

# Response to Richard Hudelson

STEPHEN LOUW

I am grateful to Richard Hudelson's response to my article. However, I feel that he ignores the basis for my claim, namely, the necessarily totalitarian structure of the classical Marxist conception of communism. I would like to make two brief remarks in response.

First, Hudelson makes much of my misunderstanding of Hegel, arguing that "nothing could be less Hegelian" (p. 207) than the idea that a unified society implies homogeneity and transparency. (I am in good company here, for his earlier article takes G. A. Cohen to task for the same point.) This is simply a sleight of hand, however, as my analysis of Marx does not depend on my reading of Hegel. Marx inherited many of Hegel's concepts, and his relationship to them is the subject of considerable debate. Quite possibly, I have completely misunderstood the discussion of unity in Hegel. However, this in no way affects my discussion of Marx and Engels's vision of communism, for it is in their writings that I locate the vision of a transparent social. Whether the original inspiration for this was Hegel, or anyone else for that matter, is irrelevant to the essential structure of Marx and Engels's work. It is also irrelevant to my broader claim, that any attempt to create a society which conforms to Marx's vision of communism is necessarily totalitarian. If Hudelson wishes to defend the Marxism of Marx and Engels, the onus is on him to do this by discussing the problematic developed in their core theoretical texts, and to show how their vision of communism can possibly be understood as democratic.

My second point concerns Hudelson's failure to tackle directly the work of Marx and Engels. In an earlier article, Hudelson makes the extraordinary assertion that there are no "Marxist laws of historical development" (Hudelson 1993, 197, fn. 25). In his response to my article, this is extended to imply that the "laws of dialectics" are seen by Marx and Engels as "weak empirical generalizations" (p. 208, note 5). The intention of my article, by contrast, is to show that it was precisely these

"laws" that define the classical Marxist problematic and that are intended to make sense of the progression of history. Often against available empirical evidence, Marx and Engels understood capitalism as no more than the seed of communism and understood its components through this prism. Class struggle under capitalism prepares the groundwork for communism by simplifying the social structure, eliminating intermediate classes, and leading to a situation where the proletariat is able to eliminate the bourgeoisie (as a class), whose social existence has become entirely parasitic and irrelevant to the circulation of capital.

More than this, the structure of capitalism is itself seen to result in systematic crises, destined not only to bring down the capitalist system but also to create communism. My discussion of the Joint Stock Company was used to illustrate this point, as great masses of capital are brought together in ways that not only displace *ex post* coordination but also render the social structure increasingly transparent. And once the social structure (under communism) is understood to become transparent to itself, it becomes easy to understand why Marx and Engels pay so little attention to the need for institutions to facilitate government. In *The Civil War in France*, for example, it is clear that Marx anticipates the need for certain representative institutions, but these are not geared to establish the interests of society. Instead, they are simply means to put these interests, which are known a priori, into place. This is why Marx compared "individual suffrage" under communism with the functional allocation of labor in the workplace: one simply "put the right man in the right place" (Marx 1977, 221). This is of a *completely* different order to the interrogative nature of representative institutions which constitute the basis of democratic society (see, further, Hudson and Louw 1992) and is at odds with the idea that knowledge is limited and inherently fallibilistic (Mill 1991, chap. 2). Once History is seen in these terms, it becomes difficult to understand how dissent might be understood as anything other than heresy. The fact that communists like Plekhanov rejected this model of communism is hardly evidence of its absence in Marx.

## REFERENCES

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