

EDITORIAL

Following on from the debate on ecological theory in RP40 we publish a critique of alternative medicine by a group of Dutch writers. In this area the philosophical and the political intersect in social relations which are increasingly under debate as the very notion of medicine itself is questioned. Looking at the rise of holistic and alternative medicine in the context of socio-political change over the last three decades the authors examine the changes in the nature of medicine itself and the impact of technological development on its practices. They then go on to examine the political context of the alternative medicine movement and its impact on the health of its users. It is an important area of political debate that, like the wider ecological questions, are only now entering the theoretical terrain in Britain.

Also in this issue we continue Richard Sylvan's examination of ecological theory. His in-depth analysis of the wide spectrum of ecological theory is an important opening out of the debate on such matters in Britain and we hope will initiate further thought. His essay attempts a sustained reformulation and defence of what he sees as important in deep ecological thinking. Although Sylvan argues that the existing formulations of deep ecology's epistemological and metaphysical underpinnings are flawed, he is still in sympathy with the general aims and applications of deep ecology. Sylvan in fact goes as far as arguing that some of deep ecological thinking is mere rubbish and yet that there is both a rational kernel and a critical importance to the whole enterprise. In the spirit of a critical rationalism Sylvan attempts a resolution of the many problems inherent in an extended synthesis of the corpus of ecological theory. Naturally we welcome replies to and criticisms of Sylvan's article.

Finally Tony Skillen re-examines the statist conception of politics in the light of responses to his earlier articles in *Radical Philosophy* and his book *Ruling Illusions*. He argues for an 'open' conception of 'politics' which goes beyond the classic notion of that sphere in which the state is the sole focus of attention. Below we print an invitation to a future discussion of the state of philosophy in Britain today which will form the basis of a future issue. Readers will also note that we have expanded our news and reviews section and that we now have a news editor who will be interested to hear from anyone with information that may be of interest to our readers.

PHILOSOPHY - WHY?

Some thoughts on a planned special issue of *Radical Philosophy* (no. 44, publication September 1986), to which you are herewith most cordially invited to contribute. All

articles in triplicate, please, to issue editor, Kate Soper at: 1 Bible Cottages, Rodmell, near Lewes, E. Sussex tel 0273 477324.

Hegel wrote of philosophical truth that it was like a 'Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk...'; Wittgenstein said of one of his works that if it were not that it would be regarded as chicanery, he would like to think it was 'written to the glory of God'; even those (Marx, the logical positivists, Derrida ...) who in their various ways have heralded the 'end of philosophy' have been, or still are, in the grip of the subject, and we may doubt their capacity to imagine, let alone enjoy, a culture without it.

To what extent do philosophers today revel in philosophy, or think of it as a creative pursuit to be judged by its own intrinsic values? What feelings, aesthetic or otherwise, are philosophical works capable of inspiring - and why? Do philosophers today retain that sense of importance and mission under whose pressure thinkers as diverse as Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Russell or Carnap devoted themselves to the perfection of a philosophical system or solution of some distinct problem? Many philosophers have worked with consuming energy on projects that seem pointless or doomed from the start. What kept them going, and how could their sense of philosophical mission be so divorced (as it sometimes was) from their other concerns in life, or from their political and religious outlook?

Here, then, is one set of issues upon which *Radical Philosophy* would like your views, whether in the form of autobiographical statement (as brief as you like) or in the form of objective analytical discussion.

But the questions raised above also lead directly into considerations of a more sociological kind about the role of philosophy and philosophy teaching today. Here, we are asking 'why philosophy?' in a somewhat more conventional sense: what is the point of its pursuit in higher education? Can it continue to exist as an autonomous discipline? What role has the radical critique of philosophy played in undermining the traditional position occupied by philosophy in the academy, and thus in depriving an education in philosophy of the esteem it once enjoyed? Has the success of that critique - now endorsed in some important respects by mainstream practitioners - brought about a situation in which the study of philosophy as a single, relatively autonomous subject-matter, can no longer be justified? Perhaps, in short, by debunking philosophy of its mystique, we have begun to argue ourselves out of a job?

On these issues, too, whether or not in concert with your views on the 'aesthetics' of philosophy, we solicit your response.

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