



## Afterword Fromm Marx's Concept of Man

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(1966d-e)

First published as "Afterword" in E. Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*. With a Translation from Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts by T.B. Bottomore, New York (F. Ungar Publ. Co.) 1966. pp. 261-263.

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When this book was published in 1961 the author hoped that it might help to restore a proper understanding of Marx's philosophy. This was considered as being of special importance for the English-speaking public who had had little opportunity to read Marx's philosophical writings in English translation. The many printings issued since 1961 are evidence that to some extent the book has fulfilled the author's hopes.

There have in the interim been many other important factors which, in turn, have tended to increase the interest in Marx's ideas. The most notable of these, in my opinion, are the increasing significance of humanist thought within Christian thinking on the one hand, and that within Marxist socialist thinking on the other. As to the new importance of humanism within the Roman Catholic Church, one need only mention the names of such men as Pope John XXIII, Teilhard de Chardin, and of theologians such as Karl Rahner and Hans Küng; in the Protestant Church we should mention theologians such as Paul Tillich and Albert Schweitzer.

At the other end of the philosophical spectrum there is evidence of a new humanism among Marxist thinkers, especially among the Marxist philosophers in Yugoslavia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, but also in Western Europe and America. Names such as those of Georg Lukács, Adam Schaff, Veljko Korać, Ernst Bloch, and many others give expression to this rise of socialist humanism.<sup>1</sup> {262}

In spite of the fact that Christian and Marxist thinkers do not share identical views--there are sharp differences between the two groups--it is perfectly clear that there is a common core of thought and feeling that unites them: humanism. This is not the place to discuss the nature of humanism. Suffice to say that it is a system of thought and feeling centered upon man, his growth, integrity, dignity, freedom; upon man as an end in himself, and not as a means toward anything; upon his capacity to be active not only as an individual but as a participant in history; and upon the fact that every man carries within himself all of humanity.

Among the great humanists of the past were Buddha, the Hebrew Prophets, Jesus Christ, Socrates, the philosophers of the Renaissance, and those of the Enlightenment down to Goethe and Marx. There is an unbroken tradition of humanism which reaches

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<sup>1</sup> For an expression of thirty-six humanists, mostly Marxists, and some non-Marxists, see *Socialist Humanism*, an international symposium edited by Erich Fromm (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965).



back some 2500 years and which is now growing in the most divergent fields of thought, mostly in those of Christianity and Marxism, but also among thinkers who belong to neither camp, such as Bertrand Russell, Camus, and Einstein.

How can one explain this renaissance of humanism? It is a reaction to the ever-increasing threat to man. This threat is twofold. In the first place there is the threat to his spiritual existence resulting from an industrial society in which man becomes increasingly alienated, a mere *homo consumens*, a thing among things, subordinate to the interests of the state and to economic production. In the second, there is the threat to his physical existence by an ever-increasing nuclear arms race. These threats have evoked in many men and women, philosophers and theologians as well as in laymen, a deep and passionate desire to fight the danger by putting the concern for man in the center of their thoughts and actions. {263}

It is this growth of humanism that has led to the beginning of a dialogue between Marxists and Christian theologians. An increasing number of such dialogues have been taking place in Europe, in the United States, and in Mexico. But, one might ask, what have Christians and Marxists to talk about to each other, when their basic beliefs, especially in relation to God and salvation, are so contradictory? The answer lies in two factors. First of all, the participants in such dialogues approach each other in a humanist spirit, that is to say, with love and respect; and without fanaticism. Secondly, while the participants by no means tend to minimize their differences, they are also convinced that in addition to their different concepts there is still another dimension--the human reality which paradoxically in its fullness is itself inexpressible, although it can be expressed to a limited degree in different and even contradictory concepts.

I hope that this book, which contains Marx's concept of man, will continue to help toward an understanding of Marx and thus serve as a corrective to the distortion and corruption of his ideas by „anti-Marxists“ and by many who call themselves Marxists. At the same time I hope that it may be helpful to the humanist renaissance that is taking place today, upon the success of which not only philosophy but also the physical survival of man to a large extent depends.