SPECIAL INTRODUCTION FOR IRANIAN EDITION OF MARX'S HUMANIST ESSAYS

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Because there is nothing more exciting than addressing revolutionaries in an ongoing revolution, I feel very honored to have this opportunity, in 1980, to introduce Marx's 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, which opened an entirely new continent of thought and revolution that Marx names "a new Humanism." The year that I was first able to publish these Humanist Essays as an Appendix to my work, Marxism and Freedom, a quarter of a century ago, coincided with the Hungarian Revolution against Russian totalitarianism calling itself Communism. Thus, both from below, from an actual proletarian revolution, and from theory, a today-ness was shed upon these Essays that had lain on the dusty shelves of archives and had never been practiced. Because what the contemporary world needs most today is a unity of Marx's philosophy of liberation with an outright revolution, we must re-examine what it is that Marx had meant when, in his greatest theoretical work, Capital, he had declared "human power is its own end"; and what, in his very first historical materialist analyses in 1844, he had meant by saying "communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society"--what the goal is, is the creation of totally new, class-less, human relations.

When you turn to the Essays on "Private Property and Communism" and the "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," you will note three things at once. First and foremost is that the analysis of labor--and that is what distinguishes Marx from all other Socialists and Communists of his day and ours--goes much further than the economic structure of society. His analysis goes to the actual human relations. Secondly, it was not only Hegel who Marx stood on his feet by uniting, instead of separating, thinking from being. It was also the "quite vulgar and unthinking communism that completely negates the personality of man." Thirdly, and above all, is Marx's concept of labor--that it is the creativity of the laborer as the gravedigger of capitalism which uproots all of the old. Whether capitalism achieves the domination of labor through ownership of or through control over the means of production, what Marx focuses on is this: any "domination over the labor of others" proves not only capitalism's exploitative but perverse nature. To further stress the perverse nature, Marx says that the whole of capitalism could be summed up in a single sentence: "Dead labor dominates living labor." This class relationship transforms the living laborer into "an appendage to the machine." Here is how Marx expresses it in the Humanist Essays:

> "Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that...in place of all the physical and spiritual senses there is the sense of possession which is the simple alienation of all these senses... The transcendence of private property is, therefore, the total freeing of all human senses and attributes."

It is here, to make sure that one thereby does not jump to the conclusion that the abolition of private property creates a new society, that Marx rejected the substitution of one form of property--state--for private as any solution to the problems of exploitation. It is why he rejected "vulgar and unthinking communism," focusing instead on two other problems: 1) truly new human relations, the "new Humanism" in place of communism; and 2) the totality of the uprooting of all old relations so that the dual rhythm of social revolution--the abolition of the old and the creation of the new--would run their full course.

In order to fully grasp Marx's Historical Materialism, the foundation for which was laid by these Humanist Essays, let us turn to the history of

Marx's day as well as of today. What we see, first and foremost, is that Marx, in laying the foundation of Historical Materialism, was also creating the theory of proletarian revolution, the dialectic of liberation. Marx's greatest discovery--his concept of labor which revealed the laborer to be not just a force of revolution, but its Reason--meant that the proletariat was the "Subject," the Universal Subject that was not just a product of history, but its shaper, negating, i.e. abolishing, the exploitative reality. The exploited proletariat is the transformer of reality. It is here that Marx saw the core of the Hegelian dialectic, naming "the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle."

In actuality, continued Marx, there lies hidden in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind "the movement of history." The mystical veil Hegel through over it must be removed, but far from turning his back on philosophy, Marx transformed Hegel's revolution in philosphy into a philosophy of revolution. Which is why Marx held that "Humanism distinguishes itself both from Idealism and Materialism, and is, at the same time, the truth uniting both...(and) capable of grasping the act of world history."

"Grasping the act of world history meant that he had to proclaim "revolution in permanence" when he saw that no sooner had the masses helped the bourgeoisie gain victory over feudalism in the 1848 revolutions than the bourgeoisie turned against them. And when he witnessed the greatest revolution in his time, the 1871 Paris Commune, and saw the masses take destiny into their own hands, Marx declared that non-state to be the "political form at last discovered to work out the economic emancipation of the proletariat." As Marx expressed it:

> "We should especially avoid re-establishing society as an abstraction, opposed to the individual. The individual is the social entity."

Marx raised the question of "revolution in permanence" not only for his day but as the way out for all unfinished revolutions. No age can understand that better than our own, plagued both by transformations into opposite after each revolution--such as that which saw the first workers' state that arose from the Russian Revolution turn into the state-capitalist monstrosity that Russia is now; and by the aborting of today's revolutions before ever they come to completion.

The question is: What happens after the first act of revolution? Does conquest of power assure a class-less society or only a new class bureaucracy? Our age, which has witnessed a whole new Third World emerge from the struggle against Western imperialism (U.S. imperialism most of all) in Latin America as in Africa, in the Middle East as in Asia, needs to demand that "grasping the act of world history" means spelling out total freedom.

Here again, Marx can illuminate our task in the manner in which he spelled out how total must be the uprooting of the old and the creation of the new. He turned to the most fundamental of all human relations--that of man to woman. In it we see why Marx opposed both private property and "vulgar communism":

> "The infinite degradation in which man exists for himself is expressed in this relation to the woman as the spoils and handmaid of lust. For the secret of the relationship of man to man finds its unambiguous, definitive, open, obvious expression

> in the relationship of man to woman, and in this way, the direct, natural relationship between the sexes. The direct, natural, necessary relationship of man to man is the relationship of man to woman.

Clearly, "each of the human relations of the world--seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, experience, wishing activity, loving" must transcend mere equality, a needed first achievement but not yet the needed total reorganization of human relations. Abolition of the old is only the first mediation. "Only by the transcendence of this mediation... does there arise positive Humanism, beginning from itself."

As one follows Marx's view of total freedom, one can see how far beyond technology Marx's philosophy of revolution extended. Long before the atom was split and out of it came, not the greatest productive force, but the most destructive A-bomb, H-bomb and N-bomb, Marx wrote in these Essays: "To have one basis for life and another for science is a priori a lie." With Hiroshima, we saw what a holocaust the lie of separating the reason for being from the reason for scientific development can become. Now, with the eruption of the world-wide anti-nuclear movement, we can see all over again how urgent it is to study and practice Marx's new continent of thought. As the great English poet, William Blake, expressed it, nothing is more binding than "mind-forged manacles." Let us finish with those manacles once and for all.

It is with the striving for such a manifesto of total freedom that I, as Marxist-Humanist, express my solidarity with the Iranian revolutionaries as we all aspire to a new internationalism. The struggle continues.

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