

Reviews

Workers' Control

Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini (eds), *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control from the Commune to the Present*, Haymarket, 444 pages, paperback ISBN 9781608461196, £13.99

The editors are to be congratulated for bringing together a large number of well-informed academics and activists from a dozen different countries to make this a stimulating and challenging study.

What is workers' control? Can it be exercised in a capitalist society? If so, in what way, and to what extent? How does it differ from self-management? How might workers' control of individual enterprises and self-management of industries be reconciled with the needs of consumers and society as a whole? Are industries now too large and complex, and workers too fragmented, for owners and managers to be effectively controlled? Do workers struggling for control need the support of trade unions and political parties? Is there a danger that the prejudices and vested interests of politicians and officials will frustrate the aspirations of working people?

These are some of the key questions for those of us who see the radical expansion of industrial democracy as a crucial component for a just and equal society. Many of these issues are vital elements that emerge in various forms from the struggles, with their advances and defeats recounted in these pages.

After a general historical and theoretical overview, the book moves from the upheavals at the end of the Great War with factory committees and factory councils emerging in Russia, Germany and Italy, through the less known experience of the workers' committees in the Spanish revolution to the experience of self-management in Yugoslavia and the struggle for greater workers' power in communist Poland. There follow accounts of workers' control developments as part of the anti-colonial struggles after the Second World War in Indonesia and Algeria, and in the resistance to dictatorship in Argentina and Portugal. More recent developments in India, Venezuela and Brazil demonstrate that the 'big flame' is still very much alight.

The Big Flame was a play directed by Ken Loach about the occupation of their workplace by Liverpool dockers. It is referred to by Alan Tuckman in his well-researched chapter on the politics of factory occupations in

Britain in the 1970s. The drama was first shown on television in 1969 and presaged the work-in at the Upper Clyde Shipyards (UCS) which was followed by a whole rash of sit-ins and work-ins. These arose from the spontaneous actions of groups of workers whose jobs were under threat. The Institute for Workers' Control (IWC – formed in 1968 after a series of industry and national conferences), did all it could to support and publicise these actions, but there was no central direction or co-ordination.

What happened in Britain is almost a model of the common ingredients needed to generate the surges in workers' control, many of the successes and failures of which are portrayed in these pages. They seem to require the interaction between crisis in the economy and society and its institutions, instability of the governing class, with the reaction of working people to the consequent pressure on their livelihoods, and the feeding of all these phenomena into the political process. Here the imposition of rationalisation, closures and redundancies in the face of technological change and growing competition in the market produced desperate but imaginative reactions from workforces under threat, where standard trade union responses were inadequate. Tony Benn, in opposition, gave prominent support to the UCS work-in and promised funds when in government for the worker co-operatives which arose from resistance to the cutbacks at places such as Fisher-Bendix, Triumph Meriden, the *Scottish Daily News* and, later, *Imperial Typewriters*.

It was in this context that the Labour Party developed its radical alternative economic strategy. This involved major intervention in the economy and included the promotion of public enterprise and industrial democracy through the creation of a national enterprise board in which trade unions and shop stewards would have strong representation. In addition, it proposed to set up planning agreements with major multinational companies on which trade unionists would have similar representation.

But this policy was not at all to the liking of Premier Wilson or his successor, James Callaghan. After giving great encouragement to shop stewards and workers' initiatives, in the face of intense pressure from industrialists and regular outcries from their friends in the media, Benn was sidelined by Wilson from the Industry Department to Energy in 1975. When the sterling crisis broke in 1976, Callaghan's government caved in to the restrictive demands of the International Monetary Fund, and the party's radical plans were either neutered or quietly dropped. Funds for the 'Benn Co-ops', such as they were, dried up. Some staggered on but with small impact either on the economy or as a focus for people's hopes and aspirations. In this climate there were but few attempts by workers in

dispute to repeat the occupation tactic.

This history illustrates clearly how industrial and political activity, involving trade unionists and shop stewards, politicians and activists, are entwined and are essential to reinforce one another, working in the same direction, if they are to succeed. But the persistence and resources of the established order has always made such unity difficult to sustain. The major economic and environmental crises now encompassing the globe mean that co-ordinated resistance is all the more necessary, but that much more difficult because it requires action on an international scale.

This a daunting challenge, but the title of this book reminds me of the powerful words of William Morris; ‘No man is good enough to be another man’s master’. Ken Coates, the leading British protagonist for workers’ control, had them inscribed on the IWC banner. I am sure he would say that as long as people refuse to submit to the whims and wishes of the powerful few then they will find together in themselves the ingenuity and means to resist and, sometimes, to prevail.

Today, the ‘masters’ are more difficult to confront because they are disguised in the form of huge remote institutions. Yet the impulse to insist on democratic accountability is stronger than ever. Interestingly, its most recent and powerful manifestation has been in the occupations of business premises of those powerful multinationals that are deemed to be responsible for the current grave economic crisis. It is a great encouragement that, despite all the obstacles, disappointments and failures, the past can be reinvented in many new and imaginative ways.

Ken Fleet

Secretary of the Institute for Workers’ Control for many years

Economic Genocide

Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Penguin 2008, 576 pages, paperback ISBN 9780141024530, £12.99

I simply do not understand how I could have missed this exceedingly important book when it first came out in 2007. I only bought it now because my niece got arrested at a demonstration in Washington along with Naomi Klein, and told me to read *The Shock Doctrine*. It is a riveting and most thoroughly researched account of the whole ‘neo-liberal’ globalisation process, which the world has suffered during the last four decades since the 1970s. I knew, as we all did, that the collapse of the Soviet Union had made possible the opening up of inequalities in capitalist development, which

Reagan and Thatcher had exploited to provide the chance this gave them to introduce their reactionary policies – with a little help from the Falklands War. I knew that Milton Friedman and his ‘Chicago School’ had been involved in the overthrow of Allende, and in the coup which established Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile, in 1973. But three things I did not know, and have learnt from Naomi Klein, which are truly shocking. The first thing she tells is of the deep involvement of Friedman and ‘The Chicago Boys’, not only in Chile, but in establishing the other Latin American dictatorships, and in counter-revolution in Russia, Eastern Europe, China, Iraq, South Africa and elsewhere – especially Iraq. Donald Rumsfeld, who attended Friedman’s seminar in the 1960s, described the ‘Chicago Boys’ as ‘a cluster of geniuses’. The second lesson for me is of the deliberate encouragement of ‘shock’ by the United States, as in ‘shock and awe’ in the Iraq war and elsewhere, as a sort of shock therapy, clearing the way in people’s minds for ‘neo-liberal’ measures. Finally, there comes the most shocking revelation of all, the deliberate use of kidnapping and murder – an estimated 300 academics in Iraq – and of torture as a method, not of revealing secrets, but of erasing previously held convictions in populations being subjected to counter-revolutionary measures.

Milton Friedman’s Chicago School prescription for remedying the world’s economic ills, and for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize, consisted of three measures, accepted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as the ‘Washington Consensus’: deregulation, that is of national financial controls; privatisation of nation state activities, especially ‘Welfare State’; and general cut-backs in state spending. To achieve these aims, it was necessary to reduce the power of trade unions and other social organisations, ending what Thatcher called ‘Society’, and leaving all economic activity to individuals and families bargaining in a supposedly ‘free’ market. The different levels of power in the hands of those individuals was not examined, but was made more than ever unequal in such a ‘free for all’.

Naomi Klein’s detailed studies of successive counter-revolutions, in the sense of the reversal of hard-won freedoms for ordinary people, make for an extraordinary picture – in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Indonesia, Poland, Russia, China, South Africa, Iraq. The Chinese Mandarin for ‘crisis’ is danger plus opportunity, and this is Naomi Klein’s explanation of the ‘shock doctrine’. The opportunity which follows the critical shock is taken by the few with power in reordering the lives of the powerless many. In a speech in America, reported in *The Guardian* on 8 October 2011, Naomi Klein distinguishes the ‘few’ as 1% and the rest of us as 99%. Whatever the numbers, the task in her view of the few is nothing less than ‘changing the underlying values of our society’. Now,

that was what Friedman sought to do in his Chicago School – ending the search for co-operative social provision to meet human needs, supported by state regulation and restriction of private initiative, and replacing this with the freeing up of private enterprise in open markets for goods and services, supported by the widest possible global competition. It can hardly have escaped the notice of even the most enthusiastic individualists among the Chicago School that some – a very few – have immensely greater power than the many, and that this basic inequality has been steadily widening over the last forty years. What they might or might not admit is that much of the widening has been due to the introduction of Friedmanite measures all over the world. They would justify this on the bold assumption that it is the few, Chicago Boys included, who are responsible for all the invention and innovation that has made lives so much easier – for some of us, at others' expense.

The shocks of the 'Shock Doctrine' which Naomi Klein studies in such detail involve many different kinds of crisis, and they are not necessarily deliberately engineered by the powerful few. The 'Shock and Awe' of the Iraq War was a special case, and was a signal failure, as Naomi Klein's account reveals, in producing, as intended, a change of mindset among Iraqis favourable to US effective control of the oil supplies, let alone better living conditions for the many. US contractors such as Vice-President Cheney's Haliburton and the giant US armament companies made enormous profits. The actual results inside Iraq, apart from the devastation of power and water supplies and health services, was the exacerbation of ethnic and religious differences between Sunnis and Shias, and between them and the Kurds, and the deliberate use of murder and torture to control popular resistance.

The Iraq War was perhaps a special case, supposedly justified as a response to the Al Qaeda destruction of New York's twin towers and other targets on the infamous 9/11 attacks, but quite evidently the excuse for the real 'shock doctrine'. Other wars which provided the opportunity for shock treatment were Mrs Thatcher's Falklands War, Russia's war with Chechnya, the Tamil Tigers' war in Sri Lanka, and civil wars in the Sudan, the Congo and South Africa. Military coups were no less valuable opportunities than actual wars for Friedmanite reconstruction. US support for shock therapy in the collapsing Soviet Union was remarkable, including not only the destruction of Solidarity in Poland but also of Gorbachev in the Yeltsin coup in Russia. The only difference from the usual pattern in the 'Shock Doctrine' being that Russian oligarchs and not American ones picked up the bits – but they were big bits. Similarly in China, which Friedman visited in his old age, the chief beneficiaries of the crackdown in Tiananmen Square

were the Chinese élite. As always, the masses suffered. Naomi Klein reveals two astonishing facts about ‘shock doctrine’ in Russia and Asia: first, that after the Yeltsin coup in 1993, 600,000 more people moved from ex-Soviet states to Israel, solving Israel’s problems of both labouring masses and skilled technicians; second, Stanley Fischer, ‘chief architect of the IMF’s shock therapy adventures in Russia and Asia’, became Israel’s new Central Bank chief. Perhaps it is not surprising that Israel is one of the world’s largest arms dealers.

After Pinochet in Chile, the military Junta in Argentina, and dictatorship in Uruguay, Bolivia and Nicaragua were all financed by the US and ‘liberalised’ by Friedman. After Chile, the main Latin American crises were due to rising debts and runaway inflation. One specialty American shock was the ‘Volcker shock’, after the US Federal Reserve Chairman, Paul Volcker, in 1981 raised US interest rates to 21%, thereby greatly increasing the debt burden. It can hardly be said that Friedmanite policies cured these diseases, but after some decades, as Naomi Klein makes clear, Latin Americans began to get over the shock and the unpaid debts they were left with, and to get fed up with dictators and gross inequalities, especially between the white and coloured populations, and look for governments committed to a reconstruction that is more protective of the many poor, and less of the few rich.

One crisis Naomi Klein includes in her list of shocks is natural disaster. The flooding of New Orleans, Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, and the Indonesian tsunami, not to mention the BP oil disaster in the Bay of Mexico, became famous for the resultant neglect of the people who suffered most and for the attention to reviving these coastal areas for tourism.

Naomi Klein’s book ends in 2007. Since then, we have had the most serious financial and economic crisis since the 1930s, plus continuing war in Afghanistan, a new war in Libya, repression in Syria and Yemen, and further Israeli attacks on Palestine. What would Naomi Klein be saying now? It is too early to judge how all these shocks will be resolved. The Arab revolt in Tunisia seemed to create an opening for democracy. The revolt in Egypt seems less likely to lead to a democratic solution, and the shocks in the rest of the Arab world hardly look like benefiting their peoples. What is sure is that the West will hold on to its control of Libya’s oil. Whatever the aims of the Libyan people, and its fighters, it was that control which Gaddafi was challenging, and to stop him the reason for the need for NATO support of the Libyan rebels. What we can see in the UK today, and to some extent in the European Union, is the most remarkable protection for the very rich, and for the bankers in particular, while all the rest of us and, particularly, the poorest are made to pay for the crisis in

what is called a freeing up of the market. This is pure Friedman Chicago School economics, which will only serve to deepen and prolong the slump. The protests of the British and other peoples remain our only hope of moving towards a reconstruction that is both just and sustainable.

Michael Barratt Brown

Chavs

Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*, Verso, 2011, 298 pages, paperback, ISBN 9781844676965, £14.99

Given the recent outbreaks of rioting and looting in London and other major cities, this book could not be more prescient. If, unlike Boris Johnson and David Cameron, you do believe the disturbances to have a fundamentally different explanation which does not primarily highlight ‘pure criminality’ then this book will undoubtedly bolster your opinion. Rioting, as Martin Luther King perceptively opined, is a manifestation of the ‘voice of the unheard’, and the recent occurrences are certainly no exception. The author uses the concept of the ‘Chav’ to explain why the working class has become largely politically neutered, if not voiceless, over the last 30 years. He uses the question of the stigmatisation of a section of the working class to describe and comment on the problems facing the Left after years of political defeats.

The definition of a ‘chav’ ranges from the most neutral in the *Collins English Dictionary* (2005), ‘a young working-class person who dresses in casual sports clothing’, to the ‘feral underclass’ of the ex-*Daily Telegraph* journalist Simon Heffer and, ultimately, to the ravings of reader opinions on the *Daily Mail* website depicting ‘tattooed, loud, foul-mouthed proles, with scummy brats’. Then there are television programmes which ram home the message of a debased and depraved sub-proletariat inhabiting (usually) council estates. Of particular resonance are the programme *Shameless* and the characters Wayne and Waynetta Slob in Harry Enfield’s repertory of characters, not forgetting Little Britain’s comic efforts. Other examples in the book are a gym club that includes in its activities ‘Chav Fighting’ and holiday companies which advertises their holiday packages as ‘Chav-Free’. Naturally, the internet provides innumerable ‘chav’ hating web sites. What these various concepts of a ‘chav’ seek to represent is a working-class person, often unemployed, ill-educated, work-shy, potentially violent, living on benefits, and drug and/or alcohol dependent. Furthermore, if she is female then she is promiscuous, usually a single

mother with several children, and living in social housing. A further confirmation of these attitudes is to be found in the first chapter where the author contrasts the initial media treatment of the tragedy of an abducted child, comparing the cases of Shannon Matthews and Madeleine McCann. The shabby journalistic treatment of Shannon and the subsequent reinforcement of stereotypical attitudes towards the people living in the Dewsbury Moor council estate are described in detail.

The author's thesis regarding the present situation of the working class takes us into the only too familiar territory of political defeats and decline of the Left over the last 30 years. The assault on the working class started with the 'creative destruction' of a large portion of manufacturing, extractive and heavy industries, through the deliberate deflationary policies adopted by the Thatcher administration. This conscious manoeuvre released the weapon of mass unemployment which, coupled with anti-union laws, depleted both the membership and the defensive power of the unions. Meanwhile, much of the industrial proletariat was being re-constituted in various Third World countries as multinational companies moved production to where wage costs were lower.

Jones argues that the diminution of trade union power and membership coupled with the Labour Party's failure to adopt a posture of united defiance against Thatcherism, illustrated by the formation of the SDP and the failure of the party leadership to support the miners' strike, were major factors in ensuring successive Labour electoral defeats. This engendered a party so desperate for electoral success that it swallowed Kinnock's drift to the right and, after the interregnum of John Smith, succumbed to the blandishments of New Labour. With the abandonment of Clause Four and assurances to the élite that they were 'relaxed' about the filthy rich getting richer, New Labour was ready for office and we are all too well aware of the path chosen by Blair and Brown in government.

Jones aptly states that 'if New Labour had an official religion, it would surely be meritocracy ...', but concentrating on equality of opportunity rather than equality of condition. Britain now has 13.5 million people in poverty. De-industrialisation has seen Nottingham, for example, formerly a centre of light engineering, mining, pharmaceuticals and the hosiery industry, reach such a state that, by 2010, 31.6 per cent of its households were workless according to the Office of National Statistics (*Guardian* 09/09/11). The level playing field, so beloved of all those who try to convince us that 'we are all middle class now', has a decided slope, and the book devotes a chapter to puncturing such outright nonsense. Small wonder that elements of the working class, ignored by New Labour, sought

solace in the British National Party, and Jones devotes an insightful chapter entitled 'Backlash' to this phenomenon.

The author has been criticised for a tendency to idealise working-class attitudes and community cohesion prior to Thatcherism, but there is surely more than a grain of truth in his statement that 'old working-class values, like solidarity, were replaced by dog-eat-dog individualism'. He makes an eloquent case that this kind of abrasive selfishness as a philosophy has to be sustained by a combination of class hatred, distorted meritocratic arguments, economic obfuscation, and the assertion that there is an inherent lack of aspirational drive within this section of society owing to the state's feather-bedding in the form of over-generous benefits. However, the author perhaps does not take into account sufficiently that the working class is more segmented than he allows for, and that the suffering amongst working-class communities was not uniformly spread. In fact, 'chav' hating is not something confined to the middle class and the élite, but segments of the prosperous and 'respectable' working class also have a far from sympathetic attitude to the poor despite the reality of their hardship. These attitudes, of course, are fed by the media, but are helped by the social segregation implicit in now utilising council housing as 'transit camps for the needy'. This is a far cry from the hopes of Aneurin Bevan that council housing would have the social mix associated with the 'English and Welsh villages, where the doctor, the grocer, the butcher and the farm labourer all lived on the same street'. The right-to-buy and the supposed, but now increasingly dubious, asset of home ownership have undoubtedly assisted the divisions within the working class.

The author is an Oxford history graduate from Stockport and used to work as a trade union parliamentary researcher, so apart from anything else the book is factually highly informative. His conversations with the likes of Geoffrey Howe and Stephen Byers provide useful illustrations of the book's argument. Particularly piquant is his chat with Rachel Johnson, editor of *The Lady* and sister of the archetypal old Etonian and Bullingdon Club rowdy, Boris Johnson. The book exudes the youthful verve and enthusiasm of Jones for resuscitating the Labour Movement and, although he does not advance a comprehensive programme, he is surely right when he says such a renewal must be based on the struggle against structural unemployment and the fight for decent jobs. By 'decent' he obviously means jobs that provide security and a living wage, but more consideration needs to be shown to the changed nature of industry since the 1970s, and in this context to address the necessity of a reduction in working hours.

In the conclusion Jones pointedly raises the situation of the Labour Party's reduction in working-class electoral support, demonstrated by the loss of

five million voters, four million of whom were lost under Blair's premiership. He questions what Labour's response should be to what Ed Miliband himself has called 'a crisis of working-class representation'. Unfortunately, the latter's speech at the Trade Union Congress in September 2011 is not the kind of response that is at all helpful. The Coalition Government, in reality, wishes to dwarf Thatcher's achievements by drastic reductions in state welfare provisions, creating the neo-liberal 'minimalist state', and privatising its residue. They have an agenda which, having deftly shifted the reasons for the economic crisis onto Labour, away from their banking compatriots in the City, now seeks to make the working class pay for the crisis. They are determined ideologues with a radical class-war-based agenda, to whom the demonization of the working class provides a helpfully divisive smoke screen to mask their intentions. The author wants to engender a return to the politics of class and 'at least build a counterweight to the hegemonic, unchallenged class politics of the wealthy'. What is needed is a counter class consciousness to match that of the élite, and this book should help to realise that ambition. *Chavs* is written in a clear, non-academic style, and is the ideal book to explain how we arrived at the present lamentable situation. It should enthuse a new generation of prospective activists.

John Daniels

Mixed Economy?

Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Guilty Secrets of Rich Nations and The Threat to Global Prosperity*, Random House, 2007, 266 pages, paperback ISBN 9781905211371, £8.99

Commenting on the work of the (South Korean) Cambridge University economist Ha-Joon Chang, Martin Wolf in the *Financial Times* engaged in typical neo-liberal newspeak, describing Chang as 'probably the world's most effective critic of globalization'. He is nothing of the sort, but a fierce opponent of neo-liberal dogmas instead. His book *Bad Samaritans* is a finely tuned demolition job, set against many of the myths carefully inculcated by mainstream politics, the mass media and orthodox academic circles over several recent decades.

Chang's account, rich in factual detail and empirical support, ripostes to most of the basic popular preconceptions surrounding the 'free market' policies advanced by global and national political and economic élites. It systematically demonstrates how the turbo-capitalist, 'one-size fits all' mantras of 'privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation' (along with low

inflation, balancing of the budget, etc.) – continually imposed on developing countries by the Western élites and their compradorial partners in the satellite, client states – do not have much credibility as far as needs for economic development and social progress are concerned. Instead, these policies aim to pull developing and transitional economies into rich countries’ (and, more directly, rich companies’) accumulation cycles, stifling their own endogenous resources and potentials.

In the world of global economic governance plutocracy has replaced democracy, and the one-dollar-one-vote system means that the rich countries control 60% of voting shares in the IMF and the World Bank. The World Trade Organisation is nominally democratic (China and Luxemburg have the same number of votes), but Chang observes that it is effectively run by an oligarchy of richest countries, and that crucial ministerial meetings (such as the ones in Geneva in 1998, in Seattle in 1999, in Doha in 2001, and in Cancun in 2003) were held on a ‘by-invitation-only’ basis in so-called Green Rooms. Mafia style, some delegates from developing countries who tried to attend these closed meetings were even physically thrown out. Chang points out that threats and bribery in international economic negotiations are also commonplace. In the most literal sense, the game is rigged.

The neo-liberal agenda-setters, in powerful and weak countries alike, typically point to the rise of the ‘Asian tigers’ as an example of neo-liberal efficiency, its economic and social superiority. The reality was in many ways diametrically opposed to this propaganda. Chang emphasises how South Korea, represented as a neo-liberal prodigy, tenaciously employed measures such as tariff protection, subsidies and other forms of state support in order to foster and shield some industries (which were selected by the government in conjunction with the private sector), until they could withstand foreign competition. The state also retained possession of the entire banking sector, unapologetically (and pragmatically) setting up state-owned enterprises and taking over private companies if they were mismanaged. Taiwan, China, India and others also made use of similar forms of state intervention. Even Chile, sometimes hailed as the most illustrious example of neo-liberal success (after the CIA-sponsored coup against the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende), took on a much more interventionist attitude after its financial crash of 1982, when it nationalised its entire banking sector, which was followed by the allocation of significant state support to private companies in overseas marketing and R&D, the introduction of capital controls to combat short-term speculative funds in the 1990s, and so on.

Chang is also illuminating on the question of state ownership, which is the central anathema of ‘free market’ capitalists. He points out that ‘(t)he economic successes of many European economies, such as Austria, Finland, France, Norway and Italy after the Second World War, were achieved with very large SOE [state-owned enterprise] sectors at least until the 1980s. In Finland and France especially, the SOE sector was at the forefront of technological modernization’ (p. 110). Very large SOE sectors still exist in ‘Asian tigers’ such as China, Taiwan, and indeed the famed, supposedly ‘neo-liberal’ Singapore, whose state-owned sector is twice the size of Korea’s, which is significant as well. Chang manages to grasp the anti-democratic content which is at the heart of demands for reduced governmental involvement in the economy – privatisation and ‘liberalisation’ aim to minimise scope for policy discretion.

‘Democracy is acceptable to neo-liberals only in so far as it does not contradict the free market; this is why some of them saw no contradiction between supporting the Pinochet dictatorship and praising democracy ... (U)nlike their intellectual predecessors, neo-liberals live in an era when they cannot openly oppose democracy, so they try to do it by discrediting *politics in general*. By discrediting politics in general, they gain legitimacy for their actions that take away decision powers from the democratically elected representatives. In doing so, neo-liberals have succeeded in diminishing the scope for democratic control without ever openly criticising democracy itself’ (p. 176).

In the same key, he observes one of the strategic aims behind the neo-liberal emphasis on ‘depoliticised’, rigid monetary and fiscal policies aimed at lowering inflation: they also diminish room for policy intervention, helping to inaugurate and preserve the independence of national central banks from the state, and from any form of democratic accountability. Chang does not deny the negativities of high inflation, but seeks to demonstrate how moderate inflation can actually be congruent with accelerated economic growth, and argues that positive aspects of low inflation are often counterbalanced by the reduction of workers’ future earnings through reduced growth, reduced employment prospects and reduced wage rates (on the other hand, financial industry benefits from low inflation, as its profits depend on financial assets with fixed returns).

Chang puts monetarist arguments to the test by documenting certain cases in which a glaring absence of correlation between prosperity and anti-inflationist policies can be observed. For instance, Brazil’s average inflation rate in the 1960s and 70s was 42%, yet the country’s *per capita* income grew annually by 4,5% in this period. Conversely, the growth in its *per capita* income was sharply reduced when its inflation rate was lowered. South

Korea's development tells a similar story. These perplexing cases (from the vantage point of official monetarist dogma) demonstrate that the richest countries do not maintain their monetarist prescriptions out of altruism for developing countries, but rather to erode developmental strategies which favour investment, demand management and growth. Developing countries, which need to accelerate growth, investments and jobs most, are therefore often forced by the IMF to balance their budgets every year. As usual with neo-liberalism, double standards reign supreme. Instead of following their own advice, which they present to developing countries, rich and powerful countries regularly reduce their own interest rates and increase state deficits in order to stimulate economic demand. 'When Korea was in its biggest-ever financial crisis in 1997, the IMF allowed the country to run budget deficits equivalent to only 0,8% of GDP (and, at that, after trying the opposite for several months, with disastrous consequences); when Sweden had a similar problem (due to the ill-managed opening-up of its capital market, as was the case with Korea in 1997) in the early 1990s, its budget deficits were, in proportional terms, ten times that (8% of its GDP)' (pp. 158-9). Even the administration of a fervent 'free marketer' such as George W. Bush engaged in extensive deficit spending (and, one might add, the present recession helps reveal just how extravagantly detached most leading capitalist metropolises were from their own recipes of 'fiscal prudence').

In addition to its failure in delivering equality and growth, the implementation of neo-liberal doctrine has failed to bring economic (and social) security and stability. Instead, as Chang pointed out (even before the latest crisis), '(t)he world, especially the developing world, has seen more frequent and larger-scale financial crises since the 1980s' (p.28). The post-WWII Keynesian 'golden age' of state-led industrialisation, brought about as a result of the anti-colonial, democratic and socialist tectonic shifts in global politics, had led to historic social and economic advances: 'During the period of controlled globalization underpinned by nationalistic policies between the 1950s and the 1970s, the world economy, especially in the developing world, was growing faster, was more stable and had more equitable income distribution than in the past two and a half decades of rapid and uncontrolled neo-liberal globalization.'

In contrast to the received wisdom of recent decades, post-WWII development of poor nations didn't fundamentally conflict with the welfare and stability of Western societies. The corrective influence of Cold War positioning on the behaviour of the US and other Western powers, and especially the assertiveness of decolonising and developing countries, meant that the less developed economies were to a large degree allowed to

pursue policies which protected their nascent industries. Mostly as a result of this (relatively non-dogmatic) planning in numerous developing as well as developed countries, the period between 1950-1973 was characterised by rising standards of living worldwide. ‘*Per capita* income growth rate shot up from 1,3% in the liberal golden age (1870-1913) to 4.1% in Europe ... These spectacular growth performances were combined with low income inequality and economic stability’. The *per capita* income in developing countries grew at ‘twice the rate they have recorded since the 1980s under neo-liberal policies’.

Chang’s work is a brilliant call for strategic openness, a resolute negation of the mantra that there is no alternative. Unlike many quasi-Keynesian opportunists, he does not gloss over the potential for widespread corruption through deregulation and privatisation: ‘Deregulation of the economy in general, and the introduction of greater market forces in the management of the government more specifically, has often increased, rather than reduced, corruption’ (p. 180). He bluntly states that ‘privatization ... can be a recipe for disaster, especially in developing countries that lack the necessary regulatory capabilities’ (p. 119), as well as that ‘(s)ome of the world’s best firms are owned and run by the state’ (pp. 17-18). Still, progressive as these arguments and assertions are in the present situation, Chang also devoted the latter part of his book to deepening his critique of some of the fundamental structural defects in the present socio-economic system. A progressive technocratic critique of neo-liberalism is often as far as heterodox economists are currently willing to go. Commendably, Chang goes further to uncover some basic issues regarding social and economic democratisation. He recognises that ‘market and democracy clash at a fundamental level. Democracy runs the principle of “one man (one person), one vote”. The market runs on the principle of “one dollar, one vote”. Naturally, the former gives equal weight to each person, regardless of the money she/he has. The latter gives greater weight to richer people. Therefore, democratic decisions usually subvert the logic of the market’ (p. 172).

Yet, despite this valiant step, his open-mindedness towards state ownership does not also result in a sufficiently sustained attempt to consider genuinely public, democratic and co-operative forms of ownership. Even in his latest (also brilliant) book, *23 Things They Don’t Tell You About Capitalism* (Penguin Books, 2010 – see *Spokesman 111*), which broadens and in some respects deepens the arguments made in *Bad Samaritans*, Chang could have discussed the subject of workplace democracy at more length. In this latest book, his position on workplace democracy is refreshingly progressive, yet he doesn’t give it quite the

attention it deserves. Thus he fails to emphasise (for instance) the work of the 2009 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Elinor Ostrom, who has shown that social ownership is in fact more efficient in the management of public resources than both private and state ownership. None the less, Chang (as well as some of the more ‘mainstream’ critical economists, such as Stiglitz and Krugman) helps to carve out a discursive terrain more amenable to radical critiques of capitalism. It is the task of the democratic Left to take advantage of this new space and plant ideas and arguments that will advance an authentic political, economic and social democracy.

Daniel Jakopovich

Looking Back

Kenneth O. Morgan, *Ages of Reform: Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left*, I.B.Taurus, 2011, 320 pages, hardback ISBN 978184885 5762, £27.50

Kenneth O. Morgan is a distinguished historian of the Left in Britain, who has written more than thirty books including biographies of James Callaghan and Michael Foot. This book consists of a series of essays dealing with events, episodes and individuals connected with developments on the Left of the political spectrum over the last two centuries. Versions of most of these have already appeared elsewhere and they reflect the views of the author, who has been a member of the Labour Party since 1955 and a member of the House of Lords since 2001.

He begins with the 1832 Reform Act, which abolished the worst features of the pre-existing electoral system – the rotten boroughs – in which a handful of voters were controlled by the landowners and returned over fifty Members of Parliament. As he points out, however, although a massive step forward, the Act retained a property qualification for voters and can by no means be regarded as establishing democracy in Britain.

He devotes a chapter to W. E. Gladstone, four times a Liberal Prime Minister, and evaluates his great contribution to the creation and development of the Liberal Party. This is a prelude to his dissertations on David Lloyd George, the paradoxes in whose career he brings out. How did a ‘little England’ opponent of the Boer War become the all-powerful British leader in the First World War, and then an advocate of appeasement and compromise with Hitler in the 1930s and 40s? Morgan is anxious to rehabilitate Lloyd George’s reputation by referring to his progressive role in the 1906-14 Liberal Government, and by drawing attention to his unhappiness about the harsh

terms imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, which many now regard as a factor contributing to the rise of Nazism.

Morgan compares the progressive movements in Britain and the United States. He points out that although the International Workers of the World (the Wobblies) and Daniel de Leon excited some interest on the Left in Britain, trade union-led struggles in Britain – particularly the great unrest before the First World War – tended to alienate American progressives.

When he comes to consider the development of the British Labour Party over the years since its foundation in 1900, Morgan traces the key role played by socialist ideas until the advent to power of Tony Blair and New Labour. He emphasises the fact that Hugh Gaitskell, Anthony Crosland, Roy Jenkins, James Callaghan and Harold Wilson all regarded themselves as socialists, although the meaning they attached to this description of themselves varied. He enumerates seven ages of socialism from the period of James Keir Hardie, when it was a gospel of fraternity, down to the rejection of Clause IV and its replacement by various vague doctrines like that of the ‘Third Way’. He points out that there has not been any significant new statement of the meaning of socialism since Anthony Crosland’s book, *The Future of Socialism*, and considers that Michael Foot and Tony Benn both lost their versions in Labour’s 1983 General Election defeat.

His chapter on the rise and fall of nationalisation suggests that, although inseparable from socialist ideas in the past, after 1983 Labour turned its back on the idea. In all this, Morgan fails to bring out that the privatised industries are far from being a great success. Just, as he notes, the Labour Government was virtually obliged to nationalise Northern Rock, Bradford & Bingley, the Royal Bank of Scotland, etc., albeit as a temporary measure – the growing economic crisis and other developments may well make renationalisation of privatised industries a realistic and desirable option in the future. The railways, to take one example, are less efficient and require a bigger subsidy – part of which goes in dividends to shareholders – than was the case when they were owned and operated by British Rail.

One of Morgan’s chapters deals with imperialism. He gives considerable credit to the Fabian Colonial Research Bureau, but dismisses the work of the Movement for Colonial Freedom in campaigning for decolonisation as of little importance. ‘The anti-imperialist rhetoric of the MCF was marginalised’ [p.177]. As the Chair and, subsequently, the President of MCF, I have a different view of its effectiveness. However, he concedes that Harold Wilson, Anthony Greenwood and Barbara Castle – together with other ministers in the 1964-70 Labour Government – were former MCF members, and he praises Labour for granting self-

government to the colonies without much more bloodshed:

‘The ending of empire, even with difficult problems remaining in Cyprus and Rhodesia, was in many ways Old Labour’s greatest moral victory’ [p.180].

Morgan devotes a number of chapters to key Labour Party personalities. He praises Hugh Gaitskell, whom he twice met, and considers that Michael Foot’s two-volume biography of Aneurin Bevan is grossly unfair to the former. He argues that Bevan was essentially a middle of the road figure and not a left-winger except on some aspects of foreign policy in the 1950s.

Michael Foot and the Bevanites were far more anti-Gaitskell than Bevan, he contends. Michael Foot was a great communicator, orator and journalist and an outstanding man of letters. He was not, in Morgan’s judgment, however, temperamentally or psychologically equipped to lead the Labour Party and his 1983 campaign was pathetic. Morgan gives him credit for the role he played supporting the Labour Governments of 1974-79, but he does not fully recognise his achievement in 1980/83 in holding the Labour Party together in the face of the activities of the Gang of Four and the SDP on the right, and those on the Left who wrongly judged that their time had come.

One very positive service which this book performs, in the chapter headed ‘Was Britain Dying?’, is to counter the propaganda of the Conservatives and New Labour that the Wilson-Callaghan period of 1974-79 was solely characterised by sleaze, strikes and economic decline. Morgan brings out the economic successes, restoring Britain after the three-day week and the miners’ strike, countering the inflationary pressures produced by the uplift in oil prices, the improvement achieved after the 1976 IMF crisis, when economic forecasts were appalling, and the fact that the commitments to the public services, to greater social and racial equality, and reducing unemployment were maintained.

As a back-bench Labour MP at that time, I had numerous criticisms of the Government’s policies, but they were never those of the Conservatives or those who believed in abandoning our socialist ideals.

Morgan was a member of a group of republican peers in 2002 and is critical of the Labour Party for its failure to adopt a more anti-royalist approach. In the face of the weight of public opinion over many years and at the present time, however, it is hardly surprising that the abolition of the monarchy has been relegated to a very low priority.

The essays of which this book is comprised are of interest to those concerned with the development of the Left in Britain but they are hardly for beginners. The topics selected by the author are not linked by an underlying continuing theme but comprise a selection of issues on which

the author has strong personal views.

His final chapter is on the Iraq War, on which he believes there was a gulf between the Labour Government and the British people. He analyses this at some length and expresses deep concern over the resultant loss of many good members from the Labour Party. Tony Blair, he says, should be wary about not becoming another Ramsay MacDonald. Many of us consider, however, that he has already done more damage to the Party than MacDonald did.

In so far as this book helps us to understand more fully a mix of episodes in the history of the progressive movement in Britain, it fulfils a useful role. It is not, however, a history of the British Left, and some of the author's conclusions are controversial.

Stan Newens

Palestine

Ali Abunimah, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse*, Holt McDougal, 2007, 240 pages, ISBN 9780805086669, £10.43

As the title concisely suggests, Ali Abunimah's book advocates a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the creation of one state in all of historic Palestine.

He bases his argument on three main points. The first is that the two-state solution, supported by virtually all governments involved in the struggle, is doomed to failure. The second is that the aspirations of Israeli Jews as well as Arab Palestinians can be realized in a single state in historic Palestine. The third is that it is possible for Israelis and Palestinians to unite under such a state.

On the first point, Abunimah's task is easy. The profound failure of efforts to arrive at a two-state solution is already clearly evident. Abunimah recalls that partition was first proposed by the British in the 1930s and then by the UN, before it evolved into what is more commonly referred to as the two-state solution. Both proposals are based on the idea that separating Arabs from Jews and dividing the land between them is the solution to the conflict, an idea that has been failing for more than seven decades.

'There is no workable partition,' he concludes, 'that is acceptable to a majority of Israelis and Palestinians.'

The alternative for Abunimah is a single state in historic Palestine, where

Israelis and Palestinians have equal rights. The borders between Israel and the occupied territories would be removed, uniting the land from the river to the sea. Jewish settlers would be able to remain in place, and Palestinian refugees would find their place in the new state, thus fulfilling their dream of returning to their homeland. Jerusalem would be the united capital of the new state.

At this point, Abunimah moves from a realistic demonstration of the hopelessness of the two-state solution, to an idealistic vision of a one-state solution. The moral basis of his advocacy is powerful. Equality, he says, demands that all the inhabitants of Palestine be able to participate in its political life, and have a say in who governs them. All those living on the land should have the right to vote, and the state should treat them equally without regard to religion, ethnicity or ideology.

Abunimah wants to overcome history. He insists it doesn't matter who has a historical right to be on the land and who doesn't. The battle of narratives need not be resolved to arrive at a just peace. It is enough to recognize the fact that both people inhabit the same land, and deserve the same universal rights.

Drawing heavily on the South African experience, Abunimah makes a comparison between the African National Congress and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. He lauds the former for transcending black nationalism and formulating an inclusive vision that appealed to whites, while criticizing the Palestinian leadership for its fixation on statehood and diplomatic recognition instead. According to the writer, it is a mixture of resistance to apartheid and the offer of an alternative to address Afrikaners' fears which ultimately convinced them to give up their hold on power and their ideology of racial separation. The Palestinians have yet to arrive at a similar formula.

Abunimah makes an impassioned plea to Palestinians and their supporters to construct a vision for the future that Israelis can be a part of. He says it is a matter of urgency for the Palestinians to provide a quick alternative to extreme ideas which are increasingly taking hold in Israel.

It would be unfair to interpret Abunimah's stress on the need for a Palestinian initiative as shifting responsibility from the Israelis to the Palestinians. A son of Palestinian refugees, Abunimah is personally aware of the destruction wrought on his people by the Zionist enterprise. His insistence on overcoming past bitterness is laudable not just for the human spirit it reflects, but also for the example it provides.

But can a vision, however well-articulated, overcome the raw balance of power, and persuade the Zionist state to give up its ideology and power?

While many Palestinians remain ambiguous about pursuing a one-state option, the Israelis are decidedly dead-set against it. As things stand, they already possess effective control of all of historic Palestine. International constraints occasionally restrain their more extreme impulses, but they have pushed ahead with settlement expansion in the West Bank largely unchecked.

Resistance, whether civil or military, does not appear to be having much effect on Israeli actions and attitudes, and neither does the international consensus against settlement expansion. To Abunimah, settlement expansion is just another nail in the coffin of the two-state delusion. The more geographically intertwined the two populations are, the harder it is to divide the land. However, there remains a missing link between the final demise of partition as a solution, and the desired emergence of a democratic state. One does not necessarily lead to the other, and perpetual conflict remains a possibility.

Abunimah successfully demonstrates the absurdity of sticking to the two-state approach, both on realistic and moral grounds. He also makes a disarming case for peace based on reconciliation and universal human rights. On the practical front, however, a lot more work is needed.

Ghadi Al-Hadi

Gore

Garrett G. Fagan, *The Lure of the Arena: Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games*, Cambridge University Press, 374 pages, paperback ISBN 9780521185967, £22.99

Faced with a book on the Holocaust, George Steiner expostulated, ‘How in God’s name do you review a book like this?’ I felt the same about what Fagan (p. 79) rightly dubs ‘a gruesome catalogue’ and ‘dismal litany’.

The Roman arena is well-trodden ground, as Fagan’s 33-page bibliography shows: he seems to have read everything except Herbert Benario’s pertinent article (*Classical Journal*, 1981) on amphitheatre crowd capacities, and (I unblushingly subjoin) my own cognate contribution (*Liverpool Classical Monthly*, 1984). Unlike Michael Grant (*The Gladiators*, 1970), who called them Nazis, Fagan recognises that the Romans had no monopoly on sadistic ‘entertainments’, surveying in horrific detail – this is an unavoidably stomach-turning read – similar atrocities from mediaeval times to Tyburn public hangings to (for example) North Korea where children are herded in to watch executions.

In Ernest Bramah's *Kai Lung's recapitulation*: 'Hanging, slicing, pressing, boiling, roasting, grilling, freezing, vating, racking, twisting, drawing, compressing, inflating, rending, spiking, gouging, limb-tying, piecemeal pruning, and a variety of less tersely describable discomforts'.

One Roman justification was religious. Games were *munera*, a word designating obligations to the dead, Homeric and Etruscan (especially the latter: blaming the Etruscans for bad things in their own culture was a Roman speciality) antecedents being adduced, along with arena attendants and rituals got up in mythological style and representations (for example, dropping the failed aviator Icarus from high above). This extended into both pagan and Christian visions of eternal tortures in their respective hells. The secular excuse was that all arena victims – beast-fighters, gladiators, slaves, convicted criminals including Christians – were *infames* or *noxii*, guilty and so deserving their hideous fates.

When Nero burned Christians alive to illuminate an evening entertainment, Tacitus (*Annals* 15. 44) comments that they thoroughly deserved this – unlike the crowd which showed pity – a word for which (said the orator-imperial tutor Fronto) was lacking in Latin, as is an exact equivalent to our 'sport'. Again, not confined to 'pagan' Rome. Christian emperor Constantine's throwing of German prisoners to the lions was hailed by a contemporary orator as 'a deed lovelier than his triumph, for the pleasure of us all'.

The usually humane Samuel Johnson pronounced 'Executions are intended to draw spectators'. If they do not, they don't answer their purpose. The old method (namely, the just-banned public hangings) was most satisfactory to all parties; 'the publick was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it'. Roman attitudes were mixed. Some emperors and intellectuals were openly disdainful. The ancient *Philogelos jokebook* (see my 1983 translation) makes fun of a crucified runner and other victims (nos. 121, 216, 217).

Fagan (pp. 241-245) enlarges on what he calls 'Disposition Theory', that is, crowds felt entitled to enjoy seeing the guilty suffer, his key to understanding the Roman attitude. There is something in this, though the darker side of human nature hardly needs dressing up in the socio-psychological jargon rampant in this book (living up or down to its sub-title), most of which I could have done without, albeit redeemed by some flashes of wit.

Fagan convincingly dismisses many other theories, including Aristotle's famous Catharsis (purgation of emotions). When he writes 'If anything, watching aggression and violence heightens aggressive impulses', I have to agree, having just watched the Vancouver ice-hockey riots.

Despite his prolix and repetitive style (never using one word where twenty will do), Fagan basically and rightly wields Occam's razor. Adducing the ever-increasing modern taste for violence in books, computer-games, films and so on (I recall the craze for 'snuff' movies, real or fake), he concludes that there have been, are, and always will be some people with depraved appetites, though one might switch gear and ask if there is really anything wrong with gladiatorial combats between consenting adults?

How many, though? Rome's population is usually estimated around one million. The Colosseum seated 54,760 spectators. The Circus Maximus was anciently said to accommodate 385,000. Even (as most do) scaling down the latter figure, we have the hopeful implication that far more people preferred the morally harmless chariot racing (though many enjoyed the frequent pile-ups, as at motor-car races) to arena slaughter. Hopkins and Beard (*The Colosseum*, 2005) come up with two surprising and welcome revelations: the death-rate among gladiators was only one in six, and in provincial arenas there were no more than two shows a year.

Fagan asks, how many of us would go to a revived Roman arena? That was always my question to undergraduate audiences, with the follow-up: how many would go twice?

Minutiae. Augustine's description of rectal fistula operations (*City of God* 22. 8) would have endorsed Fagan (pp. 31-32) on ancient pain endurance. Something (to redress the gender gap) might have been said on female arena performers, evidenced by (for example) Juvenal and Suetonius, excavations at Southwark, and an inscription in the British Museum. His attempt to poo-poo Marxist 'wishful thinking' (p. 171 + n. 48 – Geoffrey de St Croix is the target) is refuted by massive contrary evidence including the Pompeian graffito 'I hate the poor', quoted (p. 35) by himself – the Communist Manifesto's opening remains valid. Calpurnius Siculus (p. 119) is now commonly dated much later than Nero's time; cf. my article in *Illinois Classical Studies*, 1995. Martial's poem on the crucified Laureolus seems (p.181) misunderstood, Laureolus being the Beggar's Opera-like hero of a Roman stage mime. I noticed occasional trifling misprints ('ficiton', p. 16 n. 25; 'vicitims', p. 259), and one false reference (Pliny, NH 7. 168 should be 7. 186, p. 94 n. 35).

Skippy index and mere handful of sometimes blurry monochrome illustrations are offset by rich appendix of Roman texts, with translations, including inscriptional evidences not always readily available elsewhere. For industry, meticulous documentation of primary and secondary sources, cosmic view, and a good dose of common sense throughout, this is now

unquestionably the best book on this repulsive but unavoidable subject. To adapt a famous though possibly apocryphal gladiatorial chant, *Ave, Fagan Imperator! Lecturi Te Salutant!*

Barry Baldwin

The Most Honourable Spies

Paul Broda, *Scientist Spies: A memoir of my three parents and the atom bomb*, Matador, 344 pages, 2011, hardback ISBN 9781848766075, £17.50

It is widely supposed that blame for the ‘Cold War’ between the USA and USSR after 1945 could be laid at the door of the spies who gave the secrets of the atom bomb to the Soviets. A leading candidate for this accusation was the English physicist, Alan Nunn May, who was jailed for ten years for transgressing the Official Secrets Act. Rebecca West in a widely circulated book, *The Meaning of Treason*, made a quite remarkably unpleasant personal attack on Nunn May’s character and judgement.

It so happens that Nunn May was a close friend of my wife and mine. It was always our view that his action, in so far as it really did help the Soviets to speed up their development of a nuclear bomb, ensured that the Cold War did not become a hot war. If the US had sole possession of nuclear weapons, it was clear they could use that power to dominate the world. They had already used the bomb twice in Japan, although the Japanese were already suing for an end to military activity. They could use it again, or the threat of its use, to win their way. With two in possession of such a weapon, there was mutually assured destruction, MAD in short. Mad it certainly was, but not likely to be risked, although in the Cuban crisis it seemed very likely.

So what is the importance of this new book by Paul Broda, himself the son and stepson, as he explains, of atomic scientist spies? The book is based on the letters of his father and a long memorandum from his stepfather. Both had knowledge of nuclear science which they shared with Soviet scientists, but the book clearly establishes that neither gained any financial advantage. Both acted in the belief that, at the time, the Soviet Union was an ally of the US and UK, and had been promised by Churchill and Roosevelt ‘any technical or economic assistance that is in our power’.

Instead, the Soviet Union had been ruthlessly excluded from any knowledge of the development of a nuclear weapon, and anyone breaking this rule would be severely punished. Berti Broda was not convicted and

sent to prison, as Nunn May was, but suffered as Nunn May did from being excluded from scientific posts, in Broda's case in Austria, which they both certainly merited.

Both Nunn May and Berti Broder were Communist Party members or sympathisers with the Soviet Union, Nunn May in England and Berti Broda in Austria. For a time during the war Berti and his wife, Hilda, and son, Paul, lived in England. After the war Berti returned to Austria, but Hilda and Paul stayed in England, and Hilda became divorced from Berti. She qualified as a doctor and worked in public health in Cambridge.

Nunn May had been a lodger before the war in the London flat of Eleanor Singer, who later became my wife, and Hilda had worked with Eleanor in hospitals in London, but there is no evidence that Nunn May and Hilda met until Nunn May came out of prison in 1953 and went to Cambridge. It was not, however, entirely a surprise to Eleanor and me, when Hilda and Alan came from Cambridge to see us to say that they were going to marry. After their wedding, they came to our house, to escape the journalists and thereafter we had several holidays with them, especially a long holiday in Dorset with our two children and their adopted son Johnny, before they went to work in Ghana. When, many years later, they came back again to England, we saw them and Paul on many occasions.

I tell all this story, which is told at great length in the book by Paul Broda, to establish my credentials for confirming what I regard as the quite honourable nature of Nunn May's spying. It can be argued against any testimony of my wife and myself that, in the 1940s and early 50s, we, too, were in the Communist Party. We left in 1956 over Hungary and Khrushchev's revelations, but the point at issue is our trust in Alan Nunn May. If you live with a couple as closely as we did with Alan and Hilda, you come to have a very clear understanding of what goes on in their minds and motivates them. I am of course aware that Nunn May broke his promise to obey the Official Secrets Act, but, after deep consideration and for reasons that he truly believed mattered for the survival of peoples' freedom and indeed of the very planet that we live on. The Nazi armies had not yet, in 1942, been defeated at Stalingrad, when Nunn May told what he knew. If you had known what he knew from his association in Canada with the secretive American development of the atom bomb, what would you have done?

In later years, Nunn May bitterly regretted that he had ever become involved in the development of what came to be a murderous weapon of war and of military domination. Once involved in it he had to be sure that the nuclear weapon was shared – and he paid the price for it in ten long years in prison and exclusion thereafter from all scientific employment in

Europe or North America. The British Government even tried to prevent Nkrumah employing him in the University of Accra in Ghana. Paul Broda has performed an important task in presenting this story, which only his personal involvement with the main characters, and his very considerable scientific knowledge as a UMIST professor, has made possible.

Michael Barratt Brown

Transcendentalism

Alan H. Batten, *Our Enigmatic Universe*, Melrose Books, 208 pages, ISBN 9781907732034, £8.99

The overarching theme of *Our Enigmatic Universe* is that science and religion have always maintained a complex relationship but that the two aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. For many centuries philosophers, scientists and religious scholars have expounded theories about why we are here, how we are here and what happens when we are no longer here. No one answer has satisfied all and even now, with all our technological advances in science and astronomy, there is no one unified theory of everything. The universe is an unimaginably complex and enigmatic place and because of this the author suggests that we do not have to take what is revealed to us through our senses as the only possible reality.

According to the blurb on the back of the book, 'the universe may have other aspects, termed "transcendent" in this book, partially revealed to us by the arts and music, so room can be found also for a religious dimension'. From the beginning, the author suggests that although we cannot perceive the entire universe because our senses are not equipped to view everything as it is in itself (the transcendent), some of us can see a little more than the rest, and this is where God sits – in the seat between what we know we can perceive and what we can't/don't know.

In Chapter Two he talks about birds navigating using magnetic fields and eels generating their own electric impulses; he suggests that we only understand these elements of our world because we have studied them but can't 'see' or sense them in the same way these animals do. To highlight his argument he presents the reader with a thought experiment:

'... let us imagine that intelligent beings could somehow evolve in the vicinity of a stellar X-ray source. The "eyes" of such beings would evolve to be most sensitive to that part of the electromagnetic spectrum which was most intense in the radiation from their "sun" – i.e. the X-rays. The most conspicuous objects in the night-time sky would be other X-ray stars. What we call "normal stars"

would be invisible to the astronomers of that planet, at best, some of the nearest ones, emitting weak X-rays, might appear as very “faint” objects.’ (p. 20)

It is here that he begins to make his case for the theme that runs through the book. As *homo sapiens* we might not be able to ‘know’ all of the universe – we will see only what our senses allow us to detect and the sense data we receive from this observation will be processed in a uniquely ‘human’ way – but we can ‘infer’ from what we do know that which we don’t. From this he extrapolates that all phenomena that cannot be wholly known in a scientific way will fall into the category of that which lies just outside of human perception; phenomena can be said to exist, it’s just that we cannot ‘see’ them.

Batten discusses many philosophers in his well-researched book but it is specifically his reference to Kant and the transcendent that caught my attention. As Kant writes in his hefty tome *The Critique of Pure Reason*, we perceive the world not as ‘it is in itself’ but as it appears to us. This doctrine of Transcendental Idealism asserts that human beings necessarily perceive objects as located in time and space. However, space and time do not exist as a part of the object because space and time provide only the ‘backdrop’ to the objects being perceived. In other words, objects exist *in* space and time, but space and time are not a part of an object as it is in itself.

A way of understanding this aspect of Kant’s theory is to imagine a theatre auditorium. The audience (of one) is the observer, the set on stage represents the objects being observed, and backstage is space and time wherein all the objects exist as they are in themselves and not as they appear to us. This way of expressing Kant’s theory is not to be confused with Plato’s cave. The objects on stage in this analogy don’t exist elsewhere (as they do for Plato); it is just that the observer is making sense of the atoms that come together to form an object against the backdrop of space and time.

Nowhere in his doctrine of Transcendental Idealism does Kant invoke divine intervention; yet, if I have understood correctly the assertions made in *Our Enigmatic Universe*, Batten is suggesting that it is a rational assumption that God is sitting backstage designing the set for all his observers. And, in Chapter Four, Batten does consider the arguments from intelligent design and concludes that they ‘can help show that it is not totally irrational to believe in God, but they fall short of being conclusive proof’ (p.74).

In his compact book, Batten tries to marry up the scientific and the philosophical with the religious dimension of our understanding of the universe. Whilst he delivers many complex philosophical, scientific and religious concepts in a succinct and digestible fashion, some of the subjects need further expansion in order for them to be joined in an enduring partnership.

Abi Rhodes