model for creating new forms of development in which ecological conditions can be sustainably incorporated into all patterns of production.

The rest of the book develops this notion of eco-development and the critique of capitalist economic rationality in greater detail, through discussions of environmental economics and technology. As eco-development is further explored, however, the reserve shown towards the transfer of science and technology developed in temperate climates to tropical areas seems to collapse. Seemingly all kinds of technologies, including bio-technologies, become acceptable here, even though they have the capacity for much greater disruption of tropical ecosystems than of temperate climes. In addition, the constant invocation of nature as resource begins to jar and may well be too instrumental for many environmentalists.

Yet in the last chapter Leff admits that eco-development does have a somewhat ambiguous political role. On the one hand, he argues that it does not imply a frontal attack on capital, but may well take the form of an adaptive strategy of capital to exploit the cultural and ecological conditions of the developing world more rationally. However, Leff maintains that ecological technologies and productive strategies will give rise to greater political conflict and social struggle over them, because they will be inserted within ongoing struggles over the appropriation of natural resources and social wealth. This is an optimistic conclusion, if not wholly convincing because of a latent objectivism which characterizes the arguments.

Nevertheless, this is a thoughtful and interesting book which seeks to develop a Marxist approach to development rooted in cultural and ecological conditions.

Chris Wilbert

Treasure trove


In the 1950s, while sifting through a pile of discarded papers and unsaleable books in an antiquarian bookshop in Heidelberg, a German geography lecturer came across some old manuscripts on philosophical topics. He was allowed to take them away and eventually, in 1982, they found their way to the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar. It was only then that they were identified as a full set of notes of the first version of Hegel’s lectures on ‘Natural Right and Political Science’. They are, in effect, the first draft of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (1821).

Hegel was no slouch when it came to lecturing. He delivered six times a week ‘on the basis of dictated passages’ which he then expanded upon extempore. The notes translated here were made by Peter Wannemann, a law student who attended Hegel’s first series of lectures on this topic in Heidelberg in 1817–18, and then again in Berlin in 1818–19. His Heidelberg notes cover the whole course; while his Berlin notes on the ‘Introduction’ (substantially changed from the Heidelberg version) are included as an Appendix. Comparison with other, more fragmentary records confirms the reliability of Wannemann’s transcriptions, both of the dictated passages and of Hegel’s expositions. (Four further volumes of transcripts of various versions of these lectures, which Hegel continued to give regularly until his death in 1831, are available in German.)

The present lectures cover much the same ground, and follow the same basic structure, as the version published in the Philosophy of Right; but in the details the treatment is often substantially different. This is particularly the case with the much discussed section on ‘The System of Needs’ and the passages on constitutional questions. Here, moreover, Hegel expresses himself with a simplicity, directness and freedom that is often sacrificed in the more cautious and measured language of the published version, which had to pass the Prussian censor and stand as an enduring monument to Hegel’s thought.

In particular, the condemnation of existing conditions is more forceful and the critical significance of his political theory more evident. Hegel was writing at a time of profound political transformation. Napoleon had finally been defeated only a few years previously, and a new political shape given to Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In his youth Hegel had been enthusiastic about the French Revolution, but his view here, as elsewhere, is not nostalgic: in world history ‘what is laid low … had to be laid low. World spirit is unsparing and pitiless’ (§164). Nor, however, does he adopt that attitude of resigned conservatism which is often (if wrongly) read into the Philosophy of Right, and particularly its notorious dictum, ‘what is rational is actual; what is actual is rational.’ In these lectures, Hegel instead says, ‘what is rational should [or must] happen’ (§§122, 134). Heine was right, after all, when he quoted Hegel’s dictum in this form and insisted
that it had a critical and radical significance which Hegel himself was reluctant to voice. For the picture
of history given here is far more clearly dynamic and
affirmative than the published version.

These lectures are not only of scholarly importance,
as the initial version of one of the most influential
of all works of political thought. By making Hegel’s
ideas more immediate and accessible, they have a
wider interest and deserve a wider readership. The
translation reads fluently; and there is a useful index
and apparatus of explanatory notes, as well as an
excellent introduction by Otto Pöggeler. In short,
this is a most important and welcome addition to the
corpus of Hegel in English translation, and California
University Press are to be congratulated for making it
available in such a handsome edition.

Sean Sayers

Value added

Richard A. Etlin, In Defense of Humanism: Value
in the Arts and Letters, Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge, 1996. xx + 283 pp., £30.00 ($39.95) hb.,
0 521 47077 3.

Richard Etlin describes himself as an ‘old-style
liberal’. His heroes are Thomas Jefferson, Frank Lloyd
Wright and, it would seem, F.R. Leavis; his opponents
(among many) are Edward Said, Jacques Derrida,
Richard Serra, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Unlike authors
such as David Lehman and the physicist Alan Sokal,
Etlin does not set out to ridicule deconstruction and
post-structuralism; In Defense of Humanism is instead
an attempt to demonstrate that the concept of ‘value’
still has a place in aesthetic criticism, and to return
criticism and philosophy to ‘the standpoint of real
life’.

For Etlin, thinkers such as Derrida, Said, Foucault
and Nietzsche apply ‘the consistency of logic
inappropriately to the realm of human behaviour and
insight’. In this manner, post-structuralism has turned
the world upside down through the substitution of
obscure theoretical formulations and epistemological
determinism for ‘real life’ – that is, the moral actions
and responses of human beings. This destruction of
‘the fundamental ground of things’ pushes the human
subject into an abyss of contingency, negativity, and
the violence of Nietzschean ‘armchair sadism’. In this
decentred world of the post-structuralist, value can
only be considered contingent, not inhering in the
artwork, but arising from cultural judgements about it.

Etlin’s response is to demonstrate how, as he sees
it, the inherent value of the art-work is dependent
upon its presentation of ‘a heightened sensation of the
feeling of life’. This ‘feeling of life’ is a reflection in
aesthetic terms of the moral truths that ground the
liberal-humanist subject: ‘the belief in value resides in
a conviction that is known deep within the soul in a
spiritual locus that nurtures ethics as well as aesthetics.’
The art-work thus demonstrates that the subject
is centred, morally and aesthetically; the subject rec-
ognizes value in an art-work that displays the truths
that ground existence for the humanist.

Etlin remains unspecific when it comes actually to
defining what these ‘truths’ actually are. The ‘primal
numinous awe’ we are supposed to feel when encoun-
tering, for example, the ‘deeply moving humanity’ of
a Rembrandt self-portrait would appear to be based
on some form of ‘natural law’ or ‘natural sentiment’.
This law is the common sense, or shared judgement,
of ‘general culture’ (in T.S. Eliot’s terms), or, the
‘opinions and actions common to all good men’ (for
Thomas Hardy). The art-work presents the moral truths
of common sense in such a way as to affect the human
subject, and thus inspires in that subject the recogni-
tion of common humanity and the morality that such
a being-in-common necessitates.

This is perhaps the major problem with Etlin’s
account of the value of art. He assumes that ‘common
humanity’, ‘common sense’, ‘moral and aesthetic truths’
are self-evident and unproblematic terms. Post-struc-
turalism has attempted to debunk such self-evident
notions, and while it may be prey to lunatic and
obscene excesses, as Etlin shows, it certainly questions
the foundations to which he appeals. The ‘abyss’ that
Etlin sees as separating the ‘inherent mystery’ of
art from rational discourse can never be bridged in
theoretical terms, if belief or faith is the only possible
mediator between the two.

In Defense of Humanism tries to defend a model
of aesthetic value that has been common since Aristotle.
But while it is well-written, intelligible, and accessible
to non-specialists, it can never demonstrate its case
without resorting to faith or belief, because of the
vagaries around which its argument is constructed.
Etlin’s ideal model of aesthetics would be one in which
‘one is ... able to open one’s soul like the music box
to hear the lovely song of art’. He never questions
whether the abyss he postulates between reason and
art is only there in the first place because of assertions
such as this.

Duncan J. Campbell