

MARX ON THE COMMUNIST STATE: A PARTIAL ECLIPSE OF POLITICAL REALITY

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An obvious ambiguity in Marx's thinking on the "state" in communist society has long been recognised.¹ With the best of anarchists Marx could rail against what at least *seems* to be the state-as-such, prophesying its inevitable "abolition" following the demise of classes,² and yet in nearly the next textual breath allow for a "public power"³ within society, muse over the form of the future "state,"⁴ and indeed insist upon the absolute necessity of an abiding central authority.⁵ In brief, we seem to be faced with two irreconcilable communist positions, indeed two "Marxes": one "anarchist," the other "statist."

I

In principle four basic interpretations of the problem are possible.

(1) Marx is indeed, at least fundamentally, an "anarchist." Clearly, "true" communist society, that which follows the temporary reign of the proletarian dictatorship, is envisioned as a *stateless* society; conflicting evidence is for one reason or another to be discounted. Two versions of this interpretation may be briefly cited. The first is the dominant view in the voluminous literature on Marx, which follows closely the familiar "economic," class dimension of the political theory: poised on an economic reductionist precipice Marx is strongly inclined to characterise politics and the state as epiphenomena of the history-making class struggle. For under capitalism, the state is nothing but the organisational form adopted by the bourgeoisie for the preservation of its property and its perseverance as dominant class.⁶ When economic conflict ceases, so will the state meet its end, its *raison d'être* evaporating into the dimming mists of the long dark age of unfreedom. The state apparatus will then more or less literally "wither away."⁷ A second, in my view much more profound, analysis which comes to roughly the same conclusion is offered by thinkers such as Talmon, Loewith and Voegelin, who view Marx only secondarily as a political economist, and primarily as a messianic, activist mystic who has created in the symbol of "communism" an immanent speculative *eschaton* out of the disintegrating ordering categories of an inverted Christianity. Communist man will no longer require the services of a state because he will have become a "new

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man" living in circumstances equivalent to terrestrial paradise, the fusion of *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena*.⁸

(2) Marx is in truth, despite apparently contrary evidence, a "statist." Solomon Bloom, for example, argued over three decades ago that the anarchist tendency in Marx is overshadowed by his insistence on the absolute need for centralised authority. Marx does in fact have a vision of the future political organisation of society; and communism, says Bloom, is rightly seen not as an anarchist utopia, but as a genuine (though revolutionary) version of the liberal-democratic idea involving a state organisation that respects a definite "realm of freedom."⁹ More recently Richard Adamiak has taken this line of argument much further to suggest that Marx's supposed anarchism is merely a polemical scrim pragmatically propagated to steal thunder from the genuine anarchists (first Proudhon and later Bakunin and their followers) and accomplished by the adroit manipulation of carefully defined terms. The existence of so-called "political power" is made definitionally contingent on the presence of antagonistic "classes," whose stipulated existence in turn rests entirely on private property; hence, with a veneer of paradox belying a rigorous logic, political power diminishes in direct proportion to an expanding scope of state ownership of the means of production. The shrewd politico Marx thereby has his cake and eats it: with the anarchists he can (duplicitously) call for the state's "abolition," thus siphoning off to the socialist cause popular radical sentiments and energies; but this selfsame abolition is in fact nothing but an extreme tactic of statism.¹⁰

(3) There is really no problem at all, and certainly no duplicity; Marx's is a unique and internally coherent political viewpoint that transcends the anarchist and statist positions while incorporating the truth of each. In the communist period there will indeed persist a state of sorts, but one compatible with the freedom so highly prized by the anarchist. The revival of interest in Marx's Hegelian origins generally, and one book in particular, Shlomo Avineri's *Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, have made this perhaps the most popular of current interpretations. According to Avineri, the *Aufhebung des Staats* that Marx intends refers only to the state as a so-called "universal sphere" institutionally and ideologically separate from civil society; the establishment of universal suffrage, under proper conditions, will realise the "true democracy" that performs the dialectical feat of fusing state and society into a higher, truly universal synthesis. Thus the state is "abolished" when it is drawn into "the totality of economic real life,"¹¹ that is, when it has lost its alienated character and is no longer an enemy of universal freedom. In a similar "dialectical" vein Hal Draper, though unimpressed by the promises of universal suffrage and retaining total respect for the ultimate unthinkable-ness of the communist social transformation, discovers an inner harmony of Marx's anarchist and statist sentiments. When Marx says that the proletarian revolution will abolish the state, he means, according to Draper, than an altogether new *type* of state is to be in-

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troduced: a workers' state which "breaks out of the series" of previous state-forms, and is "in-process-of-becoming-a-non-state," *i.e.*, an organisation which somehow carries out the legitimate social functions of coordinated decision-making without manifesting any form of "rule," not even the rule implied by the most perfect democracy.¹²

(4) Marx is incompatibly both anarchist and statist. The opposing formulations on the communist state, though not necessarily to be taken in every case at face value, nonetheless bear witness to a deep and fundamental fissure in the Marxian system. For reasons to be revealed by a theoretical analysis, Marx is locked into a radically self-contradictory position. This is my own view, which I shall attempt to articulate in the remainder of this essay. Each of the alternative views, of course, has much to recommend it; and they are by no means mutually exclusive. Marx indeed weaves together economic-determinist, liberal, democratic, polemical, and Hegelian philosophical elements into the visionary fabric of communist society. Though it is easily overstated, I consider the interpretation of Marx as a "messianic mystic" to harbor an especially keen insight into the problem, which we shall return to below. But each of the alternative interpretations is severely limited. A bloodless historical determination of anarchism (or for that matter, statism), however conscientiously grounded in the texts, is superficial, for Marx is first of all a philosopher and not a dogmatist; invoking the polemical context of Marx's anarchist utterances is enlightening but not decisive, for there are more solid grounds, less political perhaps but again more convincingly philosophical, for a Marxist anarchism; the dialectical harmonisation does not fully appreciate the radicalness of Marx's claims and the awesomeness of his anthropological expectations; the millennial Marx is the real but not the whole Marx, who eludes facile classification. Most simply put, the two dimensions, "anarchist" and "statist," are neither reducible to the other, nor are they harmonious. At the center of the visionary fabric is a gaping rent.

II

These claims may hopefully become clearer if we introduce the analysis by drawing out the issue of the state in its strongest terms.

In my view the heart of the issue is the problem of mediation, *i.e.*, the mediation of particular and general that is basic to any politics, though perhaps especially to the "idealist" politics that the erstwhile Hegelian Marx so enthusiastically took to task. I will go a bit into some of the subtleties of the case in a moment, but if I read correctly the philosophical anthropology that informs the critique, the outstanding result is that the category of mediation is not simply criticised, but obliterated. And with it goes the "political space" itself, *i.e.*, the artfully crafted cultural arena in which working, if imperfect, harmonies of

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parts and wholes are generated and sustained.¹³ For once Marx has made the analytical shift from "politics" to "society,"¹⁴ it is doubtful that the categories of particular and general — the raw materials of the political mediatory task — can survive at all, even in transvalued form. Certainly, "communist man," long-awaited issue of history's millennial labours, is not at all the curiously ambiguous political fellow, at once ever so jealous of his privacy, we have become accustomed to under our alienated conditions of existence. This is, then, the one side of the problem: if we follow out the logic of the philosophical anthropology, Marx is indeed, necessarily, an "anarchist," in the radical sense that no mediating authority may be legitimately predicated on the assumed philosophical grounds. The other, confounding side is that Marx himself quite forcefully posits just such a mediating authority in various forms: from the "public power" of the *Communist Manifesto* to the still more cogent communist "commanding will" over all processes of social production cited in *Capital*. There Marx likens the labouring process to an orchestra: each needs a conductor to coordinate, unify and carry out functions required by the good of the whole, as opposed to merely partial activities.¹⁵ The message is unequivocal. The need for orchestration is by no means diminished in communist society; on the contrary, Marx insists that following the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, what he disarmingly refers to as the "book-keeping" encompassing the regulation of labour becomes more essential than ever.¹⁶ Whatever we may conclude as to the "ruling" status of such a regulatory-administrative agency (clearly, Marx believed that such "management" posed no threat to freedom¹⁷), it is obviously still a *mediating* form, as the distinction between particular and general, expunged by the logic of the (anti) political anthropological vision, creeps back into the socialist scheme in the form of the partial activity of the workers and the total activity of the workshop as a whole. In short, it is still irreducibly a form of *state* — and this even at the level of the single factory — a situation that can only be magnified indefinitely the further we move up the scale of collectivity.

Put this way the divergence of anti- and pro-state sentiment is so striking that we must suspect an origin in two relatively independent sources: one a motive powerful enough to prompt the radical attempt at altering the very structure of political reality, the other a reason why Marx finally fails to carry through on the state's "abolition," leaving the mediatory political space intact, and indeed re-asserting it as the absolute precondition for communism. We submit that these two sources are, respectively: (1) a revolt against God which is the real ground of Marx's apocalyptic philosophical anthropology; (2) an abiding contact with reality rooted in the lifelong preoccupation with the "material" dimension of human existence. Marx's is a potent will to eclipse political reality; but in the end the will is considerably restrained, the resulting eclipse is only partial.

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The Revolt against God

Marx trumpets his revolt against the transcendental *realissimum* as early as his doctoral dissertation of 1841, in which — as the defender of philosophy — he makes the rebellion of Prometheus his own. He too “hates all the gods,” for only this apostatical defiance secures the right of human thought to world pre-eminence. Man may worship only at the earthly altar of human self-consciousness, for Marx “the supreme divinity.”¹⁸ Soon Marx had deserted an overly contemplative philosophy for a more activist career within the closed stream of material existence, but he held fast, as he always would, to his Promethean faith in human self-consciousness as the only true god. The expression of faith only becomes more sophisticated, as in the well-known formulations of the “Introduction” to the *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*.¹⁹ In a crucial development Marx has incorporated into his antitheism the subtleties of Feuerbach's projection psychology: man seeks gods because he has not yet found the only “true reality” that is himself. Religion is only *pseudo* self-consciousness and self-esteem. In short, “religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve around himself.”²⁰ Only through the abolition of religion can man become Man, and claim the immanent divinity that is his birthright.

Rebellion against transcendent divinity blossoms in the *Paris Manuscripts* into a full-fledged philosophical anthropology of human “self-creation.” To be independent, to stand on one's own feet, is precisely to owe existence only to oneself, to brook no “external ground.”²¹ What kind of god can be content to be creature of another, or depend for his sustenance and salvation on another? Marx conjures a conflation of “nature” and “history” in a process of human self-creation, insisting that “the *entire so-called world history* is only the creation of man through human labour and the development of nature for man.”²² The sacred is superceded by the profane. The self-creator who has become self-conscious of his power needs no God to be himself; he is already a god.

There is a problem, Marx admits. Such is the alienation of man from this true reality that the notion of man's creation by God remains “very difficult to expel from popular consciousness.” Against the best demystifying efforts common sense will insist on tracing the chain of created being back to an extramundane source. But the self-divinising rebellion cannot be derailed at this advanced stage. Marx impatiently alleges that the deeply metaphysical and spiritual question of creation is nothing but an abstraction; it is twisted — not even a fit subject for rational thought. Believe in your creator-God if you will, he states, but keep faith with your abstraction and hold your peace: “Do not think, do not question me, for as soon as you think and question, your *abstraction* from the existence of nature and man makes no sense.”²³ Here Marx is

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barely a hair's breadth, if that, away from what Voegelin has identified as the point of demonic closure to reality — the *Fragesverbot*, the ukase, issued in the name of rationality, against questions that are disturbing to the speculative system.²⁴

We are not, however, so much concerned with the rebellion itself as with its specifically political dimension. Marx's passion for the strictly Feuerbachian rebellion quickly burned out — precisely because that rebellion was not "political" enough. This may sound like a strange assertion about one who once said that politics must become the new religion. But Feuerbach's is still obviously the politics of the quasi-Hegelian state. The state constitutes an "infinite being" through the division and reunion of human powers; it is the essence of all realities, man's providence. "The true State is the unlimited, infinite, true complete, divine Man ... the absolute Man."²⁵ For Marx this idealist rhapsodising will no longer do; he has outgrown the Hegelian overshoes Feuerbach still wants the divine Man to wear. Thus after Feuerbach the chief thing remains to be done:²⁶ the fight against God must be expanded into the fight against the secular realities that have produced God, against man's *earthly* idols. And among them, indeed next to fetishised commodities the greatest of all, is the illusory "abstract community" of the state. Feuerbach's divine and absolute Man remains the goal, but now He is to be achieved *sans* benefit of the State.

The fact that the experience of religious revolt remains at the core of Marx's political speculation accounts for the peculiar character of the critique of Hegel, which closely parallels, often explicitly, Feuerbach's religious critique. Not surprisingly: how long will a mangod who has overcome God put up with the mystification of the mediatory state? Marx admits that Hegel showed keen insight in sensing a contradiction in the separation of civil and political society. But Hegel proved unequal to the task of resolving the contradiction, that is, abolishing the separation; he is little better than a trickster, contenting himself with apparent dissolutions that leave the uncompromising reality intact.²⁷ That is to say, through a mediatory effort at once philosophical and institutional, Hegel tries to preserve the duality of public and private life as a harmonious unity-in-difference that is an advance beyond the two sides taken singly. To Marx this is a "logical" pseudo-solution to a "real" problem. For the truth is, he argues, that the modern prize of differentiated political society is merely "life in the air, the ethereal region of civil society." Compared with "actual, empirical reality," the state has for its citizens an "otherworldly existence"; it is "nothing but the affirmation of their own alienation ... the religion of popular life, the heaven of its universality in opposition to the earthly existence of its actuality."²⁸

The state is God all over again, denying the supreme divinity of human self-consciousness and insisting that true reality lies somehow outside man's imme-

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diate being. The structure of overcoming Hegelian, and generally modern,²⁹ politics therefore emerges as identical to the structure of overcoming religion. Assaulted by the Feuerbachian transformational criticism, the quasi-religious mysticism of the Hegelian political categories were penetrated and exposed, and the belaboured system of institutional mediation, bureaucracy, crown, classes and corporation — by which Hegel expected private and public interests to find their common, complementary ground — sent tumbling down. For obviously the “actual extremes” of state and civil society cannot in fact be mediated; in the long run of history man can no more live with the lie of the state than he can with the lie of God. The hatred of the gods is not spent until the last vestige of externalised universality is reabsorbed into the existing particular.

This, the position of the *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'* is reiterated and developed in the contemporaneous essay, “On the Jewish Question.” The specific flaw of the modern state, Marx argues there, is that it retains the whole structure of “egoistic life” *outside* the political sphere. In the “perfected” political life of modernity man is compelled to lead a double life. In political community he indeed regards himself as a communal being; but in the apolitical world of civil society he thinks and acts as the strictly private individual. The division is intolerable, Marx avers, but only a new, radical, complete socialisation of man can put his sundered self back together. Only then will man be truly liberated. Here Marx's disdain toward the presumption of institutional mediation to yoke individual and community is unqualified. He is emphatic that politics and citizenship are not in fact, and not even potentially, the mediation of public and private interest, but on the contrary the expression of their mutual hostility and the need to overcome this hostility in the “emancipatory” progress toward self-divinisation. “The state is the mediator between man and the freedom of man. As Christ is the mediator on whom man unburdens all his divinity and all his *religious ties*, so is the state the mediator to which man transfers all his unholiness and all his *human freedom*.”³⁰ Marx would bring the prized political universality down to earth, and back to its true resting place — the undifferentiated heart of “absolute Man.” Hence the sharp distinction struck between the “political” emancipation that represents an advance only within the prevailing unfree order and the “universal human emancipation” that is humanity's somewhat tardy realisation of the fullness and plenitude of its self-created being. Hence also the judgment that universal citizenship is but one stage in the advance of freedom, destined to be superceded in the historical movement beyond the “abstract” citizen to the new whole man. Only when individual man has reabsorbed the citizen and when politics as a distinct mode of activity has been expelled from society, only then are everyday life and relationships infused with the spirit of the species-being and the process of emancipation complete.³¹

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At this point Marx is poised on the border of the fantastic promised land articulated in the *Manuscripts* — communism as “the riddle of history solved,” man’s total and self-conscious restoration of himself, his human “essence,” to himself. This ultimate “restoration” of man,³² the last phase of the process of emancipation, is more than just another in a series. It is rather the dawn of real humanness. It is the moment of transition between two ages which marks the radical *transfiguration* of human existence. This communism alone is the end of history, the fulfilment of all historical striving, the “perfection” of mankind and hence truly the world’s immanent *eschaton*, unlimited in content by either particular ideas or particular institutional forms.

This vision is truly speculative, but it is Marx’s solution to the mystery of existence. Communism, he says, is at once “naturalism,” “humanism,” the resolution of all man/man and man/nature antagonisms, and also the “true resolution” of the age-old conflicts between “subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and passivity ... existence and essence, objectification and self-affirmation, freedom and necessity, individual and species.”³³ For socialist man every dimension of the noxious historical tension between himself and his generic life dissolves, replaced by an all-encompassing, unmediated unity. With the “real,” “positive” movement beyond private property even the division of labour is overcome, and specialisation is replaced by the realisation of the dream-image of the *German Ideology*, the whole man who can hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, and engage in criticism after supper, without having to fix on any form of labour, because “society” as regulator of general production places no restriction on the all-sided appropriation of manifold essence.³⁴ Indeed, Marx says, the very senses of socialist man are transformed; by the leap into immediate existence hearing, smelling, tasting, *etc.*, are now “human” relations to the world that are “immediately communal in form.” At the same time, the individual has no needs that are not immediately satisfied by society, because all his needs are communal needs: “Need or satisfaction have thus lost their *egoistic* nature.” The individual mirrors society and society the individual in a self-absorbed dance of magical enchantment. The individual is everywhere at home; for in his particularity he is “equally the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of society explicitly thought and experienced ... a totality of human expression of life.”³⁵

Marx’s intention is clear enough: by the leap into communist existence he does nothing less than speculatively abolish the given order of reality. And if we take man’s need for mediation generally as an index of his position within the given order of being — as participant in the whole and not master of the whole itself, in a word, as “creature” requiring salvation and not God-the-creator-and-savior — the motives for the hostility toward the political mediation also become clear. For it is precisely this mediated order which Prometheus-Marx cannot abide. It offers nothing but alienated existence.

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The "Material" Limit

If the question is now raised, how is it possible to (logically) reintroduce the state into communist society, the answer must be that it is *not* possible. Insofar as Marx retains the anthropology of communist man as the philosophical bedrock of the system — as I believe he does, and must — there is simply no room, as we have seen, for the political space, the mediation, forcible or otherwise, of particular and general. The free spiritual superman, the absolute Man, does not take well to institutional restraints. Yet, as we have also seen, this is precisely what Marx does, he reintroduces the mediating institution into the very heart of communist society, most notably in the form of *Capital's* "commanding will" whose supreme task it is to integrate particular and general in the all-important process of production.

How is this possible? I think we must reject as an explanation an early-late dichotomisation of Marx's thought — an assumption that the apocalyptic passions of the youthful Marx simmer down sufficiently to permit the mature treatment of questions of order. Though surely the articulation of the millennial vision is most transparently striking in the early Marx, it is present in the mature work as well, as it must be if Marx is to retain his philosophical footing, let alone his revolutionary *esprit*. Deferring for the moment consideration of the "realm of freedom" introduced in volume three of *Capital*, we find the vision reflected in the famous earlier discussion, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof." We find it reflected there not only generally in the projection psychology of alienation underlying the analysis of commodity production, but also specifically in the identification of Christianity with the ideology of the limited individual ("abstract man"), and in the suggestive comparison of "a community of free individuals" with that fictional bourgeois darling, Robinson Crusoe. While Marx has only censure for the abstract, ahistorical political economy underlying the Crusoe tale, he at once champions his own "social" version of the all-sided productive Robinson, late counterpart to the *German Ideology's* unspecialised hunter-fisherman-husbandman-critic.³⁶ Clearly the vision of *Capital* continues to bear the imprint of conviction as to the unmediated unity of particular men and general societal will under the transfigured conditions of communist existence. Yet it is in this same work that the mediating will makes its reappearance.

A first approximation of an explanation must be that Marx has, paradoxically, created a speculative vision that he himself refuses to believe in. He has seen the promised land of his imagination, but he is a little too wise, too "realistic," to take it for reality and try to enter it. He has, as we suggested a moment ago, eclipsed reality, but only partially. This approximate explanation is obviously baffling. Why should Marx construct an elaborate system only to walk away from it? Clearly it is not a matter of logical consistency. "Logically," Marx should have hermetically sealed himself into the magical circle of specula-

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tion on the communist *eschaton*. And to do so it would seem he had only to consistently refuse to speculate in any way, shape or form on the "music or the orchestras of the future," that is, on the problem of communist institutions. Should unpleasant questions somehow crop up, there was always the inflexible *Fragesverbot*, the retort that "socialist man" does not ask such ridiculous questions; Marx has already proved himself capable of invoking the technique when necessary. In this sense the "statist" remarks in *Capital* are distinctly "illogical," standing in sharp contrast to others suggestive of an enduring state form. Talk of a "public power" that is not "political" is indefinite enough to be open to half a dozen glosses; the Commune, after all, was but a "harbinger" of future society, and easily enough interpreted as a mere instrument for achieving the terrestrial paradise of communism.³⁷ This is even truer of the intervening dictatorship of the proletariat, which we are invited to appreciate as a transitory organ of *sanctificatio*, sanctification of life in preparation for the final transfiguration through death to the old life and inauguration of the new. But with the "bookkeeping" state of *Capital* we reach the height of disjunction between premises and result, between, we may say, fantasy and an abiding sense of political reality.

Despite the apparent ease with which he might have sidestepped this *aporia*, there is good reason to suspect something internal to the system itself which prevented Marx from leaping totally out of existence, which kept him in contact with an essential stratum of non-communist human nature and so limited the eclipse of reality to a partial eclipse. This internal limit is, I believe, provided precisely by Marx's "materialism," *i.e.* his insistence on sticking close by the requirements of man's somatic, "sensual" nature. Marx is determined not to fall into the utopian trap of fantasising "ideals" divorced from material reality; and communism is after all, he insists, not a fantastic, but a "real" movement emerging necessarily from already existing material conditions.³⁸ This "material" emphasis in the long run proves decisive. For by the speculative construction of a closed stream of immanent being Marx can certainly close himself to the existence of God, indeed he can pull down into the immanent stream of history the Christian idea of supernatural perfection, the *visio beatifica* (proletarian man contemplating his own industrial navel). He can invert the God-man and posit the Man-god, and he can speculatively abolish the mystery of the meaning of existence in the sense of Romans 8:24-25 by predicting the world-immanent moment "when that which is perfect is come," and when "that which is in part shall be done away with" (I Cor. 13:10). What he obviously cannot do, and does not attempt, is speculatively transfigure the *physical* nature of man. It is in line with this obvious fact that Marx posits the apparently self-evident distinction between the two "realms" of freedom and necessity. The realm of freedom, he says, really only begins where labour determined by "mundane" considerations ceases; that is to say that in "the

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very nature of things" real freedom lies "beyond" the whole sphere of material production. But on Marx's premises the self-evident character of the two-realm distinction can be *only* apparent: the whole thrust of the corpus is in precisely the opposite direction. Communism is supposed to be the "resolution" of the antinomy of freedom and necessity; in communist society, work is "the foremost want in life"; freedom *is* unalienated work, for work is self-creation and the indispensable basis for the unity of individual and generic self. "When the labourer co-operates systematically with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of the species"³⁹ — that is, the essence of "socialised man." And yet here, near the conclusion of *Capital*, we are informed that "true" freedom is of another substance altogether. Just like his primitive forebears, modern man — and this is true, Marx stresses, under any conceivable social formation and mode of production — must "wrestle" with an ever recalcitrant Nature for the satisfaction of wants, the maintenance and reproduction of life. Indeed, freedom *here*, in the labouring exchange with nature, consists precisely in socialised man — rationalised, cooperative work accomplished with the least expenditure of energy and greatest regard for human dignity. But this freedom is not "true," it is freedom corrupted by association with necessity, with the mundane, with matter. Only *beyond* it "begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite."⁴⁰ Ordinary work puts communist man on the same level as the "savage." Only the escape from cooperative labour, "associated production," and movement beyond socialised man via a shorter working day, provides access to the Realm. Communist man is not free *through* the productive process, but only on the basis of it, as it were in spite of it. A yawning gap has opened up between the spirit and the materialism that was supposed to overreach it.

The system bucks up against its outer limit. One can fantasise that the revolution has been made, the will to exploit has disappeared, the material basis for class domination of social institutions has been abolished, *etc.* And yet there remains still puny physical man; who even if he loves his work must still "wrestle" his sustenance from nature, who is moreover limited in his effort to appropriate the "totality" of productive instruments by the need to specialise in a highly complex, coordinated labouring process,⁴¹ who — however full his life — must still die,⁴² who however creative, both individually and through the collectivity, is liable to break forth any time with that damnable question of the original creator of things, "of man and Nature as a whole": what sort of self-creating, self-saving god is this? Despite the most Promethean of speculative efforts, a vast segment of the given order of being remains intact, and the program of the incontestable divinity of self-conscious man breaks down. One

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can note here a pertinent contrast with that other "anarchist," Bakunin. Bakunin is not concerned with "material production," but only with an alleged "creation" through unbridled destruction; he trusts not in man's labouring efforts, but in the "eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternally creative source of all life. The joyful passion for destruction is a creative passion."⁴³ This is the testimony of the faithful "anti-authoritarian." With the young nihilist Nechaiev Bakunin is ready to make the leap into utterly negative revolutionary existence. As long as destruction is possible, the Bakuninist "program" need never break down. And is there ever an end to the possibilities of destruction? Should all else fail there is always finally the ultimate "revolutionary" act of *self*-destruction — epitomised by the mad deed of the character Kirilov in Dostoevski's *The Possessed*, whose fervent belief is that through suicide he literally becomes God, the new Christ through whom all men may follow into the final realm of mangedhood.

But Marx is not Kirilov, he is not mad. Though at what precise point and in which chamber of the psyche we cannot say, he *knows* that the program breaks down, that he cannot stop history, that it is not for him nor any man to utter the words of John 11:25-26. And it should perhaps not be at all surprising that the breakdown gains such vivid representation in the problem of the state. In the orthodox conception of St. Augustine, the state represents that part of human nature, bound by the *civitas terrena*, which will pass away with the final irruption of the eschatological events. Then truly will there be no longer a need of the state, when the period of waiting, the *secularum senescens*, is at last at an end. But until such time history goes on as before, the job of the state being to moderate man's fallen state through checking the worst excesses of evil and generally providing the best external framework for the church's eschatologically-infused labours of *sanctificatio*. It is, simply, an inherent part of the inescapable tension of historical existence — basically, though complexly, a tension of "sacred" and "profane" — that is man's fate. Marx preserves the tension, but in a transmogrified, immanentised form — in the form of the tension between freedom and necessity, between that which is truly human and that which is not, between the world-immanent spirit and the flesh of man. Once more the state represents that part of man's limited nature that "passes away" with the transfiguration of time — only now the *Parousia* occurs not once for all time, but daily, whenever the communist labourer punches out on the clock.

In a sense, then, it is possible to point to a limit intrinsic to the effort of immanentisation itself. Categories of eschatology are transcendently oriented by nature. Even the intramundane millennial quest, if it springs from genuinely religious motives, requires the transcendental irruption, supernatural aid in one or another form.⁴⁴ The fusion of *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* at the hands

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of *homo faber* is an error, both logical and spiritual, of the first magnitude, bound for ultimate failure. It is of course necessary to stress "ultimate" here, since the eschatological tension produced by the immanentisation is capable of generating immense energies, as befitting a quest for salvation. But in principle the program must break down. The revolution will be made, but Reality will annoyingly refuse to revolutionise its structure. Perhaps classes will indeed be abolished, and hence an important source or *libido dominandi*, or at least an important field for its play. More likely a very great deal of evil will be committed in the name of good.⁴⁵ Man will not become other than man, and the "superman" will still reside "in heaven," as he has from the beginning.

III

The recognition of limit does not, however, save Marx from a charge of massive contradiction. On the contrary, we are in the final analysis left with what on Marxian anthropological premises can only be a wholly illegitimate case for the legitimacy of the state. If he is not to let the system collapse entirely, Marx must enter a vicious circle of invalid validation: the state, the institutional form that by its mediating activity proves the *lack* of immediacy, must be legitimated by the presupposition of the existence of a millennial stateless community, *i.e.*, an already *achieved* immediate unity. The disjuncture of particular and general and the immediate identity of particular and general are presented coexisting happily, each witness to the truth of the other. The will to transfigure reality remains intact, even if now one must settle for an incomplete transfiguration. Reality will be eclipsed, but only partially — and the corona will be less than apocalyptically breathtaking.

Unfortunately, it is no more possible to legitimate a state by a human condition that should have abolished it, or a realm of necessity by a realm of freedom that has renounced necessity forever, than it is possible to ground reality in fantasy, or waking consciousness in dream.

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Notes

1. See especially among the works discussed below, Solomon Bloom, "The 'Withering Away' of the State," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 7 (January, 1946), 113-121; and Richard Adamiak, "The 'Withering Away' of the State: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Politics*, 32 (1970), 3-17. Cf. Elizabeth Rapaport, "Anarchism and Authority in Marx's Socialist Politics," *European Journal of Sociology*, 17, No. 2 (1976), 333-343. The ambiguous question of a socialist politics naturally parallels Marx's ambiguous interpretation of the pre-socialist state as both a coercive class tool and a social organ somehow independent of classes. See John Sanderson, "Marx and Engels on the State," *Western Political Quarterly* (December, 1963), 946-955; cf. Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1969, pp. 59ff.

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2. For example, in the 1844 essay, "The King of Prussia," Marx says that where the revolution's "organising activity begins, where its own aim and spirit emerge, there socialism throws the political hull away." In Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat, trans. and eds., *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, New York: Anchor Books, 1967, p. 470. Even more emphatically in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, he asserts that when class antagonism is finished "there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society" (New York: International Publishers, 1963, p. 174.). In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx implies that the proletariat will represent a "political power" only so long as it is "compelled" to do so in its "contest with the bourgeoisie." In Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1972, p. 353.
3. The *Manifesto* uses the language of a "public power" that has no "political character." *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 352.
4. Marx criticised the Gotha Program for its failure to deal with "the future state of communist society," and raised the question, "What transformation will the state undergo in communist society?" *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 395.
5. See below remarks on a necessary "commanding will."
6. See, e.g., *The German Ideology*, in Easton and Guddat, p. 470.
7. See for example the "Preface" to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, New York: International Publishers, 1970.
8. See J.L. Talmon, *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase*, New York: Praeger, 1960, pp. 221-228; Karl Loewith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, ch. 2; Eric Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1975, chs. 10 and 11. Cf. Gaston Fessard, S.J., "The Theological Structure of Marxist Atheism," in Johannes B. Metz, ed., *Concilium*, 16, "Is God Dead?" New York: Paulist Press, 1966, pp. 7-24.
9. Bloom, especially pp. 113, 121.
10. Adamiak, especially pp. 7, 9.
11. Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 203ff.
12. Hal Draper, "The Death of the State in Marx and Engels," in Ralph Miliband and J. Saville, eds., *The Socialist Register*, London: Merlin, 1970, pp. 301ff.
13. On the concept of political space, consult Robert J. Pranger, *Action, Symbolism and Order: The Existential Dimensions of Politics in Modern Citizenship*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968, pp. 28-29, 50-54.
14. David Kettler sympathetically discusses this shift in "Beyond Republicanism: The Socialist Critique of Political Idealism," in Marvin Surkin and Alan Wolfe, eds., *End to Political Science*, New York: Basic Books, 1970, pp. 56ff.
15. Marx, *Capital*, 3 vols., New York: International Publishers, 1967, vol. 3, p. 383. Cf. vol. 1, pp. 330-331.
16. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 851.

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17. Marx recalls Saint Simon's distinction between "owners" and "industriels"; only the latter are important at the present level of production: "it is not the industrial capitalist, but the industrial managers who are 'the souls of our industrial system....'" The apolitical, non-ruling character of the managers' role is part of the transvaluation of decision-making Draper alludes to.
18. Marx, "Forward to Thesis: *The Difference Between the Natural Philosophy of Democritus and the Natural Philosophy of Epicurus*," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Religion*, New York: Schocken Books, 1964, p. 15.
19. *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, Joseph O'Malley, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 131ff.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Easton and Guddat, pp. 312-313.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 314.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Voegelin believes that Marx is already past the point of closure. See his *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., Gateway edition, 1968, p. 44ff.
25. As quoted in Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1965, vol. 7, p. 299.
26. *Theses on Feuerbach*, no. 4, in Easton and Guddat, p. 401.
27. *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, p. 76.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 31-32.
29. Just because Germany is backward politically, Marx believes it has been forced to *speculate* abstractly, that is, philosophically. "In politics the Germans have *thought* what other nations have done. Germany was their theoretical conscience." ("Introduction" to the *Critique*, p. 137.) Here is the justification for the critique of Hegel, for Hegel develops "the idea of the modern state" to perfection. And Marx, exponent of a new kind of critical thinking, can presumably through the critique of Hegel raise to consciousness the inadequacy of merely political emancipation.
30. Easton and Guddat, pp. 224ff.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 232, 241. For two other views which stress Marx's antagonism toward political mediation, see J. Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. John O'Neill, New York: Basic Books, 1969, pp. 110ff.; Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950, p. 162.
32. Easton and Guddat, p. 304.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 310.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
35. *Manuscripts*, Easton and Guddat, pp. 307-308.

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36. *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 76-79.
 37. The Commune was, Marx says in *The Civil War in France*, "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.... The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes...." *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 557.
 38. *The German Ideology*, Easton and Guddat, p. 426.
 39. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 329.
 40. *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 820.
 41. Marx's notion of the "transcendence" of the division of labour seems in fact to take the form of a total obeisance to the continually revolutionising "process" of "Modern Industry," which in its rapid multiplication of specialised tasks far outruns any individual's capacity to keep pace. See *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 486-488.
 42. As might be expected, however, Marx downplays the significance of the individual's death as against the immortality of the species-being. *Manuscripts*, Easton and Guddat, p. 307.
 43. As quoted in Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, p. 198.
 44. Cf. Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 237ff.
 45. See Paul Ricoeur's incisive critique of the withering away of the state thesis, delivered from the standpoint of concern for the problem of "political evil." "The Political Paradox," in Hwa Yol Jung, ed., *Existential Phenomenology and Political Theory*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1972, pp. 337-367.
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