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THE ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

OF MARXISM

by

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NOTE ON SOURCES AND
TRANSLATIONS

Karl Marx is still best known for the political and economic writings of his maturity, published in his own life-time and widely disseminated in English translations. An examination of his ethical views, however, must take in his earlier, more philosophical, writings and the notes and drafts not meant for publication as they stood which he habitually made throughout his life. It is here that we shall find the key to his ethical views and their place in his mature beliefs. The study that follows therefore draws heavily on Marx's writings preceding the publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848 (collected in the Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe, 1927f.) and on the notes and drafts he made between 1850 and 1859 (published in Moscow in 1939 and 1941 and republished by the Dietz Verlag, Berlin, in 1953 under the title Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie). The major portion of these writings has not been translated into English; the translation of those that have is not always satisfactory.

Early translators, especially, tended to read the later Marx back into the earlier Marx and Marx the Communist economist into Marx the neo-Hegelian philosopher. Thus one widely-used translation of portions of the German Ideology rendered Marx's use of bürgerliche Gesellschaft in the very important sense of "civil society" as "bourgeois society" and had Marx writing that "bourgeois society does not begin with the bourgeoisie". A later translation of the German Ideology by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow, and their rendering of the Economico-philosophical (Paris) Manuscripts which appeared when this work was nearing completion, are more satisfactory. Even all the translations taken together, however, do not cover enough of the ground to enable a reader who knows only English to form a first-hand judgment of Marx's intellectual development or of the ethical foundations from which he worked. I have therefore devoted greater space than would otherwise be necessary to the presentation of relevant passages from Marx's, mostly untranslated, work. These, like the citations from Russian writers, are mainly translated by myself. In general, all translations in this study are my own unless otherwise indicated. Citations

are followed by a source: where the source is a German or Russian text, the translation is my own; where the first source is an English text, the translation is that of the text. Where two sources are given, the second is for comparative purposes only. In the case of Marx's later political writings and Engels' more popular polemical writings, satisfactory English translations are widely available; I have seen no point in substituting my own translations for the mere sake of originality.

Accuracy in the difficult task of translating Marx's more philosophic writings is extremely important to a sound understanding of his views. His constructions are involved; his language is studded with philosophical terms; his sentences are often ungrammatical. He plays with words and makes deliberate use of their overtones or their ambiguity. He sets out a sequence and then fails to follow it; he poses questions and leaves them unanswered. I have not thought it illuminating or right to "tidy up" Marx's writing, to turn a clumsy, Hegelian German into elegant empirical English, shorn of vagueness, metaphysics or ambiguity. To do that would be to present as Marx a man who is not Marx.

Presenting the metaphysical side of Marx faithfully and convincingly in English is not easy. Words like "essence", "true reality", "actuality" and "objectification" do not sit ~~readily~~ readily on an English tongue. Those raised in the tradition of German culture will read their German counterparts without stopping to ask what they mean. Most Englishmen, faced with them in English, will not. To translate Hegel into English, it has been said, is to rob him of much of his plausibility. The same is often true of the early Marx. But to shear Marx of his metaphysics is to misunderstand and misrepresent him. I have striven not to do so.

Certain key philosophical terms - such as Wesen, Vergegenständlichung, Aufhebung, Entäusserung and Entfremdung - recur repeatedly. Their rough meanings are "essence", "objectification", "supercession", "alienation" and "estrangement". All of them, of course, are words which have a simpler meaning in ordinary German speech and a far more intricate meaning in philosophical contexts. Marx sometimes uses them in their popular sense (very rarely); more frequently he is emphasising one or other of their overtones in a philosophical context. I have therefore thought

it pointless - indeed wrong - to render each of these words by a single English counterpart whenever it appears and have chosen instead the word or expression that brings out the meaning in the particular context in question. The following notes on four key words may help to bring out the difficulties faced by the translator and why I have adopted the procedure mentioned:

Wesen is one of the ordinary German words for "being", e.g. menschliches Wesen = human being. It usually carries with it, however, the suggestion of "essence" or "essential being" as contrasted with Dasein or mere empirical existence. Wesen also often appears in compounds to indicate an aggregate: Postwesen = the post office; Zeitungs-wesen = the Press. Hegel combines the notion of essence with that of an aggregate in his conception that the Wesen of an institution is, as it were, its corporate soul - the relations that bind it to others of the same kind, or to its members. Where Marx is using the word philosophically, I have generally thought the emphasis on the essential, as opposed to the empirical and contingent, the most important. Accordingly I have tended to translate the word as "essence" or "essential being". What Marx made of such an essence will appear in the text.

Aufhebung has two opposed meanings in popular speech; it can mean to "abolish" or to "preserve". Hegel used the word, precisely for this reason, to describe the process in dialectical development by which a higher logical category or form of nature or spirit abolishes or annuls a lower form and yet preserves its content or truth. There is no English word capable of rendering this dual content, though some translators of Hegel have used the word "sublate". Where

the Hegelian sense is dominant I have tended to use "supercession"; occasionally I have used the verb "to transcend". In some contexts "dissolution" or "abolition" has seemed to me more apt.

Entäusserung and Entfremdung often occur together in Marx as virtual synonyms. The former is "alienation" (in popular uses "renunciation"), the latter is normally rendered "estrangement". In Hegel the two words are kept distinct and signify different stages of estrangement; I can find no suggestion in Marx of any theory of stages with which he associates the words and thus distinguishes them. I have therefore tended to use "alienation" or "estrangement" together or separately, without suggesting any difference in meaning between them. The root verb and prefix from which Entäusserung is formed, however, also suggest the idea of "externalisation" in a way in which Entfremdung does not; in some passages I have thought that Marx relies on this suggestion and I have therefore added "externalisation".

In the text below, I have used both single and double inverted commas. The double commas indicate direct quotation; single commas denote my reservations about the term used, or the fact that it is used as representing a view not quoted directly.

CITATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

All works cited are collected in a bibliography at p.407f. Page numbers refer to the edition given in the bibliography. Where Roman numerals precede the Arabic, they refer to volume numbers.

I have also used the following abbreviations for works cited frequently:

- AD - Engels: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring), trans. by E. Burns.
- C - Marx: Capital, Book I, transl. by Eden and Cedar Paul.
- CPE - Marx: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, trans. by I.N. Stone.
- CWF - Marx: The Civil War in France, published as volume 5 of the Marxist-Leninist Library by Lawrence and Wishart.
- EPM - Marx: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, trans. by Martin Milligan.
- GI - Marx and Engels: The German Ideology, Parts I & III, ed. R. Pascal.
- HF - Marx and Engels: The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique, trans. by R. Dixon.
- HM - Emile Burns (ed.): The Handbook of Marxism.
- K - Marx: Das Kapital, vols. I-III.
- M - Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe. Large Roman numerals refer to the section, the Arabic numerals that follow refer to the volume within the relevant section and the final Arabic numerals are page numbers. Volume I of section I is divided into two sub-volumes indicated by small Roman numerals, e.g. M I, 1-ii, 435 * page 435 of Section I volume 1 sub-volume ii.
- M-E Soch. - Marx-Engels: Sochineniya (Russian edition of 1939f.).

- PP - Marx: The Poverty of Philosophy,
English trans. by the Foreign
Languages Publishing House,
Moscow.
- SC - Marx-Engels: Correspondence 1843-1895,
ed. by Dona Torr.
- SW - Marx-Engels: Selected Works, two vols.,
Foreign Languages Publishing
House, Moscow, 1951.