

BOOK REVIEWS

SOVIET MARXISM, "A CRITICAL ANALYSIS." By Herbert Marcuse. ("Studies of the Russian Institute.") New York: Columbia University Press, 1958. Pp. 271. \$4.50.

This volume bears many similarities to Professor Marcuse's two earlier books in English: *Reason and Revolution*, "Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory" (2d ed.; New York: Humanities Press, 1954), and *Eros and Civilization*, "A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud" (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). The most striking of these is the graceless idiom in which all three are cast. The cumbrous style of *Soviet Marxism* is enlivened only by a procession of such words as "libertinarian," "unuseful," and "theoretizing."

A more important similarity is in their universe of discourse. In each case Professor Marcuse has taken for his subject an entity no less grand than "Western culture" or "late industrial civilization." Despite the immense erudition which he has brought to his studies of Hegel, Freud and the USSR, respectively, his real interests have been in problems far transcending them in generality. In the present volume, as in the earlier two, the author's goal has been to develop another facet in his general theory of contemporary thought and society, enunciated within a broadly Hegelian-Marxist tradition.

The leitmotiv of this volume, as of the other two, then, is the process of industrialization and its interaction with thought and society. This dialectic is characterized as the basic force of modern civilization. The constant flux of values between technical and moral standards, between production-repression and consumption-liberation, is as integral to Soviet as to Western society. Our hopes are to be lodged in the ultimate triumph of freedom over necessity, in that liberation of the individual which constitutes the philosophic basis of both Western and Soviet society.

Paraphrasing Herzen, the author characterizes the Hegelian dialectic as "... a logic of liberation, for the process is that of an alienated world, whose 'substance' can become 'subject' ... only through shattering and surpassing the

conditions which 'contradict' its realization" (p. 140). In Soviet society, however, this dialectical process has become truncated by objective necessity. The *Logos* of the process under Stalinism "... is the historical reality, and its universality is that of history" (p. 143).

This leap from the philosophic realm of freedom into the historical realm of necessity Soviet Marxism has accomplished by a reversal of values, the justification for which is a simple linguistic trick. For Hegel and Marx, freedom had been not merely "insight into necessity," as Engels held. Freedom was also and essentially "... comprehended [*begriffene*] necessity, which implies a change in the actual conditions" (p. 152). The dialectic was critical and negative in its rational necessity. Soviet Marxism has transformed the dialectical process into a mechanistic one, and "... defines freedom as 'recognized necessity'" (p. 151). Thus:

What is involved is not so much a revision of dialectic as the claim of socialism for a nonsocialist society. Dialectic itself is used for substantiating this claim. . . . The Soviet Marxist treatment of dialectic merely serves to protect and justify the established regime by eliminating or minimizing all those elements of dialectic which would indicate progress of the socio-historical development beyond this regime. [pp. 154 f.].

In Part II of the book, this dialectical analysis is carried to the ethical sphere. Professor Marcuse contrasts with Soviet ethical theory that of classical Marxism, which had no independent ethics, but rather viewed itself as the realization of humanistic morality. He sees an externalization and politicalization of these humanist values in Soviet society such that official policy becomes identical with private interests. In an authentic Hobbesian manner, Soviet Marxism simply *defines* the needs of the state and those of the citizens as necessarily equivalent. Morality becomes tautologous. And, since the Soviet state does have pressing particular interests, "socialist morality thus succumbs to industrial morality. . ." (p. 242). As Sartre has called behaviorism the philosophy of Taylorism, so Marcuse might describe Soviet values as the Stakhanovite theory of ethics.

The most that can be said of the theory is that it has harmonized with the needs of the Soviet state: "The ethics of productivity expresses the fusion of technological and political rationality which is characteristic of Soviet society at its present stage" (p. 255). There ensues the fatal identification of what Kant called cost (*Preis*) and intrinsic worth (*Würde*), of means and ends.

What is the way out? The author correctly perceives that this is a problem not restricted to the Soviet world, but is in fact a fundamental dilemma of all industrial society. Yet it is here, in its political analysis, that the book is weakest. There is a certain absence of immediacy in Professor Marcuse's writing on political developments, a distance from political life. (Consequent to this is a lack of ready familiarity with its organizational forms: for example, there is a consistent confusion of "popular front" and "united front.")

The political theory is above all an amalgam, a curious blend of diverse strains. At places, Professor Marcuse seems to be saying that the Soviet bureaucracy, as the crystallized consciousness of the proletariat *für sich*, is the legitimate expression of socialist ideals. At others, he lends credence to the theories customarily associated with the name of Issac Deutscher in expecting socialist reforms to be forced on the bureaucracy through its own internal dynamic. At still others, he inclines towards what is commonly called the "state capitalist" view of the U.S.S.R. For example, in brief but tantalizing passages he sketches an application of the theories of Weber and Tawney to Soviet morality. In these passages he goes so far as to suggest that the puritanical reign of productivity in values is the expression of that process described by Marx as "primitive capitalist accumulation" adapted to the modern polarized world situation. It is perhaps this last strain which predominates in the book, and is, I think, the most propitious.

Occasional inadequacies, however, do not diminish the impact of *Soviet Marxism* in a field which has too often been inundated by truism and superficiality. Professor Marcuse's latest volume invites study not only by those interested in Russian society, but by all students of the human condition.

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ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL REFORM. By Abram L. Harris. New York: Harper & Bros., 1958. Pp. xvi+357. \$5.00.

Following a short Foreword by Frank Knight, a Preface and a short introductory chapter, this book consists of a series of essays on John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Thorstein Veblen, John R. Commons, Werner Sombart, and Heinrich Pesch. These names tell the story. In spite of conspicuous divergences, the last five have this in common: all are "deviants" (as Professor Knight says of Veblen and Commons) from classical orthodoxy, of which Mill is the peerless representative.

It would be unfair and untrue to say that Professor Harris has written this book to atone for youthful folly. The spirit of these essays, though partisan, is not polemical. Not only do all of these studies give evidence of massive scholarship, it is also abundantly evident that the author has made a sincere and determined effort to penetrate the minds and understand the preconceptions of his subjects. However, Professor Knight informs the reader that as a young man the author was "inclined to radically 'leftist' notions," and Professor Harris himself indicates that his interest in Marx and Veblen began at that time and was originally sympathetic. As he outgrew "his adherence to radical reformism" (Knight), he published essays on Marx and on Veblen and thought for a time of developing these into a book. But other essays followed, on others of the present group, which by a process of expansion and refinement have eventually led to the present volume.

In their resemblances and differences, these writers do make an extraordinarily interesting pattern. Thus Marx and Veblen shared a conviction which was basic to both, that technology is a dynamic factor, perhaps the dynamic factor, in the development of civilization. But Marx took a much narrower view of what he called "the material conditions of production" than Veblen did of the cultural abstraction he called "workmanship"; and Marx's passionate partisanship led him to neglect this "propelling force" (Harris' phrase) by focussing his attention on "the class struggle."

Professor Harris sees clearly the unrealities that pervade Marx's conception of the proletariat. Indeed, he is at his best in his analysis of the metaphysical absurdities of dialectical materialism. But it is one thing to show that Marx was an authoritarian at heart, and quite