EDITORIAL

A hundred issues have blossomed!

Radical Philosophy has become one hundred in the year 2000, mimicking the Christian millennium with a numerological accident of its own. Arbitrary as such anniversaries are, it nonetheless provides an occasion to reflect upon some of the changes in the context of the journal over the last three decades.

RP is the only one of the string of self-published collective journals founded in Britain in the early 1970s to remain independent from corporate publishing while retaining a commitment to a readership uninhibited by disciplinary boundaries. Yet despite this continuity, it has, inevitably, undergone a series of changes as the space in which it operates – between the academy and a broader literary-political sphere – has contracted, squeezed on either side by the developments of the late 1980s and 90s. Intellectual publishing in Britain has altered almost beyond recognition during the last ten years.

When the founding statement of the Radical Philosophy Group (1972) set as its main aim 'to free ourselves from the restricting institutions and orthodoxies of the academic world', who could have predicted just how much more restrictive those institutions and orthodoxies would subsequently become, albeit in new ways? When it set out 'to question … above all, the divisions which have isolated the universities and other educational institutions from the wider society', there was no inkling of the collapse of the political culture upon which effective questioning of this kind depends. And when it sought 'to encourage and develop positive alternatives' to the poverty of so much that then 'passed for philosophy', there was as yet no indication of how accommodating philosophy in Britain would turn out to be, to small portions of phenomenology, existentialism and Hegelianism, taken on the side to pep up the curriculum, or analytically reconstructed to suit the national palate – the chicken tikka masala of current philosophical life. Marxism was (and remains) another matter; its much-touted but seldom convincing 'analytical' makeover notwithstanding. But Marxism has troubles of its own.

If the principal vices of professional philosophy in Britain in the 1960s were the trivial character of its problems, gratuitous formalization, and a social and political complacency and aloofness characteristic of its heartland, the Oxford colleges, these vices have largely been abated; yet without any transformation of the discipline comparable to those which overwhelmed other areas of the humanities during the 1980s. For all the changes, institutionally, philosophy remains the most traditional and least reformed discipline in the humanities; not least with regard to race and gender.

However, as a product of the student movement, with its intermingling of a libertarian political tradition and a Marxist theoretical culture, *Radical Philosophy* was always about more than the reformation of philosophy as a discipline. It is with the contribution of philosophical thought to left intellectual culture, and the maintenance of that culture as a critical and irreverent space, that the journal has become increasingly preoccupied – wherever such thought originates. As a result, the range of topics and contributors continues to expand, while the turn to photographic imagery has made its visual quality one of its most distinctive and intriguing features. Thought is not borne by words alone.

Intellectual journals are creatures of their time – or should be; they must keep moving or wither. The resounding call to Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom! with which the founding statement ended strikes a different note today. A hundred issues have blossomed. We would like to thank the growing ranks of our contributors and readers over the many years for keeping the project alive. At a time in which collective spaces and practices of every kind are under assault by new managerialisms of state and corporation alike, the task has become harder, the terrain less hospitable, but the journal is all the more precious for that.

Peter Osborne