

MARX AND CIESZKOWSKI

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IT IS GENERALLY AGREED that Hegel and his younger and somewhat leftist followers contributed to shaping the philosophical and economic views of Marx. Not so generally recognized is the impact of a Polish writer, August von Cieszkowski, whose influence is the subject of our query. This note is not intended to be an original contribution on the subject but a brief restatement of an interesting proposition concerning Marx's intellectual origins by a German professor of philosophy, Reinhard Lauth.¹ To the best of my knowledge Professor Lauth's proposition has not been discussed as yet on this side of the Atlantic.

The eleventh thesis of Marx on Feuerbach, appended to his *Deutsche Ideologie* (1845-46) reads: *Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert; es kommt darauf an, sie zu verändern.*² Its meaning is well known and the alteration from *interpretation* to *change*, from theoretical to practical philosophy, has been stressed sufficiently. Equally, there is no doubt that it was intended to supersede Hegel, the most renowned, although not the most brilliant, schoolmaster of German Idealism. This supersedure of Hegel is generally attributed to Marx's inquiring mind. Even so, there is historical evidence that Marx was not the first to point out some insufficiencies in Hegel's philosophical system. And this is the point of Professor Lauth's plausible conjecture.

August von Cieszkowski published a 157-page treatise concerning Hegel's *Philosophie der Geschichte* as early as 1838, a treatise entitled *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*.³ As the title itself promises, the author succeeds in transcending the Hegelian limitations of the philosophy of history which was past-oriented. Cieszkowski states, *stimmung der Menschheit darstellt, unmöglich zum Erkennen der integrierenden Theil der Geschichte, welche die Realisation der Bestimmung der Menschheit darstellt, onmöglich zum Erkennen der organischen und ideellen Totalität, so wie des apodiktischen Processes der Weltgeschichte zu gelangen ist.*⁴ The new philosophy, super-

¹ Reinhard Lauth, "Einflüsse slawischer Denker auf die Genesis der Marx'schen Weltanschauung." *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Vol. XXI, 3-4 (1955), pp. 399-450; ———, "Die verwirtschaftete Humanität." *Neue Deutsche Hefte* (August, 1955), pp. 334-46.

² Karl Marx, *Die Frühschriften*. Ed. by S. Landshut (Stuttgart: A Kroener, 1955), p. 341. (Philosophers have interpreted the world differently; the problem, however, is to change it.)

³ Berlin: Veit & Co.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9 (that it is impossible to understand the organic and ideatic totality as well as the apodictic process of world history without the knowledge of the future; the future

seding Hegel, has to be future-oriented. Certainly, any future-orientation involves the consideration of the will, of the self-determining human action and of all the practicalities connected with such an orientation. Basically, the dialectical triad of emotions, reasonability, and will-determination enters the picture; the will-determination represents the synthetic and last phase of the historical development of man. The first phase is Greco-Roman, classical, prophetic, where philosophy started with awe and wondering. The age of reasonability started with Christ, and the main endeavor was to decipher intellectually the essence of Being. Hegel was the last man-philosopher of the era. The coming age, the future, will fulfill itself in an objective reification of the Truth. Philosophers will become pragmatic teachers and ideologists of the Truth. The practical will and the good, the connection and fusion of theory and praxis and goodness, are not eschatological nor transcendental but within the limits of possibility.

August von Cieszkowski⁵ was a Polish aristocrat, scholar and gentleman, four years younger than Marx. Around the year 1834 he came to Berlin and enrolled in courses offered by Karl Ludwig Michelet and the *Philosophie-Dozent* Karl Werder. Cieszkowski's philosophical career was rather shortlived although significant; two works besides the *Prolegomena* should be mentioned: *De philosophiae Ioniae ingenio, vi, loco*, which was his doctoral dissertation in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg submitted the same year the *Prolegomena* was published. *Gott und die Palingenesis* appeared in Berlin four years later. Cieszkowski, like other gentleman-scholars of the humanist tradition, travelled in France and England where he became acquainted with problems of early capitalist economy, as Engels did a few years later. Cieszkowski's major economic work appeared as early as 1839 in Paris under the title *Du crédit et de la circulation*. In the following years he contributed to the *Journal des économistes*. In German, he published in 1845 *Zur Verbesserung der Lage der Arbeiter auf dem Lande*. But Cieszkowski, unlike Marx, was not a revolutionary. His political activities were well within the bounds of legal reforms; in 1848 he started his politically important career as an elected deputy of the Grand Duchy of Posen.

Cieszkowski's philosophy of action did not lead him anywhere near

is conceived as an integrated part of history; its knowledge, in turn, affects the realization of the vocation of mankind).

The pillar of modern Soviet Marxism, interestingly enough, is the doctrine asserting the foresight of the Party leadership which, in turn, facilitates the apodictic dialectical process of the historical development of mankind.

⁵ *Polski słownik biograficzny* (Cracow, 1937).

Marx's position, perhaps because he retained his Christian ideology. Of importance, nonetheless, remains his Hegelian orientation while in Berlin and the product of it as published in 1838. When young Marx came to Berlin in 1837 to study law, he found all the Hegelians contemplating "What is to be done" with philosophy. Hegel had died six years prior to Marx's arrival and had left a feeling of uncertainty for his disciples. After all, if he really did discover the truth and he himself were the truth, what else was there to do for philosophy? Evidently, this intellectual climate did not escape the young and sensitive Marx. One of the teachers of Cieszkowski, Dozent Werder,⁶ who became professor *extraordinarius* of philosophy in 1838, lectured a full semester on Cieszkowski's ideas as he was reading the *Prolegomena* in the galley proofs.⁷ It seems that Cieszkowski's challenge to Hegel was a welcome gift to the perplexed young Hegelians in Berlin. And it is to be assumed that Marx was fairly well acquainted with these ideas before he commenced to write his doctoral dissertation *Differenz der demokratischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie* (1840), submitted to the University of Jena. To expound Marx's philosophy as contained in his dissertation would be superfluous for this paper.⁸ But one thing is certain: there is an intellectual proximity between Marx and Cieszkowski with regard to the solution of the Hegelian problem of history.

The pure suggestion of a possible influence by Cieszkowski on the young Marx, does not, of course, constitute the proof of such an imputation, but it is remarkable that so far such a possibility has not been noted. Several reasons may be advanced for this: First, the *Prolegomena* appeared in a presumably limited edition and has not been, to my knowledge, reprinted at any time after 1838. It is interesting to note that the only copy I was able to obtain through an inter-library loan from an Eastern university was still uncut. Second, most editions of Marx or on Marx published by the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow or similar publishers would not consider it opportune politically to stress any influence on Marx which would deprive him of some of his undoubted originality; furthermore, August von Cieszkowski is hardly the right political figure to be promened as Marx's intellectual stimulant. Third, Marx himself was an eager reader and indubitably read the same Fichte as Cieszkowski did; and the similarity of the one's philosophy of action to the other's *Philosophie der That* may have made it easier to overlook the distinction between them and a possible independent influence of Cieszkowski's on Marx.

⁶ *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX siècle* (Paris, 1869).

⁷ R. Lauth, "Einflüsse . . ." *op. cit.*, p. 414.

⁸ Especially since Professor Lauth did so in detail in his "Einflüsse . . ." *op. cit.*

Even if Cieszkowski did have a basic intellectual influence on the young Marx initially, Marx's future life was influenced more by his personal and professional affiliation with the leftist Hegelians and later with the *Rheinische Zeitung*, and with French socialists and by the events of 1848. Of course, even Cieszkowski refers to the socialist system of Fourier⁹ which he considered still as utopian but tending toward a realistic and socially just system.

Can we conclude then that the young Marx was influenced by this forgotten Polish writer? I would say "yes" rather than "no"; but even if I should be inclined to say the reverse, this imputation should not diminish the attention of the intellectually curious.

⁹ Cieszkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 146.