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## EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVES

### IN THIS ISSUE

S&S readers will surely be knowledgeable about the organic connection between Hegel and Marx, and about the ever-renewing debate about the nature of this connection. We suspect, however, that many will know less about an earlier link, between Hegel and the literary giant and scientific philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, although Andy Blunden, author of “Goethe, Hegel and Marx,” sees this link as “hardly controversial.” Blunden’s key proposition is that Hegel acquired the concept of the archetypal phenomenon, the *Urphänomen*, from Goethe, and that this category of a holistic (non-positivist) science then passes through to Marx. Look deeply enough and you will find traces of Goethe’s thought, as indeed one finds traces of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, in *Capital*, and so Goethe becomes another element in the ongoing effort “to learn from [*Capital*] how to analyze the great social crises of our times.” As always in studies of this sort, the proof is in the details.

The Coase Theorem is standard fare for students of mainstream welfare economics. In their article, “Coasean Theory of Property Rights and Law Revisited: A Critical Inquiry,” authors Giorgios Meramveliotakis and Dimitris Milonakis (the latter a long-time S&S contributor) provide a singularly clear exposition of the Theorem, and of the debate surrounding it. They mount an internal critique of the assumptions of the Theorem, and explicate its particular place in the armory of “free market” economic theory. But they also move on to a wider view, based on Marxist foundations, which addresses the narrow perspective of the entire debate and its avoidance of the crucial framework of social relations, power and conflict. In this regard, the Coase discussion is placed within the entire field of “law and economics” studies, and the underlying political meaning of that field’s assumptions is brought to the surface.

Christopher Araujo’s study “On the Misappropriation of Marx’s Late Writings on Russia” addresses the influential work by Kevin Anderson, *Marx*

at the *Margins*. Marx had speculated, largely in correspondence, that Russia had the opportunity, based on the relative stability and survival of the *mir*, or village commune, to draw upon ancient communal forms in a direct transition to communism, bypassing the negativity and individualist distortions of capitalism. One issue in the debate about this, as exemplified in Anderson's work, is whether this possibility appears generally in precapitalist societies, or whether it was (in reality and in Marx) tied to the specific social relations of the Russian case.

Antonio Gramsci's powerful yet subtle ideas about social consciousness and transformation continue to be a source of inspiration for creative thinking in present-day contexts. In "Gramsci and the Challenges for the Left: The Historical Bloc as a Strategic Concept," Panagiotis Sotiris offers a new reading of the "historical bloc." This has often been taken to refer to a cross-class alliance, or possibility of such an alliance. Sotiris argues instead that the concept is a strategic one, in which the actual dynamics of struggles and the emergence of new forms of democracy from below can be drawn upon to shape new possibilities — the "concrete utopias" of an emerging hegemony of the subaltern.

"Communications" in this issue begin with Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth's response to the earlier article by Tom Brass, "Who These Days Is not a Subaltern? The Populist Drift of Global Labor History" (S&S, January 2017). van der Linden and Roth are major progenitors of the field of Global Labor History (see their jointly authored *Beyond Marx: Theorising the Global Labor Relations of the Twenty-First Century*, Brill, 2014). Their reply to Brass is followed by his rejoinder. At issue here is a well-known dialectical problem: whether, and how, it is even possible to preserve a synthesis — in this case the systematic study of labor in its complete contextualization within capitalist social relations — *without* "going beyond" that synthesis as constituted at any moment in time. Alternatively: how one can *go beyond* without losing the core, the "kind," of that which is thus transcended. But perhaps this is to read this discussion too much in connection with Goethe–Hegel–Marx, or Gramsci! Insight: when you read an article in S&S, the surrounding articles and debates will affect that reading. This is why a journal is so much more than a simple collection of its contents.

A final Communication in this issue is by David Laibman: "A Note on the Complex and Contradictory Effects of Rising Productivity in Modern Economies." This was prepared for delivery at the Moscow Economic Forum last March, a venue where, to put it mildly, Marxist ideas compete for attention with all sorts of liberal (and neoliberal) thinking. The essentially Marxist method underlying the study should nevertheless be clear enough.

Finally, we are pleased to present Alex Callinicos' review article on Fred Moseley's edition of Marx's *The Economic Manuscript of 1864–1865: Capital Book*

*Three: Forms [Gestaltungen] of the Process as a Whole.* The noteworthy effort to make available, in English as in other languages, the entire *corpus* of Marx's work continues, and this publication is a major contribution to that effort, as Callinicos' able survey shows. There is — or should be — no contradiction between the “going beyond” of van der Linden/Roth and the scholarly return to sources made possible by the MEGA<sup>2</sup> project and by publications such as the Moseley edition of Marx, 1864–65. In Callinicos' words: “The critique of political economy stands before us, massive and unfinished but magnificent, like Michelangelo's slaves in the Accademia in Florence. It's up to us to decide what use we make of it.”

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## **MARXISM IN OUR TIME**

*Notes from the Editor*

### THE NEW RED-BAITING: AND THEY EVEN COME AFTER OUR KIDS

While the USSR existed, it provided, however imperfectly, a counterweight to capitalist class power and hegemony worldwide. The centerpiece of mainstream capitalist ideology therefore had to be opposition to “communism,” where that term came to stand for unmitigated evil, the unarguably hated “other.” Lives, and livelihoods, were lost in the struggle against McCarthyism and political persecution — of Communists, and of anyone whose activism threatened existing power and who could be branded with the “communist” label. With the fall of the Soviet Union, one might have imagined that this particular dimension of ideological attack on left and progressive movements would cease to be effective, and would die out.

How wrong “one” would have been! With the current rightward turn in U. S. politics (and, with important exceptions and qualifications, in many other parts of the world), McCarthyite smear tactics and persecution are rising once again. Julia Carrie Wong, writing in *The Guardian* (May 22, 2017), takes note of “America's obsession with rooting out communism,” which (the obsession, unfortunately, and not communism!) “is making a comeback.” She cites examples: a California Republican state assemblyman, Travis Allen, opposing legislation to remove obstacles to members of the Communist Party holding government jobs, opines: “To allow subversives and avowed communists to now work for the state of California is a direct insult to the people of California who pay for that government.” The legislation was blocked. The

State of Washington has a law on the books barring communists from voting or holding government jobs. Democratic representative Joe Fitzgibbon has tried to get it repealed three times since 2012, without success.

One of the most blatant examples of the new red-baiting emerged recently at Park Slope Collegiate, a middle school and high school in Brooklyn, New York. Jill Bloomberg, the school's principal, has been an outspoken critic of racist policies in her school: in particular, of discriminatory favoring of the largely white Millennium Brooklyn High School, also housed in the Park Slope Collegiate building. She is now under investigation for alleged "communist activity" (*New York Times*, May 4, 2017; *Park Slope Courier*, June 9–15, 2017). Ms. Bloomberg and two unnamed teachers at the school are accused of belonging to the Progressive Labor Party, a Communist organization. It is also claimed that they recruited students and invited them to participate in the party's activities. Ms. Bloomberg denies allegations that there had been any organizing for the party at the school.

The hostile atmosphere generated by the investigation has of course impacted on teaching as well. One social studies teacher was asked in class about "communism as a form of government." In her words: "I felt caught. Should I answer? How should I answer? I can't even teach it because I am scared. . . . I felt like I was in some type of twilight zone because we teach this as something that happened in the past, but that we're smarter than that now."

In a possibly unprecedented move against students, investigators from the Department of Education interrogated four students at the school, without inviting their parents to be present and without informing them that they had the right not to answer any questions. This provoked widespread demonstrations and protests in response. One eighth grader said: "When the guidance counselor pulled me out of class and took me to the office, I was terrified. She didn't tell me I was being questioned, nor did she offer to contact my parents." Students were asked whether certain teachers had held political meetings at their homes, or recruited students for May Day demonstrations. It was noted that, while some white students at the school had been active in anti-racist activities, only young women of color were targeted for the interrogations. The connection between the witchhunt against "communists" and activism against racism was not lost on the students, or their parents. Said one parent: "I've seen what a difference our principal has made for the school, and I sat down to myself one day and said: 'You know they're going to try and force this white woman out, because she's standing up for black kids.'" The effect of this persecution of alleged communists (and of anyone who is active in anti-racist or anti-war or pro-labor struggles) on freedom of thought generally was also apparent. In the words of one senior at the school: "Every time I come to class, I think my teachers might not be there next year. It really upsets me."

All of this makes the present writer think back (gulp!) 60 years or so, to my own high school years. A classmate of mine at Cleveland Heights High School (with whom I am still in contact) was then working part time in the administrative offices of the school. She told me, one afternoon, that the principal had called her into his office that morning, where he was meeting with a couple of men. He asked her to get my file and bring it in to him, which she did. After a period of time, the men left, and the principal gave my friend the file, to be returned to its alphabetical home in the file cabinet. That is all she knew, of course, but the meaning of the episode was not lost on her; she apologized to me — an apology that I assured her was totally unnecessary! In the weeks that followed, I noticed that two men (I have no idea whether they were the same two), in what I later came to recognize as the proverbial grey suits, were diligently tracking my progress, in their vehicle, as I made my way, on foot, to and from school. You just can't imagine what horrendous subversive activity and attacks on the foundations of freedom in the United States were prevented by this judicious use of taxpayer money!

I had undoubtedly come to their attention by sounding off at school, regaling my classmates with my less-than-mature versions of working-class organization, capitalist crisis, and revolution (see "Editorial Perspectives," *S&S*, January 2017). By way of example: I launched a minor uproar in an English lit class, where the standard text we were reading contained a song from the Gilbert and Sullivan classic, *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B., Admiral of the Navy, was soliloquizing on his life story:

I grew so rich that I was sent  
 By a pocket borough<sup>1</sup> into Parliament.  
 I always voted at my party's call  
 And I never thought of thinking of myself at all.  
 I thought so little they rewarded me  
 By making me the ruler of the Queen's Navy.  
 (Chorus) He thought so little they rewarded he . . . (Etc.)

Now I was a bit of a Gilbert and Sullivan buff in those years, and something about this annoyed me. So I checked in my official unabridged G&S at home, and made a remarkable discovery. In the fourth line of the verse, the second "of" was wrong; this was a replacement for the original word, which was: "for." Read it again, this time correctly: "I never thought of thinking *for* myself at all"! One can only imagine the delight this would have provoked

1 Footnote, paraphrased from the high school edition: "Pocket borough" refers to a sparsely populated district, from which an MP could be elected without any sort of popular base, as a reward for service — a British form of gerrymandering and yet another instance of the glories of bourgeois democracy.

in a London audience in the 1880s, and it explains why W. S. Gilbert had to wait as long as he did for a knighthood. Well, I brought my discovery — and the G&S unabridged edition — into class with a vengeance (as was my habit), and created a furor. The student teacher who was leading the class on that day was flustered beyond recognition. She tried to deny that the change in wording had any significance. This, of course, was ridiculous. (This was the same teacher who tried to convince us to pronounce “Don Quixote” as “Dahn Kwiksot.”) The difference between not thinking *of* oneself (positive, except perhaps to a few unreconstructed AynRandians) and not thinking *for* oneself (negative) was not lost on my classmates. To make things even worse (from the teacher’s standpoint), a Mexican exchange student picked up the theme; he gave a marvelous, if somewhat overdrawn, impromptu talk on the corruption inherent in all politics.

But the takeaway is that the pall of anti-communist hysteria at that time had created an environment so oppressive, and so counter to critical and creative thought, that the U. S.–based editors of an anthology of English literature should find it necessary to tamper with Gilbert and Sullivan in the way that they did. This, to assure that no impressionable high school student might risk getting the idea that thinking *for* oneself — not accepting at face value the formulary handed down from on high, but processing it and confronting it with one’s own experience — might be a good thing, not a bad one.

This little incident might have been the source of the complaint that led to the FBI visit to my school principal, and to the subsequent surveillance. I remember being more proud than frightened — perhaps my lack of fear was due to ignorance — but also wondering what in the world could *they* be so afraid of? Certainly not of a single, rather scrawny high school kid with dark-rimmed glasses and (then!) dark brown curly hair. And this leads to the real questions. Was the McCarthy-era hysteria an irrational moment, a lapse of judgment, on the part of the country’s rulers? Or was it in fact a rational, and from their class standpoint necessary, response to real challenges to their hegemony and power? The same questions must of course be asked in the present, as the repressive investigations reported above attest.

When posed in this way, the question seems to answer itself. However ridiculous these “investigators” may seem to be, going after schoolkids and teachers and principals and asking them about “communism,” the billionaire class for which they work (directly or indirectly) is correct to be frightened! (Marx and Engels, 1848: “A spectre is haunting Europe; the spectre of communism.”) The billionaires know what we should know, better than we sometimes do: that *communism* — or whatever it comes to be called as these ideas are rediscovered and lifted up out of an evolving social reality — is the glue that holds all the various dimensions of struggle together. I have been

putting “communism” in quotation marks, to indicate that those who level this charge have no idea of the real meaning of the term. Nevertheless, there is a real logic to their attempt to brand all efforts toward equality and social unity and democracy as “communist.”

What is the purpose of dividing up the working class along cultural lines? You can walk through the Botanic Garden in Brooklyn on a weekday, and witness a depressing scene: multiple private school groups visiting the Garden, separately, each with its own style of dress, skin coloration, hair type, etc.: the orthodox Jews, the African Americans, the Hispanics, the Muslims. No interaction among the groups; they pass each other, silently, evincing and learning passive hostility. New York’s public schools offer a challenge to this, and it is a valuable one: it drew my grandson to PS9, not far from Park Slope Collegiate, in fact, where he is in a dual language kindergarten class and interacts daily with black and Hispanic, and now Muslim, kids. The capitalist rulers are afraid of that — as well they should be. So they create “Charter Schools,” whose purpose is to maintain the divide, both cultural and in terms of resources, between “white” (and, currently, Asian) kids on one side and others, or between a *tiny layer* of mostly white kids chosen by lottery and the rest, if that is all that is possible for now. The invidious separation is built into consciousness, and that is what enables the powers that be to take one grouping within the working class and turn the anger of its members against groups that have even less than they do.

And, incidentally, to break the Teachers Union. Which brings us to another dimension of what they know, and we (so often) do not: the central unifying place of labor, and class, and consciousness of class. Without this, we get what is sometimes referred to as the “silo effect,” the separation of “demands”: parents vs. teachers, workers vs. communities, Euro-Americans vs. (everywhere else)-Americans, women vs. men, loggers vs. environmentalists, white collar vs. blue collar, seniors vs. juniors, millennials vs. GenXers, east siders vs. west siders, country vs. soul, big enders vs. little enders (remember Jonathan Swift), and so on. One can almost hear the billionaire elite saying: “If they ever get beyond all this and get it together, we are done for.”

And what would “getting it together” amount to? *Communism!* — if that is the word for building a movement, and then a society, in which working people themselves figure out how to address the serious planetary constraints facing humanity, how to share the burdens and fruits of our common existence, how to balance the needs for community and individuality, how to deliberate together and plan, how to use the monumental new technologies to enrich our inner and outer lives rather than impoverishing them. If some skinny teenager in Cleveland Heights, Ohio in 1959; or some perky eighth-grader in Park Slope, Brooklyn in 2017; or that eighth-grader’s courageous principal who is willing to stand up to power on behalf of the underprivileged;

or even certain aging editors of Marxist scholarly journals! — if any or all of these folks begin to have ideas about all that, and dare to collect and transmit for the future the accumulated theory and experience of revolutionary movements around the world, the billionaires and their administrators and ideologues will call that “Communism.” Whatever they choose to call it, that’s what they will attack — and we in turn will find that we need to defend the chosen words, because that way we are defending our ideas, and identities.

An old 1920s William Gropper cartoon has two workers (and yes, from that era they *were* white males, with overalls and lunch pails) reading a headline in a newspaper that reads: “Communism!” One of them says: “I think I know what this ‘Communism’ means, Bill. It means us!”

So the bottom line here is this. When red-baiters do their hateful worst, stand up to them *not* because they are wrong about us, but because they are right! Despite the political trend of recent years, their hysterical attacks tell us something truly important, which they are at pains to deny: *we are stronger than we think we are.*

D. L.