

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Proslavery currents in Marx and Engels

May 4, 2019 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

I live... again.

I want to thank in advance all of the 6 people who read this blog. There's still a lot I have to do before I can comfortably call this project "finished," among other things an in-depth examination of Karl Ludwig von Haller's body of work (although [Doug Smythe](https://dissentingsociologist.wordpress.com/) (<https://dissentingsociologist.wordpress.com/>), could end up beating me to it), an essay on Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, more tortured wrangling of feudal law, some essays on political economy, Southern proslavery thought, the topic of "race and sex after Darwinism," ultra-royalist counter-histories of nationalism, etc. etc.

So much to do, so little to show for it. My impromptu hiatus has been preoccupied with other concerns. I wonder if Michael Rothblatt, marcusmontisursinensis, quaslacrimas, fjwawak or any of those people are still around...

Either way, until I steadily get back on track, a little detour into something I noted previously. (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2018/01/06/scientifically-historicizing-progress/>), about having a stageist model of history and a classical/pre-marginalist view of commodity production. Some spooky implications.

Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital*, Ch II (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/wage-labour/ch02.htm>). (1847):

Labour-power was not always a commodity (merchandise). Labour was not always wage-labour, i.e., free labour. The slave did not sell his labour-power to the slave-owner, any more than the ox sells his labour to the farmer. The slave, together with his labour-power, was sold to his owner once for all. He is a commodity that can pass from the hand of one owner to that of another. He himself is a commodity, but his labour-power is not his commodity. The serf sells only a portion of his labour-power. It is not he who receives wages from the owner of the land; it is rather the owner of the land who receives a tribute from him. The serf belongs to the soil, and to the lord of the soil he brings its fruit. The free labourer, on the other hand, sells his very self, and that by fractions. He auctions off eight, 10, 12, 15 hours of his life, one day like the next, to the highest bidder, to the owner of raw materials, tools, and the means of life – i.e., to the capitalist. The labourer belongs neither to an owner nor to the soil, but eight, 10, 12, 15 hours of his daily life belong to whomsoever buys them. The worker leaves the capitalist, to whom he has sold himself, as often as he chooses, and the capitalist discharges him as often as he sees fit, as soon as he no longer gets any use, or not the required use, out of him. But the worker, whose only source of income is the sale of his labour-power, cannot leave the whole class of buyers, i.e., the capitalist class, unless he gives up his own existence. He does not belong to this or that capitalist, but to the capitalist class; and it is for him to find his man – i.e., to find a buyer in this capitalist class.

In slavery, one's body is a fixed asset, as opposed to one's labor-power being a commodity to be exchanged on the market. Marx's passage seems to imply that the free laborer is basically akin to a whore, whereas the tributary serf retains the dignity of his personhood. Per the Marxian profit equation $S/(C+V)$, the surplus value and rate of exploitation is hence lower, since the labor performed is only marginally above that which is socially necessary, and the means of production are leased as opposed to not being had under one's disposal at all.

Engels, *The Principles of Communism* (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/11/prin-com.htm>). (1847):

The slave is sold once and for all; the proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly.

The individual slave, property of one master, is assured an existence, however miserable it may be, because of the master's interest. The individual proletarian, property as it were of the entire bourgeois class which buys his labor only when someone has need of it, has no secure existence. This existence is assured only to the class as a whole.

The slave is outside competition; the proletarian is in it and experiences all its vagaries.

The slave counts as a thing, not as a member of society. **Thus, the slave can have a better existence than the proletarian, while the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of social development and, himself, stands on a higher social level than the slave.**

The slave has a better existence *because* he is a thing, and not a free agent in the struggle for existence. On the other hand, the rather vapid historicism rears its head as we are assured that the prole at least has a "higher social level" because of the steam engine and mechanical loom, apparently.

The serf possesses and uses an instrument of production, a piece of land, in exchange for which he gives up a part of his product or part of the services of his labor.

The proletarian works with the instruments of production of another, for the account of this other, in exchange for a part of the product.

The serf gives up, the proletarian receives. The serf has an assured existence, the proletarian has not. The serf is outside competition, the proletarian is in it.

The serf liberates himself in one of three ways: either he runs away to the city and there becomes a handicraftsman; or, instead of products and services, he gives money to his lord and thereby becomes a free tenant; or he overthrows his feudal lord and himself becomes a property owner. In short, by one route or another, he gets into the owning class and enters into competition. The proletarian liberates himself by abolishing competition, private property, and all class differences.

Ditto serfdom, except add in legal personhood (though Engels doesn't mention manumission of slaves for some reason).

How do we get to this promised land of "abolishing competition, private property, and all class differences," however?

Engels devotes S.18 to proposing a revolutionary course of action. It involves imposing progressive taxation, heavy inheritance taxes, abolition of inheritance through collateral lines (brothers, nephews, etc.) forced loans, nationalization of heavy industry, centralization of money and credit into the state, free education, public housing, inheritance rights for bastards...

In other words, we're already living in 85-90% communism. And yet, the end goal that "private property will disappear of its own accord, money will become superfluous, and production will so expand and man so change that society will be able to slough off whatever of its old economic habits may remain" hasn't panned out at all.

Weird.

On the other hand, in S.24 Engels talks about the so-called "reactionary socialists", i.e. aristocratic corporatists:

The first category consists of adherents of a feudal and patriarchal society which has already been destroyed, and is still daily being destroyed, by big industry and world trade and their creation, bourgeois society. This category concludes, from the evils of existing society, that feudal and patriarchal society must be restored because it was free of such evils. In one way or another, all their proposals are directed to this end.

However, communists must resist them. Why?

Three reasons:

(i) It strives for something which is entirely impossible.

Look who's talking!

(ii) It seeks to establish the rule of the aristocracy, the guildmasters, the small producers, and their retinue of absolute or feudal monarchs, officials, soldiers, and priests – **a society which was, to be sure, free of the evils of present-day society but which brought it at least as many evils without even offering to the oppressed workers the prospect of liberation through a communist revolution.**

So Engels concedes that it was free of the evils of bourgeois society (would any contemporary leftist make such a concession, I strongly doubt), but it has “at least as many evils” of its own which go unspecified. Maybe. It also has the advantage of not being a complete phantasm like “liberation through communist revolution.” The state has already been communized (<http://www.telospress.com/sklar-capitalism-socialism-mix/>), with no liberatory effect, other than allowing for extreme individual-hedonic self-expression, I guess.

(iii) As soon as the proletariat becomes revolutionary and communist, these reactionary socialists show their true colors by immediately making common cause with the bourgeoisie against the proletarians.

More like the proletarians made common cause to become bourgeois. Most of the proles’ retirement and pension benefits these days come from pension funds investing in a mixed portfolio of private equity and money market funds. The health of the stock exchange is also the health of the working class. “Marx pulled a fast one over everyone. He tricked people into believing that Traditionalism was an ultimate Progressive ideology,” as one of my commenters once said.

This entry was posted in [Political philosophy](#), [Socialism](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

9 thoughts on “Proslavery currents in Marx and Engels”

1. marcusmontisursinensis says:

[May 5, 2019 at 5:21 pm](#)

Nice to hear from you again! Christus surrexit! Happy Easter

[Reply](#).

2. fjwawak says:

[May 6, 2019 at 4:48 am](#)

Another of your six readers here. Glad you’re back.

[Reply](#).

3. LeeWad says:

[May 6, 2019 at 5:50 am](#)

Lurker for the past 6 months or so, it’s great that you’re back man. Its hard to run or read a blog while keeping up with life, I’m sure we all get it. Keep up the good stuff.

[Reply](#).

4. [theplantationsite](#) says:

[May 8, 2019 at 12:22 am](#)

As one sixth of your audience, I am glad to see you back!

[Reply](#).

5. A french reader says:

May 8, 2019 at 6:51 am

Happy to read you again

Another article on Engels' positive perception of slavery

"Without ancient slavery, no modern socialism"

<http://lesmaterialistes.com/anti-duhring-engels-sans-esclavage-antique-pas-socialisme-moderne>

"It was only slavery that would be possible on a fairly large scale of the division of labor between agriculture and industry and subsequently, the apogee of the ancient world, Hellenism. Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire.

Or, without the base of the ellenism and the Roman empire, nor of modern Europe. We will never forget that our economic, political and intellectual evolution is a prerequisite for a situation in which slavery was absolutely necessary.

In this sense, we have the right to say: without ancient slavery, no modern socialism.

It does not cost much choice of war with the general formulas against slavery and other similar things, and to overthrow on such infamy a superior moral wrath. Unfortunately, nothing is said but what the world says, namely that these antiques institutions no longer correspond to our present conditions and the feelings that determine these conditions in us.

But it does not tell us anything about how these institutions were born, what causes them to survive, and what role they played in history. We are obliged to say, if we are contradictory and heretical, and that we have set up a security system in the circumstances of that time.

It is a fact that we started the animal and that we needed barbarous means, almost animal, to get rid of barbarism. The old communities were always there, constituting from the base of the most crude form of state, the Eastern despotism, from India to Russia.

Only where they have dissolved and the peoples have progressed on their own, and their first economic progress has been an increase and development of production to slave labor.

The choice is clear: to the work of human work, to this product, to the product, more than you, on the other side of the means of subsistence, the increase of the productive forces, of traffic, development state and law, the foundation of art and science possible through a strengthened division of labor, it is forced to fuse a great division of labor between the masses providing for work simple manual and a few privileged people devoted to the direction of work, to commerce, to the United States and later to artistic and scientific occupations.

The simplest, most natural form of this division of labor was precisely slavery.

The Anticaled Anticaled Anticaled World of Modern Greek on Progress. Even for slaves, that was progress; the prisoners of war, among whom the mass of slaves met, were preserved at least now, on the massacre, and even more anciently, on roasting them (...).

If, therefore, Herr Eugen Dühring was on Hellenism because he was founded on slavery, he would be just as much right to reproach the Greeks for not having been steam engines and electric telegraphs. “

Reply

6. quaslacrimas says:

May 29, 2019 at 9:47 pm

I am still alive, but logged in only infrequently. I check my e-mail if you need to get in touch. Haven't read your latest posts yet.

Reply

7. Aldon says:

February 8, 2021 at 9:33 am

Yeah this would probably be best explicated in book or paper form. Many examples: trifunctionalism v. three estates, various cycles of the jurist-priest v. magician-king, domestic cult v. cult of the saints, the list is almost endless

— Imperium Press (@ImperiumPress) February 6, 2021

<https://twitter.com/viractualwhite/status/1357846444414300160>

There's no such thing as naturalism

— prc (@viractualwhite) February 6, 2021

That depends on how much new power denigrates society by punishing them for their values, either due to resentment, or a cold, insouciant lust for control. If new power regimes render life meaningless in favor of its True Forms, expect a reciprocity of alienation and hate.

— prc (@viractualwhite) February 3, 2021

It was in part this delusional logic of reliance that lead to the crisis of multiracial America. No race can consistently base their proliferation on a so called slave race.

— prc (@viractualwhite) January 31, 2021

Computer engineering is escapism for asocial nerds engaged in death-denial.

— prc (@viractualwhite) February 6, 2021

(not a metaphor)

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 5, 2021

Dissolving problems rather than solving them is the most underrated philosophical and general answer. Quite a lot of pointless debates can be avoided by dismissing people as engaging in a false problem. Truth or falsehood should primarily apply to problems actually.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 7, 2021

There is nothing more alien to tradition than Platonism or Aristotelianism which tyrannise over nature with arbitrary divisions and privilege abstraction. But nonetheless we have the power to abstract and so can't be simple minded Bronze agers.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) [February 5, 2021](#)

I am also Loyal to the legacy of Pagan and Oral culture (this includes Christianity which is also basically mythical and oral but more advanced) and the legacy of Indo-Europeanism wherever we see it. When it comes to philosophy I am loyal to the rebels of every epoch

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) [February 5, 2021](#)

Okay Neoplatonism is based but Plato sucks. Deleuze's criticisms of Platonism are somewhat analogous to Plotinus and successors. I'd still affirm Spinoza and immanence over Cusa, Ficino, Scotus-Eriugna, and co, but they gave it a great shot and what they're doing is pretty sick.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) [February 6, 2021](#)

You can read this either as the universe is a field of mimesis and theosis or as a morphogenetic field of the semi-divine Ideas. Either way it sounds pretty cool.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) [February 5, 2021](#)

Do you consider Plato to be a bad option in the long run?

Reply.

8. Aldon says:

[February 8, 2021 at 5:39 pm](#)

Nigel Carlsbad @pompilivs · Feb 7, 2021



"Head of state with a crown" is about the worst end state, merely a crowned republic. But then this ought to show that w/o a legal culture that actually understands the historical Ständestaat encompassing European monarchies, any "restoration" will be met with a quick overthrow. twitter.com/jashari_jetton/...

sentinel of the grave

@sentinelgrave

"the corporative state" of the early 20th century rightists was always a world away from actual medieval monarchy. you can see this in spann — his estates, at the end of the day, would be subject entirely to the will of an overarching total government, raison d'état.

1:30 AM · Feb 8, 2021



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It is full spectrum dominance. pic.twitter.com/KU4oelTtq6

— Le bon Gustave (@StoicObserver_) [February 7, 2021](#)

The term "sportsball" sucks.

Sports teach you teamwork, grace, how to win, how to lose, how to lead, how to follow, hierarchy, collectivism, sacrifice, the virtue of hard work, manliness, loyalty, brotherhood, commitment, strategy...

The thing is you actually have to PLAY them.

— Imperium Press (@ImperiumPress) [February 8, 2021](#)

Enjoying Sportsball™ goy? pic.twitter.com/0ZdkJRhQIH

— Blompf Junior NJP  FREE MR BOND (@Blompfjr) [February 8, 2021](#)

It's a valid complaint, but liberalism commodifies and ruins everything it touches. For some reason sports as a whole get singled out in a way that say art doesn't.

— Imperium Press (@ImperiumPress) [February 8, 2021](#)

Terrible Right wing media editorial habits to avoid:

- 1) Focus more on the violence anarchist rioters do to PEOPLE, not property.
- 2) Don't respond to hysteria about Russia by making it about China instead.
- 3) Avoid focusing on personalities as much as possible.

— Striker (@Striker05381540) [February 8, 2021](#)

On a longer timeline the libertarian geek is really left and the socially conservative trucker is really right. The post-50s era has been a bit of a category inversion, a compression of the inversion that is the Enlightenment, where everything whigs believed is now "traditional".

— Imperium Press (@ImperiumPress) [February 8, 2021](#)

This is nonsense and there are meta-studies that prove that economies with strong intellectual property rights also have more innovation.

— Imperium Press (@ImperiumPress) [February 8, 2021](#)

if these people devoted even a small fraction of their unconditional veneration of black women to God they would be approaching the unitive stage of spiritual perfection <https://t.co/50J4r0LG7v>

— Classical Theist ✠ (@ClassicalTheis) [February 8, 2021](#)

Wait until you find out how they felt about gay people <https://t.co/7cO6oj4pyy>

— Stalin Groyper (@Stalin_Groyper) [February 8, 2021](#)

ethnographic map of Europe from National Geographic, 1919 pic.twitter.com/NffG1YzbyY

— SP fan account (@thuletide) February 7, 2021

A lot of it has to do with mass Irish immigration and left nationalist larp... most Scottish loyalists don't really identify as Celtic.

— JJ (@jordyboyJJ) February 7, 2021

categories on OP are linguistic btw

a map based on genetics would maybe look something like this (9000 hours ms paint). u cant really draw it well b/c its a continuum and because Europeans are so closely related to each other

related genetics info here too, Admix & PCA analysis pic.twitter.com/4rtdTiyXmd

— SP fan account (@thuletide) February 7, 2021

the admixture analysis had some stuff in the wrong order so I edited it to group the populations better pic.twitter.com/46cU4JRU4L

— SP fan account (@thuletide) February 7, 2021

In terms of the Bible there is good evidence Jesus Christ existed as a real figure who taught the apostles his oral teachings, however they are mythical teachings and so aren't for the most part to be taken literally, this is a much later rationalist interpretation

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 8, 2021

Chromasophore

@Chromasophore



Treating the Bible as a solitary work to be understood completely in and of itself rather than as the culmination of centuries of hellenic-jewish literature and oral tradition is monstrously ignorant and results in most of the bizarre contradictions you see in modern Christianity

8:20 AM · Feb 8, 2021



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Analogia entis comes from Aristotle's Paronymous discussion of Being, but the rest is platonic. In any case I don't see Platonism as being particularly Christian either.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 19, 2021

This is based because Christianity is closer to paganism than it is to Aristotelianism, the crusades are clearly pagan religious fervour. It is monotheistic and more sophisticated than some pagan religions due to its proximity to literate culture but is closer to Homer than Plato <https://t.co/4iZi31n1Wx>

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 19, 2021

Even more.

Reply

9. Aldon says:

February 8, 2021 at 5:51 pm

Yeah what you see is pagan and indeed some Christian archetypes recurring in western culture, for example in the beowulf and other aspects of culture, but also in the philosophy itself with the liquidation of classical philosophical archetypes in nominalism.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 19, 2021

Nominalism isn't ultimately tenable but the point was it was a reaction against bureaucratic scholasticism which separated man from the divine will. The project as I see it is self consciously reclaiming the ontological structure of the beliefs of oral culture.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 19, 2021

lol everyone will hate this take.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 19, 2021

yeah but that's a narrow definition of literacy, in any case you probably get misimpressions about how writing driven it is because of the lack of important emphasis on markets abstracting people from embeddments

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 19, 2021

As you can imagine my take is Deleuze rips Aristotle and by extension the scholastics ontology to shreds in this regard and sets out an ontology of intensity and difference. Analogy is one of the four shackles of mediation.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) January 18, 2021

The second is the Christianity that mutated as it entered Europe, it came in later more writing and reading culture and was a fusion of Magian Christianity and European pagan philosophy, Plotinus universally, Aristotle later etc.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) December 25, 2020

Firstly there was the Christianity born in oral culture spread by St Paul and Jesus Christ and his disciples with its own distinct theology and culture.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) December 25, 2020

The Virtue ethicists like MacIntyre tend to make what I would call a "teleological reversal of liberalism" which I think is a mere illiberalism and not a genuine postliberalism and relies on dogmatic metaphysics which is indefensible and was defeated for a reason.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) December 18, 2020

People don't realise it but indirect realism and idealism are associated with modernity and computationalism, direct realist approaches tend to fall much closer to where we are like embodied cognition etc, one of the few areas where Deleuze and Aristotle Agree on.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) December 18, 2020

So for example in Aristotle we can do away with the category of species because we now know through evolution that all barriers of reproduction between populations of animals are basically arbitrary, we can alter the genetic code (not a metaphor) of a goat to produce spider silk

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) November 17, 2020

The problem is that such systems actually don't make much sense given our current understanding of the universe, teleology is basically a retrojection of causality backwards wherein something's properties are considered essential and you must assume something as existing as an

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) November 17, 2020

This is absurd, you have to presuppose being in order to make this claim, you're disguising the fact that you don't know the origin of what you're examining and just putting the result as if it was an essential characteristic of the thing itself.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) November 20, 2020

Therefore a species has the same ontological status as that of an individual, I.e. it is a unique historical event which does not exist as a real abstract universal, you cannot exchange two identical twins or even a clone, they would have different lives

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) November 17, 2020

Aristotelianism is the only ethical position I'd take seriously, although probably only a Nussbaumian account specifically. <https://t.co/0DgzVqPLnQ>

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 1, 2021

Honestly there are no "shoulds" wrt centralisation vs decentralisation, it's purely pragmatic and up to the decision of the sovereign. We shouldn't engage in this sort of discourse full stop.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 1, 2021

Gans is right in contexts where graceful charisma is to not always display you're the guy in charge, like Trump with his narcissistic advertising. But I think the idea Democracy Assuages resentments is retarded, it enables patronage networks which fuel them and weaponise them.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 1, 2021

Nah the government should be able to just act like the mafia when it comes to economics. Obviously not everything can be micromanaged but this isn't an ethical debate really. Any talk about rights here just leads to more centralisation of course.

— Marcus Cunningham (@MarcusC31391111) February 1, 2021

And that's the last set. I apologize for any inconvenience. I'm just hoping these all provide food for well-done thought.

Reply.

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