



# **Marxism and Ethics: Freedom, Desire, and Revolution (Sunny Series in Radical Social and Political Theory)**

*Paul Blackledge*

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## **Marxism and Ethics: Freedom, Desire, and Revolution (Sunny Series in Radical Social and Political Theory)** Paul Blackledge

Accessible introduction to key thinkers of Marxist theory and the debate on the nature of Marxist ethics.

Marxism and Ethics is a comprehensive and highly readable introduction to the rich and complex history of Marxist ethical theory as it has evolved over the last century and a half. Paul Blackledge argues that Marx's ethics of freedom underpin his revolutionary critique of capitalism. Marx's conception of agency, he argues, is best understood through the lens of Hegel's synthesis of Kantian and Aristotelian ethical concepts. Marx's rejection of moralism is not, as suggested in crude materialist readings of his work, a dismissal of the free, purposive, subjective dimension of action. Freedom, for Marx, is both the essence and the goal of the socialist movement against alienation, and freedom's concrete modern form is the movement for real democracy against the capitalist separation of economics and politics. At the same time, Marxism and Ethics is also a distinctive contribution to, and critique of, contemporary political philosophy, one that fashions a powerful synthesis of the strongest elements of the Marxist tradition. Drawing on Alasdair MacIntyre's early contributions to British New Left debates on socialist humanism, Blackledge develops an alternative ethical theory for the Marxist tradition, one that avoids the inadequacies of approaches framed by Kant on the one hand and utilitarianism on the other. "In this important study, Paul Blackledge provides a thorough, detailed and wide-ranging account of the controversies around ethical questions in the history of Marxism." — Marx and Philosophy Review of Books "...in this major new study ... [Blackledge] moves beyond what has become the well-worn ground of the dispute within Marxism between ethical nihilism and universalism and takes the debate onto more substantial and promising new ground." — International Socialism "This book provides impressive evidence of the intellectual and moral strengths of contemporary Marxism. Paul Blackledge has provided the best history so far written of Marxism's engagement with ethics. He enables us to understand Marx's own moral concerns better than Marx himself did. And he has made an incisive contribution to contemporary moral debate. Critics of Marx and Marxism, including sympathetic critics such as myself, will have to take this book very seriously." — Alasdair MacIntyre, author of *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Third Edition Paul Blackledge is Professor of Political Theory at Leeds Metropolitan University. He is the author of *Perry Anderson, Marxism, and the New Left* and *Reflections on the Marxist Theory of History*, and the coeditor (with Graeme Kirkpatrick) of *Historical Materialism and Social Evolution*.

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