

What Remains of Communism Now? [From *International Journal of Social Economics*]

"The idea that a social system might move, that is, regress, from a supposedly superior, historically advanced socialist to a supposedly outmoded capitalist mode of production was inconceivable for Marxist theoreticians."

Paul Hollander, "Why Communism Collapsed in Eastern Europe," *Society*, 30 (Jan/Feb. 1993): 41.

Soviet Marxism, Fact or Fancy?

Shortly after the demise of the Soviet Empire - for the USSR did make a sustained and from the Marxist point of view, rational attempt at imperialism, despite some who denied this - Martin Anderson, who was head of President Ronald Reagan's transition team and was a top advisor to Reagan during the early years of his administration, gave a speech at the conservative Philadelphia Society. In this talk Anderson lamented that we in American are not as euphoric as we ought to be given what had just transpired. The West had won the Cold War. Capitalism was fully vindicated. The theories of Ludwig von Mises and Frederick A. Hayek, two premier economists who defended the free market system and predicted that socialism will fall, had been confirmed in practice. The world has had a demonstration, albeit at great and unnecessary cost, of the hopelessness of socialism. So why are we not cheering? Why are there so few celebrations?

I was in the audience and had a chance to talk with Anderson following his talk. What I am about to present is the more developed version of what I told him, which was: The true believers do not give up, they merely rephrase, reformulate, re analyze. And since human minds can be extremely clever when they try to bail out themselves, to rationalize their own failings, we will by no means see any substantial retreat on the part of socialism for the foreseeable future. Moreover, Marxism has some escape clauses of its own.

Here is why. To begin with, a comprehensive system of ideas such as Marxism is prepared to cope with many developments in human society. One can think of how the Roman Catholic church has managed to realign itself to the most radical secular developments in Western culture without having ever to give up its fundamental theology. That is because it rests on such principles, in the last analysis, that make nearly any adjustment possible.¹

Karl Marx was first and foremost a visionary. From his most early writings we can detect that he had a moral or normative vision, one that affirmed the ultimate significance of humanity as a concrete being. It is only when we devote ourselves to humanity will we find true happiness, he wrote in his high school separation essay². And in this belief Marx never changed.

Where Marx has always been willing to make adjustments is in his effort to convince others of his vision. For some time he believed he might employ the traditional efforts of moralists who would try to convince people to change their thinking and follow the righteous path. But when Marx became increasingly better informed about the prominence of scientific thinking - that is, of the sweeping influence of scientism - he turned from his earlier approach and embraced what he called scientific socialism.

This outlook posits the necessary development of humanity toward communism. In this new approach communism ceased to be an ideal and become what Marx called a "real movement."⁵

It is not my concern here whether Marx was sincere. One can clearly convince himself of the need to think differently about some aspects of the world in the effort to think as one used to about others. Clearly Marx came to think less and less of the utopian socialist approach and never relented on the superiority of the socialist way of life. So he began arguing that it will come about regardless, it must.

What I want to show is how Marxism is flexible enough to incorporate the recent developments in Eastern Europe and keep the belief alive that socialism is indeed still the best way of community life for human beings.

Karl Marx and Russia's Revolution

In 1883 Marx wrote a preface to the Russian edition of *The Communist Manifesto* in which he answered the question of a Russian communist revolutionary concerning whether socialism might not be instituted in Russia, despite the backwardness of the Russian economy. Marx replied that this would be possible, provided the revolution serves as a "signal" to the West, where revolution would then occur nearly simultaneously. Why did Marx qualify his encouragement for a Russian revolution?⁴

It is clear that Marx had earlier discounted the prospect of any socialist revolution that was not premised on the full development of capitalism. Such a revolution, he noted, would do little else but "socialize poverty." Why? Because prosperity, wealth, economic growth all depended for their fullest development on the constituents of a capitalist political economy. How is that?

Marx's Collectivist Humanism

In Marxism humanity is very much akin to an organism not unlike a human individual as we ordinarily understand one. Marx even calls humanity an "organic whole" or "body," in *Grundrisse*, where he also refers to the ancient Greeks as humanity in "childhood."⁵ Marx had always been a collectivist in the sense that he took humanity to be a concrete universal, indeed, perhaps even a concrete individual. He regarded individual human beings as specie-beings and this for him meant that their essential identity is inherently related to their being parts in the larger organism of humanity.⁶ Whatever there is of individualism in Marx's views, it certainly has to mean no more than the well being, flourishing of any individual person is entirely tied in with the flourishing of humanity as a whole.

One important ingredient of this collectivist humanism is that the species must undergo stages of development. It has, as individual human beings are taken to have ordinarily, an infancy, childhood, adolescence, and a young and eventually mature adulthood. Furthermore, just as with individual human beings as we take in not only ordinarily but also in developmental physiology and psychology, humanity must pass through its various stages of development in the proper sequence, lest it suffer various imbalances, disequilibria, confusions, anxieties, etc. A person who skips adolescence because, say, there is a war where he lives, or is made to become a young adult too early in his or her life, will suffer certain maladjustment and this will result in various types of adversities throughout his life. Indeed, this is presupposed in our understanding of what psychologists can do for us, namely, get us readjusted after such a maladjustment inducing kind of early life.

In Marx's mature - post 1844 manuscript stage - understanding of humanity's development, there is no place for skipping the various stages of political economy. Tribalism, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism must all come about in proper sequence. The Soviet experiment, in so far as it never seriously expanded beyond the borders of Greater Russia, has to be seen, from a Marxist point of view,

as a futile effort, even little more than a fraudulent mislabeling. Russia never went through capitalism and without its successful absorption of Western capitalist countries that have undergone that stage of humanity's development, there was no justification for construing it as ready for socialism. (It is important to consider, in this connection, that Soviet imperialism had to be a necessary adjunct to the Soviet Union's claim to be a faithful institution of Marxian revolution. Without successful imperialism, no such claim could be proven to be born out within the Marxian framework.)

Marxism After 1989

Accordingly, when in 1989 the Soviet Empire collapsed, it would have to be understood in Marxian terms as no more than the fall of a major, traditional, semi-feudal, colonial power. The claim that it represented an experiment in socialist development would have to be categorically denied. All that had been attempted is some variety of the command economy, some version of feudal mercantilism. Whatever claims were being made linking the USSR to Marxian socialist revolutionary developments would have to be taken as at best ignorant wishful thinking, but more likely evasive deception.

What about current developments in the region?

From the Marxist view point these developments are now more closely on course than in the past. As with most such empire building experiments throughout the world, once the empire collapses because of various economic and other pressures, there is initial disintegration and eventually gradual bourgeois development.

It is crucial in this connection to recall that dialectical or historical is unlike mechanistic or reductive materialism in respect to the principles or laws of motion that characterize it. Whereas mechanistic materialism proposes that change occurs in a rigidly predictable fashion, dialectical or historical materialism is more akin to biology, geology or, as Marx himself put it, natural history.

Accordingly, there is no promise in Marxian theory - as distinct from some of Marx's imprudent activist projections - concerning the arrival of capitalism or socialism or communism in humanity's future. Just as psychology, or even physiology, are disciplines that do not offer rigid predictions concerning the development of some human individual, so dialectical materialism does not propose a time table for when humanity's various future stages will ensue.

Current indecisive experimentation with free market structures throughout the former Soviet bloc is fully consonant with Marxian theory. Just as familiar bourgeois developments did not occur in some fixed, rigid fashion, so the future of capitalism and socialism is likely to see flexible developments.

So, at least, could a Marxian approach be sketched as regards what has recently occurred in our world. Indeed, when supporters of liberal democratic capitalist societies express amazement at why Marxists across the globe haven't laid down their intellectual armaments, I am always surprised at their naiveté. Not only is this an unrealistic expectation from a psychological viewpoint - our experience with Christianity should have taught us that much, what with the Vatican managing to be in tune with nearly everything science and history has to offer, however much it may seem that its Christian theology would be overburdened by it all. It is also unjustified in terms of what the Marxists have offered - indeed, in terms of Marx himself told us.

The Pointless Resilience of Marxism

Nevertheless, I want to argue that this Marxian thesis should be laid aside, given up, buried and done with. Not, however, because of what happened in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the world. For all that could have been anticipated by any conscientious Marxist. Each could have agreed with Ludwig

von Mises's and F. A. Hayek's analysis about the futility of getting a socialist system to accommodate the demands of economic efficiency. Marx would never have claimed that one can substitute socialism for capitalism, quite the contrary. And given human nature under the capitalist phase of humanity's development, all the arguments about the impossibility of calculation under socialism should have been fully acceptable to Marxists. To avoid the problem we need the new man, which certainly has not made its appearance in humanity. This fully altruistic, entirely socialized human being is not going to expect the kind of efficient economic organization that Mises and Hayek had in mind when they criticized socialism. That new man would be so new that no standard economic analysis could appreciate the workings of the society, whether economic or otherwise, based on its nature. Marx was very specifically vague on the issue of what communism would be like, precisely for this reason. We cannot tell just yet.

But then why do I say that this is all wrong? Here is why.

Oddly it is one of the central features of Marx's nemesis, namely, bourgeois philosophy, that calls into question the truth of Marxism. Marx inherited from Hegel and his scientific bent of thinking the deterministic aspects of his philosophy. Hegel had argued that although human beings are subjectively free - capable of making choices in their lives - at the aggregate level or holistically history is determined. We may only know this retrospectively but it is, nevertheless, true. Reason is working out its necessary development through human social, political and economic history. The laws of countries, its customs and so forth, are the manifestation of this progress of Reason (or Idea). Marx took a somewhat different metaphysical view of it all but retained the determinism. And it is entirely unclear how either Hegel or, especially, Marx could find room for free will in human existence.

The problem is that determinism is incorrect, untenable, and self-defeating even for Marxism. Let me just make this point in some detail.

The Importance of having Free Will

I'm going to defend the position that free will means that human beings can cause some of what they do, on their own; in other words, what they do is not explainable solely by references to factors that have influenced them, though, of course, their range of options is clearly circumscribed by the world in which they live, by their particular circumstances, capacities, options, talents, etc. My thesis, in other words, is that human beings are able to cause their actions and they are therefore responsible for some of what they do. In a basic sense we are all original actors capable of making novel moves in the world. We are, in other words, initiators of some of our behavior.

The first matter to be noted is that this view is in no way in contradiction to science. Free will is a natural phenomenon, something that emerged in nature with the emergence of human beings, with their kind of minds, namely, minds that can think and be aware of their own thinking.

Nature is complicated and multifaceted. It includes many different sorts of things and one of these is human beings. Such beings exhibit one unique yet natural attribute that other things apparently do not exhibit and that is free will.

I am going to offer eight reasons why a belief in free will makes very good sense. Four of these explain why there can be free will - i.e., why nature does not preclude it. But these do not yet demonstrate that free will exists. That will be the job of the four reasons I will advance next, which will establish that free will actually exists, it's not just a possibility but an actuality.

Nature's Laws versus Free Will

First, one of the major objections against free will is that nature is governed by a set of laws, mainly the laws of physics. Everything is controlled by these laws and we human beings are basically more complicated versions of material substances and that therefore whatever governs any other material substance in the universe must also govern human life. Basically, we are subject to the kind of causation everything else is. Since nothing else exhibits free will but conforms to causal laws, so must we be. Social science is merely looking into the particulars of those causes, but we all know that we are subject to them in any case. The only difference is that we are complicated things, not that we are not governed by the same principles or laws of nature.

Now, in response I want to point out that nature exhibits innumerable different domains, distinct not only in their complexity but also in the kinds of beings they include. So it is not possible to rule out ahead of time that there might be something in nature that exhibits agent causation. This is the phenomenon whereby a thing causes some of its own behavior. So there might be in nature a form of existence that exhibits free will. Whether there is or is not is something to be discovered, not ruled out by a narrow metaphysics that restricts everything to being just a variation on just one kind of thing. Thus, taking account of what nature is composed of does not at all rule out free will. Yet, simply because of the possibility that there is free will, there may still not be. We consider that a bit later.

Can we Know of Free Will?

Now, another reason why some think that free will is not possible is that the dominant mode of studying, inspecting or examining nature is what we call "empiricism." In other words, many believe that the only way we know about nature is we observe it with our various sensory organs. But since the sensory organs do not give us direct evidence of such a thing as free will, there really isn't any such thing. Since no observable evidence for free will exists, therefore free will does not exist.

But the doctrine that empiricism captures all forms of knowing is wrong - many things that we know not simply through observation but through a combination of observation, inferences, and theory construction. (Consider, even the purported knowledge that empiricism is our form of knowledge is not "known" empirically!)

For one, many features of the universe, including criminal guilt, are detected without eyewitnesses but by way of theories which serve the purpose of best explaining what we do have before us to observe. This is true, also, even in the natural sciences. Many of the phenomena or facts in biology, astrophysics, subatomic physics, botany, chemistry - not to mention psychology - consist of not what we see or detect by observation but that is inferred by way of a theory. And the theory that explains things best - most completely and most consistently - is the best answer to the question as to what is going on.

Free will may well turn out to be in this category. In other words, free will may not be something that we can see directly, but what best explains what we do see in human life. This may include, for example, the many mistakes that human beings make in contrast to the few mistakes that other animals make. We also notice that human beings do all kinds of odd things that cannot be accounted for in terms of mechanical causation, the type associated with physics. We can examine a person's background and find that some people with bad childhoods turn out to be decent, while others crooks. And free will comes as a very helpful explanation. For now all we need to consider that this may well be so, and if empiricism does not allow for it, so much the worse for empiricism. One could know something because it explains something else better than any alternative. And that is not strict empirical knowledge.

Is Free Will Weird?

Another matter that very often counts against free will is that the rest beings in nature do not exhibit it. Dogs, cats, lizards, fish, frogs, etc., have no free will and therefore it appears arbitrary to impute it to human beings. Why should we be free to do things when in the rest of nature lacks any such capacity? It would be an impossible aberration.

The answer here is similar to what I gave earlier. To wit, there is enough variety in nature - some things swim, some fly, some just lie there, some breathe, some grow, while others do not; so there is plenty of evidence of plurality of types and kinds of things in nature. Discovering that something has free will could be yet another addition to all the varieties of nature.

Let us now consider whether free will actually does exist. I'm going to offer four arguments in support of an affirmative answer.

Are We Determined to be Determinists - or not?

There is an argument against determinism to the effect that, if we are fully determined in what we think, believe, and do, then of course the belief that determinism is true is also a result of this determinism. But the same holds for the belief that there determinism is false. There is nothing you can do about whatever you believe - you had to believe it. There is no way to take an independent stance and consider the arguments unprejudiced because all various forces making us assimilate the evidence in the world just the way we do. One either turns out to be a determinist or not and in neither case can we appraise the issue objectively because we are predetermined to have a view on the matter one way or the other.

But then, paradoxically, we'll never be able to resolve this debate, since there is no way of obtaining an objective assessment. Indeed, the very idea of scientific or judicial objectivity, as well as of ever reaching philosophical truth, has to do with being free. Thus, if we're engaged in this enterprise of learning about truth and distinguishing it from falsehood, we are committed to the idea that human beings have some measure of mental freedom.

Should We Become Determinists?

There's another dilemma of determinism. The determinist wants us to believe in determinism. In fact, he believes we ought to be determinists rather than believe in this myth called "free will". But, as the saying goes in philosophy, "ought" implies "can". That is, if one ought to believe in or do something, this implies that one has a choice in the matter; it implies that we can make a choice as to whether determinism or the free will is a better doctrine. That, then, it assumes that we are free. In other words, even arguing for determinism assumes that we are not determined to believe in free will or determined but that it is a matter of our making certain choices about arguments, evidence, and thinking itself. That's a paradox which troubles a deterministic position.

We Often Know We Are Free!

In many contexts of our lives introspective knowledge is taken very seriously. When you go to a doctor and he asks you, "Are you in pain?" and you say, "Yes," and he says "Where is the pain?" and you say, "It's in my knee," the doctor doesn't say, "Why, you can't know, this is not public evidence, I will now get verifiable, direct evidence where you hurt." In fact your evidence is very good evidence. Witnesses at trials give evidence as they report about what they have seen, which is introspective evidence: "This indeed is what I have seen or heard." Even in the various sciences people report on

what they've read on surveys or seen on gauges or instruments. Thus they are giving us introspective evidence.

Introspection is one source of evidence that we take as reasonably reliable. So what should we make of the fact that a lot of people do say things like, "Damn it, I didn't make the right choice," or "I neglected to do something." They report to us that they have made various choices, decisions, etc., that they intended this or that but not another thing. And they often blame themselves for not having done something, thus they report that they are taking responsibility for what they have or haven't done.

In short, there is a lot of evidence from people all around us of the existence of free choice.

Modern Science Discovers Free Will!

Finally, there is also the evidence of the fact that we do seem to have the capacity for self-monitoring. The human brain has a kind of structure that allows us to, so to speak, to govern ourselves. We can inspect our lives, we can detect where we're going, and we can, therefore, change course. And the human brain itself makes it possible. The brain, because of its structure, can monitor itself and as a result we can decide whether to continue in a certain pattern or to change that pattern and go in a different direction. That is the sort of free will that is demonstrable. At least some scientists, for example Roger W. Sperry⁷ - in his book *Science and Moral Priority* (Columbia University Press, 19983) and in numerous more technical articles - maintain that there's evidence for free will in this sense. This view depends on a number of points I have already mentioned. It assumes that there can be different causes in nature, so that the functioning of the brain would not be a kind of self-causation. The brain as a system would have to be able to cause some things about the organism's behavior and that depends, of course, on the possibility of there being various kinds of causes.

Precisely the sort of thing Sperry thinks possible is evident in our lives. We make plans and revise them. We explore alternatives and decide to follow one of these. We change a course of conduct we have embarked upon, or continue with it. In other words, there is a locus of individual self responsibility that is evident in the way in which we look upon ourselves, and the way in which we in fact behave.

Some People are, some are not Determined.

There clearly are cases of conduct in which some persons behave as they do because they were determined to do so by certain identifiable forces outside of their own control. A brain tumor, a severe childhood trauma or some other intrusive force sometimes incapacitates people. This is evident in those occasional cases when a person who engaged in criminal behavior is shown to have had no control over what he or she did. Someone who actually had no capacity to control his or her behavior, could not control his or her own thinking or judgment and was, thus, moved by something other than his own will, cannot be said to possess a *bona fide* free will.

Those who deny that we have free will simply cannot make sense of our distinction between cases in which one controls one's behavior and those in which one is being moved by forces over which he or she has no control. When we face the latter sort of case, we still admit that the behavior could be good or bad but we deny that it is morally and legally significant - it is more along lines of acts of nature or God by being out of the agent's control. This is also why philosophers who discuss ethics but deny free will have trouble distinguishing between morality and value theory - e.g., utilitarians, Marxists.

The Best Theory is True.

Finally, there what I have alluded to earlier, namely, that when we put all of this together we get a more sensible understanding of the complexities of human life than otherwise - we get a better understanding, for example, of why social engineering and government regulation and regimentation do not work, why there are so many individual and cultural differences, why people can be wrong, why they can disagree with each other, etc. It is because they are free to do so, because they are not set in some pattern the way cats and dogs and orangutans and birds tend to be.

In principle, all of the behavior of these creatures around us can be predicted because they are not creative in a sense that they originate new ideas and behavior, although we do not always know enough about the constitution of these beings and how it would interact with their environment to actually predict what they will do. Human beings produce new ideas and these can introduce new kinds of behavior in familiar situations. This, in part, is what is meant by the fact that different people often interpret their experiences differently. Yet, we can make some predictions about what people will do because they often do make up their minds in a given fashion and stick to their decision over time. This is what we mean when we note that people make commitments, possess integrity, etc. So we can estimate what they are going to do. But even then we do not make certain predictions but only statistically significant ones. Clearly, very often people change their minds and surprise or annoy us. And, if we go to different cultures, they'll surprise us even more. This complexity, diversity, and individuation about human beings is best explained if human beings are free than if they are determined.

We have Good Reason to Trust Free Will.

So these several reasons provide a kind of argumentative collage in support of the free will position. Can anyone do better with this issue? I don't know. I think it's best to ask only for what is the best of the various competing theories. Are human beings doing what they do solely as the consequences of forces acting on them? Or do they have the capacity to take charge of their lives, often neglect to do so properly or effectively, make stupid choices? Which supposition explains the human world and its complexities around us?

I think the latter makes much better sense. It explains, much better than do deterministic theories, how it is possible that human life involves such wide range of possibilities, accomplishments as well as defeats, joys as well as sorrows, creation as well as destruction. It explains, also, why in human life there is so much change - in language, custom, style, art, and science. Unlike other living beings, for which what is possible is pretty much fixed by instincts and reflexes - even if some extraordinary behavior may be elicited, by way of extensive training and prodding in laboratories, or, at times, in the face of unusual natural developments - people initiate much of what they do, for better and for worse. From their most distinctive capacity of forming ideas and theories, to those of artistic and athletic inventiveness, human beings remake the world without so to speak having to do so! And this can make good sense if we understand them to have the distinctive capacity for initiating their own conduct rather than relying on mere stimulation and reaction. It also poses for them certain very difficult tasks, not the least of them is that they cannot expect that any kind of formula or system is going to predictably manage the future of human affairs, such as some of social science seems to hope it will. Social engineering is, thus, not a genuine prospect for solving human problems - only education and individual initiative can do that.

Marxism and Free Will

What impact does the above have on Marxist philosophy and its chance at sustaining its truth? Clearly, since Marxism is a nearly hard deterministic position - except for some obscurity concerning the supposed dialectical relationship between free choice and natural necessity - any serious finding to the effect that human beings can make bona fide choices in their lives, including their political alternatives, would be fatal to Marxism.

Furthermore, Marxism also needs the free will doctrine, just to make sense of Marx's own creative intellectual and political activities. Marx, a human being, made much of arguing that other people were wrong in what they believed. But to be wrong about theoretical matters is precisely something that the presence of free will in one's life makes possible, as we saw above. Indeed, as Ernst Cassirer had argued⁸, it is literally impossible for those who cannot reason abstractly to be wrong. Conversely, if one is a reasoning being, dealing with such abstract ideas as comprise the subject matter of political economy, one is capable of being wrong, making logically and factual errors. And that capacity is best explained by the doctrine of free will: the effort to learn, to think things through, to recall, to keep in focus, etc., is presupposed in being right and its presence is called into question when one is wrong. It is arguable that this fact of epistemic freedom - that one is master of the use of one's conceptual faculty and is responsible for using or failing to use it consistently - is at the heart of morality. Marx seems to have appreciated this well enough when he made such a great fuss about other socialists who disagreed with him. He became a moralist on such occasions, denouncing his adversaries for their failure to think or see something clearly. And this moralism about thinking right has not been abandoned in Marxist circles since Marx's time. The Marxian community is fraught with acrimonious disagreement.

Individualism is Metaphysically Prior

The bottom line is that what is wrong with Marxism is not so much a matter of its details but that of a basic element. The individual human being is, contrary to what the Marxian epistemology and social history would have us think, responsible for much of what is essential about one's life. Moreover, this aspect of social philosophy also eclipses Marxian collectivism. It is, in short, not the "organic whole [or body]" of humanity that is the proper focus of analysis and understanding in the humanities and humane sciences. It is the human individual. The reason is that it is human individuals who ultimately exist and act in the world, not collectives. When collectives do emerge, they are comprised of either willing or unwilling individuals. And when it is the latter, there is *ipso facto* inhumanity at work

Once again, this point is illustrated in the history of Marxian thinking itself. Who other than the individuals who embraced Marxism could be appreciated for being most influential in the forging of social, economic and political history during the last 150 years or so? Clearly it is such individuals as Marx, Engels, Rosa Luxembour, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and the thousands of dedicated followers and updaters of Marxism.

It is these individuals who are, furthermore, responsible for contributing to the tragedy of the Marxist phenomenon. They can be said, even from the Marxist point of view (as I argued at the beginning of this paper), for having permitted themselves to pretend that the U.S.S.R. was the fountainhead of Marxian social-political movement. Marx himself could be said to have been so hasty and imprudent about producing a communist revolution that he allowed himself to encourage Russians to try to impose a revolution when in fact that society was far from ready for this from his own frame of reference. In short, Marx was willing to betray Marxism so as to promote it. (After all, what else can we say about his 1883 partial endorsement of a Russian revolution, when it was clear that Russian society was

anything but ready for socialism and when he himself, elsewhere, made clear that any attempt in that direction would simply "socialize poverty"?)

Such individualist, bourgeois errors in Marx's own ways of thinking, as well as the thinking of thousands of Marxists, cannot be explained from a purely Marxist perspective. Determinism does not allow us to claim, truly, that anyone was responsible for distorting anything. All that we could say is that history drove some people to believe one thing, others another, with no individual responsible assignable for the errors. Yet, clearly, that does not make sense, even from within Marxism as applied to explaining what occurred in the Soviet Union and its allies.

Bourgeois Individualism Reinstated

This is not the place where bourgeois individualism may defended.⁹ But we have been hinting in these last paragraphs, beginning with the discussion of free will, that something on that order of thinking makes much better sense than Marxism. The crux of the issue is how much responsible individuals must shoulder for what happens in human history. Both Hegel and Marx appeared to have demeaned this idea, dismissing individuals as only subjectively free but objectively determined. Marx made it clear that "My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them."¹⁰ This "economic formation of society," it must be recalled, is the foundation of human life - the crux of Marx's economic determinism.

Conclusion

My point may be summarized as follows: Despite the appearance that Marxism is theoretically capable of handling recent developments in Eastern Europe, ultimately there is better reason to expect that some version of bourgeois individualism makes sense of these events.

The fact may be difficult to live with, especially in the modern age when problem solving via science and technology is such a great expectation, but when it comes to human existence there is free will to contend with, not merely inadequate knowledge of natural chaos. It seems that the human and social sciences, to which Marxist theory had been a formidable contribution, need to take this fact into account and not aim to produce theories and engineering programs that omit it from consideration.

Marxism has been and will continue to be influential primarily because human beings believe in it. This is not unlike what can be said about the great religions of the world. And people choose to believe or not to believe on sound or unsound grounds - it is really something up to them. We cannot erase this fact from our lives and it will do us a great deal of good to keep it in mind. It will reduce the degree of cynicism that is produced by way of the utopianism that offers the panacea of resolving all human problems by means of the impersonal action of history. It will put human individuals back into the role of decision makers, with all the attendant risk that this entails.¹¹

ENDNOTES:

¹ Perhaps the most one can expect is that new renditions of the Marxist position will carry on a new label. Indeed, we are today being asked to consider such milder versions of the position as communitarianism. But, see, also, such unreconstructed Marxian offerings as Andrew Bard Schmookler, *The Illusion of Choice* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993). in which the author basically reiterates Marx's thesis that liberal individual liberty is nothing but a fraud -- "the most complete suppression of all individual liberty and total subjugation of individuality to social conditions which take the form of material forces." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. D. McLennan (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971), p. 131.

² "When we have chosen the vocation in which we can contribute most to humanity, burdens cannot bend us because they are sacrifices for all. Then we experience no meagre, limited egoistic joy, but our happiness belongs to millions, our deeds live on quietly but eternally effective, and glowing tears of noble men will fall on our ashes." L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat, eds., *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), p.39.

³ Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed., D. McLellan (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 171.

⁴ Marx put it this way: "If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development." Op. cit., Marx, *Selected Writings*, p. 417.

⁵ Op. cit., Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 33, and *Selected Writings*, p. 359.

⁶ See note 1. See, also, *ibid.*, p. 126, where Marx states that "The human essences is the true collectivity of man."

⁷ Roger W. Sperry, *Science and Moral Priority* (New York: Columbia University Press, 19983).

⁸ Ernst Cassier, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Vol. 3, The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), Chapter 6.

⁹ For my efforts in that direction, see Tibor R. Machan, *Capitalism and Individualism, Reframing the Argument for the Free Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990) and *Individuals and Their Rights* (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Co., Inc., 1989).

¹⁰ Op. cit., Marx, *Selected Writings*, p. 417.

¹¹ The discussion of free will in this papers is drawn from Tibnor R. Machan, "Applied Ethics and Free Will, Some Untoward Results of Independence," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 10 (1993), pp. 59-72.