Gallina and Pitt: similarities and differences

by Jack Pitt

IN THE PRECEDING article in this journal Paul Gallina accuses me of various sins of commission and omission in my paper "Russell and Marx".[1] The following remarks are in response to what he says.

Since Gallina generously refers to this effort of mine as a "critique", I had best begin by stating one purpose I hoped might be served by my paper. Here it must be kept steadily before us that even now Russell is one of the very few philosophers with a large general readership. This readership tends to be of liberal persuasion, yet uncomfortable with Marxian thought. It hears of Marxist-Leninist ideas largely through the media's mystification of them. As a result it does not stop to consider similarities between Russell and Marx, similarities which might encourage the reader of Russell to look into Marx's more systematic analysis of class, exploitation, private property, and so on. Thus *one* reason I had for placing the two men in juxtaposition was the thought that readers who had found sustenance in Russell's reflections on social issues could come to see their way to tackling the rather more difficult, but ultimately more profound, analyses of these issues which Marx or Marxism offers.

I can only applaud Gallina's probing of the differences between the various associations of German workers, and Russell's relation to them. I am less confident that we have quite met each other on the matter of the intellectual environment out of which *German Social Democracy* arose, or on the related issue of its reception. Regarding the former, the problematic assertion is my claim that, "... without any support from his intellectual environment or encouragement from specific individuals, Russell was motivated to do an enormous amount of reading, in both English and German, of many of the works of Marx available to him." Note that the encouragement of which I speak is encouragement *to read Marx*. It is not simply encouragement to study economics or to look into socialism. Gallina draws attention to the fact that Alfred Marshall gave Russell a list of books to read, but as one of the chief formulators of utility theory it is hard to imagine Marshall as *encouraging* Russell to read *Capital*. Werner Sombart was to note that the term "capitalism" is not to be found in Marshall, a circumstance to be noted when speculating what

[1] Jack Pitt, "Russell and Marx: Similarities and Differences", *Russell*, nos. 37–40 (1980): 10.

might have been on that reading list.[2]

By "intellectual environment" I had in mind the scene at Cambridge, the Apostles and the people associated with the Cambridge Moral Sciences Club, in other words people Russell knew well and whose judgment he had come to trust. And from this source there is disparagement even of his plan to study economics. Russell reports to his first wife, Alys: "they [Ward, McTaggart and others] *all* urged me to do what I'm good at, rather than fly off to Economics."[3]

If "intellectual environment" is read broadly so that it includes the entire climate of thought present at the time, then undoubtedly some factor in that climate did prompt Russell to study Marx. My praise of Russell focussed on his receptivity to whatever that factor was.

With regard to the reception of *German Social Democracy*, I am indebted to Gallina for addressing my query regarding the originality of Russell's criticisms of the labour theory of value, and for his inclusion of Eduard Bernstein's review of that book. The extent to which this review establishes its author as among the *cognoscenti* of the labour theory of value, I leave for those interested to judge.[4]

At one point in his paper it would seem that Gallina attributes to me a view I do not hold. It is his exceedingly harsh verdict that *German Social Democracy* "is hardly original, and does not demonstrate a good knowledge of Marx." This verdict accounts, he says, for my wonder as to "why Russell's first book has been overlooked by contemporary Marxists." But I expressed no such wonder in connection with contemporary Marxists. The persons I mentioned were Lord Acton and J. P. Plamenatz, neither of whom is likely to be called a Marxist. And it still strikes me as a minor oddity that whereas they share Russell's general stance *vis-à-vis* Marx, this affinity is not noted in their works.

I am pleased Gallina and I are in general accord with respect to Russell and Marx's views on religion and work. As I indicate above, it was especially this aspect of my paper which I had hoped would be favourably received.

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[2] See Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), p. 1n. 1.

[3] *Cambridge Essays*, p. 306.

[4] It is not as if Bernstein, and other reviewers Gallina mentions, were in a class with their contemporary Böhm-Bawerk, who actually wrote a serious critique of Marx's economic theory. How intricate discussions of the labour theory of value can be is exemplified by, for example, Ian Steedman, *Marx After Sraffa* (New York: Schocken, 1977), or John Roemer, *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1982).