THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

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Alan L. Seltzer

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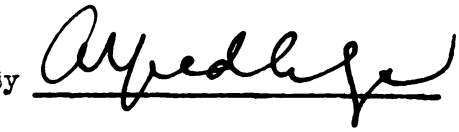
AN ABSTRACT

Approved By 

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This thesis investigates the philosophy of leadership in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marxism can be properly termed a political philosophy because it tried to arrive at genuine knowledge of how man ought to live on the basis of its conception of human nature. It asserted that capitalism made man unable to live that way because it had stunted his potentialities for intellectual development and leadership. Capitalism's requirement that surplus value be maximized led to a division of labor that provided no possibility for workers to exercise their intellectual potentialities either on the job or in their free time. Members of the ruling class were also stunted, according to the Marxist theory of ideology, in that their intellectual development stopped at the notion that existing material relationships were universally valid.

The Marxist doctrine of working class consciousness changed during Marx and Engels' lifetime. In its most mature version it suggested not only that the workers must attain full theoretical understanding of society before the revolution could occur, but also that they were capable of doing so. After the revolution and the subsequent abolition of classes, leadership, according to Marx, would be analagous to the role of conductor of a symphony orchestra. There would be no difference between individual interests and the common interest. Both Marx and Engels discussed human inequalities. How-

ever, Marx ignored the possibility of unequal human capacities for rationality in positing democratic processes to select leaders. Engels went further, in suggesting that all men would take part in community affairs. Marxism suggested that these would involve technical matters of economic administration only and Engels implied that competence for these functions would be achieved by all.

Marxism's philosophy of leadership can be sharply contrasted with that of classical political philosophy despite an appearance of certain striking similarities. However, the contrast is not so sharp as to avoid distortion if Marx and Engels are termed Machiavellians as they have been by certain classical scholars. While Machiavelli's philosophy dismissed morality as conventional, Marxism had clearly expressed moral concepts for men under Communism that were held not to be conventional. Marxism is best criticized by trying to show that its philosophy of human nature and leadership is based on faulty premises.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND MARXISM

The themes of differences in natural talent, in ability to rule, in intelligence, are recurrent ones in social thought. So important were these differences to the classical political philosophers that they envisioned the best regime as the absolute rule of the wise. Rousseau's social contract society included the concept of the legislator who, standing outside of the society as a wise advisor, drew up the laws. In the United States we have the notions of representative democracy and universal suffrage, resting on the belief that the voter is rational enough to choose his representatives. In the Soviet Union the Communist Party is defined as the conscious vanguard of the working people, consisting of the latter's "finest elements" and therefore best able to provide leadership in the society, so that the dictatorship of the proletariat becomes in essence, "the dictatorship of its vanguard, the dictatorship of its Party."[1]

The ideological struggle of our day is at least partly expressed through opposing theories of leadership. Further removed from the practical political world, political philosophies ever since classical antiquity have found it necessary to reconcile in some fashion the requirements for wisdom and for consent.

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[1] Stalin, The Foundations of Leninism and On The Problems of Leninism, (combined, 1 vol.) Moscow, 1950, Foreign Languages Publishing House, pp. 149, 198.

In Chapters II through IV we shall investigate the Marxist position with respect to the capacities of different individuals to exercise leadership. We shall examine the question of working class consciousness, and the ideas of Marx and Engels about the intellectual gifts of the laboring man. We shall try to demonstrate that while Marxism[1] suggested that the proletarian's intellectual faculties suffered retarded development in capitalist society, it also suggested that people were unequally endowed with the skills and intelligence required to exercise leadership. We shall try to learn what kind of leadership was envisioned by Marx and Engels in their scattered remarks about the future Communist society. In Chapter V we shall make some summary remarks that compare, generally, the Marxist position with that of classical political philosophy.

In the present chapter the author shall indicate his understanding of what is meant by a political philosophy and shall try to show in detail that Marxism can be described as one.

As used in this thesis, the term political philosophy shall mean the effort to arrive at genuine knowledge of how man ought to live. This begins with the attempt to understand the nature of man, i.e. to appreciate what human behavior is like and what is involved in the notion of human needs, in all of the complexity that this study involves. It is the author's position that it is a legitimate undertaking to proceed from the study of human behavior to the

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[1] For the purposes of this thesis the term Marxism shall be the shorthand method of denoting, "the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels."

discussion of how man ought to live. In my view, this effort does not simply dissolve into personal biases, value judgments or opinions. Instead, it would appear that genuine knowledge in this area is possible when based on scientifically obtained information about man and society.

The social sciences are indispensable to a philosophical discussion. The scientific method of hypothetical deductive observation is necessary if we would describe man's world accurately and logically.[1] The set of descriptive statements that compose scientific method are systematically related in the precise sense of being elements of a theory that is able to explain and predict events by means of a logical procedure. A scientific theory begins with general statements that whenever and wherever conditions of a type, A, occur, then conditions of a type, E, will obtain.[2] A scientific explanation of an event, E, will refer to its causes, A, in such a way that our general statements of the relationship between A and E enable us to account for E by the use of the laws of logic.[3]

While science's hypothetical deductive observational method can

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[1] This already has an implication for a philosophical discussion. The requirement that no statement take on a sacred quality -- that all statements are corrigible and continually susceptible to test -- provides immediate suggestions to political philosophers about the kind of ethical code that would be necessary in a good society.

[2] But frequently it becomes necessary to add a probability statement, e.g. "conditions of a type, E, will obtain with a probability of 70%."

[3] Whenever A, then E. Yesterday A. Therefore (logically) yesterday E.

tell us what human behavior is like, it is not so conceived as to be able to deduce from the knowledge it provides, ideas about how man ought to live. Nevertheless, that philosophical quest is nearly universal to human beings. Thus understood, political philosophy is synonymous with the idea of natural right becasue it makes the effort to know what is good or right for man from an understanding of human nature.

Marxism can be described as a political philosophy because it not only discussed what is, but also what ought to be. It is one approach to the problem of natural right because it deduced from its understanding of human nature the outline of the way men ought to live. To understand its approach it is useful to provide a brief sketch of the two natural right philosophies that dominated political thought prior to Marxism. These were the classical position, Socratic-Platonic or Aristotelian, and in sharp contrast, the modern natural right teaching that originated with Hobbes and was later modified by Locke and Rosseau.

The political thought of the latter group began with a concept of man derived from Machiavelli's approach to politics, namely, that men were selfish by nature and had to be compelled to be social. They could be so compelled because of the malleability of human nature; the passion for glory could induce princes to compel other men to live socially and therefore to begin to behave according to moral conceptions. But Machiavelli taught that this morality was derived from a concern with what was good for a given principality; morality was defined in terms of the common good rather than the common good being

defined in terms of morality. That is what we mean when we say that he taught that all morality was conventional. Hobbes' concern was to mitigate this teaching by introducing the notion of the state of nature which was held to be man's natural state, making his nature non-social or selfish. Natural right involved making it possible for man to fulfill his selfish urges, particularly the need for self-preservation. Governments were established to protect men from violent death. Consequently, Hobbes' teaching does not posit the state of nature as perfect. It was Rousseau who believed that man was perfect in the state of nature and whose political philosophy included the idea of a society that would approximate as closely as possible man's natural and non-social state. Rousseau believed that free men, having realized that the state of nature contained obstacles that were too great to overcome and that the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence, voluntarily put themselves into the hands of the general will, an association "which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before."[1]

Long before this conception of man's natural freedom and therefore natural right, classical political philosophy had an understanding of man that spoke not of his rights but of his duties, not of the origins of man but of his potentialities. "What each thing is when

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[1] Social Contract, Book I, Chapter 6.

fully developed, we call its nature," said Aristotle.[1] The individual, if by accident he were to be found in isolation, would be like a beast because he would have no opportunity to develop human virtues. Hence man is by nature social:

> He is so constituted that he cannot live, or live well, except by living with others; since it is reason or speech that distinguishes him from the other animals, and speech is communication, man is social in a more radical sense than any other social animal: humanity itself is sociality. Man refers himself to others, or rather he is referred to others, in every human act, regardless of whether that act is "social" or "anti-social." His sociality does not proceed, then, from a calculation of the pleasures which he expects from association, but he derives pleasure from association because he is by nature social. Love, affection, friendship, pity, are as natural to him as concern with his own good. It is man's natural sociality that is the basis of natural right in the narrow or strict sense of right. Because man is by nature social, the perfection of his nature includes the social virtue par excellence, justice; justice and right are natural. [2]

Classical political philosophy recognized that most men were motivated to a considerable degree by selfish, material interests, but conceived of the full development of virtue as most appropriate to man's potentialities as a social being.

Marxism was a departure from both of the approaches to natural right that have been described. It contained a teleological conception of human nature because it discussed the full development of man's potentialities and posited a social organization that would make possible that sort of human development. But unlike Aristotle,

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[1] Politics, 1252b.

[2] Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History, Chicago, 1953, University of Chicago Press, p. 129.

whose teleology asserted that these potentialities could be actualized in a few men who had become habituated to a life according to principles of justice, Marxism suggested that they could be actualized in all men as the culmination of a historical process. Let us now go into more detail and examine, step by step, the philosophical presuppositions that have just been indicated.

In one of the early manuscripts after Marx adopted the materialist approach, he declared that "the individual is the social being." He could not conceive of real man, i.e. man truly living according to his nature, without conceiving of his sociality. Even when man engaged in activity which could seldom be performed "in direct community with others" he was social because he "was active as a man:"

> Not only is the material of my own activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being. [1]

Marx and Engels asserted that "only in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible."[2] That is:

> ...the senses of the social man are other senses than those of the non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness

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[1] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (hereinafter referred to as Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts), Moscow, 1959, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 104, emphasis in original.

[2] Marx and Engels, The German Ideology (Parts I and III), New York, 1947, International Publishers, p. 74.

> of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form -- in short, senses capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of man) either cultivated or brought into being. [1]

Although the Marxist understanding of man suggested that he could not fulfill all of his potentialities except as a social being, Marx and Engels also declared that he could become a social being only as the result of the history of material development. Their theory of historical materialism made use of the notion of a state of nature in which man was non-social and akin to the beasts or to the lowest savages.[2] It was the historical process that gave rise to fully developed men, to men as social animals. According to Engels:

> The normal existence of animals is given by the conditions in which they live and to which they adapt themselves -- those of man, as soon as he differentiates himself from the animal in the narrower sense, have as yet never been present, and are only to be elaborated by the ensuing historical development. Man is the sole animal capable of working his way out of the merely animal state -- his normal state is one appropriate to his consciousness, one to be created by himself.[3]

It was only with society that we mark "the appearance of fully-fledged man."[4] Once men began to live in society they became capable of achieving higher and higher aims but heretofore each such victory had taken its revenge on us because of "unforseen effects which only too

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[1] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 108, emphasis in original.

[2] Engels, Dialectics of Nature, New York, 1940, International Publishers, Chapter 9.

[3] Ibid, p. 187, emphasis in original.

[4] Ibid, p. 285.

often cancel the first."[1] Engels added that, "The first men who separated themselves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in civilization was a step towards freedom."[2] Finally, after a whole prehistory of economic development ending with conscious organization of social production on a planned basis,

> man finally cuts himself off from the animal world, leaves the conditions of animal existence behind him and enters conditions which are really human...It is only from this point that men, with full consciousness, will fashion their own history....It is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 285, 292.

[2] Engels, Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science, (hereinafter referred to as Anti-Dühring), London, 1934, Lawrence and Wishhart Ltd., p. 129.

[3] Ibid., pp. 311-312. This passage and others like it, some of which are cited herein, suggests that Vernon Venable misinterpreted Marxism in asserting that Marx and Engels viewed human nature solely as a process of continuous change. While Marxist historical materialism stressed steady change in human behavior, it also indicated that history was moving toward a time when man would no longer be troubled by the economic problem -- thus, a time when the full potentialities of human nature could assert themselves. This thesis cannot hope to achieve the breadth of scholarship represented by Venable's Human Nature: The Marxian View (New York, 1946, Alfred A. Knopf Inc.). Nevertheless, it would appear generally that the notion of human nature becomes meaningless if it is made simply synonymous with human behavior. Marxism did not so identify the two concepts because it did not deduce Communist man scientifically, but indicated in concrete, normative terms what it would mean to be truly human and subsequently tried to ground this normative understanding in a scientific prediction. In the following passage (p. 26) Venable might be reading into Marxism his own interpretation:

> When we find Marx and Engels speaking of "truly," "genuinely" and "really" human, we will be concerned with different interests and different linguistic intentions. Here their usage is primarily normative and directive, functioning on the one hand in support of their "humanist" ethics,

> and on the other, as an expression of the practical or "productive" principle which enters into their theory of human knowledge....But in no case should their "ethical" references to the human, be understood as intended to qualify either their behaviorism or their rejection of absolute essences. Their interest, after all, was in directing the change that occurs in men into desirable channels. They employ concepts of the "genuinely human" to this end, to inspire men not to some abstract or absolute ideal, but merely to a fuller realization of those capacities which, since they see man actually possessing them in present historical time, they feel able to incorporate as elements, among others, in his substantive definition.

The author of this thesis finds the interpretation of the Marxist view of human nature presented by Solomon Frank Bloom in the introductory pages of The World of Nations (New York, 1940, Columbia University Press) to be much more cogent. Viz:

> A theory of human nature is implicit in every social philosophy. Anyone who thinks about society at all is bound to consider the character of its ultimate unit -- man himself. The social philosopher must form a conception of human potentialities and limitations. He must distinguish between the inherent and the transitory traits of man. Men obviously have a good deal in common, but they have always belonged to groups set apart from each other by all sorts of distinctions. The philosopher must determine with some precision in what sense mankind may be regarded as a homogeneous mass and in what respects it may be treated as the sum of many heterogeneous parts. He must assay the significance and incidence of the traits that bind and the traits that divide men.
>
> This is especially true of a thinker like Karl Marx, who not only propounded a social theory but strove to be effective in the practical world as well. He sought to influence and guide widely variegated groups -- more particularly the lower classes of many countries -- toward a uniform solution of their economic problems. Marx was aware that the socialist idea must be tested by its implied judgment of human nature. He frequently stopped to reflect on man, and these reflections, though he never elaborated them systematically, formed an integral part of his picture of the world.
>
> At first glance his view of humanity seems quite paradoxical. He once asserted that history was "nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature," suggesting that one could not speak of human nature as such. Yet he also discussed "human nature in general"...and described its fundamental characteristics. His conception of man was the touchstone of some important social and

But before this took place, man's degradation became extreme in capitalist society. Marx and Engels characterized the existing society as one which reduced the worker "to the mere fragment of a man."[1] Man was alienated; he was estranged from his real self because his labor was unrelated to his essential being. When he worked, man denied himself, felt unhappy, mortified his body and ruined his mind. He could not affirm himself, feel content or develop freely his physical and mental energy. His labor was therefore forced labor, rather than the satisfaction of a need. "It is

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historical conclusions. A note on Das Kapital yields the key to this apparent contradiction. Marx was condemning Jeremy Bentham for the error of "excogitating" the nature of man from a general principle, in this case the principle of utility. He went on to remark that he who would pass judgment on the human scene must "first become acquainted with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified historically in every age." If this proposition applied to Marx as well as to Bentham...then Marx drew here a crucial distinction. He separated the characteristics of human nature into two categories, which we may take the liberty of naming "generic" and "historical." ....The creature that exercises will and control and has definite potentialities is "generic" man. The plastic constituents which change with the environment, and hence with human activities, are the stuff of which "historical" man is made. It is "historical" and not "generic" man who is subject to "continuous transformation."....

The concept of "generic" humanity as one and invariant enabled him to justify his social theory in terms of a set of traits belonging to a homogeneous mass. He could condemn as backward societies which frustrated the noblest traits and potentialities of "generic" man, and could vindicate socialist society by showing how it would realize and fulfill them. The complementary concept of "historical" human nature as plural and changeable made it possible to explain the actual variety of traits in different ages and places.

[1] Anti-Dühring, p. 324.

merely a means to satisfy needs external to it."[1] Labor, which was the only connection linking the majority of individuals with the productive forces and their own existence, had "lost all semblance of self-activity" and came to sustain life by stunting it."[2] In capitalist society man did not express his social nature. In a sense, he was made non-social:

> Hundreds of thousands of men and women drawn from all classes and ranks of society pack the streets of London. Are they not all human beings with the same innate characteristics and potentialities? Are they not all equally interested in the pursuit of happiness? And do they not all aim at happiness by following similar methods? Yet they rush past each other as if they had nothing in common...The more that Londoners are packed into a tiny space, the more repulsive and disgraceful becomes the brutal indifference with which they ignore their neighbors and selfishly concentrate upon their private affairs. We know well enough that this isolation of the individual -- this narrow-minded egotism -- is everywhere the fundamental principle of modern society. But nowhere is this selfish egotism so blatantly evident as in the frantic bustle of the great city. The disintegration of society into individuals, each guided by his private principles and each pursuing his own aims has been pushed to its furthest limits in London. Here indeed human society has been split into its component atoms.[3]

All victories had brought their unforseen effects, but now, Marx added, society had established the pre-conditions for solving "the riddle of history." For "Communism as the positive transcendence of private property" represented "the real appropriation of the

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[1] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 72.

[2] The German Ideology, p. 66.

[3] Engels, Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844, New York, 1958, The Macmillan Co., (hereinafter referred to as Conditions...), p. 31.

human essence by and for man." Communism was therefore,

> the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being....This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man.[1]

At this stage self-activity would coincide with material life, "which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off of all natural limitations."[2]

We can now see that Marxism was philosophic insofar as it stated preferences about the characteristics of man that ought to dominate human relations. Its philosophy of human nature led to a teleological understanding of how man ought to live. But Marxism, as science, became the most optimistic of philosophies because Marx and Engels believed that the theory of historical materialism demonstrated scientifically that man would one day live as their understanding of human nature had led them to believe he ought to live. Only then would the pre-history of mankind cease and real human history emerge. While other great philosophical systems, the Socratic-Platonic for example, spoke of the improbability of actualizing their answers to the problem of the good society,[3] historical materialism is characterized by optimism in that it predicted that

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[1] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 102, emphasis in original.

[2] The German Ideology, pp. 67-68.

[3] Cf. Plato, Republic, 473, and Strauss, Natural Right and History, pp. 138-140.

following an inevitable social revolution man would begin to express his potentialities as a human being.[1]

The early Marx, taking on Hegelian terminology but giving it new content, applied the term philosophy to his own efforts. He envisioned philosophy not as an end in itself but as a means. Just as the criticism of religion ended with the realization that "man is the highest essence for man, hence with the categoric imperative to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence,"[2] so did the criticism of philosophy and with the realization that while "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways the point...is to change it."[3] The task of philosophy was to "unmask self-alienation" and the goal of politics was to make philosophy a reality by going beyond it. Philosophy, thought of as a means, became the spiritual weapon of the proletariat in heralding the emancipation of man by proclaiming "man to be the highest essence of man." Philosophy was to be abolished, but only because it was to be made a reality.[4]

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[1] Cf. Marx, "Speech at the Anniversary of the People's Paper," in Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol. II, New York, undated, International Publishers, pp. 427-429.

[2] "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction," in Marx and Engels, On Religion, Moscow, 1957, Foreign Languages Publishing House, pp. 44, 50.

[3] Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, No. 11, appendix to The German Ideology, p. 199, emphasis in original.

[4] "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction," op. cit., pp. 42, 48-50, 57-58.

In the ensuing chapters we shall be concerned with that portion of Marx and Engels' philosophical remarks about the Communist society of the future that dealt with intelligence and leadership. In this connection, Marxism focused on the potentialities of the working man that were stunted by capitalist society. It not only expressed a preference that these capacities ought to emerge, but also predicted that inevitably they would emerge. Consequently Marxism declared that some men who did not fill positions of leadership in capitalist society had a capacity to be leaders provided class antagonisms were eliminated. The problem to be treated was suggested by the following remark by Professor Alfred G. Meyer, dealing with Lenin's political thought:

> While it is true that in the main he denied rationality to the workingman, he did not maintain this attitude unhesitatingly. On the contrary, he more than once allowed himself to be led astray by an unusually optimistic appraisal of proletarian consciousness. Lenin was thus torn between two judgments about the working class. In tracing the ups and downs of his estimate of proletarian rationality, we find that his opinion becomes optimistic as soon as the masses begin to engage in spontaneous revolutionary action, following the slogans preached by himself and his associates. Conversely, as soon as the masses cease to obey the commands or suggestions of the party, his estimate of their consciousness declines sharply. Lenin thus was caught in the same dilemma in which modern democratic theorists find themselves; and in being one of the first men to voice doubts in working-class consciousness, he is one of the pathbreakers of contemporary political thought. In theories of democracy the rationality of the "common man" is as indispensable a premise as the workers' class-consciousness is in Marxism. Although Lenin's faith in it was shaken, he never completely abandoned it because then he would have had to abandon his entire ideology. Somewhere, at some point, his theories inevitably assume that workers will acquire consciousness. Similarly, all ideas of democracy collapse once the faith in the common man's rationality is abandoned. Yet we are even less sure of it than was Lenin, whose lack of faith was based only on political horse sense, whereas ours is intensified by

> the incontrovertible findings of psychology and anthropology. Democratic theorists of our day are therefore as schizophrenic with regard to this problem as the Leninists, and only those who have no scruples in abandoning democracy as an ideal wholeheartedly accept all evidence about man's alienation and project it into the indefinite future. [1]

In the following pages we shall see how the workers' class consciousness did fit into the theory of Marx and Engels. But we shall see that they too were "schizophrenic" although not so obviously as was Lenin. With most great social thinkers, Marx and Engels recognized unequal potentialities among human beings. Nevertheless, while they sometimes alluded to differences among men in degree of talent or intelligence, we shall see that the doctrine of working-class consciousness as well as certain notions about participation in community affairs suggested that all men could attain sufficient rationality to fill leadership roles.

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[1] Alfred G. Meyer, Leninism, Cambridge, Mass., 1957, Harvard University Press, p. 44.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVISION OF LABOR

> Modern industry, indeed, compels society, under the penalty of death, to replace the detail-worker of today, crippled by life-long repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs, are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers.
>
> — Karl Marx

We will better understand the Marxist attitude toward the potentialities of the working man both for intellectual development and leadership after we try to explicate Marx and Engel's attitude toward the division of labor.

Marx defined labor power or the capacity for labor as "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description."[1] But this aggregate was exercised in different ways, according to Marx, depending upon the society's mode of production. When production was for the immediate consumption of the household by its members or when individuals began to produce commodities for exchange, "the individual appropriated natural objects for his livelihood." In this process the labor of the hand was united with that of the head because "a single man cannot operate upon nature without calling his own muscles into play under the con-

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, Moscow, 1954, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 167.

trol of his own brain."[1]

Rephrasing these remarks in terms of Marx's theory of alienation, we can see that for labor to take place in the absence of alienation it had to entail the satisfaction of a need for self-activity. It had to be the means by which the worker freely developed the aggregate of his physical and mental capabilities. Even in a society of individual commodity production, the laborer was somewhat self-estranged because he did not freely engage in what Marx and Engels termed self-activity. Although he exercised his mental capabilities during the process of production, it was not the free exercise of those capabilities because of the effort involved merely to produce his material life.

"At a very early stage of development of society," the mind that planned the labor process "was able to have the labor that had been planned carried out by other hands than its own."[2] Marx and Engels considered this separation of material and mental labor to have been the decisive point in the history of the division of labor.[3] From this point, "all merit for the swift advance of civilization was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain."[4] Finally, in capitalist society, self-activity and the pro-

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[1] Ibid., p. 508.

[2] Dialectics of Nature, p. 289.

[3] Cf. The German Ideology, p. 20.

[4] Dialectics of Nature, p. 289.

duction of material life diverged to such an extent that "material life appears as the end, and what produces this material life, labor... as the means."[1] Labor became merely the means to satisfy external needs, i.e. the need for subsistence.[2] "Labor has lost all semblance of self-activity and only sustains life by stunting it."[3]

It was because alienation or self-estrangement had been carried to such an extreme that Marx and Engels reserved their strongest condemnation for capitalist society. It was for this reason also that they investigated the possibility that the capitalist mode of production would give way to one in which alienation could be abolished. Before we examine in some detail their description of the development of the division of labor in capitalist society we should at least sketch the difference that Marxist theory saw between capitalism and earlier economic systems.

We will best understand the uniqueness of capitalism to Marx by briefly outlining Marxist economic theory. Value, in Marxist theory, was the term used to designate an object as a product of human labor. Use-value designated that an object had utility. An object could be a use-value without having value, e.g. air, virgin soil and natural meadows were not the products of human labor. The term exchange value was used to designate that an object was pro-

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[1] The German Ideology, p. 66.

[2] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 72-73.

[3] The German Ideology, p. 66.

duced not for the immediate utility of its owner but to be exchanged for other objects. The product of labor possessed use-value and value. It became a commodity when it was produced for exchange. Whenever commodities were exchanged the common attribute that manifested itself in their exchange value was their value, i.e. the amount of labor socially necessary for their production.[1]

Commodities became exchangeable by "the mutual desire of their owners to alienate them."[2] In a simple exchange economy some products of labor were not produced for consumption by their owners. While these had no utility for purposes of consumption, they possessed utility for purposes of exchange. Once money became used in an economy to assist the process of exchange the transaction could be represented as follows:

Commodity ——— Money ——— Commodity or C — M — C

The result of such a transaction was that at the end of the process the producer possessed a commodity equal in value to his original commodity, but the distinction between the two commodities was that while the latter possessed use-value for him, the former possessed only exchange value.[3]

In the society represented above we can see that there would exist a social division of labor, i.e. the producer's labor was one-sided while his wants were many sided.[4] However, we have not yet

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, pp. 36-40. Cf. also p. 60.

[2] Ibid., p. 87.

[3] Ibid., p. 105.

[4] Ibid., p. 106.

introduced any notion of surplus labor. Up to this point, each man produced commodities but since not all of these had utility for him he exchanged some of them with other producers for commodities they had similarly produced. The object of the transaction was a qualitative change of use value. Money enabled the transaction to take place on a more convenient basis for the producers since it permitted purchases and sales to be split up. Nevertheless, money was not the object of the transaction, but simply the intermediate form in which transactions were represented between the time that an object was sold and another bought.

Marx called that part of the labor process in which the worker produced a quantity of commodities equal to the value of his own (or his and his family's) means of subsistence, necessary labor. He then distinguished a second period of the labor process in which the laborer no longer created value for himself, i.e. surplus labor. Surplus labor existed in any society in which there was a class division between persons who produced means of subsistence and others who in some way were free from the need for this labor. Such a condition was an attribute not only of capitalism, but also of the slave and serf societies that preceded it. But in slave and serf societies use-value of the product predominated over exchange value. That is, surplus-labor was "limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less."[1] The master or the lord was freed from the need to labor and his objects of utility were either directly produced by

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[1] Ibid., p. 235.

the slave or serf or were furnished by means of an exchange that originated with commodities produced by them. The transactions could still be represented by C--M--C.

This was not the case under capitalism. The first form of appearance of capital was money but the distinction between money as capital and money in the earlier transaction, C--M--C, was in the form of circulation. Money as capital circulated in the form M--C--M, where the capitalist purchased commodities with his money and had labor performed on them for the purpose of turning out manufactured articles on the market and through a sale changing the commodity back again into money. But this circuit, M--C--M, would have been meaningless "if the intention were to exchange by this means two equal sums of money."[1] The reason for the process could not have been due to any qualitative differences between the original and final "M" but must have been that a quantitative difference, namely the increase in the quantity of money, would exist when the transaction was completed. Hence the distinction between capitalism and earlier economic systems could be represented by the circuit M--C--M', in which the object of the whole process was that M' was greater than M. As Marx put it, "the general formula for Capital" was not buying in order to sell, but buying "in order to sell dearer."[2]

The increment or excess over the original sum advanced in the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 146-147.

[2] Ibid., p. 155.

transaction M--C--M' was what Marx termed surplus value.[1] Capitalism differed from feudalism or the slavery of antiquity in that its object was not consumption or the satisfaction of wants, but rather to make M' as large as possible. The capitalist's ability to do this originated with the laborer's need to subsist and a class division that made the laborer unable to sell commodities in which his labor was incorporated, i.e. a separation of the laborer from the ownership of the means of production. If such a condition were realized the laborer would be left with only one commodity to offer for sale, i.e. "that very labor power which exists only in his living self." But capitalism presupposed another condition, namely that the laborer be a free man. He "must be the untrammelled owner of his capacity for labor, i.e. of his person." The capitalist relation:

> demands that the owner of the labor-power should sell it only for a definite period, for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity. [2]

The laborer's need to subsist caused him to take his commodity, labor-power, to the capitalist and exchange it for money with which it was possible for him to purchase the commodities necessary for his maintenance. For the capitalist, the exchange value of labor power was likewise equivalent to a quantity of commodities necessary to maintain the laborer because, as with all other commodities, the exchange value of labor could be represented by that which was necessary

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[1] Ibid., p. 150.

[2] Ibid., pp. 168-169.

to reproduce it. In terms of the labor theory of value, the exchange value of labor-power was equivalent to the labor time socially necessary to produce the laborer's means of subsistence. But the daily cost of maintaining the laborer was totally different from the daily expenditure of labor power in work. "The former determines the exchange-value of the labor-power, the latter is its use-value." But the seller of any commodity realized its exchange value when he parted with its use value. Similarly the seller of labor-power. "The use-value of labor-power, or in other words, labor, belongs just as little to its seller, as the use-value of oil after it has been sold belongs to the dealer who has sold it." The specific use-value which labor-power possessed was that it was "a source not only of value, but of more value than it has itself."[1] It was this characteristic of labor-power that enabled surplus value to be realized and it was the nature of the process M--C--M' that was behind the desire to maximize surplus value and consequently labor productivity. Marx pointed out that while avarice and the desire to get rich were "the ruling passions" at the historical dawn of capitalist production, later the laws of competition compelled the accumulation of capital, the discovery of labor-saving improvements and generally, the maximizing of surplus value in proportion to necessary labor time. For it was only by so doing that the capitalist was able to preserve his capital. Otherwise it surely would have been destroyed when other capitalists undertook such improvements.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 193.

[2] Cf. Ibid., pp. 592-593.

With this sketch of Marx's economic theory as a background for us to understand the nature of capitalism we are ready to see what happens to the division of labor in capitalist society.

We have seen that a non-alienated exercise of the capacity for labor would involve the free development of the laborer's mental and physical capabilities. If he was employed in work in which he was unable to develop these capabilities freely, Marx noted that he would not enjoy the work. One distinction between man and the beasts, he said, was man's ability consciously to plan his work and to realize a purpose of his own. If this planning and purposiveness were absent, the worker would become a stunted human being. This was the case in capitalist society, Marx observed, where it was the function of the capitalist to exercise care and planning, with the object of maximizing the return on his initial capital investment.[1]

The historical development of this separation began with the assembling of many independent craftsmen under one roof by a single capitalist according to one of two systems. The first method was used when the division of labor had already been a part of the process of production of the commodity in question, but the craftsmen previously had been spatially separated. When assembled together they continued to perform the same operations they formerly had. Nevertheless, the exercise of their capabilities became stunted because thereafter each pursued his trade only in relation to one product, e.g. carriages. "Each gradually loses, through want of practice, the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 178, 185.

ability to carry on, to its full extent, his old handicraft."[1] The second method involved, originally, the assembling under one roof of a number of workmen, each of whom continued to produce the entire commodity by performing all the operations necessary for its production. But later, in search of methods to meet a temporary demand for increased production, the capitalist re-distributed the work so that the operations were changed into disconnected, isolated ones. The re-distribution, at first accidental, "gradually ossifies into a systematic division of labor."[2]

From these origins, the capitalist's effort to increase the productive power of labor and thereby his profit resulted in an accumulation of misery for the working man, side by side with the accumulation of wealth.[3] To increase labor productivity the detail laborer was created, "who all his life performs one and the same simple operation," thereby converting his body "into the automatic, specialized implement of that operation."[4] As a result, the natural inequalities among men became emphasized to the greatest possible degree. These inequalities were ossified, not only by the development of a one-sided speciality into a perfection, "at the expense of the whole of a man's working capacity," but also by having created "a class of so-called unskilled laborers" and thereby having made "a specialty of

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[1] Ibid., p. 336.

[2] Ibid., p. 337.

[3] Ibid., p. 645.

[4] Ibid., p. 339.

the absence of all development."[1] Finally, in the later stages of capitalist development, the separation of workers into skilled and unskilled began to vanish, because in numerical terms "unskilled labor constitutes the bulk of all labor performed in capitalist society, as may be seen from all statistics."[2] With the advent of the automatic factory, the artificially produced differences of the detail workers disappeared as all work was equalized and reduced to the same level. Although technicians and mechanics were necessary to look after the machinery, according to Marx this group was numerically unimportant.[3]

With nearly all workers having become the living appendages of machines, all of their freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity, was confiscated. Modern industry completed "the separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labor;" hence while it did not free the laborer from work it deprived the work of all interest. Furthermore, the workman, as early as childhood began to be transformed "into a part of a detail-machine." It was necessary to begin his training early so that he learned "to adapt his own movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an automaton," but the cost of this training was considerably reduced because it was not necessary for him to acquire any skills.[4] Engels observed that jobs

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[1] Ibid., pp. 349-350.

[2] A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (hereinafter referred to as Contribution...), Chicago, 1904, Charles H. Kerr and Co., p. 25.

[3] Capital, Vol. I, p. 420.

[4] Ibid., pp. 421-423.

of this kind gave the worker "no scope for exercising his intelligence," but "since the operator must pay some attention to the machine to ensure that nothing is going wrong...he is prevented from thinking about anything else." A man working in this manner was "degraded to the level of a beast" with no opportunity for intellectual activities.[1] Engels added that in what little leisure time the worker had, he was unlikely to develop his mind because, having come home, "tired and exhausted from his labors" to an unattractive dwelling he felt urgently the need for a stimulant

> to recompense him for his labors during the day and enable him to face the prospect of the next day's dreary toil....In these circumstances the worker is obviously subject to the strongest temptation to drink to excess, and it is hardly surprising that he often succumbs.[2]

The workers were left with only two pleasures -- drink and sexual intercourse -- with the result that "to get something out of life" they indulged these "to excess and in the grossest fashion."[3]

We can now see how Marxism treated the natural inequalities that it did observe among men. Capitalism had superimposed artificial inequalities on those that occurred naturally. The result was that nearly all working men finally appeared to be equal because the demands of the system caused them all to be equally unskilled. It is significant that in discussing the labor theory of value Marx reduced skilled labor to unskilled, apparently for convenient analysis. But while he pointed out that by making the reduction he was simply sav-

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[1] Conditions..., p. 134.

[2] Ibid., p. 116.

[3] Ibid., p. 144.

ing himself a superfluous operation[1] he did not think of the reduction as a simple abstraction because it was "an abstraction which takes place daily in the social process of production."[2] That this reduction was the actual tendency of capitalist production could be seen in the automatic workshop:

> Time is everything, man is nothing....Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything....one worker's labor is scarcely distinguishable in any way from another worker's labor: workers can only be distinguished one from another by the length of time they take for their work. [3]

The workman became "an appendage of the machine," and it was only "the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack," that was required of him.[4] His special skills, his bodily and intellectual faculties became worthless. "He becomes transformed into a simple, monotonous productive force....His labor becomes a labor that anyone can perform."[5]

To all appearances a very wide gap existed between the abilities of different men, but while the natural existence of some gap might have been a cause of the division of labor, the size of the gap

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, p. 198.

[2] Contribution..., p. 25.

[3] Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, London, undated, Martin Lawrence Ltd., pp. 46-47.

[4] Manifesto of the Communist Party, New York, 1948, International Publishers, p. 16.

[5] Marx, Wage Labor and Capital, Moscow, 1954, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 66.

was a result of the division of labor under capitalism. Adam Smith believed that in an advanced civilization "this is the state into which the laboring poor, that is, the great body of the people must necessarily fall,"[1] and Marx noted that Smith recommended public education to prevent "the complete deterioration of the great mass of the people."[2] Of course Marx did not accept this view of the necessity of the case, but otherwise his view of the division of labor was identical with that of Adam Smith. According to Smith, (as quoted by Marx),

> the difference of natural talents in different men, is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of diverse professions, when grown up to maturity, is not so much the cause as the effect of the division of labor.[3]

"In principle," Marx added, paraphrasing Smith, "a porter differs less from a philosopher than a mastiff from a greyhound. It is the division of labor which has set a gulf between them."[4] We can see how close Smith and Marx were on this point by the following citation of Smith in Volume I of Capital:

> The understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple

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[1] The Wealth of Nations, Book V, Chapter 1, cited by Marx, Capital, Vol. I, p. 362.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Smith, op. cit., Book 1, Chapter 2, cited by Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 109, (emphasis Marx's.)

[4] Ibid.

> operations...has no occasion to exert his understanding....He generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become....The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind....It corrupts even the activity of his body and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigor and perseverance in any other employments than that to which he has been bred. His dexterity at his own particular trade seems in this manner to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. [1]

Unlike Smith, Marx expected the antithesis between mental and physical labor to vanish,[2] and to give way to "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."[3] This would be a society in which alienation would disappear. In its place would arise "the rich human being... in need of a totality of human life-activities."[4]

The education clauses of the Factory Acts and the educational system proposed by Robert Owen were the prototype of what Marx meant by the abolition of the antithesis between mental and physical labor. Marx noted that the success of the educational clauses of the Factory Acts "proved for the first time the possibility of combining education and gymnastics with manual labor, and, consequently, of combining manual labor with education and gymnastics." He quoted approvingly

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[1] Smith, op. cit., Book V, Chapter 1, cited by Marx, Capital, Vol. I, p. 362.

[2] Critique of the Gotha Programme, Moscow, 1954, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 26.

[3] Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 31.

[4] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 111, emphasis in original.

the report of a factory inspector that noted that "half manual labor and half school renders each employment a rest and a relief to the other; consequently, both are far more congenial to the child, than would be the case were he kept constantly at one." In addition, long school hours, as shown in the case of the children of the upper and middle classes, only added uselessly to the labor of the teacher while wasting the time, health and energy of the children.[1] According to Marx, Owen had shown in detail

> the germ of the education of the future, an education that will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labor with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings.[2]

While Marx and Engels may have recognized some inequalities among men, they saw in the historical development of the division of labor under capitalism the production of artificial inequalities. Capitalism progressively begat, in their view, fewer and fewer persons of talent, more and more unskilled laborers. It was not that the ordinary man had an inherent inability to exercise his intellectual capacities; it was the division of labor that was responsible for his ignorance. But Marx and Engels did not choose to return to a society that pre-dated the capitalist division of labor. In Marx's view, the men of that kind of society were care-burdened; they were caught up "in crude practical need."[3] By excluding the division of labor within

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, pp. 482-483.

[2] Ibid., pp. 483-484.

[3] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 108.

each separate process of production as well as the control over production by society as a whole, the society in which each man was the private owner of his own means of production moved "within narrow and more or less primitive bounds. To perpetuate it would be...to decree universal mediocrity."[1]

The division of labor under capitalism was therefore a step in the direction of producing the material pre-conditions for a classless society and the abolition of alienation. The criticism of capitalism proceeded from the observation that although these pre-conditions had been created, the particular economic interest of capitalists, i.e. maximizing surplus labor in proportion to necessary labor, was a barrier standing in the way of the full development of society's productive resources. The capitalist bought the use of a man's labor-power for a day. The increase in labor productivity was not used to shorten substantially the time in which this labor-power was exercised. Rather, the advantage of labor's rising productivity allowed the capitalist to discharge those whose labor was no longer necessary to him, to utilize their labor by the creation of new industries that made it necessary to "seduce" consumers into new modes of gratification,[2] to expand the category of those engaged in unproductive commercial activity, or to expand unproductive expenditures of the state. The result was that profit maximization bred unproductive activities but the laborer's leisure time was not freed for his per-

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, pp. 761-762.

[2] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 115.

sonal development.

The distribution of the laborer's time was important to the Marxist approach to man's intellectual potentialities. Not only had it become unnecessary for the worker to possess skills at work, but capitalism was not concerned with adding to his free time nor with helping him to achieve self-activity in the free time it did allow him. "Time," said Marx, "is the room of human development. A man who has no free time to dispose of, whose whole lifetime, apart from the mere physical interruptions by sleep, meals, and so forth, is absorbed by his labor for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden."[1] Capitalism transformed "his life-time into working-time"[2] and by so doing ignored what Marx called the moral limitations of the working day.[3] To capitalism, "time for education, for intellectual development, for the fulfilling of social functions and for social intercourse, for the free-play of...bodily and mental activity, even the rest time of Sunday" was "moonshine!"[4] In a long footnote he quoted reports of employment commissions that demonstrated the illiteracy of children whose time was fully taken up with manual labor.[5] Engels noted that at "an age when all their time should be devoted to bodily and mental development" they were "taken from

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[1] Wages, Price and Profit, Moscow, 1952, Foreign Languages Publishing House, pp. 80-81.

[2] Capital, Vol. I, p. 645.

[3] Ibid., p. 232.

[4] Ibid., p. 264.

[5] Ibid., p. 259, note.

school and the fresh air" to be exploited "for the benefit of the manufacturers."[1]

Marx and Engels' approach to man's intellectual potentialities and his capacity for leadership declared that all of the workers had decidedly more ability in these directions than they could exercise in capitalist society. Not only did the division of labor make it unnecessary, from capitalism's standpoint, for them to develop the full range of their potentialities, but capitalist society had not given them the time to do so even though it created the material preconditions for them to have this time. "This immeasurable productive capacity, handled with consciousness and in the interest of all," according to Engels, "would soon reduce to a minimum the labor falling to the share of mankind."[2] By suppressing the capitalist form of production, the length of the working day could be reduced to necessary labor-time, which would then be of longer duration because the expansion of the notion of "means of subsistence" would mean a higher standard of living for the laborer and also because a part of surplus-labor would become necessary labor in order to maintain a fund for reserve and accumulation. Whereas "in capitalist society spare time is acquired for one class by converting the whole lifetime of the masses into labor-time," it would be possible, if capitalism were superseded and the work more evenly divided among all able-bodied persons, for society to have time at its disposal "for the free development,

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[1] Conditions..., p. 169.

[2] "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," appendix to Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 199.

intellectual and social, of the individual."[1]

In the case of the workers, the division of labor under capitalism had superimposed artificial human differences on the natural ones and therefore had made them stunted human beings. Because of inadequate leisure time, they were unable to develop their human potentialities fully. But the members of the ruling class were also stunted, according to Marxism. Part of their leadership function was unnecessary, and if it also included a necessary part the capitalists could not fully develop their intellectual potentialities to undertake it, regardless of their possession of leisure time. Their problem according to the theory of ruling class ideology, was that they were caught up in false consciousness.

The two-fold nature of the process of capitalist production had alienated the worker from the capitalist. On the one hand, it was a social process for producing use values. But for the capitalist it was a process for extracting the greatest possible amount of surplus value. In this sense, surplus controls over the workers became necessary that were analagous to surplus value. With the abolition of capitalism, controls over the production process would still be required but discipline over the laborers, insofar as it has resulted from a difference between the interest of the capitalist and the common interest, would disappear. Certain aspects of the capitalist's leadership function were superfluous, according to Marx, and had been artificially superimposed upon whatever natural differences

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, p. 530.

in the capacity for leadership existed among men.[1]

Among the ruling class itself, ideas about its dominance seemed rational and universally valid. The Marxist theory of ideology declared that their ideas were simply the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, but appeared to be significant to the ruling class apart from the individuals and conditions that were their sources.[2] The emancipation from feudalism required the accompanying notions of freedom, equality and the rights of man. In making the individual member of civil society the basis of the political state, as in the rights of man, feudal society had been resolved into its basic elements -- its individual members.[3] In asserting its dominance over landed property, bourgeois society depicted its adversary in immoral terms. The capitalist accused the landowner of wanting "to replace moral capital and free labor by brute, immoral force and serfdom." It enumerated "the baseness, cruelty, degradation, prostitution, infamy, anarchy and rebellion of which romantic castles were the workshops." As to its own claims, it declared that it had obtained political freedom for the people, created trade promoting friendship between peoples, created pure morality and an agreeable degree of culture and had given the people civilized needs and the means of satisfying them.[4] According to Marx, the egoistic individual ap-

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[1] Ibid., pp. 331-332.

[2] The German Ideology, pp. 39-40.

[3] "On The Jewish Question," in Marx, Selected Essays, London, 1926, Leonard Parsons, pp. 79 ff.

[4] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 89-90.

peared to the bourgeois to be the natural individual and his rights appeared to be natural rights.[1] The political economists did not explain private property because they expressed as abstract laws the material process through which private property passed. They took private property and the interest of the capitalist for granted.[2] They never asked why "labor is represented by the value of its product and labor-time by the magnitude of that value."[3]

As capitalism developed, the ruling class continued to perceive its relationships as natural laws, according to Marx. This was to be expected, particularly because the capitalist, while not exactly living a life of misery, was not his own master. His passion for wealth -- formerly a mere idiosyncrasy -- grew to be "the effect of the social mechanism, of which he is but one of the wheels." He therefore felt the need to accumulate through "external coercive laws." He was compelled by competition either to accumulate or to find his capital destroyed. The process was not without its contradictions for him and he began to feel "a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation, and the desire for enjoyment."[4] In short, he was as alienated as the working man, but in a different sense because he felt perfectly satisfied with this alienation since his power was derived from it. While the working class became de-

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[1] "On The Jewish Question," op. cit., pp. 82-83.

[2] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 67-68.

[3] Capital, Vol. I, p. 80.

[4] Ibid., pp. 592-594.

humanized, the capitalist retained a semblance of human existence.[1] Consequently he had no cause to become radical -- to pursue social problems to their roots. Instead, bourgeois consciousness stopped by attributing social evils to political opponents within the ruling class. Pauperism, according to the Whig, was the result of the monopoly of large landed property and the corn laws. According to the Tory, the whole evil was due to liberalism, to competition, to carrying the factory system too far. Each found the cause to reside in the policy of its opponent; neither in politics generally. While alive to the danger, the English middle class had an inadequate idea of the causes. The politicians could not see that the cause of evil was the essence of the state, but instead they found it in the fact that their opponents were at its helm. So far as the state recognized social evils it attributed them either to natural laws, which were amenable to no human power, or to the defects of private life, which were independent of the state, or to the futility of administration, which was dependent on it. According to Marx, however, the administration was impotent against the consequences which sprang from the bourgeois private property society because it was based on that society. To abolish this impotence it would have had to abolish the existing mode of living which meant abolishing itself, since it existed because of the contradiction between individual and common interests. The state could attempt to remedy what appeared to be defects of administration. When the modifications that were made proved

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[1] Marx and Engels, The Holy Family, Moscow, 1956, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 51.

to be fruitless either the problem was attributed to a natural imperfection independent of mankind or else to the dispositions of private individuals -- too vitiated to second the good intentions of the administration. Meanwhile, the private individuals complained against government when it restricted their freedom and then demanded that government should correct the problems caused by the necessary consequences of this freedom. Political understanding, in the sense that Marx used the term political, was incapable of discovering the source of social distress; social well-being created political understanding, i.e. false consciousness.[1]

For the moment we shall leave open the question of the extent to which the vast majority of persons possessed unrealized potentialities to assume leadership roles in the community. We only note that the Marxist position was that human potentialities remained unrealized because of the capitalist system. The separation of society into classes had nothing to do with natural talent, but was based on ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. Both the owners and the non-owners could not develop themselves freely in a class society; the former, because of the ideological barrier; the latter, because of their dehumanization by the division of labor. In the Communist society posited by Marx and Engels the division of mental and physical labor would vanish. The problem of ideology would also disappear and all men would be able to realize whatever potentialities they possessed, among them potentialities to participate in community affairs.

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[1] "On The King of Prussia and Social Reform," Selected Essays, pp. 105-120, passim.

CHAPTER III

WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority.

-- The Communist Manifesto

Chapter II showed that Marxism's discussion of the division of labor did not preclude the notion of natural inequalities among men, but did suggest that many apparent inequalities were artificially imposed by capitalism and would disappear under communism. In the present chapter we shall see that the changes in the doctrine of class consciousness that came about as a result of Marx and Engels' lifetime of participation in revolutionary organizations show that they became increasingly optimistic about the proletarian's intellectual potentialities.

Marx and Engels' revolutionary theory was based on their certainty that they had arrived at a true understanding of the needs of the proletariat. "Theory," said Marx, "is fulfilled in a people only insofar as it is the fulfillment of the needs of that people."[1] In the formation of the proletariat lay "the positive possibility of a German emancipation" because wrong generally was perpetrated against it; because it had "a universal character by its universal suffering;" because it could "invoke no historical but only its human title." He noted that the proletariat was beginning to appear in Germany and would

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[1] "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction," in Marx and Engels, On Religion, p. 51.

herald "the dissolution of the hereto existing world order" and demand "the negation of private property."[1] This is essentially what is termed in Marxist theory the unity of theory and practice. Because the proletariat's very existence represented universal suffering, it was put in the position of achieving a true understanding of the world in the very fulfillment of its needs.

Marx's assertion that theory must fulfill the needs of the people did not mean that a class would at once be conscious of its needs. He believed that his treatment of the role of the proletariat and of their needs was a true understanding, whether or not it was grounded at a given moment in the expression by the people themselves of their needs and consequently in the arrival by the masses at such understanding. Eventually, the workers would attain that understanding, when capitalism had developed to such an extent that its contradictions had fully manifested themselves in the workers' universal misery. Meanwhile, Marx, as a theoretician, conceived of himself and other communists as the most advanced section of the proletarian movement,[2] able to articulate the needs of the masses earlier and more clearly than could the people themselves:

> The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment considers as its aim. The question is what the proletariat is, and what, consequent on that being, it will be compelled to do. Its aim and historical action is irrevocably and obviously demonstrated in its own life situation as well as in the whole organization of bourgeois society today.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[2] Cf. Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 22.

[3] The Holy Family, p. 52, emphasis in original.

Working class consciousness had to grow as part of the historical process. In emancipating society from feudal relationships, the bourgeoisie proceeded from its own situation and undertook the general emancipation of society. It thought of its understanding of social relations as a true understanding. At the time of the bourgeois revolution, the masses were equally enthusiastic; the bourgeoisie was perceived and acknowledged as the general representative of all classes and was able to speak in the name of the working class because feudal relationships and absolute monarchy were equally the stumbling block of the bourgeoisie and the emerging proletariat.[1] This is Marx's explanation of how the working class was caught up in ruling class ideology. As the movement progressed, the workers began to revolt but at the beginning of the movement they blamed their condition on politics, as did the capitalists. They perceived the cause of all evils to be in the wills of men and thought all remedies to lie in force and the overthrow of a particular form of state.[2] Later, as the historical development of material conditions continued, there would be embodied in the proletariat "the complete loss of man."[3] The emerging proletariat would find its spiritual weapon in the concurrently emerging social theory that identified itself with the work-

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[1] "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction," op. cit., p. 54.

[2] "On the King of Prussia and Social Reform," Selected Essays, pp. 128-129.

[3] "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction," op. cit., p. 57.

ing class and it would become clear that the rule of the bourgeoisie had become antiquated.[1] At first, it was likely that the working class would fail to understand its aim although theoreticians such as Marx and Engels might have already attained such understanding. But sooner or later the workers would achieve a sufficient degree of consciousness to prompt them to revolutionary action. This was inevitable but it would occur only at the proper stage of development of the material conditions of life. Until then it was "absolutely immaterial whether the 'idea' of this revolution" had been expressed a hundred times.[2]

Marx and Engels wavered between optimism and pessimism about the degree to which their understanding of the proletarian movement coincided with that of the workers themselves. Before 1848, they were decidedly optimistic, although Marx did note as early as 1844 that the revolutionary movement was likely to be "a very severe and protracted process."[3] But recognition that the proletariat might

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[1] Ibid., pp. 55-57. Alfred G. Meyer notes that if the theory of ideology is applied to the working class it might easily appear that the workers could not be convinced by inspired intellectuals such as Marx and Engels, since "the ideology of the ruling class is fostered on the helpless minds of the exploited." Meyer shows that Marx's reply to this challenge would have been in terms of the complete detachment of the workers in a radical negation of the social structure. It would be well to add that this is a historical process. As we have seen in the text above, the workers were thought to be the victims of false consciousness at the beginning of the movement, but that history was moving toward their achievement of true consciousness. Cf. Meyer, Marxism, Cambridge, Mass., 1954, Harvard University Press, pp. 96 ff.

[2] The German Ideology, pp. 29-30.

[3] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 124.

not understand its historical role "at the moment," often dissolved into boundless optimism. The theoreticians, said Marx, having passed the stage of utopia building, no longer had to seek science in their minds. "They have only to take note of what is happening before their eyes and to become the mouthpiece of this."[1] Engels, infected even more with an optimistic view, had already developed the thesis that given the worker's conditions of existence, he could retain his humanity only by violent hatred against his fate and against the bourgeoisie. "This and this alone fills the thoughts of the operatives when they are not tending their machines."[2] He did add that "they become animals as soon as they submit patiently to their yoke, and try to drag out a bearable existence under it without attempting to break free,"[3] and that if they were "not inspired to a fury of indignation against their oppressors, then they sink into drunkeness and all other forms of demoralizing vice."[4] But although Engels posited vice as an alternative to rebellion and also remarked about "the extent to which drunkenness and sexual license prevail in the factory towns"[5] he retained his optimism by asserting that "the workers...are determined" that the state of affairs would not continue.[6]

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[1] The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 106.

[2] Conditions..., p. 200.

[3] Ibid., p. 129.

[4] Ibid., p. 200.

[5] Ibid.,

[6] Ibid., p. 240.

We can see this optimism also in the assertion that the average English worker, despite near illiteracy, had "a shrewd notion of where his own interest and that of his country lie;"[1] In the observation that the vast majority of the workers patronized working-class reading rooms to "discuss matters which really affect their own interests;[2] and in the prediction that the workers would not put up with another commercial crisis.[3] This did not mean that the need for leadership was ignored. Engels' tone appears to be that the workers were students, but that they were outstanding students:

> There can be no doubt that the workers are interested in acquiring a sound education, provided that it is not tainted by the 'wisdom' spread by prejudiced middle-class teachers. This is proved by the popularity of lectures on economic and on scientific and aesthetic topics which are frequently held at working-class institutes, particularly those run by Socialists. I have sometimes come across workers...who are better informed on geology, astronomy and other matters, than many an educated member of the middle classes in Germany. No better evidence of the extent to which the English workers have succeeded in educating themselves can be brought forward than the fact that the most important modern works in philosophy, poetry and politics are in practice read only by the proletariat. The middle classes, enslaved by the influences generated by their environment, are blinded by prejudice. They are horror-stricken at the very idea of reading anything of a really progressive nature. The working classes, on the other hand, have no such stupid inhibitions and devour such works with pleasure and profit. In this connection the Socialists have a wonderful record of achievement, for they have promoted the education of the workers by translating the works of

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[1] Ibid., p. 128.

[2] Ibid., pp. 271-272.

[3] Ibid., p. 334.

> such great French materialist philosophers as Helvetius, Holbach and Diderot.[1]

Thus the workers needed teachers: above, the Socialists, but they learned about their unique position in history with ease:

> The workers are conscious of the fact that they form a separate class, and have their own interests, policies, and points of view, which are opposed to those of the capitalist property owners. Above all they are conscious of the fact that on their shoulders rests the real power of the nation and the hope of its future progress. [2]

Privately, as early as 1846 and 1847, Engels expressed his misgivings when his enemies in the movement, Grün and Hess, were, in his view, misleading the workers.[3] The Manifesto also appears to have recognized the possibility of setbacks. For example:

> Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. [4]

> This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 272.

[2] Ibid., p. 273.

[3] Letters to Marx, September 18, 1846 and November 23-24, 1847, in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, New York, 1942, International Publishers, pp. 20, 22.

[4] Manifesto of the Communist Party, p. 18.

[5] Ibid.

> In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, (the communists) always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole....The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.[1]

The latter quotation seems to be a clear statement of an inequality of theoretical understanding between the proletariat and the Communists. But in predicting a bourgeois revolution in Germany as "but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution,"[2] Marx and Engels were expressing their optimism about the degree to which the proletariat would attain consciousness. For by their own statement, this "inevitable" movement could not be that of a minority, but must be the self-conscious movement of the majority acting in its own interest.[3]

It appears from a scruitiny of the works cited in the preceding pages that while Marx and Engels were optimistic about the workers' ability to attain consciousness, they also recognized that the theoreticians of the movement might have a better theoretical understanding than the workers. This seems to be a contradiction, but it appears to be resolved when we try to clarify what was meant in 1848

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[1] Ibid., p. 22.

[2] Ibid., p. 44.

[3] Ibid., p. 22.

when Marx and Engels spoke of proletarian consciousness. We have seen that the workers in London went to the lecture halls to learn about economic theory from the Socialists. Similarly, above, Marx and Engels asserted the theoretical advantage possessed by the Communists over the great mass. It would be over-simplifying matters, therefore, simply to suggest that by proletarian consciousness they meant full theoretical understanding on the part of the workers. It is likely that their self-conception was expressed in the Manifesto when they described how,

> when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class...assumes such a violent, glaring character that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class.... and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. [1]

In 1848, they did not suggest that the workers had achieved this level of theoretical comprehension. A few years later, in referring to the Proudonhists, whom Marx termed the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, he declared

> what makes them representatives...is the fact that in their minds they do not go beyond the limits which the latter do not go beyond in life, that they are consequently driven theoretically to the same tasks and solutions to which material interest and social position practically drive the latter. [2]

Then he added the decisive statement of his doctrine that we must as-

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[1] Ibid., p. 19.

[2] The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, New York, undated, International Publishers, p. 44.

sume should be applied to the communists also: "This is in general the relationship of the political and literary representatives of a class to the class that they represent."[1] It was not so much that the workers understood theoretically their tasks and solutions, but their material interest and social position were decisive in bringing them to these tasks and solutions "in life."

Still, the inclusion of one notion in the Manifesto, namely that the communists have a special role, that of being the most advanced section of the movement and pushing forward all the others, opened the door to a changed approach to the workers' movement when Marx and Engels later realized that they had been overly enthusiastic about the capacity for a working-class victory in 1848. Looking back, in 1895, Engels declared that "there were but a very few people who had any idea at all of the direction in which this emancipation was to be sought. The proletarian masses themselves, even in Paris, after the victory, were still absolutely in the dark as to the path to be taken." Their view at the time, he said, was that although the leaders were a minority, it would be easy to win the great masses of the people "to ideas which were the truest reflection of their economic condition, which were nothing but the clear rational expression of their needs, of needs not yet understood but merely vaguely felt by them." That history proved them wrong, he continued, was due to "the state of economic development on the continent at that time.... not, by a long way, ripe for the elimination of capitalist produc-

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[1] Ibid., emphasis in original.

tion."[1]

But, in addition, the notion of consciousness had undergone a change. We have suggested how in 1848 practical consciousness was sufficient -- i.e., the consciousness necessary for the workers to know that they must engage in revolution. Later this was termed as revolution "carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses" because "the history of the last 50 years" had taught that "the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for with body and soul." So that the masses could understand what was to be done, long persistent work was required, "and it is just this work that we are now pursuing, and with a success which drives the enemy to despair."[2]

The history of the movement had made Marx and Engels less optimistic about the ease with which revolution could be accomplished. Their correspondence is filled with remarks that the workers had become bourgeois due to prosperity, that they were ignorant and that the task of education was difficult, that the improvement in communications was a powerful counter-force to their efforts. Yet, as the above quotation of Engels shows, they never lost hope in the success of the movement. Instead, Engels appears to have been suggesting not only that the masses must attain greater theoretical understanding

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[1] Engels' 1895 introduction to Marx, The Class Struggles in France, Moscow, 1952, Foreign Languages Publishing House, pp. 18-19.

[2] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

than had formerly been thought necessary, but also that they were capable of absorbing the instruction. Therefore, while he became less optimistic about the ease with which revolution could occur, for our purposes he actually became more optimistic. Formerly, the doctrine of proletarian consciousness had suggested that the revolution sprang not from the masses' theoretical appreciation of their task, but from their material conditions. As Marx expressed it:

> As soon as it has risen up, a class in which the revolutionary interests of society are concentrated finds the content and the material for its revolutionary activity directly in its own situation: foes to be laid low, measures dictated by the needs of the struggle to be taken; the consequences of its own deeds drive it on. It makes no theoretical inquiries into its own task.[1]

In later exposition of the doctrine this was no longer the case. The masses must have grasped what was at stake and what was to be done, and they would do so if the communists were persistent.

Such a view brings us back to our main line of inquiry. We have been asking to what degree Marx and Engels believed the masses to be endowed with unfulfilled potentialities for leadership and participation in theoretical affairs and we have seen that while they recognized unequal natural endowments they felt that the division of labor and the absence of leisure time had stunted the working man. As we have already indicated, although they saw that human potentialities were unequal and they implied differences in intelligence among men, they were optimistic about those who appeared to lack talent because they felt that this was an illusory condition caused by lack of

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[1] Ibid., p. 61.

need for skilled laborers. The history of their approach to proletarian consciousness, however, shows their ambivalence on this matter. While they became more concerned about the need for theoretical leaders, they expected the masses to absorb the teachings of those leaders. A doctrine that contrasts leaders with followers seems to be a doctrine about persons with unequal abilities. Yet Marx and Engels never lost hope in the capacity of the masses to absorb theoretical knowledge. On the contrary, if the above discussion is correct, they gained hope.

CHAPTER IV

EVERY MAN AN ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR?

A single violin player is his own conductor; an orchestra requires a separate one.

-- Karl Marx

Those of us who attend concerts have probably come to recognize the important role of the conductor. Even in the most distinguished symphony orchestras, where each musician is an artist in his own right, the conductor must be familiar with the instruments of every-one of them. He must understand the composition as a whole and the role of each musician in creating a commendable performance. Moreover, he must usually bring to a musical composition his own understanding of the intentions of the composer, his own interpretation — because the written sheet music does not usually provide an unambiguous statement of how it will sound when performed by the orchestra. In each of these tasks, the role of the conductor usually is respected by the members of the orchestra. While now and then we hear of cases of temperamental artists, most of the time the musicians recognize that the conductor has come to his position after many years of learning and performance of his own. Consequently, they respect his ability to fulfill his tasks, in addition to realizing that the role of coordinator must be undertaken by someone, just as each member of the orchestra fulfills his particular role. They are not likely to feel any difference of interest between themselves and their conductor. In a symphony orchestra, the individual and the common

interests are united.

Karl Marx conceived of the relationship between people who are working and living together and their leaders as similar in nature to that existing between the orchestra and its conductor. In a society where exploitation had disappeared, he expected leadership of this nature to emerge because

> all combined labor on a large scale requires, more or less, a directing authority, in order to secure the harmonious working of the individual activities, and to perform the general functions that have their origin in the action of the combined organism, as distinguished from the action of its separate organs.[1]

According to Marx, the controls in capitalist society were twofold. On the one hand, the productive process was "a social process for producing use-values." Consequently a director was necessary, just as an orchestra conductor is necessary. On the other hand, it was "a process for creating surplus value" and in this sense the individual and the common interests were alienated, in contrast to the character of a symphony orchestra. The worker's presence in the factory was conditioned on the sale of his only commodity, his capacity to labor, so that he could obtain the commodities necessary for his subsistence. But for the capitalist who purchased this labor-power the worker's presence was solely contingent on the directing motive of capitalist production, namely, "to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus-value, and consequently to exploit labor-power to the greatest possible degree."[2]

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, pp. 330-331.

[2] Ibid., pp. 331-332.

In communist society, this distinction between the individual and common interests would disappear. We can therefore clarify Marx and Engels' much abused concept of the "withering away of the state" by understanding that what they meant by the state was an independent institution within society, "divorced from the real interests of individual and community" but existing to provide a stage upon which the class struggle could be fought. The state, in Marxist theory, is identical with the class struggle and synonymously with "a contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community."[1] The state, as the illusory community, took on an independent existence in relation to the individuals, whereas "in the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association."[2] Even the most democratic institutions of capitalist society were no solution because they merely allowed the class struggle to be fought openly in the political arena but continued to express, in legal terms, the property relations of capitalism.

We can better understand the meaning of "the withering away of the state" to Marx and Engels by recognizing that the class struggle, and therefore the state, exemplified to them the alienation of man from man. The state, said Marx, "is based upon the contradiction between the public and private life, upon the contradiction between the general and individual interests." To abolish this contradiction is

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[1] The German Ideology, p. 23.

[2] Ibid., pp. 74-75.

to abolish itself.[1] Along with religion and family, the return of man from the notion of the state represents "the positive transendence of all estrangement" to man's "human, i.e. social mode of existence....What is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of 'Society' as an abstraction vis-a-vis the individual. The individual is the social being. His life is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life."[2] But bourgeois society instead took all common interests and put them in the hands of the bureaucracy:

> The Legitimist monarchy and the July monarchy added nothing but a greater division of labor to the existing state machinery growing in the same measure that the division of labor within bourgeois society created new groups of interests, and, therefore, new material for state administration. Every common interest was straightway severed from society, counterposed to it as a higher, general interest, snatched from the self-activity of society's members and made an object of governmental activity from the bridge, the school-house and the communal property of a village community to the railways, the national wealth and the national university of France. The parliamentary republic, finally, in its struggle against the revolution, found itself compelled to strengthen, along with the repressive measures, the resources and centralization of governmental power. All the revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it up.[3]

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[1] "On the King of Prussia and Social Reform," in Marx, Selected Essays, p. 117.

[2] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 103-105, emphasis in original.

[3] The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 107, emphasis in original.

Marx and Engels called for the destruction of the state machine because in their view the state was a manifestation of class antagonisms and alienation. Because they believed that man was social by nature they conceived of men associated together, with agencies of communal affairs. But in Engels' view, an association such as the Paris Commune "was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word." He and Marx therefore proposed "to replace state everywhere by the word Gemeinwesen (community), a good old German word which can very well represent the French commune."[1] Therefore, though Marx posited the smashing up of the state he could ask about the social functions that would remain in existence "that are analagous to present functions of the state."[2] As in the symphony orchestra, the individual and the common interests would be one. While the need for leadership would be acknowledged, in a classless society there could be no antipathy toward leaders. Antipathy would dissolve in the recognition that leaders' interests were not different from those of other men.

We now have to try to determine who, in Marx and Engels' view, was qualified to serve in the role analagous to the conductor. If we take the orchestra as being analagous to society it would appear to the author that persons in leading roles have superior skill because of training, age, aptitude, intelligence and similar characteristics and that it would be unlikely that every person within the society would fulfill these roles competently because of differences in

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[1] Engels' letter to Bebel, March 18-28, 1875, Selected Correspondence, pp. 336-337, emphasis in original.

[2] Critique of the Gotha Programme, p. 41.

experience, training, aptitude and intelligence. Before we go on to examine the Marxist position with respect to leadership, we ought to look at what Marx and Engels said generally about such differences among men.

The stories of the poor boys who achieved wealth because of unusual ability might be one way to prove that in general the people of the working class were not inherently lacking in intelligence and business sense. That is, since the odds against success were overwhelming, one worker might happen to achieve success only if a great many had the capacity to do so. Interestingly enough, Marx did not take this approach, but suggested, in tones resembling the Horatio Alger stories, that the poor boys who were successful might have been more intelligent than the rest. Thus, the tendency toward equality of opportunity in the capitalist system was a means to secure "the supremacy of capital itself" by the recruiting of "ever new forces for itself out of the lower layers of society." He likened this characteristic of the system to that of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages in which the hierarchy was formed "out of the best brains of people without regard to estate, birth, or wealth." It "was one of the principle means," said Marx, "of fortifying priest rule and suppressing the laity. The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the more prominent men of a ruled class, the more solid and dangerous is its rule."[1]

Having already seen in Marx's approach to the history of the di-

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[1] Capital, Vol. III, Chicago, 1909, Charles H. Kerr and Co., pp. 705-706, emphasis supplied.

vision of labor, the theory that natural inequalities among men had been emphasized and ossified by capitalism, we should not be surprised at this conception of persons of unequal talent among the "ruled class." In fact, Marx had little commitment to the natural right philosophies of equality of 17th and 18th century political thought that were the slogans of the French Revolution and the philosophic foundation of America's Declaration of Independence. His approach to equality went no further than to develop a labor theory of value, "the secret" of which was "that all kinds of labor are equal and equivalent."[1]

Over and over in the writings of Marx and Engels, we have clear statements about natural inequalities. Not only were the different "natural endowments" recognized as "the foundation on which the division of labor is built up,"[2] but also it was noted that the division of labor posited by classical political philosophy was a consequence of "the various bents and talents of men."[3] The quantitative equivalence of the labor of commodity producers could in fact serve as a standard of measurement or payment in the early stages of proletarian dictatorship only if it were also recognized that "one man is superior to another physically or mentally and so supplies more labor in the same time, or can labor for a longer time."[4] That individuals

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, p. 60.

[2] Ibid., p. 349.

[3] Ibid., p. 365.

[4] Critique of the Gotha Programme, p. 25.

were unequally endowed was for Marx a self-evident truth. "They would not be different individuals if they were not unequal."[1] Engels suggested the scope of human inequalities in terms not different from those used in ordinary conversation when he asserted that one man could have determination and energy while another was irresolute, inert and slack; one could be quick-witted while another was stupid.[2] But it was the nature of capitalist society, Marx asserted, that wealth had the power of "overturning and confounding...all human and natural qualities:"

> Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness -- its deterrent power -- is nullified by money. I, in my character as an individual, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honored, and therefore so is its possessor....That which I am unable to do as a man, and of which therefore all my individual essential powers are incapable, I am able to do my means of money.[3]

Therefore capitalist society was subject to criticism because untalented persons could, if they happened to be wealthy, purchase the services of the talented -- "and is he who has power over the talented not more talented than the talented?"[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 26.

[2] Anti-Dühring, p. 112.

[3] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 138-139, emphasis in original.

[4] Ibid.

These insights into natural inequalities prompted Engels to declare that the proletarian demand for equality was either a reaction against "the crying social inequalities" of the day or against "the bourgeois demand for equality." The demand served "as an agitational means in order to rouse the workers against the capitalists on the basis of the capitalists' own assertions" and therefore stood and fell "with bourgeois equality itself." Because, as we have seen, individuality meant inequality, "the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the abolition of classes. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that, of necessity passes into absurdity."[1]

The potentialities of the working class were therefore unequal potentialities. But this approach to inequalities followed that of Adam Smith in that it attributed talent in some area to all men and did not depreciate those who were less gifted mentally. This was what Smith meant when he said that "among men...the most dissimilar geniuses are of use to one another."[2]

With this background, we are in a better position to try to learn who would possess the talent for leadership in a communist society and what the exercise of that talent would involve.

Let us begin by turning to Marx's description of the Paris Commune where "plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the governmental privilege of their 'natural superiors,' and,

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[1] Anti-Dühring, pp. 120-121, emphasis in original.

[2] The Wealth of Nations, Book I, cited by Marx in Economics and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 131.

under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed their work modestly, conscientiously, and efficiently..."[1] In this conception of workers as administrators, it remains to be seen whether Marx was implying that, as with the poor boys who became wealthy, at least some proletarians were capable of taking on leadership roles, or if he was instead suggesting that this was a capability of the working class generally. According to Marx "the few important functions which still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed...but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore, strictly responsible agents."[2] When discussing these functions, Marx limited his concern to the process of production which involved the need to apportion labor-time "in accordance with a definite social plan"[3] and for conscious social control and regulation of the process of production.[4]

Marx called the planning skill "intelligence in production" and noted that in capitalist society it expanded in one direction because it vanished in many others. "What is lost by the detail laborers, is concentrated in the capital that employs them."[5] But although Marx asserted that capitalism estranged from the worker

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[1] The Civil War in France, Moscow, 1952, Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 97.

[2] Ibid., p. 91.

[3] Capital, Vol. I, p. 79.

[4] Ibid., p. 356.

[5] Ibid., p. 361.

"the intellectual potentialities of the labor-process,"[1] he indicated also that in the cooperative factory the job of manager would remain but that the manager would be "paid by the laborers instead of representing capital against them."[2] Presumably he meant that persons who had the potentialities to fulfill this role would also have the opportunity in a communist society. Equality of opportunity would be a reality, not merely a tendency, and the abolition of classes would mean that talented persons would not be disadvantaged as they had formerly been simply by their membership in the working class.

That the managers would be the responsible agents of society does not make clear how society would select them. It was in discussing the Paris Commune that Marx indicated that he envisioned a democratic selection process. Indeed, "nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture."[3] Marx had clearly indicated that not all men had the talent to discharge the managerial functions, but his favoring of universal suffrage shows that he expected each citizen of the classless society to be competent to select the persons who did have this talent. Apparently Marx avoided thinking about the possibility that the masses might not be rational enough to make this selection. That this problem might not have occurred to him is

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[1] Ibid., p. 645.

[2] Capital, Vol. III, p. 456.

[3] The Civil War in France, p. 92.

suggested by the fact that only lately has concern about apathy and irrational voting behavior become an important element of modern political theory. The doctrine of class consciousness suggested that the workers would attain theoretical understanding of the workings of society, once they had emancipated themselves from capitalism. Indeed, such understanding was held to be required for the emancipation to occur. But this position with respect to consciousness appears to contradict Marx and Engels' own remarks about natural inequalities, cited above. It is possible that they absorbed some of the democratic ideology that was prevalent in the wake of the French Revolution or that their study of classical economics predisposed them to expect people to behave rationally.[1]

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[1] In fact, if we were to take a Marxian or Mannheimian position with respect to the limitations caused by a thinker's background, perhaps the entire doctrine of class consciousness can be subsumed under the broader notion of rational behavior that played so important a part in classical economics. There is also the suggestion in Chapter VI of The Holy Family that the doctrine is partly rooted in Hobbesian materialism:

> There is no need of any great penetration to see from the teaching of materialism on the original goodness and equal intellectual endowment of men, the omnipotence of experience, habit and education, and in the influence of environment on man, the great significance of industry, the justification of enjoyment etc., how necessarily materialism is connected with communism and socialism. If man drawa all his knowledge, sensation, etc. from the world of the senses and the experience gained in it, the empirical world must be arranged so that in it man experiences and gets used to what is really human and that he becomes aware of himself as man.

Engels seems to take a similar view in the essay on historical materialism in which he asserts that

> So long as we take care to train and to use our senses properly, and to keep our action within the limits prescribed by perceptions properly made and properly used, so long we shall find that the result of our action proves the conformity of our perceptions with the objective nature of the things perceived.

In our orchestra analogy, universal suffrage would mean that each musician participated in the choice of the conductor on the basis of the decisions of each about the qualifications of prospective conductors. Those without administrative talent would be able to determine who did have that talent. But it was Engels who carried democracy to its highest degree -- who made every musician (man) an orchestra conductor -- when he described how the abolition of the division of labor would mean the participation of all men in community affairs. In the same work in which he wrote on inequalities, Engels suggested that "society liberated from the barriers of capitalist production" would create "a race of producers with an all-round training who understand the scientific basis of industrial production as a whole."[1] According to Engels, the final reason for defending class differences was that there had to be a class which was not plagued "with the production of its daily subsistence, in order that it may have time to look after the intellectual work of society."[2] This kind of division of labor had been justified on grounds of necessity, but that justification no longer existed:

Apparently this position would be that differences in the ability to perceive are produced by differences in the way men have been trained and are not attributable to any natural differences among men. But this would contradict Engels' own remarks, cited above. Cf. "On Historical Materialism," special introduction to 1892 English edition of Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, Moscow, 1954, Foreign Languages Publishing House.

[1] Anti-Dühring, p. 325.

[2] The Housing Question, New York, undated, International Publishers, p. 30.

> So long as the really working population was so much occupied in their necessary labor that they had no time left for looking after the common affairs of society -- the direction of labor, affairs of state, legal matters, art, science, etc. -- so long was it always necessary that there should exist a special class, freed from actual labor, to manage these affairs....Only the immense increase of the productive forces attained through large-scale industry made it possible to distribute labor among all members of society without exception, and thereby to limit the labor time of each individual member to such an extent that all have enough free time left to take part in the general -- both theoretical and practical -- affairs of society.[1]

In the final analysis, Engels' contribution to the teaching on the abolition of the division of labor contradicted the discussion of man's inequalities, unless we assume that he was following Adam Smith's approach to the diversity of human talents and was including a particularly Marxist addition. That is, although man's individuality meant a diversity of talents, in a non-alienated society there would be one talent that would be common to all despite individuality -- namely, the social talent, for man is by nature social, according to Marxism, and his highest existence is "the real enjoyment of social existence."[2]

But Engels is not clear about how it would be possible for all men to participate in community affairs. Marx had stressed the need for managers to control the production processes and had suggested that social controls of a less technical nature would wither away. Even discipline over labor within the process of production itself

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[1] Anti-Dühring, p. 204.

[2] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, pp. 104-105.

was expected to "become superfluous under a social system in which the laborers work for their own account."[1] As for crime, in communist society it would be unlikely because the overwhelming majority of persons would understand that the society permitted each man to fulfill his need for self-activity. Criminals, when they did exist, would not be punished. Instead, the criminal himself would recognize his transgression and would desire to inflict punishment upon himself. At this point the society would step in to save him from the sentence he had pronounced on himself:

> A penal theory that at the same time sees in the criminal the man can do so only in abstraction, in imagination, precisely because punishment, coercion, is contrary to human conduct. Besides, this would be impossible to carry out. Pure subjective arbitrariness would take the place of abstract law because it would always depend on official "honest and decent" men to adapt the penalty to the individuality of the criminal. Plato admitted that the law must be one-sided, and must make abstraction of the individual. On the other hand, under human conditions punishment will really be nothing but the sentence passed by the culprit himself. There will be no attempt to persuade him that violence from without, exerted on him by others, is violence exerted on himself by himself. On the contrary, he will see in other men his natural saviours from the sentence which he has pronounced on himself; in other words the relation will be reversed.[2]

Thus, although Marx was able to conceive of crime and criminals "under human conditions," he posited a society that could tolerate criminals without repressive controls against them. The only communal affairs remaining would be controls over the economy. Indeed, according to Engels' famous statement, the only work remaining for public servants

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[1] Capital, Vol. III, p. 100.

[2] The Holy Family, pp. 238-239.

would be "the administration of things and the direction of the process of production."[1]

In our orchestra analogy, it was one of the conductor's functions to interpret the composer's intentions. Similarly, it would be the manager's task to interpret society's needs. In any complex industrial society this involves policy-making since it is impossible to divorce policy from administration.[2] This is of special importance to Marxism because the outline of the future society indicated that less technical aspects of community affairs would disappear. Hence the notion of all men participating in communal affairs becomes rather utopian when given concrete meaning in Marxism's own terms. Marx's recognition of the need for managers implied that technical functions would be in the hands of those who had the talent to fulfill such roles and who would be chosen through democratic procedures. The problem of administrative policy-making was one that Marx ignored despite the fact that he suggested the disappearance of all other policy-making, because he felt that the interests and therefore the policies of the administrators would, as with everyone, coincide with the common interest. Engels, on the other hand, said that all men would participate in community affairs, thus ignoring the fact that decisions on those affairs would necessarily involve technical competence.

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[1] Anti-Dühring, p. 309.

[2] Paul H. Appleby shows this in detail in Policy and Administration, University of Alabama Press, 1949.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: MARXISM AND THE CLASSICS

> **The philosophers must become kings in our cities, or those who are now called kings and potentates must learn to seek wisdom like true and genuine philosophers, and so political power and intellectual wisdom will be joined in one....Until that happens there can be no rest from troubles for the cities, and for the whole human race.**
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> **— Plato, Republic, 473.**

In this concluding chapter we would like to tie together the preceding discussion and note some of the problems it raises for political philosophy. This shall be done primarily by contrasting Marxism with classical political philosophy. While admittedly the author of this thesis has not studied all of the major political philosophies since classical antiquity, up to this point in his intellectual development the only philosophical system among those he is familiar with that he finds capable of raising serious arguments against Marxism is that of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

The ensuing discussion shall not attempt to reach conclusions about whether or not the arguments raised by the classics would emerge victorious when placed side by side with those of Marxism. This shall not be done, not because we are unwilling to commit ourselves to a philosophical position, but because the present level of scholarship of the author permits him to present the classical position only in a very sketchy outline. The discussion shall instead proceed primarily from the author's impression that there is a need to distinguish between sound arguments that ought to be made by those who accept

the classical approach and other arguments that appear to be untenable because they reflect an incomplete understanding of Marxism.

Let us begin by looking at two instances in which Marxism directly discussed arguments of the classics. It was Marx himself who recognized a certain kinship between his approach to economics and that of the classics. He noted the striking contrast between the capitalistic desire to accumulate, i.e. the attitude of "accentuation of quantity and exchange-value" and the classical position, i.e. "quality and use-value." He recognized that the division of labor posited in Plato's Republic was a consequence of "the various bents and talents of men" and of the classical position that "without some restraint no important results can be obtained anywhere."[1] In The German Ideology, Marx and Engels mentioned pre-capitalist notions of the division of labor in which productive labor was thought of as a subordinate mode of self-activity -- subordinate because of "the narrowness of the individuals themselves."[2] Marx's interpretation of the Socratic-Platonic economic system was that its division of labor developed from the multifarious requirements and the limited capacities of individuals. "Hence," he noted, "both product and producer are improved by division of labor."[3] Nevertheless, Marx's apparent approval of this system was dissolved when he suggested that the end of alienation involved the capacity of all men to engage in creative

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[1] Capital, Vol. I, p. 365.

[2] The German Ideology, p. 66.

[3] Capital, Vol. I, p. 365, note 4.

activity. The classical writers believed that men were unequally endowed with the ability to reason and therefore their reaction to a suggestion that the antithesis between physical and mental labor be abolished might have been that this would make many members of the polis into worse men. Marx's characterization of the Socratic-Platonic division of labor was in purely economic terms. With Plato, said Marx, the division of society into classes was based on the division of labor. It was "merely the Athenian idealization of the Egyptian system of castes," where Egypt had been used as a model because her castes were founded on the knowledge "that they who change their occupations become skilled in none but that those who constantly stick to one occupation bring it to the highest perfection."[1] This view of the Socratic-Platonic society omitted mentioning that the classics believed some men were by nature better equipped to strive for social virtue than others because of natural differences as well as differences caused by good and bad upbringing. Their division of society into classes was based on the assertion that "some men need guidance by others, whereas others do not at all or to a much lesser degree." Consequently, it was right for some men to be the rulers of others and the best regime of the classical writers, i.e. the "utopia" for which they would wish or pray, consisted of the absolute rule of the wise, where wisdom was synonymous with understanding how society must be organized if each man were to be able to lead a just life.[2] Marx rejected these ideas on the

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[1] Ibid., pp. 365-366 and notes.

[2] Strauss, Natural Right and History, pp. 138-141.

ground that all prior notions of morality, justice and virtue only reflected the level of material development of the productive forces and that classical political philosophy was, generally, an ideology either of the Athenian state or of slave society generally. This is one ground on which the arguments of classical scholars might originate.

Marxism also presented another teaching of classical political philosophy, however incompletely, by suggesting that the highest reason for the defense of class differences had always been that "there must be a class which need not plague itself with the production of its daily subsistence, in order that it may have time to look after the intellectual work of society."[1] This interpretation omitted that part of the classical position that contains the teaching that while the simply best regime would be the absolute rule of the wise, for practical purposes the best regime would be the rule of gentlemen. It was not so much because of their wealth that gentlemen were held to be able to look after the affairs of society. Primarily it was because they were held to be better able to appreciate virtuous, just and noble behavior than the majority of men.[2] In contrast with Marx and Engels, the classics taught that only a few men could attain this level; that there was something in the nature of man that prevented many of them from reaching it and that material abundance was not simply the answer because if it were achieved most men would indulge

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[1] Engels, The Housing Question, p. 30.

[2] Strauss, Natural Right and History, pp. 142-143.

in vulgar, rather than noble and creative pursuits. "To honor riches and at the same time to acquire enough temperance," said Plato's Socrates, "is impossible."[1] This is another ground on which classical scholars may want to challenge Marxism.

Nevertheless, a great deal of criticism of Marxism, not only by classical scholars but also by non-Marxist liberals, defeats its own purpose because of a failure to appreciate the nature of the philosophy that is being attacked.

Marxism is the most optimistic of social theories. It rejected the approach of 18th century natural right philosophy in which a concept of natural freedom and equality at the dawn of human history was made to imply that leadership should depend on democratic institutions, in favor of an approach in which all men were qualified to choose their leaders -- perhaps to be leaders -- because of their rationality. Consequently, Marxism also challenged the teaching of classic natural right, but it had in common with the classics an emphasis on reason and man's natural sociality. In contrast with the classics, Marx asserted that the members of the working class would, as a result of the material progress of the history of civilization, attain enough rationality to understand the historical role of their class and subsequently to select their representatives through the democratic process. To this, Engels added that each man would participate in community affairs. Marxism posited an economic organization that permitted the antithesis between mental and physical labor to be superseded and that sharply curtailed the time that must be

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[1] Republic, 555c.

taken up by work. If this took place, man would be able to express his creative nature in self-activity and therefore there would no longer be any tension between men's individual interests and the common interest. Political problems -- insofar as these represented the tensions of the class struggle -- would vanish, and social controls would remain in the economic sphere only, i.e. the administration of goods in the automated economy of abundance and the control over production that would entail a minimum level of direction of the working man during the few hours that it would be necessary for him to contribute his time to the community. Furthermore, what appears to be the obligation of each man to contribute "according to his ability," is not an obligation that would, in a truly human society, encounter any resistance. The end of alienation meant the end of the conflict between the individual and the common interests. The individual would therefore contribute according to his ability simply because he would be a "human being in need of a totality of human life-activities."[1] The end of alienation means that we must not interpret the slogan, "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," as referring to the contribution that an individual must make as a prerequisite for his sharing in the social product. Rather, the first and second phrases of this slogan are identical. There would no longer be any difference between abilities and needs. We would have a situation in which the fulfilling of one's needs would become the contribution according to one's abilities.

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[1] Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, p. 111, emphasis in original.

Consequently, in a non-alienated society all work would be creative work and all men would lead a life of creativity and contemplation. Yet Marx and Engels also noted inequalities in human intelligence and even implied on occasion that these inequalities were natural. They conceived of the abolition of classes, (i.e. the ownership of the means of production and their products by the entire community for the planned production of use values, rather than their ownership by one class for its own enrichment at the expense of another), without conceiving of the abolition of all inequality. But though Marx and Engels said that human differences cannot be, or even should not be, done away with, they appear to have contradicted their own recognition of human differences when they suggested that once the community owned the means of production it would be possible to build a society in which all men would be brotherly, moral and rational so that separate institutions for the prescription of virtuous conduct, as well as punishment for transgressions, would wither away.

The kind of social organization envisioned would begin to come into being after an inevitable social revolution by the working class -- inevitable because the rate of capitalist profit would fall to such a degree that either economic crises would become increasingly severe or perpetual misery and stagnation would exist. The revolution, they asserted, would lead to the abolition of all classes. The notion of consciousness and the unity of theory and practice made Marx and Engels practical revolutionaries as well as theoretical social scientists and philosophers. The unity of theory and practice made it possible for them to "wear two hats," as it were -- in

their role as theoreticians, to predict the inevitability of the revolution; then, in their role as revolutionaries, to work for its achievement, all of this work being guided by their certainty that from misery would emerge truly human morality. Their work for revolution was not thought to be inhumane by them, because the capitalist system was held to be so inhumane and because the revolution was expected to lead to the end of all degradation.

If this characterization of Marxism is correct, it is not quite sufficient to describe Marx and Engels as Machiavellian.[1] One possible reason they might be so characterized is that Machiavelli did not rule out violence and bloodshed from the actions of princes. However, his pragmatic methods included no absolute standards of justice in which, perhaps, an unjust status quo could be thought to justify violations of what are normally held to be moral acts. In contrast, Marxism posited revolution because of a situation that was unjust from the point of view of its understanding of the potentialities of human nature. Man had been reduced to a fragment of his real self despite the fact that, according to Marxism, the pre-conditions existed for that real self to emerge. Revolution would lead from extreme misery to the best kind of social existence man had ever known.

The central point of Machiavelli's critique of morality was that the classics were utopian, since they described their best regime in the idealistic terms of virtue. Machiavelli revolutionized political philosophy by taking his bearings not by virtue but by the

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[1] Leo Strauss so characterizes Marx. See What Is Political Philosophy? Glencoe, Ill., 1959, The Free Press, p. 41.

interests and passions of all men. He taught what he considered to be a new kind of justice that rested on an immoral foundation, i.e. the prince's passion for glory. Marx and Engels could be termed Machiavellian insofar as they rejected classical idealism and also took their bearings by men's interests, in their case the material interests of socio-economic classes. But, since they conceived of these interests in their historical materialist fashion they were not, like Machiavelli, conventionalists who believed that virtue was nothing more than the interest of the prince. Machiavelli believed all morality was conventional. Marx accepted this view, however, only for all "hitherto existing society." Hegelian historicism, with its absolute moment in which absolute truth became knowable, was made compatible with the materialist approach by the suggestion that knowledge of absolute truth depended upon the material growth of the productive forces. Marx and Engels had very clearly expressed notions of how men ought to conduct themselves and they suggested that a time would come when they would do so spontaneously; that if class antagonisms were superseded no social controls would be necessary to enforce this kind of behavior. It would appear that those who have adopted the classical political philosophers as their teachers have a very strenuous argument to pose against Marxism, but I think it is not precisely accurate to equate historical materialism with Machiavellianism.

Marx and Engels proceeded from a Machiavellian (as well as a Hobbesian) foundation to something higher, but perhaps incorrect. Whereas 18th century natural right was closer to Machiavelli's teach-

ing in resting civil morality on a conventional base, Marxism was a natural right philosophy that restored the classical notions of man's natural sociality, rationality and a morality based upon teleological concepts of life most appropriate to human nature -- while at the same time it suggested that history had established the pre-conditions for transcending material interests, actualizing the good, and ending what it termed alienation; consequently, for uniting the former opposition between wisdom and consent.

Marxism's historical materialist approach led to an unusually optimistic view of human nature and human potentialities and an unwillingness to accept anything short of the non-alienated life that was believed to be within the reach of men. Because of Marxism's unusually optimistic -- and perhaps therefore inaccurate -- view of human nature, it was radical, i.e. critical of everything that existed. It is on the grounds of its optimistic philosophy of human nature that it ought to be criticized by classical scholars and these are grounds that open the door to an avalanche of criticism.

Marxism began with Machiavellian premises and then transcended them by suggesting that true notions of morality could be actualized from a materialist basis. In a sense Marxism is a merger -- perhaps an unsuccessful one -- of Machiavellian and idealistic principles. Criticism of the validity of the synthesis it suggested would be fruitful in the attempt to achieve better understanding of the fundamental problems of political philosophy. Since my main effort is to achieve that kind of understanding, I have tried to outline these arguments, having undertaken, for the purposes of this concluding chapter,

a rough case study of two contrasting philosophies that vie for acceptance by thoughtful persons. Criticism of Marxism should be based on the attempt to demonstrate that its understanding of man's nature and man's potentialities is in error, rather than on the illusory ground that Marxism contains no absolute moral conceptions. On the contrary, its faith in the ability of man to be moral and noble dominated both the theoretical writings and the practical activity.

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