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This collection of essays discusses the issues that are important for Catholics and others who find in neo-Marxism, at least in some of its varieties, something that speaks to their condition. The situation is slightly complicated in that some of the writers, notably Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams, are also affected by a densely and peculiarly English background, that of the tradition constructed (if a tradition can be said to be constructed) by Raymond Williams and his circle out of their reading, in both senses of the word, of Cobbett, Arnold, George Eliot, Tawney, Lawrence, Leavis. I am not sure that I have ever wholly understood the theses advanced by these writers. In part this is because I find their style opaque. Certain terms seem to be terms of art, but one is left to pick up the sense as one goes along. 'Totalization' is one that is coming in; 'structure', of course, both as a substantive and a verb, but this is perhaps the influence of American sociological writing; losing and making connexions between 'cultural meanings' seem to be important but elusive processes; we have 'praxis', and so on.

One would wish to press for examples. One of the great lessons of Wittgenstein's later writings is the need to measure formulations against examples. At any rate, we are given by Mr Williams himself and by Mr Eagleton one of the theses over the interpretation of which I remain confused. Summarily it is that if we want to have or to bring about or to realize more fully a common culture in England—and it is always taken for granted that there is a moral imperative to work for this end—then we must strive for revolution or socialism or both as the only way of bringing this end about. Indeed, it seems at times to be claimed that the realization of a common culture *is* socialism. Not much attention is paid to questions of strategy or tactics on the political level, and this gives to what is written a remote and utopian character. In particular, there is no serious attempt to think through what is surely the central question for those who talk about revolution, namely, whether there is not a kind of logic of institutional development by which the institutions created or transformed in the process of political struggle necessarily falsify the values the revolutionaries strive to embody. Mr Williams himself has always seen this, as when he has warned us against the danger of substituting for the domina-

¹*From Culture to Revolution. The Slant Symposium 1967, edited by Terry Eagleton and Brian Wicker. Sheed and Ward, 1968. 50s.*

tive or manipulative models of our society manipulative models of socialism. The contemporary student Left, for all its obtuseness and intellectual poverty, has grasped at least this difficulty. Its insistence on government by perpetual assembly may be hilarious if we reflect that the concealed presupposition of this method of agitation is that there should be an army of obedient workers providing the members of the assembly with food, clothes, tobacco, supplies of paper, public transport, sewage disposal and so on. All the same it is a recognition of the inherent tendency of revolutionary institutions to become perverted. This is why the Communists, who still believe in giving power and discretion to committees, are on the far Right of the present political scene and no longer count as revolutionaries at all, for in the last resort they find themselves 'objectively', to use their own jargon (*objectively* Trotsky was on the side of the imperialists or collaborated with the Gestapo . . .), on the side of the forces of order.

I only mention my difficulties, difficulties that may indeed reflect my own inadequacies, over the Williams-Eagleton thesis because this collection of essays is presented to us wrapped, so to speak, in this particular cocoon. Most of the essayists seem in fact to have a different approach, or at least different concerns, though they are all in some degree concerned with the understanding of Marxism and its application to contemporary politics and, in the case of the Catholics, with its relevance to Christian faith and Christian hope. If I choose two of the essays for particular notice, those by Adrian Cunningham and Charles Taylor, this is because in these cases we find something quite original and, in my judgment, useful. We are all of us, I take it, extremely perplexed about politics and about the political role of Christians, and our perplexities are increased rather than diminished by most of the exhortation and preaching to which we are subjected. To find pieces of writing that diminish our perplexities by even a little is a piece of good fortune. The essays by Brian Wicker and Walter Stein are also fine pieces of work, though they are developments of lines of thought we are already familiar with. Fr Fergus Kerr's piece on 'Language and Community' has appeared in *New Blackfriars* and deserves its place in this collection, if only because it raises the hard questions that resist rhetorical answers. There is a splendid piece of polemic by Mr Martin Green, one of the few writers in the collection to use the English language with some grace and clarity.

Adrian Cunningham's 'Culture and Catholicism' is a sketch for a chapter in the intellectual history of Catholicism. He attempts a critical account of the intellectual tendencies grouped round the movement known as neo-Thomism. It is written in a slapdash kind of way and I do not think Mr Cunningham is as familiar as he should be with the events and persons who figure in his story. When I first encountered 'Sagnier' I took it for a misprint; but it occurs four times and I must conclude that Mr Cunningham thinks Marc Sangnier spelt his name Sagnier. Again, he tells us that 'Sagnier'

and Péguy were 'outside the Church'. This is fair enough as to Péguy, though one would like a more nuanced judgment—the implication seems to be that Péguy was 'outside the Church' for political and/or theological reasons, whereas it was a problem in his private life that kept him outside. But Sangnier received the condemnation of *Le Sillon* with the greatest docility and was never outside the Church. We are told not only that Battifol (*sic*) was censured, but that during the pontificate of Pius X Maurras 'appointed' bishops. The reality is disgraceful enough—the *Action Française* was condemned under Pius X but the condemnation was kept secret, a marvellous piece of ecclesiastical double-think—without its being dressed up in this way.

Mr Cunningham in general argues that neo-Thomism, with all the related movements that believed in *order*, the *organic* society, the need for a socio-religious principle of *authority*, in short, the whole spectrum of opinion made up of such men as Maritain, Clérissac, Garrigou-Lagrange, Christopher Dawson, Carl Schmitt, to pick out only a few names, is a form of false consciousness; it professes to provide a critique of bourgeois society; indeed, it attacks the 'modern' world as the product of Protestantism and rationalism, those makers of the bourgeois spirit; but its solutions to the intellectual problems of the time and its proposals at the social level are either compensatory fantasies and not genuine policies or contribute to the muddy stream of Fascism and National Socialism. Broadly, but only broadly, I think this is right, and Mr Cunningham has assembled some of the decisive evidence for his view. I hope, though, that if and when he goes on to extend this study—it is much to be hoped he will do so—he will stress the many-sided character of the phenomenon he is concerned with. He does this occasionally, as when he picks out Maritain's attitude to the civil war in Spain as not being coherent with the general picture of political neo-Thomism; but this should surely be done much more often. Political neo-Thomism, and the neo-Thomism of the writings on 'culture' we come across in the 'twenties and 'thirties, in, for example, the *Essays in Order* to which Mr Cunningham rightly draws our attention, is only in part a consequence of the revival of interest in the work of Aquinas begun by *Aeterni Patris*. Attention to the actual text of the theologian and philosopher was an immense gain; and the impulse of this is not yet spent, as we can see if we look at the work of Schillebeeckx or Congar or at the work of our own Herbert McCabe. The tragic side of the Thomist revival lay in the general philosophical incompetence and ignorance on the Catholic side. Catholic thinkers were so soaked in the Cartesian and post-Cartesian notions of what philosophy is (briefly, the construction of systems), that they quite missed the often tentative, exploratory character of medieval scholasticism and constructed a great Thomistic system far removed from the actual work of Aquinas. Where, as in the case of Maréchal, Catholic thinkers

were not incompetent or ignorant, the result is quite as impressive as anything done at the time by secular philosophers. The most impressive result of the revival is in the field of historical studies, from the beginnings in Louvain under Mercier to Gilson. Of course, all this might have happened without *Aeterni Patris*; it is even conceivable that the Encyclical is itself in some way the product of the *Zeitgeist*; but this is to bring out the delicate and perilous character of any essay in the history of ideas.

One writer several times mentioned by Mr Cunningham is Christopher Dawson. There is no attempt at an intellectual portrait, but most of the references are rather slighting. I think this ought not to be let pass without a remonstrance. Even if one thinks, as I do, that the later Dawson of, for example, his Gifford Lectures, has not much new to say, it should be recalled that Mr Dawson is also the author of one first-rate, indeed, brilliant book, *Progress and Religion*. Forty years after it was first published it still reads well. It was in its day an instructive example to Catholics of what free, disinterested intellectual inquiry could be; and Mr Dawson has always been an enemy of Catholic obscurantism. Whatever the weaknesses of his social diagnoses in the epoch of Fascism and National Socialism—why, by the way, are parallel deviations in the direction of Stalinism portrayed sympathetically or at least not censoriously by so many left-wing writers?—he is a man to whom the Catholicism of the English-speaking world owes an immense debt.

Charles Taylor's essay is, to my mind, quite the most impressive contribution to the volume. Mr Taylor is a very good philosopher and his work here has both the authority of the philosopher whose work goes beyond mere competence and the passion of a man who is not too worried—this is rare—by the thought of professional colleagues breathing heavily just behind him. It is sometimes alleged that practitioners of the analytical method now prevailing in English and American philosophy never feel themselves committed on questions of substance and believe themselves engaged in a value-free activity, academic in the pejorative sense. This is plainly not true in Mr Taylor's case. He begins with a problem that is, as it were, given by life: 'to find a new basis for a radical socialism'. His central concern is with the adequacy of the Marxian model of alienation and the overcoming of alienation and with the adequacy of the latter as a solution to the human problems of advanced technological societies. He believes that the solution is not adequate and 'that the root cause of its inadequacy is that it isn't true: its solution is based on an illusion about the human condition. The promise that it holds out of complete reconciliation of man to other men, his creation and himself, all in one act, is unfulfillable. All other criticisms of Marxism, against its atheism, its inability to incorporate what is valid in individualism, its one-sided emphasis on work, its ultimate lack of content, find their validity in this root.'

As to why this should be, briefly Mr Taylor's answer is that man is not and cannot be wholly transparent to himself. His capacity for the transcendent which shows itself most obviously in the intentional, forward-looking character of his distinctively human life, is joined to a mode of being which involves a perpetual and never wholly successful struggle with the archaic (this is what Freud illuminates) and one that 'plunges right down into the depths of nature considered as a scale of life'. Mr Taylor is not concerned to deny that the conflict between social production and private appropriation is central and that this is a decisive contribution of Marxian theory to our understanding of society. Again, he would not wish to reject the moral standpoint of those who see in bourgeois society an attempt to choke what is generous and outgoing in human nature. But he wishes to keep more options open than do the Marxists; above all, he wishes to show that Marxism is a simplification which leaves out in its diagnosis what is fragmentary and dark about man's understanding of his nature and in its conception of the good society falls into the banal and the boring; for what gives human life another dimension, what gives sense to the idea of the sacred, is the conviction that the meaning of human life lies beyond the life of nature. Since there is no possibility of establishing a sacred social order in which all will profess an orthodoxy and yet be as free as before, the human and socialist task is to establish what Taylor calls 'a dialogue society'.

So long as man is not transparent to himself, and this means so long as he lives within history and nature, there will in fact be diversity over the ultimate meaning of life. 'We thus rehabilitate one of the most cherished values of post-romantic liberalism, the autonomy of the individual to develop in his own way.'

Mr Taylor also has something to say about the more immediate political implications of his standpoint. He sees the democracy of the socialist society as problematical in a deep way. No breaking up of the institutional structure of capitalism is in any way a guarantee of democratic development at any level. This is a further task and a difficult one. 'Although democracy expressed through parliamentary institutions is incomplete, this is no ground whatever for wanting to set it aside in favour of some other form. We need this form too, and if we become less capable of working it, we will not thereby become more capable of working others.' For Mr Taylor mainstream social democracy is still a possible method; piecemeal reforms are worth pursuing, if only for their value as demonstrations of what is possible, though of course they are worth having for their own sake. After the blood and fire of some of the neo-Marxist apocalyptic this is refreshing stuff. It may even be true. At any rate, Mr Taylor's argument deserves close study and one hopes that some day soon he will expand his splendid essay into a book.