

Nov. 30, 1961

Dear RB:

No doubt you saw the NL of 11.27 where Mr. Blocker publishes almost one sentence of my letter. Considering that his to me on 11/2. said "If you would like to join battle, we would, of course, be happy to print your letter—preferably within 300 words. Your note to me contained what I assume would be your major points, and, if you like, we can excerpt passages from that. If you are not too busy, however, perhaps you would prefer to draft your own letter for publication—consider such explicit and courteous invitation and then contrast to it the failure even to show that that $\frac{1}{2}$ sentence was not all I had written—and I believe that even a professor out of the dirty world of "politics" would see what I mean by "conspiracy of silence" around my work (Yes, note that "my work" is not identified as MARXISM AND FREEDOM in that priceless half sentence made to appear as a completed sentence and completed letter). So the "new generation" that wishes to re-evaluate Marxism takes its cue—nay, its mendicant guidance—from the old, as witness Daniel Bell now becoming an enthusiastic exponent of Tucker's pamphlet, and, we are informed by editor, that the Christmas Book Issue will carry an article by Hook on alienation. Not having discovered it either in the 1930's or 1955 (cf. his avvil original "The Ambiguous Legacy: Marx and the Marxists").

Note also that Tucker in a footnote on p.11 goes out of his way to refer to a book that will be published—Fromm's—in order to refer the reader to an English translation of those Early Works. It isn't that he didn't know of my published work 3 years before*. It is, I'm sorry to say, the easiest way to avoid facing the arguments in a book that does not separate the young from the mature Marx not, as Prof. Tucker prefers to do, by making it appear that all of his mature work thus become a "myth", but by proving throughout his mature works that philosophic strain to be the central point. (Of that more later.) You know that the 15 years to which I refer in my letter that was not published by the NL as being the period in which I searched for a publisher for those essays is actually an understatement as it refers to the point when I had them translated in typewritten form. Before then—at the very point when I broke from Trotskyism and returned to the study of the original philosophic essays of Marx (1940)—I was extremely modest on the whole question of philosophy since that was not my field. I asked a friend of mine who was well acquainted with Hook whether Hook wouldn't consider the translation of those Essays a worthwhile project. I thought perhaps he didn't know of their existence since it formed no part of his interpretation of Marx. His answer to my friend was: "Yes, I read those Essays. There is nothing in them of value." I tell you all this not because I'm still bent on establishing who was the "first", but to show that it is impossible to be "first" when you see "nothing of value" in them. The first to recognize their "value" were the Catholics in France, Protestants in Germany and Switzerland in the post-war world. They dug into them and made their type of interpretation in order to be able to fight Communism which was a mass movement in their countries. A whiff of that came to me from a middle-aged woman at Iowa University who had been trained in a Catholic college. She said "The Sisters told us that Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin were all evil men. But that Marx would turn in his grave if he saw what they were doing in his name in Russia." When I was in France in 1947 I spoke to many who called themselves Marxists and begged them to get off discussing those remarkable essays on the ground created by the religious critics with political motivations. You guessed it—I was again unsuccessful. And now that the American professors are discovering the Humanism of Marxism—they are still to catch up with the politics of Communist totalitarianism—there is not a single reference to Karpushin's attack on those Essays that would see what I saw in them—an anticipation, not of an academic debate, but a revolution against Communism, as I predicted that 1955 would be followed by a revolution somewhere in the East European empire of the Communists.

*I don't mean to gossip—but the man told a friend that he admired my work and would like to meet me "in person"—even as Fromm now writes me he'll mention in the next edition of his book soon to come out.

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Now then to Tucker's "Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx". I'm sorry to say I do not share your high opinion of this book. Believe me, it is not because Prof. Tucker's interpretation is different from mine, much less that he followed the path of "honest scholarship" by keeping silent on my contribution. There are passages in it that are excellent but it is not an original contribution. As a whole, it is only the opposite of the same coin distributed by those who think there are two Marx(es). The latter says: Marx the Humanist was a philosopher who saw alienation and wanted it abolished, but, as he grew mature, Marx threw his humanism overboard. Tucker is saying: Marx remained a humanist throughout his life but since he came to the glorification of the proletariat not by knowing the proletariat but as the end-product of his philosophy of alienation, therefore he had to resort to the "myth" -- "the myth of warfare of labor and capital was Marx's final answer to the problems of man's self-alienation." (p.259)

If even one doesn't see the class struggle as a fact of life, not as a "myth", surely one can't attribute that to Marx! Even when he had not yet met the proletariat "in person", even as he wrote the essays which give one the impression that he saw the alienation of man and not the class struggle, his separation from Feuerbach is surely based on the fact that Feuerbach sees the individual as if he were a single man instead of a social man: "Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." Above all, however, his mature work is just as permeated with the "freedom of the individual is the basis of the freedom of all" as are the early works which tell us never again to counterpose the individual to society for "the individual is the social entity."

I was amazed at the conclusion which is surely without any basis in fact "First, it seems that he has very little to say to us on the subject that preoccupied him all through the middle and later years of his life: capitalism." There is not a single economist, foe as well as friend, who doesn't admit that Marx was not only an erudite economist but had foretold in bold strokes the crises that confronted us in the Great Depression and admit that, in part at least, various business cycle theories based themselves on Marx's analysis of capital accumulation. Underconsumptionist theoreticians like Joan Robinson and business cycle theoreticians like Joseph Schumpeter pleaded with their bourgeois colleagues that unless they treat Marx as a serious economist who had much to tell them even today, they would continue "to run a losing race with ~~the~~ history." Who spoke of monopoly and "concentration and centralization of capital in the hands of one single capitalist" -- in 1867 -- who but Marx? If you try to justify Tucker on the ground that he meant to compare only the influence he exerted today by Marx, you would be evading the question that while Tucker admits Marx was "not...a poor economist", there is not any attempt of his part to analyze the 3 volumes of CAPITAL as the concretization of his early humanism.

One cannot see this, however, unless one first stops treating Marxism as if it were all completed in 1844 and the rest of his life was spent "to prove what had already been concluded". This is on a par with the voluminous writings that tried "to prove" that Vol.III was written as an afterthought "to justify" Vol. I -- and when it was shown that all 3 volumes were written before ever Vol. I was published, then the answer came back "He should have begun with the real world of Vol.III instead of the abstractions of Vol. I" -- but a serious ~~young~~ critic cannot begin with what "ought" to be -- but with what is. The whole structure of CAPITAL was reworked on the basis of the actual happenings in the world, and particularly so the class struggle world of the fight for the shorter working day -- therein is the humanism of Marxism, not as "philosophy" but as reality, which carries through his "idea of theory" as impulse from proletariat, and the generalizations the theoretician can then elaborate.

Otherwise you must descend to the absurdity of the epiphenomenal "secretive"

attitude of Marx. (p.172) I wouldn't presume to give any final or facile answer such as Dr. Tucker offers for the reasons behind the failure to publish those Essays by Marx himself. But it seems to me that the answer is simple and has nothing much to do with "secretive." HE DIDN'T GET A PUBLISHER. The fact is that those essays were not written as separate essays but were a draft for the very first formulation of all his philosophy including economic views and that he had contracted for their publication --and it fell through, as several letters, bitter letters testify. (See especially the Russian Letters on CAPITAL (Piana oKapitale) and note the one of August 1, 1846 to Leake which says "Several capitalists in Germany agreed to publish a series of works: mine, Engels and Hess... Besides, through one of these gentlemen, I was almost guaranteed publication of my "Critique of Political Economy" etc.... I delayed working over "Political Economy" because it appeared to me extremely important to preface my positive exposition of the subject with a polemical work against German philosophy and against German socialism as it existed until then. This is necessary in order to prepare the public for the points of view which were diametrically opposite to German science as it existed till them..."

Engels, who was neither the original thinker nor profound dialectician that Marx was, correctly, however, put a priority over the incomplete volumes of CAPITAL. I wish then that he had decided to publish not his "Feuerbach" but as Marx had written it. But he too was a "secretive" --he merely stated that they (Marx and he) were still young and hadn't known much of economics in those years and therefore he followed Marx's dictate of leaving those writings to "the gnawing of the mice" and has produced philosophy for his epoch. He included as a postscript those famous original Theses of Marx on Feuerbach and we had first glimpse of the "original Marx." Lunatsky and Bernstein who became the inheritors of the unpublished works never appreciated those Early works AND THEREFORE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE LATTER ONE AS FINALLY LEVIN SAW WHEN HE RETURNED TO THE ORIGINS OF MARXISM IN HEGELIANISM AFTER COLLAPSE OF SECOND INTERNATIONAL. It took a proletarian revolution --plus cash to pry these losses from the "Archives" so that by the time they finally saw light--1927--the dispute began with Trotsky and Ryazanov was soon accused of "Trotskyism", while their publication in Germany coincided with the year Hitler would gain power. They did not come into their own until history demanded them, so to speak, in the post-war period. Russian, German, French, Italian Communism and Catholicism and Protestantism share one thing in common in that period --a view of the backwardness of American thought. So we do not get them until some Marx pragmatists finally do it "for themselves" and for their own purposes these last few years. Scholarship, bourgeois scholarship, just sickens me sometimes with its inadequateness, not to mention its lack of honesty.

Finally on Tucker --I believe he does a great injustice not only to Marx but to Hegel. If Tucker's "The Self as God in German Philosophy" and "The Dialectic of Aggrandizement" is to stand for any serious summation of Hegelianism --Hegel needs even more help than Marx from the hands of our modern scholars. I do hope you will allow me some day to speak to your classes on Marx's Debt to Hegel and Hegel's Absolute Idea. Really, Marxist-Humanists certainly do more justice to Hegel when we stand him right side up --than those who follow Hegel on his path to the Absolute as God. Hegel did stand on the basis of classical political economy --he says so openly--but that did not mean that PHENOMENOLOGY was degraded by Marx who saw that clearest to being "a criticism of political economy" (p.126) What Marx says in his Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic is that THE PHENOMENOLOGY is therefore the hidden, still unclear even to itself, and mystifying critical philosophy. However to the extent that it holds fast the alienation of Man--even if Man appears only in the form of Spirit--to that extent all elements of criticism lie hidden in it and are often already prepared and worked out in a manner far beyond the Hegelian standpoint. The sections on 'Unhappy Consciousness', the 'Honorable Consciousness', the flight of the noble and downtrodden consciousness, etc.etc., contain the critical elements --although still in an alienated form --of whole spheres

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like Religion, the State, Civic Life, etc."

I better stop right here or I'll write a whole new book.

You are welcome to use (argue against) any part of this letter or the whole of it in whichever way you wish --but I do hope I do not remain nameless when you argue against me so that I'd get one more sentence into a journal like NEW LEADER --or in COMMENTARY you're writing the reviews for. The one important element of these publications --and as you noted, they really are coming off the press and all undergoing 2nd printings -- is the interest in Marxist-Leninism. Some will surely therefore turn to Marx himself, and that will end the heyday of the "specialists."

Yours,



P.S. --Re Daniel Bell and his 4 different versions of his essay on Alienation, I expect any time a 5th version which would now conclude he had "always" seen that "aspect" in Marx --and since it has been so "always", why refer to RD? After all he did very well avoiding any reference in the economic field, relegating even his suddenly beloved Hilferding to a footnote so that he need not take up the theory of state capitalism or the value controversy which would have compelled a reference to RD. Do you suppose I really wear horns?