

to reduce prices and to *abolish* taxes. In addition the people of the U.S.S.R. were promised: free apartments; free kindergartens, nurseries, rest homes and old people's homes; free lunches at work; free transportation; and free medicine. According to the Program, the U.S.S.R. was to become the country with the shortest working day. It was promised that the longevity of the population would increase.

Not a single promise has been fulfilled. The Brezhnev regime significantly lowered the standard of living of the Soviet people. Growing inflation reduced the real income of the population, especially of those tens of millions of people who have stable nominal wages and salaries. The number of apartments built per 1,000 persons annually was reduced by about 40 percent. The shortage of food grew even more serious during recent years. Even according to Soviet statistics, the working day of industrial workers has been increased. The rate of mortality of the population *grew* by about 50 percent, while the death rate in the free countries was significantly reduced. The real income and the living space of an average Soviet citizen are four to five times smaller than the real income and the living space of an average American citizen. The Soviet Union is now lagging behind the whole free world in its standard of living. As the Soviet rate of economic growth has fallen from more than 10 percent to less than 4 percent a year, the Soviet standard of living cannot meet or surpass that of Western countries in the foreseeable future. At the same time, however, the U.S.S.R. has surpassed the United States and other Western countries in the size of the military forces and in the production of arms, which is a great burden for the population of Russia.

Dr. Zaleski has studied only the economic planning in the U.S.S.R. The socialist leaders are, however, more effective at planning persecution, executions, and wars. Altogether, more than 150 million people have been killed, died in the concentration camps, or starved to death in the planned socialist societies. This is the result of socialism and the warning to the world of free enterprise.

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Contra Marxist Contradictions

MARXISM: FOR AND AGAINST. *By Robert L. Heilbroner.* (W. W. Norton, New York, 1980)

THE POLITICS OF PROCRUSTES: CONTRADICTIONS OF ENFORCED EQUALITY. *By Antony Flew.* (Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1981)

If I shared a prominent Marxist emotion, viz. revenge, I would follow the lead of so many "reviewers" in *The New York Review of Books*, Professor Heilbroner included, and simply develop my own reflections on Marxism instead of saying anything about *Marxism: For and Against*. For Professor Heilbroner does not in the least bother to entertain any criticisms of Marxism from non-Marxist circles. But this would be to play the Marxist game—a temptation that

civilized persons should strenuously resist. *Marxism: For and Against* is, moreover, in large part a decent book by a Marxist with many decent impulses, however muddled and self-deluded the general thinking prompted by those impulses. Professor Heilbroner cannot resist adherence to some basically bourgeois virtues — notably, honesty. He has therefore managed to admit several of the most self-indicting elements of Marxism. This should be welcome in an age when hundreds of self-proclaimed Marxists constantly engage in clean-up operations to save their guru from the allegations of being confused, often mean-minded, anything but careful in his reasoning, far from fair to those he criticized in print, and fertile in dangerous implications. Professor Heilbroner is a worthy Marxist: he bites the bullet when that is what, by the force of logic, must be done.

As to Antony Flew's book, it is merely a gem. And one reason for reviewing it alongside Professor Heilbroner's book is that Professor Flew provides much of the needed philosophical and general equipment required for a clear grasp of what is wrong with Marxism, including examples of Marxist-Leninist nonsense and evil in both print and practice.

But, first, the mists. *Marxism: For and Against* starts by exploring its theme: "Why is it that the work of Marx, from which Marxism springs, exerts such fascination after more than a century?" (p. 15).¹ His generous answer is that "some part of the 'presence' that Marxism obtrudes upon the world is surely the consequence of its unifying tendencies and its teleological thrust" (p. 23). He believes that Marxism, unlike all other philosophies, manages "to infuse a hitherto lacking coherence and meaning into social existence, not least into that aspect of existence that concerns our personal engagement with the society surrounding us" (p. 23).²

How Professor Heilbroner manages to exude such confidence in Marx's "unifying tendencies" when by now there are about 300 different definitive versions of Marxism abroad is something to wonder at and admire, preferably from afar. Concerning any reasonable assessment of its capacity to withstand honest scrutiny, Marxism has to be regarded as seriously faltering — alive politically, perhaps, but of no significant intellectual force to other than true believers. Professor Heilbroner anticipates this sort of attack and claims that the *dialectical* approach to knowledge, the *materialist approach to history*, the Marxist *socioanalysis of capitalism*, and the *commitment to socialism* all combine to form "a set of premises . . . that define[s] Marxist thought" (p. 20). But what he does not come to grips with here is that, on all these matters, almost all Marxists have different ideas — indeed, they take the very words to mean different things. At a recent convention of Marxist philosophers, for example, just one concept, that of "materialist," received as many as four drastically different interpretations — including "physical," "real," "factual," and "composed of

1. All further page numbers in parentheses refer to the books under review.

2. A very different answer is proposed by Robert Wessen, *Why Marxism?* (Basic Books, 1976).

matter." Entire passages from Marx were offered up as test cases for reinterpretation in light of these diverse conceptions of "materialist," all resulting in mutually incompatible renditions of Marx's meaning. No doubt the same could be done—and probably has been done—with any of the several dozen of Marx's key terms.³

Moving on to less scholastic matters, Professor Heilbroner tells us that "the *raison d'être* of Marxism lies in its commitment to a political goal, namely the overthrow (although not necessarily by violence) of the capitalist order and its replacement by a socialist, eventually, a communist one" (p. 25). Oddly enough, however, he declines an invitation to seriously examine the nature of Soviet Marxism. (We are given a clue, nevertheless, as to how Marxism relates to Stalinism, but it does not bode well for any attempt to merge Marxism and political liberty, let alone anything resembling democratic politics. Professor Heilbroner tells us forthrightly that the transformation of bourgeois societies into socialist ones "requires the use of political command [though not] in an arbitrary or dictatorial fashion, but certainly it requires the curtailment of the central economic freedom of bourgeois society, namely the right of individuals to own, and therefore to withhold if they wish, the means of production, including their own labor" [p. 157].⁴)

Aside from its refreshing frankness about the necessity for slave labor in achieving socialism—for that is what expropriation of "the means of production, including their own labor," comes to—there are other similar instructive elements to this book. The chapter on "The Dialectical Approach to Philosophy" is useful if only because of its admission of the obscurities in the Marxian conception of dialectics. I find it interesting that Marxists try so hard to save this element of Marxism which, in Hegel, had some metaphysical backing, but which loses every bit of support it might have in the materialism of Marx because it is largely linked to certain nineteenth century ideas of human evolution and racialism. In her " 'In the Interest of Civilization': Marxist Views of Race and Culture in the Nineteenth Century," (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, January-March 1981), Diane Paul carefully documents this widely suppressed aspect of Marx's and Engels's point of view. Marx makes unambiguous reference to "racial differences [which] can and must be abolished in the course of historical develop-

3. Some key terms are "freedom," "human nature," "alienation," "exploitation," "capitalism," and "value."

4. An even more forthright Marxist, William Ash, wrote recently (in his *Morals and Politics*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1977), that "the liquidation of a class of exploiters by no means implies the elimination of individual members of that class—only the destruction of the social basis which enabled them to exploit others. The class of criminally negligent motorists, for example, could be eliminated without a single person's being subjected to violence—unless, of course, those motorists insisted on defending their 'right' to drive just as they please" (p. 147). So those who died or were enslaved in the gulag simply didn't understand that they were criminals who "insisted on defending their 'right' to" live their lives and use their belongings.

ment," differences that Marx, following an obscure racist Pierre Tremaux, attributed to soil variations throughout the world. Marx wrote to Engels, on August 7, 1866, that "Tremaux is much more important and fruitful than Darwin." And he generally dismissed entire groups of human beings, including "the common Negro type [which] is only a degeneration of a much higher one," Slavs, Poles, and Basques, among others. But none of this is discussed in Professor Heilbroner's adulatory tract. Instead, in an attempt to set up an easy target against which Marxist dialectical thinking might be seen in a favorable light, the author is eager and certainly able to demonstrate some of the shortcomings of the Cartesian rationalism and positivism that have sometimes disfigured the social sciences. But he fails utterly to provide any good reasons for choosing the dialectical approach over common sense linked with conscientious science and civilized (contemptuously labelled "bourgeois") morality. Eventually he escapes the liabilities of this muddled element in Marxism by claiming that "the very elements that generate clear communication in ordinary discourse—the relatively clear-cut language of common sense and logic—are ill-qualified for the presentation of a dialectical view with its focus on the ideas of flux, contradiction, interpretation, etc." (p. 58). Admittedly, expecting the world to yield to some static picture we form of it, *a la* the crudest version of Platonist idealism, is folly; and we should be prepared to update our understanding as time passes and good grounds are found for doing so. But one may swallow this commonsensical gnat and still strain at the camel of Marxist dialectics.

More quickly, Professor Heilbroner's "The Materialist Interpretation of History" gets bogged down in the paradoxes generated by Marx's belief that, for human beings, it is "their social being that determines their consciousness." This is to say that the environment—including, of course, how folks produce their livelihood—causes what people think. In their later years, Marx and Engels tried to extricate themselves from the implications of this drastic environmental determinism by distinguishing between *ultimate* and *only* determinants. Yet, of course, once the environmental determinism is abandoned, so must the "scientific" character of Marxian socialism. But was it not this scientific claim which gave Marxism its standing as a somewhat useful perspective on human society? Without it, all we have is a *commitment to*—or, to use the term of another contemporary Marxist, Agnes Heller,⁵ a *faith in*—socialist human emancipation.⁶

5. Agnes Heller, "Towards a Marxist Theory of Value," *Kinesis*, Vol. 5 (Fall 1972), p. 76.

6. This human emancipation in Marxism amounts to something like the collective maturation of the human race, an analogy with the maturation of individual human beings most biologists (and bourgeois thinkers) would consider sensible to entertain. A great deal of the inhumanity practiced in the name of Marxism can be understood by noting that individual persons in this doctrine are but constituent parts of the whole, transcendent individual, namely humanity.

The chapters on "The Socioanalysis of Capitalism" and "The Commitment to Socialism" are not without merit; but they contain little that is really new or helpful. Aside from the confusions and special pleadings familiar from all Marxist circles—which include ignoring all serious theorists who defend capitalism—only the confessions of the unabashedly tyrannical features of the Marxist revolutionary progress toward socialism are worth attention.

Let me finally note that Marxism has appeal because it feeds on envy and revenge. Injustice is not difficult to find around the globe, and in the absence of easy remedies, a point of view that can be transformed into bumper-sticker slogans cannot help but be attractive. "Not for profit but for use" (as if the alternative were that simple or even possible) deceives many innocent hearts and minds. And, of course, there is the problem of the absence of fighting alternatives, with contemporary western philosophy offering little besides logic-chopping and intuition-based analytic philosophy as the alternatives to the monstrous deception of Marxian reductionism.

An excellent manifestation of contemporary analytic philosophy, however, is Antony Flew's *The Politics of Procrustes*, in which the author unleashes his razor criticism on the numerous enemies of liberty (in the libertarian, capitalist sense of this term). The central theme of his book is that the clamor for equality is at once ancient and barbarous. Professor Flew explains that in the Greek legend Procrustes "forced passing travellers to lie down on a bed, and if any were too long for the bed he lopped off those parts of their bodies which protruded, while racking out the legs of the ones who were too short." He discusses numerous ideas of equality, seeking to distinguish those with good sense going for them from those that are at best pipe dreams and at worst vile frauds. As for socialism, Professor Flew—in contrast to Professor Heilbroner on capitalism—consults self-proclaimed socialists and extracts from their evidence the most consistent and persistent rendition of that social ideal. In the end he concludes that the concept means nothing more or less than the "satisfaction of that most familiar and traditional criterion, collective ownership and public control" of the means of production, indeed, the entire realm of human interaction (p. 14). That the latter is virtually a necessary feature of a socialist political system for the author is shown by his rhetorical question: "Can it really be nothing but a quirk of history that, among all the many countries that are as near as makes no matter fully socialist, there is not one where opposition parties are allowed to organize, and to contest elections? In Poland, I have myself heard all-too-experienced students of political geography ask: 'Where is there a socialist democracy?' They gave themselves the wry answer, 'On the moon.'" (p. 44) (One hates to think of what this spells for France!)

Following some choice quotes from such eminent egalitarians as Christopher Jencks, Tyrrell Burgess, Ted Honderich—all exhibiting blind faith in the uppermost value of what in fact is the mere relative value of equality—Professor Flew offers such insights as these:

To the extent that you are indeed an authentic egalitarian you are committed to saying that what various persons are to hold is to be determined

primarily by reference to what other people have, rather than by reference to what those persons themselves both are or are not, and have or have not done (p. 29).

Furthermore,

....(T)hose who do not accept equality as a value are not necessarily, and by that token, lovers of inequality as such. They very often reject both egalitarian and inegalitarianism as direct objectives, because it seems to them perverse to lay such emphasis upon any mere relativities; to attend above all, that is, not to first-order goods and how to maximize them, but instead of second-order questions about who has more or less of one than another has. It is, therefore, although understandably tempting, wrong to label all those who do not recognise equality as a value, or who oppose policies for its enforcement, inegalitarians. You might as well argue that anyone who does not accept the classical Utilitarian thesis that the supreme good is the greatest happiness of the greatest number must, by that rejection, be committed to cherishing as the only alternative the maximum misery of the maximum number (p. 30).

In the first sections of the book Professor Flew discusses numerous exciting philosophical issues, sometimes in ways that I find not altogether acceptable—mainly because he chooses to uphold the familiar “is/ought” dichotomy. This doctrine has it that whereas judgments as to what is (was or will be) the case can be true or false, judgments about what someone should do, as a matter of moral standards, do not enjoy such an exalted cognitive status. These can perhaps aspire to expressions of preference, wishes, educated taste, or something more complicated; they can not, however, tell us anything about the world or our relationship to it. So viewing things leaves us at sea concerning whether any sort of conduct, any institutions or even political regimes are *in fact* more worthwhile than others. In the end, accepting the “is/ought” dichotomy leaves us with no *moral* basis for choosing between alternatives of any sort. Such a stance, then, leads Professor Flew to embrace what comes to but a purely formalistic conception of human rights. As he puts it: “What actual rights there are, if any, and upon what particular facts these are grounded, is a substantial matter of morals. As such it must no doubt remain inherently contentious. It would be different if rights were indeed deducible from their grounds ... [f]or in that case, the relevant facts about people being known, questions of rights could be settled by the operation of a logical calculus” (p. 37). This conclusion about basic human rights is extremely dubious and quite unnecessary. While knowing the facts about human nature will not by itself permit any mathematical deduction of human rights, it will permit us, with the aid of some knowledge about social life and economics, to rationally identify the basic requirements of civilized social existence, exactly what the basic human rights stated in the Declaration of Independence manage to do. Knowing that human beings must guide their lives by the freely chosen ideas and theories

7. Tibor R. Machan, “Wronging Rights,” *Policy Review*, No. 17, (Summer 1981).

their minds can produce, and knowing that the central threat to such a choice in societies is the aggressive behavior of other human beings, we can infer that a system where individuals have the legally protected rights to their lives and to the freedom to guide them by their own judgment is morally better than a society where this is precluded (since "higher" goals are being pursued, such as "history's" dialectical mission).⁷

At any rate, Professor Flew goes on to discuss numerous other topics in a way I find extremely satisfactory, and my disagreement with him about the human rights issue does not much mar this work. Here is analytic philosophy at its best. To quote J. L. Austin, whom Professor Flew himself clearly admires, this involves "looking not merely at words . . . but also at the realities we use words to talk about. We are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of the phenomena."⁸ And more than that. Professor Flew has a wealth of facts and quotes at his fingertips so that nowhere does his reader get that impression, familiar from reading people opposed to capitalism and the free market, namely, that the author is simply pleading his case, not letting us in on his adversaries' best case, counting on our limited familiarity with the relevant material and on our limited time.

No, here is the best of scholarship: willingness to embark on the most intricate levels of abstraction while keeping close to *terra firma* so we can actually learn from the expedition just what we need.

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8. J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 182.

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