

selects from Marx is nothing less than the set of assumptions upon which Marx builds his theory of social evolution. The selections include Marx on historical materialism, on production and property relations, on alienation, on the origins of class structure and struggle, on society, the state, and the individual, and on the applicability of these ideas to an understanding of the capitalist system.

The author asserts that Marx focused on capitalism in most of his writings, not because Marx did not see his theories as universally applicable, but because he was interested in converting ideas into prescriptions for political action. Thus, in *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." But in order to change the world, we must first understand it. We must understand, for example, that "the autonomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy," and to explore the fundamentals governing political economy is to associate specific technologies to specific class relations. The divisions of labor that are generated by these technologies produce not only great leaps forward in material progress—as in capitalism—but also great leaps backward into man's alienation from his product, from his society, and from himself. This kind of alienation is the prerequisite to class consciousness, it expresses not only a feeling of unity within, but hostility toward other classes.

The link that Marx forged between technology, class consciousness, and ultimately the Revolution cannot be overstated. Today, when "Marxist" revolutions seem to pop up all over the Third World, it is instructive to read from Marx's *German Ideology*: "slavery cannot be abolished without the steam-engine and the mule and the spinning-jenny, serfdom cannot be abolished without improved agriculture . . . 'Liberation' is a historical and not mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the [development] of industry, commerce. . . ."

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THE CLASSICAL MARXIST CRITIQUES OF RELIGION: MARX, ENGELS, LENIN, KAUTSKY. By *Delos B. McKown*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975. x, 174 pp. 40 Dglds., paper.

Marxism and communism are frequently rejected because of their dogmatic, anti-religious stance. It is remarkable, therefore, that very few commentators, on either side of the question, have written in detail and with care about the place of religion in the thought of the great Marxist writers. Another remarkable fact—one that has often been noted but seldom explained—is that Marx and Engels were inclined to be ambivalent about religion, viewing it as both an important and an unimportant social force—its repressive control over people's lives on one hand, and its eventual demise on the other. Dr. McKown has considered these problems, as well as other relevant issues, in a most commendable book. He discusses not only the two founding fathers of Marxism, but also the more ruthless Lenin and the more "scientific" Kautsky. Particularly valuable are McKown's many references to little-known primary texts.

All four writers asserted that the true understanding of religion, as of any social institution, could be acquired only in the study of actual conditions, which, in the last analysis, meant a society's mode of production. They denied the truth-

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