the high level of abstraction at which most of the writing takes place, which goes with the Kantian spirit in which it is conducted, and the immense depth and breadth of knowledge it assumes. It is not an easy book to read, and the repetition of themes is a help rather than hindrance. However, suspicions raised in analytic philosophers by the transcendental nature of the issues will be heightened by the eclectic character of much of the work: Wittgenstein's private language argument is taken on trust, as is Royce's notion of the triadic structure of the mediation of tradition, and Peirce's concept of an unlimited communication community.

When he gets down to some detailed argument, as in the essay on the foundation of ethics, the final quarter of the book, Apel carries less conviction: he never manages quite to match up with the preceding high abstractions. Scholars will also have complaints about the treatment of their pet authors. Despite such faults, the book offers an impressive overview and integration of some of the central preoccupations of critical European philosophy.

Kim Davies

Nelson: Justifying Democracy

W.N. Nelson, *On Justifying Democracy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, £9.75 hc

The main aim of this book is to provide a justification of at least some types of representative democracy, in terms of the moral quality of the laws they produce. While this involves the use of a moral argument, or at least an argument about the conditions and possibility of moral argument, reference is also made to other approaches which have attempted to justify democratic types of government either with a non-moral justification, or with a moral justification which does not refer to the moral quality of the laws they produce. This reference to other approaches is however highly critical and really serves only as a negative counterpart to Nelson's positive justification of democracy.

Early on a distinction is made between defining a system as democratic, which is done in terms of its procedures (p.3), and justifying a democratic system, which is done through an evaluation of the kinds of laws and policies to which such procedures lead (p.5). The question of the feasibility of a democratic system is further hived off from its definitions and justification. Although there may be grounds for such a distinction, especially as Nelson recognizes that any 'theory of democracy' must deal with all three factors, the consequence in this book is that questions about the definition of democracy are dealt with only lightly, while those concerning the feasibility of different models of democracy are usually ignored as interesting but empirical questions, and hence not the concern of a philosopher!

It is a tribute to Nelson that despite these unpromising foundations and the highly atomistic view he takes of the individual's position in society he still manages to raise some interesting points. For example, in Chapter 2 he attacks justifications of democracy which rest on its procedural fairness and equality by showing how these don't necessarily lead to the guarantee of substantive rights. Purely procedural justice internal to the system of government will not ensure morally acceptable outcomes. If we add to this Nelson's plausible argument that even the non-moral goods which democratic governments legislate to achieve rest on moral considerations about the nature of justice, then we can clearly see his position. This involves the need for a moral argument which assesses the outcomes (the policies

and laws) of a democratic governmental procedure as a means to giving a moral justification of that procedure.

The chapter on procedural fairness is complemented by others on participation, popular sovereignty, and economic theories of democracy all of which purport to show that these theories fail to provide an adequate justification for it. Having shown the inadequacy of these positions and in the process indicated his own view Nelson concludes, in the final two chapters, with a discussion of his own justification for democracy. This, as I have said, is an instrumental justification which looks at the consequences of democratic procedures in order to give a moral justification for them. However, this argument is supplemented by another and different argument, particularly in Chapter 6. When stating this argument at its simplest level Nelson says,

The general idea is this: the tests that a law has to pass to be adopted in a constitutional democracy are analogous to the tests that a moral principle must pass in order to be an acceptable moral principle.
(p.101)

This second argument seems to rest crucially on a comparison of the actual procedure of law making with the process of moral discourse. And yet elsewhere in the book Nelson is scathing about attempts to justify democracy by reference to its procedures. The two arguments do not fit easily together, and in not making a distinction between them Nelson is at least guilty of confusion.

Despite these problems Nelson does make some interesting points about the role of rational argument in giving reasons for the acceptance of moral principles and how this role is analogous to (and supportive of) the role of argument in the procedures of constitutional democracy.

Finally he makes an interesting distinction between the interpretation of law and the content of morality (what is morally required) in order to outline the circumstances in which an individual may not be obliged to obey a morally just law passed by a democratic government. Overall the book is closely argued but it reads as dated (despite its recent publication) and remains completely and unquestioningly within very narrow and artificial boundaries.

Peter Vipond

Tradition and History Books on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty

D. LaCapra, *A Preface to Sartre*, Methuen, 1979, £9.50
D. Archard, *Marxism and Existentialism*, Blackstaff, 1980, £7.50

Dominick LaCapra is nothing if not up-to-date. Indeed, he is positively trendy. So his new book on Sartre must surely say something new and interesting. His introduction promises us that it will. He is going, he says, to transcend existing concepts of intellectual history, to hold a creative dialogue with the past, to revise those artificial ways of thinking which radically separate text from context. A new Sartre will emerge; one hitherto hidden even from himself.

What enables LaCapra to do all this, he tells us,

is that he is inspired by Derrida's notion of deconstructive reading. Sartre read deconstructively will be seen to ignore tradition, to strive misguidedly for clarity and lack of ambiguity, to succumb to the logic of domination, and to propose a naive notion of human freedom. LaCapra, if not exactly original, could be right. We read on - and discover that tradition 'may be defined on the analogy of the text as a problematic unitary concept designating a series of displacements over time that raise the question of the relationship between continuity and discontinuity' (p.25). So *that's* what tradition is! And how about 'text'? Well, it turns out that just about everything is a text: there's the text of Sartre's complete oeuvre, the text of the

world, the text of life, even *context* - it's all text isn't it? At this point I begin to sympathize with Sartre's remark: 'I am completely opposed to the idea of the text'.

The trick, apparently, is to ignore what Sartre said, because it is what he *didn't* say that is the real significance of his work. This sort of arrogant trivialization perturbs me not least because it licences an arbitrary and cavalier approach to textual exegesis. A short but clear example of this sort of total missing-of-the-point occurs on page 97, where LaCapra quotes what Sartre said in 1964 about his early writing. When I wrote *Nausea*, he said, 'what I lacked was a sense of reality. Since then I have changed... I have seen children die of hunger. In the face of a child who dies, *Nausea* has no weight'. This 'disconcerting passage,' says LaCapra, 'posits an extreme either/or choice: kill the novel or kill the child'. Rubbish more utter than this is hard to find.

Archard's book is in total contrast, and refreshing for it. In place of LaCapra's verbose pretentiousness we have a modest and succinct attempt to

trace a real slice of 'tradition' - or rather history. The history is that of the dialogue between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty about philosophy and politics. The themes of that dialogue - for Archard takes seriously what was actually said - were reason and history, theory and practice, the responsibility of intellectuals and the problem of political effectiveness. What Archard does, and in this he goes beyond the standard accounts which detach the philosophical texts from their actual context, is to situate the thought of the two men in its historical place, and to show how they developed in response to each other and to events.

Archard does not, of course, solve the problems. But he does show how to put history and philosophy back together, how to treat a text as standing in a serious relation to a real context, and how rational argument can inform political activity. As such, the book is a short, clear contribution to an unfinished debate.

Roger Waterhouse

Value and Logic

Diane Elson (ed.), *Value: The Representation of Labour in Capitalism*, CSE Books/Harvester Press, 1979, £4.95 pb, £12 hb
Roman Rosdolsky, *The Making of Marx's 'Capital'*, Pluto Press, 1980 (trans. Pete Burgess), £4.95 pb

The cluster of concepts, arguments and problems usually referred to as the 'Theory of Value' is often taken, by marxists and non-marxists alike, as definitive of a specifically marxist approach to political economy. It is said that the theory refutes the claims of classical economics to have uncovered the eternal and ineluctable laws of relation between the economic categories, offering in their place a demonstration of the historically and socially specific exploitation of labour by capital.

The political consequences of such a demonstration are held to be equally far-reaching. In specifying the location and form of capitalist exploitation, the theory of value sets the agenda for a working class political/economic struggle whose objectives can only be the abolition of the 'value form' itself. Or so the 'official' story runs.

In fact, the theory of value has progressively become something of an embarrassment to marxist intellectuals and activists. From an early date the status of the theory as a contribution to 'technical' economic debates has been problematic. It is not at all clear that the theorems through which exchange-value and the rate of surplus-value are calculated relate in any significant way to the theorems which determine the prices at which commodities exchange and the profits which accrue to capital. This is the notorious 'transformation problem', already identified as the achilles heel of marxist economics by Bohm-Bawerk in the 1890s. More generally, it can be argued that Marx, far from moving beyond the pre-suppositions of classical political economy, shares with his predecessors a fatal attachment to the 'value problematic'; a pre-scientific quest for the general determinants of the imaginary quality 'value'.

At the political level, changes in the labour-markets and class structures of capitalist societies have created difficulties for political groupings whose programmes are addressed solely, or even mainly, to 'productive' wage labour. On the other

side of this coin, the development of movements for the liberation of oppressed 'minorities' has contributed to a widespread feeling on the left that the extraction of surplus-value from wage-labour is neither the only, nor perhaps the most important, form of exploitation and oppression in advanced capitalist societies.

The course of debates within marxist theory itself have not been without consequence for the theory of value. The retention of a concept of value by Marx in his later work is felt by a variety of *soi-disant* scientific marxists to signify an unhealthy nostalgia for the philosophical anthropology of 1844. A 'labour theory of value' seems to echo the postulate of labour as human 'species being'. As is notorious, those passages of *Capital Vol. I* and *Grundrisse* in which Marx reflects on the nature, determinants and effects of the 'value form' display distinct traces of hegelian modes of enquiry, argument and presentation. Questions about the status of Marx's value-concepts are dragged into the mire of debate on the relations, or lack of them, between the marxist and hegelian methods.

At the heart of these theoretical debates lies an issue which will form the focus of attention here. If it can be shown that the theory of value embodies a 'logic of the concrete' which cannot be captured by the theorems of formal, analytical logic, then it can be argued that the theory represents not a dispensable element within analytic economics, but the basis for a complete reconceptualisation of economic relations. Both the Elson and Rosdolsky volumes are involved in the debate over what such a 'logic' might look like. The Elson collection is clearly conceived, at least in part, as a response to the post-althusserian assaults on the coherence of the concept of 'value' and any notion of a 'logic of the concrete' represented by Cutler *et al.* (in *Marx's 'Capital' and Capitalism Today*). The appearance of *The Making of Marx's 'Capital'* in Germany in 1967 gave a considerable impetus to the development of the 'Capital-Logic' perspective, with its markedly hegelian model of 'logic'.

The argument here will be that any defence of the 'Theory of Value' must first of all abandon the notion that it is a 'theory' in anything like the usual sense of the term. Further, to make this move

it is necessary to defend a conception of enquiry which can only be understood as a specifically marxist re-working of the hegelian 'method'.

Elson is aware of the difficulties which arise if Marx's use of the value-concepts is understood as a theory, and a good part of her own essay is devoted to a consideration of what it might be a theory of. Having considered and rejected suggestions that it constitutes a 'proof' of exploitation, 'explains' prices or 'explains' the social division of labour; she argues that Marx offers not a 'labour theory of value' but a 'value theory of labour'.

The object of Marx's theory of value is labour. It is ... a matter of ... seeking an understanding of why labour takes the forms it does, and what the political consequences are.

(Elson, p.123)

Elson quotes approvingly from *Grundrisse* to the effect that 'labour is the living, form-giving fire' (Elson, p.361), a 'potential' which may become 'fixed' differently in different modes of production. The 'Theory of Value' in *Capital* serves to explain the mode in which labour becomes fixed under the conditions of commodity production.

Elson is keen that her account of the labour/value nexus should find a pathway between two cardinal errors; that of positing extra-historical determinants of socio-historical processes (ascribed to Cutler *et al.*) on the one hand, and that of reducing the complex materiality of socio-historical processes to an 'ideal' and all-embracing logic (ascribed to Rosdolsky) on the other. To do this she must be able to elucidate a conception of 'determination' which is neither empiricist nor idealist in which labour and value stand neither as cause and effect, nor as *implicans* and *implicate*, but are related in a 'logic of the concrete'. The variant of this which Elson adopts owes more than a little to the current fashion for an 'aristotelian' Marx.

The middle way between empiricism and idealism lies in '... a conception of a process of social determination that proceeds from the indeterminate to the determinate, from the potential to the actual, from the formless to the formed' (Elson, pp.129-30). Labour is to be conceived as a social 'substance' of which concrete/abstract and private/social labour are to be considered the *potentia*: 'Labour always has its abstract and concrete, its social and private aspects' (Elson, p.149, emphasis SC). Thus, Marx's value-concepts constitute the re-presentation 'in thought' of the capitalist 'form' of labour, while labour in its abstract aspect is their 'substance'.

These formulations give rise to difficulties at two levels. First, it is not clear that the terms 'substance', 'potential' and 'form' are used consistently and coherently. In classical realism substance already has form, it is formed 'matter', and Elson's references to 'form-giving fire' and movements from 'the formless to the formed' would suggest that labour is not substance but matter. If this is the case, then abstract, concrete, particular and social labour as formed matter must be *different* substances. If, on the other hand, labour is a substance it can only be a 'secondary substance', the 'essence' of a range of primary substances, and it is unclear that Elson has evaded idealism.

The second difficulty in Elson's formulations, which is illustrated by the first, is that it reduces Marx's materialism to a realist metaphysics. The logic of the concrete is sought in the structure of the 'real' itself, which can be known prior to any concrete investigation. It consists of substances, possessed of *potentia*, passing through a succession of forms.

It is unfortunate, if understandable, that many marxists tend to equate objective idealism with meta-

physics *per se*. In consequence they are so keen to avoid the former that they fall into alternative forms of the latter. This tendency can be seen at work in Elson's defence of her model of the logic of the concrete. She is aware that 'substance is a term with a certain philosophical history' (Elson, p.157) and offers a 'materialist' conception of substance as 'an abstraction with a practical reality insofar as one form of the substance is actually transformed into another form, and not in idealist terms, as an absolute entity realising its goals' (Elson, p.158). Materialist or not, this conception must add a metaphysical dimension to the logic of explanation, as an example will show.

Elson claims that 'Marx's argument is not that the abstract aspect of labour is the product of capitalist social relations, but that the latter are characterised by the dominance of the abstract aspect over other aspects of labour' (Elson, p.150). This distinction only has any point on the assumption that 'labour' is always *potentially* 'labour in capitalist social relations' and that the latter can in some part be *explained* by that potential. Taken to its conclusion this principle implies that social structures can be known *a priori* through a consideration of the *potentia* of the substances which compose them. If this conclusion is to be avoided, it needs to be shown that the metaphysical short-circuit of explanation by potential has a legitimate if limited place in a non-metaphysical logic of explanation.

Elson's ontologising blurs the distinction which Marx makes in the 1857 *Introduction* between conceptual and concrete processes. There has always been, Marx argues, a *concept* of abstract labour (*Grundrisse*, p.103), but this concept is *itself* an empty abstraction except in social relations where '... not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has become the means of creating wealth in general' (*Grundrisse*, p.104). Elson herself quotes from *Grundrisse* to the effect that it would be 'unfeasible and wrong' to equate the logical order of the economic categories with their historical order, but her conception of a logic of the concrete implies that the history of labour is the history of its potential forms, and seems to move in just that direction.

Whatever the infelicities of her solution, it can be argued that Elson has posed the problem of a logic of the concrete correctly; it must avoid empiricism and idealism. Arthur's paper in the Elson collection makes the claim that Marx's use of the value-concepts conforms to such a logic, and that on this basis they have an important role to play in economic debates as measures of equivalence. 'It is precisely the fact that commodities differ as use-values, but are equivalent as values that is the basis of capitalist exchange' (Elson, p.69). The importance of Arthur's contribution lies in his insistence that a conception of value as equivalence does not imply the identity of the equivalents and need not degenerate into the search for a common substance present in all commodities.

Marx's conception of 'equivalence', Arthur argues, is not that found in formal logic where it is characterised as a relation of reflexivity, symmetry and transitivity (RST). In the simple form of value, for example, R must be violated since the value of, say, cotton cannot be expressed in terms of cotton itself. 'x = x' is not an expression of value. Again, in the money form T must be violated; even if 'x iron' = 'n money' = 'y saffron', there is no guarantee that the owner of x will exchange it directly for y. Hence, precisely, the need for money.

Arthur's paper is a model of clarity and constitutes a first line of defence against the charge that Marx's concept of equivalence (and of logic more generally) is 'rationalist'. Beyond this Arthur does not go, however. Even if it can be established that

Marx systematically violates RST, and does so as a matter of policy rather than as a result of shoddy argument, this remains a negative insight into the logic of the concrete. Repeated assertions that the violation of RST is necessary in view of the 'concreteness' of processes of exchange have a limited heuristic value. Both Arthur and Elson recognise that a defence of the value-concepts requires a characterisation of the logic of the concrete in which 'logic' is not understood in a formalist/rationalist manner, and 'concrete' is not understood in an empiricist/idealist manner. But neither has wholly carried out such a characterisation.

Both Rosdolsky and Banaji (in the Elson collection) insist that the solution to this riddle lies in Marx's critique of Hegel's objective idealism. Banaji makes the point most forcefully, arguing that the widespread attacks on the 'hegelian, dialectical elements' in Marx can only generate '... a bizarre philosophical eclecticism, ranging over the most divergent and incompatible tendencies' (Elson, p.14). For Rosdolsky, the reading of *Grundrisse* confirms this view: 'If Hegel's influence on Marx's *Capital* can be seen explicitly only in a few footnotes, the *Rough Draft* must be designated as a massive reference to Hegel' (Rosdolsky, p.xiii). As has been noted, the most common objection to hegelianising Marxism is that it reduces the complexity of concrete processes to the unfolding of a single teleological principle.

The remainder of this essay will try to show that properly understood Marx's use of an 'hegelian method' does not have this baleful implication, but on the contrary meets the criteria for a non-idealist, non-empiricist logic of the concrete. It will be useful to begin with an example which lies at the heart of debates on value, the relation between value and price.

Having agreed that Marx is far from consistent in this matter, Rosdolsky argues that his most coherent solution is to be found in a twofold distinction between 'individual' and 'market' value, and market 'value' and market 'price' (a distinction made in *Capital Vol.3*). When the value of a commodity is considered in abstraction from the 'many capitals', as it is in *Capital Vol.1*, it is quite proper to demonstrate the determination of value by labour on the heuristic assumption that commodities exchange at their value. Once commodity production is placed in the context of the market, however, this assumption can equally properly be dropped, Rosdolsky argues.

Assume three enterprises, A, B and C all producing commodity x whose 'conditions of production' diverge so that the value of x is high in A, low in C and average in B. In this case the 'market value' of x will depend on the level of demand for x. If demand is high enough to consume the products of A, B and C, x's market value will be set by its 'individual value' in A, with B and C making large profits. If demand is too low to consume the products of A, B and C, the market value of x will be set by its individual value in B or C, thus creating difficulties for A or A and B. Rosdolsky points out that this interpretation of Marx's view needs to be set against another in which the fluctuations of supply and demand set a *price* for a commodity which may be above or below its value, and the door is wide open for Bohm-Bawerk. For Rosdolsky, price must always reflect market value while for the individual producer individual and market value will rarely be equivalent.

It may still be felt that supply and demand are being introduced as 'external' determinants of market value, but according to Rosdolsky this is not the case for two reasons. First, the limits to the fluctuation of market value are set by the range of individual values; second, demand itself represents the aggregate demand of society for a particular use-

value. This latter relates to one of the senses in which Marx uses the expression 'socially necessary labour time'; labour is necessary to the extent to which it meets the 'aggregate requirements of society' (see Rosdolsky, p.90). What 'bourgeois economics' represents as the autonomous role of demand in the determination of prices is properly understood as the set of mediations through which necessary labour in the above sense is related to necessary labour in its more familiar guise as the 'technical' determinant of wages.

This example suggests that Rosdolsky's model of a logic of explanation is neither empiricist nor idealist. On the one hand, supply and demand are not 'given' determinants of price, while on the other the process being described is utterly material. The transformation of value into price proceeds not through their essential identity, but through contradiction (between the price-form and the value-form in general and between individual and market value in particular cases) and complex processes of mediation. Even so, hard cases make bad law and if Rosdolsky is to be acquitted of the twin charges of 'idealism' and 'essentialism' a more general model of his logic of the concrete must be examined.

To an important extent the claim that hegelianising marxism is essentialist rests on a misconception of Hegel's and Marx's understanding of 'essence'. Rosdolsky quotes from *Capital Vol.1* to the effect that it is the immediate non-identity of essence and appearance which makes scientific work necessary. He adds:

... scientific investigation must proceed from the 'surface appearance' to the 'inner essence', the 'essential structure' of the economic process in order to be able to discover the 'law of appearances' and to understand that this appearance is itself necessary.

(Rosdolsky, p.52, emphasis SC)

Essence here is not a specific substance, or a hidden level of reality, but the necessity of relations between appearances. Banaji underlines this point when he notes the importance of Marx's distinction between *Schein*, surface appearance or illusion; and *Erscheinung*, objective appearance. Marx's aim is not to show, for example, that value is the 'essence' of price, a misconception which Banaji ascribes to the Lenin of the *Notebooks*. Neither is it to postulate the arrangement of the value-concepts as a set of given 'real relations' which await discovery beneath the 'phenomenal forms' of the economic-concepts. Essence is not an ontological category in Marx, but a category of *method*.

The search for essence is the search for a cognitive stand-point from which the complexity of the 'many determinations' which constitute the 'concrete' can be comprehended as rational relations rather than as a chaotic 'given'. On this view, for example, the distinction between 'capital in general' and 'the many capitals', which both Banaji and Rosdolsky regard as crucial, is not an immediate distinction between essence and appearance. 'Capital in general' is an abstract concept which serves to order and to mediate the concreteness of the 'many capitals'.

It is possible to see in the above the outline of what might be termed a 'non-essentialist conception of essence' (parallel to Elson's 'non-determinist conception of determination) which might form the basis of a logic of the concrete. The value-concepts should not be thought of as a 'theory' which explains some specific object external to value, but as moments in a 'thought-process' which seeks to display the structure of the concrete through a movement from the economic categories as *Schein* to their arrangement as *Erscheinung*.

There is, however, an ambiguity at the heart of

such a conception of essence. 'Essence must appear' could mean *either* that 'essence is no more than the necessity in appearances' or that 'essence must display itself at the level of appearance'. The 'non-essentialist' conception of essence requires the first formulation, but the second is bound to appeal to many hegelianising marxists. Banaji, for example, refers to 'Hegel's great announcement ... of the conception of a self-developing, self-evolving substance' (Elson, p.19). How convenient it would be if that substance were the 'real' process of history itself as the 'concrete essence' which must appear.

Rosdolsky appears to succumb to the temptations of this 'essentialist' conception of essence when he suggests that Marx's historical derivation of the value-concepts runs 'parallel' to the logical derivation, or in his section on 'the Transition to Capital' where he seems to regard dialectical-logical relations between concepts as a direct representation of 'real' historical mediations. In order to avoid a slippage from the non-essentialist into the essentialist conception of essence two distinctions need to be borne in mind. The first is the familiar distinction between historical processes and processes of thought. The second is a distinction *within* thought-processes between 'logical' and 'historical' derivations of concepts. Lapses into essentialism occur when these distinctions are merged and historical derivations of concepts are treated as if they represented the direct 'presence' of historical processes in thought.

On the whole Rosdolsky avoids this snare, thus:

... the dialectical transition from labour value ... to prices of production ... is not an historical deduction, but a method of comprehending the concrete, i.e. capitalist society itself.

(Rosdolsky, p.173)

The distinction is made again later. 'The conditions of the becoming of capital are distinct from the capitalist mode of production itself, and must be explained outside of it' (Rosdolsky, p.268). While the history of capital may be a *presupposition* of the derivation of capitalist social relations it also represents the *limits* of that derivation. Both Marx and Rosdolsky insist that without an historical derivation of capitalist relations, any logical derivation would be an idealist abstraction. But an historical-derivation can only be a re-presentation 'in thought' of history as the history of capitalist relations. It implies an historical and cognitive stand-point. It is only through the double distinction between historical/thought processes and logical/historical derivations that a logic of the concrete can emerge which does not reduce history to a mere 'given' and does not inflate it into the 'material' equivalent of the progress of the absolute idea.

If Rosdolsky does, for the most part, adhere to a 'non-essentialist' conception of essence, it remains to be explained why he sometimes does not. The simplest answer is that Rosdolsky follows *Grundrisse* closely, and, as is notorious, *Grundrisse* contains passages which imply that a dialectic of concepts directly reflects concrete processes. For example:

Not-objectified labour, not-value conceived positively, or as negativity in relation to itself, is the most objectified, hence non-objective, i.e. subjective existence of labour itself.

(*Grundrisse*, p.296)

This kind of stuff has led to suggestions of a radical discontinuity between the 'discourse' of *Grundrisse* and the 'discourse' of *Capital*, a discontinuity which would prejudice the legitimacy of Rosdolsky's attempt to trace the origins of the later text in the earlier.

Just such a case is made strongly in Mepham's 1978

review of Rosdolsky:

The making of Marx's *Capital* is possible only on condition that Hegel's methods are abandoned. This striking example [of the two treatments of the transition from money to capital, SC] should be sufficient warning against the temptation to search the *Grundrisse* for the key to Marx's mature scientific work.

(*Economy and Society*, Vol.7, p.444)

It is admitted that there are hegelian echoes in *Capital*, but this is because that text represents 'a struggle to release discourse from hegelian methods' (Mepham, p.436). Rosdolsky would disagree, of course, and after a lengthy examination of Mepham's 'striking example' he concludes that

It would ... be pointless to counterpose the more 'realistic' seeming solution in *Capital* to the more metaphysical one in the *Rough Draft*. Both are the product of Marx's dialectical method ... the difference lies only in the method of presentation (Rosdolsky, pp.189-90)

Earlier, when discussing the transition from money to capital, Rosdolsky cites Marx's own recognition that he would have to 'correct the idealist manner of ... presentation' (Rosdolsky, p.114) precisely in order to counter the impression that concrete processes of transformation are immediately 'given' in a dialectic of concepts.

On this basis it is possible to offer a rough and ready defence of Rosdolsky's enterprise and of his occasional slippage into an 'essentialist' conception of essence. In both *Grundrisse* and *Capital* Marx's methods of enquiry and modes of demonstration rest upon a logic of the concrete embodying a non-essentialist conception of essence. In some parts of *Grundrisse*, however, Marx presents his preliminary thoughts on concrete relations in a form more suited to a logic of concepts in the idealist manner. Marx is aware that this might give rise to misconceptions about the relations between concrete and cognitive processes, and he 'corrects' these formulations when preparing *Capital* for publication. The key methodological distinctions; between conceptual and concrete, immediate and universal, *Schein* and *Erscheinung* and the rest remain unaltered.

In conclusion, the implications of this discussion of the relations between the logic of the concrete and the theory of value can be spelled out. The conclusions are provisional, and of course 'more research is needed'. Much important work which is not referenced here *has* been done, notably in Sayer's somewhat Kantian *Marx's Method* and in Zeleny's highly technical *The Logic of Marx*. It would, perhaps, be helpful if further investigations into the possibility of a logic of the concrete could cease to rattle the bones over the sacred texts. Otherwise the baby of concrete logic may well be thrown out with the bathwater of anachronistic economic theory.

The logic of the concrete is, to quote Banaji slightly out of context, 'a specific, non-classical logical type of scientific thought' (Elson, p.18). Its specificity as a *logic* lies in its ability to introduce movement into relations between concepts, and concepts themselves, the objective of such movement being to demonstrate the necessity of appearances. Arthur's account of Marx's concept of equivalence is an important illustration of the formal characteristics of an aspect of that logic. While the logic of the concrete seeks to re-present the concrete 'in thought', it does so without invoking the *presence* of the concrete within thought. Materialist analysis of social relations, whether working in a 'logical' or 'historical' mode, always constitutes a rational re-construction, and the 'necessity' of appearances *within* thought is always conditioned by a cognitive and historical stand-

point.

Such a logic necessitates the consistent application of a non-essentialist conception of essence, it *constructs* essence as the demonstrable necessity of appearances. The unacceptable face of essentialism is its tendency to claim to 'know' the structure of reality prior to analysis. Attempts to characterise a logic of the concrete fall into this snare when they try to ground logic in ontology. This is the case whether the 'substance' granted an ontic primacy is an *element* in a process (as with Elson's substance-labour), or the *totality* of the process (as on possible readings of Banaji). The specific virtue of Marx's materialism lies precisely in its reworking of the Hegelian method into a logic of the concrete which renounces all claims to a metaphysical knowledge of the structure of reality 'as such'.

Within such a logic, Marx's value-concepts can be defended, both in general theoretical terms and as an important element in the demonstration of the

economic categories as *Erscheinung*, as both Arthur and Rosdolsky argue. But two important consequences flow from such a defence. First, the value-concepts lose the privileged status often claimed for them in Marxist theory. They are not in and of themselves the 'essence' or 'secret' of economic relations, but analytic tools whose centrality or otherwise will be relative to the task in hand. Second, there is no fixed arrangement of the value-concepts which could be said to constitute a 'theory' in the usual sense of the term. Elson comes close to realising this, but is in the end driven to locate an object, labour, for the 'theory', with baleful results. The value-concepts are no more and no less a theory of labour than they are a theory of prices, a theory of capital or a theory of exploitation. As elements in a logic of the concrete they have a place in the demonstration of each of these phenomena, and of the essential relations between them.

Steve Crook

Pilling: Marx's 'Capital'!

Geoffrey Pilling, *Marx's 'Capital' - Philosophy and Political Economy*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, £10 hc

This book is concerned with the philosophical presuppositions of Marx's *Capital*. This is not an easy question. For example, one of the most 'philosophical' sections of *Capital* is that in which Marx discusses the value-form and undertakes a dialectical derivation of money; money is currently a very topical matter; yet how many Marxists can explain Marx's conception of money as 'value for itself' (*Grundrisse*)? This Hegelian term reminds us that Lenin observed that it is impossible to understand *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having read Hegel's *Logic*.

Pilling stresses Marx's grounding in Hegel's dialectics and speaks of 'the struggle between the Marxist method and the method of empiricism'. First he examines Marx's critique of political economy with a view to bringing out the philosophical method underlying Marx's review of the work of Smith, Ricardo, Mill, etc. This leads to a consideration of Marx's concepts, and thence to a detailed examination of the opening chapters of *Capital*. Finally it is argued that Marx's notion of fetishism is a central category which lies at the basis of his entire critique of political economy. Pilling's discussion has the merit of emphasizing the importance of the notion of economic *form* and of the necessary sequence of development of forms. The empiricist method, from which Ricardo is not free in spite of his abstraction of the concept of value, takes a phenomenon like exchange-value and asks about the influence on it of more complex forms which actually presuppose it and need to be developed from it. This is because these other determinations are picked up from experience as just given. So Ricardo's 'forced abstraction' (Marx) creates 'value' out of the phenomenal movement instead of identifying the structural level which situates this form. Marx follows Hegel in rejecting the metaphysical opposition between form and content, logic and fact; instead he pursues the specific logic of the specific object. He was concerned to present the capitalist mode of production as a self-generating, self-developing, self-destroying structure. Hence he differs from Ricardo's method, which absolutizes value as the underlying inner essence of the commod-

ity, and which concentrates on the external quantitative relations in which it is expressed. For Marx the value-substance has 'a purely social reality'; it comes into being on the basis of historically specific social relations. As Pilling shows, the British post-Althusserians completely misread *Capital* (and the famous letter of Marx to Kugelmann) when they posit an ahistorical law of value. In a letter to Kautsky written in September 1884 Engels repudiated the sort of reading put forward today by Cutler, Hussain, and company:

[You say that] value is associated with commodity production, but with the abolition of commodity production value too will be 'changed', that is *value as such* will remain, and only its form will be changed. In actual fact however economic value is a category peculiar to commodity production and disappears with it ... just as it did not exist before it. The relation of labour to its product did not manifest itself in the form of value before commodity production, and will not do so after it.

Pilling stresses that all Marx's economic categories pick up social relations. Capital itself is 'not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation, belonging to a definite historical formation of society....' (Marx). Marx's critique penetrates the fetishism of commodity, money, and capital to the social relations behind them. However, against socialist Ricardians Marx points out that this fetishism arises from the commodity form itself and it is necessary to study the logic of its development and overthrow it.

Hodgskin regards this (fetishism) as a pure subjective illusion which conceals the deceit and the interests of the ruling classes. He does not see that the way of looking at things arises out of the actual relation itself; the latter is not an expression of the former, but vice versa. In the same way English socialists say 'we need capital, but not the capitalist'. But if one eliminates the capitalists, the means of production cease to be capital.

(Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value III*, p.296)

What is the value of Pilling's book? His points of reference in his reading of Marx are Hegel, Rubin, Ilyenkov, Rosdolsky; in my opinion these are the

right sources to draw on, and I am in general sympathy with Pilling's approach. However, it must be said that he does not go beyond his sources. Much of the book consists in the rehearsal of familiar passages from Marx. I would say therefore that the book is likely not to be too exciting for specialists. On the other hand it would be a very useful companion volume to anyone tackling *Capital* for the first time.

One gripe about presentation that I have is that the system of referencing employs that ugly method currently gaining ground which inserts *dates* but not *titles* in the text. This leads to such meaningless formulae as 'Marx 1963' and 'Hegel 1968'. In

scientific literature it usually makes sense because the date given refers to the announcement of research results. To employ it when the date is that of the printing used is nothing but an unpleasant distraction when one knows perfectly well that Marx did not publish anything in 1963 and one hasn't the faintest idea to which text it refers without grubbing in the notes. I would also find it helpful if bibliographies using later editions would also cite the original date of publication.

C.J. Arthur

NEWS

Ollman V. University of Maryland

In June last year, Bertell Ollman lost his lawsuit against the University of Maryland over the rejection of his appointment at the University's College Park campus. Ollman had claimed that the University's president, John Toll, had rejected him for the chair of the Department of Government and Politics because of his marxist politics. The district court dismissed the charges, however.

In his decision the judge agreed that it was Toll's 'considered judgement that Ollman did not possess the qualifications to develop the department ... in a manner which President Toll thought it should develop.' He said the court was not evaluating Ollman's credentials, but merely arguing that Toll had acted 'honestly and conscientiously'.

The case goes back to March 1978 when Ollman was recommended for the U.M. position by the faculty search committee, the Provost and the Chancellor of the College Park campus. The recommendation was then sent to the U.M. president Wilson Elkins for his normally routine approval. The appointment became a national controversy when the Governor of Maryland, Blair Lee, said that it would be 'unwise' to appoint a marxist to chair a U.M. department. The issue was debated in the editorial pages of most major newspapers throughout the USA. Elkins retired before making a decision on the appointment. The incoming president, Toll, then reviewed the matter and rejected the appointment, saying that Ollman was not the best qualified person for the job. Although he refused to elaborate at the time, Toll testified at the trial that his decision was based mainly on Ollman's lack of administrative experience and judgement.

During the trial a great deal of evidence showed that Toll, Elkins and the U.M. vice-president, Lee Hornbake, were under considerable pressure to reject Ollman because of his marxist politics. For example, Hornbake said that Ollman's role as department chairman would be negatively affected by his refusal to seek Defence Department funding for his own research. Hornbake also said that Ollman's appointment would hurt the department's image and would make it more difficult for other faculty members to do consulting and receive funding from other government agencies. The *Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun*, both of which had questioned Toll's original decision, argued in editorials that the trial had 'vindicated' the U.M. president. Toll said the decision 'gives extremely important support for a University's right to make its own appointments in accordance with a careful evaluation of candidates, without regard to external pressure'.

Harry Magdoff (of the *Monthly Review*) and others

have circulated the following statement: 'Ollman must come up with \$15,000 to \$20,000, which he does not have, in the next three to four months to launch his appeal. (Most of this money will pay for typing up the month-long-trial transcript.) For that he needs our help. The issue of academic freedom affects us all, directly or indirectly, now or potentially', and asked for contributions to be sent to the 'Ollman Academic Freedom Fund', c/o Michael Brown, 210 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012.

(Report adapted from the (US) *Guardian* of 26 August 1981)

'Praxis' Professors Reinstated in Yugoslavia

In an important gain for the fight for democratic rights in Yugoslavia, seven dissident Marxist professors have been reemployed at the University of Belgrade, reversing an earlier decision by the authorities to fire them.

In 1975, eight professors associated with the philosophical journal *Praxis* were barred from teaching and their journal was banned. One subsequently found work at a sociological institute in Belgrade. In December 1980, the authorities moved to dismiss the seven other professors (who had remained on staff at 60 per cent of their pay).

In reemploying the seven, however, the authorities have taken care to try to keep them isolated from the student body as a whole. They now form an autonomous Center for Philosophy and Social Theory, which is involved only in graduate work with young scholars.

Nevertheless, the seven professors called the move 'an important step toward normalization' of their status.

In addition, the passport of one of the seven, Mihailo Marković has been returned, following its revocation in January. All seven are now free to travel and teach abroad.

Chris Arthur

Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association

One useful symposium on aesthetics aside, the recent Joint Session at Manchester University (10-12 July 1981) gave more insight into the politics of philosophers than into philosophy.

Rumours of professorial disapproval preceded a meeting to discuss the U.G.C. report; philosophers at