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BOOK REVIEWS

Robert J. Antonio and Ronald M. Glassman (eds.), *A Weber-Marx Dialogue*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985. xxi + 334 pp.

In the English-speaking world it is only in recent years that Marxists and Weberians have begun speaking to each other. Undoubtedly this dialogue has been spurred by substantive analyses in critical theory that have gone beneath the surface Marxism of the Frankfurt School and into the Nietzschean sources that also inform this European trend. To complete the frame out of which this new interaction has emerged, we also find at either "end" of critical theory, that is, in Lukacs and Habermas, there is an important engagement with Weber.

The presence of Nietzsche in this configuration is highly significant: this presence is perhaps the most important factor in explaining the long forestalling of an explicit, open, and not purely antagonistic Marx-Weber dialogue. Marx is discussed in many departments of the contemporary university. In the United States, however, Weber remains confined mostly to the sociology department, while Nietzsche is found (hopefully) in philosophy and sometimes in German language and literature departments. My point is that a Marx-Weber dialogue is, and needs to be recognized as, a Marx-Nietzsche encounter; and necessarily so, for Weber was much influenced and informed by Nietzsche. The absence of a real encounter between Marx and Nietzsche (which is obviously correlated with the disciplinary separation between philosophy and sociology--a separation that critical theory seeks to overcome) has therefore been a detriment to the emergence of a substantive Weber-Marx dialogue. (Incidentally, and by the same token, the interest in Foucault in literary circles could certainly be well-served by a reading of Weber, as some respects of Foucault's work can be understood as a kind of "Weber-Marx encounter.")

In light of the obstacles which much necessarily be overcome, *A Weber-Marx Dialogue*, the anthology edited by Antonio and Glassman, is an important effort that breaks new ground. The selection of essays is thematically broad, a point to which I will return in a moment. Just as significant, the departmental affiliations of the scholars involved are crucial stepping-stones toward the kind of critical theoretical setting this dialogue deserves. Represented here are political science, history, philosophy, and sociology. The last of these categories, though predominant, is enriched by the presence of a number of European scholars, who exemplify the broader philosophical background typical of intellectuals involved in the "human sciences" as they are practiced on the continent.

The book is divided into five sections: "The Limits of the Dialogue," "Theory," "Method," "History," and "Politics." In each of these, however, an interesting and important organizing principle is at work. The editors turn the tables on the tradition in which the Marx-Weber dialogue has thus far been conducted. Whereas Marx has traditionally been taken as the measure of Weber, Antonio and Glassman have geared this collection toward a Weberian

estimation of Marx and an account of the originality of Weber seen separate from Marxist analyses. The political contexts and pretexts of this move are clear: Weberian analysis often excels in just those areas where Marxism has been found lacking. In particular, the editors mention the state, political forces, bureaucracy, and status groups as thorns in the side of Marxist practice as well as theory. As a related strategy to their foregrounding of Marx against a Weberian background, the authors in this collection are also interested in challenging the conventional wisdom of the post-WW II sociological consensus in the United States, which attempted to recuperate Weber to a notion of "progress" defined entirely in capitalist/consumerist terms.

This conventional, Parsonian wisdom centers around the concept of "rationality." For Parsons, this Enlightenment notion is a virtual insurance policy for progress: If only Reagan will prevail! Rationality, under this interpretation, is the key link between the individual and society, and between psychology and sociology. Alan Sica, in an essay that concerns "the sublimation of the unreasonable in social theory" and "the conceptualization of reason and its various Others within the thought of Marx and Weber," exposes the fundamental nostalgia hidden in the twentieth century desire for a new "age of reason." Sica finds this nostalgia not only in Parsons, but also in Habermas (in a far more subtle and problematized form), and finally even in Weber. But Weber, of course, is at the same time the one who warns of "hyper-rationality"--as prelude to the "iron cage." Part of Sica's analysis of the relation between these two, related themes is a fascinating exposition on Weber and Goethe, which then brings Marx into the picture as well. In this exercise, Sica places both Marx and Weber in a continuum of philosophy, natural science, sociology, and literature.

In "Capitalism and Socialism: Weber's Dialogue with Marx," Wolfgang J. Mommsen argues that Weber only saw two forms of Marxism as acceptable. Of these, the form that Mommsen spells out first is the most significant: Marxism "as a political theory which, instead of invoking objective scientific truths, proclaims revolutionary struggle against the purportedly unjust social order on the basis of ethical convictions and without regard for the possible consequences for the individual." This is practically to say that Weber liked the sort of Marxism that was more a kind of politics of Nietzschean affirmation and transfiguration; it is certainly the case that Weber was more impressed with this Marxism than he was with "dialectical materialism." The essays by Jurgen Kocha and Stephen P. Turner on method in Weber and Marx bring out this point in detail. In particular, Kocha's focus on "decisionism" in Weber will be helpful to readers who have been curious about the (re)emergence of this term in recent social theory (in Habermas's recent work, and in the rebirth of interest in Carl Schmitt), while Turner presents a penetrating analysis of the use of notions of social causation (and causal explanation) in Weber and Marx.

I should add, incidentally, that there is much in these essays that will be of value to those who are attempting to fit recent theories of rational choice (and game and decision theories) into the overall matrix of twentieth century

social theory. Again, the key term is rationality. (Beware, then, a resurgent positivism lurking in the crannies of rational choice theory.) And it is on just this point that the continued value of these essays will remain manifest. Whether the future belongs to Marx or Weber is very much an open question (even more open, I would say, because of this anthology). Even the Left-Weberians may legitimately desire that the future belongs to Marx, the point being that this future will certainly not come if we do not pay substantial attention to Weber. This claim gains gravity in the light of recent theorists such as Foucault and Baudrillard (even though the latter urges us to "forget" the former). Moreover, the recent trend in science fiction known as "cyberpunk" (e.g., *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, and the film, "Bladerunner") is a gesture toward an all-too-realistic and possible iron cage (with a little McLuhan, Baudrillard, and Daniel Bell stirred in): a prison which we have fashioned for ourselves, which we no longer know how to despise, and for which we have irrevocably thrown away the key. Weber provides more diagnosis than cure, to my mind, but it is a diagnosis which subsequent critical theory cannot ignore. A beginning toward the assimilation of that diagnosis into a broad critical theory with political consequences and (hopefully) efficacy is the major contribution of this impressive anthology.

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