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Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' Knowledge of French Socialism in 1842-43

David Gregory

Eighteen forty-three is especially significant in the history of the European left because it was the year that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were converted to socialism. The two young men scarcely knew each other at the time, and their conversions occurred in different countries, Marx's in France and Engels' in England. Yet their beliefs evolved along quite similar paths, similar enough that when they encountered each other properly for the first time in the autumn of 1844, they experienced a true meeting of minds. When Friedrich Engels first arrived in England in November 1842 he was, politically speaking, what the authorities of the time termed a "Jacobin," that is a revolutionary republican and democrat who hoped that other European countries would soon be experiencing their own versions of the French Revolution. By the end of the next year he had, under the influence of Chartism and Owenism, committed himself to the cause of socialism. Similarly, when Karl Marx arrived in France in the fall of 1843 he was still a liberal republican, although he was already interested in socialism and was beginning to sympathise with the arguments of certain socialist writers. Four months later, in January 1844, when he wrote his celebrated essay "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction," for the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Marx had definitely espoused a brand of socialism. Some historians have claimed that Marx's conversion in fact took place earlier, at Kreuznach, when he wrote the unpublished manuscript with the confusingly similar title "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," sometimes referred to as the *Kreuznach manuscript* for the sake of clarity. Shlomo Avineri, for example, has

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argued this trenchantly—but in my view unconvincingly—in his well-known *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*.¹ In fact the evidence for Marx's alleged espousal of "communism" in the summer of 1843 at Kreuznach is tenuous at best, while it is quite clear from his later correspondence with Arnold Ruge in September that he was still, to say the least, ambivalent about socialism and quite hostile to "communism" which he called a "dogmatic abstraction."² Nonetheless, although he was not yet converted, Marx was certainly interested in socialism by the summer of 1843. His interest in French socialism had actually first stirred in the latter months of 1842 while he was editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne, much the same time that Friedrich Engels was first coming across Chartism and Owenism in London and Manchester.

The critical period for both men was therefore October 1842 to December 1843. The single most important factor in Marx's conversion to socialism during these months was his increasing acquaintance with and understanding of French socialism. In Engels' case exposure to the realities of lower-class life in the Lancashire textile towns, coupled with his reading of Chartist and Owenite literature, were the primary causes of his conversion. But Engels also found out as much as he could about French socialism and communism during 1843, and the knowledge he gained played a secondary role in his mental evolution. We cannot, therefore, understand the conversion of either Marx or Engels to socialism without studying what they knew of French socialism at this time, and how their knowledge influenced their changing political and social views.

The terms "socialism" and "communism" are ambiguous. By "socialism" I mean any left-wing ideology or system of thought that assails as fundamentally unjust and repressive any social order built upon unrestricted private enterprise and property-ownership. The defining criterion of socialism is its critique of capitalist society, a critique undertaken, however, from the left, that is from within the radical democratic tradition, and complemented with a vision of an alternative, freer and juster, society in which the abuses of

1. Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 33-34.

2. Marx to Arnold Ruge, September 1843, reproduced in "Ein Briefwechsel von 1843," *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris: 1844); reprinted in *Marx/Engels Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter abbreviated as MEGA), (Frankfurt am Main & Berlin: Institut Marx-Engels, 1927-35), series I, volume I, part 1 pp. 572-575 (MEGA I, 1 (1):572-575). English translation in *Marx/Engels Collected Works* (hereafter abbreviated as MECW), (Moscow, London & New York: Progress, Lawrence and Wishart, & International Publishers), 1975-, volume 3, pp. 141-145 (MECW, 3:141-145).

"laissez-faire" capitalism will have been curbed. This, of course, is a rather loose definition, but deliberately so, because by common usage "socialism" is a concept that denotes a family of theories and systems. It was a broad concept in the first half of the nineteenth century too, but not quite so loose and fuzzy as it is today. Then it encompassed primarily the ideas of those groups within the French revolutionary tradition that went beyond the cause of republican democracy to demand substantial changes in the economic structure of contemporary society in the name of liberty, justice, and equality. So when I use the term "socialism" in this essay, I am referring to a family of anti-capitalist ideas, theories, and thought systems that was already alive and growing rapidly by the 1830s. Hence a "socialist," in the early nineteenth century context, is any thinker or militant who belongs somewhere within this extended family.

If the term "socialism" was already a loose concept by 1840, this was not true of "communism." In the 1840s communism was a specific kind of socialism. It referred, in particular, to the ideal of a fully egalitarian community, one that would eschew private property and abolish wage-labour and money. There were several variations on this basic theme current in early nineteenth century Europe, and naturally they differed in detail, but they shared the same fundamental vision, a vision that many socialists, then as now, regarded as impractical or utopian.

Marx and Engels, independently of each other, became socialists first, communists (in the early nineteenth century sense of the term that I have just explained) later in the 1840s, and then, later still, jointly redefined the term communism to describe their modified views (which by 1847 they distinguished sharply from visionary, utopian communism but still called communist, as in the famous *Manifesto of the Communist Party*). This paper is concerned primarily with the first stage of this three stage process, the transition of Marx and Engels to socialism. Neither had fully embraced utopian communism by the end of 1843, although both were already attracted, to a degree, by communist arguments and ideals. In the process of examining what their newly-found socialism meant to Marx and to Engels in 1843, we shall also see what they thought about contemporary communism and other varieties of early nineteenth century socialist thought.

I

The case of Friedrich Engels is the simpler. We know what Engels' political opinions were in October 1843 (just before he left

Germany for England) from an article he wrote for the *Rheinische Zeitung* which was rejected by that newspaper's moderate liberal editor, Karl Marx. The article was on the king of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and its central theme was that the current state of affairs in Prussia closely resembled France on the eve of the 1789 Revolution. Engels predicted that Prussia would therefore undergo its liberal revolution (i.e., the substitution of representative government for the existing feudal autocracy) in the very near future, and that this transformation would take the form of a spate of political concessions forced on the monarchy by middle class public opinion led by liberals from the intelligentsia, concessions that would lead logically to the eventual abolition of the monarchy and the creation of republican institutions.³ Clearly, at this time the young Engels was preoccupied with constitutional politics, and he was no socialist, despite the fact that earlier that summer he had met the German communist Wilhelm Weitling in Berlin and read his newly published book, *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit*.⁴ By the fall of 1842 Engels had merely decided that the lower classes were not so wild and irrational as he had previously assumed, that they warranted closer observation, and that he should delve into as much European socialist literature as he could lay hands on. Weitling, then, had stimulated his interest in artisans and manual workers, and in socialist ideas, but had not weaned him from radical liberalism.

On his way from Berlin to London in October 1842, Engels stopped in at the Cologne offices of the *Rheinische Zeitung* and was given a warm welcome by Moses Hess and other radical members of the newspaper's staff who were disappointed with their new editor's cautious liberalism. Hess was a socialist who had two years previously published an important book, *Die Europäische Triarchie*, in which he had speculated that the humanist ideals of German Romantic philosophy and the political goals of the French Revolution would be implemented in England by means of a social revolution sparked by the Chartist movement.⁵ Hess was also the *Zeitung's* Paris correspondent, and was a mine of information about the personalities and

3. Friedrich Engels, "Friedrich Wilhelm IV, König von Preussen," in *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*, ed. Georg Herwegh (Zurich and Winterthur: Verlag des Literarischen Comptoirs, 1843); reprinted in *Marx/Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1972-), 1:446-453; translated in MECW, 2:360-367.

4. Wilhelm Weitling, *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit*, (Hamburg: Verlag der Verfassers, second edition, 1849). For more information on this encounter, see Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: Eine Biographie* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1934); English translation (abridged), *Friedrich Engels: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1936).

5. Moses Hess, *Die Europäische Triarchie* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841).

views of such French socialists as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the ex-Saint-Simonian Pierre Leroux, the Fourierist Victor Considérant, and the Icarian communist Etienne Cabet. Engels spent a week with his new friend, and no doubt milked him hard for information about England, Chartism, and French socialism. He was also almost certainly stimulated by Hess's conversation to read *Die Europäische Triarchie* and, later, the articles that Hess would subsequently publish in the *Schweizerischer Republikaner* (April to July 1843) and in Georg Herwegh's collection of censored essays, *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*, which appeared in October 1843. These pieces would together set out Hess's own socialist philosophy, an eclectic blend of the elements that he found most appealing in the French socialists with whose works he was familiar (most notably Fourier, Proudhon, and Cabet), with ideas gleaned from Weitling and Feuerbach. Hess later claimed to have converted Engels to his own views at this time, stating in a letter to his friend Berthold Auerbach that "he, an Anno I revolutionary, departed from me an enthusiastic communist."⁶ In fact, Hess seems to have been deluding himself if he really believed this in October 1842. Engels was certainly impressed by Hess's knowledge and stimulated by his ideas, and he went to England predisposed to sympathise with the Chartists. He was also reinforced in his plan to study the European labouring classes and French and English socialist literature. But, though he was even more interested in socialism than before his sojourn in Cologne, he was not yet a socialist, let alone a communist in November 1842. This is evident from the first dispatches he wrote from London in November for the *Rheinische Zeitung*.⁷ In these articles he was preoccupied with the question whether England would soon experience its republican and democratic revolution or whether the old political élites—the Whigs and Tories—would buy off the main revolutionary force, the Chartists, with concessions. His answer was that republican democracy *would* soon come to England, not as the result of political manoeuvres at the top, but as the result of mass pressure by millions of armed Chartists driven to desperation by poverty and starvation. If Engels, following Hess, was already speculating on the likelihood of a "social revolution" in industrial England in the near future, he

6. Hess to Berthold Auerbach, 19 July 1843, in Moses Hess, *Briefwechsel*, ed. E. Silberner (The Hague: Mouton, 1959), p. 103.

7. Friedrich Engels, "Die inneren Krisen," *Rheinische Zeitung*, 343-344 (9-10 December 1842); "Stellung der politischen Partei," *Rheinische Zeitung*, 358 (24 December 1842); "Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England," *Rheinische Zeitung*, 359 (25 December 1842); reprinted in WERKE, 1:456-465; translated in MECW, 2:370-379.

meant by this "social revolution" a large-scale *émeute* similar in kind and purpose to those enacted by the *sans-culottes* during the radical phase of the French Revolution. He had no conception, at this time, of the social and economic transformation such revolutionaries might seek to implement because he had yet to be converted to a socialist vision of a better society. Engels, in short, saw the English "proletarians" as potentially revolutionary before he himself had espoused the cause of a specifically *socialist* revolution. His political position in November 1842, before he reached Manchester, was—in English terms—that of a Physical Force Chartist.⁸

The industrial towns of Lancashire, then in the grip of a severe economic depression, were a revelation to the young Engels. In retrospect we can see that the half-decade between 1837 and 1842 was a time of exceptionally acute dislocation in the British economy, a watershed between the first stage of the Industrial Revolution based on textiles and the second stage based on coal and iron and symbolised by the railway locomotive. Conditions for the majority of wage-earners in the textile industries were probably as bad as they had ever known, food prices were abnormally high, real wages were (temporarily) in decline, unemployment was widespread and prolonged, and certain sections of the work-force (most notably the hand-loom weavers) had been rendered redundant by technological advances. Not surprisingly, popular movements of protest—strikes and mass meetings—were strong and vociferous, and the Chartist movement seemed to be rapidly gaining a vast following in the North and the Midlands. Engels was plunged into this maelstrom at one of the places where the current was strongest: Manchester. His father had sent him to the city to study the business of textile manufacturing where the biggest and most modern cotton mills were located, so he could hardly avoid seeing the abysmal working conditions and poverty of the textile operatives. He had in any case determined to investigate the conditions of life of the English labouring classes and to learn at first hand their views and aspirations. How he first made contact with labour militants in the Manchester area we do not know, but within a few months of his arrival in the city he had established a liaison with a working-class girl, Mary Burns, and obtained an entrée into the local Chartist movement. His undisguised horror at the working and housing conditions suffered by the textile hands, and his passionate indignation at the English government's do-nothing policy towards the economic crisis, no doubt quickly convinced local militants that he

8. Engels, "Die inneren Krisen," *WERKE*, 1:456-460; *MECW*, 2:370-374.

was on their side, a commitment which was unmistakable in the reports he sent back to Karl Marx in Cologne for publication in the *Rheinische Zeitung*.

It was thus during the first months he lived in Manchester (from December 1842 onwards) that Engels began to realise that there was more to Chartism than a political movement for universal suffrage that wavered uneasily between a reformist and a revolutionary strategy. Chartism, he quickly realised, was at heart a spontaneous protest against poverty and unemployment that had been channeled into political form. It was the most visible, but by no means the only, vehicle of organised opposition to the status quo that could be discovered by a sympathetic observer of the West Midlands labour movement. There was also a local socialist movement which showed considerable vitality. In May-June 1843 Engels sent a series of articles to the *Schweizerischer Republikaner* in which he reported on the nature of the English labour movement which by this time he had been studying for six months.⁹ He was clearly impressed by its size and vigour, and also by the intellectual quality of Lancashire socialism. An atheist himself, Engels gleefully described the anti-clerical campaign in Bristol of the militant atheist Charles Southwell, and noted approvingly that two leading English socialist theoreticians, Robert Owen and his disciple John Watts, were equally hostile to Christian theology. "The English socialists," he remarked, "are far more principled and practical than the French, which is especially due to the fact that they are engaged in an open struggle against the various churches and do not want to have anything to do with religion."¹⁰ As far as I am aware, this was Engels' first reference in print to French socialism; another, in the same article, was equally negative: he dismissed as "dull and miserable" Lorenz von Stein's *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs*, an account of the different varieties of Parisian socialist groups, a copy of which he had been lent by Moses Hess.¹¹ It appears, therefore, that by the early summer of 1843 Engels considered that he knew enough about French socialism to compare it adversely with the Owenism he was now discovering in the English Midlands. But nothing more concerning Engels' acquaintance with French socialism can be gleaned from these *Schweizerischer Republikaner* articles.

9. Friedrich Engels, "Briefe aus London (I-IV)," *Schweizerischer Republikaner*, 39, 41, 46, & 51 (16 May 1843 - 27 June 1843); *WERKE*, 1:468-479; *MECW*, 3:379-391.

10. *Ibid.*; *WERKE*, 1:473; *MECW*, 3:385.

11. Lorenz von Stein, *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842).

What is evident from these same essays is that Engels' conversion to socialism, which was a fairly long-drawn-out affair, was underway by the summer of 1843. A prominent part in this appears to have been played by a new acquaintance, John Watts. Watts was the leading socialist orator and pamphleteer operating in Manchester, and he expounded a down-to-earth brand of Owenism which seems to have had considerable appeal for a portion of the local populace. It appealed to Engels too. Watts, he wrote, was an "outstanding man, who has written some very talented pamphlets on the existence of God and on political economy."¹² He was also impressed with the speaking abilities and factual command possessed by other Owenite propagandists whose meetings he had attended. Apart from the Owenites' atheism, Engels approved of their grasp of economic issues and their willingness to base their socialism on political economy, a subject in which he was becoming more and more interested. He was delighted to find that English socialist theory was, in the main, empirical and hard-headed, far different in tone from Hegelian philosophy (which Engels, once a disciple, had already repudiated). He was rather ambivalent towards Owen himself whom he charged with lapses into obscurity, although he recognised Owen's pivotal role as the founder of English socialism, and he praised the systematic and comprehensive character of Owen's writings.¹³ But on the whole, notwithstanding Owen's virtues, Engels preferred the more concrete, issue-oriented pamphlets of Watts and the local Chartist leader, Feargus O'Connor. Reading between the lines of Engels' comments on Owenism in the *Schweizerischer Republikaner* one can deduce that in the summer of 1843 he had perceived the importance of Robert Owen's writings and had begun to study them, but had not yet come to a final judgement. He was fascinated and rather impressed by Owen and Owenism, but he was not yet won over, whereas his support for Feargus O'Connor and Physical Force Chartism was still unequivocal and enthusiastic.¹⁴ So if Engels was moving steadily towards socialism in the summer of 1843, he still had some way to go. Owen's economic analysis of the evils of industrial capitalism intrigued him, but it had not yet made a deep imprint on his mind. Chartism still had a greater appeal to him than Owenite socialism, and it would take several more months of study and contacts with the English socialist movement before Engels

12. Engels, "Briefe aus London, III," *Schweizerischer Republikaner*, 46 (9 June 1843); WERKE, 1:473-475; MECW, 3:385-386.

13. Ibid.

14. Engels, "Briefe aus London, II," *Schweizerischer Republikaner*, 41 (23 May 1843); WERKE, 1:471-472; MECW, 3:383-384.

finally succumbed. Moreover, it was not only his concerted study of Owenism that made the difference. During the summer and fall of 1843 Engels also set to with a will to discover all he could about French socialism.

II

The fruits of this research appeared in a series of articles in the Owenite journal, *The New Moral World*, during November 1843. They were called collectively "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent" and their author posed—not without some justification—as an informed observer who could explain the French socialist scene to the English working class movement.¹⁵ How had Engels obtained his information? Not from personal observation, since he had spent 1843 in Manchester (apart from occasional trips to the south of England, and one to Belgium). We have seen that he had read Lorenz von Stein's *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs* but dismissed it as an inferior and disappointing work. Nonetheless he may well have drawn some of his factual material from its pages.¹⁶ He had chanced to make the acquaintance of a rather eccentric English Christian socialist called Godwin Barmby, who was interested in continental socialism and had a collection of French socialist and communist pamphlets.¹⁷ He had developed his contacts with prominent militants in the Chartist movement, one of whom, Bronterre O'Brien, had in 1836 published a translation of Buonarroti's *Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf*, and another of whom, George Harney, the editor of the central Chartist organ, *The Northern Star*, was of a cosmopolitan frame of mind and tried to keep up with what was happening on the continent.¹⁸ By now a convert to Owenism, Engels had made friends not only with the leading Manchester Owenite, John Watts, but also with the editor of *The New Moral World*, G.A. Fleming, who had some contacts among the

15. Friedrich Engels, "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent," *The New Moral World*, 19 & 21 (4 November 1843 & 18 November 1843); MEGA I, 2:435-449; MECW, 3:329-408; translation into German in WERKE, 1:480-496.

16. Lorenz von Stein, *Der Sozialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842). Engels, "Briefe aus London, III," MEGA I, 2:374; MECW, 3:388.

17. Engels, "French Communism," *The New Moral World*, (3 February 1844); MEGA I, 2:454; MECW, 3:414.

18. Philippe Buonarroti, *History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality...*, trans. Bronterre O'Brien (London: Hetherington, 1836). This was a translation of *Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf...* (Bruxelles: La Librairie romantique, 1828). It is difficult to pin down when Marx read this, but it was probably in the summer of 1844, whereas Engels likely read the English version some months earlier.

French left.¹⁹ So there were several English sources on whom Engels no doubt relied in part. But probably he drew most heavily on letters he received from German friends in Paris.

Engels had been on good terms with Georg Herwegh, the editor of the *Schweizerischer Republikaner*, and had corresponded with him in Switzerland. In the early fall of 1843 Herwegh moved to Paris to take part in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* venture, while Moses Hess, another friend and correspondent of Engels (who was an avid letter writer) was already there with Ruge. The two men kept him in touch with the doings of the little Young Hegelian circle in the French capital, and, as we saw earlier, invited him to contribute to the review they had planned. Herwegh and Engels in fact met in Ostend in September or October 1843 to discuss the project and Engels' proposed contributions.²⁰ Most probably, he gleaned much of his information about current French socialism from Hess's and Herwegh's accounts of the Parisian scene. His occasional inaccuracies may have reflected the limitations of their knowledge, or their uncritical relaying of claims made in the French pamphlet literature they picked up.

In the section on France in his "Progress of Social Reform," Engels showed a fairly comprehensive awareness of the different varieties of French socialism, without always carefully distinguishing their doctrinal differences. He mentioned eight kinds: Babouvism, Fourierism, Saint-Simonianism, Icarianism, Dézamy's revolutionary communism, and the personal systems of Leroux, Lamennais, and Proudhon.²¹ His knowledge of certain of these was obviously thin; for example, he appeared unaware of Leroux's and Proudhon's criticisms of Babouvism and Icarianism, and called them both communists. However, he may have seemed more ignorant than he actually was in this respect, because he used the label communist very loosely in the essay, and apparently deliberately so. One thesis he wanted to argue was that, notwithstanding the different origins of "the doctrine of community" in France, Germany and Britain, the doctrinal differences between the three working-class movements were relatively minor. As he sometimes used the term, then, communist applied to any scheme for a co-operative community, whether it was along the lines proposed by Owen, Weitling, Cabet, or presumably, even Fourier. Yet, on the other hand, he clearly recognised that

19. Engels, "Briefe aus London, III," MEGA I, 2:371; MECW, 3:385.

20. Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1936).

21. "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent," MEGA I, 2:435-449; MECW, 3:393-399.

Icarianism was egalitarian, anti-capitalist, and non-propertarian in a way that Fourierism was not, and called the former communist to distinguish it from the latter. His usage of the terms socialism and communism was thus not consistent, but it definitely differed from Marx's in the last months of 1843 (Marx at this time used the label socialist in a vague, general way to indicate all left-wing advocates of social as opposed to political reform, and within this broad category distinguished between communists, who wished to totally abolish private possessions, and more moderate socialists, who did not).

Engels, then, regarded most brands of French socialism as comparatively close to Owenism, although he stressed that French militants generally placed more value on political liberties than did the English. Like Marx, he considered that the French road to communism lay through parliamentary democracy, although he too claimed that political liberty by itself was an inadequate, even dangerous, kind of "sham-liberty." The French Revolution, he wrote, had shown that political democracy without social democracy was inherently contradictory and sooner or later inevitably broke down, turning into "undisguised despotism" (referring to the rule of Napoleon). Communism was thus the logical continuation of democratic republicanism; he now regarded Owenism and Chartism as essentially complementary, and considered that the French left had sensibly avoided the artificial divorce between agitation for universal suffrage and for social reform.²²

Engels used two main criteria in judging different French socialist sects and theoretical systems: whether or not they recognised the need for both community of property and equality of income, and whether they had provided a detailed, concrete analysis of the harmful workings of the capitalist economy. On these counts, the French thinkers who did best were (according to his reckoning) Cabet, Fourier, and Proudhon.²³ He was highly impressed with Icarianism, which he perceived as the most popular and most modern form of communism (in the stricter sense of the word). There were, he claimed on two different occasions in *The New Moral World*, about half a million French communists, the vast majority of whom were followers of Cabet. This was, in fact, a gross overestimate which, to judge from the circulation figures of Cabet's newspaper, *Le Populaire*, multiplied reality by a factor of ten. He seems to have been led into error because he took at face value the claim (which he probably found in some pro-Icarian literature) that

22. Ibid., MEGA I, 2:436; MECW, 3:393.

23. Ibid., MEGA I, 2:435; MECW, 3:392.

the "great bulk of the French working-classes" now supported Cabet. This, of course, was not true, but on the other hand it *was* the case that Cabet had a larger working-class following than any other French socialist, and it also seems to have been true that Icarianism in the early 1840s largely absorbed residual lower-class support for older forms of French communism like Babouvism. Clearly what seduced Engels was this fact of urban worker adherence to Cabet's movement. He argued that early Babouvian communism had been "rough and superficial" and in any case ahead of its time, so that it found no widespread echo in the "public mind." After the failure of Babeuf's conspiracy, he contended, French communism had died a natural death until the July Revolution of 1830. Then, in the mid-1830s, when it became obvious that the middle classes, who had seized power in 1830, were not about to concede a democratic republic to the workers who had fought on the barricades, there was a spontaneous revival of revolutionary communism in "the dark lanes and crowded alleys of the Parisian suburb, Saint-Antoine," that quickly spread to Lyon, Toulouse and "the other large manufacturing towns of the realm." It was, alleged Engels, a mass (though secret) working-class movement, divided into several different parties (including the Travailleurs Egalitaires and Dézamy's *L'Humanitaire* group). Since the publication of Cabet's propaganda-novel, *Voyage en Icarie*, and the establishment of *Le Populaire* in 1841, he claimed, the Icarian version of communist doctrine had won the allegiance of almost all these revolutionary-republican urban workers.

Though broadly sympathetic, Engels was in several respects rather critical of Icarianism. He regarded Cabet as merely a propagandist and agitator, dismissed his writings as "superficial," and judged French communism thin on factual analysis. The Icarians, he argued, had mistakenly rejected philosophy and had failed to emancipate themselves from Christianity. Furthermore, their political tactics were mistaken; they kept to the old Babouvian policy of secret societies and intended overthrowing the government by force. He considered this penchant for secrecy and violence quite understandable given the French national character and the traditional despotism of French political regimes, but nonetheless thought it was unnecessary and "contrary to common prudence." Presumably he himself supported, at this time, the Chartist strategy of mass meetings and petitions, although he was not insensitive to the difficulties of implementing such a strategy in France given the government's willingness to employ soldiers against any demonstration in favour of social reform. Still, he was basically out of sympathy with Icarianism over

its political methods, its contempt for sophisticated theory, and its Christianity. On balance, he judged it inferior to Owenism, largely because of Cabet's failure to provide any detailed analysis and critique of the capitalist economy. He also disliked Cabet's statism and considered that he had paid insufficient attention to the problem of how the nation, as opposed to individual communes, was to be run. Owen and the German communist Weitling were both superior in this respect, proposing the abolition of all centralised governmental organs backed by force, and the establishment instead of "a mere administration, organising the different branches of labour, and distributing its produce." Engels thus came out firmly in favour of the abolition of the bourgeois state rather than its utilisation for socialist ends. He had been won over by the anti-statist strain in the European socialist movement.

On the other hand, Engels found plenty to praise in Icarian doctrine. Cabet's scheme for a co-operative community was a little different from Owen's, he noted, and genuinely aimed at creating a society embodying the maximum of "real liberty and real equality." The Icarians had "embodied in their plans everything rational they found in Saint-Simon and Fourier" and were, in consequence, "very much superior to the old French Communists," who had been regrettably ignorant of history and political economy, and hostile to science and fine art. They were rightly critical of the institution of marriage and the present penal system, holding progressive views on education, sexual relations, and the treatment of criminals and old people. Icarianism was, in short, a rational and humanitarian doctrine, despite its inadequacies.²⁴

III

If Engels failed to include Cabet in the top rank of socialist theorists, he had no intention of downplaying the contribution made by Frenchmen to the body of common doctrine he hoped would become widely accepted by workingmen on both sides of the Channel. He discussed with respect and enthusiasm the writings of several other prominent French socialist writers, praising in particular Fourier, Leroux and Proudhon. Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonians he had little time for; the general spirit of their doctrines was admirably reformist, he remarked, but they were lamentably prone to envelop their sensible ideas in "clouds of unintelligible mysticism," and their economic principles were anti-egalitarian. Avowedly following the arguments of his old mentor

24. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 2:441-442; MECW, 3:398-399.

Ludwig Börne, he took a radical stand on the issue of wages. In a co-operative community, he asserted, skilled and unskilled workers should receive the same remuneration—a man should not be further discriminated against because he had been endowed by nature with less talent than his fellows, and all differential wages sinned against the principle of equality. On these grounds, Engels criticised both the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists. Fourierism, he maintained, was marred by one very serious inconsistency, its failure to suppress the excessive accumulation of private wealth. The phalansteries were supposed to be co-operative associations, but Fourier had suggested that not only should skilled workers receive higher pay, but those members of the co-operative who had originally contributed capital should receive dividends on it. In effect, then, there would be owners of the phalansteries, able to make a profit on their investment, which meant that in Fourier's utopia there would still be rich and poor, capitalists and workers. To Engels this was absurd—it destroyed the whole point of abolishing capitalism in the first place, and negated the rest of Fourier's work. "After all the beautiful theories of association and free labour," he commented, "after a good deal of indignant declamation against commerce, selfishness and competition, we have in practice the old competitive system upon an improved plan, a poor-law bastille on more liberal principles!" Fourierism, therefore, was an unsatisfactory halfway house between capitalism and communism.²⁵

Yet despite his critique of Fourierism, Engels had great admiration for Fourier and also for Considérant, whom he praised as one of the cleverest French socialist writers. Fourier, he stated, was a "mighty intellect" whose works could be read with "greater pleasure...and more real value" than those of the Saint-Simonians. As a theorist, Fourier was in the highest class, a class in which Engels seems to have included, at this time, only two other men: Owen and Proudhon. Fourier's great virtue, he explained, was that, unlike the Saint-Simonians, he was a social scientist. The reader could discard the poetry and mysticism in Fourier's writings and a hard core would remain: "scientific research, cool, unbiassed, systematic thought; in short, *social philosophy*." He sketched briefly Fourier's theory that labour was inherently enjoyable but was denatured by the coercive irrationality of the existing social system. Fourier, he added, was the first to establish "the great axiom of social philosophy," the proposition that all individuals had a natural inclination to some kind of work and if they were left to choose their jobs the wants of the

25. Ibid., MEGA I, 2:437-438; MECW, 3:394-395.

whole society would be automatically provided for without the intimidation and bribery used by the capitalist system. This assertion, he admitted, appeared bold, but after Fourier's mode of establishing it, it was "quite unassailable, almost self-evident." Clearly, he had been won over by Fourier's vision of a community in which labour would be free and joyous as well as co-operative. Purged of its capitalist accretions, Fourier's phalanstery looked to Engels remarkably like his old romantic ideal of an organic society, in which the individual would be at once in harmony with his fellow human beings and free to cultivate his own talents and personality.²⁶

Engels had thus merged certain key Fourierist doctrines with his newly acquired Owenite communism. He seems to have been impressed also with two other French writers, Leroux and Proudhon. About Leroux he had little to say, except that he was one of the "most eminent minds in France," which may indicate that he had received glowing reports of Leroux from Hess and Herwegh but had not as yet read much of the man's work. Proudhon's *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?*, however, he had read, although he apparently knew little about the author. It was, he affirmed, a brilliant and important book, "the most philosophical, on the part of the Communists, in the French language." Of all French socialist literature, he announced, Proudhon's work was the most deserving of translation into English. Like Fourier, Proudhon had done his homework, describing with powerful intellect and "real scientific research" the social consequences of the institution of private property, namely "competition, immorality [and] misery." Moreover, Engels added enthusiastically, he had confronted the crucial question of the nature of the state, and had proved that every kind of government, democratic or not, was objectionable because based on force. In even the most perfect form of political democracy the majority unavoidably oppressed the minority, so in order to abolish political oppression it was necessary to abolish government *per se*. Engels was convinced this could be done if the will to do it was there. Like Hess some months earlier, he explicitly endorsed Proudhon's slogan, "Nous voulons l'anarchie!" What we want, he concluded, is "the rule of nobody, the responsibility of every one to nobody but himself." Proudhon, it seems, rather than Owen or Weitling, was probably most responsible for Engel's conversion to anti-statism.²⁷

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., MEGA I, 2:442; MECW, 3:399.

IV

These, then, were Engels' opinions on the varieties of French socialism about which he possessed some knowledge in November 1843. Some of his judgements were better informed than others, but on the whole the article-essay series was quite an impressive performance for a writer who had never visited France for any extended period of time and who had assembled his material from such an odd assortment of sources. But what was the purpose of this critical catalogue? Did Engels have a motive for compiling and sorting this material other than his stated purpose of bringing the English workers up-to-date about developments on the Continent? If we remember that a few months before writing "The Progress of Social Reform" Engels was struggling to work out his own attitude to Owenism, and by implication, trying to decide whether he should become a socialist, then I think the answer becomes clear. By running through, as systematically as possible, all the versions of European socialism of which he was aware, Engels was giving himself the opportunity to define his own position in relation to each. He was attempting to pin down, in as comprehensive a manner as possible, what he agreed with and what he disagreed with in each socialist system. So if we blend together Engels' positive comments in "The Progress of Social Reform" we can create a composite picture of what he himself subscribed to at this time.

In general terms, Engels had definitely committed himself to a form of socialism by the end of 1843, but it was less obvious whether he supported communism. There are two main grounds for deducing, from "The Progress of Social Reform," that Engels had indeed been converted to communism (in the early nineteenth century usage of that term) during the previous few months. To start with, although this article-series was primarily descriptive in character, Engels made no effort to disguise where his sympathies lay, and the tone of the entire piece was positive towards its subject. Engels clearly identified with the European socialist left and was championing its cause, a cause he labelled communism. Secondly, he had a good deal of praise for Icarianism, and also, on occasion, for Weitling; and both Cabet's and Weitling's systems were communist in the nineteenth century sense—proposing the total abolition of money and private property in the interest of creating a fully egalitarian community. But before we jump to the conclusion that Engels swallowed whole the ideals and theories of utopian communism when he embraced socialism, there are some counter-arguments to consider. One is that Engels' use of the term communism was, as we

have seen, abnormally loose and vague. His usage in "The Progress of Social Reform" was very close to the normal early nineteenth century usage of socialism, and indeed he employed the two terms almost interchangeably. So his apparent self-identification with the "communist" cause is less significant than at first sight, and does not in itself prove that he now believed in communism. Moreover, although Engels had many good words for Icarianism and some other forms of utopian communism, he also made a number of harsh criticisms which indicate that he was hardly an uncritical convert. Again, he clearly preferred Owenism to Icarianism, and yet Owenism was not really communist (notwithstanding the fact that Engels called it "English communism"): Owen's alternative communities were based on the principle of co-operation rather than common ownership of *all* goods, and the practical kind of Owenism that Engels particularly admired (as advocated by John Watts) envisaged the creation of chains of producer and consumer co-operatives operating in effective competition with the surrounding capitalist economy. Furthermore, Engels lavished great praise upon Fourier and Considérant, and Fourierism was in very important respects quite incompatible with utopian communist schemes like Cabet's. For example, a central tenet of Fourierism—and the one that Engels most admired—was the claim that labour, which under capitalism was dreary, exploitative and destructive of the human personality, could become, in a co-operative community, joyous and self-fulfilling, provided that it were unforced and freely chosen. In other words, in a Fourierist phalanstery the members of the co-operative would be given the maximum freedom and opportunity to do exactly what they wanted, with some working a great deal and others little or not at all, some living frugally with few personal possessions and others amassing hoards of personal goods, some adopting sombre and ascetic life-styles and others indulging in orgies of sex and alcohol. Freedom, individuality, and self-expression were thus the guiding principles of Fourierism, principles which clashed with Cabet's insistence on a complete equality which could only be ensured if there were also uniformity (uniformity of work done, dress, goods received, opportunities for travel, etc.). Ultimately, when one chooses one's brand of socialism, one is faced with a fundamental choice between a libertarian tendency and an egalitarian tendency, and in the early nineteenth century Fourierism and Icarianism represented the poles of the spectrum. Engels' choice in "The Progress of Social Reform" was not unambiguous, but on balance he leaned towards libertarian socialism rather than egalitarian commu-

nism. This was evident not only in his praise of Fourierism and his critique of Icarianism, but in his preference for Owenism over French and German communism, and, perhaps above all, in his great admiration for Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's anti-statist *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* which was to become one of the bibles of French libertarian socialism. Owen, Fourier, and Proudhon: these were Friedrich Engels' intellectual heroes in 1843, and none of them were communists despite Engels' pinning the label on them all.

The weight of evidence therefore suggests that between June and November 1843 Friedrich Engels was converted to an eclectic brand of libertarian socialism but that he did not espouse communism in the normal early nineteenth century usage of that term. The main elements in his conversion to socialism were his personal observations of the plight of the labouring classes in Manchester and other English textile towns; his involvement with the Chartist movement and his contacts with men like Feargus O'Connor and George Harney whose democratic republicanism had a strong socialist flavour to it; his study of Owenism and exposure to John Watts' brand of practical Owenism; and, last but not least, his fairly systematic examination of the varieties of French socialism. Engels' study of French socialism in the second half of 1843 may not have been crucial to his conversion, but it appears to have played a not inconsiderable role nonetheless.

V

The story of Karl Marx's involvement with French socialism began effectively with his appointment as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* in the fall of 1842. His first public statement as editor was a categorical rejection of the accusation, made by a rival newspaper, that he was soft on communism.²⁸ Since he was a personal friend of the journalist on the *Zeitung's* staff, Moses Hess, whose articles on French socialist thought had provoked the charges, Marx phrased his leader carefully to avoid the appearance that he was beginning his new job by repudiating one of his liveliest correspondents. The newspaper, he reaffirmed, was liberal in its politics, and any suggestion that it would support an armed insurrection by discontented workers was quite absurd. The *Zeitung* had merely expressed interest in the theoretical writings of certain French socialists whose scholarly arguments warranted serious study. Recent books by Pierre Leroux, Victor Considérant, and "above all the sharpwitted work by

28. Karl Marx, "Der Kommunismus und die Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung" *Rheinische Zeitung*, 20 June 1842: MEGA I, 1 (1):260-265; MECW, 1:215-221.

Proudhon" could not be dismissed out of hand, but required detailed refutation. Communist thought, Marx added, was really much more dangerous than working class insurrection because riots could always be suppressed by cannon-fire whereas ideas might undermine the will to protect the established order. This editorial line was in fact an echo of Hess's normal defence of his articles on the French left: that socialism, whether one liked it or not, was a significant phenomenon, and that some socialist thinkers were of high intellectual calibre and could not be written off as mere trouble makers. Marx thus backed up Hess and disassociated himself and the *Zeitung* from communism at one and the same time. At this stage of his career he knew virtually nothing about socialism and communism, but he had now perceived it as a rival to his own democratic liberalism that he could no longer afford to ignore.

Despite his references to five French socialists in this article (Fourier, Enfantin, Leroux, Considérant, and Proudhon), it is doubtful whether Marx yet knew their writings at first hand. More likely he knew about their ideas from Hess, who had just formed a socialist study circle in Cologne, which Marx attended occasionally between October and December 1842. The circle, frequented mainly by members of the *Rheinische Zeitung* staff, proposed to read and discuss recent works by French and German socialists, including Hess's own *Die Europäische Triarchie*, Weitling's *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* and his new *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit*, Etienne Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie*, Victor Considérant's *Destinée sociale*, Charles Fourier's *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales*, Pierre Leroux's *De l'humanité*, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?*²⁹ The wording of Marx's leader implied that he considered these works important, but had yet to study them in depth, although he intended to do so in the near future. Whether he found time, trapped in the routine editorial tasks of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, to get very far with this reading programme

29. Moses Hess, *Die Europäische Triarchie* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841); Wilhelm Weitling, *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* (Bern, 1845; first edition, 1838); *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit* (Hamburg: Verlag des Verfassers, 1849; first edition, Vivis, 1842); Etienne Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie, roman philosophique et social* (Paris, 1842; first printed in a limited private edition in 1839); Victor Considérant, *Destinée sociale*, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie du Palais-royal, 1834-44 (the first two volumes had appeared by this time, in 1834 & 1838); Charles Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales* (Lyons, 1808; second edition, 1841, as part of the *Oeuvres complètes*, 6 vols., eds. J. Muiron & V. Considérant (Paris, 1840-45); Pierre Leroux, *De l'humanité*, 2 vols. (Paris: Perrotin, 1840); Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété? Ou recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement* (Paris: Brocard, 1840).

before his resignation as editor in March 1843, is doubtful. His habit, throughout his life, was to sprinkle his writings with references to what he had just perused, but allusions to French socialists are sparse in his numerous *Rheinische Zeitung* articles in the winter of 1842-43.

However, about this time Marx does seem to have read Theodore Dézamy's *Calomnies et politique de M. Cabet* (1842), which he presumably borrowed from Hess, and he also perused some issues of a French communist monthly, *La Fraternité*. This was edited by Richard Lahautiere who, like Dézamy, was a former disciple of the most prominent French advocate of communism, Etienne Cabet. Lahautiere, influenced by the socialist philosopher Pierre Leroux, offered a more spiritual and humanitarian version of communism than Cabet and Dézamy, and his articles may well have stimulated Marx's interest in Leroux's egalitarian philosophy. In addition, Marx almost certainly skimmed through Proudhon's first *mémoire* on property. He was fascinated by Proudhon, whose legalistic arguments that private property was incompatible with natural rights appealed to him, and mentioned him in an editorial footnote in January 1843. Commenting on an article by a Berlin correspondent on the subject of taxation and incomes, Marx challenged the author's assertion that wages ought to vary in direct proportion to the number of hours worked and also according to the type of job done. "The most consistent, most penetrating socialist writer, Proudhon, denies this proposition," he noted, "as also does the journal *La Fraternité*."³⁰

Marx never followed up this issue of equality of wages in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, but the remark indicates that he was beginning to take an interest in such social problems. Furthermore, an echo of Proudhon's slogan that "private property is theft" appeared in Marx's first extended article as editor, "Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood" (October-November, 1842). Concerned in this piece with the question of whether pilfering by peasants of dry wood from landowners' forests should be regarded as a crime, he denied that the gathering of fallen wood was theft. To convict the peasants of theft, he claimed, was to pervert the true meaning of the word, and implicitly to call into question the whole concept of private ownership. Relying on an argument from *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* he inquired:

30. Marx, "Red. Notiz über Proudhon zu einer Korrespondenz aus Berlin über Steuern," *Rheinische Zeitung*, (7 January 1843); MEGA I, 1 (2):141-142. Omitted from MECW.

If every violation of property without distinction, without a more exact definition, is termed theft, will not all private property be theft? By my private ownership do I not exclude every other person from this ownership? Do I not thereby violate his right of ownership?³¹

Marx, it appears, had not at this time repudiated private property, since he wanted to limit, not abolish, the legal rights of Rhenish landowners vis-à-vis the local peasantry, but it does look as though discussing Proudhon's ideas with Hess and glancing at *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* had raised in his mind some fundamental issues which he would think through the following year. However, one must not overemphasise the significance of this first stirring of interest in French socialism. Marx, in the winter of 1842-43, had little knowledge of or sympathy for either artisans or unskilled factory labourers. Economic questions were just beginning to impinge on his consciousness, but he had yet to question the benefits of industrialisation, and he had yet to face the ramifications of a major social problem of which he was still only dimly aware: mass poverty. Marx's experience as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* during these winter months did raise his social conscience because the agricultural recession in the Rhineland could not be ignored by the newspaper, and he became increasingly indignant about the Prussian government's failure to do anything to relieve the stricken farmers.³² His losing battle with the government censor also confirmed editor Marx in his hostility to the illiberal regime of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and he now came to understand Rhineland politics as a struggle between the interests of aristocratic landowners, small farmers, an urban bourgeoisie, and the state bureaucracy. He saw the Prussian government's policies as the unsatisfactory result of horse-trading among merchants, landowners, and bureaucratic administrators: a series of compromises which were neither rational, moral, nor favourable to the majority of the district's inhabitants.³³ But Marx the liberal had few alternative policies to offer: a free press, a democratic parliamentary system, curbs on the power of the landed aristocracy, and

31. Marx, "Verhandlungen des 6. rheinischen Landtags. Dritter Artikel. Debatten über des Holzdiebstahlsgesetz," *Rheinische Zeitung*, 298, 300, 303, 305 & 307 (25 October 1842 - 3 November 1842); MEGA I, 1 (1):266-304 (quotation pp. 269-270); MECW, 1:224-263 (quotation, p. 228).

32. Marx, "Rechtfertigung des Korrespondenten von der Mosel," *Rheinische Zeitung*, 15, 17, 18, 19, & 20 (15-20 January 1843); MEGA I, 1 (1):355-383, especially pp. 368-371; MECW, 1:332-358, especially pp. 343-347.

33. Ibid., especially MEGA I, 1 (1):372-373; MECW, 1:347-349.

tax-reliefs for impoverished small-farmers; these were his panaceas. Clearly, Marx was a long way from being a socialist when he resigned from the editorship of the *Zeitung* in the spring of 1843. In fact he was searching for a new theoretical basis for his democratic liberalism, since his experiences in Rhenish politics had convinced him that there were important problems that neither Hegelianism nor Young Hegelianism (the bases of his political philosophy up to this point) had tackled adequately. He carried on this search, after the interlude of his marriage to Jenny von Westphalen, at Kreuznach, where he spent most of the summer and penned the lengthy, unpublished "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" (the *Kreuznach manuscript*), the document which marked his final renunciation of Hegelianism.³⁴

While working on this critique at Kreuznach, Marx read two classics of French Enlightenment political thought: Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* and Rousseau's *Du contrat social*. The latter made a deep impression on him, and provided the theoretical stance from which he attacked Hegel's conservative political philosophy in the *Kreuznach manuscript*. It also, incidentally, prepared him to understand (some six months later) the arguments of French socialists like Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux who took Rousseauian principles as a given and tried to develop them to their logical conclusion. Moreover, Marx now examined more closely the French socialist writings he had borrowed from Hess the previous winter but neglected because of the pressures of his full-time job. He now went through Proudhon's *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* more thoroughly, read Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie*, and probably looked at Considérant's *Destinée sociale*, the first two volumes of which had recently been published and which provided the most lucid and coherent introduction to Fourierism then available. He also glanced through the issues of the *Schweizerischer Republikaner* containing Engels' articles on Chartism and Hess's on French socialism. Not surprisingly, some traces of this reading programme showed up in the *Kreuznach manuscript*.

Most of Marx's ideas in his critique of Hegel were the product of his own reflections on his experience as a political journalist and his acceptance of the principle of popular sovereignty which he had found in *Du contrat social*. But there was one significant aspect to his argument that derived not so much from Rousseau as from his reading of French socialists, in particular Proudhon. This was his

34. Marx, "Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," MEGA I, 1 (1):401-553; MECW, 3:3-129.

claim that private property was inimical to "true democracy," an assertion which marked his first hesitant step towards socialism.³⁵ To judge from Marx's earlier remarks on the subject in the *Rheinische Zeitung* and from the context of his comments within the manuscript, he meant to attack not private property *per se* but the abuse of landed wealth by powerful, aristocratic, vested interests: the kind of selfishness and irresponsibility towards the mass of ordinary people that he had campaigned against in his newspaper. A consequence of the *de facto* alliance of bureaucrats and land-owners monopolising political power, he argued, was that in a modern society like West Prussia a citizen had to possess considerable property in order to gain political rights. An uneven distribution of private property resulted in the majority of the populace being deprived of their rights, deprived of the opportunity to exercise some control over their own lives. That situation, Marx affirmed, was simply wrong and indefensible. Moreover, he suggested (following Proudhon), there was no way in which private property could be defended as a natural right: it merely existed as contingent fact, lacking any ethical justification. Hence it was acceptable only to the extent that it did not interfere with fundamental political rights like universal suffrage.³⁶

This was the closest that Marx got to socialism in "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law." His attack on private property, taken in context, was relatively mild, and limited in its thrust, hardly enough to warrant his being labelled a socialist (let alone a communist). His political views were evolving quite rapidly, and the exercise of writing the *Kreuznach manuscript* finally emancipated him from the powerful hold that the Hegelian theory of the state had previously had over his mind. It also, in effect, marked the end of the Young Hegelian phase of his mental development. But it would be stretching the evidence too far to contend that Marx worked out, in this manuscript, a new political philosophy of his own, since his line of thought was so heavily dependent on Rousseau. Yet he had now espoused the ideal of a democratic, secular, and republican political community in which the power of government bureaucrats, vested interests, and wealthy property-owners would (somehow) be curbed by popular sovereignty. He had joined the camp of "Jacobins" or radical democrats outside the pale of respectable political life.

35. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):531; MECW, 3:110. Also: Marx, "Kreuznacher Exzerpte, 1843," MEGA I, 1 (2):135.

36. Ibid.

Further evidence that Marx in these months before he moved to Paris was interested in socialism but still ambivalent about it can be found in a letter he wrote to Arnold Ruge in September 1843.³⁷ Discussing the editorial policy that should be followed in the projected *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Marx put in a plea for tolerant eclecticism. He was highly critical of all cut-and-dried remedies for contemporary social and political problems, and poked fun at theorists who claimed to have "the solution of all riddles lying in their writing-desks." In attacking such a priori dogmatism he no doubt had in mind the Berlin Young Hegelians whose articles he had blue-pencilled as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, but he was also thinking of the books he had just read by Weitling and the French communists Cabet and Dézamy. "I am not in favour of raising any dogmatic banner," he declared, and went on to cite utopian communism as just the kind of "dogmatic abstraction" that must be avoided.³⁸ Cabet's and Weitling's proposals were much too extreme, he contended, because they had been formulated on the basis of one narrow idea: the total repudiation of private property; and although these utopian communist schemes were conceived in a humanistic spirit, their vision of the future was sterile and one-dimensional. Marx therefore rejected such "ready-made systems" as that described by Cabet in *Voyage en Icarie*, and he remarked to Ruge that non-communist thinkers like Fourier and Proudhon had come up with fruitful suggestions for a less extreme but more practical alternative to the status quo.

At the end of this letter Marx even went so far as to affirm his general acceptance of "the socialist principle" in the moderate form given it by Proudhon. But he was still a hesitant and half-hearted convert who had some major criticisms of the ideology he was toying with. Even in the libertarian form given it by the Fourierists and Proudhon, he informed Ruge, socialism was inadequate as a world-view. "The whole socialist principle," he wrote, "is only one aspect that concerns the *reality* of the true human being."³⁹ Translated from the idiom of Feuerbach, this was a way of saying that socialists were preoccupied with bread-and-butter issues, but man did not live by bread alone.

Marx admitted that French socialists were right to criticise the existing social system for perpetuating poverty and unemployment,

37. Marx to Arnold Ruge, September 1843, reproduced in "Ein Briefwechsel von 1843," *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, 1844); reprinted in MEGA I, 1 (1):572-575; MECW, 3:141-145.

38. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):573-574; MECW, 3:142-143.

39. Ibid., MEGA I, 1, (1):574; MECW, 3:143.

but he contended that they were wrong to view these social problems as the root of every other sickness assailing the modern world. Following the analysis put forward several decades earlier by such German Romantics as Schiller and Hölderlin, Marx argued that the widespread dehumanisation of modern man had psychological and intellectual causes which the socialists neglected, and that the most immediate and pressing problems were in the spheres of religion, the intellect, and politics. Progress towards a new renaissance of the human spirit would not be achieved unless men's minds were freed from outdated orthodoxies, and no solutions to "the social problem" would be forthcoming until a democratic state based on universal suffrage had been established. From this perspective, Marx dismissed as silly and impractical the anti-statist sentiments of Proudhon and the Fourierists.⁴⁰ So while he sympathised with some of the ideas of these "moderate socialists," he flatly rejected others, and his overall judgement was that they were directing their energies to the wrong causes.

Marx, in short, was more interested in creating a mass movement for parliamentary reform than in worrying about the economic roots of crime, disease, and poverty. Even if he sometimes thought of himself as a socialist in the fall of 1843 after reading Proudhon and *Considérant*, his commitment to their perspective was at the most partial and lukewarm. Only their critique of private property had made a substantial impression on him so far, apart from his sympathy with their general humanitarian values. Marx's last piece of writing before his arrival in Paris thus revealed a republican democrat who rejected communism, who was interested in socialism but far from fully won over to it, and who still affirmed the primacy of reformist politics and intellectual criticism. By questioning the sanctity of private property he had taken an important step towards a radical social philosophy, but he still had a long way to go.

VI

The practical task that confronted Marx on his arrival in France in October 1843 was that of converting Arnold Ruge's dream of a Franco-German intellectual review into a viable enterprise. Participation by leading Parisian thinkers was crucial to the project's success, but Ruge had secured few French contributors thus far. Marx's first job, therefore, was to establish a firm list of Parisian contributors, and this would involve following up all Ruge's and Hess's contacts with the French left. He was looking forward eagerly

40. *Ibid.*, MEGA I, 1, (1):574-575; MECW, 3:144.

to meeting the socialists whose works he had perused at Kreuznach, and in particular he hoped to see Pierre Leroux, the only one of these French theorists who had shown any interest in German philosophy. Just before leaving Germany he had begun dipping into Leroux's writings, and he had been favourably impressed; writing to Ludwig Feuerbach to solicit a critique of Schelling for the *Jahrbücher*, he commented that the French philosopher was "gifted."⁴¹ Marx also expected to meet Lamennais (whom Ruge thought he had lined up as a contributor), Proudhon (who periodically visited Paris on business trips), the revolutionary communist D  zamy (an acquaintance of Hess's), the leading Fourierist spokesman Consid  rant, Louis Blanc (whom Ruge had also contacted), and possibly Cabet (for whom Hess had great admiration). In the event, although he called on as many of these Frenchmen as he could locate in Paris, Marx had no more luck than Ruge in obtaining articles for the review.

We possess little direct evidence to determine precisely whom Marx met in the late fall and early winter of 1843, but we can deduce a fair amount from circumstantial evidence. For example, it is highly unlikely that he saw either Proudhon, who was out of town at this time (Marx did meet him later), or Cabet, who was preoccupied with the growth of the Icarian movement in Lyon and Toulouse. On the other hand, he certainly met Louis Blanc, who received him warmly, promised him an article, and gave him permission to use his house as a forwarding address for foreign correspondence.⁴² He also visited the offices of *D  mocratie Pacifique*, the Fourierist daily newspaper which had begun publication the previous August with Consid  rant's trenchant *Manifeste de la D  mocratie pacifique: Principes du socialisme* and since Consid  rant was himself in Paris engaged in editorial work for the paper Marx probably made his acquaintance (the *D  mocratie Pacifique* organisation was small and informal, and the staff sold Fourierist books and pamphlets at the paper's offices). As we have seen, Marx had already read Consid  rant's book-length account of Fourier's ideas; he now received from the pages of *D  mocratie Pacifique* and other Fourierist literature a better idea of how the disciples hoped to implement their master's vision.

41. Marx to Feuerbach, 3 October 1843; MEGA I, 1 (2):316-317; MECW, 3:349-351.

42. Marx to Julius Frobel, 21 November 1843; WERKE, 27:422-423; MECW, 3:351-353.

We cannot be absolutely sure that Marx saw Pierre Leroux in person, but it seems very likely that he did: Ruge had already contacted Leroux who was in Paris at this time, and we know Marx was anxious to meet him; furthermore, some two decades later (in the early days of the First International) Marx still regarded Leroux with especial respect and affection, so it looks as though they established their warm friendship during these winter months.⁴³ The case of Lamennais was different, although he too had already received a visit from Ruge; Marx was unsympathetic to his religious outlook and probably had little desire to look him up—at any rate, there is no evidence that he was influenced by Lamennais' brand of Christian socialism. Marx may not have bothered with D  zamy: he was hostile to D  zamy's crude egalitarianism and regarded him more as an agitator and pamphleteer than a social philosopher.⁴⁴ From what can be deduced from the scanty evidence, then, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the first three French socialists with whom Marx had discussions in Paris were Louis Blanc, Pierre Leroux, and Victor Consid  rant. Together they exerted a significant impact on the way in which his thought evolved in these crucial months. Their influence was due in part to the fact that he happened to meet them (or read their writings) at a time when his ideas were in a state of flux and he was consciously searching for a new system of thought to replace his recently discarded Hegelianism. But it was not just a matter of chance. Marx already suspected that French socialism might be worth exploring further, and the men whose minds he first chose to investigate each had an immediate appeal for him. In different ways their various philosophical and political positions were quite close to his own at the end of 1843. Politically, this was especially true of Louis Blanc, the first Frenchman to exert a direct influence on Marx in Paris.

VII

Marx found in Blanc a left-wing journalist whose political strategy was akin to that which he himself had recently proposed to Ruge. Blanc was also a historian. He had recently published his *Histoire des*

43. In June 1866 Marx nominated Leroux (then an exile in London) as a member of the Central Council of the International Workingmen's Association ("First International"): meeting of the Central Council of the I.W.A., 6 December 1866, *Minutes of the General Council of the I.W.A.*, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, [1967]), 1 (1864-66):199.

44. Marx to Ruge, September 1843, MEGA I, 1 (1):572-575; MECW 3:141-145. Marx retained this attitude to D  zamy and to Babouvian 'revolutionary communism' throughout his period of residence in Paris.

dix ans, 1830-1840, and had begun research for a major work on the French Revolution, the two-volume *Histoire de la Révolution française*, which was eventually published in 1847.⁴⁵ This subject was one which particularly intrigued Marx, who had studied French history at Kreuznach and was now working his way through some volumes of Buchez's and Roux's huge compendium of parliamentary documents from the Revolution, the *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française ou Journal des Assemblées Nationales*.⁴⁶ Marx's reactions to Blanc were mixed. He found Blanc contemptuous of German philosophy, which he regarded as pernicious metaphysical speculation, and unsympathetic to militant atheism, which he thought a tactical political error, given the current strength of clericalism in France and Germany. There was therefore no meeting of minds between the two men on these topics, but no doubt Blanc was willing to impress his young visitor with his interpretation of the changing nature of the French Revolution, and to expound the central themes of his celebrated pamphlet, *L'Organisation du travail*.⁴⁷

Blanc probably influenced Marx in three main ways. He reinforced his democratic republicanism, impressing on him the vital difference between the Jacobin social democracy of the recently created newspaper *La Réforme*, and the elitist, laissez-faire liberalism of the Girondin moderates on *Le National*.⁴⁸ From this time on Marx was convinced that democracy, to be genuine, had to have a social component, going beyond such political formulae as representative government and universal suffrage. Secondly, Blanc provided him with a general scheme for understanding the significance of the

45. Louis Blanc, *Histoire de dix ans, 1830-1840* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1841); *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie de Figaro, 1847).

46. *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, ou journal des Assemblées Nationales, depuis 1789 Jusqu' en 1815*, ed. P.J.E. Buchez & P.C. Roux (Paris: Paulin, 1834-38).

47. Louis Blanc, *L'Organisation du travail* (Paris: Prevot, 1840); English trans., *The Organisation of Work* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati University Press, 1911). Subsequent page references are to this English edition.

48. Blanc was a leading contributor to *La Réforme*, his interpretation of the view of the editors of *Le National* was biased by his hostility to this rival newspaper. He painted *Le National* as more sympathetic to economic liberalism than it was at this time, although one might argue that the statements and actions of the *National* group in 1848 retrospectively justified his suspicions. In any case, for our purposes, the important point is that Marx accepted Blanc's opinions as accurate, objective accounts, and became convinced that there was a crucial difference between the two wings of the French republican-democratic movement. That there were, in fact, substantial ideological differences between *La Réforme* and *Le National* has been denied by Theodor Zeldin, *France 1848-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 1:499. The truth, I suspect, lies somewhere between Blanc's and Zeldin's positions.

French Revolution: he viewed 1789 as a bourgeois revolution sanctioning the emergence of a new individualist and commercial society, and 1793 as an abortive attempt to heal the social wounds created by rampant laissez-faire. And third, Blanc deepened Marx's presentiment that contemporary Europe was going through a profound period of crisis from which some equally profound transformation of political and social life must needs emerge.

In *L'Organisation du travail* Blanc offered a three-level analysis of the crisis he perceived in French society—it was, he claimed, at once social, economic, and moral.⁴⁹ That French society was disintegrating was, Blanc maintained, obvious to the casual observer: there were extremes of opulence and poverty, the lower classes eked out a miserable subsistence, the upper classes lived in continual fear of social disorder and lower-class violence, civil war was imminent, and that pillar of traditional social organisation, the family, was in demise. The beginning of this slide into decadence, thought Blanc, could be pinpointed with precision: the Revolution of 1789 had opened a floodgate, releasing a wave of social change which was rapidly destroying the old order. Seventeen eighty-nine was for Blanc above all a bourgeois revolution: the political changes of 1789-92 allowed the French bourgeoisie to imitate their English counterparts and set France along the painful road of laissez-faire industrial capitalism, thus commencing a commercial duel with England which could end with the ruin of one country. Since 1789, he admitted, attempts had been made (in 1793, under the Empire, and in 1816), to slow or reverse this revolutionary process, but in vain; the transformation was “rooted in the depth of the social body,” and 1830 had demonstrated that the reign of the bourgeoisie could not be prevented by the privileged orders of the ancien régime. But if the bourgeoisie remained in power, he added ominously, they would soon reduce France to the sorry state of modern Britain. He painted a dismal picture of industrial England, drawing on the writings of Sismondi to explain how laissez-faire capitalism had produced in England extreme inequality of incomes between classes, cycles of overproduction and unemployment, and a desperate drive to establish colonies as sources of the rapidly depleting raw materials incessantly devoured by mechanised industry.

Thus in Blanc's eyes the contemporary social crisis, while it had a political dimension, was rooted in economic change. Since 1789, he

49. *L'Organisation du travail*, passim. On Blanc, see Leo Loubere, *Louis Blanc: His Life and His Contribution to the Rise of French Jacobin Socialism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961).

argued, the economic framework of French social life had become capitalist, or, to put it another way, France had become a *commercial* society in which all transactions were governed by the economic laws of competition in a free market. Undoubtedly the new economic regime had produced great wealth for the entrepreneurs but for the country as a whole it had been a disaster—it had brought monopolies and high prices, machinism and declining wages, crises of overproduction, colonial conflicts, and, worst of all, a perpetual conflict between the interests of industry and agriculture. In short, France was undergoing a severe economic crisis which would have to be solved before there could be any hope of healing the wounds inflicted by 1789 and 1830 on French society.⁵⁰ He pushed this analysis a stage further. Both the social and economic crises, he suggested, were ultimately manifestations of an even more fundamental trauma. The very values upon which traditional France had been built were being undermined. Seventeen eighty-nine and 1830 symbolised the triumph of the philosophy of egoistic individualism cultivated by the *philosophes* and developed to its logical conclusion by the British political economists Ricardo and Malthus. The commercialisation of French social life meant that Frenchmen, in order to survive in a mercilessly competitive jungle, were being forced to defend ruthlessly their own particular interests at the expense of their neighbours. In spite of themselves, they were gradually adopting the values of the entrepreneur. It was not so much industry as commerce that Blanc abhorred: competition, he averred, bred misery and moral decadence, because it destroyed the natural harmony and co-operation which ought to exist between men and reduced them instead to the ethical level of wild beasts.

For Blanc, the liberalism of the revolutionaries of 1789—the liberalism of Enlightenment thinkers like Montesquieu and Smith—was essentially an ideological justification of commercial capitalism. As such it was diametrically opposed to the social Jacobinism he detected in Robespierre and Babeuf and to the utopian socialism of Morelly and Mably, whom he regarded as his intellectual mentors. He believed he shared with these precursors of his own Jacobin socialism a desire for a harmonious, egalitarian society based on co-operation. This society would be above all a *community*, a moral order in accord with natural law. Economically, it would exclude competition—there would be a federation of producer co-operatives, initially state-created and state-run, later more independent but still regulated by central workshops controlling production in each

50. *L'Organisation du travail*, passim.

branch of industry. His vision of an ideal society was thus opposed to Manchester liberalism on three vital counts: it favoured governmental paternalism, it repudiated free competition, and it abhorred egoistic individualism.⁵¹

Marx was thoroughly sympathetic to Blanc's analysis of the moral roots of the contemporary social crisis, and to his desire for a new social community based on fraternal co-operation. He was not put off by the implicit statism in Blanc's proposals for government-controlled social workshops and a centrally planned economic system. His Young Hegelianism had left him sympathetic to a strong state, provided only that it was a democratic one based on popular sovereignty, representative government and universal suffrage. What did initially shake him was Blanc's hostility to liberalism.

VIII

Marx had started his political career as a liberal, edited a liberal newspaper for the Rhineland business community, and had always assumed that the main trouble with the Prussian state was that it was insufficiently liberal. Even at Kreuznach he had regarded himself as a liberal—a left-wing liberal, a republican democrat, to be sure, but nonetheless still a liberal, who demanded, first and foremost, a political revolution to create a genuinely democratic society. Now Blanc—and Hess—forced him to recognise that the mere introduction of political democracy would not suffice to cure the sickness of modern society. The French Revolution had implemented liberal principles, and the result had been a society permeated with egoism, avarice and injustice. Reluctantly Marx had to admit that Blanc was right—political democracy was no panacea, and the democratic revolution would have to be followed by a social revolution reconstituting life upon a different moral basis. In short, he came to perceive that his romantic ideal of a harmonious moral community was at odds with his liberalism. As he had no intention of abandoning his most cherished values, he retained his romantic vision and sought in French socialism rather than German liberalism the political (and later, the economic) means of realising them. His commitment to democracy remained a key part of his outlook, but from this time on he saw democracy as a means to a greater goal and no longer an end in itself. He now felt free to criticise the inadequacies and pernicious consequences of limited, bourgeois democracy, without giving up his allegiance to the principle of popular sovereignty.

51. *Ibid.*, see especially pp. 51-59 (English trans.).

This second step of Marx's towards socialism—his repudiation of liberalism and his recognition of the need for social as well as political transformation—is evident in the first article he wrote in Paris: Part One of his *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* article, "On the Jewish Question."⁵² "On the Jewish Question" was actually two articles, not one; the two parts were written at different times and represent different stages in Marx's intellectual evolution. The first part may well have been begun at Kreuznach, but it must have been rewritten in Paris under the influence of Blanc and Hess, because Marx's thought even here had progressed beyond the position adopted in his letter to Ruge of the previous September. The article is too well known to require a lengthy description here, but its language was obscure and it has been often misunderstood, so a few comments may be apposite.

The title, "On the Jewish Question" was misleading. In the first part of the article, Marx was concerned not merely with the problem of Jewish emancipation, (the subject of a book by Bruno Bauer which had sparked his train of thought), but with the wider issue of human emancipation—what it entailed, and how it could be achieved. He posed the basic problem in much the same terms as had Schiller, Hölderlin, Feuerbach, Rousseau and many others before him: given that recent history had witnessed the disintegration of the human personality and an atomisation of human society, how could a truly human nature be re-established in which the individual would be no longer divorced from his true self and from his fellow-men? His terminology was derived from Feuerbach, but his answer was indebted to Hess and Blanc.

One of Marx's main themes in the article was that political liberation was not enough, and that only genuine social emancipation would permit the individual to become once again a "species-being," i.e., a free but integrated member of a democratic community akin to the ancient Greek *polis*. He was vague about what he meant by social emancipation, but he evidently desired the transformation of contemporary society in order to eradicate egoistic individualism. If his remedy was unclear, he at least made a more concerted effort to explain what was wrong with modern Europe. Here the influence of Blanc was evident: the main thrusts of Marx's critique were directed against the consequences of the French Revolution, and the values implicit in the revolutionaries' most forthright ideological manifesto, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*.⁵³

52. "Zur Judenfrage, I," *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, 1844); MEGA I, 1 (1):576-599; MECW, 3:146-168.

The French Revolution, he maintained, was a bourgeois political revolution against feudalism. It successfully dissolved the feudal state and emancipated the bourgeoisie politically, but at the same time produced a serious split between socio-economic and political life. After the Revolution, the French state was divorced from "civil society," and educated Frenchmen simultaneously lived two separate lives: their political lives as citizens and their social lives as businessmen, artisans or members of the professions. Marx was not hostile to the Revolution; he emphasised the importance of political liberty as a necessary step towards human emancipation, and he accepted that political rights *had* been achieved in principle during the Revolution once a secular, republican democracy based on universal suffrage had been created. But he distinguished between the *droits du citoyen* which the Jacobins (following Rousseau) proclaimed at the most radical phase of the Revolution, and the *droits de l'homme* implemented by the Liberal revolutionaries. The *droits du citoyen*, he maintained, were premised on popular sovereignty and had to be exercised in a community with other men, i.e., they were essentially *social* rights; although advocated by the Jacobins (and also in some democratic republican states in North America), they had so far been rendered illusory in practice by economic inequality. This demonstrated that even in republican democracies the lack of social emancipation rendered real political freedom impossible. Marx was wholeheartedly in favour of such *droits du citoyen*. *Droits de l'homme*, on the other hand, he scathingly denounced as "the rights of egoistic man, of man separated from other men and the community."⁵⁴

He devoted considerable space in the article to a close analysis of what he considered the four main *droits de l'homme*: *l'égalité, la liberté, la sûreté, la propriété*. These, he argued, were rights not of political man (the citizen), but of commercial man (the bourgeois operating in civil society). Criticising the approach to liberty and equality taken by the authors of the *Déclaration*, he asserted that the *droits de l'homme* were premised on a view of men as isolated monads, and sanctioned egoistic self-interest and anti-social behaviour. He also attacked the *Déclaration*'s emphasis on security and property which, he claimed, made the state into a coercive instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The net effect of the *Déclaration*, he concluded trenchantly, was to make "every man see in other men not the *realisation* of his own freedom but the *barrier* to it." For the bourgeois revolutionaries

53. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):592-599; MECW, 3:160-168.

54. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):593; MECW, 3:162.

of 1789-93, he commented, the egoistic, entrepreneurial personality was a norm and an ideal, and the working model they had of society was the mechanical theory of the social contract. Against this atomistic view of the individual, and this contractualist view of society, he asserted that man was naturally gregarious and co-operative, a "species-being" who always operated best in a social context and fulfilled himself with the help of, and in harmony with, other people. For Marx the French Revolution had moulded man in the image of the bourgeoisie, and another revolution would be required to restore to man his true, natural, social nature. This revolution would be political, but it would have to be much more than merely political—it would be a far-reaching social transformation because it was impossible for man to be fully emancipated within the existing world order.⁵⁵

This, though expressed in Feuerbachian language and strongly reminiscent of Rousseau in its desire to abolish the duality of man as *homme* and *citoyen*, was implicitly a socialist vision, presupposing egalitarianism and co-operation. Marx had abandoned liberalism and found a new ideological framework for his romantic ideals. His socialism was, however, still extremely vague and cloudy, and as yet completely lacking any economic dimension.

IX

Between writing the first part of the "Jewish Question" and the second, Marx became aware of the economic roots of the phenomenon of dehumanisation. The second half of the article was a reply to another piece by Bauer on Jewish emancipation, this time an essay in *Einundzwanzig Bogen*. In it Marx adopted Blanc's position that the contemporary moral and social crisis was explicable only in terms of the spread of the capitalist ethic, which saw as the highest value the accumulation of money. Like Blanc, he came to see in the commercialisation of Europe the root cause of the fragmentation of modern social life and the "self-alienation" of the individual. By the time he came to pen this part of the "Jewish Question," however, Blanc was not the only socialist who had influenced the direction of his thought. In his first few months in Paris he developed a much closer relationship with Moses Hess than he had when editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*. Thrown together by their joint involvement in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Hess and Marx were evolving intellectually along similar lines, and had now discovered an exciting, if temporary, mental kinship. There is a remarkable similarity between

55. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):599; MECW, 3:168.

the ideas that Marx and Hess were committing to paper in the winter of 1843-44; in particular, the central theme of Hess's essay "Über das Geldwesen" and of the second part of Marx's "On the Jewish Question" was the same: an application of the Feuerbachian notion of religious alienation to money, seeing this as the new God of modern commercial society.⁵⁶ We have no way of knowing for sure which man hit on this idea first; possibly it was a case of simultaneous discovery, possibly Hess was the innovator; but at any rate it appears most likely that the two men discussed the issue together before either took up a pen. The crucial question is not Who thought of it first? but Why did they both suddenly become interested in financial and economic questions? The answer would seem to be the influence of Blanc, Leroux and Considérant.

Marx found in Pierre Leroux a thinker whose values and intellectual preoccupations were remarkably similar to his own. Leroux was, to start with, the only French socialist in these years to show any abiding interest in German Idealist philosophy. Although he probably had read little Hegel and had not followed in detail the evolution of the Young Hegelian movement, Leroux knew the work of Kant, Fichte and Schelling (he had recently written an article on the latter's celebrated reappearance at Berlin University in 1842), and was interested to hear more about current German philosophical controversies. He was himself an accomplished philosopher; in 1839 he had published a substantial work, the *Réfutation de l'éclecticisme*, attacking Victor Cousin, whose highly influential system dominated French academic philosophy.⁵⁷ This book of Leroux's was a leading manifesto of French Romanticism and has been called the philosophical equivalent of Hugo's literary broadside, *Hernani*, a description which reveals a second feature of Leroux's outlook that strongly appealed to Marx: his romanticism. Leroux, in fact, had translated Goethe's *Werther* into French in 1829, and during the 1830s (after a brief spell in the Saint-Simonian movement) had made the *Revue Encyclopédique* (which he helped edit) one of the champions of French romantic art and literary theory, writing numerous articles explaining and defending the works of Goethe, Byron, Chateaubriand, Senancourt and Sainte-Beuve (among others).⁵⁸

56. Moses Hess, "Über das Geldwesen," *Rheinische Jahrbücher zur Gesellschaftlichen Reform*, 1 (1845):1-34; *Sozialistische Aufsätze*, ed. Zlocisti, pp. 158-187. Hess wrote the first draft of this essay early in 1844 for publication in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* but it was omitted through lack of space from the only volume ever published.

57. Pierre Leroux, *Réfutation de l'éclecticisme* (Paris: Gosselin, 1839).

58. On Leroux, see Jack S. Bakunin, "Pierre Leroux and the Birth of Democratic

Another thing Marx and Leroux found they had in common was their interest in recent biblical scholarship, and their concern to define (and expose) the social role of the Christian religion. Leroux was more sympathetic to religion than Marx, but he was equally hostile to established versions of contemporary Christianity, like Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism, which he characterised as "empty shells." He had devoted much time to an elaborate study of the rise and decline of the Christian church, and had concluded that by the eighteenth century the Christian religion (which the Reformation had ultimately failed to regenerate) had lost its battle against the massed forces of rationalism, science and secularisation. Like Marx, Leroux was fascinated by the consequences for modern man of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the twin forces of modernization which together had undermined and destroyed the feudal and Christian world. His attitude to the Enlightenment was, like Marx's, ambivalent. Much of the *philosophes'* work was destructive, he argued; they were responsible for articulating the modern ideology of utilitarian liberalism which justified the irresponsible egoistic individualism of the middle classes, concerned only to defend property, competition and their own material self-interest. In short, Leroux, like Blanc, blamed the Enlightenment for the dominant value-system which sanctioned the commercialisation of modern France, a process which he too loathed and feared. On the other hand, he detected in Rousseau's *Du contrat social*, Condorcet's *Esquisse*, and the writings of the utopian socialists the germs of a new philosophy, an alternative value-system appropriate to the new social order which he believed would eventually replace commercial capitalism, and he singled out liberty, equality and human perfectibility as the key concepts of this new socialist ideology. In his own writings Leroux concentrated on the concept of equality, subjecting its evolution to historical analysis in one of his most important books, *De l'égalité*.⁵⁹ Ultimately, despite his critique of facile Enlightenment optimism, he believed firmly in the progress of the human race towards a more just, freer, and more egalitarian society. In this respect he was, notwithstanding his romanticism, a child of the Enlightenment; indeed his fusion of romantic and Enlightenment ideas and attitudes was remarkably similar to Marx's.

Socialism," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1973), and David O. Evans, *Le socialisme romantique: Pierre Leroux et ses contemporains* (Paris: Riviere, 1948). The comparison between Leroux and Hugo was made by Evans, *Le socialisme romantique*, p. 56.

59. Leroux, *De l'égalité* (Paris, 1838; revised ed., Boussac: Imp. de P. Leroux, 1848).

Unlike his relations with Blanc, Marx probably sensed that in Leroux he had found an intellectual equal with whom a meeting of minds was possible.

Politically, Leroux was a republican democrat who had, in the 1830s, played a significant role in the *Société des droits de l'homme*, and indeed had helped formulate its programme of 1833 which championed universal suffrage and social reform. After the failure of republican insurrections in Paris and Lyon in 1834, he had become disillusioned with conspiratorial politics and had drifted away from involvement in day-to-day political affairs, but his basic political allegiance had not changed. He now stressed the inadequacy of mere political change, arguing that the malaise afflicting French society could not be overcome until a new kind of organic community based on justice and equality was created. This perspective fitted perfectly with Marx's new convictions. He agreed with Leroux's dismissal of secret societies as childish and dangerous, sympathised with his Rousseauian ideal of a community based on popular sovereignty and the general will (in which the divorce between the individual and society would be overcome), and echoed his repeated appeal to the notions of *solidarité* and *communion* as the principles which would underlie the socialist society of the future.⁶⁰

His conversations with Leroux thus deepened and reinforced Marx's newly acquired socialism, strengthening his intuition that socialism, not liberalism, was the political movement which had correctly diagnosed the sickness of contemporary Europe and might cure it. Indeed Leroux offered Marx not only a detailed and comprehensive critique of the ills of modern society but also a positive programme for remedying them.

We have seen how Leroux's critical analysis of liberalism and Christianity harmonised with Marx's own. To this campaign against his intellectual opponents Leroux joined a passionate moral denunciation of social injustice, attacking bourgeois privileges, political inequality, and poverty. Like Blanc in *La Réforme* (which Marx now read fairly regularly), Leroux stressed the need for immediate social reforms to alleviate distress among the worst-paid workers and the unemployed, and he argued repeatedly for educational schemes to combat ignorance and prejudice among the lower orders. Marx's exposure to the writings and conversation of these two Frenchmen no doubt gave him a firmer grasp of the realities of poverty, crime and disease in the slums of Paris, which Ruge and Hess took him to observe in person. But it is one thing to be aware of poverty, crime

60. Ibid., passim. Also, Leroux, *De l'humanité*, 2 vols. (Paris: Perrotin, 1840).

and unemployment, and another thing to understand the causes of them. Ruge and Hess could give Marx no explanation, whereas Leroux could, or at least thought he could. Like Blanc he argued that the social crisis was attributable to an economic crisis, and that poverty and unemployment were inherent in the contemporary economic regime.

Leroux's economic analysis, though still somewhat general and abstract, went beyond Blanc's in focussing on industrialisation and on the growth of two new, antagonistic classes: a wealthy plutocracy and a mass of wage-slaves. The relationship between these two groups, he suggested, was a kind of new feudalism, and class conflict was a necessary characteristic of the new industrial economy so long as it was run on capitalistic lines. Perhaps because of his Saint-Simonian heritage, Leroux does not seem to have been hostile to factory industry *per se*, but he criticised the Saint-Simonians for their faith in a managerial elite and for their view of the individual worker as merely a cog in an industrial machine. The answer to wage-slavery, he suggested, was essentially no different from the socialist remedy for political and social injustice: namely, democracy and equality. This meant, in practice, workers' control of the factories and workshops in which they spent their lives. Leroux looked forward to the eventual creation of a democratic socialist society, but in the meantime he supported the embryonic cooperative movement and the press campaign of the republican left for political and social reform. Both his philosophical critique of contemporary society and his moderate, reformist programme were congenial to Marx at this time.⁶¹

X

Marx and Hess read *La Réforme* and Leroux's *Revue Indépendante* during the winter of 1843-44, but they also perused the Fourierist daily edited by Victor Considérant, *Démocratie Pacifique*. Marx even had a letter to the editor published in the paper in December 1843, announcing that he and Ruge had reason to hope that Lamartine and Lamennais would both contribute to the forthcoming *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*.⁶² Almost certainly he approached Considérant for an article too. Whether or not he met the Fourierist leader personally, he undoubtedly read his newspaper, including the

61. Leroux, *De l'égalité*, and his articles in *Revue indépendante* between 1841 and 1843, especially "De la ploutocratie ou du gouvernement des riches", *Revue indépendante*, 4 (1842):513-596 and 5 (1842):5-74.

62. *Démocratie Pacifique*, 12 November 1843:3.

celebrated essay with which it commenced publication: the *Principes du socialisme*.⁶³ The influence of this manifesto on Marx was profound; even as late as 1847 he used it to some extent as a model for the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and many of the themes of that document found their first expression in Considérant's earlier pamphlet. Not that Marx assimilated Considérant's ideas all at one go; on the contrary it was not until some months later when he began to read Fourier himself that he became really enthusiastic about Fourierism. But Marx and Hess did find in the pages of *Démocratie Pacifique* much food for thought, and in particular a more detailed account of socialist economic thought than they had previously been exposed to.

Considérant's socialism had both a positive side and a negative side – the latter was his scathing critique of modern capitalist society, the former his package of remedies. Both derived directly from Fourier, although Considérant's analysis of the capitalist economy went beyond Fourier and appears to have been considerably indebted to Sismondi. It seems that Marx was initially more impressed by the critical side of Considérant's system than with his utopian scheme for a counter-culture institutionalised in a network of phalansteries.

As painted by Considérant, the operation of the French economy was thoroughly irrational and inhumane: it sucked thousands of men, women and children into workshops and factories and then periodically cast them out, jobless, to starve in the streets.⁶⁴ Unregulated capitalism had produced economic anarchy characterised by monopolies, high prices, huge profits, bankruptcies, unemployment, declining wages, and the pauperisation of the wage-earners. He pointed to the cycle of boom and slump which had become a feature of French economic life, and put forward an underconsumption theory of periodical sales crises to account for the fluctuations in price, wage and unemployment levels. Like Leroux, he emphasised the misery and bitterness caused among the lower classes by the new

63. *Principes du socialisme: Manifeste de la Démocratie Pacifique* (Paris: Démocratie Pacifique, 1843). This pamphlet was actually a reprint of the article which composed the first issue of the newspaper, entitled "Manifeste politique et social de la *Démocratie Pacifique*," 8 January 1843. A revised version, retitled *Principes du socialisme: Manifeste de la démocratie au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Librairie phalanstérienne, 1847), was published some months before Marx wrote his own manifesto for the Communist League and almost certainly influenced the composition of this famous work. By this time, however, Marx's views were fairly firm, whereas he probably read the initial version in *Démocratie Pacifique* when most susceptible to the influence of Considérant.

64. Victor Considérant, *Destinée sociale*, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie du Palais-royal, 1834-44), 1:26.

commercial and industrial regime, he too saw capitalism as a new kind of feudal dictatorship in which the workers were "industrial serfs" whose only hope was to break free somehow from the exploitation to which their masters subjected them. Class conflict was rapidly becoming more severe, and there was a real danger of violent social revolution, he warned, even suggesting that the time was not far off when French society would be reduced to two warring classes: bourgeoisie and proletariat.

While he was as hostile as Blanc and Leroux to the acquisitive and competitive values of the entrepreneur, Considérant, (in this respect going beyond Fourier whose real hatred was for commerce), attacked mechanization as one of the chief evils which had caused the present crisis. The new industrial technology, as employed by entrepreneurs in a market system, was responsible for the extremes of wealth and poverty so evident in contemporary France. The central idea underlying the industrial revolution, he argued, was to replace men by machines, but every invention which brought its owners fresh profits brought at the same time unemployment to the workers it replaced. He posed in *Destinée sociale* the simple question: What would happen when machines had come to dominate the production process? His answer was that although machine-made goods would be cheap and abundant, there would be no domestic market for them because the hosts of technologically unemployed workers would be dying of hunger. The economy would then collapse in an over-production crisis of monstrous proportions.⁶⁵ Industrial capitalism was therefore an absurd, self-destructive system, and the economic chaos experienced in France in the 1830s was merely the beginning of a vast economic catastrophe. Before the crisis proceeded much further it would likely engender civil war and social revolution.

The cataclysm could only be avoided, Considérant preached, if France voluntarily undertook a programme of peaceful, gradual social change along the lines suggested by Charles Fourier. Phalansteries, he claimed, were the solution to the evils wrought by unrestrained competition. Cooperative communities were designed to harmonize conflicting interests and remould the social environment to accord with human nature and allow man to develop all his capacities and fulfill all his desires. Fourier's (and Considérant's) aim was to create, in a phalanstery, a model society in miniature in which the full range of human passions would find outlets, in which work would become joyful, and in which men would have total freedom to

cultivate their own personalities. The goal was, in short, total liberation and total fulfillment; the method was to restructure human society to make it correspond for the first time ever to human nature (which Fourier regarded as unchanging).⁶⁶

Considérant's vision was socialist in the sense that it stressed freedom and co-operation as the basic principles of the new society, but it was not egalitarian (and hence certainly not communist). Private property and private capital would continue to exist, and the members of the phalansteries would receive in return for their labour not equal pay but dividends based on the capital and skill they had contributed as well as the number of hours worked. This feature of the system appealed to Marx at first; as we have seen, he was suspicious of communism and, like Proudhon, incensed more by the abuse of private property than by the institution itself. As an admirer of Condorcet he also found congenial Considérant's theory of progress: a division of the history of mankind into seven stages, the penultimate of which would be a socialist society composed of co-operative communities, and the last a utopia in which full social harmony would be achieved. But these were details which Marx paid more attention to later when he had become partially converted to Fourierism; what struck him most forcefully in the winter of 1843-44 was Considérant's attack on the compulsive irrationality of the entrepreneur's lust for wealth, and its deleterious social consequences. Considérant, even more than Blanc and Leroux, stimulated in Marx an interest in the economic content of French socialist theory, and convinced him that the dehumanisation of modern man had an economic as well as a moral and political aspect.

Apart from pointing out that Considérant's economic analysis was more sophisticated (or at least more detailed) than Leroux's, I find it difficult to separate what Marx owed to each man. I suspect he assimilated Leroux's outlook more readily than Considérant's more sectarian ideology, but he derived from both a general orientation towards social and economic problems and a new interest in the industrial worker. They each had a humanitarian, progressivist philosophy of history, and Marx probably borrowed from them the idea that the emancipation of the proletariat was the next stage in

66. Ibid., *passim*, and *Principes du socialisme*, *passim*. On Considérant, see Hubert Bourgin, *Victor Considérant, son oeuvre* (Paris: Imprimeries réunies 1909); Maurice Dommanget, *Victor Considérant, sa vie son oeuvre* (Paris: Editions sociales internationales, 1929); Rondel Van Davidson, "Victor Considérant: Fourierist, Legislator and Humanitarian" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech. Univ., 1970); George Kirchmann, "Utopia and Reality: The Life and Social Theories of Victor Considérant" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1973).

the onward march of history and would make possible the creation of a social community based on fraternity, liberty and personal self-development, a community impossible under commercial capitalism. Leroux and Considérant based their visions of the future socialist society on this romantic notion of a community capable of overcoming the disintegration and oppression characteristic of contemporary civilization. And, like Marx, they saw a democratic political system based on popular sovereignty as a necessary stage in reaching this goal, although they believed that institutional changes, to be effective, would have to be accompanied by a moral reformation. Ultimately, the writings of Blanc, Leroux, and Considérant appealed to Marx because he not only shared their belief in progress, liberty, and self-cultivation (values he had retained from his earlier romantic liberalism), but also was coming to adopt their faith in co-operation and equality and their conviction that capitalism was fundamentally inimical to these ideals.

XI

The influence of these three French socialists on the development of Marx's views during November and December 1843 was thus far-ranging. However, the single most striking impact they had upon his outlook was to convince him of the crucial importance of economics. If Marx was already a socialist when he wrote the first half of "On the Jewish Question," he had not at that time assimilated the economic dimension of French socialism. He was beginning to do so by the time he wrote the second part, and it was here that the concept of economic alienation first appeared in his writings. Alienation, a concept Marx had borrowed from the German romantics, denoted both the fragmentation of modern man's personality and his isolation from his fellow beings.⁶⁷ For Marx—as for Schiller, Hölderlin, Feuerbach, Hess, and many other German neo-romantics—it was a shorthand term that summed up much of what was fundamentally wrong with decadent modern civilization. But it was one thing to affirm that alienation was rife in the modern world and quite another thing to explain, in detailed, concrete terms, why it had occurred. Up to now Marx had assumed that the primary causes were intellectual and political. But Blanc, Leroux, and Considérant offered him the elements of an alternative explanation.

67. A classic German romantic statement concerning the alienation and dehumanisation of modern man may be found in Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Shell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954). See also Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, trans. W. Trask (New York: Signet, 1965).

The key insight was that modern man was *economic* man: he lived his life in a commercial and industrial framework that forced him to be selfish and egoistic, concerned above all with his own material interests. In consequence, he had deviated from his true nature which was *social*, thereby losing his sense of identity and community with his fellow human-beings. This alienation of man from his true self found expression in religion—that was where Feuerbach's anthropological explanation of Christianity fitted in—but even more fundamentally in the entrepreneur's elevation of money-making into a supreme virtue. Following this line of thought, Marx now came to see religion as a mere manifestation of social dislocation, whereas the lust for personal wealth which oiled the wheels of the contemporary social system was the root cause, the fundamental evil that really perverted human beings. Economic alienation (that is, worship of the god Money instead of the god Mankind) was thus the source of the present moral and psychological crisis that pervaded Europe.

Marx argued this "economic alienation" thesis in the second part of "On the Jewish Question," stressing that the problem of Jewish emancipation was not religious but social and simply reflected, in an acute form, a more general crisis.⁶⁸ The real barriers to emancipation, he argued, were "huckstering and money": money had become an inhuman but tremendously powerful force dominating men's activities and forcing them to act selfishly to satisfy their "practical needs" at the expense of others. The lust for wealth was now running riot, and society had dissolved into a bourgeois world of atomistic individuals hostile to each other. When money was the highest value, he added, men were necessarily reduced to the level of commodities. Wage-labourers, and especially women, had become "alienable, vendible objects" forced to acquiesce in their new, degrading status by their urgent need for food and shelter and their plight as isolates in an unfriendly environment.

Abstract and rhetorical as Marx's essay was, it nonetheless conveyed unequivocally his disgust at the way contemporary capitalism left individuals helpless to fend for themselves in a cut-throat world where everything, including human life, could be bought and sold. The passionate tone of the article suggests that Marx's new perception of the nature of life in modern Europe was more than an intellectual breakthrough, more than a new way of conceptualising and explaining things. It was an intellectual breakthrough, true enough, but a deeper change had occurred in Marx, almost certainly

68. Marx, "Zur Judenfrage, II," *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, 1844); reprinted in MEGA I, 1 (1):599-606; MECW, 3:168-174.

as a result of seeing with his own eyes what everyday existence in the slums of working-class Paris was really like. He had now witnessed personally the poverty and unemployment, the overcrowding, poor sanitation, disease, crime, and above all the futility of life in these ghettos. He had seen for himself the striking contrast between the crowded slums and the elegant and spacious bourgeois suburbs. He had come to the almost inescapable conclusion that here was a case of great social injustice, a case of the exploitation of one segment of the population by another. And searching for an explanation for this horror, for the manifest greed and callousness that he labelled "economic alienation," he had found it—under the guidance of Blanc, Leroux, and Considérant—in the impersonal mechanisms of the capitalist economy. Marx's emotional revulsion at the sights, sounds and smells of lower-class Paris was the psychological upheaval underlying the expostulations of "On the Jewish Question." He transmuted this revulsion, intellectually, into a hostile critique of capitalism as a fundamentally inhumane economic and social order. And in opposition to this money-dominated jungle-society, he held up once again his romantic ideal of a genuine social community in which there would no longer exist any conflict between "man's individual-sensuous existence" and his "species-existence." Ultimately, he concluded, in such a community there would be no place for money. He had realised that his ideal society was incompatible with the drive for profit at the heart of contemporary capitalism, and, like Blanc, he had now decided that commerce was the cancer which had to be excised.⁶⁹

If the impact of Blanc, Leroux and Considérant on Marx's thought can be detected in "On the Jewish Question," it was even more evident in the next essay he wrote for the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law."⁷⁰ He discussed six main issues in this article: the current role of Young Hegelian critical philosophy, the real significance of the campaign against religion, the contribution of Germany to the recent progress of the human race, the difficulties in the way of a radical revolution in Germany, the new problems of modern industrial society in France and Britain, and the means whereby universal emancipation might come about.

69. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):606; MECW, 3:174.

70. "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung.," MEGA I, 1 (1):607-621; MECW, 3:175-187. Originally published in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (Paris, 1844).

Although much of the essay was devoted to the backward condition of Germany, Marx's focus of interest had clearly changed to France and England. In order to tackle "truly human problems," he argued, post-Hegelian philosophy should cease its Feuerbachian pre-occupation with German theological debates and deal instead with the distressing "politico-social reality" in industrial France and Britain. European politics were in the process of becoming democratic but control of the economy remained in the hands of an elite. Hence the major issue of modern times was "the relation of industry, or the wealth of the world generally, to the political world" because money bestowed power, and the bourgeoisie was retaining the vast wealth generated by industrialisation. This fact, Marx concluded, had two disturbing results: the middle-classes (not the population as a whole) were reaping the gains of those constitutional reforms that had been achieved in England and France; and the factory system as currently operated was creating a new class of paupers, "artificially impoverished...masses resulting from the drastic dissolution of society."⁷¹ He had thus discerned two key issues—the relationship between economic and political power, and the perverse distribution of wealth (and poverty)—and, following Leroux, he now believed that liberty and equality would remain mirages unless economic life as well as politics were made democratic. So Marx had come to recognise that "the social question" had to be solved at once, but that this could not be done without the abolition of powerful vested interests in commerce and industry. In making the elimination of poverty, the reform of commerce, and the democratisation of industry his goals, he was now beginning to put some content into his hitherto nebulous notion of a "social revolution."

Again drawing upon the views of Blanc and Leroux, Marx went on to tackle the question (which he had ignored in "On the Jewish Question") of how the social revolution might come about in Europe. His broad answer was that it would be the work of a coalition of progressive intellectuals and the disadvantaged since by themselves radical ideas were powerless to effect political or social change: "the weapon of criticism cannot replace criticism by weapons," he remarked, adding bluntly that "material force must be overthrown by material force."⁷² But he had faith in the power of socialism once it had become a mass ideology. Socialist theory, he contended, would become a material force once it had gripped the mass of workers, and grip them it would because it exposed the root cause of their

71. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):620; MECW, 3:186-187.

72. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):615; MECW, 3:182.

personal problems. In predicting that the lower classes would turn into the troops of the social revolution, Marx was not idealising the "working man": on the contrary, he saw the unskilled wage labourer as a "debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being," the extreme form of human degradation, and (following Leroux and Considérant) he pointed to the emergence of a new class of such unskilled labourers, the "proletariat."⁷³ Although on occasion Marx seemed to limit membership in this proletariat to urban manual labourers, in fact his use of the term was inconsistent and imprecise, and it is difficult to tell which social strata he really meant to include within it. He apparently excluded agricultural labourers and peasants, and he definitely linked it with industrialisation, distinguishing between a new kind of destitution caused by technological change and the "naturally arising poor...mechanically oppressed by the gravity of society" who had presumably always existed.⁷⁴ The new type of destitute worker presumably included artisans whose skills had been reduced in value as a result of mechanisation—for example, weavers or coopers—and when Marx mentioned that the ranks of the proletariat were filled by families originating mainly in the "middle estate," it sounds as though he was thinking of previously self-employed craftsmen and tradesmen reduced to working for employers. Prima facie, then, what Marx meant (initially) by a proletarian was any wage-labourer, whether a factory worker or an artisan employed in a small workshop, and whether skilled or unskilled.⁷⁵ This, incidentally, seems to have been the current usage among the French socialists in Paris in the 1840s from whom Marx picked up the term. The label, it must be emphasised, did *not* differentiate factory workers from artisans, and in fact most proletarians in Paris in the 1840s were artisans, since there were very few large factories using steam-powered machinery.

So Marx was now convinced of the need for a social transformation in Britain, France and Germany, the only European countries to which he had so far paid any attention. In the "Introduction" he was silent about England, about which he still knew very little, and had probably not yet considered how the necessary transformation might occur there. But he did offer some opinions on the means whereby change might be effected in Germany and France. Germany was a *société bloquée*—pre-1789 on the French time-scale—and would only make progress through a violent upheaval; when a political insurrec-

73. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):620; MECW, 3:186.

74. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):619-620; MECW, 3:186-187.

75. Ibid.

tion did eventually break out there it would bring social revolution in its train. But Marx, (disagreeing in this respect with Engels), was by no means convinced that Germany was yet on the eve of her 1789, although he was sure this would arrive sooner or later.⁷⁶ However, his perspective on France, influenced by Leroux's and Considérant's pacifism and gradualism, was very different.

In France, Marx stated, the role of liberator was passing in sequence from class to class, ending up with the proletariat, which would want to add social to political freedom. He expected that social liberation would be achieved gradually through the medium of a democratically elected parliamentary government, and that the eventual success of workers' demands for social rights would bring general liberation too. The social revolution could be peaceful in France, unlike Germany, because there was plenty of scope for piecemeal reform through democratic politics and socialist propaganda. But in one crucial respect, his scenarios for social change in France and Germany were the same: the social group instrumental in forcing it through would be the new urban work-force. This class, he admitted, was as yet tiny in Germany, but he seems to have regarded it as already quite large in France, taking as accurate Leroux's and Considérant's claims on this score. He apparently assumed, moreover, that the majority of urban workers were already sympathetic to some kind of crude socialism or communism and were demanding the abolition of private property, a sentiment that would render them easy converts to a more sophisticated philosophical socialism along the lines of his own and Leroux's beliefs.⁷⁷ Marx, however, like Leroux, placed considerable emphasis on educating the urban lower classes. As we have seen, he regarded the proletariat as, at present, only semi-human. Deprived culturally and materially, the poor had to be rescued on the material level by a more egalitarian distribution of wealth, but equally important, they had to be rescued on the moral level by an infusion of the humanist values of German romantic philosophy. Marx thus aimed at saving the souls of the workers as well as their bodies, and he saw the creation of a new kind of non-exploitative economic system and the overcoming of Europe's spiritual crisis as two sides of the same coin. In short, the social revolution would have to be *both* ethical and economic. It was not going to come tomorrow, he recognised; social emancipation would likely proceed slowly in France in the wake of further political reforms, and at some time in the future a German revolution might

76. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):616-617; MECW, 3:183-184.

77. Ibid., MEGA I, 1 (1):619-621; MECW, 3:186-187.

be again sparked by "the ringing call of the Gallic cock" as had once before happened at the end of the eighteenth century. But in the meantime the preconditions had to mature in both countries, and that meant launching a campaign to educate the masses in a humanitarian, socialist philosophy while industrialization marched onwards.⁷⁸

Hence, while Marx was unquestionably a socialist by the time he wrote the "Introduction," he still believed that the core problem holding up the progress of European civilisation was the widespread debasement of human nature that Schiller, Rousseau, and other romantics had detected decades earlier. Since he had begun living in Paris and talking to French socialists, he had come to recognise the problems of pauperism and wage-labour—the "social question." The "proletariat" had come to symbolise to him man at his most lost, alienated and dehumanised. But his ultimate goal remained the one he had adopted during his student days at Bonn: to remake human nature, to make men truly human once again. He called this vision of regeneration "universal, human liberation," and it required, he now believed, three stages: (i) republican democracy, i.e., political and religious liberation (a parliamentary government based on popular sovereignty would, he assumed, be secular in orientation and legislate the separation of church and state); (ii) socialism, i.e., social and economic liberation (including the abolition of powerful concentrations of private property and the end of the artificial impoverishment of the masses which resulted from laissez-faire capitalism); and (iii) the restoration of a free, harmonious human personality integrated into a fraternal, co-operative community (his old, romantic ideal, that he had never forsaken). Marx had not, it is worth noting, yet equated this third, visionary, stage with utopian communism. He was no more attracted to the doctrinaire communism of Babouvians like D  zamy or the Icarians led by Cabet than he had been when he attacked "dogmatic abstractions" in his letter to Ruge the previous September. Leroux and Consid  rant had given him some new ideas about how the future society might eventually look, but he had yet to read Fourier or Owen, and he had yet to experience a meeting of minds with Friedrich Engels who would introduce him to the British industrial revolution and British socialism. Like Engels, Marx was a socialist by the end of 1843, but, as with Engels, there were many questions that he still had to work out for himself. He would make considerable progress in 1844, but that is another story.

78. Ibid.

XII

In conclusion, we can say with all fairness that if Engels' growing knowledge of French socialism during the latter half of 1843 played a significant part in his conversion to socialism, Marx's exposure to the ideas of Proudhon, Blanc, Leroux and Considérant was quite crucial to his acceptance of socialism between September 1843 and the end of that year. Of the two men, Marx, by virtue of living in Paris and making personal contact with Parisian leftists, had the better opportunity to assimilate French socialist ideas, and, not surprisingly, his knowledge of the subject was more extensive than Engels' by December 1843. Nonetheless, Engels' own study of French socialism was also fairly thorough. If we make two reasonable assumptions, that Engels in his "Progress of Social Reform" articles wrote down virtually everything he knew about the French left, and that he had the benefit of Hess's and Herwegh's views on the question, we can deduce some tentative conclusions about the differences between his and Marx's knowledge. Marx—but probably not Engels since he never mentions the newspaper—read *La Réforme* and had contacts among the Parisian Red Republicans including Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux. Both Marx and Engels knew about the Icarian movement and read Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie*. The *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* group in Paris also had access to the communist newspaper *Le Populaire*, and had contacts with Cabet's more violent rival for rank-and-file communist support, Dézamy; indeed their familiarity with Dézamy's rhetoric of armed insurrection apparently led them to suppose (erroneously) that Cabet and his supporters espoused violent revolution too. Marx was familiar with *Démocratie Pacifique* and Victor Considérant's more important writings; he was aware of Fourier and Fourierism but had not yet read any of Fourier's own works. Engels, on the other hand, knew the Fourierists' older theoretical journal, *Phalange*, but when he drafted "Progress of Social Reform" was unaware of Considérant's new daily (he was informed of its existence and title by G.A. Fleming and just had time to include the information in a footnote to his article); still, he had already begun the daunting task of reading Fourier himself, presumably on the advice of one of his English sources.

Both Marx and Engels had read and were greatly impressed by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's first important book, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?*, and Marx also knew his second, *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité* (1843), but neither man had yet had any personal contact with him.⁷⁹ Like Marx, Engels knew of *La Revue*

79. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété? Ou recherches sur le principe*

Indépendante, the literary and philosophical periodical edited by Pierre Leroux and Georges Sand, but unlike Marx he had no opportunity to meet Leroux or study his ideas in depth. Lamennais, too, was a figure familiar to both Engels and the Germans in Paris, but only Ruge seems to have regarded him as a really important thinker. As for the Saint-Simonians, Engels was aware that the movement had existed but knew relatively little about it and dismissed it as out of date—he commented in his “Progress of Social Reform” that it had flashed across the social horizon like a “brilliant meteor” but was now no longer spoken of.⁸⁰ Marx, on the other hand, had access to a file of *Le Globe*, and through his friendship with Leroux was able to learn about Saint-Simonianism first hand, an opportunity he was to make more use of in 1844. However, these latter differences in knowledge between Engels and Marx were of minor importance compared to the two really significant ones: Engels had already plunged into the detailed study of Fourier’s writings whereas Marx knew him only second-hand from *Considérant*; and Marx had a good understanding of the ideas of Louis Blanc and Pierre Leroux, whereas Engels was largely ignorant of both men’s work. There was also another, much more major, difference in outlook between the young Marx and the young Engels in 1843: Engels’ socialism bore the imprint of his experience in England, whereas Marx’s, so far, was primarily French in origin.

Marx’s and Engels’ views on politics and social theory were still evolving at the end of 1843. Neither had yet come to a mature formulation of the system of ideas that would later be known as Marxism. Some key concepts and arguments were already present in their 1842-1843 writings, but embryonically and unsystematically. The most important missing element was British political economy, a subject both men were beginning to study but which neither had yet mastered. Nor had they yet completed their investigations of utopian socialist thought, and Marx’s encounter with Proudhon and reading of Fourier, for example, were to affect significantly the development

du droit et du gouvernement. Le mémoire (Paris: J.-F. Brocard, 1840); and *De la création de l'ordre dans l'humanité, ou principes d'organisation politique* (Paris: Prevot, 1843). Marx and Engels subsequently met Proudhon in Paris in September 1844, and Marx, who spent several weeks listening to and arguing with Proudhon, was initially strongly influenced by him, as is evident from the text of *The Holy Family*. Karl Marx, *Die heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt, 1845); reprinted in MEGA I, 3:173-338; MECW, 4:2-211; see especially MEGA I, 3:211 or MECW, 4:41.

80. Engels, “Progress of Social Reform on the Continent,” MEGA I, 2:437; MECW, 3:394.

of his opinions during the next two years. It is tempting to look for a key to Marx's and Engels' later differences in their different knowledge of French socialism in 1843, but that would be to over-emphasise the firmness of their views at this time and to underestimate the degree to which these changed during 1844-1847. The genesis of Marxism was a long drawn-out process.

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