

value of religious assertions (McKown himself seems to be in agreement here), they ridiculed religions (none more so than Lenin who advocated their abolition by force), and they believed that religion functions in a manner supportive of the ruling class (summed up in the Marxist clichés—"the sigh of the oppressed creature" and "the opium of the people"). Marx, in his early work, also spoke of a natural religion identified with an animal consciousness based on fear, and a social religion grounded on a conscious realization of the contradictions of socioeconomic life. Engels, writing more extensively on religion at the end of his life, incorporated parts of Tylor's theory of animism into his work and thereby ran into inconsistencies. Engels's interests were not only in tribal religion but in the primitive church and sectarianism, which he saw as movements aspiring to socialism. Kautsky, in contrast to the others, wrote systematically about Christianity, and introduced sociological concepts (such as collective representation) which showed affinities with Durkheim. But all four completely disregarded ritual and rites of passage. Such was their rationalism!

Both the strength and weakness of McKown's approach is that he writes as a convinced functionalist (as he is honest enough to admit at the outset). He shows how all four writers were to some degree functionalist themselves, and emphasizes their inadequacies in this respect. One wonders if this is really fair criticism, because none of the four would have claimed to be functionalist in McKown's sense. The author's summarizing style, for example, "turning now to external consistency, fourteen points can be made . . ." (p. 92), is rather wearying. It is also a pity that he failed to refer, at least in passing, to modern writers such as Garaudy, Kołakowski, and van Leeuwen. But despite these shortcomings, the book stands on its own as a valuable contribution to a subject that has long needed attention.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH LUKÁCS. Edited by *Theo Pinkus*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975. 155 pp. \$8.95.

György Lukács, the last universal Marxist, who died only five years ago, is a legend and a classic today. The seven decades of his intellectual career encompass, in historical and geographical terms, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Wilhelmian Imperial Germany, Stalinist Russia, and post-Stalinist Eastern Europe. Lukács's *Collected Works*, presently being published in West Germany, will amount to some twenty volumes, covering the areas of philosophy of history, history of philosophy, political science, sociology, and aesthetics.

*Conversations with Lukács*, a slim volume translated from the German, is based on tape-recorded discussions with the octogenarian which took place over a four-day period in September 1966. Three West German interlocutors asked Lukács about his ideas on philosophy, literature, and the political and ideological problems of our time. The first conversation, entitled "Being and Consciousness," revolves around the ambitious project Lukács was engaged in during the last years of his life: to work out a Marxist ontology.

This century has not been particularly conducive to the theoretical continuation of the Marxist legacy, either in philosophy or in political economy. Outside

of Party Marxism, only the young Karl Korsch and Lukács—and to a certain degree the Frankfurt thinkers—attempted to correct this. Inside the orthodox camp, only Lenin's writings represent ambitious beginnings, which Soviet Marxism aborted and replaced with textual exegesis of the work of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

In 1955, at the age of seventy, Lukács worked out a ten-year plan (which he later revised) aimed at the summation of his lifework: a systematic Marxist aesthetics, ontology, ethics, and, finally, an intellectual autobiography. Lukács thought he could update Marxist philosophy by incorporating the ontology of the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950). The problem of the possibility of an ontology in Marxist philosophy is related to the basic division within the Marxist camp and can be traced back to the inconsistencies of the founding fathers. Adherents of scientific Marxism recognize only the theory of knowledge that contains ontological categories as a legitimate philosophical subarea. Revisionist Marxists want to enrich and update Marxism by laboring in the more speculative traditional subareas of philosophy, including ontology.

This book, in many ways, represents a return to some of the themes of the young Lukács. Thus, his ontological theses are a return to the theme of totality, a kind of wholism that is now to be an organistic and a historical category. Epistemology should be replaced by a historicized ontology as the basic science of a modernized Marxism and thus would achieve the renaissance of Marxism that Lukács optimistically believed in. Lukács categorically states: "The introduction of ontology . . . provides a scientific and philosophical basis for understanding processes in their complexity and hence their rationality." Logic and epistemology can be good instruments in certain circumstances but when "questions of epistemology are erected into the main method, they become a hindrance to real knowledge" (p. 24).

Another theme repeated is the Leninist-Lukácsist thesis about "bringing class consciousness to the masses from without." In Lukács's words: "Lenin was not wrong in maintaining . . . that revolutionary theory is brought to the workers' movement from outside. We are of the opinion that today, when the objective situation is in many respects very, very unsatisfactory . . . , the significance of this 'from outside' has increased extraordinarily." Lukács set his hopes on the radical students and intellectuals of Western capitalist countries to accomplish this task.

In sum, *Conversations with Lukács* is a valuable addition to the growing volume of Lukács translations. It brings us closer to the working mind of one of the most remarkable thinkers of the century, and it is required reading if one is to understand the lifework of György Lukács.

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