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THE ORIGINS OF SOVIET ETHICS

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by

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The "origins" of Soviet ethical theory during the first half-dozen years after October 1917 did not -- as it turns out -- produce doctrinal seeds from which future ideological or theoretical harvests would sprout. There were two interesting Soviet discussions in the field of ethics, broadly construed, during this period; but both of them proved to be false starts -- positions which were doctrinally aborted in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Curiously enough, both discussions centered on the work of a non-Russian, non-Soviet Marxist: the venerable Karl Kautsky. Despite this common focus, there was little community of doctrine between them. However, the Soviet repudiation, in the late 1920s, of one of the positions associated with Kautsky infected the other -- through guilt by ideological association -- and thus hastened its elimination.

The first, and less well-known, discussion centers on Kautsky's Darwinian theory of social instincts, his account of moral obligation and sanction, and the sense of duty and conscience. This theory and this account were accepted through the 1920s by almost all Soviet Marxists. But since about 1931 they have completely disappeared from the Soviet intellectual scene.

The second, better-known, discussion centers on Kautsky's polemic with Trotsky, beginning in 1919, about ends and means and the problem of terrorism.

I shall begin with the first discussion.

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I

In a series of articles, beginning in 1875 and culminating in the book Ethik und materialistische Geschichtsauffassung (1906), Kautsky had developed the hints to be found in Darwin's second major work, The Descent of Man (1871) -- though missing from his first, The Origin of Species (1859) -- to the effect that it is not merely the animal strength or cunning of individual members of a biological species which have survival value. Rather, the unit of "struggle for existence," and hence of survival, is the social group. Thus, patterns of cooperative and mutually-supportive behavior, as well as the "social instincts" from which these spring, have survival value. In a word, human altruism, the sense of duty and conscience, have a biological, pre-human origin.

Kautsky regarded Darwin's "discovery" that altruistic feelings are to be found in animals as "one of the greatest and most fruitful discoveries of the human mind."[1] Kautsky's central concern in ethical theory is, in a way, similar to Kant's. He is trying to "make sense" of the experience or consciousness of moral obligation. But his procedure is radically un-Kantian. Kant tried to make sense of our pre-critical feeling of duty and obligation by formalizing its presuppositions, the postulates of practical reason, and stating moral principles with utmost generality. For him, moral principles are synthetic a priori propositions, that is, they are wholly independent of experience. Kautsky, on the other hand, seeks to "ground" moral principles in experience -- not that of individuals, but that of the entire human race, historically regarded, including the experience of man's pre-human ancestors. Specifically, he attempts to establish (a) that altruistic feelings, cooperative behavior-patterns, "social instincts" have a bio-social foundation in prehuman animal societies. In two early works (1883 and 1884, reprinted as

appendices to his magnum opus of 1927), he offered detailed evidence for the existence and efficacy of such instincts and attitudes among animals and primitive men. (b) Having established the existence of social instincts[2] in the face of various negative criticisms, he goes on to argue for their survival value and hence "natural selection" in Darwinian terms. Kautsky claims that, from the biological beginning, sociality (Geselligkeit) served as a weapon in the competition of animal societies. Highly cohesive groups enjoyed a competitive advangage; social instincts had "survival value." Human morality is grounded in pre-human sociality. "The ethics of today," Kautsky declares, "...is a product of Darwinism....It investigates not what ought to be, but what is, and what has been, and attempts to explain the former in terms of the latter. The moral laws which have thus far existed are...nothing but the products of the hitherto existing forms of society and of the social instincts which we have received from our apelike ancestors."[3] In another place Kautsky puts the point even more decisively: "The moral law is an animal instinct, nothing more. Hence its mysterious nature, this voice within us, which depends upon no external impulsion, no visible interest....It is certainly a mysterious urge, but no more mysterious than sexual love, mother-love, or the instinct of self-preservation...."[4] In yet another place Kautsky writes: "Thanks to its instinctive character, our moral volition and action springs from our innermost selves and commands us like an inner voice, of which we know not whence it cometh....This instinctive character is what makes our moral actions and judgments a matter of impulse and the commands of morality categorical imperatives which need no grounding."[5]

Kautsky insists on the distinction between the sense of duty (moral law) and specific moral norms; the former -- which might be formulated as "act altruistically" or "put the interests of society above your own" -- is a product of the animal world. The latter -- "do x" or "don't do y" --

are products of culture. Or, in another Kautskyan formulation: the moral law is a product of man's social nature; moral norms are products of specific social needs. Kautsky is willing to call his own version of the "moral law" a categorical imperative, and formulates it as follows: "In every collision between individual and social interests the latter are always higher, and the former should give way to them."[6]

Is Kautsky's Darwinism compatible with his Marxism? He wavers between the view that morality (the moral law or moral sense) is wholly instinctive and cannot be modified by environmental influences and the opposed view that, although its bases are pre-human and biological, it can be so modified. The first view accounts more adequately for the categorical and imperative character of the moral sense; but it provides no basis for asserting a significant difference between, say, proletarian and bourgeois morality. Yet Kautsky, as a Marxist and socialist, wants to insist upon such a difference. The second view explains such differences as the result of the differing "life conditions" of different classes during historical periods which are very brief compared to the geological epochs during which social instincts have supposedly developed. But this second view fails to account for the categorical and imperative character of the moral sense. Perhaps more seriously, it is committed to some version of the now discredited theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics, including psychological-moral characteristics. Kautsky explicitly accepted this theory (as did many thinkers of the late nineteenth century, when the biological evidence against it was still inconclusive). He held that a worker's child born in the twentieth century starts life with a more strongly developed moral sense than a capitalist's child born at the same time. Thus he assumes that the few decades of differing "life-conditions" of the two classes make more difference than the preceeding hundreds of thousands of years of biological evolution, with their reinforcement of

generalized social instincts.

Kautsky apparently failed to think through the contradictory implications of his vacillating position. Soviet Marxist-Leninist critics accuse him-- rightly, from their point of view -- of abandoning the exclusively historical approach to ethics of classical Marxism in favor of the predominantly socio-biological approach of Darwinism or neo-Darwinism.

I turn now to some of the details of this Soviet discussion of the early 1920s.

The year 1923 saw the publication of two works important to our topic: O morali i klassovykh normakh (Moscow, 1923, 114 pp.) by Ye. A. Preobrazhensky; and Marksizm i etika (Kiev, 1923, 320 pp.) ed. by Ya. S. Rozanov.

Preobrazhensky (1886-1936?) was an economist who held responsible positions in Lenin's government, but disappeared into Stalin's Gulag in the 1930s.[7] His book was the first extended treatment of questions of ethics to be published in the Soviet Union -- apart from reprintings and translations of earlier works. Its position is generally, but not uncritically, Kautskyan.

Marksizm i etika is made up chiefly of articles or book chapters from Kautsky's works, polemical articles directed against his position (by Förster, Tönnies, Otto Bauer, Quessel, et al.), and essays by L. I. Akselrod and Deborin on Kautsky's Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History. There was also one article by the French Marxist Lafargue. A second enlarged edition, published in Kharkov in 1925, added two or three articles by Plekhanov.

Preobrazhensky begins by complaining that the "Marxist literature on the problems of morality is extremely small."[8] He mentions the scattered passages in Marx and Engels, the works of Kautsky, some passages in Plekhanov (especially on the French Materialists), and in Bogdanov, and a few pages

in Bukharin's Teoriya istoricheskogo materializma (1921). There is, he admits, a considerable "revisionist" literature, e.g., the works of the Kantian Marxists. But such authors are not to be taken seriously; they all showed their true colors by opposing the October revolution. With this criterion in hand, of course, Preobrazhensky finds it easy to dismiss with an abusive epithet or two the few serious and extended treatments of ethics by Russian Marxists before 1917. Thus Stanislav Volsky's Nietzschean-Marxist treatise, Filosofiya bor'by (1909), is a "bombastic little book,"[9] the work of a "Philistine-intellectual windbag." As for the anonymous brochure, O proletarskoi etike (1906), it is a Philistine falsification of Marxism, exhibiting an "arch-intellectualistic" approach to ethics, having nothing proletarian about it.

Preobrazhensky repeats Kautsky's analysis of the origin of social instincts. Physically frail man, he writes, has attained his present favored position in the struggle with nature chiefly because he has been able to develop and strengthen a capacity for self-sacrifice, a capacity "always to place himself at the disposal of his fellows...in the interests of the preservation of the [social] whole."[10]

Social instinct, "man's prehistoric legacy," is blind; but class interest opens its eyes, and it begins to view the world through class eyes. "[C]lass interest, strong in its consciousness,...captures the social instinct, weak in its blindness, turning it in effect into class instinct."[11] In class society, class instinct, though it springs from the soil of social instinct, serves class interests and the ends of economic (class) struggle.

However, the operation of a social instinct of the entire species, since it is "incomparably older than class interest," may, "where class interest does not hold it in check, proceed -- armed with the consciousness of another class -- against its own class. The movement of a part

of the ruling class to the side of the revolutionary class, the emigration of certain individuals from the aristocracy and bourgeoisie to the side of the proletariat, may be explained in a considerable degree...as resulting from the operation of social instinct."[12]

Only in the classless society of the future, Preobrazhensky adds, "will it be possible to employ man's social instinct, which is one of the most precious acquisitions of his long history, in its entire fulness."[13] In the meantime morality, and the social instinct(s), serve a purely instrumental function: "Morality itself is...nothing other than a means of uniting all the members of a class in the closest way for the defense of the interests of the whole, and of utilizing all the members of the class to this end in the most advantageous way."[14] "In Northern Siberia it happens that an enormous herd of deer is crossing a broad river. It is necessary to get to the other side in order to save the whole herd from starvation. But the river is deep, and the social instinct of the herd builds a bridge out of the corpses of the foremost."[15] Similarly, in the period of struggle for power, proletarian class interests demand that "the individual member of the class should regard himself as an instrument of struggle of the entire...class."[16]

According to Preobrazhensky, the proletariat as a class realizes its full strength only when each member is willing to throw his body into the building of a bridge over which the entire proletarian collective can march toward the society of the future.

Preobrazhensky explicitly rejects the Kantian dictum that the individual person should always be treated as an end, never as a means only. He calls it the "preaching of a petit-bourgeois who has erected the demand of the individualistically-oriented Philistine: 'Don't touch me' into a moral dogma."[17]

Lying and deception, Preobrazhensky admits, are essential means for

the waging of class warfare, and "for a worker's state, surrounded on all sides by hostile capitalist states, lying in foreign policy is often necessary and useful."[18] However, since lying results from the enslavement of man by man, it will disappear along with the class division of society. But even before a classless society is achieved, Preobrazhensky asserts, lying should be eliminated from Party and working-class relationships, and admitted only with regard to the class enemy.

Echoing both Bogdanov and Bukharin -- though referring to neither -- Preobrazhensky maintains that moral norms, including the norms of class morality, will, like law and the state, disappear ("be liquidated") under full communism. "It is most likely," he writes, "that legal norms will gradually be replaced by universally-social norms during the transitional period, and the...transformation of the latter into social instincts will take place on a broad scale only in a historically more remote period."[19]

In this claim, as in the paralled claim that, in the future, communist social instinct will wholly replace self-interest (however "enlightened") as the incentive for socially useful work, Preobrazhensky appears to be making the controversial assumption -- sometimes made by Kautsky himself -- that "social instincts" can be reinforced, perhaps even generated, by social conditioning.

A similarly Kautskyan view is put forward by the legal theorist G. S. Gurvich (b. 1886), one of the framers of the Soviet Constitution of 1918, in an essay, "Pravo i nravstvennost' s tochki zreniya materialisticheskogo ponimaniya istorii," first published in vol. I, 1922, of the Trudy of the Belorussian State University in Minsk. It appeared in expanded and revised form in Moscow in 1924 as a 46-page brochure entitled simply Nravstvennost' i pravo, under the auspices of the Socialist Academy.

Gurvich's account of the origin and nature of morality is close to that of Kautsky, whom he occasionally cites.

"To discover the nature of morality," Gurvich writes, "to understand the origin of the moral law, the feeling of conscience and duty, one must turn to the instincts of animals and, in particular, to the social instincts of the higher animals."[21] "The mysteriousness [of the moral law]," he adds, "its apparent inexplicability, its apodictic character, for which it is so difficult for reason to find a ground, all these are signs of its nature and origin in an animal instinct homogeneous with the instincts of self-preservation and procreation."[21] Gurvich claims that both social instinct as such and (specific) moral norms "astonish the observer" with their categorical and obligatory character. And this character does not -- pace Kant -- spring from consciousness or from reason.

In the struggle for existence, that (social) organism will be more stable which is solidary, cohesive, and harmonious. Animals have social instincts, or moral feelings, but animal society is innocent of moral norms or principles, since the latter cannot be formulated without language, which the animals lack. (Gurvich cites the authority of Espinas and Paulsen, as well as Kautsky, for this assertion) And norms differ from instincts in being known (formulated) as such.

Man is not just another social animal; he is a tool-making animal. "Here," Gurvich asserts, "Darwin ends and Marx begins." In the labor process language, and then ideology, arises, and social solidarity is further strengthened. As the individual becomes more dependent upon society, the social environment becomes more important to the individual than the natural environment. [Cf. Bogdanov, Volsky]. Social instincts are intensified. At the same time, says Gurvich (here contradicting Kautsky), the range of these social instincts is broadened. But with the rise of class divisions there was an intensification of social instincts toward members of one's class, a weakening of such instincts toward mem-

bers of other classes. (Here he agrees with Kautsky.) Social instincts, in Gurvich's words, "are wholly directed within the given class and there attain an unprecedented strength and scope [razmakh]."[22]

In this context Gurvich (in his second edition) quotes Preobrazhensky about the way in which "social instinct" begins to "serve class interest."[23]

In our time, Gurvich declares, capitalism "has provided a basis for the broadening of the sphere of action of social instincts. . ., but it does this against its own will, and to its own destruction. This broadening of the basis of social instincts is a sign of the ever-growing class self-consciousness of the [proletariat], to which class alone it is given. . . to realize. . . universally-human solidarity in a classless society."[24]

Moral norms and principles, Gurvich insists, are relative and changeable; they have no existence apart from the human mind. Since social relations, which generate moral principles, are constantly changing, all moral norms, from the moment they first arise, are "doomed to destruction." To regard moral norms or principles as binding or obligatory in themselves, is to fall into "fetishism," against which Marxism was a protest. [Cf. Bogdanov.]

The principles of the new morality, the morality of the future, Gurvich writes, are generated in the depths of the new class, bearer of a new economic interest, and able to "unite the whole society around itself."[25] This new morality will dominate the future not because it is the embodiment of an absolute, but because it is the "inevitable product of the new economics and technology."[26]

According to Gurvich, while the solidarity of the proletariat is increasing, the social instincts of the bourgeoisie are steadily weakening, as is evidenced by the frequent bourgeois defections to the proletarian cause. The new class -- not in Djilas' sense! -- is summoned to affirm a new, heroic and self-sacrificing, virtue

as a "universal law."[27] "Severe valor," Gurvich exclaims, "fanatical devotion to duty, courage and self-abnegation which gives itself readily and joyously, not requiring struggle with self and not looked upon as a sacrifice; honor and truthfulness, friendly benevolence -- all these are qualities which invariably characterize a strong [socio-]economic class in the dawn of its political life..."[28]

I can mention only three further "Kautskyan" discussions of the early 1920s: those of Gorev and Orlov, and the Aksel'rod-Deborin polemic.

Gorev refers favorably to Kautsky's Ethik und materialistische Geschichtsauffassung and declares that the "social instinct, which may reach the point of readiness to sacrifice oneself for the whole herd or flock. . . , has been elaborated in the struggle for existence."[29] But, somewhat inconsistently, his main emphasis is on the clash of specific moral (class) norms. "It seems immoral. . . to the capitalist," he writes, " if a striking worker prevents the strikebreakers from working. He regards this as violence toward the human person, an infringement of the 'freedom to work'. On the other hand, workers consider it a good and moral thing, when they have declared a strike, to condemn their wives and children to hunger and poverty for the sake of the common task . . . ."[30]

Orlov is rather more critical of Kautsky's position, which, he admits, finds "more [nearly] unanimous recognition" than those of Bukharin, et al. That our animal or pre-literate ancestors had a sense of duty like our own, Orlov insists, is at best an unverifiable hypothesis, an argument from analogy. But even if the hypothesis be accepted, the problem remains of how a sense of duty can be inherited. Clearly, according to Orlov, ideas cannot be inherited; but the sense of duty presupposes a complex system of ideas (concepts of the collective, the opposition between individual and collective interests, etc.) Furthermore, animal instinct is a mechanical habbit-pattern, but human self-sacrifice is not a mechanical habbit. In sum, Orlov denies the Kautskyan view that moral

instincts are inherited, asserting (with Marx) that "morality is wholly conditioned by the socio-economic milieu."[31] Orlov does not deny that human beings have social feelings, but he does deny that these are social instincts.

My mention of the Aksel'rod-Deborin polemic must be brief, since the main documents fall outside the time-frame of this study: Aksel'rod's statements date from 1907 and 1916, respectively, even though they were reprinted in the two editions of Marksizm i etika (1923 and 1925). And Deborin's response is contained in a three-part article published in 1927-28.[32]

Deborin admitted to being a Kautskyan in the sense of accepting, as Aksel'rod did, the theory of the bio-social origin of the moral law or categorical imperative.[33] But he rejected Aksel'rod's claim that this moral law is objective, universally valid and binding, claiming instead that it is class-subjective, relative, and particular. "Marxism," in his words, "rejects both the absolutism and the formalism of the moral law; in other words, it repudiates the categorical imperative as such."[34]

In her 1916 essay Aksel'rod accepted the Kantian dictum that every human being should be treated as an end, never as a means only. Deborin rejects this, asking rhetorically: How far could we get in the class struggle if we treated the exploiter as an end-in-himself (samotsel')? Curiously enough, Deborin goes on to attack Aksel'rod's (and Plekhanov's) defense of the "simple rules of law and morality" without once mentioning either that Plekhanov (whom, in general, he admired) had defended them, or that the phrase is taken from Marx himself. Anyone who acknowledges the "simple rules of law and morality" in fact serves the interests of the bourgeoisie and its exploitation and violence.[35]

With this topic, we have already moved close to our second discussion.

II

The second discussion moves beyond the limits of ethical theory to include questions of social and political philosophy and even, in a sense, philosophy of history. But then, for Marxists, as for

Hegelians generally, ethics is always at bottom social ethics.

During a heated polemic which extended from 1919 to 1922, Kautsky attacked, and Trotsky defended, Lenin's "revolutionary Machiavellianism." Trotsky, with great candor as well as polemical brilliance, repudiated moral principles as limitations upon the choice of means, insisting that terrorism, violence, and fraud were, so to speak, "antecedently" justified by their use in reaching the good end of Communism. Kautsky, the grand old man of European Marxism, insisted, on the contrary, that Bolshevik terrorism represented not only a reversal of the historical trend toward humanitarianism (especially clear, he maintained, in the nineteenth century) but also an inadmissible violation of the sanctity of human life, a refusal to recognize the individual person as an end-in-himself, i.e., an intrinsic rather than instrumental value.

The chief documents are Kautsky's Terrorismus und Kommunismus of 1919 and Trotsky's Terrorizm i kommunizm of 1920; further comments on the subject were made by Kautsky in 1921 and by Trotsky in 1922.

Since, as I said at the beginning, this discussion is relatively well known, I shall treat it quite briefly.

Much of the discussion turned on the hoary question of ends and means. "The end," Kautsky insisted, "does not sanctify every means, but only those which are in harmony with it."[36] In other words, Kautsky held that there are certain moral principles or values which set absolute and inviolable limits to the choice of means for realizing given socio-political ends. He thus came close to Kant, and to an absolutist position inconsistent with Marxian ethical relativism -- a point which Trotsky was quick to seize upon in order to discredit Kautsky's claims.

Trotsky's theoretical justification of recourse to terrorism, violence, and fraud on the part of revolutionary governments in general, and the Bolshevik regime ca. 1920 in particular, may be reduced to four claims. Of these, he considers the first two the more important, more theoretical, more "matters of principle," and the last two more contingent and historically conditioned.

Here are Trotsky's claims: (1) Ends and means are separate and separable, and a good end justifies the use of any means whatever. Different socio-economic classes may use the very same means, e.g., terrorism, to achieve very different, even opposed, ends.[37] (2) Socialism cannot be achieved -- at least under present conditions of capitalist encirclement and intervention, without recourse to revolutionary violence and other repressive means. Anyone who desires the (good) end of socialism must accept the means of terrorism. (3) All governments use violence and fraud to maintain their power, and all historical revolutions have used violence and fraud to break that power. (4) The reign of terror in Russia was started not by the Bolsheviks but by the counter-revolutionary forces. In other words, the Red Terror was only a response to the White Terror.

There is something refreshing (rhetorically speaking) about Trotsky's candor in acknowledging the Bolshevik resort to terror when one contrasts it with later Stalinist pieties and hypocrisies. Thus he speaks openly of the "terroristic measures of the Soviet power, i.e., the same searches, arrests, and executions [as those of Clemenceau's gendarmes], merely directed against the counter-revolution." And he openly avows that his book was written to fill the "theoretical need for a justification of revolutionary terrorism."[38]

Both Kautsky and Trotsky devote a good many pages to the attempt to enlist Marx and Engels in support of their respective positions. My sense of the matter is that, whereas Kautsky's heart is in this exegetical exercise, Trotsky's isn't. In any case, I shall spare you the details, particularly since the appeal to doctrinal authority founders on the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the "classical" texts themselves.

A second kind of evidence, massively marshalled by Kautsky, is historical: humanitarian feelings and a general softening of formerly harsh morals and mores has marked the nineteenth century, especially its last decades. "During the entire nineteenth century," Kautsky asserts, "we note a progressive and continuous humanizing of the working classes."[39]

Trotsky treats such claims with contempt; he sees the "humanizing process" as a figment of Kautsky's Philistine imagination. For Kautsky, he writes, "the whole of history reduces to a continuous ribbon of printed paper, and Kautsky's venerable writing desk stands at the very center of this 'humane' process."[40]

As for Kautsky's claim that "the end does not sanctify every means, but only those which are in harmony with it,"[41] Trotsky simply repeats, with emphasis, that an act or institution which is moral and justified when directed toward one end is immoral and unjustified when directed toward a different end. In his vulgar but vivid image: "Only contemptible eunuchs maintain that the slave-owner who, by fraud and violence, places a slave in chains is equal before morality of the slave who, by fraud and violence, casts off his chains."[42] With Lenin, Trotsky insisted that terror is ultimately powerless when it is used by reactionary forces against a historically rising class. But terror can be highly effective when it is used against a reactionary class which refuses to leave the scene of history.

Trotsky recognizes no moral limitation, no limitation of moral principle, upon the use of terrorism. He maintains that the degree and nature of repressive measures is a matter of expediency, not one of principle. And he explicitly repudiates what Kautsky explicitly defends: the Kantian "metaphysical-bourgeois" dictum (though Kautsky would resist its characterization in these terms) that the dignity and worth of individual persons must always be respected, that human beings are to be treated as ends, never as means only. In clear contrast, Trotsky asserts that as and when necessary human beings are to be treated as means to the good end of socialism. Trotsky -- with a sarcastic reference to Kautsky's rather ponderous claims about the peaceable nature of herbivores (in contrast to the violent nature of carnivores) -- declares that he and other Bolsheviks have never accepted the "Kantian-clerical, vegetarian-Quaker chatter about the 'sanctity of human life'"; he goes on to assert that "in order to make the individual person sacred, one must destroy the social order which crucifies the individual. And this task can be carried out only with iron

and blood."[43]

Democracy, for Kautsky, as Trotsky accurately reports, is a "supreme principle, standing above classes and unconditionally subordinating to itself the methods of proletarian struggle." In contrast, Trotsky declares: "We have rejected democracy in the name of the concentrated power of the proletariat."[44]

Trotsky declares flatly that "anyone who renounces terrorism in principle. . . must also renounce the political rule of the working class, its revolutionary dictatorship. Anyone who renounces the dictatorship of the proletariat also renounces the social revolution and writes 'finis' to socialism."[45]

The difference between the two is clear: Trotsky holds that socialism can only be achieved by violence and terrorism; Kautsky insists that the constitutional winning of power through free elections, accompanied by widespread popular education in the aims of socialism, is the only way to keep the end uncorrupted. But, however much we may prefer Kautsky's position, we must acknowledge that Trotsky's blunt challenge that Kautsky ground, rather than merely asserting, his democratic and humanitarian principles, remains unanswered. The fact that Trotsky himself asserts rather than grounding his own commitment to violence and terror and the separability of ends and means is not, in this situation, particularly comforting.

III

To sum up and tie a few loose ends together: Kautsky's Darwinian account of the origin and nature of the moral sense and the moral law was officially repudiated in the late 1920s and early 1930s on the ground that in content it was universalistic rather than class-specific; and in methodology it was biological (or bio-social) rather than sociological and historical.[46]

In addition, Kautsky's repudiation of the October Revolution as premature and un-Marxist, together with his harsh critique of the Red Terror, had the effect -- through "guilt by ideological association" -- of souring the Bolshevik attitude toward his other, more theoretical and "academic" views -- including his

Darwinian grounding of morality. It was not, of course, that Soviet theorists took Trotsky's side in the Kautsky-Trotsky dispute (at least after 1925), but rather than the whole question de terreur became progressively enveloped in a deafening ideological silence. The Leninist instrumentalizing of morality continued to be preached: "Our morality is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat, etc."[47] But, at the same time, especially after 1931 -- when Stalin consolidated his ideological control -- an anvil chorus of lies began, crescendo, to proclaim and celebrate the exemplary and unexampled humanitarianism, social harmony, and justice of the Soviet system -- a clangor intended to drown out, and for a long time quite successful in drowning out, the Dantesque groans, screams, and lamentations which issued from Stalin's Gulag.

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1. Ethik und materialistische Geschichtsauffassung (Stuttgart, 1906), p.

2. Kautsky first used the expression kommunistische Instinkte (1875), but in 1883 introduced the expression soziale Triebe, which he retained thereafter. His use of the term Geselligkeit was constant throughout.

3. "Die sozialen Triebe in der Tierwelt," Die neue Zeit (1883), p. 71.

4. "Der Ursprung der Moral," Die neue Zeit (1906-1907), p.

5. Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung(Berlin, 1927), I, 258.

6. "Leben, Wissenschaft und Ethik," Die neue Zeit, No. 24 (1906), p.

7. Preobrazhensky's best-known work is the Azbuka kommunizma (1919), written jointly with Bukharin, which went through several large printings (one million copies were in print by 1924) and was widely translated.

8. O morali i klassovykh normakh (Moscow, 1923), p. 5. The same complaint is voiced by the editor of Marksizm i etika, who refers to the "extreme poverty" of the Russian Marxist literature on questions of ethics (p. vi).

9. The word knizhka is obviously not meant descriptively -- but rather evaluatively, i.e., pejoratively -- since Volsky's book contains 311 large, closely-printed pages.

10. O morali i klassovykh normakh, pp. 41-42. In a generally favorable review in Lunacharsky's journal Pechat' i revolyutsiya (No. 7, 1923), P. Stuchka, the well known, but subsequently repudiated, theorist of law, called Preobrazhensky's book a "very timely work," deserving wide distribution. He notes that Preobrazhensky, while adopting a Kautskyan point of view, "develop[s] it in a consistent revolutionary-Marxist direction" (p. 213). Stuchka welcomes this as a constructive alternative to Kautsky's "trite notions," on the one hand, and the negative attitude toward ethics of most [Soviet] Marxists, on the other. Stuchka's suggestion that Preobrazhensky's book be published in an expanded second edition was not followed up, but one chapter was reprinted in the collection Kakim dolzhen byt' kommunist, Moscow, 1925.

11. Preobrazhensky, op. cit., p. 45.

12. Ibid., p. 44n.

13. Ibid., p. 46.

14. Ibid., p. 35.

15. Ibid., p. 73.

16. Ibid., p. 72. Despite his scornful dismissal of Volsky's book, Preobrazhensky is here taking precisely the position that Volsky takes with regard to the period of class struggle. Cf. G. L. Kline, "The Nietzschean Marxism of Stanislav Volsky" in Anthony M. Mlikotin, ed., Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature (Los Angeles, 1979), esp. pp. 183-88.

17. Preobrazhensky, op. cit., p. 72.

18. Ibid., p. 85.

19. Ibid., p. 114. The voice of conscience, according to Preobrazhensky, is the "voice of the species, sounding within the individual, the thread which the species twitches to remind the individual member of his connection with the whole" (ibid., p. 39).

20. Nravstvennost' i pravo (Moscow, 1924), p. 12.

21. Ibid., p. 15.

22. "Pravo i nravstvennost'. . ." (Minsk, 1922), pp. 57-58.

23. Cf. Preobrazhensky, op. cit., p. 42.

24. "Pravo i nravstvennost'. . .," p. 17.

25. Nravstvennost' i pravo, p. 21.

26. "Pravo i nravstvennost'. . . ," p. 57.

27. Nravstvennost' i pravo, p. 23. The theme of heroic virtue was also sounded by the jurist Ya. M. Magaziner (b. 1882) in the scant two-page discussion of ethics in his 490-page treatise Obshchaya teoriya gosudarstva (Petrograd, 1922), pp. 49-50. Magaziner praised the "free impulse" involved in responding to that which is "supraobligatory" and drew an invidious comparison between the "norms of heroics [geroika]" and the "cold voice of duty" which characterizes ordinary ethics [etika]. I. Orlov declares that "all morality contains elements of heroism, being connected with an upsurge [pod'yom] of the psyche" ("Materializm i razvitiye nravstvennosti" in Voinstvuyushchi materialist, vol. I, 1924, p. 58).

28. Gurvich, "Pravo i nravstvennost'. . .," p. 59. Cf. Nravstvennost' i pravo, p. 24.

29. B. I. Gorev, Materializm -- filosofiya proletariata (1st ed., 1920; 3rd ed., Moscow, 1923), pp. 104n, 103.

30. Ibid., pp. 104-105.

31. Orlov, op. cit., pp. 67, 66, 65.

32. For a concise account of this polemical exchange see Philip T. Grier, Marxist Ethical Theory in the Soviet Union (Dordrecht, 1978), pp. 79-81.

33. The charge of Kautskyanism was one of several accusations that resulted in Deborin's downfall as a "menshevizing idealist" in 1931.

34. A. M. Deborin, "Revizionizm pod maskoi ortodoksii," Pod znamenem marksizma, No. 1 (1928), p. 11.

35. Ibid., p. 15.

36. Terrorismus und Kommunismus: Ein Beitrag zur Naturgeschichte der Revolution (1919), p. . This book was not, of course, translated into Russian. Kautsky's arguments were available to Soviet readers only in the sketchy and tendentious form in which Trotsky reproduced (in order to refute) them in Terrorizm i kommunizm.

37. A year later Lunacharsky jumped on the Lenin-Trotsky bandwagon. "The means," he declared, "do not at all have to resemble the end. . . ." Violence, for example, though "repulsive and reactionary in the hands of a reactionary government, is sacred and necessary in the hands of a revolutionary" (A. V. Lunacharsky, 1921, p. 4).

38. Terrorizm. . ., p. 7.

39. Terrorismus. . ., p. 84.

40. Terrorizm. . . , p. 26.

41. Terrorismus. . . , p. 139.

42. Terrorizm. . . , p. 169.

43. Ibid., p. 61.

44. Ibid., p. 31

45. Ibid., p. 23. In this connection Bukharin's claim (also dating from 1920) that "proletarian coercion in all of its forms, beginning with shooting [i.e., execution by shooting] and ending with labor conscription, is. . . a method of creating [future] communist mankind out of the [present] human materials of the capitalist epoch" should -- pace Sheila Fitzpatrick -- be taken "at face value." I note that this is taken (via Stephen Cohen's book) from Bukharin's Ekonomika perehkodnogo perioda. What magic resides in the Hegelian-

Marxist concept of Übergang(=perekhod): actions which at any other time or in any other context would be criminal are, when committed during and for the sake of an Übergangsperiode or perekhodny period necessary, even sacred, means for the building of the radiant future of all mankind! We have to take Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Preobrazhensky, Deborin, et al., seriously; they are laboring to erect a theoretical justification of the Gulag Archipelago.

46. As one critic had noted as early as 1924: Kautsky's Darwinian approach commits him to a denial that the materialist conception of history can provide an adequate explanation of morality. (cf. Orlov, op. cit., p. 69.)

47. V. I. Lenin, Sochineniya, 4th ed., vol. 31, p. 266.