

TOWARD A MARXIST HUMANISM: ESSAYS ON THE LEFT TODAY.

By *Leszek Kołakowski*. Translated by *Jane Zielonko Peel*. New York: Grove Press, 1968. 220 pp. \$5.50, cloth. \$1.95, paper.

THE NEW MARXISM: SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN MARXISM

SINCE 1956. By *Richard T. De George*. New York: Pegasus, 1968. 170 pp. \$6.00, cloth. \$1.95, paper.

The first of these volumes is a highly literate translation (and undoubtedly an authorized one, since Professor Kołakowski holds the copyright), but it has no editorial support. The subtitle gives the impression that the essays are current, whereas a cursory check places nearly all in the late 1950s. The topics range from epistemology through determinism to "In Praise of Inconsistency." The longest essay, "Responsibility and History," appeared in Sartre's *Temps modernes* in 1958, and the "Permanent vs. Transitory Aspects of Marxism" was published in English in the same year. The essays are of uneven quality—some the author addresses to a popular audience and others to his fellow philosophers. Yet the book is a valuable addition to the growing body of New Marxist writing from Eastern Europe available to Western readers.

Kołakowski is a creative intellect who has mastered the history of philosophy and religious thought and remains convinced that Marxism can be made relevant to current problems. His effort is not simply to reinterpret Marx, scraping away the distortions of Marx's followers, but to build on the insights of the young Marx—insights that the older Marx himself sometimes forgot. Rejecting the "copy" epistemology that Lenin built on ideas of Engels, Kołakowski finds in Marx's early writings an "embryo of an epistemology" in which man, like the God of the Averroists, organizes the world out of pre-existing material into categories "created by a spontaneous endeavor to conquer the opposition of things" (p. 46). Nature is "humanized" by man, "who sees the world in such terms and from such points of view as are necessary for him to adapt to it and to transform it usefully" (p. 47). Moreover, his categories are never eternally fixed; they are derived from and change with his needs.

The unity of theory and practice is thus built into the cognitive process. While accepting the positivists' dichotomy of facts and values, Kołakowski insists that, especially in the humanistic world, choices and evaluations are part of cognition, a process of "continuing dialogue between human needs and their objects" (pp. 64-66). There is no escape from responsibility for such choices through an appeal to historical necessity—Marxist or any other. Duty is the voice of social needs: "In this sense the world of values is not merely an imaginary sky over the real world of existence, but also a part of it, a part that exists not only in the social consciousness, but that is rooted in the material conditions of social life" (p. 144).

Professor De George has written a very different kind of book, an admirable work of scholarship, a survey of developments in Marxist philosophy from Khrushchev's devaluation of Stalin to the end of 1967. It is conceived as an effort at synthesis, with chapters on topics such as "The Marxist Vision of Man," "Marxist Ethics and Communist Morality," and "Ideological Conflicts and Power Politics." A number of individual thinkers are mentioned or discussed incidentally, but no attempt is made to present any of them coherently. The author traces each topic briefly to its roots in Marx, Engels, and Lenin, maintains his objective stance with fair success throughout, and concludes with a useful three-page bibliographical essay.

Greater attention is given to developments in the Soviet Union, which are usually contrasted with trends in the other countries. In general the contrast shows that the Soviet thinkers put more stress on the collective and the others more on the individual. Stojanović of Yugoslavia sees Marxism as concerned with men as individuals, and argues against the "collectivistic deformation of Marxism" (p. 71). The Soviet Marxists, on the contrary, see man as derivative from society, defined not by his inherent attributes but by social relations, and malleable not by individual effort (à la Sartre) but by social change. The Party Program of 1961, therefore, is permeated with paternalism; men are to be made free and happy by making society free and happy. The Yugoslav Gajo Petrović rejoins that "freedom cannot be given as a gift or forced upon anyone. An individual becomes a free human person only through his own free activity" (p. 81). Karel Kosík, the Czech, suggests that neither the collective nor the individual can claim primacy. The individual is shaped by his social heritage, but he must live his own individual life; if he would be autonomous he must neither be subsumed by the collective nor negate and oppose it (p. 72).

In the field of ethics, De George finds, it follows that for the Soviet Marxist "the basic moral choice is not personal but social, the ultimate court of appeal is not one's conscience but society's decision" (p. 109). Hence the regime of pervasive party tutelage, which the other New Marxists so sharply criticize. They, however (with the exception of Georg Lukács), while much concerned with morality, have made little progress toward a satisfactory Marxist system of ethics.

With regard to dialectical materialism, De George describes a constructive retreat from the efforts made during the Stalin period to deduce theories and truths in specific sciences from the ideas of dialectics—the rejections of relativity theory, quantum mechanics, Mendelian genetics, and so forth. The impossibility of such deductions now being generally seen, the scientists are freer to follow empirical evidence. Moreover, like scientific laws, specific courses of action are neither entailed nor prescribed by the laws of dialectics. For some of the New Marxists it follows that not only several courses of action but also several political systems can be compatible with Marxism. The implications of such thinking for established regimes are clear.

THORNTON ANDERSON
University of Maryland

DIE DIALEKTIK IM WANDEL DER SOWJETPHILOSOPHIE. By *Helmuth Dahm*. *Abhandlungen des Bundesinstituts zur Erforschung des Marxismus-Leninismus (Institut für Sowjetologie)*, vol. 2. Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1963. 152 pp. DM 19.80.

Whatever else one may be able to say about this book, it is very difficult to read. To some extent this is because of the author's style. The main obstacle to clarity, however, lies in the very complexity of his enterprise. He shows the untenability of the Marxist-Leninist version of the dialectic: he also shows the invalidity of Marxist-Leninist philosophy's critique of Thomism: on top of all this, he tries a "dialectical" comparison of the relative applicability of the Thomist and Soviet conceptual apparatuses, especially with reference to philosophic questions arising from contemporary natural science. This is perhaps too much for a mere 152 pages.

These difficulties and this complexity serve to explain why the book is composed not of chapters but of more or less independent essays, varying in length