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automatically exclude everyone else. An engaging and interesting book, therefore, but hardly what the blurb calls "probably Scholes's best yet"; unfortunately he has set in previous works the high standards by which this one will be judged.

JOHN FLETCHER

The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism: Althusser and his Influence. By Ted Benton. (Contemporary Social Theory.) London: Macmillan, 1984. xv + 259 pp. £18.00.

Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism. By Douglas Kellner. (Contemporary Social Theory.) London: Macmillan, 1984. xii + 505 pp. £22.50.

Douglas Kellner sets out to show that Marcuse's work is "an extremely critical, speculative and idiosyncratic version of Marxism". Ted Benton argues that Althusser's opposition to Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's attempt to humanize Marxism is "rooted in his commitment to the conception of Marxism as a science: an indispensable means of guidance and direction for communist policies". There is thus some considerable difference in emphasis between these two books, since Ted Benton insists that Althusser's defence of Marxism as a science involves the rejection of "a whole historical tradition of speculative philosophy of history and its associated developments in political and moral philosophy". It can thus be assumed that Althusser would have had no more time for Marcuse than he did for Sartre, and the general impression left by *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism* was that Althusser was something of a hard-liner who would be happy with nothing but a total revolution in all aspects of the existing state apparatus. What Benton calls Marxism's "internecine warfare" is, to judge from this book, an activity in which quarter is neither sought nor given, and I rather enjoyed his suggestion that "perhaps the long-lamented absence of an authentic British Marxism has been a blessing in disguise". At least it leaves British Marxists free to attack capitalism instead of squabbling with one another, though I haven't seen their activities crowned with much success of late.

Benton agrees with both Althusser and Marcuse in seeing modern society as still class-dominated, and would like to see the liberating movements of the Left extended to take in the Women's movement and the other forms of protest against racial and sexual discrimination. He doesn't make it absolutely clear where Althusser stood on this point, but accepts that this involvement with more general movements of dissent might make the Left run the risk of being diverted from its main task of economic and political revolution. As the title of his closely written and interesting book suggests, he has reservations about the long term effects which Althusser's thinking might have on Marxism itself, though he is most informative about the French intellectual and political background against which this thinking took place. Both books make the

interesting point that there must and will be crises in Marxism just as there are crises in capitalism, and that the vitality of the two systems comes out in the way they profit from the crises which periodically affect them. I wonder who you think is surviving the crises best.

PHILIP THODY

French Studies

Early Deism in France, from the so-called "Déistes" of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's "Lettres philosophiques" (1734). By C. J. Betts. (Archives internationales d'histoire des idées, no. 104.) The Hague: Nijhoff, 1984. 309 pp. £35.75.

Scrupulously documented and, despite a number of misprints, elegantly presented with a clarity of treatment which will make the product of much research readily available not only to specialists but to all who are interested in the ideas that inform much Enlightenment literature, this study of deism in France up to the *Lettres philosophiques* casts light on many obscure corners of an intellectual tendency which in its early days was perforce advanced circumspectly in clandestine publications. After first establishing the fact that certain thinkers in Renaissance Lyons ought to be regarded as anti-Trinitarians and not as deists in the accepted sense of the term, Dr Betts goes on to trace the slow emergence of the trend in thought which would deny the claims of revealed religions, especially Christianity, while continuing to posit and also to revere a supreme being. As Catholic theology sought for intellectual support beyond fideism, the increasing emphasis on rationality led some inquiring thinkers to wonder whether reason was not enough in itself, ousting both Scripture and ecclesiastical authority. Humanism had trained scholars not to pass over such problems as contradictions and inconsistencies in the Bible; miracles, like sacraments, strained credulity instead of confirming faith; and the mysterious "Militaire philosophe" (whom Betts declines to identify as Robert Challe) gladly followed Origen in interpreting Old Testament stories as fables. Disrespect for traditional religion was prompted by the apparently irremediable scandals of schism and by the abuses manifest within the church, while the example of alien cultures, whether presented in factual descriptions or in a growing number of more or less fictionalized narratives, fostered the opinion that virtue was not the prerogative of Christendom. In all this it is not difficult to follow the early deists. No particular philosophical acumen was required, however, for seeing that Christians failed to live up to their calling, and their inadequacies, however grievous, were no proof that their faith was vain, for Christianity offers redemption to sinners, not perfection to mankind. No doubt it is because Betts considers issues from the viewpoint of the thinkers whom he has studied that emphasis falls more on critical deism than on the wider and far more interesting question of the intellectual respectability of the case for a benevolent supreme being. Despite the problems of assessing evidence about the evolution of ideas which is represented by works whose circulation was minimal