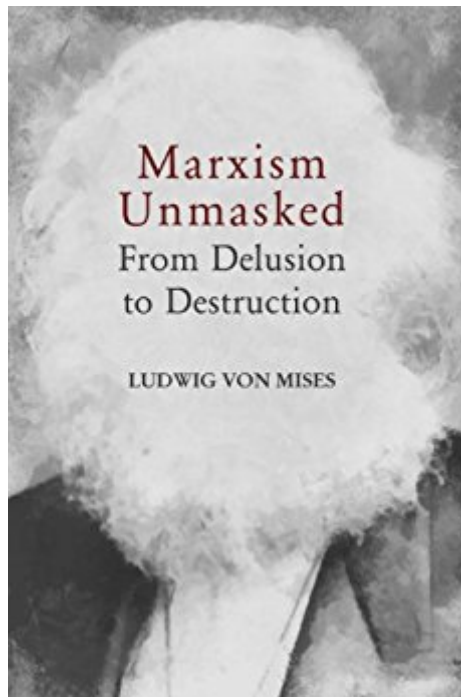


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Marxism Unmasked (LvMI)



Synopsis

We can't sit at the feet of Mises at his famous Vienna private seminar. We can't go back in time and attend his New York seminar, or follow him to the speaking engagements that he held in the 1950s and '60s. But we do have access to what he said. He is warm, funny, passionate, and learned. This book provides a candid look at the man and his teaching style. It demonstrates his dazzling command over the material, and teaches in a breezier way than his treatises. This volume contains nine lectures delivered over one week, from June 23 to July 3, 1952, at the San Francisco Public Library. Mises was at his prime as a teacher and lecturer. He shares a lifetime of learning on topics that were (and remain) central to American public life. As the title indicates, his main focus is on Marxism. He discusses Marx and his place in the history of ideas, the destruction wrought by his dangerous ideology, the manner in which his followers have covered up his errors, and how the Marxists themselves have worked for so long to save Marxism from itself. He discusses Marxist claims about history and refutes the Marxist smear of the Industrial Revolution. The approach is systematic but casual, so the reader encounters wonderful insights in the form of short asides. For example, "The worst thing that can happen to a socialist is to have his country ruled by socialists who are not his friends." As a lecturer, Mises is steady and relentless. The reader can nearly "hear" him speaking through the prose. And there are times when he reveals a level of rhetorical passion that you would never encounter in print. That's because what is printed here are not prepared lectures. They were transcribed by Bettina Bien Greaves from what he actually said. Thus can we hear this passage: "It is not true, as Marx said, that the improvements in technology are available only to the exploiters and that the masses are living in a state much worse than on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. Everything the Marxists say about exploitation is absolutely wrong! Lies! In fact, capitalism made it possible for many persons to survive who wouldn't have otherwise." Some readers of Mises's larger works have said that while his rigor is dazzling, the man himself can seem remote. Whether or not you agree with this observation, Mises comes across in these lectures as brilliant but very warm and charming in an old world sense. To search for Mises Institute titles, enter a keyword and LvMI (short for Ludwig von Mises Institute); e.g., Depression LvMI

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Customer Reviews

The book is a print of lectures given by Ludwig von Mises in 1952. There is a long introduction to the book by Richard M. Ebeling which covers the impact of Marxism, and the world of 1952 which von Mises was speaking to. Von Mises may have been the first to attack Marxism and socialism at the core of their philosophy. Von Mises points to the outright contradictions in Marxist theory, as well as the confusion caused by Marx's lack of clear definitions. The problem with dialectical materialism, for example. Materialism has two meanings; one refers to man as a machine, and the second holds that ideas are simply secretions of the brain. The materialist hold that ideas create the same response in everyone. Von Mises points out this is clearly false. To the materialist the "material productive forces" of history are the basis of everything because they determine the kind of property ownership that exists. Capitalism or feudalism are automatic responses produced by a certain stage of productive forces & property ownership. Marx thinks these material productive forces are tools and machines. New tools and machines would lead to socialism. Von Mises points out that tools and machines result from ideas and "The origins of these ideas cannot be explained by something which is possible only in a society, which is itself the product of these ideas." Thus, ideas are not the product of tools and machines, but the other way round. The lectures also key in on Marx's lack of definitions. Class is never defined by Marx. This is critical because Marx based all his ideas on class. For example, Marx believed you would think according to your class interest; thus, we must know what class is to know what your thinking will be.

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