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Professor Erwin Rosenthal
Greifswald, DDR

Dear Professor Rosenthal

Thank you for yours of the 9th as well as for the offprint of your paper on my philosophical work.

I am very grateful for your objective and generous assessment of my work, particularly for the way you have emphasized that I am an (emergentist) materialist and a (scientific) realist.

I was also glad to note your criticism of J. Wettersten's views on my philosophy. I believe he has understood nothing of it.

We ^{certainly} disagree ~~of course~~ on the matter of dialectics. Of course we agree that everything real (material) is in a state of flux, that (sometimes) there is conflict, and that (sometimes) quantitative increases (or decreases) give rise to new properties (or to the loss of old ones). But I disagree with dialecticians on the following points: (a) cooperation (in particular spontaneous self-assembly of atoms, molecules, people, etc.) is at least as important as conflict, (b) dialectics has never been formulated in exact terms, and (c) the exaggeration of conflict not only distorts reality but it may lead (as it did Lenin) to oppose mind and matter, as well as culture to the economy: it is incompatible with materialism.

As for Dilthey and von Wright, there seems to be a misunderstanding. I have always criticized the so-called historico-cultural school, or Historismus, in particular Dilthey (whom in my youth I used to describe "an idealist without ideas"). In particular, I have criticized their main thesis, namely that the social sciences are totally different from the natural ones for dealing with spiritual processes and using an irrational method, namely that of Verstehen. One of the works where I criticize this view is my Treatise, Vol. 7, Part II (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985). I have also criticized it in my Intuition and Science (1st ed. 1962, latest revised Spanish ed. Intuicion y razon, Tecnos, 1985).

There is an alternative to the spiritualism of Dilthey & Co and the dualistic position of classical Marxism, according to which the material part of society is its economy, the culture and polity being ideal. The alternative is systemic materialism (Treatise, Vol. 4, Ch. 5, and Vol. 7, Part II, Ch. 4, as well as Scientific Materialism). According to this alternative view every society is composed of three main subsystems, every one of which is material and interacts strongly with the other two: the economy, the polity, and the culture.

I am very glad that your Ph.D. student H. Freiheit has worked on my philosophy.

I would be happy to meet you to discuss further points. I will be attending the Brighton congress of philosophy. If you go, please look me up. On August 23rd at 13:30 I will be chairing the symposium on the Mind-Body Problem (Room 4, Brighton Centre); and I will give papers on the 25th (on quantum physics) and on the 26th (on psychology).

Cordially

Mario Bunge

P.S. You may be interested in knowing that last year Philosophy of Psychology, by myself and R. Ardila, was published by the Springer-Verlag.

