SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

On the Sociology of Intellectuals

Louis PINTO

The sociology of intellectuals is in a position to perform part of the critical functions traditionally claimed by this group of professionals. After demonstrating the validity of this assertion, the author makes an analysis of the main tools prevailing in this area of sociology. The work of Pierre Bourdieu and other social scientists influenced by the work of the latter receives a distinct attention in so far as it successfully integrates two types of description : 1/ the description of the properties of intellectual production as they arise from the autonomous « field » in which intellectual production originates, and 2/ the description of the whole social functions performed by intellectual production. Finally, after presenting a few illustrations of such work, the author considers some of the theoretical presuppositions contained in the very project of an objective knowledge of intellectuals.

Philosophical Anthropology : A Legacy of Humanist Metaphysics for the Humanities.

Jean-Marc FERRY

Nature, Freedom, Mind are the three paradigms with which the philosophical tradition of German Idealism attempted to conceive universal history as the implementation in the world of the values of reason. These metaphysical paradigms can be made scientifically productive in the field of the humanities, beyond the sole context of the various philosophies of history. However, this kind of utilization would require the mediation of philosophical anthropologies as sketched in Fichte's early works and, even more so, in Hegel's early works. In these works, new anthropological paradigms allow metaphysical ones to become relevant as they unmask the latter's hypostases. This process gives access to basic concepts of

activities capable of providing the humanities with their foundations : instrumentation, interaction, and representation are such concepts of organized activities. Specifying the dynamic connections of these activities would help understand the evolution of society, and a study of their logical relationships would help systematically define established forms of life in the fields of economy, politics, culture.

The Philosophical Dimension of Catastrophe Theory

Alain BOUTOT

Catastrophe theory has been sharply criticized because it has no practical applications and does not allow us to increase our power upon nature. This essay would like to « rehabilitate » this theory by reviewing this controversy raised by scientists about its practical efficiency. It points out that catastrophe theory has not to be judged by its practical results, which are in fact limited, but by its epistemological and philosophical implications. This theory represents indeed a real revolution in sciences : it announces the emergence of a more theoretical and less practical science, more concerned with understanding reality than with acting on it, and, from that point of view, breaks with the contemporary scientific tradition, inherited from the XVIIth century.

The Scottish Enlightenment and the Origins of Social Anthropology

Michel FAURE

This article examines the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers' contribution to what would now be described as the origins of social anthropology.

Emphasizing the initial impetus given by Lord Kames (1696-1782) and David Hume (1711-1777), it focuses mainly on the works of Adam Smith (1723-1790), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), William Robertson (1721-1793), and John Millar (1735-1801), whose methods and sources it assesses.

Through all these works it traces a common interest in the diversity of social cultures, and it identifies a common urge towards a universalizing « natural history of mankind », or a study of social man, upheld by impartial and tolerant views, and based on methods inherited from experimental science.