

"either you understand the science of Marxism as I do, accept it, and apply it, or else see me after class to discuss your learning disability."

Some American history books will "spare little ink on Communism, its nature, or its history in practice," warns Hewitt. Quite. Students may even encounter popular American history texts such as Marxist historian Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. (Zinn claims that his history text is written from the point of view of the Indians, the slaves, pacifists, and draftdodgers.)

The publishing of *First Principles* comes at a time when the American academy suffers from a number of harmful unintellectual diseases, especially in promoting the myth of "moral equivalence" that Professor Jeane Kirkpatrick has confronted in all its dangerous implications, and in promoting the idea "that it's all relative." If students equip themselves with Hewitt's handy manual and apply the wisdom therein, we might be able to begin again the discussion of how to reopen the minds of our future leaders. With Ms. Carter, it might be too late.

Les Csorba III, executive director of Accuracy in Academia, is executive editor of Campus Report.

Common Sense

by Steven Goldberg

Feminism and Freedom by Michael Levin, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Over in my philosophy department they used to shake their heads and smile. They didn't actually pat me on the head or anything; professors don't do that. But they did get a kick out of what they saw as my naiveté. "How sweet," they seemed to think, "that he could really believe that philosophy is, by its nature, impenetrable by the sort of idiocy that has penetrated sociology and anthropology."

Well, it made sense to me. In sociology, the irrelevance of fact is such that over three quarters (*well* over three quarters) of the introductory textbooks can claim, even after more than 50

years of Margaret Mead's vehemently denying she ever said any such thing, that Mead's Tchambuli reversed sex roles. But philosophy doesn't have empirical facts, and so, it seemed to me, any logical equivalent of the made-up fact would be so obviously false that derisive laughter would be philosophy's source of immunity.

It turns out it doesn't work that way. You wouldn't believe the nonsense that some men and women in philosophy, at least in the area of sex-role issues, now take seriously. Most of the nonsense is a sort of Dadaist entwining of confused argument and obsessive concern with bodily functions. It's a little easier to think that this stuff isn't actually taken seriously by the author (even if it is taken seriously by Harvard University Press), than to believe the author or anyone else could confuse it with serious thought. But whether one finds duplicity or stupidity more repugnant is a matter of taste, and ultimately irrelevant. Dumb is dumb.

A sentence created by a third-rate mind and devoid of any real meaning can *sound* meaningful, even profound, particularly if dressed up in splashy footnotes that misrepresent serious work and accurately present work even more ridiculous than that of the author. Rectifying the intellectual damage done by such a sentence requires a rigorous mind devoting pages to undoing the confusion and exposing the lack of content. *Whole books* of such sentences (see, for example, Catherine MacKinnon's *Feminism Unmodified*, 1987) dissuade those who lack the necessary rigor, endurance, or courage from responding. Until now, in philosophy, this seems to have meant everybody.

Finally, one of the few contemporary philosophers who possesses the necessary traits in sufficient quantities has responded to the thousands of papers and hundreds of books that would lead an outsider to think that philosophy is the silly studying the sillier. What is particularly admirable is that Michael Levin didn't need this. Already possessing a world-class reputation in abstruse areas of mathematical and other philosophies, Levin could have ignored the once-unimaginable depths of incompetence now exhibited by many of those who perform at philosophy conferences and conven-

tions. All the other smart ones did.

Levin calls his book *Feminism and Freedom*, a title that reflects his belief that feminist philosophy generates a world view and a set of policies discordant with the requirements of liberty. He effectively demolishes both feminism's assumptions and the arguments drawn from them. *Feminism and Freedom* deserves an audience far wider than its obvious constituency of conservatives and others for whom the issues of liberty and freedom are of central interest.

Levin's primary concern is that a combination of illogic and bullying can lead—and has led—to policies that are inefficient at best, disastrous at worst, and always unjust. He examines the myriad areas in which a feminist environmental model has denied the relevance of physiologically-rooted sex differences, and then coerced ignorant and/or cowardly politicians into supporting policies that would make sense only if the model were correct. By the time Levin has demonstrated the lack of common sense in arguments for comparable worth, military Rambettes, unisex educational policies, alteration of the language, redefinition of excellence in athletics, and a score of other denials of human experience, one wonders what leg their supporters are left standing on.

Consider, for example, the case of the women who wanted to be firemen. These women, like all potential fire fighters, were given a strength test. To any of you who have ever lifted a fire hose, to say nothing of a 200-pound man, such a test is obviously necessary, given the nature of the job.

The judge who heard the womens' suit (*Berkman v. NYFD*) did not think so. When faced with the fact that all 88 female applicants failed the test, the judge decided that here was discrimination at its most pernicious. (The fact that over half the males failed the test doesn't seem to have bothered His Honor too much.) Demonstrating the correctness of the truism that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," the judge concluded that the odds against this happening in the absence of a biasing factor are less than one in ten trillion.

"Bias" has two different meanings—one being "statistical skewing resulting from real differences" and the

other "invidious discrimination." Confusing them is crucial to the judge's argument. If it were true that men and women were equally strong, then the failure of 100 percent of the women would occur by chance only once every ten trillion sets of tests (on the average)—indicating that this particu-

lar test was probably discriminatory. But of course, as the more sharp-eyed among us have noticed, men and women are not equal in strength. With that as the given there is no argument.

In other cases Levin exposes fallacies both deeper and more subtle, and in every case he merely begins with

exposing the weakness of thought and then demonstrates how weak thought has become public policy. This is an excellent book that will endure.

Steven Goldberg is chairman of the Department of Sociology at City College in New York.

CORRESPONDENCE



Letter From Paris

by Curtis Cate

Twenty Years After the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

T.S. Eliot notwithstanding, April is almost certainly not the cruelest month. For the tens of millions of urban dwellers along the Eastern Seaboard who had to sweat it out this summer in conditions of infernal heat, as for the millions of others who watched despairingly as their wheat stems and cornstalks wilted across the parched plains of the Middle West, a more fitting candidate for the prize would surely be August—the torrid month which, already 2,000 years ago, was reducing Horace and his fellow Romans to a state of unair-conditioned limpness as they mopped their brows and cursed that baleful Dog-Star season—*atrox hora canicularae*—from which we Anglo-Saxons and Latins have inherited the word "canicular," and the Russians their word for holiday vacations, *kanikuli*.

There are, however, many other, less sun-blistered souls who have special reasons today for cursing the dog-starred month. I am thinking of the Czechs who, 20 years ago, watched with a numbed mixture of rage and disbelief as Soviet tanks rumbled into their capital, wiping the timid smile from that "socialism with a human face" on which they had set their

hopes, and who more recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of those grim August (1968) days by gathering by the thousands in Prague's Václavské náměstí—the long, rectangular square that bears the name of Bohemia's first Christian monarch (Yes, the Good King Wenceslaus of our Christmas carols)—chanting, "Freedom! Freedom! Freedom! . . . Russians, go home! . . . You have the dogs, we have the truth! . . ." and most insistently of all, "Dubček! Dubček! Dubček!"

It is probably difficult for Americans who limit their excursions abroad to Acapulco, the Caribbean, and the standard London-Amsterdam-Brussels-Paris-Rome circuit to get worked up over the continuing plight of the Czechs. Vienna—with its Prater, Ringstrasse, and pastry shops; Budapest—with its gypsy restaurants and surface veneer of prosperity; these have long been more tempting tourist attractions than Prague. Yet no one, I think, with the slightest ethnic sensibility can forget that first glimpse of the Malá Strana (literally, the "Small Side," because hemmed in between hill and river), rising up almost magically above Emperor Charles IV's towered bridge to the castle-crowned summit, from which, like an upraised sword, rises the single spire of Saint Vitus' Cathedral. It is a sight as unforgettable as that of the minarets and domes of the Sulimaniye and of Sultan

Ahmed's "Blue" Mosque rising softly from the waters of the Sea of Marmora as one approaches Istanbul by ship.

Emperor Charles IV (1316-1378), who made Prague the capital of the Holy Roman Empire long before the Habsburgs of Austria annexed that imperial title for themselves, was a partly Czech, French-educated polyglot, as well as the scion of a Germanic family from Luxembourg, and his ascendancy offers further proof of the extent to which Prague was and has always been a Central rather than an Eastern European city. The Germans, precisely because they belong to this particular middle ground, long ago coined a word for it: *Mittleuropa*—the European equivalent of our Middle West.

The Czech novelist Milan Kundera, in a memorable interview given to the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*, once took us all to task for talking so loosely about Eastern and Western Europe, as though they represented definite geographic entities. The continent, as we know well, is presently split down the middle from the Baltic to the mountains of Yugoslavia by an Iron Curtain erected by the Soviets; but, Kundera pointed out, precisely because we go on referring to the countries lying east of this curtain as part of *Eastern Europe*, we have unconsciously absorbed the Soviets' geopolitical viewpoint—which is that all lands lying east of the Elbe and the mountains of the Sude-