

Anti-Dühring by Engels

RoseTorte

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Prefaces to the Three Editions

In the preface for the first edition, Engels says that he wrote this book against Herr Dühring, who supposedly proposed a new “System” for science, as well as socialism. This new system might’ve led to a split in the German socialist party, so Engels felt the need to write a refutation. In the preface to the second edition, Engels mentions that after many years of this polemic’s release, a new edition came out where he didn’t alter any previously made arguments because Dühring wasn’t able to respond back to the new arguments. Engels just added a new section to Part II which is “From the critical history” which Marx wrote with the help of Engels. Engels didn’t bother correcting anything other than that because at that time his priority was publishing the other volumes of Capital. In the preface for the third edition, nothing major happens. Engels just shortens the section he previously added.

1 Introduction

1.1 General

Engels here highlights how the French revolution was based around bourgeois values. Bourgeois equality, bourgeois property, bourgeois justice, and that the Social Contract of Rousseau came into existence as a bourgeois democratic republic. This happened because of the revolution of the bourgeoisie against the noble, where the bourgeoisie claimed to represent all of humanity under the values of absolute justice, absolute equality, absolute fairness. Later on, as we see, the values presented by the bourgeois were bourgeois justice, bourgeois equality and bourgeois fairness. This is precisely what Utopian Socialism is, the justification of socialism on the basis of metaphysical absolutes. To the English, French and first German Socialists, socialism is the expression of absolute truth, reason and justice. Of course, we now know that all of this is merely subjective moral claims, conditioned by one’s material conditions and subjective understanding of what is moral or not. Those systems of metaphysical absolutes will always end up in Nihilism, as Nietzsche says, “The belief in categories of reason is the cause of Nihilism: we have measured the worth of the world according to categories which can only be applied to a purely fictitious world.” This was the prevalent mode of thinking from Bacon to Locke, the metaphysical mode of thinking. What Engels advocated for is a dialectical view of the world, nature in motion. What Engels and Marx did was show a scientific backing to Socialism, independent of bourgeois metaphysics. This came with the discovery of *Surplus Value*.

1.2 What Herr Dühring Promises