

her argument she needs to turn her attention to transnational capitalism as an alternative view of the world system. This would certainly extend and deepen the debate.

JERRY HARRIS

1250 North Wood
Chicago, IL 60622
gharris234@comcast.net

Lectures on the History of Moral and Political Philosophy, by G. A. Cohen. Edited by Jonathan Wolff. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013. \$35.00. Pp. 376.

This is the third and final volume collecting together writings that were left unpublished when Cohen died so unexpectedly in 2009. It is a disparate collection, made up of three quite separate parts. The first and largest part contains lectures that Cohen gave on various figures in moral and political philosophy: Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche. These lectures were given at different times and places. The text is compiled from notes which, we are told, Cohen himself had thought of writing up for publication (vii). The second part contains five unrelated papers not included in previous collections of his works. Finally, there is a short Memoir by the editor, Jonathan Wolff, which gives a very useful brief outline of the development of Cohen's thought.

As Wolff says in his Preface (x), comparison will inevitably be made with John Rawls' *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (2000) and *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* (2007). The comparison is not to Cohen's advantage, in my view. Rawls gives an overview of the figures he is discussing designed to provide help and guidance for students getting to grips with their theories of morals and politics. He also discusses and criticizes their ideas from the perspective of his own philosophy.

Cohen's approach is very different. It is typical of the analytic approach in philosophy of which he was a prominent exponent. It demonstrates some of the strengths of this approach, but also — and even more clearly — its limitations. In most cases we get no overview of the philosophies being discussed. Instead, the lectures seize (seemingly arbitrarily) on some particular concept or argument which is then logically dissected in minute detail. Cohen's analyses are intensely scrupulous and rigorous, but the scope of his discussion is also remarkably circumscribed and limited. He treats the philosophies he

discusses as though they were a series of abstract and disembodied ideas and arguments, completely detached from the social, historical or personal contexts in which they were put forward by their authors or in which they might be considered by readers, either at the time or now.

Cohen's lectures are also a good deal less polished and finished than Rawls'. Composed for a number of different courses given at different times, they vary considerably in character, style, and quality. The lectures on Plato are surprisingly scholarly and detailed, and — exceptionally — there is a good deal of description of Plato's relation to his contemporaries and to his society. With Hobbes, more typically, one particular argument is taken out of context and focused on exclusively: namely, Hobbes' argument that the "state of nature" must be a "state of war." Different interpretations of Hobbes' position and its formal validity are minutely examined using contemporary arguments concerning the "prisoner's dilemma" and game theory. However, there is no discussion of the truth or political significance of Hobbes' philosophy. These lectures read more like a draft for a scholarly and technical article (albeit a useful one for Hobbes scholars) than a study in the history of political philosophy.

Other lectures similarly examine Locke's concept of "self-ownership," ground that Cohen covers in detail in his *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (1995). There is a useful brief lecture attacking Hume's argument against the social contract philosophy. But again, Cohen concentrates exclusively on the formal validity of Hume's criticisms; there is no discussion of his alternative consequentialist and utilitarian approach in morals and politics.

There are also a couple of lectures on Hegel. These give a sketchy account and discussion of some aspects of the master–slave section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and do little justice to the richness of this passage. This is particularly disappointing, since Cohen wrote very illuminatingly about Hegel on other occasions, even though this went against his usual view that Hegel is the fount of "bullshit" (as the analytical Marxist group with which Cohen was associated put it) (334). Surprisingly, given the usual limits of his interests, there are some early lectures on Nietzsche. These are more wide-ranging and contain an interesting discussion of Nietzsche's use of the notions of health and strength and of aesthetic criteria in his critique of morality.

Cohen is seldom concerned with whether or not the ideas of Hobbes, Locke, Kant or any of the other philosophers he is discussing are true or false, or right or wrong; or whether they are helpful or otherwise for thinking about ethical or political issues today. He says virtually nothing about how their ideas related to their own times, or to ours. He considers their concepts and arguments as though they were disembodied and timeless. He is interested only in whether some of the particular concepts put forward by these philosophers are free of ambiguities and whether or not the arguments

that he chooses to consider are logically valid. What is particularly striking is that one gets almost no inkling from these lectures of Cohen's own views; no moral or political perspective emerges from them. For example, one gets hardly a hint that Cohen was any sort of a Marxist. One might think that the unfinished character of these lectures helps to account for this, but there is a deeper reason. Focus on purely formal and logical issues is characteristic of the analytical approach.

In short, although these lectures contain some valuable discussions of some particular issues and arguments to be found in these philosophers, the purely formal, analytic approach will severely limit the interest these lectures have for the general reader, and confine their audience to academic scholars (and their unfortunate students).

SEAN SAYERS

66 Havelock Street
Canterbury CT1 1NP, UK
s.p.sayers@kent.ac.uk

Alternative Theories of Competition: Challenges to the Orthodoxy, edited by Jamee K. Moudud, Cyrus Bina and Patrick L. Mason. London/New York: Routledge, 2013. \$91.53. Pp. 334.

The reader of this book will enjoy eight first-rate essays advancing our knowledge of competition in terms of Marxian economics, and three essays advancing it in terms of Austrian economics. Critiques of the orthodox theories of perfect and imperfect competition are scattered throughout, except in Frederick S. Lee's essay (ch. 7) defending the post-Keynesian argument that the relentless drive of capitalists to gain new markets — the essence of competition — is thwarted by monopoly power, trade associations, cartels, price leadership and government regulations. Lee assumes a stylized fact propounded by orthodox economists: persistent profit-rate differentials earned by individual capitalists. He then explains these differentials by attributing to capitalists the freedom to choose the prices at which they sell their output, and thus the amount of profits they make, by setting mark-ups over costs. Rejecting this stylized fact, and thus Lee's explanation of it, the other 16 contributors argue that competition determines prices and profits independently of the will of individual capitalists, and in the process gives rise to a tendency towards equalization of profit