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Sherwin B. Nuland

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The life and work of the great Italian Renaissance artist and scientist Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) have proved endlessly fascinating for generations. In *Leonardo da Vinci*, Sherwin Nuland completes his twenty-year quest to understand an unlettered man who was a painter, architect, engineer, philosopher, mathematician, and scientist. What was it that propelled Leonardo's insatiable curiosity? Nuland finds clues in his subject's art, relationships, and scientific studies--as well as in a vast quantity of notes that became widely known in the twentieth century. Scholarly and passionate, Nuland's **Leonardo da Vinci** takes us deep into the first truly modern, empirical mind, one that was centuries ahead of its time.

Leonardo Da Vinci: A Life Details

Date : Published January 4th 2005 by Penguin Books (first published November 16th 2000)

ISBN : 9780143035107

Author : Sherwin B. Nuland

Format : Paperback 176 pages

Genre : Biography, Art, Nonfiction, History, Science, Historical, Cultural, Italy

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From Reader Review Leonardo Da Vinci: A Life for online ebook

Elynn says

It was nice because it was a short history, and it was informative, but sometimes got too much into the theoretical (why Leonardo did something) and drew on psychological/sexual impetus for his paintings, especially when it came to the Mona Lisa. Also it spent too much time addressing popular belief that Leonardo was homosexual, which the author believes is possible, without actually giving evidence or reasons why he was (the author discounts the one event that most historians use to justify the homosexuality).

The book was informative and demonstrated Leonardo as first a scientist and an artist second. The tragedy and failure of Leonardo's life (in my opinion) was he was so caught up in learning that he never took time to share the knowledge. After his death it was lost. Many of his discoveries were made hundreds of years before they would be discovered by others. Unfortunately no one knew that since most of his scientific writing was not found until after the fact. He could have advanced medicine by a hundred years if he had taken the time to share his knowledge.

Phil says

A third of the way through this short book I grew very weary of the speculation as to the sexual proclivities (if there were any) of da Vinci. I had not realized Freud had written a major paper on why he thought da Vinci to be gay, the cause of it and the artist's ability to repress all his sexual urges and pour the passion of that repressed sexual love into the making of his art.

Da Vinci himself wrote: "The act of procreation and anything that has any relation to it is so disgusting that human beings would soon die out if there were no pretty faces and sensuous dispositions."

When the author finally moved from this subject, the speculation continued but now it targeted the manner in which da Vinci approached art and science. Da Vinci had not formal education which the author believes saved him from having to later cast off the mistaken ideas that were being marketed as education. Da Vinci mind was never cluttered by their mythic thinking of those who went before him.

I was surprised to find out that painting for him was not his passion. His paintings paid his bills and allowed him the freedom to do what he really wanted to which was to study nature to the point of complete understanding. He was convinced that only in the study of nature could man ever understand themselves. For him man was merely a lesser world made up of everything else that was in the world.

But how do you study nature? Nature moves from cause to experience (his choice of word). To study nature one must reverse the process and go from experience to cause in order to understand its function. He saw in the world proof of a great age with evidence of species appearing and others disappearing. He came very, very close to revealing the secrets of evolution which would not be revealed for another 150 years.

The author who died in 2014 was a physician so his real interest was in da Vinci's anatomical studies. He had every reason to be so. What da Vinci did in drawing the anatomy of the body is a remarkable achievement.

In his lifetime da Vinci dissected many, many bodies and wasted no parts. He drew muscle structure, skeletal diagrams, intestines, the eye, the heart, even the appendix. Page after page he depicted with such clarity every part of the human body.

His most remarkable piece of work came with the study of conception and the subsequent growth of the fetus. His side cut diagram of coitus which changed over time as he began to discover the presence of the cervix which keeps the penis from entering the womb.

Of the penis he remarks: "The penis does not obey the order of its master, who tries to erect and shrink it at will, whereas instead the penis erects freely while its master is asleep. The penis must be said to have a mind of its own by any stretch of the imagination."

Upon his death all his paintings (The Mona Lisa was never delivered to the person who commissioned it, by the way), sculptures, manuscripts, mechanical drawings, animal depictions and the anatomical drawings were all left to a young artist friend who he made executor of his estate. The young man gave different parts of this legacy to various people but kept the anatomical drawings hoping to put them in book form. He did not accomplish this before he died and at his death they were sold and sent to Windsor Castle in a trunk where they stayed unknown for 150 years.

When the trunk was opened and the drawings discovered, William Hunter the famous Scottish anatomist was astounded. Here was everything drawn to scale in exact placement of every muscle, nerve, artery, organ, etc.

Upon this discovery, as the world became aware of what this man accomplished in his lifetime and against such odds, the definition of genius changed. Upon reading this fine little volume, I can only add, as well it should.

Artguy says

In my opinion, which is only backed up by this book, Leonardo Da Vinci is the most fascinatingly brilliant man to ever live. Not only was he a legendary painter, but he made discoveries in areas of anatomy and physiology that weren't otherwise "discovered" in some instances until 1969. He was a sought-after weapons builder in a few wars, a civil engineer tasked with redesigning conquered cities, and a great writer among other things.

What is amazing is that, although he accomplished so much, he could have accomplished a lot more. Two things held him back in his lifetime-- first, his constant financial problems. Either his employers went broke or were killed all too often, or he simply spent too heavily. Second, he was notoriously bad at completing projects, at times working on something for two years before simply walking away.

Here are some of the interesting tidbits I picked up from this book:

1. Only about a third of his notebooks and sketches remain. Occasionally another is found, but he had to relocate often while he lived. He also had to live in fear of the Pope and his minions, who disapproved of his scientific research, and so had to hide much of what he did.
2. He was strikingly handsome (most sketches you see of him are when he was over 60) and an excellent singer, charming and fashionable.

3. He hated Michelangelo and vice versa. At one point, they were both commissioned to do paintings on opposing walls in a great hall in Florence. Both started the project but failed to complete it, partly because the plaster on the walls was such cheap quality!

4. Mona Lisa was probably pregnant during her portrait. Da Vinci never let the Gherardini family have the painting, although they commissioned it. He kept telling them it wasn't quite done.

5. Da Vinci was more than likely homosexual. Of all his notes and journal entries, very little is devoted to sexuality outside of the study of anatomy. On one occasion he described sexual intercourse as disgusting.

6. Da Vinci made multiple radical discoveries about the human body, being the first in numerous instances to understand how it functioned. Although at times he was also wrong, his determinations about the heart, the circulation system, the bowels, and musculature were centuries ahead of his time. In one particular instance, he identified "excess nutrition" as the cause of most deaths in the elderly, citing the thickening and closure of the arteries. Atherosclerosis, identifying this nutrition as cholesterol, was not officially recognized until 1969. Understand, the concept of blood flow through the body was not correctly understood by the scientific community until the late 1800's and nutrition until the early 1900's. Da Vinci did all this even though he had no medical training and only worked on 10 human cadavers.

7. He was vegetarian. He did a lot of research on the bodies of animals, but always after they died naturally or by some other hand (with the exception of one frog he pithed).

Ashok Suthar says

Short read.. Gives brief info about life of Leonardo Da Vinci.

Tamara Jill says

I wasn't thrilled until about 30 pages in but then I got hooked. This book focuses on Leonardo the scientist-researcher rather than Leonardo the artistic genius, although the short analysis of Mona Lisa was fascinating. I feel a bit vindicated that I'm always doing too much and not finishing projects - just channelling my inner-Leonardo who apparently left nearly every project halfway (or less) done.

Chad says

So I knew Leonardo was an artist, anatomist, engineer, and had a cameo in Ever After (my wife made me watch it). It was about time I learned more.

I found Leonardo to be enthralling. I loved his insatiable curiosity. I empathized with his habit of beginning so many projects and having a tough time finishing them. I found it interesting how he began studying anatomy in order to be a better artist, but it appears shifted to being an artist to that he could further study anatomy. I find it fascinating that he invented (at least in concept) what some think were precursors to smokescreens, tanks, and flying machines. This particular biography focused most on his anatomical work that was hundreds of years before its time.

There were many aspects of his life that I didn't admire, but he was still worth studying.

I loved the author's scholarly restraint. He was very careful not to make too many logical leaps, and when he proposed one, he responsibly couched it in what evidence there was.

I enjoyed this book.

123sami says

When I came across this book, I figured that it would be a boring biography of unimportant things in Leonardo's life, but I took it anyway, because it looked short. I have been interested in this person, Leonardo Da Vinci, for a few years now and wanted to know a bit more about him. It took me a little while to adjust to the book due to the author's vast and distinct vocabulary. After the twentieth page, I started to become more fluent with the book by understanding how it was written. It was just a matter of getting used to it. This book was extremely insightful on Leonardo's life, and even went so far as to separate the book into sections. This way, the reader could almost summarize to his or herself the events that occurred. Within the book, the author put a few of Leonardo Da Vinci's sketches and drawings, which in my opinion the author put so as to respect Da Vinci's presumption that artwork was superior at description than anything else including words. Leonardo Da Vinci: A Life is mainly focused on the Vincian's anatomical discoveries, which like all of his other discoveries, are magnificent.

The author starts of Leonardo's life by mentioning a journey taken to his supposed birthplace. Nuland does not truly know if where he went was Da Vinci's birthplace, and some may never know. The biography goes in depth to look at the psychological feelings of Leonardo Da Vinci during his adult years and see if they correlate at all with the events of his childhood, which includes his unknown mother, the father that left him, and his rise to fame as the new shining star of Florence. The psychological issues and debates chosen by Nuland describe Da Vinci's outlook on life, his sexuality, his personality, his friendships, and his curiosity. Nuland, as well as many of the people Nuland references, call Leonardo a man who is centuries ahead of his time. Sherwin Nuland describes with precise detail of the works and research Leonardo has done and the areas he has been. Da Vinci was part of Italian and French politics while ascending from the status of prodigy to full blown genius and master of the arts. He is also one of the most famous polymaths ever to exist by being a painter, sculptor, anatomist, engineer, inventor, cartographer, geologist, botanist, musician, writer, mathematician, architect, and philosopher. He has been named by many as the archetype of the Renaissance man. Nuland displays this with a large amount of finesse. This book shows Leonardo's highest and lowest points and describes each event of his with detail, from his visits to Milan, Florence, and his final resting place: Rome.

Shuvam Nayak says

1. What do I feel about the book overall?

The book about which I am going to give my review is titled as Leonardo Da Vinci. The author of this book is Sherwin B. Nuland. The book is published under the Penguin lives series by the Penguin publication. It is the edition of 2005. Now before I begin my review on the book I would like to give a brief introduction about the author. Mr. Nuland is a famous surgeon and is known popularly for his book How we die? The

point that he is a surgeon is important to understand the overall taste of this book.

As the name suggests the book deals with the life of the legendary painter Leonardo Da Vinci. But it's just not the collection of historical notes on Leonardo that is assembled in this book. This book is the tryst of the author to understand the anatomist in Leonardo. The author has done complete justice to describe the Leonardo in simple words and complete sense ie. He describes Leonardo's life as painter, sculpture, architect, without deviating from the main topic of Leonardo as an anatomist.

Overall the book serves its purpose well in demonstrating the life of Leonardo in a lucid manner. In fact, the very attempt at compiling and presenting the life and works of Leonardo in an organized manner is a Herculean task. In the sense, that the person to this date is a mystery which might not be resolved for coming years. On top of that, the very nature of the subject and his varied life and varied interest made sure that no author in future will find it easy document his life in a single lucid manner. But the author has done a great job on this part.

2. The Central theme

For this review, I have structured the talk in 4 parts. First, I will talk about the main theme and the underlying principle of the book. Then next, I will talk about the parts where I feel the books could have done better to improve the overall experience. After that, I will talk about the part where book performs well and I will conclude my talk one the excerpt from the book.

Coming to the main topic, Since the author himself is a surgeon it is only natural for such a person to write about Leonardo Da Vinci on the light of his work in the field of anatomy. But to give the complete picture about the author's hero, the author has dedicated half of the book on the timeline of events of Leonardo to demonstrate just how great his hero is. Starting from his birth in Venice to his death at Amboise and everything in between.

One fun fact that I got to learn is that although we all know Leonardo as the painter of Mona Lisa and the Last Supper and regard him as the greatest painter, he considered painting as a seer distraction from his passion of science and maths. In simple words Leonardo hated painting and this fact has been proven in the book where the author points out numerous event where Leonardo started the painting project but left it incomplete. Many of his works that we know are still incomplete for example Saint Jerome and Adoration of the Magi

Leonardo was more interested in learning about the deep secrets of nature and for that, he invested heavily in various fields of science ranging from optics, perspective, and vision to cartography, watershed management, and geology. He was also one of the earliest who had expertise in Architecture, flight, and advanced weaponry. He was one of the earliest people to view the human body in terms of mechanics, geometry, and relationship among different parts as a whole.

3. The weak points.

Now coming to the aspect where I felt the book could have done better is the picture to illustrate the works of Leonardo, especially when he was explaining the expertise of the Leonardo in drawing the human parts. Although there are few pictures like the one depicting the fetus of around 5th month in the uterus and the comparison between Leonardo's drawing to that of Galen's medicine from 2nd century which was prevalent at that time, more of it would only help the readers to appreciate the drawings of the Leonardo.

Nonetheless, the author has done a great deal in describing the great discovery that Leonardo has made during his adventure as an anatomist. For example, the Leonardo first worked on the geometrical aspect of the body whose finest example is the famous Vitruvian man also called the Leonardo Man. Also, he was the first person to carry out the drawing of different parts of muscles and bones with minute accuracy, which dates back 3 or 4 decades before the work of the father of anatomy Andreas Vesalius.

4. Pros of the books

The two greatest discovery by the Leonardo in anatomy are the sinuses of Valsalva which was not known to mankind until it was discovered in 1912. And the discovery about how human perceive or view objects through the eye. The working of the eye was discovered by Leonardo when he was just 30 years old and for him to accomplish this task he had to study optics, perspective, the anatomy of eye and brain all at the same

time to comprehend the complete nature of image formation in human mind. He was the 1st person to suggest that the image is formed by lights converging at retina in opposite to what was believed at that time that the image was formed at the lens of the eye.

The author also shows us the other aspect of the Leonardo about which I was completely unaware. Like he was a fan of designing instruments of mass destruction. From Leonardo's notebooks, many sketches can be found that resembles early prototypes of tanks, advanced catapults, and helicopters. At the same time, he was engaged in the study of mechanics and motion and on that note, he published the book titled "On the flight of birds".

The book neatly divides the life of the author into chronological order and thereby describes the challenges that the hero had to face at that time to sustain himself and his passion. His 1st problem was the unstable politics of Italy. Due to this, he had to travel a various number of times in his lifetime, because of which his many original works are missing. The 2nd-second reason was his impulsive nature of leaving the commission work uncompleted due to which he had a difficult time in managing his finance to continue his pursuit in science.

Many authors and critics at that time criticized Leonardo for his incomplete work of painting and his habit of leaving his painting incomplete for his pursuit in science and natural science, but after his death, did the people recognize the importance of work done by the Leonardo in the various field where ever Leonardo has stepped in. As per the author, Leonardo "woke up too early in the darkness when everyone else was sleeping". Had Leonardo had access to better technology or would have taken birth a century or later, mankind would have benefitted from his in-depth knowledge of science and maths.

5. Quotes

In the end, I would like to end with the line of reference from another book named The subtle art of not giving a fuck by Mark Manson. In one of his chapter, he mentions that no man is great or less. If a person excels in one field then he must be less great in another field. In that way, he was talking about the idea of balance in life. But after reading about the Leonardo, I feel that true polymath does exist on earth and such polymath contribute to humanity in a way which the earth will much. So If you are fascinated about Leonardo and want to know more about this guy then I would definitely recommend you to read this book. I would like to end the speech with this quote of Leonardo Da Vinci on time. "In rivers, the water that you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of that which comes; so with present time."

Thank you.

Hans Ostrom says

It's very good on discussing the unbelievably broad range of topics and concepts Da Vinci investigated. It's not very good on the personal life and seems confused when trying to discuss his sexuality (tired references to Freud).

Bill Ibelle says

Love the concept of the short biography series but have found it fairly uneven. Some of them have been marvelous, some just so-so. This fell somewhere in the middle. I wasn't aware of how little da Vinci finished, and it was interesting to learn about what a force he was in his time. But it seemed lacking in personality and detail, maybe because so little is known about the details of his life.

Could have focused more on the art and inventions, if there isn't much biography to work with.

I would still recommend this for some quick background.

Laura says

I am disappointed in this book. I thought that Penguin Lives were intended for a generalist audience, but if so I think they made a mistake in the selection of their author, who as a surgeon is not unsurprisingly most interested in Leonardo's work on anatomy. He devotes about a third of the short book to it.

I also disagree with two of the author's theories—that Leonardo's sexuality was caused by a Freudian repressed longing for his mother (I'm astounded that a serious scientist and scholar would give as much credence in 2000 to this theory as the author does), and that he was repressed sexually, for which he gives little evidence other than "everybody knows" and one passage Leonardo wrote, as if what he wrote was automatically equivalent to what he actually did.

I also realized what I should have already known, that as a voracious reader and lover of long books I am probably not Penguin Lives ideal reader.

Barbara M says

Leonardo da Vinci was a gifted and brilliant man - way ahead of his time! He was a painter, architect, engineer, philosopher, mathematician, and scientist.

This slim volume (170 pages) is a quick read that provides an overview of Leonardo's early life and accomplishments.

The author, Sherwin Nuland, is a surgeon. The section of the book on Leonardo's contributions to the study of anatomy and medicine were very well done. It's clear the author appreciated the brilliance of Leonardo and understood that his contributions were way ahead of his time.

I also enjoyed the end of the book where the author discussed what happened to Leonardo's work after he passed away. Unfortunately, some of it was lost. The work that has been preserved can be found in different places around the world and the author details how it wound up in these different places. This was interesting to read about and new information for me.

The author theorizes that Leonardo was homosexual and sublimated his sexuality into his work. According to the author, the sublimation led to the huge and varied volumes of work produced by Leonardo. I don't agree with the author. I don't think the fact that the author was unable to find proof of a lover means that Leonardo did not have a sex life - he may have kept it private. I think that Leonardo was highly intelligent and his inquisitive nature was one of his gifts and part of his intelligence. The author spent too much time talking about his theory of sublimation. What was important was Leonardo's gifts to the world.

I had the opportunity to visit a museum that had one of the largest collections of Leonardo's works. I was amazed by all he had accomplished in his life and the diversity of his gifts.

Deborah Ideiosepius says

This was a beautiful little book in which the author sung the praises of Leonardo Da Vinci as an artist, visionary, scientist and anatomist. As a surgeon himself a large portion of the book looked at the development of Da Vinci's anatomical skills and the formidable powers of observation that led him to discover and describe features of the human body, in some cases hundreds of years before they were rediscovered.

However, it is not really possible to describe Da Vinci in isolation from his artwork, so the book does trace his early years and the skills and talents that made him so incredibly well known even in his lifetime and pretty much eternal fame thereafter.

Thoroughly enjoyed the light touch of the writing, as a non-fiction book it did well in not bogging down in surmises -since so much about Da Vinci is conjecture- and keeping the reader hooked on the narrative.

Susan says

I was not a fan on how strongly Nuland focused on Leonardo Da Vinci's sexuality, as though it were such a defining characteristic to his persona. However, seeing as though he mentions multiple historians speculate it, I suppose that warrants a necessity to discuss it. However, still with that in mind, I don't think it warrants an in-depth questioning. I did take into account the year this was written, however, as it may have been more entertaining to speculate in earlier years. I understand it may have held some minor impact on himself as an artist or observer of the life around him, yet it certainly wasn't worth a chapter or two upon it.

What I did like walking away with was some scope of who he was - with the little he left behind for historians to churn over - and his intrigue on the world around him (and his society's lack of interest on science and what he felt important). I loved hearing his captivation on sharing the knowledge he obtained on the human body by drawing it in multiple angles prior never imagined - even by doctors and surgeons on the era. (Scary to ponder!) He was a man ahead of his time and always questioning the ways of his society about him. That was a wonderful take-away from this novel.

What I also loved to marvel and relate to, as a semi-artist myself, is da Vinci's capability to leave things unfinished. Prior to this reading, that is something---

Ryan says

4. 1888 English Edition

The Manifesto was published as the platform of the Communist League, a working men's association, first exclusively German, later on international, and under the political conditions of the Continent before 1848, unavoidably a secret society. At a Congress of the League, held in November 1847, Marx and Engels were commissioned to prepare a complete theoretical and practical party programme. Drawn up in German, in January 1848, the manuscript was sent to the printer in London a few weeks before the French Revolution of February 24. A French translation was brought out in Paris shortly before the insurrection of June 1848. The first English translation, by Miss Helen Macfarlane, appeared in George Julian Harney's Red Republican, London, 1850. A Danish and a Polish edition had also been published.

The defeat of the Parisian insurrection of June 1848 — the first great battle between proletariat and bourgeoisie — drove again into the background, for a time, the social and political aspirations of the European working class. Thenceforth, the struggle for supremacy was, again, as it had been before the Revolution of February, solely between different sections of the propertied class; the working class was reduced to a fight for political elbow-room, and to the position of extreme wing of the middle-class Radicals. Wherever independent proletarian movements continued to show signs of life, they were ruthlessly hunted down. Thus the Prussian police hunted out the Central Board of the Communist League, then located in Cologne. The members were arrested and, after eighteen months' imprisonment, they were tried in October 1852. This celebrated "Cologne Communist Trial" lasted from October 4 till November 12; seven of the prisoners were sentenced to terms of imprisonment in a fortress, varying from three to six years. Immediately after the sentence, the League was formally dissolved by the remaining members. As to the Manifesto, it seemed henceforth doomed to oblivion.

When the European workers had recovered sufficient strength for another attack on the ruling classes, the International Working Men's Association sprang up. But this association, formed with the express aim of welding into one body the whole militant proletariat of Europe and America, could not at once proclaim the principles laid down in the Manifesto. The International was bound to have a programme broad enough to be acceptable to the English trade unions, to the followers of Proudhon in France, Belgium, Italy, and Spain, and to the Lassalleans in Germany.

Marx, who drew up this programme to the satisfaction of all parties, entirely trusted to the intellectual development of the working class, which was sure to result from combined action and mutual discussion. The very events and vicissitudes in the struggle against capital, the defeats even more than the victories, could not help bringing home to men's minds the insufficiency of their various favorite nostrums, and preparing the way for a more complete insight into the true conditions for working-class emancipation. And Marx was right. The International, on its breaking in 1874, left the workers quite different men from what it found them in 1864. Proudhonism in France, Lassalleanism in Germany, were dying out, and even the conservative English trade unions, though most of them had long since severed their connection with the International, were gradually advancing towards that point at which, last year at Swansea, their president could say in their name: "Continental socialism has lost its terror for us." In fact, the principles of the Manifesto had made considerable headway among the working men of all countries.

The Manifesto itself came thus to the front again. Since 1850, the German text had been reprinted several times in Switzerland, England, and America. In 1872, it was translated into English in New York, where the translation was published in Woorhull and Claflin's Weekly. From this English version, a French one was made in *Le Socialiste* of New York. Since then, at least two more English translations, more or less mutilated, have been brought out in America, and one of them has been reprinted in England. The first Russian translation, made by Bakunin, was published at Herzen's *Kolokol* office in Geneva, about 1863; a second one, by the heroic Vera Zasulich, also in Geneva, in 1882. A new Danish edition is to be found in *Socialdemokratisk Bibliothek*, Copenhagen, 1885; a fresh French translation in *Le Socialiste*, Paris, 1886. From this latter, a Spanish version was prepared and published in Madrid, 1886. The German reprints are not to be counted; there have been twelve altogether at the least. An Armenian translation, which was to be published in Constantinople some months ago, did not see the light, I am told, because the publisher was afraid of bringing out a book with the name of Marx on it, while the translator declined to call it his own production. Of further translations into other languages I have heard but had not seen. Thus the history of the Manifesto reflects the history of the modern working-class movement; at present, it is doubtless the most wide spread, the most international production of all socialist literature, the common platform acknowledged by millions of working men from Siberia to California.

Yet, when it was written, we could not have called it a socialist manifesto. By Socialists, in 1847, were understood, on the one hand the adherents of the various Utopian systems: Owenites in England, Fourierists in France, both of them already reduced to the position of mere sects, and gradually dying out; on the other hand, the most multifarious social quacks who, by all manner of tinkering, professed to redress, without any

danger to capital and profit, all sorts of social grievances, in both cases men outside the working-class movement, and looking rather to the "educated" classes for support. Whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere political revolutions, and had proclaimed the necessity of total social change, called itself Communist. It was a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive sort of communism; still, it touched the cardinal point and was powerful enough amongst the working class to produce the Utopian communism of Cabet in France, and of Weitling in Germany. Thus, in 1847, socialism was a middle-class movement, communism a working-class movement. Socialism was, on the Continent at least, "respectable"; communism was the very opposite. And as our notion, from the very beginning, was that "the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself," there could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take. Moreover, we have, ever since, been far from repudiating it. The Manifesto being our joint production, I consider myself bound to state that the fundamental proposition which forms the nucleus belongs to Marx. That proposition is: That in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which it is built up, and from that which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; That the history of these class struggles forms a series of evolutions in which, nowadays, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class — the proletariat — cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class — the bourgeoisie — without, at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinction, and class struggles.

This proposition, which, in my opinion, is destined to do for history what Darwin's theory has done for biology, we both of us, had been gradually approaching for some years before 1845. How far I had independently progressed towards it is best shown by my *Conditions of the Working Class in England*. But when I again met Marx at Brussels, in spring 1845, he had it already worked out and put it before me in terms almost as clear as those in which I have stated it here.

From our joint preface to the German edition of 1872, I quote the following:

"However much that state of things may have altered during the last twenty-five years, the general principles laid down in the Manifesto are, on the whole, as correct today as ever. Here and there, some detail might be improved. The practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and, for that reason, no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today. In view of the gigantic strides of Modern Industry since 1848, and of the accompanying improved and extended organization of the working class, in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February Revolution, and then, still more, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months, this programme has in some details been antiquated. One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes." (See *The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association 1871*, where this point is further developed.) Further, it is self-evident that the criticism of socialist literature is deficient in relation to the present time, because it comes down only to 1847; also that the remarks on the relation of the Communists to the various opposition parties (Section IV), although, in principle still correct, yet in practice are antiquated, because the political situation has been entirely changed, and the progress of history has swept from off the Earth the greater portion of the political parties there enumerated.

"But then, the Manifesto has become a historical document which we have no longer any right to alter."

The present translation is by Mr Samuel Moore, the translator of the greater portion of Marx's *Capital*. We have revised it in common, and I have added a few notes explanatory of historical allusions.

Fredrick Engels

London, January 30, 1888

