

Introduction To Marx And Engels: A Critical Reconstruction (Dimensions of Philosophy)

Richard Schmitt

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This book steers a middle path between those who argue that the theories of Marx and Engels have been rendered obsolete by historical events and those who reply that these theories emerge untouched from the political changes of the last ten years. Marxism has been a theory of historical change that claimed to be able to predict with considerable accuracy how existing institutions were going to change. Marxism has also been a political program designed to show how these inevitable changes could be hastened. Richard Schmitt argues that Marxian predictions are ambiguous and unreliable, adding that the political program is vitiated by serious ambiguities in the conceptions of class and of political and social transformations. Marxism remains of importance, however, because it is the major source of criticisms of capitalism and its associated social and political institutions. We must understand such criticisms if we are to understand our own world and live in it effectively. While very critical of the failures of Marx and Engels, this book offers a sympathetic account of their criticism of capitalism and their visions of a better world, mentions some interpretive controversies, and connects the questions raised by Marx and Engels to contemporary disputes to show continuity between social thought in the middle of the last century and today. Addressed to undergraduate students, the book is easily accessible. It will be important in introductory or middle-level courses in sociology, political theory, critical theory of literature or law. It will also be useful in graduate courses in political theory, sociology, and economics.



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