

## Tradition: Use and Misuse

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***Heroes and Heretics, A Social History of Dissent***, by Barrows Dunham. *New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1964. ix & 484 pp. \$6.95.*

***Will in Western Thought, An Historical-Critical Survey***, by Vernon J. Bourke. *New York; Sheed and Ward, 1964. vi & 247 pp. \$5.00.*

WRITERS EMPLOY tradition for two purposes; in order to create a mythology lending weight by the claim of immemorial practice to the propaganda of the moment or by establishing continuity to make understandable process, development and the configuration of ideas and events which dominate the moment. The former use of tradition is the mark of the propagandist, the myth-maker, the political hack; the latter use of tradition marks the historian and even the thoughtful and the honest man whose quest is for understanding rather than a weapon used in liquidating what he conceives to be his intellectual or his class enemies. These two works, differing as they

do in scope, method, and value, illustrate aptly the uses to which tradition can be put. To read the 484 pages of Barrows Dunham's *Heroes and Heretics* is equivalent to taking a transcontinental auto trip with a talkative but senile Marxist. To read Professor Bourke's *Will in Western Thought* is to breathe again the serene and unpoisoned air of the academy. It is a delight to find a good man writing such a good book; a delight which is nearly as intense as the pleasure derived from seeing falsity so stupidly presented as it is by Barrows Dunham.

Marxism has had its great scholars and at its best has created a viable intellectual tradition. Mr. Barrows Dunham does not belong to this tradition. His work falls into the pressed-flower school of Marxian hagiography. His style, his ideas, his bibliography are late nineteenth century rather than modern. His research is slight and largely at the level of third-rate Marxians and second-rate popularizers. His "Bibliographical Essay" presents the image of an unscientific, ancient, and fuddled mind. He has pieced his tradition of heresy and hero-

ism which culminates in Karl Marx and Eugene V. Debs like a latter-day Betsy Ross from the discarded intellectual undergarments of Western thought. There is a great show at writing "social history," but social history means in the language of Mr. Dunham vulgar Marxism.

The account Dunham gives of Jesus will serve to illustrate the point. Jesus is presented to us as a "social revolutionary," "the leader of an armed movement of national liberation." His message was not eschatological, his mission not redemptive. He was simply an anti-imperialist, a sort of proto-Castro. St. Paul is the counter-revolutionary theologian and the real founder of modern Christianity. "Pauline theology... describes, not realistically but imaginatively, the state men must inevitably be in so long as the wealth and power of a few derive from poverty and impotence among many." Even for one who purports to have read the New Testament these are astonishing conclusions. More conclusively, they demonstrate an ignorance of biblical scholarship since the publication of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, (1906). No well read student of Christianity, Marxian or otherwise, would today come to such absurd conclusions.

In attempting to establish a tradition of protest which will lead inevitably to the revelation of Marx and the establishment of a new society Mr. Dunham finds himself in some strange company and among some strange heroes. How, one asks himself incredulously, did the Albigensians get into this select pedigree? Was it the simple affinity of one gnostic for another? By what stretch of the imagination can St. Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc, and Baruch Spinoza be made to help turn this gusty Marxian windmill?

Mr. Dunham tells us that "The first historical appearance of a workers' government was the Paris Commune of March

to May, 1871." The fact is that this interpretation of the Paris Commune is rejected by nearly every non-Marxist historian of the Commune.

It would be easy to point out numerous errors of fact and interpretation, but even where the history is correct and the tradition of protest accurately represented, the over-all interpretation in this book would call for derisive comment. Mr. Dunham tells us that, "Ever since socialism passed from theory into fact, men have been able to compare the results of production for use with the results of production for profit. It has become evident that production grows more readily when it is for use than when it is for profit, and that use-economics can absorb without dislocation all that technology affords. The day when socialist production begins to exceed capitalist production will see much alteration in men's minds of what is to be believed." Leaving aside the exact meaning of this rather fuddled statement one is tempted to remark of its approximate meaning that capitalism can afford to wait for this demonstration. It should be clear now on the basis of empirical evidence, that socialism is an inferior system of economic production and that its costs in individual and in social terms are inordinately higher. Whatever justification existed in the early days of socialist theory for hoping that it would one day outproduce a market economy those hopes today are disappointed and everywhere the techniques if not the theories of the market are creeping back into the socialist economies. Creeping capitalism and creeping nationalism are the great transforming realities in the socialist camp and only the most obtuse and deliberately deceived are prepared to deny it.

Finally, it is a disappointment that a book so beautifully printed should have been so carelessly proofread. James Baikie

is, for example, repeatedly cited as "Raikie."

Professor Bourke's book on *Will in Western Thought* is on the other hand an accomplished exploration of the traditional conceptions of will. He finds after an exhaustive exploration of the literature "that Western thinkers have taken eight distinctive views of the will." His purpose is to identify these views and to trace the developing tradition each has represented. No major school is neglected and the philosophers who have dealt with the will are, each in turn, dealt with at some length. The traditions are frequently related by cross-references and the reader is delighted with a treatment which in microcosm explores the totality of Western philosophical development. It comes as something of a surprise to find St. Thomas and the Pragmatists rubbing shoulders, or to see so clearly the continuity in German idealistic philosophical and political theory.

This is a wise and capable book and consequently the reader looks with a good deal of anticipation to the concluding chapter,

"A Core Meaning of Will." It is anticipation which is somewhat disappointed, for the greater part of the discussion of the chapter is concerned with psychological experiments intended to prove or disprove the existence of the will and a discussion of psychological voluntarism. Only in the last four pages does Professor Bourke attempt to arrive at a definition. The attempt is important and interesting and deserves a far more elaborate formulation than that given it.

It is interesting to explore the Western intellectual tradition with a Marxist and a Jesuit respectively. For those who argue that dogmas are all alike in their antipathy for rational enquiry the experience will be an enlightening one. Certainly there is a great and apparent difference between those who conceive of disciplined enquiry as little more than a weapon in the arsenal of the social revolutionary and those who conceive of truth as God's own to be cherished and loved for His sake. Of the two positions it would be difficult to say which is the more revolutionary. It is easier to point out which is the more barbarous.