

**Allen W. Wood.** *The Free Development of Each: Studies on Freedom, Right, and Ethics in Classical German Philosophy.* Oxford University Press, 2014. 352 pp. \$65.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199685530).

*The Free Development of Each* consists of twelve chapters, most of which are revised versions of previously published essays. It is nevertheless useful to have these previously published essays assembled in a single collection and there are three entirely new essays. Most of the essays deal with specific themes found in the writings of Kant, Herder, Fichte, Hegel and Marx. The inclusion of Marx in this philosophical tradition—the phrase ‘the free development of each’ comes from *The Communist Manifesto*—is a welcome move in that it helps place Marx in his proper philosophical context and in so doing invites an engagement with the philosophical aspects of his writings at a time when neo-liberal triumphalism is increasingly being called into question by the development of modern capitalism itself.

Some of the essays involve close analysis of particular aspects of the ethical or political thought of one or more of the above-named philosophers. Among these essays I would include the one on Kant’s notion of moral worth and duty, the one on his conception of practical reason, the one on Fichte’s notion of the intersubjective I and the one on Hegel’s views on responsible moral agency. Other essays provide helpful overviews of a particular topic and may therefore serve as advanced general introductions to them. Among these essays I would include the one on Kant’s distinction between ethics and right, the one comparing Kant’s and Herder’s views on history, the one on Fichte’s notion of ‘absolute’ freedom, the one comparing Fichte’s and Hegel’s accounts of recognition, and the one on Marx’s view of equality. There are also two essays that deal with more general philosophical positions or concepts in such a way as to complement the other essays which focus on particular themes as addressed by the philosophers mentioned above: one essay in which Wood argues for the superiority of deontology in relation to consequentialism and one essay that seeks to analyze and to distinguish from each other the concepts of coercion, manipulation and exploitation. Although the book consists of independent essays on a broad range of themes, Wood wants to suggest that there is a thematic unity in that they all deal with the concept of freedom. Moreover, despite any disagreements concerning this concept, he wants to argue that the philosophers have much in common not only with respect to how they understand this concept but also with respect to what they have to say about some of its implications.

Wood identifies four basic aspects of this shared standpoint. First of all, there is a shared conception of practical reason as being based on the notion of a self-governing rational agent capable of subjecting itself to constraint simply in the light of moral principles that cannot be explained in terms of an instrumental form of rationality. Secondly, by identifying moral agency with self-constraint, this notion of freedom provides the resources for viewing the freedom of one person as no longer being in tension with the freedom of others. Rather, recognition of the value of freedom demands recognizing the freedom of others and constraining one’s own freedom in relation to theirs. Wood argues that in this way individually and community turn out not to be necessarily in tension with each other. Thirdly, since the notion of freedom in question makes possible ‘the mutual recognition of each person by every other as a free and equal person’ (8), it supports the idea of right as a condition of external freedom in which each person is free from having his or her choices constrained by the choices of others. Wood describes this freedom also as ‘the capacity of a rational human adult to govern his or her life, rather than having it subject to the will of someone else’ (274), and as non-

domination rather than non-interference' (294). Coercion is therefore justified in so far as it is exercised to guarantee such freedom for all. Finally, given the relation between coercion and freedom both at the level of moral agency as such and at the level of right, freedom and coercion can be viewed as not being necessarily opposed to each other even if in certain cases they clearly are so. Wood argues that state coercion in particular is justified because 'the greatest threat to rightful freedom is always the wealth and power of the privileged' (11).

The last claim relates to a noticeable feature of *The Free Development of Each*, namely, the rather frequent, impassioned attacks on the existing state of economic, social and political injustice that Wood thinks characterizes modern capitalist societies, especially the United States. Clearly, then, he views the notion of freedom and the development of its implications that he finds in the writings of Kant, Herder, Fichte, Hegel and Marx as a critical tool. This invites the question of just how critical this notion of freedom is. Although what Wood says about the notion of freedom that he endorses appears incompatible with libertarianism in virtue of the degree of state coercion that it licenses—Wood is, for example, keen to show that a condition of external freedom in which each person is free from having his or her choices constrained by the choices of others requires acts of redistribution on the part of the state—it is less obviously incompatible with liberalism as such. Welfare liberals, for example, could regard such state coercion as justified even if they do not view constraint as constitutive of freedom in the way that Wood appears to do. Wood could be seen, then, as someone who wants to maintain the liberal aspects of the notion of freedom that he endorses while disassociating it from capitalism. Wood appears to be committed to the abolition of capitalism as opposed to reform of it by his claim that capitalist labour 'always has been, and always will be, an essentially unfree form of labor' (311), since this claim implies that capitalist relations of production are by their very nature incompatible with this notion of freedom. Yet Wood's keenness to stress the radical implications of the notion of freedom which he finds in a philosophical tradition that begins with Kant and extends to Marx is not without its problems.

Mutual recognition in the legal form of right may well require regarding others as having the same status as oneself. Yet it does not self-evidently entail a direct concern with the freedom of others or such measures as abolition of private property, at least in so as the means of production are concerned. Therefore, when Wood gives the heading 'Kantian Right is Sooner Socialist than Libertarian' to one of the sections of his essay on Kant's views on the independence of right from ethics, one may wonder just what he means by the term 'socialism' given that Kant nowhere argues explicitly for the abolition of private property. Moreover, socialism might be thought to require a sense of community that transcends the one that would characterize a purely legal form of community. In relation to the last point the problem is not simply that any endorsement of the independence of right from ethics makes it difficult to see how this sense of community could be generated because a community based on legal rights could after all favour the development of a form of consciousness in which one views others simply as limits to one's freedom even if one recognizes that the limits in question are set by the equal legal rights of others. Rather, Wood goes so far as to characterize the communist society envisaged by Marx as a society in which goods would be distributed according to need without any considerations of desert as one in which human behaviour is motivated as much by egoism as by altruism. Yet it is by no means clear that egoistic individuals would be willing to allow what they had produced to be distributed to others without receiving anything of comparable value in return. My point here is not that Wood is wrong to think that Marx envisages communist society as one in which one individual has an interest in satisfying

the needs of others in that he or she thereby experiences the fulfilment of one of his or her own fundamental needs. The point is rather that such an individual would have a direct concern for others and that it would therefore make little sense to describe such a need and any actions motivated by it as egoistic.

The problematic nature of Wood's use of such terms as 'socialism' and 'egoistic' in the contexts in which he employs them might be explained in terms of a wish on his part to reconcile his commitment to certain liberal ideals with his hostility to capitalist society. Yet one may argue that these two things cannot so easily be reconciled, since it could be that the abolition of capitalism would require - at least until the form of consciousness and disposition required by socialism and even more by communist society had been fostered in individuals—a use of coercion that was in the case of parts of society incompatible with the possibility of an external freedom that consists in one's choices being free from the choices of others. Marx clearly recognized such a possibility when in *The Communist Manifesto* he speaks of the proletariat as a ruling class that will have to make 'despotic incursions into the rights of private property and into bourgeois relations of production' when describing what will have to take place before the free development of each which is the condition of the free development of all becomes possible (Marx, K. *Later Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1996). Wood might here respond that the coercion exercised in such cases would not amount to a violation of the choices of others in that they would be made to choose what they ought to choose as rational agents. Here, perhaps, the fact that the book is a collection of individual essays in which the connection between ethics and politics receives specific attention in only one essay, the one on Kant's views on the moral politician, prevents Wood from presenting the argument he wishes to make as clearly as he might otherwise have done. Taken together these essays nevertheless constitute an impressive attempt to defend a certain notion of freedom and to explore in depth some of its main implications, if not all of them.

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