



What Does It Mean to "Be a Marxist"?

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Erich Fromm is a thinker who has consciously and manifestly drawn inspiration from Marxism. But he is not, and in view of his interests could not be, simply an interpreter of other men's ideas; on the contrary, he is an original thinker who, regardless of the sources that may stimulate him, goes his own way and breaks new ground. In consequence, he has frequently been a center of controversy, and never more so than when attempts are made to "classify" him into this or that school. These have inevitably run into difficulties, and the same can be said of the dispute over Erich Fromm's relationship to Marxism. For every argument used to prove he is a Marxist, another has been found to prove the contrary.

Obviously, pigeonholing a thinker is not the most important issue. Nor is it particularly simple when faced with a creative and innovating mind; indeed it usually proves quite impossible. However, the attempt may still be a rewarding exercise insofar as it sheds additional light on a body of work and on contemporary intellectual currents. This is the basic idea behind my essay. I do not propose either to "classify" Erich Fromm or judge him by the standards of Marxist orthodoxy. That would be pointless. I am one of those people who think very highly not only of his work as a philosopher but also of his stance as a man. I am convinced that not

only has he drawn inspiration from Marxism but also that he has opened up new avenues of inquiry with a Marxist approach. So it would seem both fruitful and justified to consider the work of Erich Fromm from this vantage point—especially for one who is himself a Marxist. The following remarks are offered as a theoretical contribution toward making an analysis of this kind.

Questions like "What is meant by being a Marxist?" or its complement, "What is meant by being a revisionist?" are not new. They have [300] resurfaced in every new period and whenever the word "Marxist" was not given the crude, oversimplified interpretation of an adherent to certain "orthodox" doctrine, in the sense of absolute fidelity to the teaching of the masters.

Anyone who rejects such a dogmatic and, in practice, useless conception of "being a Marxist," who regards Marxism as a science and so as an open system which must be augmented and modified along with the development of reality and its apprehension by mankind, must also encounter the problem of determining what are or are not Marxist views. When new issues arise, it is no use going back to the classic writings, since their authors did not and could not—since they were scholars, not prophets—foresee new problems and situations; thus the question



"What does it mean to be a Marxist?" and its counterpart, "What is meant by revisionism?" always reassert themselves.

In our time these questions need asking not only in view of the appearance of new problems, but also because of the great confusion caused by the propaganda warfare waged by various groups within the international movement which invokes Marxism as its theory and ideology; as a result, concepts like "Marxist" and "revisionist" are robbed of their scientific meanings and serve, instead, as emotive descriptions for immediate targets in the political struggle. Naturally, this does not help to clarify ideas which are complex and vague enough as it is. Still, "being a Marxist" does have a rational meaning which is worth tracking down in view of the gravity of the arguments taking place.

When we say that someone is a Marxist, we mean that he has opted for a certain body of ideas known as "Marxism." This emphasis on the subjective aspect of "being a Marxist"—stressing the idea that to *be* a Marxist a man must *want* to be one—is, I believe, extremely important. Simply to proclaim certain propositions which accord with, or are even historically derived from, Marxism does not make someone a Marxist. After all, he may disagree with other parts of the doctrine or even—a very common occurrence nowadays, especially among sociologists and historians—be unaware that his views derive from Marx, so thoroughly and organically have his theories been absorbed by modern science. In other words, no one can be counted a Marxist against his will, since this term implies a deliberate act of commitment to Marxism as an intellectual movement.

Wanting to be a Marxist—that is, declaring one's allegiance—is a [301] necessary condition for being counted as a Marxist. It is equally certain, however, that this is not a sufficient condition. There is an obvious distinction between subjectively wanting to be something and objectively being it. Good intentions are not enough to make someone, say, a pianist, a tennis player, or a scholar—and the same is true of being a Marxist. In this case, too, what is needed is not only the *will* but also the *capacity*, and that is an objective and verifiable qualification.

Thus to be a Marxist in the field of theory,

it is necessary to have a certain skill, and this skill—a certain sum of knowledge—must be genetically connected with the views of Marx and his successors, since these constitute the whole known as "Marxism." *But what kind* of skill is needed, and *how* is it to be exercised to validate the name "Marxist"?

The simplest answer would seem to be: as thorough a knowledge as possible of the writings of Marx, Engels, and the other classics, and a faithful cultivation and continuation of their views. But such a dogmatic interpretation of Marxism as a kind of creed must itself be criticized since, as the historical vicissitudes of Marxism have shown, even such an absurd position would not be without supporters. The classics of Marxism, however, insisted that Marxism was not a system, in the sense of an enclosed doctrine but only a guide to action. Marx himself made Cartesian skepticism a basic element of his scientific outlook. Asked by his daughters for his favorite motto, he replied *de omnibus dubitandum est*. Accordingly, for a Marxist there can be no hesitation between scientific method and pietism.

To be a Marxist, therefore, one must know the views of Marx, Engels, and other classics and—realizing that the postulate of perfect knowledge is always only a model—uphold them unless they have been invalidated or modified by the development of society and science. Under this definition anyone who claims to be a Marxist not only need not dogmatically believe in whatever is written in the classics of Marxism, but should check their views and, if necessary, modify or even reject them as obsolete. This is an extremely important point to be borne in mind before classifying someone as either a Marxist or a revisionist.

So far so good: the designation of Marxist can legitimately be claimed by someone who has declared his allegiance to Marxism, has a sufficient knowledge of its principles, and stands by them unless they have been overtaken by the historical development of social life and science. But from here on, the matter is neither as simple nor as straightforward as it might [302] seem. For example, one might reflect on some questions that arise in this context and demand an answer if the term "Marxist" is to have some op-



erative sense:

Who is authorized to decide that a Marxist proposition needs to be modified or even discarded?

How far can one go in this direction before claims of adherence to Marxism cease to make sense? Or, to put it another way, are there some basic propositions which may not be rejected without forfeiting one's right to call himself a Marxist? If so, what are they?

Is the problem of allegiance to Marxism a purely theoretical question or a practical and political one as well? Or, to put it another way, can the term "Marxist" be applied to someone who adopts the Marxist position in theory without acting on it in practice, or only to someone whose theoretical views are consistent with his practical activity in the political sphere? How are we to assess and describe those who agree with Marxist theory, but disagree with the policies of the communist movement in general, or of some communist party in particular?

Questions like these—and there are others—need a reply before any general answer will be found of value.

But first we must come to grips with the question of revisionism which, though a correlate of the positive definition of "Marxist," needs to be broached explicitly if we are to avoid difficulties later on.

First of all, we should describe as a revisionist someone who is a Marxist insofar as he is familiar with the principles of Marxism and has avowed his allegiance to it. Anyone who simply rejects these principles because he disagrees with them is an opponent of Marxism, not a revisionist. Nor is someone a revisionist (in the historically accepted sense of the word) who, while recognizing the value of a certain tenet, proposes some change or amendment since, in its original form he believes it is—or has become historically—inconsistent with the empirical facts. By definition then, a revisionist is (only and always) a Marxist who advocates certain appropriately qualified alterations in Marxist theory. To use this term, as is sometimes done, to denote an opponent of Marxism who proposes a partial or complete rejection of this theory is imprecise and illegitimate.

But what kind of changes in Marxist theory

have to be proposed in order to call someone a revisionist, seeing that Marxism is an open system, which means that it can be reinforced not only with new propositions but also by changing or even eliminating those that have been made obsolete by the development of science and social reality? Since, as we know, the [303] classics of Marxism *insisted* on just such a critical and open-minded approach, when and under what circumstances can this procedure be found improper and so warrant the pejorative description of "revisionism"?

In the light of our previous remarks, the answer to this question should not be difficult: the only legitimate change is one justified by the incompatibility of the theory with reality; an illegitimate change ("revisionist" in the bad sense) is one that is not justified by the development of our knowledge of the world or by the altered circumstances of the social reality we investigate.

This general formula seems simple, but a moment's reflection, however, requires us to put forward at least three additional questions which complicate the picture:

1. Is *every* change of this kind liable to the charge of "revisionism"?
2. What is to be adopted as the *criterion* of compatibility when it is proposed to make changes, not in theoretical propositions that describe reality and state its laws, but in ideological norms and postulates?
3. What is to be done if *opinions differ* about the adequacy of the theory and the need for change? Whose opinion should prevail? What should the standards of judgment be: how many people stand behind each of the contradictory propositions, or their content?

My answer to the first question is firmly in the negative: not *every* change in Marxist theory, even if it is shown beyond all doubt not to be justified on the grounds of incompatibility with reality, is to be condemned as "revisionism." There must be no blurring of the difference between error—to which a Marxist is also entitled—and "revisionism," since there can be no search for truth without the risk of error; as we know from historical practice, the fear of being



called a revisionist can be a deterrent to creative inquiry. In any case, it would be ludicrous in assessing the Marxism of a thinker not to be guided by the *entirety* of his views when they are beyond reproach from this point of view but, in error, perhaps, in a theoretically insignificant way. Thus it is certainly not *any* change in Marxist theory mistakenly proposed by a person that entitles us to criticize him as a revisionist; this would depend instead on his *system of views* regarding some major part of Marxism. But what are these *major* parts of Marxism? Here is a problem which requires an answer to our previous question about the basic propositions of Marxism, and the limits of the changes that can be made without forfeiting the right to be called a Marxist. [304]

To run ahead a little, I believe that there is no clear-cut answer to any of these questions. This enormously complicates the issue of whether it is legitimate to describe someone's views as "orthodox" Marxist or "revisionist." A glance at the history of the problem indicates that, in the past, the term "revisionist" was used sparingly, and then only when theoretical divergence was accompanied by departures *in political practice* from the principles of the revolutionary struggle for power or its retention. For example, when Lenin attacked Plekhanov's hieroglyph theory, he did not describe it as revisionism, though he regarded it as mistaken and inconsistent with Marxism. The prodigal use of "revisionism" as a term of abuse, leading to its increasing devaluation, is a product of later times.

Again, as to whether every change in Marxist theory can be assessed as "revisionism," one must also bear in mind the individual *frame of reference*. After all, "revisionism" designates the action of revising—in the sense of changing—certain views and its consequences. But since Marxism is an intellectual system which has evolved historically, and to which various people have contributed, one must always be aware of the time and specific stage of development of the theory when talking of its revision.

Which of the views of Marx and Engels are to be respected in the sense of being obliged to uphold them on pain of the charge of revisionism? From what period? Should it always be as-

sumed that the later views are more correct? What other thinkers, apart from Lenin, have the same status? History, as well as the ideological disputes now in progress in the working-class movement, indicate that these are not minor questions and that they complicate the task of someone wishing to reach a rational judgment about whether to classify certain views as revisionist, rather than simply use the word "revisionist" as an insult.

The matter becomes even more complicated when we come to the second question: what is to be done if there are differences of opinion regarding the validity of ideological norms and postulates? For despite the difficulties we have mentioned, it is still clear what is at issue when we accept the compatibility of Marxist theory to reality as the criterion of admissible changes. But this applies to propositions predicating something about reality—that is, its description in the broad sense of the word. On the other hand, when we construct an ideology—a system of views and attitudes which, on the basis of a certain system of values, guides human behavior towards a recognized goal of social development—we are dealing not only with descriptions but with assessments and standards of conduct which are not *logically* deducible from descriptive propositions; even if we [305] agree that they are *genetically* deducible—I myself would support this view—we must admit that there is no question here of an obvious inference from predicative statements.

From a certain description of reality, from its *apprehension*, there arise through a complex social process certain assessments—that is, systems of values recognized by certain groups—and, in consequence, accepted norms of conduct. But if I conclude that, in certain conditions, they need to be modified, my argument with someone who opposes this suggestion cannot be decided by a simple appeal to reality but only by reference to its cognition; this implies a subjective factor. The criterion of the compatibility of the theory with reality cannot be applied in this case, at any rate not in its simple and direct sense. Thus if I say, for instance, that in the altered circumstances of our time the development of socialism calls for teaching people to think for themselves, and this entails a radical



extension of freedom of thought and speech, and if someone disagrees with this assertion, then to label either of the parties to this dispute as "revisionist" *is meaningless*—unless one follows the dogmatic interpretation of this term which involves comparing whatever is said with the statement of some recognized authority. Appealing to reality is of no use in this case. In a normative statement what is involved is a certain recommendation, in other words, something that is not embodied in any description of reality.

The third question is, in my view, the most fruitful from the pragmatic point of view, since it reveals the shakiness of any answer. As we know, a general consensus is not to be recommended as a criterion of truth, still less the consensus of one or another group. The decision of an authority is even less acceptable. Thus, when there are no clear objective criteria and there is also controversy among the people involved, we must reconcile ourselves to admitting humbly that the situation is controversial and the problem cannot be settled unambiguously.

Our digression over the concept of "revisionism" will have injected us with a sizable dose of skepticism and wariness in approaching the problems that concern us. Let us now, with this lesson in our minds, revert to our difficulties with the definition of "Marxist."

We have seen that the only concept of Marxism justified by its own principles is one of an open theory. As we have said, its propositions can be supplemented and altered if the need arises. But who is to decide that one has actually arisen?

Naturally, *anyone* who has come up against this question in the course of inquiry. A variety of reservations can and should be added: he must [306] observe maximum caution in the changes he makes, carefully examine the differing views of those who are qualified and experienced, etc. But the final result cannot be altered: the decision rests with anyone who has seriously pondered some issue—and this right belongs to everyone. To think otherwise is a sad remnant of the personality cult, in its literal sense.

All this might seem commonplace were it not for a certain "but" which arises when we remember the twofold function of Marxism: scien-

tific cognition and the binding agent of a movement fighting for specific social goals. Obviously, these functions are organically related and complementary, but they nevertheless form two aspects of a complex phenomenon and to appreciate this difference is a help in understanding our problem.

From the point of view of its cognitive function, Marxism cannot and should not be afraid of any changes proposed within its framework: if they prove mistaken, they will be criticized and rejected. This is a normal and accepted procedure in all fields of science, and as a *science* Marxism is not—and should not be—an exception.

But the position changes when we consider the function of Marxism as an ideology welding together a movement fighting for certain social goals. Durkheim once called this function of ideology a religious function; he had in mind the factor of faith, in the sense of a profound and unquestioned belief in the justness of something, as the cement of social movements. This factor undoubtedly also appears in the social movement based on Marxism, often determining the strength of people's convictions and their readiness to make sacrifices for the ends specified by this movement.

Now, in this field, a change of principles, opinions, recognized goals, and their attendant norms is not a neutral matter. On the contrary, their relative invariability, and their simplicity as well, guarantee (at least in certain circumstances) the maintenance of the emotional tension on which faith and militancy depend, especially where mass movements are concerned. Hence the pragmatic politician will be extremely cautious in accepting such changes, and his disposition toward them, as is psychologically only natural, will be suspicious: they complicate the situation and may weaken the militancy of the masses. This consideration should not be minimized, for it is extremely important. And it is here that the confusion begins: if experimentation and innovation are extremely useful and even desirable in the field of theory, where the dangers are negligible, in the sphere of practical politics the matter is far more involved. For in view of the possible risks, even the most fervent advocate of innovation will tread warily if he



has a minimum of political experience and a sense of responsibility for action undertaken in the social field. [307]

These two functions—the scientific and the ideological-political—are not only organically related but are also linked by feedback; that is, they control and stimulate each other in their historical development. This gives additional weight to the observation that, though they form a single whole, they display, within certain limits, varying and even contradictory tendencies. Here is a dialectic straight out of the textbooks. But unfortunately it tends to be overlooked, which is all the more dangerous since both functions of Marxism, because of their relative independence, have in social life relatively different and separate groups of representatives: theorists-scientists and practical ideologists-politicians.

Of course, the boundaries between them are not clear-cut; obviously, there may be cases of a personal union—the most favorable arrangement—but unfortunately such examples are increasingly rare and attesting to, in this case, an unwelcome tendency toward a "division of labor" and specialization. Such a division becomes dangerous, both ideologically and in practice, not only when the "incumbents" of these different functions of Marxist ideology cease to perceive and understand their unity, but also when they overlook their differences. One observes Marxist intellectuals who, while they are right in calling for freedom of discussion and creation, overlook the social implications of their work, often displaying a quite childish lack of political judgment and responsibility (which, naturally, does not help to raise their standing with the politicians). On the other hand, there are Marxist politicians who, preoccupied with the social consequence of such changes, forget about the unity of theory and practice and of their responsibility for the development of theory.

Even though the stability of the ideological factors that bind a group might seem to strengthen its emotional capacity for struggle and sacrifice, in actual fact such protection of unity at any cost, to the point of sectarianism and dogmatism, leads in the longer run to a profound crisis of ideological disillusionment; it

causes a correspondingly more serious disintegration of the group, a process which may often be incurable and irreversible. Those men are poor politicians indeed who, while loudly professing to be defending unity, are most radically and dangerously working for its disintegration by failing to appreciate the importance of the advancement of theory, both for progress and the consolidation of the influence of their ideology.

But let us come back to the point in hand: who is authorized to decide that changes and modifications need to be made in Marxist theory to adapt it better to reality, in the broad sense of the word? With the reservations set out above, let us repeat the answer we have already given: *anyone* [308] who reflects on these issues. Whether or not these proposed changes prove tenable is another matter; it depends on how well substantiated the changes are, and on the results of their social appraisal. But one thing is certain: there are no privileges in these matters; no individuals, groups, or institutions enjoy a special status. And there is no other way of assessing the merits of these changes except by the force of their arguments based both on the theoretical premises of Marxism and on an analysis of the social practice.

This answer to the first question emphasizes the significance of the next one: how far can these changes be carried before calling oneself a Marxist ceases to make sense?

In answering this question we must distinguish at least three different forms it can take.

First and foremost: what questions are legitimate with regard to Marxism? In the light of its own principles, *every* question is legitimate; and equally legitimate, or even necessary, is *every* change in its propositions if they collide with the properly researched evidence of reality. Marxism is a science, not a religious creed, and so is subject to the general laws of science. But if in making these changes we reach a point where Marxism as a *system* ceases to exist, it would make no sense to call oneself a Marxist. This raises the question of a body of views whose survival is essential if we are to talk seriously of Marxism.

Marxism, as theory, is a historically shaped system of views composed primarily of its phi-



losophy, sociology, political economy, political theory, and specific research method. It is a system in the strict sense of the word; when the classics of Marxism said that their views "are no system" they had in mind the special meaning of this word developed by metaphysics. In other words, Marxism is a set of elements—in this case, whole theories—in which to change one is to change the others. This is why rejection of any of the basic components of Marxism is the same as rejecting Marxism as a whole. Consequently, it is not possible to be a "partial" Marxist, acknowledging only certain of its areas or aspects; if one does not accept the *system* of Marxist thought, one does not accept Marxism and is not a Marxist. Here then is the first distinct boundary which may not be crossed if one wants to keep the right to be called a Marxist.

In practice, however, in what might be called the day-to-day routine of science, research is specialized and one is usually a philosopher, economist, sociologist, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc., who is not concerned with the other fields, often remote from his own interests, which form part of [309] the Marxist system. Take a social scientist who in his sphere accepts the research method and basic theoretic principles of Marxism, draws his inspiration from it, and is avowedly one of its supporters; is he a Marxist or not? Obviously a rhetorical question: of course, he is. But in a slightly different sense than if he simply displays a lack of interest in the fields of Marxism outside his immediate province. The matter becomes more complicated if he actually rejects Marxism in these other areas. In this case we are dealing not with a Marxist but with a researcher who employs the methodological and theoretical guidelines of Marxism in a certain sphere. These are quite different situations, as are the theoretical and practical conclusions to be drawn from them.

But this being so, where is the boundary whose crossing implies the surrender of the right to be called a Marxist even in this second, narrower sense?

Each component of the Marxist system is a relatively independent theory of philosophy, sociology, economics, etc. Each of these theories has the shape of a more-or-less rigorously structured intellectual system. As in every such sys-

tem, the various propositions can be graded according to the degree of their importance to the structure of the theory. On the other hand, as has been said, Marxism—both in the sense of the entire system and its component elements—is an "open" system; since it is not a dogmatism, it develops, absorbs new elements, alters old ones, etc. In principle there is nothing to stop such changes being made if they are justified by the development of man's knowledge of social and physical reality. However, there are limits to these changes; if these limits are crossed, it would no longer make sense to talk of Marxism as a specific theoretical system; the system would cease to exist and the author of these changes could not claim to be called a Marxist. The general rule would be that these limits are determined by the basic theses of the theory. It is not possible to prescribe in detail which propositions play this fundamental role, but the idea can be illustrated with examples, and in such a situation this is enough.

For instance, rejection of materialism as a view of the world in favor of spiritualism means renunciation of Marxism as an intellectual system and thereby takes away the right to call oneself a Marxist. This is clearly not a question of degree. The point is not whether we can put various constructions on the principles of materialism, but whether we accept or reject its basic proposition in the field of epistemology (the objectivity of existence) and ontology (the materiality of existence) which decide the materialist character of a given school. Anyone who does not acknowledge this [310] principle and adopts any kind of spiritualist admixture is simply not a materialist, and *by the same token* not a Marxist, since he dismantles Marxism as a specific theoretical system.

The same applies to historical materialism, the Marxian analysis of capitalism and its sociopolitical model (including the ethical aspects of human attitudes) of the socialist society.

To grasp the full meaning of this answer, we must turn to the third version of the question posed earlier: can one make changes and modifications in the position of the Marxist classics with regard to *these*, for us, key issues? The answer, of course, is positive: one can and should change and modify the propositions of



the classics in accordance with the needs of the developing social and scientific reality. It was Engels himself who said, for example, that materialism must change its form together with every great scientific discovery which revolutionizes our view of the world. A fortiori this applies to social problems.

In other words, the key problems in Marxism are neither an exception nor taboo for the researcher. Nor was this what I had in mind when I insisted on their exceptional position in Marxism. But it is one thing to make changes and modifications, however far-reaching, in theoretical propositions (for instance, by saying that the theory of reflection in one of the forms in which it has been stated is not tenable in the light of modern knowledge about the role of the subjective factor, and above all, language in cognition; or by showing that the theory of the three levels of cognition is mistaken for similar reasons; or by rejecting the Hegel-Engels concept of movement as an objective contradiction; or by discarding the Morgan-Engels concept of prehistory on the evidence of modern anthropology). It is another thing entirely to *renounce* them (for instance, by replacing materialism with spiritualism, the dialectic with crude evolutionism, the materialist concept of history with the idealistic concept of great individuals as the sole and autonomous makers of history, etc.). In the former case, we are working "inside" the propositions of Marxism—whether the changes are justified or not is another matter; in the latter, "outside" them, in the sense of simply dismissing them as wrong, thereby rejecting Marxism itself.

By way of precaution, let me end with one reservation: in all that has been said here we have ignored the problem of truth and falsehood. It is obvious (and I have emphasized this often enough) that science knows no taboos *whatsoever* and that we cannot hesitate to criticize any proposition if it is contradicted by scientific truth. What we were concerned with here [311] was another question: is there a corpus of propositions whose negation would 1) mean the end of Marxism as a theoretical system—even though certain true propositions might survive—and 2) would thus deprive anyone who discarded them of the right to call him-

self a Marxist? The answer to *this* question is a positive one, which involves a variety of consequences for the meaning of the terms "Marxist" and "revisionist."

Finally, the last question of this series: can the designation "Marxist" be claimed only by someone who links theory with practice, drawing revolutionary practical conclusions from the Marxist theory, or also by someone who upholds Marxism in theory but is either not politically active or, if active, draws from Marxist theory different conclusions from those embraced by the communist movement.

This is primarily a question of *definition*. We can assume *ex definitione* that we will only qualify as a Marxist a revolutionary who is active and bases his political practice on Marxist theory. But the question then arises: what are we to call those supporters of Marx who do not draw such practical conclusions from their convictions? For instance, a social scientist (I have met many such academics in the United States) who declares himself a Marxist and does indeed follow the Marxist method in his research, but is not and does not intend to be, for one reason or another, politically active. So radical an extension of definitional requirements (i.e. to reserve the name "Marxist" only for those who not only adhere to Marx's thought in theory but are also politically active revolutionaries) seems to be not only incompatible with the conventions of language, but would also introduce an unnecessary confusion of concepts. It would be better to leave the term "Marxist" as a description of certain beliefs and *theoretical* attitudes, and reserve for *practical* attitudes some other name, such as "communist" or the like.

This is all the more advisable in that the matter is by no means as simple as it once seemed; the same is also true of the question whether the same theoretical premises always lead to only one possible directive for practical action. Today we can see clearly that this is not the case, that there are various possibilities, and that proceeding from a *common* theoretical base we can arrive at various practical interpretations and conclusions—which does not give us the right to dismiss as non-Marxist people who think differently from us.

What conclusions can be drawn from these



remarks? Though they may seem vague and modest, they are nevertheless important for the purpose we set ourselves. For we have found that although the issues are [312] enormously complicated and require much discussion, we can with a fair degree of accuracy define what is meant by "being a Marxist" and therefore what we understand by revisionism. But the most important result is the conviction that a researcher who professes Marxism and draws creative inspiration from it is by no means condemned to sterile dogmatism and exegesis of the established texts. On the contrary, the more creative he is the more "orthodox" he is in his Marxism. In other words, he is completely free to bring into

the perspective of Marxist theory new lines of inquiry and the new horizons opened up by the development of science; he is entitled to make changes in the traditional form of the theory where dictated by these advances; and in doing so he does not cease to be a Marxist, as long as he stops short of changes so fundamental that they destroy the system of Marxist theory; and finally, in creatively developing Marxism he cannot be accused of "revisionism," though he might well level this charge at his opponents who, confusing fidelity to Marxism with dogmatism, betray one of the basic principles of Marxism: treatment of the body of its propositions as a science, that is, as an open system.