

it is "essentially a chain of images all equal and parallel, developing the one idea. It is not supposed to get anywhere; it is supposed to add up, to delight us with a string of thoughts similar and different." And of the moral ideas in the poem: "Our aesthetic experience is not moralistic; yet it is not by ignoring moral values that we comprehend and judge the poetry; for these values play as experienced meanings calling back and forth within the texture of the verse. . . ." Developed in this way, the concept of "bracketed ideas" makes sense. This may suggest a condition for understanding the ideas of art-theorists who are consistently presentationalist: something parallel to the condition for grasping the meaning of critical predicates as laid down in the essay "Critical Communication." Just as the descriptive terms of the aesthetic critic take on meaning through perception of the qualities to which they mean to direct us, so the sense of some of Isenberg's theoretical concepts can be gathered only after we examine the type of criticism from which the concept is derived. There may also be a more general significance for our inquiry here: these, with obvious exceptions are exercises in aesthetic investigation and theory of criticism. Their vividness and relevance are derived from the fact that they are not studies in the Philosophy of Art—we are spared even the allusions to the questions, "What is Art?" "Is Art a Symbol?" and to the "aesthetic-cognitive distinction" and other canonized topics. There is, moreover, none of the usual adventurous and disastrous extension of a set of concepts that do well enough in one kind of art to Art in General.

For making these heterodox, original essays—some justly well known, others until now unpublished—finally available under one cover, we must thank the editorial committee, especially Professor Mothersill for her careful explanations, and her protection of some of Isenberg's ideas from misunderstanding; and to Professor Callaghan for his warmly personal biographical essay.

ARTHUR SZATHMARY

Princeton University

SOLOMON, MAYNARD, ed. *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary*. N. Y.: Knopf, 1973, xi + 646 pp., \$15.00.

Marxist philosophy is now much discussed in the United States (for confirmation see the bibliographical newsletter of the American Institute for Marxist Studies). At least in academic circles there is a lively interest—unequalled

since the mid-1930's—in its application to contemporary problems. Undoubtedly this development draws on the revival of marxist thought in Western Europe, and it rests also on the felt need of left-wing intellectuals and artists to thoroughly revise what has remained of the older marxist tradition in the United States. That tradition was guided by a deterministic concept and strictly economic-political concerns. Regrettably, its inspiration lay in the Zhdanov period of Soviet culture. Today's attention is oriented to a heritage indicated by the writings of Gramsci, Lukács (early and late), and Ernst Bloch.

Study of a marxist aesthetic tradition takes a parallel turn to that in philosophy, but even more conspicuously, since in this area there is greater scope for a richness, openness, and diversity of premises and conclusions which nonetheless go back to some common themes in the marxist world-view. In the past few years the United States and West Germany have produced the best and most comprehensive anthologies presenting the history of marxist aesthetic ideas from Marx and Engels to our own time. Paradoxically such collections are not published in Eastern non-capitalist countries. Granted that many major texts are to be found there, the explanation is above all that a restriction, a total silence of long or short time, is imposed on some thinkers whose contribution to the marxist heritage is incontestable and ranks with the most significant.

Among the recent anthologies the most extensive, instructive, and stimulating is Maynard Solomon's. It is in seven parts, of which the first five are historically, and the last two systematically, ordered. The first section presents the texts of Marx and Engels on art, the second Morris, Labriola, Mehring, Kautsky, Plekhanov, and Luxemburg; the Bolsheviks follow (Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Lunacharsky); then come excerpts from Gorky, Davydov, Mao, Sartre, and DuBois. The fifth section, "The Return to Marxist Humanism," includes Gramsci, Fischer, Finkelstein, Balázs, and Bakhtin. The sixth, "The Sources and Function of Art," includes Caudwell, Thomson, Brecht, Adorno and Eisler, Lukács, and Raphael; the final section, "The Trajectory of Art," includes Slochower, West, Breton, Marcuse, Benjamin, Malraux, and Bloch. Solomon elaborates his views in a preface and in introductions to the sections on Marx and Engels, the Zhdanov era, and art's trajectory. He offers commentaries on each author and he supplies supplementary readings, bibliographies for contributors, and a list of his

text sources. The bare survey of the volume's contents and its compiler's scholarly exertions says much about its scope and worth.

In Solomon's kind of marxism several tendencies are clearly discernible: to focus on the philosophy of history, to show concern about alienation and its possible transcendence by humanity in general and artists in particular, to consider aesthetic values both historically (ideologically) and suprahistorically (archetypically), to emphasize an incessant human urge to proliferate projects (utopianism) rather than inevitable and rigid social laws, and to cherish a free imagination and revolutionary zeal founded in unbridled human creativity. Hence the constant criticism of economic determinism and a mechanistic concept of history; hence too the opposition to zhdanovism. Solomon's marxism derives from certain principles in Marx, and its relation to the line of thought in Gramsci, Caudwell, and Bloch is evident. American readers will surely find aspects of the marxist worldview (and aesthetics) that have been unknown or marginal in their land. Surely, too, most readers will find this marxism much more sympathetic and closer to the great humanist tradition of Western culture than were the old shibboleths which reduced art to a phenomenon strictly dependent on the given productive forces and class struggle.

Sociohistorical circumstances, one must note, were operative in this revival of a "marxist humanism" in the United States and the attendant castigation of the 1930's "mechanical determinism." Starting in the early 1920's as literary radicals peregrinated to the Soviet Union, the conviction grew on them that the promised land had been found, a social system that worked almost perfectly. They believed the victory which they perceived overseas would soon and inevitably come about everywhere. Now none of this attitude remains. The earlier myth is totally ruined; and the groping towards an Edenic condition in our own time, the nostalgia to live a fully human existence, and the realization that nothing is preordained, have led to Bloch's utopia, which closes the anthology. It likewise is historically conditioned as a vision and here it conduces to a one-sided if most welcome study. Solomon is a spontaneous and authentic product of his time. He takes the contemporary marxist style of presenting philosophic and aesthetic ideas further, to the point of including Reich's concepts as wholly marxist-oriented; repeatedly he suggests that the key to human emancipation and the disalienation of the art activity lies in liberation of the body, or

to put it more exactly, in a reasonable hedonism poised in place of a puritanical asceticism.

Many of Solomon's selections are apt and well arranged. He gives us a wide spectrum from Marx and Engels. The Morris choices are fine, and a proper light is put on the aesthetic methodology of Mehring. If at least one of Plekhanov's methodological pieces had been included, his selections also would be good. Lenin and Trotsky, unfortunately, are represented only by pieces that have become notorious in their usage by others, and Solomon would have rounded out their standpoints by including, say, one of Lenin's letters to Gorky and a literary review (say, of Céline) by Trotsky. Bukharin is symptomatically and accurately presented, and so is Mao. Fischer is given in a brief, important, and original fragment on "productive memory." The best selections are from Caudwell, Thomson, Brecht, Raphael, West, Slochower, and Benjamin. Although the compiler's commentaries are generally less convincing than his selections, if we take his particular marxism in context I must add that the information, explanation, and analyses of the last two sections are of exquisite quality. I do not dismiss the earlier commentaries: I only find more to quarrel with than to approve.

If the merits of *Marxism and Art* are considerable, one cannot pass over those defects which must be apparent even to the non-marxist critic—I mean especially the treatment of the historical material which has resulted in disproportion and distortions. Solomon surely is entitled to have idiosyncrasies as a marxist—I am the first to admit my own. However, to praise or disapprove of one or another classical or contemporary author is one thing; it is quite another matter to tailor the history of marxist aesthetic thought to one's current position. My objection is not to the high degree of selectivity in this anthology (this is unavoidable), but rather to the exclusion of the zhdanovist authors. Their activity is as integral to the marxist heritage as that of Gramsci, Bakhtin, or Bloch.

Not only can they not be excluded from the history, but in their period the problem of realism was more thoroughly probed, and it seems impossible to leave the valid debates over the artistic category out of discussion. Similarly the social function of art and the revolutionary and liberating role of the artist were repeatedly and passionately discussed; the question is to see how these debates were defined, what was the sociopolitical background, and what were the deliberate or implicit goals in the Soviet context of the 1930's and 1940's. But Solomon's fourth

section, bridging over this period, simply discards the zhdanovists themselves. Instead a summary is offered, according to which this standpoint is distinctive in its propagation of exemplary myths, its rejection of complex and advanced art, and its subordination of art to a repressive apparatus of patronage. I find that this description doesn't do justice to all traits of the period: the realism debate, or the discussions of the class and national equivalents of art, or the understanding of the artist as "the engineer of the human spirit." On the other hand, the traits assigned to the period are in fact not distinctive of it. As early as Mehring and Plekhanov, antipathy to modernism emerged, evident also in mature utterances of Lenin and Luxemburg. Lenin's chief of culture, Lunacharsky, oscillated between the Scylla of fostering an avant-garde and the Charybdis of the greatest possible communicativeness. As for "exemplary myths," they were favored by Klara Zetkin and Karl Leibknecht. Tendentiousness was surely not rejected on principle by Marx and Engels, who merely preferred a latent tendency in art. Lenin never insisted on freedom from censorship, and it is wholly misleading to bracket his 1905 article on Party literature with the young Marx's comments on the Prussian instructions for press control. To put the matter plainly, the traits cited by Solomon as destructive recur time and again through the entire marxist heritage; he incorrectly sees them as extraneous to the marxist world-view. Instead, the problem lies in seeing these traits neither as absolute nor merely as tactically valuable (deliberately or obliquely) to the ultimate uses of Party headquarters.

Solomon believes the aspersion of "decadence" became congenial to marxist aesthetics only in the Zhdanov period; he should recall the early Gorky or Henriette Roland-Holst a generation previous. Further, it is impossible to regard the zhdanovist concept of decadence solely as a rejection of libidinal pursuits, since its characteristic reference was much broader than the sexual, indeed it often was synonymous with "bourgeois individualism." I do not deny that Zhdanov was frequently, ridiculously, puritanical in his attitudes. Yet to reduce his trend-making critique of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* opera to a mere attack on its libidinal elements is to see only a tree of the woods.

Concluding his inadequate approach to zhdanovism, Solomon finds himself logically compelled (p. 241) to reject the Enlightenment tradition as foreign to marxism. This is plainly a mistake, in view of the aesthetic ideas of Marx

and Engels and of their successors. In this same place he acknowledges that zhdanovism did hold a utopian conception of art; hence he qualifies what has been said by him earlier in deciding what qualifies and fails as a marxist approach. Again here, our task must be to see how the zhdanovists modified and "inverted" the utopian project—not merely to read them out of the guild. Yet since no zhdanovist selections are provided, it is hard for the reader to consider this phenomenon for himself—and he may properly ask, "Why not?" An arbitrary premise has led to the regrettable consequence of excluding the thought of this period, permitting only commentary. A reader may further and quite rightly inquire, "If Gorky and Mao as presented here are not 'zhdanovists,' as Solomon applies the term, than who is?"

There is another problem with the selections, the reverse of that discussed above: it involves the texts which are unsymptomatic or unrepresentative of marxist thought and make the reader wonder why they are included. The Balázs and Bakhtin texts, for example, are simply unrepresentative selections. The problem with the Adorno (and Eisler) case is more controversial. Neither the text itself nor the Solomon commentary justifies the allying of this great thinker with marxism. We are told (on pp. 375–76) that Adorno was a neo-hegelian but raised questions that are most germane to marxist criticism. This is mere sophistry unless one can elucidate a way and purpose to which Adorno did elaborate Marx's idea of commodity-fetishism; more fundamentally, one must resolve whether any *marxicising* criticism (the borrowing of *some* ideas of Marx or later marxists to put them into an alien context) should be counted as representative of the marxist philosophico-aesthetic school. I doubt it strongly.

The inclusion of Breton and Malraux shows that Solomon would like to absorb into marxism any artistic eschatology or *amour fou* which strives for a better future of mankind. Sober description must however contradict him. Breton was the consistent proponent of surrealist doctrine, though for a limited time he also employed some marxist ideas, assimilating them to his philosophic and historiosophic purposes. Malraux's case is similar. His speech to the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture (1935), here included, developed aesthetic ideas he had laid down earlier and implicitly in his novels, starting with *The Royal Road*. Both men were fellow travellers. Their commitment and dedication went not to the marxist world-view but to the United Front

struggle against the Fascist menace. In a word, to join with the marxist Communists in the struggle against bourgeois idols could not automatically assimilate them to the marxist tradition.

Still other shortcomings are evident to specialists on marxist aesthetics. I can only cite a few of these.

The commentaries on Marx and Engels provide no interpretive keys to the excerpts. Solomon's statement that Marx's and Engels' aesthetic "aphorisms" were the bonafides of their deliberate resistance to systematization, seems to be too far-fetched. They simply had no time, and probably not enough intellectual enthusiasm for these matters, to elaborate their ideas. Anyway, a *non-systematic* heritage does not mean *non-coherence*. Solomon's approach to selections, alas, instead of aiding the reader to make heads-and-tails of the disparate fragments from the classics, increases the confusion and disorder. Fragments oriented to similar or like issues are not presented under one heading. For example, his first heading, "Prerequisites of History," should include passages placed later on pp. 31-32, 47, 52-53, and the second, "History," should probably include those on "labor" under the first heading.

Again, with Lenin the presentation is hypertrophic—why the fragment on "Dialectics?" Solomon could have used its ideas in his introduction. Solomon's commentary says much about Lenin's general approach to art and culture but states falsely that he always resisted having aesthetic emotions, and it offers no guidance to his aesthetic views.

The commentary on Trotsky declares wrongly (p. 187) that the debate between Lassalle and Marx and Engels was the only debate in marxist aesthetic thought before our century (cf. the naturalism controversy in German Social Democratic circles), and it declares misleadingly (p. 187) that in speaking of art's own laws Trotsky was of the same mind as Plekhanov (Trotsky here indicated what Plekhanov never did, namely the relatively autonomous, formal value of art; this same approach is asserted by Bukharin in 1934, a document which Solomon oddly labels a synthesis of formalism and sociology). Again, on p. 190, Solomon postulates only extremes—on the one hand art's transcendence (utopianism), on the other hand its role as a more product and mirror of the given society. But Trotsky like other marxists of his time chose the third possibility, i.e., *the revolutionary activity of art based on its integration with the potentialities of the present day*.

Lunacharsky is very poorly chosen. No theo-

retical texts, nothing that he wrote on avant-garde art. The commentary proves that Solomon is not quite familiar with the writings of this fascinating personality. On p. 218 he ascribes Mach's influence on Lunacharsky to the years after 1905, whereas it occurred before this date, and it was Avenarius instead who influenced *The Foundations of Positivist Aesthetics* (1904). Lunacharsky articles are cited as books (p. 219), and he is treated as a successor to both Tolstoi and Chernyshevsky, a completely misleading statement applied to such a complex, tension-and conflict-ridden mind.

Lukács is obviously mistreated and underestimated. The way matters are presented, it seems Sidney Finkelstein is of the same if not greater rank. Yet the contradictions (and the antinomies behind them) in Lukács's body of work are the most useful keys to marxist aesthetic thought in its often puzzling complexity. Solomon, one-sidedly approaching this heritage, seems angry with Lukács, even though he comes on themes—e.g., anticipation of the future, an idea parallel with Marx's "prefiguration"—which he should assent to. This deprecation of the Lukács contribution stems primarily from Solomon's neglect of the category of realism, and his further failure to grasp that in the Marxist heritage art is primarily the creatively-transformed reflection of the given society (which of course doesn't exclude art's transcending, utopian function).

Introducing the question of "Marxism and Utopia" (pp. 457-67), Solomon defends his standpoint and offers grounds for his idiosyncratic judgments. However, the analysis at the same time demonstrates a striking *ambiguity* of the notion of utopianism—its elements may be: (a) imaginative anticipation of the world as it soon will be, (b) detailed vision of the future, near and distant, or (c) sheer fancy; and in each case the tenor can be reactionary or progressive—which runs like a leitmotif through the whole volume, and with this, the hesitations of Solomon whether to see utopianism as the act of transcending the status quo or as an ideally projected order of a best possible world. The latter course leads to Bloch's prophetic conception; the former can be seen in Garaudy's or Fischer's aesthetic perspective. Marcuse's place is in the middle of this continuum.

If I criticize the Solomon anthology it is only because of its great capacity to stimulate, and the appetites it whets. I thus return at the end to my initial observations. As compared with another recent anthology, *Marxism and Art*, edited by B. Lang and F. Williams, Solomon's volume opens the doors widely to past, classical

thought, and introduces a kind of warm engagement, a modern humanistic marxist approach which could be infectious and draw students *inside*. As compared, say, with the West German anthology edited by Hans Buch, *Parteilichkeit der Literatur oder Parteiliteratur?*, which prominently discusses the German Social-Democratic debate over naturalism, the Prolet-cult movement, and party-mindedness in the 1930's and in Cuba and China today, certain lacunae of the Solomon book become obvious—but also some virtues that are owed to the decisive alliance made by the editor with utopian, transcendent marxism.

Commenting on Bloch, Solomon outlines the great artistic heritage of utopian thought versus a futile religious eschatology. He does criticize Bloch for separating utopian projections from any necessary psychosociological conditions, while simultaneously he stresses the powerful significance of the authentic artist's vision, the imaginative *Traum nach vorwärts* which never abates but, taking diverse forms, always betokens the storming of heaven, the struggle for man's freedom, and the richest sense of life.

This mode of marxism—without any doubt one of the main trends in the Marxian heritage—should prove of interest to non-marxist students who find much that is wrong with the world in its present state. The Solomon anthology, by revealing the marxist dialectics of aspiration and hope, of revolutionary action and messianic outlook, and of a permanent transcendence of what (owing to conditions of the day) is presented as socialist achievement, contributes genuinely to the humanistic strivings of our bitter and tumultuous time.

STEFAN MORAWSKI

*Academy of Science and Art,
Warsaw*

HARRELL, JEAN G. AND ALINA WIERZBIANSKA, eds. *Aesthetics in Twentieth Century Poland*. Bucknell University Press, 1973, 285 pp., \$12.00.

Aesthetics in Twentieth Century Poland is an occasion for reflection on the extraordinary flowering of aesthetics and philosophy in the interwar period in Poland. The book is a collection of essays by prominent Polish aestheticians of the twentieth century: Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, Leon Chwistek, Stanislaw Ossowski, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Ksawery Piwocki, Roman Ingarden, Jerzy Pelc, Mieczysław Wallis, Stefan Morawski, and Jan Białostocki. What I wish to do in this review is not so much to analyze the content of the various aesthetic

theories, but rather to sketch the background and circumstances which catalyzed the emergence of these theories.

The ten essays included in this volume reflect well the changing idiom of twentieth-century philosophy. From more ambitious all-embracing attempts we have moved to meticulous, precise analyses. The story of twentieth-century philosophy (and aesthetics) has been the story of increasing specialization. For precision of results (very often merely of formulations) we have given up scope and breadth. We have thus gained in accuracy of language and expression, but we have lost in overall comprehension of phenomena and the world around us. Polish aesthetics is a case in point.

Polish philosophy has been something of a phenomenon in the twentieth century. It started very inauspiciously, yet blossomed to produce some of the finest achievements of the twentieth-century thought. This philosophy was created by Kotarbinski, Ajdukiewicz, Tartarkiewicz, Twardowski, Łesniewski, Łukasiewicz, Chwistek, Witkiewicz (popularly called Witkacy). They challenged Bertrand Russell in logic, the Vienna Circle in semantics; they anticipated Austin and Ryle in Britain, Quine and Chomsky in the United States, and not only produced surprisingly novel theories in logic and semantics, but also in ontology, in epistemology, and in aesthetics. By and large, these people were born in the 1880's at a time when Poland did not exist on the map of Europe. They received their elementary and high school education in Austrian, Prussian, and Russian schools, and usually went to study abroad in Vienna, in Paris, in Göttingen. Some, however, were educated at the University of Lwow, where K. Twardowski (a pupil of Brentano) started teaching philosophy in 1895, and subsequently established the Polish school of philosophy which spread its influence far beyond the boundaries of Poland.

To be accomplished in the twentieth century is to specialize. So Polish philosophers did specialize. The peculiar feature of their specialization, however, was that they specialized in more than one field, and thus avoided the perils of excessive specialization, which otherwise is known as narrow-mindedness. Each of them had a very thorough background in classical philosophy and in classical languages, so that while they were making novel contributions to the propositional calculus, as in the case of Łukasiewicz, they were at the same time critically and refreshingly rethinking the syllogistics of Aristotle (see, for example J. Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle's Syllogistics from the Standpoint of Modern Formal Logic*).

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