Scott's Many Writing Projects "In Progress" (?)

(April 7, 2017)

Recently my sister Connie asked me to tell her about the many books and other writing projects I've been working on for such a long time. So for her and my other sister Carol and their families, as well as for some friends who may be curious about a major part of what I've been up to for the past half-century, here's the story. I hope that writing out this summary may also help spur me to actually get some of these many projects finished!

If, however, as is highly probable, I never finish some or all of these projects, I hope that others will find some useful material in my beginnings to help them accomplish something similar.

Book on Aesthetics (Philosophy of Art): Tentatively entitled "A Materialist Philosophy of Art"

When I was a grad student in philosophy at the University of Wisconsin (and before I became a Marxist) I think I only wrote one major paper of any real value, an essay on what sorts of things works of art actually are. (In the highfalutin language of professional philosophers this is called the question of the "ontology" of works of art.) There is a lot of confusion about this because some works of art seem to be physical things (such as a painting being paint on canvas) while other works of art seem much more abstract and ephemeral (such as a poem, or a song, or a new dance style, etc.). I came to the conclusion that *all* works of art had to be considered from the point of view of types and tokens, and that works of art were basically newly created types or patterns in one media or another while specific physical art objects (where they exist) were actually tokens of that pattern type even if there was typically only one of them. Thus from an aesthetic point of view, a visually indistinguishable "copy" of a painting is really just another token of that very same painting. (You can see why bourgeois art buyers might not like my theory!) My professor (Paul Ziff) wasn't entirely convinced by my paper but thought it was good enough to get it published in a journal. (I tried, but it was rejected.) But the thesis in this paper became the first chapter in the draft of my aesthetics manuscript.

The second chapter focuses on how works of art are to be evaluated from an aesthetic point of view. Here I put forward the idea that works of art have to be viewed as being in one or another *style*, and that how good the work is depends primarily on how well it meets the (usually implicit) standards of that particular style. (See: aesthetic evaluation)

The other parts of this manuscript (which consist mostly of disorganized notes) are on more traditional topics in *Marxist* aesthetics specifically, such as the role of art in the class struggle, the importance of audience (working for the masses in artistic work), why art seems to be of such

great importance in human society, and so forth. There is much reliance on Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" in these sections.

This manuscript is very undeveloped and, to tell the truth, I haven't worked on it in any serious way for decades. None of it is online, though some of the ideas in it are included in entries in the "Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism" (such as those linked to above). It is very unlikely that I will ever finish this aesthetics book.

Book on Ethics: "An Introduction to the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Class Interest Theory of Ethics"

In the late 1970s I decided that the most important works I might be able to produce were this book on MLM ethics and my book on the mass line. Alas, forty years later, neither is finished though both have a lot of work done on them.

As with my aesthetics manuscript, some of the germs of the ideas in this ethics book were actually developed at the UW, and before I started seriously investigating Marxism around 1968. Specifically I learned about the key importance of the word 'interests' from Professor Ziff. He was really mostly interested in aesthetics (not ethics). But in the last chapter of his 1960 book *Semantic Analysis* he carefully defines the word 'good' in general as meaning "answering to certain interests". A good knife is one that is sharp, keeps its edge, doesn't rust, and so forth, because these are our usual interests in knives. A good apple is one that looks nice, tastes good, etc., because these are our usual interests in apples.

When I started studying Marxism I found that Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao were always talking about "class interests", and suddenly ethics clicked into place for me and became in essence a quite simple subject. *Morality is really only a matter of what is in the common, collective interests of the people*. There is a major complication, however: Different classes have different objective interests (things which benefit them as a group), which means that different classes must of necessity have different class moralities. Engels had already put forth that general idea in his great work *Anti-Dühring*, but Ziff's linguistic analysis of the word 'good' in terms of interests, and my elaboration of that with respect to ethics, further clarified and supported Engels' viewpoint. The expanded discussion of all this became chapter 2 of my manuscript.

Chapter 1 of my ethics book is just an overall introduction, with a debunking of some of the most common bourgeois ethical theories (such as the "Golden Rule") along with a quick outline of the overall MLM ethical theory based on class interests. The draft of chapters 1 & 2 of my ethics book (about 65 pages in total) is available online at:

http://www.massline.org/Philosophy/ScottH/MLM-Ethics-Ch1-2.pdf The table of contents for the whole eventual book is also included in that excerpt.

Much of the rest of this book is either mostly unwritten or consists of a bunch of semiorganized notes (and also a huge pile of clippings). There are no major conceptual difficulties (i.e. unresolved theoretical issues) involved in finishing it; only a whole lot of necessary sustained work.

Chapter 3 ("Morality Before Classes Existed") will include some anthropological summaries and even some references to neurophysiology (such as a discussion of the *conscience* and its physical location in the prefrontal cortex of the brain). Keeping up with the constant new scientific theories and discoveries in certain of these sub-areas is a bit of a challenge.

Chapter 4 (on the advent of class society and morality) is mostly drafted and available at: http://www.massline.org/Philosophy/ScottH/MLM-Ethics-Ch4.pdf This includes a discussion of the origin of warfare as a result of the advent of social classes.

Chapters 5 (on bourgeois morality) and 6 (on proletarian morality) are mostly not written yet, but I have an enormous mass of materials relating to both. It is just a matter of sorting through it all, cutting it down, and organizing it.

From a theoretical perspective the most important chapter is number 7 on "Conflicting Class Moralities", and explaining why it is not "inconsistent" to claim *both* that each class has its own morality and at the same time that proletarian morality is *better than* bourgeois morality. This has been called the "central problem of Marxist-Leninist ethics" by some bourgeois writers but it is easy to resolve (though admittedly it involves some subtleties). My brief resolution of this "Central Problem of MLM Ethics" is already posted as an entry in my Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism. (More and more, my DRM is functioning for me as a means of at least getting the most important issues in my various writing projects posted in a preliminary and somewhat abbreviated form.)

Chapter 8 on morality in a future communist society will be short and straight-forward, since once classes and class society are abolished the issue of morality becomes simple and obvious once again. A primary task in chapter 9 on the relationship between utilitarianism and Marxist class interest ethics is to show how Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill destroyed the original quite rational theory of utilitarianism by turning it into a variety of hedonism.

Chapter 10 consists of a number of separate discussions on specific traditional issues and "puzzles" related to ethics, such as fairly short discussions of <u>determinism</u> and <u>free will</u>, <u>compatibilism</u>, <u>consequentialism</u>, and the so-called <u>"Naturalistic Fallacy"</u> and the supposed impossibility of deducing <u>"ought from is"</u>. Another section is on the <u>"ends vs. means"</u> issue, which causes no end to puzzlement in popular discussions of ethics but which is very simple to resolve. Then there is a section on "animal rights" and the basis of morality with regard to other animals, androids and artificial intelligence, and possible extraterrestrials we might meet up with someday. Finally this chapter concludes with a discussion of all the many types of ethical theories and how they relate to each other, which is already available at:

http://www.massline.org/Philosophy/ScottH/MLM-Ethics-FamilyTreeChart.pdf

Chapter 11 will try to rebut any criticisms of the MLM Class Interest Theory of Ethics. Chapter 12 will deal with various pseudo-Marxist ethical theories, and especially the pernicious inroads of Kantianism into Marxist ethical theory. One section on Alain Badiou is available at: http://www.massline.org/Philosophy/ScottH/BadiouAndEthics.pdf

Book on the Mass Line: Current draft entitled "The Mass Line and the American Revolutionary Movement".

The "mass line" is the method of democratically leading the masses in making revolution, the theory of which was developed by Mao. For us would-be revolutionaries, therefore, this is important stuff!

This is the manuscript which I have put the most effort into since I first started working on it around 1978, though I haven't done much more on it over the past decade. There are a planned 43 chapters of which 33 are posted at: http://www.massline.info/mlms/mlms.htm This amounts to about 400 pages of material, which is at least 80% of the final book I think.

The remaining chapters are partially drafted and with sustained effort could probably be finished in four or five months. The one possible exception to this is chapter 38 on the Mass Line and the Political Economy of Socialism. That could actually be expanded into a whole book in itself! Mao himself made a start in that direction with his "Critique of Soviet Economics" (MR Press: 1977). I think I may have to trim my overenthusiastic plan down for that chapter (and perhaps the other remaining chapters too) in order to finish the book.

So why haven't I finished this book long ago? That's a complicated question. As with my other writings, I see plenty of shortcomings in this manuscript that really should be improved on. One of my friends reminded me many years ago that the "The perfect is the enemy of the good". In other words, better to get the book finished—even with some shortcomings—rather than to never get it done by forever trying to make it "perfect". I see the logic in that, but there are other problems too.

One really serious matter is that most of those who have read at least some of what I have posted so far don't seem to get the fundamental point of it at all! Not only don't they seem to understand what the mass line is after reading my manuscript, very few people who read Mao's own writings on the mass line really grasp the main idea. This has puzzled me for decades, though I think I have finally figured out the basic explanation.

A lot of the problem comes in the *name* of this leadership method itself: "the mass line". That sounds like we are talking about a "line" (a political line in the Marxist sense) rather than a *method* of leadership. The name that Mao himself used for this was "the method of 'from the masses, to the masses"—which is vastly better.

Zhou Enlai is said to have come up with the name "mass line" (which presumably originally meant something like "a political line derived from the masses themselves"). But the problem soon came to be that those—even in the leadership of the Communist Party of China (other than Mao)—who talked about the "mass line" were not at all focusing on any method of leadership. Instead, for many of these people (who were later identified as "capitalist-roaders"), it became a mere platitude to cover the policies they were implementing in contradiction to the method of "from the masses, to the masses". Deng Xiaoping, for example, discussed the "mass line" at considerable length in his presentation at the 8th Party Congress in 1956, but there was only one short paragraph in all that verbiage which referred to the central idea of "from the masses, to the masses".

Things got even worse when Lin Biao and his PLA associates issued the "Quotations of Mao Tsetung" in 1966. Although there is much wisdom in this collection, in the section of the "Little Red Book" on the mass line the bulk of the quotations are on more general principles of Marxism, such as that "the masses are the makers of history". Those things are very true, but once again the thrust of this section on the "mass line" was to strongly downplay the central notion of leadership as being "from the masses, to the masses". Most people who call themselves Maoists in the U.S. and around the world get their initial education in Maoist theory by reading the "Little Red Book" (or from comrades who started there), and therefore their basic conception of what the "mass line" is all about is instilled in them from the start in that distorted way. And I have found that no matter how much you emphasize that *the mass line is a method of leadership*, people just cannot change that initial misconception they get from the "Little Red Book" and from their comrades.

What this all means is that, if you really want to get people to focus on the leadership method of "from the masses, to the masses" you've got to *call it that* and stop calling it the "mass line". And this in turn means that my whole mass line book really needs to be revised or rewritten! Even the title needs to be changed to something like: *From the Masses, To the Masses: The Mass Line Method of Democratic Revolutionary Leadership.*

I've often thought to myself that in order to write a good and worthwhile book on the method of revolutionary leadership that Mao theorized and championed I first had to write a not-so-good book and learn a lot more about the topic myself as I proceeded. Writing what I've got so far has been a life-long educational process for me. But now I should really sort of start over. At the very least, finishing the remaining chapters should be done from that revised perspective and at least some revisions should be made in the existing chapters. I think the work should go much, much faster now, once I buckle down on it again. But there is still a whole lot to be done. I hope to be able to accomplish this before I kick the bucket.

• "An Introductory Explanation of Capitalist Economic Crises"

Marx spent much of his life working on the political economy of the capitalist system. You would think this would lead a fair number of his genuine followers to give some very serious attention to the economics of capitalism too. But, surprisingly, not very many do so. Over the

decades I've been continually astounded to discover that very few active American Marxist revolutionaries have even read volume I of *Capital*! Instead, those who do read any significant portion of Marx's work on capitalist political economy tend to be reformist "Marxist" academics, who are generally not real revolutionaries at all! I think Marx would have been very disappointed and puzzled by this bizarre circumstance.

A great many Marxists assume that Marx (perhaps with the additions by Lenin on <u>capitalistimperialism</u>) settled all the important issues in political economy. That's simply not the case. It is not as if there aren't plenty of "open questions" in political economy which obviously need to be answered more thoroughly and persuasively.

In the introduction to my book I ask:

What are the major tasks of Marxist political economy today? I believe that the following list encompasses many of the most important ones:

- 1. To further defend, explicate and develop the theory of capitalist economic crises. This continues to be of great importance because of the unfinished state of Marx's work on this topic, because of some new phenomena or characteristics of capitalism and capitalist crises in the imperialist era, and because of all the many continuing disputes in this area.
- 2. To explain why the Great Depression of the 1930s was so qualitatively more severe than previous economic crises.
- 3. To explain how and why the Great Depression ended. (I.e., was it Keynesian "pump-priming", or World War II, or something else that did it?)
- 4. To explain why the Great Depression did not resume after the end of World War II.
- 5. To explain the long post-World War II capitalist boom. (Not only did the Depression of the 1930s not resume, but there was actually a rapid and powerful *new* expansion of capitalist production during this period.)
- 6. To explain why the recessions which have occurred since World War II have been so mild compared with the Great Depression. [That is, up until the most recent one, the "Great Recession".]
- 7. To explain why the quarter-century post-World War II boom came to an end in the early 1970s, and the long "slow down" that has continued since that time.
- 8. To analyze the current long-term economic crisis as it continues to develop, and to *predict*, at least in rough outline, what will happen with the U.S. and world economy over the next few decades. And to predict how this current crisis might ultimately be resolved, or at least outline several plausible alternatives.
- 9. To critique Soviet-style state monopoly capitalism. To show what it amounted to, and to deepen the Marxist understanding of capitalism in general based on the experience of this new form of capitalism, including our understanding of overall capitalist economic crisis theory.
- 10. To properly sum up all this "globalization" business that we hear so much about today. (And to examine any hypothesized claims of fundamental changes or "new stages" to capitalism or capitalist-imperialism.)
- 11. To more thoroughly explain exactly how imperialist countries exploit the rest of the world.
- 12. To resolve the "transformation problem" and fix any real problems (if they truly exist) with the Labor Theory of Value.

13. To further develop a genuinely Marxist political economy appropriate for socialist society (i.e., the socialist transition period to communist society).

This essay addresses the first 8 topics, and makes a start toward addressing the 9th. The rest of these topics will have to be addressed elsewhere.

So far the draft of the first five chapters of this book are posted at: http://www.massline.org/PolitEcon/crises/index.htm Of these the most original, I think, is chapter 5 which argues that the conditions of capitalist-imperialism in the 20th century led to the splitting of the "industrial cycle" in two—short-term cycles which lead to generally mild recessions, and a long-term cycle that eventually leads to an outright depression. So far as I know, no one else has argued along these lines.

Chapter 6 will be on the Great Depression of the 1930s and the most important point to be made there is what actually caused the end to that Depression. (Namely, the massive destruction of productive capital in World War II and *not* the mere massive Keynesian war deficits which most bourgeois economists falsely believe accomplished this.)

Chapter 7 will talk about the <u>Long Slowdown</u> in the U.S. and world economy that began around 1973 when the <u>post-World War II boom</u> came to an end. This slowdown was first described by others (especially Robert Brenner) but they didn't really understand its true nature and mistakenly suggested that it might even be followed by a new capitalist boom (like that following World War II). Instead, things got worse—with the <u>Great Recession</u> of 2007-2009 (which actually still continues). That will be the subject of Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 will then talk about the current state of the still-developing world capitalist overproduction crisis and make a number of predictions for the future, and especially the main prediction that the crisis will eventually develop into an outright, intractable depression. Actually I already have written a great many letters and essays over recent years which get into the sorts of material and arguments which will be in chapters 6-9. (Many of them are available at: http://www.massline.org/PolitEcon/index.htm)

Chapter 10, on the economic crisis in the state-capitalist Soviet Union which led to its collapse, is somewhat extraneous to this book and it might be wise to keep it very brief.

If I am correct in arguing that the long-developing U.S. and world economic crisis will only continue, and continue to worsen overall, with a series of new financial crises and catastrophes, it might be necessary to put other work aside and focus more on getting this book finished. It is only a matter of how soon such further economic disasters will strike.

• "Is China an Imperialist Country? Considerations and Evidence"

Although I was the lead author of this book, it was actually a joint project with two other main people and therefore published under the collective pseudonym "N.B. Turner". To some

degree it is in reaction to the views of another friend who wrote some things about China and Chinese capitalism today which we disagreed with. And this fairly small book actually got finished! It was formally published by the Canadian radical publisher Kersplebedeb in 2015. It was mostly written in 2013 and was first posted on the http://www.red-path.net website in March 2014. It is also available in digital form elsewhere on the Internet, including at:

http://bannedthought.net/International/Red-Path/01/RP-8.5x11-IsChinaAnImperialistCountry-140320.pdf

Unfortunately we didn't do much of anything to let the world know about this book and it scarcely had any noticeable impact. This will likely be the fate of any of my solely authored books too, even if they do eventually get finished and published. But for now, until the ruling class censors the Internet further (which is inevitable), at least the drafts (or parts of them) will be available there for anyone interested in searching them out.

• Quotations collection: "Quotes and Comments"

This is a more or less defunct project which from the start was mostly prepared for my own use, rather than to ever be published. Since it is impossible to read all the many tens or hundreds of thousands of useful books that have been published over the centuries, the idea was to glean from other quotation collections many of the best ideas in them. And then, where appropriate, to comment on those quotations—as when they are one-sided or undialectical or just plain outrageously wrong.

I started collecting quotations long before the Internet existed and began putting them on my very first PC (the first IBM model) when the only word processing program then available was WordStar. The old PCs which supported WordStar and my Q&C collection have now all broken down and have been tossed out. But I still have a printout of (most) of the entries, which amounts to many hundreds of pages. These could be scanned and posted (with the many cross references ideally converted into hypertext). If I ever run out of more important things to do, I might think about working on this and maybe even expanding it to include a lot more Marxist quotations.

• "Philosophical Doggerel"

Working on this was sort of a fanciful hobby for a while, though I haven't put any effort on it in recent years. When Sara was still working I used to drive down and wait to pick her up at the end of the day, and while I waited I occupied myself by writing limericks and clerihews on philosophical topics in a little notebook. I also added many ditties that others came up with. The results are at: http://www.massline.org/PhilosDog/ Of course there is the potential to greatly expand this collection, though I don't view it as a high priority.

"Dictionary of Revolutionary Marxism"

This is a large and constantly growing collection of definitions of not just Marxist terms, but of general terms it is important to be able to properly understand in reading serious materials on philosophy, political economy and politics from any source. However, all the definitions themselves are written from the Marxist perspective. The home page for this dictionary is at: http://www.massline.org/Dictionary/index.htm

This is the primary writing project I've been working on over the past few years (except for occasional interruptions such as while working on the Chinese Imperialism book). Its roots go back to a glossary I was slowly preparing for my ethics book, at least as far back as the early 1980s. I first started preparing a version in hypertext way back in 1999 when the Internet was just taking off as a mass phenomenon. But then this project stagnated for a decade and only resumed in a significant way in 2009. Since that was also a period of intensified financial crisis in the U.S. and world capitalist economy I began adding a large number of entries on political economy and Marxist politics as well.

I've tried to get other people involved in this project, and several people have submitted some entries. Perhaps, though, because so much of it is clearly from my own personal point of view, others seem reluctant to participate in a major way. One friend disparaged it as "the world according to Scott". And, in truth, it has become something like a "brain dump" of everything I believe.

However, I still think this is a very important project. Younger people are reading fewer and fewer books, and small entries on specific topics in a dictionary might somewhat ameliorate that growing educational disaster. I tried at first to put up a few things on the Wikipedia (such as the original entry on the mass line), but reactionaries kept changing and distorting the entries I put up there. So I had to start a dictionary project where the editorial control would remain in the hands of Marxists.

As I begin to reach the end of my life and time grows short, this sort of project—to at least get some of the important ideas that I've been thinking about posted—seems ever more the better way for me to spend a major part of my remaining time.

It is curious, though, that I seem to be drawn toward not only projects that I may never finish, but even toward open-ended projects that really *cannot possibly be finished*, at least by any single person. I don't worry about this as much as you might think I would because in reality it is extremely rare for anyone to truly finish anything! Most books seem to their authors and readers to be "finished", but in truth they are not. There is always more to say, and things to correct and supersede in what has been written so far. If you want the truly finished result, well then come back at the end of time!

Other projects only dreamed of:

As if it were not enough to have started all the unfinished or even inherently open-ended writing projects mentioned above, I've often thought about starting yet more. Egad! Here are just a few:

- * A book on the labor theory of value This would be an elaboration of some ideas I've put forward in the past, in several letters and essays, which *disagree with Marx* (yup, I'm willing to disagree with anybody when I think they are wrong!) about aspects of his labor theory of value. I strongly suspect (though I'm still not absolutely positive) that Marx's LTV needs some secondary corrections and elucidations. (See the Labor Theory of Value section at: http://www.massline.org/PolitEcon/index.htm)
- * "Revolutionary Democracy" This would be a book contrasting a genuinely democratic society with the absurdly false "democracy" we have under present-day capitalism. In some ways it would be an extension of my mass line book. Although I've collected some relevant materials and notes over the years on this, and have formed sort of a vague mental outline, this project has never gotten off the ground.
- * "The Rise and Fall of State-Capitalism in the Soviet Union" I'm not really capable of writing such a book, though I think there is still a great need for it. I don't think that any extensive existing work on the Soviet Union is really very good. (The materials prepared by the RU/RCP, for example, can't possibly correctly discuss the fundamental economic problems of the USSR when they don't even have a correct understanding of capitalist economic crises in general!)
- * "The Materialist Foundations of Dialectics" Or some such title. This would be directed against academic "Marxists" who are always trying to give dialectics an idealist twist. No real start on this idea.

• Essays and Letters.

Over the decades I've written a large number of letters and essays, mostly to friends and comrades, which largely focus on the main areas of concern for Marxism-Leninism-Maoism: philosophy, political economy and politics. And also some book reviews.

A large number of these (maybe half!) are posted online, mostly on http://www.massline.org/Philosophy/index.htm , http://www.massline.org/Philosophy/index.htm , http://www.massline.org/Politics/index.htm A small number of documents in these sections are written by other people (and my intention has always been to add a lot more by others). There is also an index page which is aimed at providing links to all my writings (but which is very incomplete) at: http://www.massline.org/ScottH/writings.htm

Here are some of my more substantial essays:

- * "Can We Really Understand the World?"
- * "Do We Know For Certain that the Earth Goes Around the Sun?"
- * "The Top Ten Scientific Advances of All Time"
- * "On the Analogy Between Mind/Brain and Software/Hardware"
- * "Chopping Onions and Pragmatism" and its appendix "Critical Letter and Response"
- * "The Impossibility of Infinitely Small Particles"
- * "On the 'Spiritual Aspect of Reality' and Pantheism"
- * "The 'Problem of Altruism"
- * "Report on a Discussion by Bill Martin & Raymond Lotta" With comments against Kantian ethics.
- * "Notes on 'Notes on Political Economy" A long critique of some views of the RCP.
- * "A Virtual Debate with Gandhi about Non-Violence"
- * "Are Cops Really That Bad?"
- * "Lenin on Imperialism"
- * "False Lessons from the Great Depression"
- * "Comments on Sison's Essay"
- * "The 'Capital Shortage' Myth: A Dangerous Error in Political Economy" An early internal criticism of the RCP's erroneous economic views (from when I was a member of the group).
- * "What is Socialism?" A letter to a friend who had some social-democratic leanings.
- * "A Short Introduction to the MLM Conception of Fascism" and a companion entry from the DRM which should go with it: "Fascism—And National Chauvinism and Racism"
- * "On the Question of Multiple Revolutionary Parties"
- * "How Critical Should Revolutionaries Be of Each Other?"
- * "How to 'Fake' the Mass Line" A criticism of the 2001 RCP Programme.
- * "Mao's Evaluations of Stalin" A collection of Mao's comments together with a summary.
- * And there are many more, such as my old essay lamenting the passing of pre-World War II (i.e. pre-Bebop) jazz styles, which I might eventually get around to polishing a bit and posting.

I really hope that in all this massive amount of material there is at least an item or two that y'all might find interesting!

-Scott