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## Marx's philosophy of revolution vs. non-Marxist scholar-careerists in "Marxism"

### THEORY / PRACTICE

by Raya Dunayevskaya

author of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

The writings of non-Marxist scholars who are careerists in Marxism have become an industry unto itself. One such scholar, Terrell Carver, who has spent more than a decade in the field, published his first, quite promising study, *Karl Marx Texts on Method*<sup>1</sup>, in 1975. His latest work, *Marx & Engels, The Intellectual Relationship*<sup>2</sup>, will be followed (in a soon-to-be-published 1984 symposium, *After Marx*<sup>3</sup>) with an article entitled "Marxism as Method," a title very similar to the first book he published. But the recent works appear to be totally the opposite of what Carver first seemed to be saying.

The reader had every right to read into that 1975 work, which focused on Marx's methodology, that the author meant dialectic methodology as Marx had transformed the Hegelian dialectic, which had created a revolution in philosophy, into a dialectics of revolution. That principle had permeated Marx's entire adult life, so that it mattered not at all whether the subject under discussion was philosophy or political economy; whether it was a matter of working out in theory a dialectics of revolution and writing a Manifesto for an organization that called for revolution, or actual participation in an ongoing revolution and even after its defeat declaring for "revolution in permanence."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it did not seem to matter at all whether a study of Marx was undertaken by a Marxist or a non-Marxist who had delved into the field merely as a scholarship pursuit.

THE TWO TEXTS Carver had chosen to concentrate on seemed most impressive and objective in that regard. One was the Introduction to the *Grundrisse* which had first come to light in our age and proved — even to opponents of the Hegelian dialectic and proponents of "scientific economics," like the Althusser — that the "mature Marx" had most definitely not discarded "philosophy" as he made his profound analysis of "the economic law of motion of

capitalist society." It is true that Carver was presenting a new translation and commentary on only the Introduction of the *Grundrisse*, but there was no way of missing Marx's multi-dimensionality, his sweep of human development as the absolute opposite to capitalist wealth and alienated labor as well as to pre-capitalist society. Marx had, after all, held out a Promethean vision of a new society "where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality. Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming."<sup>5</sup>

Carver furthermore made some quite original contributions as he called attention to the fact that, profound and comprehensive as was Marx's Introduction, the post-Marx Marxists had narrowed their vision to make the only reigning principle of Marxian methodology to be a "development from the abstract to the concrete." Carver correctly stressed that that was not the method that characterized the Preface to Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*. As Marx explained: "I omit a general introduction which I had prepared as on second thought any anticipation of results, that are still to be proven, seemed to me objectionable, and the reader who wishes to follow me at all must make up his mind to pass from the particular to the general . . ."

The second "Marx text" Carver chose to translate anew and comment on — "Notes (1879-80) on Adolph Wagner" — further reinforced the view that Carver was entering the contemporary field of challenging reigning Marx-interpretations by self-appointed Marx "specialists" who imprison everything in so-called "orthodoxy" when what is needed is a serious grappling with Marx's Marxism instead

1. *Karl Marx Texts on Method*, translated and edited by Terrell Carver (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

2. Terrell Carver, *Marx & Engels, The Intellectual Relationship* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983).

3. *After Marx*, edited by T. Ball and J. Farr, is soon to be published by Cambridge University Press.

4. See *Address to the Communist League*, available in many sources, including *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works*, Vol. 10. (New York: International Publishers, 1978).

5. See *Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, (New York: International Publishers, 1965), p. 85.

of inventing unbridgeable gulfs between the "young" and the "mature" Marx. Here was a document from Marx's last years in which he was reaffirming that his dialectic methodology and the historically concrete commodity were inseparable. Moreover, commodity related not to a mere thing; the two-fold nature of the commodity reflected the two-fold character of labor — abstract and concrete:— Marx's original contribution without which, he claimed, no scientific understanding of political economy is possible.

NOTHING IN ALL this could possibly have prepared the reader for the shock of reading Carver's latest article on "Marxism as Method," as he rushes to conclude: "Marx's actual method in dealing with political economy was eclectic and very complex. He used classical and Hegelian logic, and the techniques of mathematical, sociological, economic, historical and political analysis . . . This eclectic method included a notion of dialectic as the specification of conflictual, developmental factors in analysing social phenomena, and we know that Marx found this helpful in dealing, for example, with the concepts of money and profit." (My emphasis).

So opposite a picture of Carver emerges from his first book and his most recent writings that one is tempted to ask: Who is the "real" Terrell Carver? The answer, I believe, is revealed in an article — "Marx's Commodity Fetishism" — written the same year as Karl Marx Texts on Method. It is there we read: "In 1842 he (Marx) had read a 1785 German translation of Charles de Brosses's Cult of the Fetish-Gods, published anonymously in Paris in 1760." Supposedly, "Marx used the word 'fetish' in this eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sense." (p. 50) This is further substantiated by him with a definition straight from the Oxford English Dictionary: "An inanimate object worshipped by savages, on account of its supposed inherent magical powers, or as being animated by a spirit."

It is absurd to consider that Marx would have followed an Oxford English dictionary definition after a full quarter of a century of labor studying the commodity — at the end of which he was still so dissatisfied that, following the Paris Commune, he returned to his masterpiece, Capital, to introduce fundamental changes both in Chapter 1 and in the section on "Accumulation of Capital," asking even the reader familiar with the original edition to nevertheless read that 1872-75 French edition.<sup>6</sup>

6. Terrell Carver, "Marx's Commodity Fetishism," *Inquiry*, 18, pp. 39-63.

It is in the section on fetishism — in which Marx had seen that the mystical character which has human relations reduced to "material relations between persons and social relations between things" — that he now, after the Paris Commune, declared that only "freely associated" men and women can strip away that fetish. Carver makes short shrift of all of this by paying no attention whatever to such historical truths and dialectical relations.

The truth is that Carver totally rejects Marx's dialectic, including the whole labor theory of value and surplus value. He is so eaten up with hostility to Marx that in this article he strikes out also against the great economist, Joan Robinson, who, though she rejects Marx's dialectics, recognizes his great contributions to economics. Here is the arrogance with which Carver wipes his hands of all that: "If the arguments for his critical re-presentation of the labor theory of value are unconvincing, then there is no reason to accept his views precisely as he expressed them, and that is that." (p. 59)

THE ONE PARAGRAPH Preface to Marx & Engels, The Intellectual Relationship, in which Carver calls attention to his Marx-Engels Chronology, may shed some illumination — but for very different reasons than he had in mind when he wrote that he hoped "the reader will find the Marx-Engels Chronology at the end of the book useful in following my account of two complicated careers . . ." The Chronology illuminates not so much the Marx-Engels relationship as the pragmatic, non-revolutionary pre-suppositions that

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7. Over the years, I have traced not only Marx's concept of the fetishism as he described it in 1867, and in the 1872-75 French edition, but how Chapter 1, especially its concluding section on fetishism, has become central to all the debates over Marx the dialectician and Marx the "economist" at every single critical turning point in the objective situation. These debates begin with the call by the first revisionist, Eduard Bernstein, for the removal of the "dialectical scaffolding"; achieve a Great Divide in Marxism with Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic; and reach the post-WWII period with Sartre on one side and Althusser on the other. See Marxism and Freedom, especially Chapter X ("The Collapse of the Second International and the Break in Lenin's Thought"); Philosophy and Revolution, Chapter 2, Section C ("The Adventures of the Commodity as Fetish"), as well as Chapter 6, on Jean-Paul Sartre, especially Section D ("The Dialectic and the Fetish"); and Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, Part Three ("Karl Marx — From Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theorist of 'Revolution in Permanence'").

8. One way Joan Robinson rejected dialectics was expressed when she told me that she wished Marx had told Engels all his economic theories, so Engels could have presented them in clear English.

are weighing heavily on the author.

Thus: 1) Missing entirely are the 1848 Revolutions or any writings during that period. No wonder there is not a word of the famous 1850 Address to the Communist League, written after the defeat of those Revolutions, in which Marx and Engels declared for the "revolution in permanence." In place of revolution — either the particular ones in France and Germany, or "in permanence" — what determines this so-called independent study of Marx is the concept of "career," "vocation." Carver goes so far as to picture, in this latest book, Engels losing out to Marx because he "lacked Marx's single-minded political thrust and unifying sense of vocation." (p. xiii)

2) The 1860s fare as badly in the Chronology as the revolutions that covered Europe in the 1840s. We are told nothing of the Polish Revolt, or the Civil War in the U.S., or the General Strikes in France — all of which resulted in the establishment of the International Workingmen's Association (First International), headed by Marx. Not only that. Along with Marx's activities came also the many restructurings of Capital, which led, at one and the same time, to relegating the history of theory to Vol. IV. Instead, "history and its process" became the center, the determinant for Marx. This means, little to Carver, as is obvious from the fact that he also leaves out of his Chronology what was the greatest revolution in Marx's time — the Paris Commune — which led to the definitive French edition of Marx's greatest work, *Capital*, and which, in illuminating that intellectual relationship between Marx and Engels, would have thereby revealed what Marx's Marxism is.

3) Instead, Carver presents the last years of Marx's life so loosely that outright factual errors have crept in. The reader doesn't know whether Carver really does know the *Ethnological Notebooks* or was led to believe by Engels that they were concerned only with Morgan's Ancient Society, and to believe, further, that Engels had included all of Marx's study in his own very first work after Marx's death — *The Origin of the Family* — as a "bequest" of Marx. No wonder that Carver does not subject Engels' very first "substantial" work after Marx's death to any critical examination. (This author considers that work to be the

9. See Chapter X of Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, especially Section 2 ("Capital: Significance of the 1875 French Edition of Vol. 1"). See also "The French Edition of *Capital*, 100 Years After," a paper presented by Kevin Anderson to the Conference of the Eastern Sociological Society, Philadelphia, March 19, 1982.

10. In 1972, Marx's *Notebooks*, titled *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972), were finally transcribed by Lawrence Krader. For my analysis see especially Chapter XII, Section 2 ("The Unknown Ethnological Notebooks, the Unread Drafts of the Letter to Zasulich, as well as the Undigested 1882 Preface to Russian Edition of the Communist Manifesto") in Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

most serious deviation from Marx's Marxism, whether that be the concept of Man/Woman in the 1844 Essays or as it was developed in the full *Ethnological Notebooks*.<sup>11</sup> A reading of those Notebooks would have proved to Carver that his conclusions that Marx and Engels are not "one" is by no means limited to the difference in Engels' presentation of Anti-Duhring before and after Marx's death. It is no wonder that the way Carver presents the situation ends with his total rejection of Marx and praise of Engels, though it began the other way around.

IN HIS LATEST WORK, *Marx & Engels, The Intellectual Relationship*, Carver devotes no less than two of the five chapters of the book to Engels, before the lifelong association was established in the autumn of 1844. This presentation, indeed, overshadows Marx's development in the crucial 1842-44 period. The first encounter between Marx and Engels in 1842, presented by Carver in Chapter 1 ("The False Start"), led nowhere, but Carver shows in great detail what Engels wrote in that period. The same holds true for 1843, which was a great turning point in Marx's life — not only personally, as his break with bourgeois society shows, but objectively, as his writing shows. But, again, the focus is on Engels, not on Marx, specifically on the article, "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," which Engels had submitted to Marx's journal in Paris, and which greatly impressed Marx.

What is important is not that it greatly impressed Marx then, but that Carver is so overwhelmed by it now, 140 years later, that he elevates it to a status above Marx's famous 1844 Essays, which initiated the discovery of a whole new continent of thought and revolution. Completed the month before the meeting with Engels in mid-August, Marx's views had so great an impact on Engels himself (even though he heard the concepts only in an abbreviated oral form) that a life-long collaboration of the two revolutionaries resulted.

Terrell Carver, the hide-bound eclectic, turns all this upside down. Thus: 1) Carver claims (p. 41) that since Marx's "excerpt-notes" contain a resume of Engels' "Outlines," it is, in fact, Engels who inspired Marx's now famous 1844 *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*.

2) Not only that, Carver further considers those 1844 Manuscripts "an intermediate stage of conceptual elaboration between Engels's critique of the economists's basic categories, and the much crisper 'premises' of *The German Ideology*" (p. 41, my emphasis), a collaborative effort of the two in 1845, which they later consigned to the "gnawing criticism of the mice."

3) Still not satisfied with his reduction of Marx's 1844 Manuscripts as something reflecting Engels' "methodology," Carver concludes: "The methodology, however, was adopted from Engels's 'Outlines,' where there was a focus on 'contradictions' in social life." (p. 54, my emphasis).

4) Finally, Carver concludes that "The theoretical, empirical and even in some respects political and historical virtues of Engels's work were substantially degraded when he settled into his role as Marx's 'second fiddle'" (p. 155).

Of course, when one has praised Marx's "eclecticism," spelled out his scientific, rigorous and voluminous concrete economic studies, stressing the meticulousness of his studies, how can one conclude that Marx's methodology, which led to his conclusion about the law of motion of capitalism, is mechanically "derived" from Hegel's categories in the *Logic*? Fiction in place of fact oozing out of Carver's eclecticism should not surprise us anymore than his crediting Marx's methodology in the 1844 Manuscripts to Engels....

What all this proves, to this author, is that the totality of the crises of our age, in thought as well as in material conditions, is so unrelenting in its stranglehold over pragmatism that it becomes impossible for the non-Marxist scholars to cut themselves free and make any real contribution to the knowledge of Marx's Marxism as a totality.