Towards an Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861–3
ENRIQUE DUSSEL, Translated from the Spanish by Yolanda Angulo, Edited, with an
Introduction, by Fred Moseley
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Reviewed by CHRIS ARTHUR

For many people, this book will be their first introduction to the leading Latin-American Marx scholar, Enrique Dussel. Although some of his works on the philosophy of liberation have been translated into English, this has not yet been the case with his monumental trilogy devoted to the painstaking study of all Marx’s economic manuscripts.¹ So, the present translation of the second of these, on the 1861–3 manuscript of Marx’s Critique, is to be warmly welcomed; the editor, and the publisher, are to be congratulated on their initiative in bringing it before us. Given this context, the work serves a double function: on the one hand, it provides us with a way into the highly original interpretation of Marx long advocated by Dussel, while, on the other, it is the first work in English devoted solely to the 1861–3 manuscript, effectively the ‘second draft’ of Capital, if the Grundrisse is counted as the first.² No doubt, this second point is the reason for the selection of this middle volume of Dussel’s trilogy for translation first. Marx’s 1861–3 manuscript was published in German from 1976 to 1982, and in English from 1988 to 1994.³ Only now, then, can its importance be understood, and Dussel is an excellent guide to its intricacies. In his view, just as in the Grundrisse, we enter here into Marx’s ‘laboratory’ and see how he constructs his concepts and develops his theories. However, given the just-mentioned double function this book serves, I intend in this review to concentrate more on the overall interpretation of Marx evident here than on providing a detailed account of the 1861–3 manuscript itself.

The 1861–3 manuscript is exceptionally interesting since it covers the period in which the structure of Marx’s Capital was originally laid down.⁴ It includes, in addition

² Dussel holds there were four drafts in all. See Dussel 2001.
⁴ It was while writing this manuscript that Marx first settled on the idea of promoting ‘Capital’ to its title and reducing ‘Critique of Political Economy’ to a sub-title; see Marx to Kugelmann 28 December 1862 in Marx and Engels 1985.
to the well-known *Theories of Surplus-Value* extracted from it, a draft of Book I (Parts 2–4) and a first draft of much of Book III. Dussel’s exposition follows Marx’s manuscript chronologically, section by section, keyed to the English translation. It facilitates our understanding of how Marx clarified his thinking on a number of issues, as well as explaining his confusions and difficulties.

The manuscript starts with ‘Chapter 3, Capital in General’ because it is a sequel to the 1859 *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. In this sense, the 1859 *Contribution* must be regarded as part of the second draft of *Capital*.\(^5\) Here, I must dissent from the claim that Marx’s last three drafts of Volume I start with what became Part Two because ‘this Part is the real conceptual starting point of Marx’s theory’ (p. xvii).\(^6\) They start with Part Two for the much more mundane reason that Part One was already published. It was finally re-done for *Capital’s* 1867 publication, ‘not only for the sake of completeness’, but also because there must have been ‘something lacking in the first presentation’ since no one understood it properly.\(^7\)

In his treatment of the capital relation, Dussel emphasises that, according to Marx’s theory, living labour is the ‘creative source’ of surplus-value. Without living labour, capital cannot valorise itself. That capital is the source of its own profit is an illusion brought about by the deceptive shape of the ‘appearances’ of things. One of the most important strategic moves Dussel makes is the placing of this ‘source’ in ‘exteriority’; it comes from outside the value totality systematised by capital. On this basis, Dussel criticises those, such as Lukács, promoting ‘totality’ as the key concept in Marx. However, Dussel himself retains the category because he is sensitive to the fact that capital does have a totalising drive, and, through its subsumption of labour under its forms, it generates a contradictory unity with its ‘Other’. Nonetheless, Dussel is right to point up the radical otherness of the source of surplus-value from the capital-totality itself. We shall return to this point.

Dussel emphasises that the ‘macroeconomic’ character of Marx’s theory is already evident in the draft of what later become the chapter ‘Contradictions in the General Formula of Capital’. It is argued here that the surplus-value of the capitalist class as a whole cannot be increased through acts of circulation alone, although the profit of individual capitalists may increase at the expense of others.\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Marx to Kugelmann, 13 October 1866.

\(^8\) Unfortunately the text has: ‘new value can emerge from circulation’ (p. 6, end of section); ‘cannot’ was presumably intended.