

Problems of Law and State in Friedrich Engels's "Anti-Dühring"

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role and significance of Anti-Dühring, a famous work written by Friedrich Engels and published in 1877-1878. Through a comprehensive literature review, the authors investigate the history of Anti-Dühring's creation and explain its origins and subsequent development. Initially planned as a series of articles against the critics of Marxism (particularly Eugen Dühring), who were spreading opposing views and causing ideological confrontation within the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the work later evolved into a holistic reflection of the entire Marxist philosophy. In this respect, our article also highlights Karl Marx's involvement and active participation in writing Anti-Dühring. We conclude that the book clearly reflects the collective views of both Engels and Marx. Furthermore, our article examines the legal and political questions raised in the book. In our opinion, Anti-Dühring remains drastically understudied from an ideologically neutral and unbiased perspective, and, therefore, deserves more attention from contemporary scholars.

Keywords: *Anti-Dühring, Marx, Engels, Marxism, communism, philosophy*

1. INTRODUCTION

A classical work by Friedrich Engels, "Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science" (in German, "Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft") is more well-known in social sciences as "Anti-Dühring" [1]. The original title of Engels's book mocks Dühring's work "Carey's Umwälzung der Irthschaftslehre und Socialwissenschaft" ("Carey's revolution in economics and social science"), which was published in Munich in 1865. In his work, Dühring extolled Henry C. Carey, an American economist, who was essentially his teacher in political economy. Engels's work was the result of ideological conflicts within the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD). Dühring attracted the attention of Marx and Engels with his critical review of the first volume of Marx's Capital, which Dühring published in 1867 in the journal "Supplementary materials for understanding the present" ("Ergänzungsblätter zur Kenntnis der Gegenwart").

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this paper, the authors examined the research topic by means of conducting a comprehensive literature review,

which concerns some of the fundamental works of Marxism. Our historical method of research and the diverse philosophical methodology (e.g., dialectical materialism, Marxism, and other methods of philosophical enquiry) allowed us to discuss the creation of the book as well as its key concepts, and make valuable conclusions, which enable us to make a substantial contribution to the academic community by rediscovering famous works from a novel perspective.

3. RESULTS

The correspondence between Marx and Engels allows us to trace the history of Anti-Dühring's creation back to the first concepts of the work in May 1876, which were later developed into a full book. In 1877—1878, the finished work was published in "Vorwärts" ("Forward"), the main newspaper of the party, and was subsequently distributed among a wider audience. In addition, the correspondence reveals Marx's role and personal contribution to Anti-Dühring.

With Marx's support, Engels decides to oppose Dühring, Marx also writes a critical essay on the history of political economy for Engels's book and assists him in selecting the literature for writing a section of the book, which analyzes the background of scientific socialism. Engels wrote to

Marx in a letter dated 7 January 1868 [2]: “Herewith returned the Dühring...The whole article is embarrassment and funk. You can see that the worthy vulgar economist is ‘frappé au vif’ and can find nothing to say except that it will only be possible to judge the first volume when the third has come out, that determination of value by labor time is not undisputed, and that there are people who have some modest doubts about the determination of the value of labor on the basis of its costs of production. You see that for this genus you are by no means learned enough...! At the same time, there is the fear in every line that he may be exposed to a treatment à la Roscher. The fellow was happy when he had finished the thing, but I am sure he carried it to the post with a heavy heart.” [3, vol. 32, pp. 5-6]. In subsequent letters dated January 8, 1868, Marx responds that “Dühring’s article (he is lecturer at Berlin University) is very decent, particularly since I handled his master ‘Carey’ so roughly. Dühring obviously misunderstood various things. But the oddest thing is that he ranks me with Stein, because I pursue the dialectic, and Stein assembles thoughtlessly the greatest trivialities in clumsy hair-splitting, with a few Hegelian category conversions. I believe one reason that Dühring reviewed the book at all is malice against Roscher. Indeed, it is easy to scent his anxiety that he might also be ‘Roscher’ed.” [3, vol. 32, pp. 7-8]. At the same time, Marx noted a meagre reaction to his work, writing that “From the camp of political economists, so far we have only seen the article by Dr. Dühring (assistant professor at Berlin University and a follower of Carey), published earlier this year in the ‘Hildburghäuser Ergänzungsblätter’. Marx also pointed out that the article is written in a restrained tone, but generally in a sympathetic manner” [3, vol. 32, p. 459]. Marx and Engels often made fun of Dühring in their letters: “At the museum, where I did nothing but leaf through catalogues, I also noted that Dühring is a great philosopher. For he has written a ‘Natürliche Dialektik’ against Hegel’s ‘un-natural’ one [3, vol. 32, p. 15]; “Dühring amuses me very much...” [3, vol. 32, p. 27]; “Have you read about the scandal between Dühring and ‘Privy Councillor’ Wagener, with the former accusing the latter of pinching his manuscript or something or other about workers’ cooperation” [3, vol. 32, p. 37]; “The proofs and the Dühring I shall send to you; I forgot to take the stuff with me this morning. In haste. “[3, vol. 32, p. 39]; “I have sent you a scrawl by Dühring which despite the heat you might read. You could also tell me your impressions of it, since it is certainly not overtaxing. But all the more boring to be sure.” [3, vol. 32, p. 101]. In letters to his friend, Ludwig Kugelmann, a member of the first International, Marx wrote about the ‘conspiracy of silence’ surrounding the first volume of ‘Capital’ and mentioned that in Dühring’s review, it is possible to sense a glimpse of fear. [3, vol. 32, p. 443]; “I can now understand the curiously embarrassed tone of Herr Dühring’s criticism. He is ordinarily a most bumptious, cheeky boy, who sets up as a revolutionary in political economy... He attempts, in ‘mauvaise foi’ (bad faith), to burden me with all Ricardo’s limitations. But never mind. I must be grateful to the man, since he is the first expert who has

said anything at all.” [3, vol. 32, p. 448]; “...I console myself here with Dühring’s philosophy — never before has anyone written such arrant rubbish. Windy platitudes — nothing more, interspersed with utter drivel, but the whole thing dressed up, not without skill, for a public with which the author is thoroughly familiar — a public that wants by means of beggar’s soup and little effort to lay down the law about everything. The man is as if cut out for the socialism and philosophy of the millions era” [3, vol. 34, pp. 17-18]. The letters criticizing Dühring, according to Vladimir Lenin, in some ways, could be seen as the precursor of Anti-Dühring’s content written nine years later by Engels (with Marx) [4].

In the mid-1870s, Dühring’s authority among social democrats grew significantly, and his ideas became widespread.

In February 1876, Engels published an article “Prussian Vodka in the German Reichstag” (“Preußischer Wodka im Deutschen Reichstag”) in the “Volksstaat” newspaper, saying ironically that “... the newest adherent and restorer of socialism, Herr Eugen Dühring, could glorify winemaking as a natural link between the industry and agriculture and solemnly proclaim that the value of alcohol production is so great that it easier to underestimate than to overestimate it” [3, vol. 19, p. 147].

Historians believe that on May 24—26, 1876, Marx and Engels, aware of the increasing influence of Dühring’s anti-Marxist views among members of the Social Democratic

Workers’ Party of Germany, concluded that it was necessary to publicly challenge Dühring’s ideas in the press [3, vol. 19, p. 601]. Thus, Engels suspended his work on “Dialectics of Nature” to systematically put forward his objections to the new “socialist” teaching and to defend Marxism in a form that allows the proletariat to effectively understand and study the key ideas of Marxism, and use them as guidance. Later, with reference to Anti-Dühring, Engels notes: “the boredom, inevitable when one has a debate with an insignificant adversary, did not diminish the influence of the work, in which we explained our understanding of the fundamental issues in philosophy, natural science and history” [5, p. 371].

On 24 May, 1876, Engels wrote to Marx: “... people imagine that Dühring, by his scurrilous onslaughts upon you, has rendered himself invulnerable vis-à-vis ourselves, for, if we make fun of his theoretical nonsense, it will look as though it’s out of revenge for those personalities! The ruder Dühring is, the more humble and propitiating we are to be...” [3, vol. 34, pp. 10-11]. In a reply dated May 25, 1876, Marks concludes that they have to retaliate against Dühring’s criticism: “I consider that, if one is to adopt a ‘position vis-à-vis these gentlemen’ one can do so only by criticizing Dühring without any compunction. He has obviously been secretly at work among the literary loutish careerists devoted to him in order to obviate such criticism; ... we had long refused to criticize on the grounds that the work was too paltry. ...As... letters to us go to prove, the thing only seemed worth doing when, by repeatedly passing on to us the louts’ letters, ...drew our attention to the threat of debased propaganda within the

party.” [3, vol. 34, p. 12]. In a letter of May 28, Engels agrees with Marx's idea to “break a lance with the tedious Dühring... It can't be helped, I suppose, even if it means letting myself in for a controversy to which there is no foreseeable end; for otherwise I'll get no peace...” [3, vol. 34, p. 14]; “... while Dühring will... get his deserts. These gentlemen ought to be shown that we have more ways than one of dealing with such folk” [3, vol. 34, p. 15]. Engels later clarified that: “According to the division of labor that existed between Marx and me, it was my task to represent our views in the press, and, particularly, to fight against hostile opinions. I had to do that in order to save Marx time for his great monumental work. To reach the goal, I had to present our views mostly in a confrontational way, in contrast to other views.” [3, vol. 21, p. 337].

Engels was working on *Anti-Dühring* for two years — from late May, 1876 to early July, 1878. The first part of the book was being written from September 1876 to January 1877. It was published in the “Vorwärts” newspaper (“Forward”) in January — May 1877 as a series of articles entitled “Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Philosophy”. The second part of the book was being written from June to August 1877.

Marx was directly involved in the creation of *Anti-Dühring*. Not only did he actively encourage Engels to oppose Dühring's ideas, but he also supported Engels and fully approved his concept of the entire work. He actively assisted Engels in collecting necessary materials and familiarized himself with the entire manuscript. Besides, Marx himself wrote the chapter devoted to criticizing Dühring's views on the history of political economy. That is why *Anti-Dühring*, from the first to the last page, expresses the collective opinion of both Engels and Marx. The last chapter of the second part of the book, Chapter X, which covers the history of political economy, was written by Marx [3, vol. 20, p. VII]: the first part of the chapter was finished by early March, and the second part devoted to the “Economic Table” by François Quesnay was finished by early August 1877. The second part of the book was published in the Scientific Appendix and in the Appendix to the newspaper “Vorwärts” in July — December 1877 under the title “Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Political Economy”. The third part of the book was being written from August 1877 to April 1878. It was published under the title “Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Socialism” in the Appendix to the newspaper “Vorwärts” in May — July 1878.

The publication of *Anti-Dühring* triggered a fierce reaction from Dühring's followers. At the following party congress in Gotha on May 27—29, 1877, they attempted to persuade the party authorities to prohibit the publication of Engels's work in the press owned by the party. Not without their influence, *Anti-Dühring* was being published in the newspaper at long intervals. The complete Russian translation was published in St. Petersburg in 1907 under the title “*Anti-Dühring (Herr Dühring's Revolution in Sciences)*” [3, vol. 20, pp. 680-681].

Vladimir Lenin, describing *Anti-Dühring*, pointed out: “This work resolves the greatest issues of philosophy, natural and social sciences... It is a wonderfully

meaningful and instructive book” [6, vol. 2, p. 11]. In his work, Engels defends consistent and dialectical materialism: “One either follows consistent materialism all the way, or chooses the lies and confusion of philosophical idealism. That is the way each paragraph of *Anti-Dühring* raises the question [6, vol. 14, p. 323].

Anti-Dühring consists of an introduction and three main parts: Philosophy, Political Economy, Socialism. In the introduction, Engels outlined the development of philosophy and explained why the emergence of Marxism was inevitable. He demonstrated the patterns, in which philosophical paradigms shift over time, and concluded that the influence of materialism on understanding history created the scientific foundation for studying the capitalist method of production, which, thanks to Marx's two great discoveries, a materialist understanding of history and the theory of surplus value, transformed socialism from utopia into science. In the first part, Engels expounded the main problems of materialism and dialectics, as well as the materialist understanding of history. Consciousness is a product of human brain, and humans themselves are a product of nature and society. Thinking is a reflection of being (chapter 3). The possibilities of cognition and cognitive development are limitless, the absolute truth is represented by an infinite series of relative truths (chapters 3 and 9). The unity of the world lies in its materiality (chapter 4). The world is infinite in terms of space and time, which are the essence of the main form of being (chapter 5). Motion is the way, in which matter exists in the universe (Chapter 6). Various forms of motion of matter (i.e. mechanical, physical, chemical, biological) are studied by different branches of science (chapters 6—7). Engels particularly highlights the role of sciences that explore the laws of human thinking, such as formal logic and dialectics (chapter 9), and also examines the laws of dialectics (chapters 12, 13).

From a dialectical standpoint, he explores various problems of natural and social sciences. In the second part of the book, Engels, drawing on the economic theory of Marx, gave a definition of the research subject and method of political economy (chapter 1), showed the crucial role of economy in the development of society, examined the two ways of the emergence of social classes, analyzed economic prerequisites for the socialist revolution, and investigated the role of revolutionary violence in transforming the old society (chapters 2—4). Chapters 5—9 outline the Marxist understanding of value, simple and complex labor, capital, surplus value, and land rents. The tenth chapter, which was written by Marx, covers some key problems of the history of political economy.

In the third part of the book, Engels, relying on a materialist understanding of history, explored the history and theory of scientific socialism. He showed that scientific socialism is a theoretical embodiment of the proletarian movement and that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism may be resolved through a proletarian revolution. After the success of the revolution, anarchy of production is to be replaced with a systematic approach. The development of productive forces will result in a disappearance of the former division of labor.

Thus, labor will stop being a heavy burden and, instead, turn into a basic need. The disparities between mental and physical labor, between urban and rural areas will disappear; social class differences will also cease to exist. The state will no longer be required for society to function and, therefore, will wither away. Humanity will take a leap from the realm of need to the realm of freedom [7].

It should be noted that problems of law are mainly addressed in Chapter 9, “Morality and Law. Eternal Truths”, Chapter 10, “Morality and Law. Equality”, and Chapter 11, “Morality and Law. Freedom and Necessity”, in the context of the origin and purpose of the state. Engels considers morality and law as superstructures: “... we found that all previous history was a history of class struggles. These conflicting social classes at all times are the result of the relationship between production and exchange, in other words, economic relations of a certain era. Thus, it became clear that the economic system of the society in a specific time period forms a base that ultimately guides the entire superstructure, which consists of legal and political institutions, as well as religious, philosophical and other views of a certain historical period” [3, vol. 20, pp. 25-26].

Criticizing Dühring, Engels points out that morality and law should be studied from the standpoint of “real social relations”: “And when such an ideologist constructs morality and law from the concept, or the so-called simplest elements of “society”, instead of from the real social relations of the people round him, what material is then available for this construction? Material clearly of two kinds: first, the meagre residue of real content which may possibly survive in the abstractions from which he starts and, secondly, the content which our ideologist once more introduces from his own consciousness.

And what does he find in his consciousness? For the most part, moral and juridical notions which are a more or less accurate expression (positive or negative, corroborative or antagonistic) of the social and political relations amidst which he lives; perhaps also ideas drawn from the literature on the subject; and, as a final possibility, some personal idiosyncrasies. Our ideologist may turn and twist as he likes, but the historical reality which he cast out at the door comes in again at the window, and while he thinks he is framing a doctrine of morals and law for all times and for all worlds, he is in fact only fashioning an image of the conservative or revolutionary tendencies of his day — an image which is distorted because it has been torn from its real basis and, like a reflection in a concave mirror, is standing on its head.” [3, vol. 20, p. 98].

Speaking of equality Engels notes that “The idea that all men, as men, have something in common, and that to that extent they are equal, is of course primeval. But the modern demand for equality is something entirely different from that; this consists rather in deducing from that common quality of being human, from that equality of men as men, a claim to equal political resp. social status for all human beings, or at least for all citizens of a state or all members of a society. Before that original conception of relative equality could lead to the conclusion that men should have equal rights in the state and in society, before

that conclusion could even appear to be something natural and self-evident, thousands of years had to pass and did pass” [3, vol. 20, pp. 104-105] and “... so long as the antithesis between freemen and slaves existed, there could be no talk of drawing legal conclusions from general equality of men...” [3, vol. 20, p. 105]. Under the correct order of things, “... the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the abolition of classes. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that, of necessity passes into absurdity. We have given examples of this, and shall find enough additional ones when we come to Herr Dühring’s fantasies of the future.” [3, vol. 20, p. 108].

Describing the patterns of transition from capitalism to communism, Engels gives a classic formula for the development of a socialist state: “As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a state, is no longer necessary.

The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not ‘abolished’. It dies out.” (F. Engels, “Anti-dühring”, 1933, edition of Partizdat, p. 202)” [8].

In this book, Engels conducts an analysis of the Prussian criminal law, in connection with the Lassalle process, which is valuable from a historical and legal perspective: “The Ministry of State, steeped in Prussian law, overlooked, just as Herr Dühring did, the essential difference between the sharply defined French code and the vague indefiniteness of Prussian law and, subjecting Lassalle to a tendentiously conducted trial, egregiously failed in the case. Only a person who is completely ignorant of modern French law can venture to assert that French criminal procedure permitted the Prussian legal form of an acquittal for lack of evidence, this half acquittal; criminal procedure under French law provides only for conviction or acquittal, nothing between.” [3, vol. 20, pp. 110-112].

Engels had quite progressive views on state authority, which he regarded as a special kind of public power that acts on behalf of the whole society, but not merges with it, standing above [3, vol. 21, pp. 170-171]. Engels pointed out the desire of the state and public authority to act as the official representative of the whole society [3, vol. 20, pp. 291-292].

Engels’s reasoning that freedom of the will essentially means the capacity to make a knowledge-based decision has crucial political and legal implications. Therefore, the freer a man’s judgment is in relation to a definite question, the greater is the necessity with which the content of this

judgment will be determined. Freedom consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development. Freedom is about knowing the laws of nature and the opportunity based on that knowledge to use them intelligently for certain purposes. This applies both to the laws of external nature and to the laws governing the bodily and spiritual existence of man [3, vol. 20, pp. 116-117].

We should also highlight Engels's opinion on the legal relations considering the development of legal attitudes: "we tend to focus on the big picture, in which smaller elements are in the background, we pay more attention to the movement, transitions and links than what actually performs those actions" [3, vol. 20, p. 665].

With regard to the principles of law, Engels believed that they are derived from the objective laws of social development, and that principles have a higher capacity and a wider variety of applications, compared to norms: "... principles are not applied to nature and human history, but abstracted from them, it is not nature and the realm of man which conform to these principles, but the principles are only valid in so far as they are in conformity with nature and history. That is the only materialist conception of the matter..." [3, vol. 20, pp. 33-34].

4. CONCLUSION

Anti-Dühring was of immense interest to researchers (philosophers, economists, sociologists, lawyers etc.) during the Soviet era [9-21], and it remains to be relevant to contemporary scholars as well [22-25]. During the Soviet times, Anti-Dühring was regarded and studied solely as a work of immortal ideas that "will continue to illuminate the path of scientific development in the age of nuclear energy, cybernetic systems and space exploration; and that will continue to support social development in the great era of communism" [3, vol. 19, p. XXII]; "Engels's book Anti-Dühring is one of the greatest creations of human mind, the source of great, immortal ideas calling the proletariat of all countries to fight for a new world — the world of communism. This book equips humanity with a novel scientific outlook" [10, p. 10].

Vladimir Lenin wrote that the ideas of Anti-Dühring were widely disseminated and had a huge impact; they played an outstanding role in the history of Marxism and the revolutionary labor movement. Anti-Dühring became an indispensable guide and a handbook of each conscious worker" [6, vol. 19, p. 4]. This is how Karl Marx himself viewed the impact of Anti-Dühring: "The series of recent articles he sent to 'Vorwärts' under the ironic title 'Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science' is a response to Dühring's ostensibly new theories in science generally, and socialism in particular. These articles were combined into a book and had great success with the socialists of Germany" [3, vol. 19, p. 245].

Therefore, we believe that Anti-Dühring has a special place among the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

and deserves more attention from contemporary scholars. This work has not been studied in an unbiased way before, that is why it needs more ideologically neutral research in the future.

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