

Karl Marx in the Dialectic of Continental Philosophy

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Karl Marx's work is typical of continental philosophy insofar as his writings combine philosophy with material from other disciplines to carry out a critique of the present age. Continental philosophers as disparate as Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Foucault developed original theoretical perspectives on their current socio-historical situation with imposing intellectual inquiry that often synthesized philosophy with history, social theory, literature, or the sciences. Marx, of course, goes well beyond the confines of traditional university philosophy. His thought is identified with Marxism, a socialist and revolutionary movement that has been a philosophical and politico-historical force since the 1860s, and has often been embraced or vilified because of the embeddedness of his ideas within history.

In this chapter, I will argue that while Marxism as a political movement and force has been vitiated with the collapse of "actually existing socialism" in the late 1980s,¹ as a theory Marxism still has much to offer. I will situate Marx's thought within the epoch of modernity that he so acutely theorizes and the dialectic of continental philosophy, interpreted as transdisciplinary interrogation of the contemporary epoch. In this reading, the thought of Karl Marx emerges from the ashes of communism as one of the enduring continental philosophies that provides a grand philosophical synthesis of existing knowledge of history, society, economy, politics, and culture and sharp critical perspectives on modern societies. From this vantage point, far from being an outmoded 19th century philosophy and failed utopian project, Marxism provides dialectical methods of inquiry that contain new ways of seeing and thinking about the world, original philosophical perspectives, and radical critique of modern society and culture.

The Life and Times of a Revolutionary Hegelian

Karl Marx was born in Trier, Germany on May 5, 1818, in a provincial region of the Rhineland that was strongly influenced by the culture of nearby France. Marx's ancestors were Jewish, though his father Heinrich converted to Christianity in order to preserve his job as lawyer and government official. Karl's upbringing was thoroughly secular and both his father and his schooling immersed young Marx in Enlightenment humanism, while Ludwig von Westphalen, the father of Karl's childhood sweetheart and later wife, Jenny, introduced Marx to the radical ideas of the French Revolution and to French utopian thinkers.¹

Thus, young Marx was exposed to modern ideas in a primarily premodern milieu. It was not until his entry into the University at Berlin in 1836 that Marx systematically studied Hegel and in the heated atmosphere of the Young Hegelian movement became involved in contemporary philosophical debates. Marx's Ph.D. dissertation was a comparative analysis of "The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," written between 1839-1841, and accepted in Jena in 1841. In a thundering conclusion, which anticipated his emerging philosophical-political project, Marx wrote:

As in the history of philosophy there are nodal points which raise philosophy in itself to concretion, apprehend abstract principles in a totality, and thus break off the rectilinear process, so also there are moments when philosophy turns its eyes to the external world, and no longer apprehends it, but as a practical person, weaves, as it were, intrigues with the world, emerges from the transparent kingdom of Amenthes and throws itself on the beast of the worldly siren... as Prometheus, having stolen fire from heaven, begins to build houses and to settle upon the earth, so philosophy, expanded to be the whole world, turns against the world of appearance. The same now with the philosophy of Hegel (MER 10-11).

From Hegel, Marx appropriated a mode of critical and reflexive thought which reworked motifs from Enlightenment rationalism, attacking obsolete forms of thought and society, while developing his own mode of thought and critique. In several early essays, Marx called for, in Enlightenment fashion, the "realization of reason" and a "ruthless criticism" of everything existing (CW3: 142). For the young Marx, "realizing the thoughts of the past" meant fulfilling the Enlightenment ideas of freedom, reason, equality, and democracy (CW3: 144). When he spoke of the "realization of philosophy" in an essay on Hegel, he envisaged the consummation of the Enlightenment project (CW3: 187), translating Enlightenment ideas into socio-political reality.

Hegel, of course, believed that reason was already realized in the Prussian state, but Marx's early essays assert that conditions in Germany were extremely backward, debased, anachronistic, and irrational (CW3: 176ff.). Using an analogy concerning the role of the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution and the situation of the proletariat in the contemporary era, Marx argued that the proletariat was a universal class that represented general suffering and the need for revolution (CW3: 186f). For Hegel, the monarch and bureaucracy represented the universal interests of the polity, while for Marx these were false universals, refuted by the suffering of the proletariat, whose interests were not incorporated into the bourgeois state. The proletariat, by contrast, represented for Marx universal interests in emancipation and its mission was to overthrow capitalism -- an event that Marx concluded was necessary to fulfill the promises of the Enlightenment.

Marx also took up Hegel's concept of stages of history and expanded on Hegel's notion that the present age was distinctive and original, marking a rupture with the past. In his Preface to The Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel wrote:

It is surely not difficult to see that our time is a time of birth and transition to a new period. The spirit has broken with what was hitherto the world of its existence and imagination and is about to submerge all this in the past; it is at work giving itself a new form. To be sure, the spirit is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressing motion.... the spirit that educates itself matures slowly and quietly toward the new form, dissolving one particle of the edifice of its previous world after the other, This gradual crumbling... is interrupted by the break of day that, like lightning, all at once reveals the edifice of the new world (1965 [1807]: 380).

Hegel's followers in the 1830s and 1840s, after his death, took up the theme of the uniqueness of the present age and the possibilities of ascent to a higher stage of history. It would be Marx's life-work to provide an historical account of the origins and trajectory of the modern world. Hegel, by contrast, never really delineated the features of modernity, nor produced a detailed sociological analysis of the present age. Marx replicated Hegel's prodigious research in his effort to depict the birth and genesis of modern societies and their key stages of historical development. Marx primarily investigated political and economic history, rather than cultural history, which was Hegel's focus.

For the Young Hegelians, the key to individual and social emancipation was liberation from religion, thus Marx and the progressive students of his generation saw modern thought and the modern age as quintessentially secular.¹ They were deeply influenced by the biblical criticism of David Strauss (1835) and the anthropological critique of religion developed by Ludwig Feuerbach (1957 [1841]). Strauss put in question the divinity of the Gospels by detailed textual analysis of the contradictions in the life of Jesus in the various Gospels. Marx's close friend Bruno Bauer challenged their authenticity, claiming that the biblical stories were sheer myth. Feuerbach disclosed the anthropological origins of religion in the need to project idealized features of human beings onto a godhead who was worshipped and submitted to. Feuerbach's trenchant critique reduced theology to philosophical anthropology and claimed that humans worshipped their alienated human powers in religious devotion, fetishizing human powers as divine.

The early Marx followed the young Hegelians in producing a critique of religion and the state. The American and French revolutions spurred new theories of radical democracy, which inspired Marx and his cohorts to criticize the old autocratic order that still dominated most of Europe. These "bourgeois" revolutions produced discourses that labelled "forms of inequality as illegitimate and anti-natural," and thus called attention to historically produced "forms of oppression." Relations of subordination such as serf/lord, or capital/labor, were presented as relations of domination, which Marx denounced while calling for their elimination.

Association with the Young Hegelian group of philosophical radicals in Berlin meant that Marx could not attain a teaching position in Germany and so with philosophy Ph.D. in hand, he travelled to Cologne in 1842 and got a job with the Rheinische Zeitung, soon after becoming its editor at the age of twenty-four. Young Marx discovered the importance of economic conditions and the impact of capitalism in his work with the newspaper, writing articles on freedom of trade debates, bourgeois agitation for extended railways, reduction of taxes, and common toll and custom duties (CW1: 224ff). He also discovered the plight of the poor, covering the trial of Mosel valley peasants accused of stealing wood from what used to be common land, but which was now declared to be private property. In addition, Marx championed Enlightenment ideas by attacking new Prussian censorship regulations and restrictions on divorce law, publishing some of the most striking articles ever penned on behalf of freedom of the press (CW1: 109ff and 132ff).

Yet until his move to Paris in 1843, Marx lived in a relatively provincial and premodern Germany and was not really exposed first-hand to the emerging industrial-capitalist society, or to the working-class movement. In Paris, Marx began studying the French Revolution and then the

classics of bourgeois political economy. He intended to support himself as co-editor of a German-French Yearbook, which was terminated after one issue; it was seized by police on the German border. Marx's article declaring "war on Germany" and supporting proletarian revolution (CW3: 175ff) caused him to lose his German citizenship rights, making him an exile, first in France and later in Belgium and England where he would spend most of the rest of his life until his death in 1883.

The German-French Yearbook included some important early essays of Marx and a "Critique of Political Economy" by Friedrich Engels who was to become Marx's collaborator and life-long friend.¹ Engels was born in the northern German industrial city of Barman in 1820. His father was a factory-owner and Engels went to work in the family firm at 17. After several years of clerical labor in Barmen and Bremen, Engels spent a year in military service in Berlin in 1841-1842, where he became involved with the Young Hegelians. Engels was then sent to England in 1842 to learn the business of factory production in his father's factory, which was situated in the industrial heart of the most advanced capitalist society of the day. In addition to studying industrial production, Engels explored the new working class life in England, compiling materials for a book that he published in 1845, The Condition of the Working Class in England (CW4: 295ff).

Marx began seriously studying economics in Paris in 1843-1844 and after an encounter with Engels in Paris in 1844, he intensified his economic studies. Convinced that the rise of capitalism was the key to modern society and history, Marx sketched out his analysis in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. This text, unpublished in his lifetime, presented his initial perspectives on modern societies in terms of a sketch of the alienation of labor under capitalism and its projected emancipation (CW3: 231ff).¹ Marx's Paris manuscripts revealed that he had intensely studied classical political economy, French theories of revolution and socialism, and German philosophy, the three key components of what would emerge as the distinctive Marxian synthesis. Marx's early theoretical optic viewed modern society as a product of industrial capitalism, criticized alienation, oppression, and exploitation from the standpoint of the ideals of the Enlightenment and German philosophy, and called for revolution to realize the positive potential of modernity while eliminating its negative features.

Marx acknowledged Engels' "Contributions to a Critique of Political Economy" in the Preface to his Manuscripts (CW3: 232) and proceeded to develop his own analysis of the class structure of capitalist society, providing an early vision of modernity as a catastrophe for the working class (CW3: 231ff). For Marx, capitalism transformed the worker into a commodity who was forced to sell his or her labor power. The worker's labor power thus belonged to the capitalist and its productive activity was forced, coercive, and unfree. Since the product of labor belonged to the capitalist, the worker could not get satisfaction that its activity produced something for itself, and thus felt alienated from its product, its labor activity, other workers, and its own human needs and potentialities.

Marx's vision reconstructed Hegel's master-slave dialectic and conceptualized the alienation of humans in terms of, first, the alienation of the worker from the object of labor. In the capitalist mode of production, the objects and system of labor appear as something "alien," a power independent over worker, as no doubt the early industrial factory system appeared to

workers. Secondly, the alienation of labor involved loss of control over the labor process (and over life activity) in a form of "wage slavery" in which the worker existed in a state of "bondage" to the capitalist master. Humans under capitalism were thus alienated for Marx from "productive activity," that appeared external, non-essential, coerced, and unfree. Labor in the capitalist system was thus not only unpleasant, but constituted an alienation from one's very humanity, defined by Marx as free and productive activity. For alienated labor yielded no self-realization or satisfaction, constituting an alienation from species being, other people, and nature.

Whereas Marx with Hegel and Feuerbach envisaged species life as universal, free, and creative activity that differentiates humans from animals, labor under capitalism for Marx is fragmentary, onesided, and unnatural. The capitalist labor system enslaves individuals in factories, using up their time, the very medium of life. Marx's critique of capitalism thus presupposes a concept of human nature and non-alienated labor in which labor is conceptualized as essential life-activity, an enterprise through which one satisfies distinctly human needs and develops human potentials -- or fails to develop them. Non-alienated labor for Marx is defined as free and conscious activity, developing human potentialities and thus enabling individuals to realize their "species-being" or humanity.

Consequently, for Marx capitalist production is the basis of human alienation, leading to a dehumanization of human beings and which requires revolution to overcome. Marx had not yet envisaged how capitalism was to be overcome, though it is significant that even in his early manuscripts he polemicizes against a "crude communism," that is "leveling," destructive of individuality, and fails to cultivate the full range of human powers (MER 82). Marx does, however, call for elimination of the system of private property which is to be replaced by a "truly human and social property," in which "objects of use and enjoyment" (MER 102) will be provided to individuals to enable them to engage in free and creative productive activity.

Marx's philosophical accomplishment was to concretize the conceptions of alienation and human beings developed by philosophers such as Hegel and Feuerbach, transforming philosophical concepts into social terms, thus taking universal concepts and reconfiguring them into historically specific ones. For Marx, alienation is neither a subjective nor an ontological concept, but a socio-historical normative category that points to a deplorable state of affairs that should be overcome. Delivery from the alienation of labor for Marx is therefore a critical-revolutionary project involving the transcendence of capitalism.

In The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith conceived of humans as bartering animals, in which self-love or egotism was seen as the primary human trait, and competitiveness the natural condition (1937 [1776]). For Marx, by contrast, humans were primarily social, cooperative, many-sided, and protean, capable of novel historical development and creativity. Whereas Smith described labor as "Jehovah's curse" and an ontological burden, while valorizing rest, leisure, and tranquillity, Marx saw productive activity and labor as the distinctive human trait. For Smith, the division of labor is the source of wealth of nations, whereas for Marx it is a catastrophe for the working class. For Marx, humans are many-sided beings, who require a wealth of activities and free-conscious self-determination to realize their basic human powers. Since, for Marx, individuals are social and cooperative, then capitalism is in contradiction with human nature and

requires a new social system to emancipate humanity and create a society worthy of human beings.¹

While for Adam Smith the capitalist market society provides the proper framework for human beings and capitalism is compatible with human nature, for Marx they stand in contradiction, requiring a new human and social system. Marx, however, does not have an essentialist theory of human nature in which human being is conceived as fixed, unchanging, and invariant. Rather Marx is a historicist who sees humans developing throughout history, with distinctive needs and potentialities, but no fixed essence. For Marx, human nature is constantly changing and evolving, in tandem with with development of the forces and relations of production.

Thus Marx undercuts the essentialism/historicism dichotomy that plagued previous philosophy, suggesting in effect to philosophers that they need to combine anthropology, history, the social sciences, and philosophy to properly theorize human beings, their alienation and oppression, and their potential emancipation. Marx never fully developed his philosophical perspectives, turning to political economy as his major intellectual focus, though I would argue that a theory of human nature, its alienation under capitalism, and potential emancipation underlies Marx's entire work. Marx's philosophical reflections were from his Paris manuscripts on connected with developing a critical theory of contemporary society that situated philosophical issues in the context of the contemporary historical situation. In his 1844 manuscripts, for instance, Marx posed with trenchant insight the key questions that the alienation of labor under capitalism raised:

(1) What in the evolution of mankind is the meaning of this reduction of the greater part of mankind to abstract labor? (2) What are the mistakes committed by the piece-meal reformers, who either want to raise wages and in this way to improve the situation of the working class, or regard equality of wages (as Proudhon does) as the goal of social revolution? (CW3: 241).

Marx's answer to the first question was that although labor was a universal activity through which individuals satisfy their needs and distinguish themselves from animals, under capitalism labor takes the specific form of wage-labor in which the individual "alienates" his or her self by selling one's labor-power to the capitalist, thus producing for another and submitting to coercive and unfree activity. Consequently, the emergence of a modern industrial order was a catastrophe for the working class which Marx perceived as a qualitatively unique situation in history. Marx concluded that increased wages are only "higher wages for slaves," suggesting that wage slavery itself must be abolished in order to allow the full development and realization of individual human beings (CW3: 295f).

Marx assumed that humans were subjects who could potentially control and enjoy objects. In the emerging industrial system, however, objects controlled subjects and individuals were thus dominated by the objects of labor. Even the bourgeoisie failed to control the capitalist mode of production that spiraled into periodic recessions and depressions. The capitalist economy was out of control and Marx and Engels envisaged a condition in which individuals controlled the system and objects of their labor instead of being controlled by them. Their

concept of socialism thus presupposed a modern concept of sovereignty in which associated individuals would control the conditions of their life and labor.

Dialectics, Philosophy, and Science

Marx's emerging project combined philosophy, history and what we now call the social sciences. It is perhaps Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach," penned in Brussels as he was working on the German ideology in 1845, that provide the most concise summary of his distinctive philosophical perspectives. The famous Thesis Eleven articulates the activist thrust of Marx's concept of philosophy: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (CW5: 8). Thesis I articulates Marx's particular blending of idealism and materialism in a dialectical overcoming of one-sided positions: "The chief defect of all previous materialism -- that of Feuerbach included is that things, reality, sensuousness, are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectivity. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was set forth by idealism--but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such" (CW5: 6).

Marx affirms Feuerbach's materialism with its emphasis on the body and the senses, but also Hegel's emphasis on the reality of thought and subjectivity, thus aligning himself with Hegelian dialectics without the idealism and linked to a critical Enlightenment tradition that stresses the senses, critical practice, and materialism. Marx's twist on the Enlightenment is that he radicalizes Hegel's emphasis on critique and negation and conceptualize transformative activity as "revolutionary practice" (CW5: 6-8).

Appropriating Hegel's concept of negation, Marx asserted that the dialectic of negativity "is the moving and generative principle" in Hegel (CW3: 332), whereby thought criticizes partial and one-sided views, overcomes contradictions through negation, and attacks institutions and forces that oppress and alienate human beings. Marx followed Enlightenment critique and Hegel's dialectics in systematically negating one-sided or oppressive existing realities, while attempting to overcome all contradictions and conflicts in higher syntheses. He also followed Hegel in seeing conflicts overcome through breaks and ruptures characterized by suddenness and novelty -- a distinctly modern way of seeing. Hegelian-Marxian dialectics rejects continuity theories of history, stressing discontinuities. Marx in particular also focused on the breaks in history, which produced upheavals that generated turbulence, violence, and suffering in distinctly modern forms.

"Critique" for Marx thus delineated one-sided, contradictory, and oppressive forms of thought and social conditions that were to be negated and overcome. Marx privileged the concept of critique, making it a central aspect of his theory and subtitled several of his major books "A Critique of."¹ Ridding Hegel's dialectics of idealism and an uncritical positivity toward existing society, Marx transformed dialectics into a mode of materialist investigation and social critique. Dialectics for Marx was connective, showing the relationship between different sectors of society and phenomena usually seen apart (i.e. like culture and social conditions). His dialectic was also negative and revolutionary, analyzing contradictions as well as connections, and delineating conditions in need of transformation. The Marxian theory was historical and

materialist as well. "Contradictions," for example, referred to real historical conditions of tension and inequality, which required resolution through social struggle (as opposed to mere oppositions in which opposites, such as up and down, or either/or, are mere linguistic constructs which are equal and symmetrical, without tension or explosive force. And, as I show in a later section, the Marxian vision also condemned existing modern societies from the perspective of a form of socialist society with more freedom, justice, and social wealth.

Marx's philosophical-dialectical perspectives, however, moved beyond Hegel in turning toward empirical science as the proper method of inquiry and source of knowledge. To be sure, "science" for Marx is always Wissenschaft, in the German sense, which implies a historical, normative, and broad comprehensive mode of theorizing, tempered by rigorous empirical research, the testing of ideas in practice, the modification of concepts and hypotheses based on research, and a constant refinement, development, and systemization of results. Hence, following his early work in philosophy, Marx championed science over philosophy, calling for investigation of real individuals "in their empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions" (CW5: 37). Further: "Where speculation ends, where real life starts, there consequently begins real, positive science, the expounding of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men" (CW6: 37). Philosophy thus loses its self-sufficient medium of existence, is absorbed into real history and disappears as an autonomous discipline, thus producing a sublation, or Aufhebung, of philosophy into science. This move provides a model of an interdisciplinary space and method which investigates the interconnection of the economy, state, social institutions, and culture in the constitution of capitalist societies, criticizing the institutions of modern societies from the normative perspectives of ideals of a better society and more human life under an alternative form of social organization.

From a methodological standpoint, Marx began a reconstruction of philosophy and science and development of a critical social theory fusing a new epistemology (i.e. radical historicism and praxis) with broad historical perspectives and detailed empirical research. By decisively breaking with Smith and bourgeois political economy, Marxian theory broke with previous conceptions of social science and inaugurated a new form of critical social science that privileged practice as the criterion of truth and rejected all ideas that could not be confirmed in practice, that could not be experimentally validated.

Marx's turn toward science was influenced by Feuerbach who defended perception and empirical knowledge against Hegelian idealism. In his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx insisted that his results were attained by "wholly empirical analysis," and that his critique of capitalism proceeded "from an actual economic fact" -- the alienation of the worker under capitalism (CW3: 231 and 271). Yet Marx never really distinguished between science and dialectics, arguing that: "Empirical observations must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculations, the connection of the social and political structure with production" (CW5: 35). This passage brings out the combination of empiricism and dialectics in the Marxian conception: following the model of empirical science, the investigator is supposed to describe the facts of experience without speculation or distortion, and to connect social and political phenomena with the structure of the economy. In turn ideas are to be tested in practice, as "Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice" (CW5: 6).

But the facts that Marx described are always historical, always subject to change and development, and the Marxian optic focused on the structures and movement of history as well as modern societies. Marx developed his theory of history and critical theory of society through concrete empirical and historical study, although his framework for the presentation of his analyses was arguing Hegelian and dialectical. As he later put it in Capital, Hegelian dialectics “is in its essence critical and revolutionary” (MER 302), showing societies as riven with contradictions and crises, which lead to their breaking-up and collapse and thus movement to a higher stage of society. Developing this view of history would occupy Marx for much of his life.

Historical Materialism and Modern Societies

The early Marx represents a synthesis of Hegel and Enlightenment critical rationalism, influenced by the radical democratic wing of the French Revolution. While working on his economic studies, Marx was expelled from Paris in 1845 for publishing in a radical emigre newspaper, and he moved to Brussels where he began his collaboration with Engels. Together they traveled to England to observe the new factories and industrial living and working conditions. Upon their return, they began developing their sketch of the genesis of the modern world and what became known as “historical materialism in The German Ideology (CW5), written in 1845-6 and never published in their lifetime. The text is important for it articulates some of their first formulations of the differentiated structure of modern societies, as well as sketching out their historical materialist perspectives on human beings and society. Marx and Engels (CW4) also published a joint attack, The Holy Family (1845), on Bruno Bauer and their former young Hegelian associates, who they now considered pseudo-radical and idealist. Marx published in addition (CW6: 105ff) a critique of the economics of Proudhon in The Poverty of Philosophy (1846), declaring the French writer to be trapped in the idealist verbiage of Hegel, thus mystifying the concrete economic phenomena which Marx and Engels were attempting to analyze.

In investigating the origins and genesis of modern societies, Marx and Engels developed a new materialist theory of history and society, introducing the concepts of the mode of production, forces and relations of production, division of labor, ideology, and class struggle as key to understanding society and history. They also produced a conception of history as a succession of modes of production, leading to the emergence of modern bourgeois society and its future transition to a communist society. For Marx and Engels, the highly differentiated mode of production associated with modern bourgeois society makes its appearance "with the increase of population" and presupposes the "intercourse (Verkehr) of individuals with one another" (CW5: 32).¹ Every society on the Marxian theory is constituted by:

definite social relations [which] are just as much produced by men as linen, flax, etc. Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill give you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill with the industrial capitalist (CW6: 165-6).

Although this passage is often taken as an example of an alleged technological determinism in Marx, one can also read it as stressing the importance of social relations and differentiation in the constitution of modern societies. Social differentiation is in turn connected to the division of labor which begins in the family, leading to a division between mental and material labor, and serving as the motor for further social differentiation (CW5: 46f). Differentiation, however, takes the form of relations of subordination and domination, and Marx developed one of the first critical theories of modern bourgeois society, attacking oppression and exploitation.

Although Marxian theory is often accused of limiting domination and oppression to class and neglecting such forms of oppression as gender and race (Balbus 1982), Marx and Engels argue that inequalities begin "in the family, where wife and children, are the slaves of the husband" (CW5: 46). They also refer to the "latent slavery in the family" and constantly criticize "patriarchal" forces, thus providing the conceptual space for critique of the oppression of women. Indeed, Marx and Engels frequently describe the production and reproduction of social life as the basis of society and history (CW5: 42, 43, 46, passim), and thus attribute conceptual importance to the family and social reproduction. Of course, their main focus would be almost exclusively on production and the oppression of the working class, though Engels would eventually write a book on the family (1972 [1884]).

Marx's dialectical theory also articulated the relationships between the economy, polity, society, and culture in modern social formations. His critical theory of society thus unfolds in an interdisciplinary space connecting economy, social structure, state, and culture. "Political economy" for Marx referred to a structure that combined politics and economics, describing a mode of social organization that Marx delineated as the "base" (Unterbau) for the set of modern legal, political, social, and cultural institutions and practices that he designated "superstructures" (Uberbau).

For Marx, modern societies were highly differentiated ones, divided between state and civil society, classes, and an increasingly complex economy. Following Hegel, Marx distinguished between state and "civil society" (better: "bourgeois society"), whereby "bourgeois society" referred to the sphere of private life in the family and economic domain, while the "state" described the sphere of public life.¹ As a member of the state, one was a citoyen with universal rights in a realm of freedom and equality, whereas in the sphere of bourgeois society one was a mere private individual in a fragmented and competitive domain of self-interest and competition.

Whereas Hegel posited the Prussian state as the realization of reason, which harmonized the contradictions of the socio-economic order, Marx developed a more critical optic on the organization of the modern world. In his view, the fragmentation and divisions which Hegel described were not overcome in the modern state. Rather society was bifurcated into two distinct spheres in which the individual "leads a double life, a heavenly and an earthly life, not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life: life in the political community where one regards oneself as a communal being, and life in civil society where one is active as a private individual, treats other human beings as means, is oneself reduced to a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers" (CW3: 154). For Marx, the socially differentiated bourgeois society was a

conflicted one, characterized by a "sphere of egoism and of the bellum omnium contra omnes. It is no longer the essence of community, but the essence of differentiation. It has become the expression of man's separation from his community, from himself and from other men" (CW3: 155).

Marx was thus one of the first to describe the social contradictions and differentiation of the new bourgeois society and to anchor the state in its structure. He adopted the category of differentiation from Hegel, for whom it was mainly a concept of logic, of thought, while for Marx it was a category of social analysis. For Hegel, "differentiation" (Differenzierung) signified a process of the creation, division, and externalization of categories, first in the realm of thought (Hegel's logic) and then into the fields of nature and spirit. In analyzing the realm of spirit (Geist), Hegel describes differentiations in the social and political sphere, arguing that these differentiations are overcome (aufgehoben), and are absorbed and harmonized in his philosophy. For Marx, by contrast, the differentiations under analysis referred to the concrete social-historical development of a structurally-articulated bourgeois society, state, and forms of culture and everyday life, which he described in the language of social theory, rather than philosophy, consequently inaugurating the classical social discourse of modernity.

In the new fragmented bourgeois civil society, individuals were split into egoistic atoms, opposed to each other and driven by class-based self-interest and greed. The "rights of man" established by the bourgeois revolutions guaranteed that each individual maintains a certain sovereignty and rights vis-a-vis the state and society. Individuals were thus split between their life in the state where they were free and equal contrasted to everyday life in society, where inequality and unfreedom reigned. While from the standpoint of the state, the individual was a citoyen, possessing universal rights and equality with all other citizens, within civil society the individual was a mere bourgeois, characterized by particular interests, posed in a competitive struggle for existence with others.

Marx always recognized that the individual was an important product of bourgeois society that socialism would preserve and develop.¹ Yet he also saw that bourgeois society produced an atomized, fragmented form of individualism, limited and ruled by the demons of private interest. In addition, he believed that modern civil society also destroyed the communal ties of feudalism, and that community needed to be reconstituted in the modern world. Therefore, "political emancipation" was but a partial and abstract individual emancipation from the limitations of feudalism, which Marx ironically described as the "democracy of unfreedom" (CW3: [1843]: 32). By contrast, Marx called for "human emancipation," which involved transcending the egoism, private property, and religion of civil society and thus, ultimately, the liberation of society from capitalism (CW3: 170f).

Marx's vision of history from the 1840s was presented in the "Communist Manifesto," which sketches in dramatic narrative form his and Engels' view of the origins and trajectory of modernity (CW6: 477ff) and concretizes the stress on "revolutionary practice" in his previous works with conceptions of class struggle. The "Manifesto" appeared in early 1848, anticipating the sequence of revolutions that broke out throughout Europe shortly after its publication. It provides one of the first critical visions of capitalist globalization and a gripping narrative of the origins and unfolding of capitalism.

For Marx and Engels, the rise of a global market system characterized by a world market and the imposition of similar relations of production, commodities, and ideas on areas throughout the world was crucial in creating modern capitalist societies: "Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way" (CW6: 486). In turn, the "need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere" (CW6: 487). As Marx once wrote in a letter, the railway, steamer and telegraph "finally represented means of communication adequate to modern means of production" (cited in Hobsbawm 1979: 32), making possible a world market: "The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization.... In a word, it creates a world after its own image" (CW6: 488).

In the Marxian vision, the bourgeoisie constantly revolutionized the instruments of production and the world market generated immense forces of commerce, navigation and discovery, communications, and industry, creating a potentially new world of abundance, diversity, and prosperity. Marx and Engels also indicated how as "the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property," nationalist "one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible" (CW6: 488). Pointing to the resources and positive creations of the world market that provide the basis for a higher stage of social organization, Marx and Engels indicate that the world market also produced a new class of "world-historical, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones" (CW5: 49). This class of individuals -- the industrial working class, the Proletariat -- was reduced to abstract labor power, rendered propertyless, and standing in contradiction to the "existing world of wealth and culture" (CW5: 48-49). Having nothing but its chains to lose and a world to win Marx and Engels believed that the industrial Proletariat would organize as a revolutionary class to overthrow capitalism and produce a new socialist society that would abolish poverty, inequality, exploitation, and alienated labor, making possible the full development of individuals and social wealth (CW5: 48f and CW6: 490f).

The Marxian theory was thus one of the first to posit a global market system that would encircle the world. Marx and Engels envisaged the possibility of world global crisis and revolution, which would envelop the earth in a titanic struggle between capital and its opponents. Their working class revolutionaries would be resolutely internationalist and cosmopolitan, seeing themselves as citizens of the world rather than members of specific nations. The Marxian theory thus shared the illusions of many market liberals that the development of a world system of free trade would generate prosperity and cosmopolitanism, with both downplaying the importance of nation states, nationalism, national rivalries, and wars which had characterized previous centuries and would continue to be important forces through the present.

Capital and Counterrevolution

In the exciting revolutionary year of 1848, Marx and Engels traveled, first, from Brussels to Paris and then to Germany where the turbulent situation had gained Marx an amnesty. Marx returned to Cologne where he gathered support for a newspaper, the Neue Rheinische Zeitung,

which he published for the next two years. Marx and Engels sided with the bourgeois democrats who were fighting the old feudal powers for a modern parliamentary system. They envisaged a two-stage theory of revolution in which the workers would initially ally themselves with the bourgeoisie and then fight for a socialist republic. The counterrevolution prevailed, however, Marx's newspaper was shut down, and he was once again forced into exile.

Following his participation in the German and European revolutions of 1848-1849, Marx emigrated to England and Engels joined him. It was the fate of Engels to work for the next twenty-five years in his father's manufacturing firm in Manchester, while Marx studied and wrote in London. During the 1850s, Marx and Engels were embroiled intermittently in the quarrels of the radical exile community and both wrote regularly for the New York Tribune and other newspapers, keeping abreast of international political affairs. But Marx was primarily devoted to his economic studies in which he analyzed in minute detail the economic structure of capitalism, refining his arguments concerning capitalism as the foundation of modern societies. During the 1850s and 1860s, Marx spent much time pouring over economic texts and documents. Convinced that the capitalist economy was the key to the structure and processes of modern societies, and that only a major crisis of capitalist society could lead to a higher form of socialist society, Marx diligently studied all the salient economic documents and literature of the day, carrying out a systematic critique of previous economic theory, while producing his own.

Marx carried out his economic studies during the period that Hobsbawm (1979) described as "the Age of Capital." From his London vantage point, Marx was in an excellent position to chart out the unprecedented economic expansion that took place from the 1850s until his death in 1883. This was the era of the proliferation of new modes of mechanization, in which machine production produced immense quantities of goods, and expanded trade generated a dynamic world market. In addition, science and technology grew rapidly, constantly revolutionizing production. It was an era of great wealth but also tremendous divisions between rich and poor which generated intense class conflicts that Marx and Engels chronicled.

Marx charted these developments, going daily to the British Museum library where he kept abreast of the economic and political vicissitudes of the epoch, sketching out his system of economics in an unpublished Grundrisse, or "Fundamental Outline" (1857-8; CW28) and publishing an introduction to his economic theory in 1859 (CW29). After years of poverty and relative obscurity, Marx eventually achieved a certain renown and notoriety. He was elected President of the International Workingmen's Association and gave its inaugural address in 1864. And after working on his economic studies for over twenty years, Marx finally published the first volume of his magnum opus Capital in 1867 (CW35), which provides a critical analysis of the structure of modern societies. Capital was translated into many languages and was eventually recognized as a classic text of modern economic theory.

Marx's magnum opus brought together decades of prodigious research into the origins, genesis, and structures of capitalism. Modern capitalist society for Marx is a commodity-producing society that is characterized by large-scale industry, an ever-proliferating division of labor, and contradictions rooted in capitalist relations of production, in particular the relation between capital and labor, the bourgeoisie and workers. Beginning with analysis of the commodity, Marx sought the secret of capitalist "surplus value" and profit in the unpaid labor-

time extracted from workers. This theory of exploitation was combined with minute analysis of the power of the capitalist industrial system over the worker. In some of the more powerful passages in Capital, Marx notes how the division of labor "seizes upon, not only the economic, but every other sphere of society, and everywhere lays the foundation of that all engrossing system of specialising and sorting men, that development in a human being of one single faculty at the expense of all other faculties, which caused A. Ferguson, the master of Adam Smith, to exclaim: 'We make a nation of Helots, and have no free citizens'" (MER 394).¹

By Capital, Marx has thus come to conceptualize the present age as a system of domination whereby the commodity form comes to dominate society in its totality, in which the worker is reduced to commodity status, in which production is geared toward commodity production in order to produce profit and surplus value. Thus, modern societies are those ruled by capital, by abstract social forces, that impose a system of domination on contemporary individuals. For Marx, capitalism is fundamentally a commodity producing society and modernity is an era in history organized around the production of commodities. Whereas in premodern societies fetishes were made out of trees or other animate or inanimate objects, under capitalism commodity fetishism metamorphized value into exchange value, whereby use value, or the development of human beings was minimized, and value resided primarily in the possession and use of commodities, and ascendancy of abstract exchange-value in the form of money.

Within the history of civilization, capitalism thus constitutes a unique mode of social organization, structured by the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of commodities. Modernity for Marx thus is bound up with the triumph of capitalism, his book Capital is a testament to the power of capitalism, and a sign of the extent to which the working class was held in thrall by the power of the industrial system and hegemony of the capitalist class over labor. Itself a sign of the times, Capital was researched and published during an era of unprecedented economic expansion and before the working class had organized and provided a counterforce to the "juggernaut" of capital. Marx's treatise was thus an expression of the victory of capital in an era of countervolution when capital reigned triumphant and did not yet face a powerful countervailing oppositional force. Marx himself, of course, was involved with a nascent movement that would contest capitalism and would militate for an alternative economic system and mode of social organization.

Socialism and Revolution

For Marx, modern capitalist societies constitute a form of social organization in which individuals lack conscious control and mastery of their social relations and in which individuals are alienated from and subordinated to an oppressive social system. A communist society, by contrast, would overturn "the basis of all earlier relations of production and intercourse, and for the first time consciously treat all natural premises as the creations of hitherto existing men, strip them of their natural character and subjugate them to the power of the united individuals" (CW5: 81). Thus, against the individual monadic subject of modern theory from Descartes throughout the Enlightenment and Kant to positivism, Marx envisages a collective organization of society that will consciously control production and social life.

Marx accordingly analyzed the new forms of social cooperation and association, the new interdependencies, which bound individuals together in the emergent bourgeois social order and which produced the potentialities for better, more free and egalitarian, forms of social association. For Marx:

the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only this will liberate the separate individuals from the various national and local barriers, bring them into practical connection with the production (including intellectual production) of the whole world and make it possible for them to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). All-round dependence, this primary nature form of the world-historical co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and ruled men as powers completely alien to them (CW5: 51-2).

The division of labor, system of property, and competitive market system of the modern economy thus separates individuals from each other and from control over their labor activity producing alienation and oppression. Yet the modern economy also brings individuals together, producing an expanding "wealth of real connections," novel forms of cooperation, and innovative forms of association that will make possible control of economic and social conditions and a higher stage of history in which associated individuals could master their economy and society. Voluntarily associated individuals under socialism will, Marx claims, come to control their social production and apply their social power and productive forces to satisfy their needs and develop their potentialities. Thus, the genesis of modern society produces not only alienation and oppression for the working class, but the preconditions of its emancipation. This is a major theme of The German Ideology and Marx and Engels's analysis culminates in a vision of world revolution, in which capitalism will be replaced by communism. They characterize "communism as the real movement of history and revolution as "the driving force of history," producing an especially revolutionist view of history (CW5: 54, 83).

Thus, in addition to conceptualizing new forms of class conflict and differentiation, Marx was also among the first to see that capitalism was engendering new modes of cooperation and solidarity at the same time it was dividing society into classes. In an 1853 article "On Imperialism in India," Marx argued that: "The bourgeois period of history has to create the material basis of the new world -- on the one hand the universal intercourse founded upon mutual dependency of humanity, and the means of that intercourse; on the other hand the development of the productive powers of humans and the transformation of material production into a scientific domination of natural agencies" (MER 663-4). Marx thus characterized "universal intercourse" and "mutual dependency," or interdependence, as defining features of modern societies, which produced new modes of association as well as differentiation and conflict.

In the Grundrisse, Marx described the immense emergent sources of social power (over nature) contained in accumulated "scientific labour" and "technological application of natural science" combined with "the general productive force arising from social combination" (MER 282). Marx's special contribution was that he identified complex cooperation as the secret "social force" propelling capitalist development and the rise of modernity. In his famous discussions of

"Cooperation," "The Division of Labor and Manufacture," and "Machinery and Modern Industry" in Capital, Marx analyzes the powers of the capitalist mode of production as deriving from modes of cooperation and the new forms of association in the factory that produce new social powers and the basis for a yet higher form of social organization. In the chapter on "Cooperation," Marx writes that "the starting point of capitalist production" is the bringing together of a "greater number of labourers working together, at the same time, in one place... in order to produce the same sort of commodity under the mastership of one capitalist" (MER 384). The early forms of capitalist cooperation involved "the conversion of numerous isolated and independent processes into one combined social process" (ibid).

In the chapter on "Cooperation," however, Marx puts his emphasis on capitalist command, its "directing authority," as "counterpressure" to working class resistance, and on the development of an "industrial army of workmen" under the control of supervisors and managers. In Marx's vision of political emancipation, he envisaged the workers themselves appropriating the social powers of cooperation for their own purposes, eliminating the capitalist owner and retinue of supervisors and managers, themselves taking over the process of production to develop their own potentials and to produce for their own needs.

In stressing the social powers of cooperation and the division of labor, Marx thus describes at once the new potentialities generated by capitalism, the capitalist appropriation of these powers to exploit and dominate workers, and a vision in which the workers themselves utilize the new powers of association and cooperation for their own purposes. Hence, while Marx analyzed the productive and social power of the new modes of cooperation and association produced by capitalism, he also pointed to the alienating and despotic side of capitalist specialization in the same pages that he praised its powers. For Marx, both the negative and positive features of modern capitalist societies were driving modernity toward an inevitable break or rupture with capitalism. On one hand, Marx believed that the inherent crisis tendencies of capitalism were leading to upheaval, intensified crisis, and eventual collapse. On the other hand, he believed that positive features of modernity, such as increased cooperation among workers in the process of production, big firms that brought associated producers together in the workplace (where they could be organized and increase their social power), and, especially, the tendencies toward automation which would eliminate socially necessary labor, would increase the realm of freedom, and thus provide the basis for a freer, more egalitarian, and more democratic social order.

From the Marxian perspective, capitalism and socialism are thus two forms of modernity, two developmental models within modernity. Socialism, in Marx's view, represented a higher stage of modernity, the preconditions for its fulfillment. The Marxian theory of socialism is integrally connected with Enlightenment modernity in its advocacy of democracy as the highest form of political organization. In an early commentary on Hegel, Marx championed democracy as the highest form of state: "democracy stands to the other constitutions as the genus stands to its species; except that here the genus itself appears as an existent, and therefore as one particular species over against the others whose existence does not correspond to their essence. To democracy all other forms of state stand as its Old Testament. Man does not exist for the law but the law for man -- it is a human manifestation; whereas in the other forms of state man is a legal manifestation. That is the fundamental distinction of democracy" (MER 20). Moreover, Marx

championed a form of radical democracy. For Marx, unlike Hegel, sovereignty lies with the people and not the state or monarch. The constitution under democracy "is a free product of man" and represents "the self-determination of the people" (ibid). Popular sovereignty thus involves the self-government of the people in all realms of social life.

Marx, "the Battle for Democracy," and the Realm of Freedom

In "The Communist Manifesto," Marx and Engels champion the modern form of state, urging the workers "to win the battle of democracy" and to fight for establishment of a democratic republic. It is in his speech on the Paris Commune, however, that Marx most fully developed his views on democracy. The Paris Commune lasted for two months after the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 before the combined German and French forces crushed it and killed thousands of its supporters. Marx wrote that "the Commune was the positive form" of the workers "social Republic" and represented "the self-government of the producers," serving "as a model to all the great industrial centers of France" (MER 632-3). The Commune was constituted by popular assemblies and its representatives were workers who were "revocable at short terms" and who received the same wages as other workers. The Commune would create a people's militia and police force and an elected judiciary:

In a rough sketch of national organization which the Commune had no time to develop, it states clearly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia, with an extremely short term of service. The rural communes of every district were to administer their common affairs by an assembly of delegates in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris, each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the mandat impératif (formal instructions of his constituents. The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally mis-stated, but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents. The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal Constitution and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence (MER 633).

Marx therefore advocated a radical form of popular sovereignty and democracy in which the people would govern themselves. In place of representative democracy, a form of popular sovereignty would represent the self-government of the people: "instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people" (MER 633). A people's militia and police force would guarantee that no permanent state apparatus would stand above and over society. The Commune constituted "the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor" (MER 635).

In his most advanced vision of an emancipated society, Marx envisaged a realm of freedom made possible by the developments of modern technology and industry. In the Grundrisse, he sketched a theory of a possible rupture between capitalist and post-capitalist

societies that would be as radical as those between pre-capitalist and capitalist ones. On his account, capital generates factories, machine production, and eventually an automatic system of machinery (MER 278ff.). In his famous analysis of automation, Marx sketches out an audacious vision of the development of a fully automated system of production under capitalism which brings capitalism to an end and which produces the basis for an entirely different social system. In Marx's vision, the "accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain," are absorbed into capital and produce machinery which "develops with the accumulation of society's science, of the productive force generally" (MER 280). As machinery and automation evolve, the worker becomes more and more superfluous, standing ever-more powerless alongside the growing power of machines and big industry. On the other hand, machines free the worker from arduous and back-breaking labor. In this situation: "Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself.... He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor" (MER 284).

The capitalist system thus makes possible "a large quantity of disposable time" which furnishes the space for the development of the individual's full productive forces" (MER 286). Free time allows for more education and development of the social individual who can then enter "in the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and, at the same time, practice [Ausübung], experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society" (MER 290). Thus capitalism produces the basis for a new society of non-alienated labor in which individuals will possess the free-time to fully develop their human capacities and labor itself will be a process of experimentation, creativity, and progress, in which the system of automation produces most of society's goods and individuals can thus enjoy leisure and the fruits of creative work.

Such a society would be a completely different social order from that of capitalist society which is organized around work and the production of commodities. Marx acknowledges that the new society would have a totally "changed foundation of production, a new foundation first created by the process of history" (MER 293). In the third volume of Capital, Marx described this radically new social order in terms of a "realm of freedom," writing: "Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature" (MER 441).

Marx's most distinctive vision of socialism thus envisages socialism as constituting a break in history as dramatic as the rupture between pre-capitalist and capitalist societies that produced modernity. While capitalism is a commodity-producing society organized around work and production, socialism would be a social order organized around the full development of individual human beings. Marx formulated this radical vision of a new society in his late text Critique of the Gotha Program as the product of a transition to a higher phase of communism. In the first phase, the "prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society" would limit the level of social and individual development, but:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the spring of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly -- only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (MER 531).

Crucially, Marx saw the potentials for socialism rooted in the very historical trajectory of modernity. Eschewing moralistic and utopian concepts, Marx theorized that just as historical forces had produced capitalist modernity, so too would history provide the possibilities of constructing a socialist society. Yet such a transition would involve political choice and struggle, and so much of Marx's attention was devoted to analyzing the class forces and material conditions that could produce socialism. Consequently, from the mid-1860s into his final years, Marx devoted much energy to nurturing a socialist political movement. He sought political strategies that could produce a socialist revolution and a new stage of history that as radically broke with the previous stage as capitalist modernity broke with previous precapitalist social formations.

Crisis, Revolutionary Historicism, and the Transition to Socialism

Of course, the big question was how a socialist revolution could occur. At times, Marx envisaged that only a radical crisis and collapse of the capitalist system would generate the possibility of a transition to socialism. In the Grundrisse, for instance, Marx posited the rupture in terms of a cataclysmic collapse of capitalism, leading to a violent upheaval:

the highest development of productive power together with the greatest expansion of existing wealth will coincide with the depreciation of capital, degradation of the laborer, and a most straitened exhaustion of his vital powers. These contradictions lead to explosions, cataclysms, crises, in which by momentaneous suspension of labour and annihilation of a great portion of Capital the latter is violently reduced to the point where it can[not] go on. These contradictions, of course, lead to explosions, crises, in which momentary suspension of all labour and annihilation of a great part of the capital violently lead it back to the point where it is enabled [to go on] fully employing its productive powers without committing suicide. Yet, these regularly recurring catastrophes lead to their repetition on a higher scale, and finally to its violent overthrow (MER 291-292).

Yet in an 1872 Address to a Congress of the First International, Marx suggested that a democratic road to socialism "where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means" was also viable, in countries such as America, England, and Holland (MER 523). To some extent Marx's politics were always ad hoc and oriented toward existing political struggles and movements and, contrary to many attacks on him, were never fixed and dogmatic. In an 1843 contribution to The German-French Yearbook, which established the political principles for that venture, Marx wrote: "We shall confront the world not as doctrinaires with a new principle:

'Here is the truth, bow down before it!' We develop new principles to the world out of its own principles. We do not say to the world: 'Stop fighting; your struggle is of no account. We want to shout the true slogan of the struggle at you.' We only show the world what it is fighting for, and consciousness is something that the world must acquire, like it or not" (MER 14-15).

To a large extent, Marx followed this principle throughout his life. His sketch of socialism in The German Ideology -- where one would "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic" -- reflects the ideals of the utopian socialism which predated the concept of communism to which Marx would eventually adhere. Indeed, the principles and ideals of "The Communist Manifesto" summed up the program of the emerging communist movement and in the 1848 revolution, Marx joined the struggles of liberals and workers for a democratic republic, projecting communism as an ideal for the future. During the 1860s, Marx articulated the principles of the First International Working Men's Association, again putting his socialist ideals aside, while, as just noted, in his writing on the Paris Commune, he championed the Commune form of government.

Thus, Marx tried to connect his political theory with the most advanced political forces of the day and articulated his principles in accord with the most radical struggles and movements. This form of "revolutionary historicism" derives political ideals from existing forces and struggles, rather than projecting an a priori blueprint which is then imposed on diverse movements and contexts. Rather, Marx saw that in distinct political circumstances different forms of struggle and different alternatives were necessary, and thus never advocated one single strategy of revolution or concept of socialism, instead developing his concepts in concordance with existing struggles and potentials.

On the whole, Marxian political theory was oriented toward actually existing struggles as the bearers of hopes for revolution and on the whole he adopted a multi-class model and analysis of class blocs, rather than the "melting vision" which pitted the proletariat against the bourgeoisie as in "The Communist Manifesto." Despite different emphases in his political theory, it was class struggle and a coalition of classes that was a necessary condition of any revolution or transition to socialism. Much of Marx's focus in his post-1848 works was on class analysis, in which he explicated class differences, alliances, and conflicts. Indeed, his materialist theory of history suggested that the role of classes was crucial in history and his theory of revolution indicated that class struggle was a primary vehicle of achieving socialism.

While Marx believed that capitalism had developed the forces of production in a more revolutionary fashion than any previous social formation, he believed that there comes a time, as he put it in Capital, when "the monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated" (MER 438).

Ultimately, Marx believed that capitalist societies would continually revolutionize themselves as they developed their potentials further, but that capitalism's contradictions and

crisis tendencies would produce the transition to what he saw as a higher mode of civilization. In the decades following Marx's death in 1883, capitalism underwent many crises, a revolutionary working class movement emerged, a wing of which embraced Marx's ideas. In addition, revolutionary regimes erupted that carried out socialist revolutions using Marx's ideas to legitimate their policies, and the Soviet Communism bloc that was a mainstay of Marxism collapsed. What, then, are the limitations and contributions of Marxist theory in the light of historical experience and theoretical critique of Marxism?

The Limitations of Classical Marxism

The limitations of classical Marxism are evident in the "Communist Manifesto" and its "melting vision" of capitalist societies melting down to two classes facing each other in irreconcilable hostility, the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Only a class war and the victory of the proletariat could resolve this contradiction in the vision of classical Marxism. Yet the very tendencies of social differentiation and fragmentation, analyzed elsewhere in the Marxian classics, confounded this two-class model and model of a simplified class war, rendering this version of classical Marxism obsolete, or at least highly problematic. However, in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and his other historical writings, Marx deployed a more complex model of class differentiation in contemporary modern societies.

Thus, certain versions of Marxism are antiquated, in particular Marxism as the theory and movement of the proletariat, of proletariat revolution. Consequently, Marxism as a purported unity of theory and practice, as a project to totally transform the world through proletarian revolution, appears to be historically outmoded and even falsified. For many critics, Marx was simply too uncritical toward the proletariat which he and Engels always saw as a universal class which represented universal interests of emancipation and that was inherently revolutionary. By virtue of the fact that it was the largest, most oppressed, and most potentially militant class, Marx identified the proletariat as the force of revolution from the early 1840s. He believed that bringing the working class together in factories produced a material basis for organization and that the proletariat could disrupt the capitalist production process through strikes and revolutionary activity, thus producing conditions for the overthrow of capitalism. Yet it was not clear how the uneducated masses would be able to gain class consciousness, organize, and exhibit the will and resolve -- and sacrifices -- to overthrow capitalism.

For neo-Marxists like Herbert Marcuse, Marx's concept of the proletariat was rooted in concrete analysis of the industrial workers in the factory system of his day and thus the concept of proletariat should not be applied to postindustrial conditions that exhibited a fragmentation of the working class into different class sectors and manifested different types for labor (see Kellner 1984). On this account, while Marx provided a penetrating empirical analysis of the industrial working class of his day and while his scheme of revolution was justified by the nature of the class antagonisms of his time, and was manifest in later socialist revolutions, new theories of socialism and revolution are needed for the contemporary era.

Moreover, in historical retrospect, lack of theory of subjectivity, of the development of revolutionary consciousness, in the classical Marxian theory also vitiates its theory and practice. Marx seemed to think that class and revolutionary consciousness would develop naturally, as a

result of the workers' position in the process of production. Later Marxian theorists, however, engaged in a heated debate concerning whether class consciousness developed spontaneously (as Rosa Luxemburg claimed), or would have to be brought to the workers from outside (as Kautsky and Lenin argued). But subsequent neo-Marxian theorists and others, by contrast, would develop more sophisticated theories of consciousness, communication, and education whereby political subjectivities could be formed who would strive for democratic social change.

Later neo-Marxist theorists also argued that Marx underplayed the role of culture in shaping consciousness and behavior and, in particular, integrating the working class within bourgeois society.¹ From this perspective, Marx put too much faith in the working class as an inherently revolutionary class and did not anticipate its fragmentation, integration within the capitalist system, and growing powerlessness and conservatism in later stages of capitalist development. Moreover, the emphasis on an unified proletarian working class contradicted the tendencies of modernity toward class differentiation and fragmentation, tendencies recognized in some, but not all, of Marx's own work.

Many of Marx's texts also seem to place too heavy an emphasis on labor as the distinctly human activity, as the key to the development of the human being. Overemphasis on production is accompanied by an inadequate concept of intersubjectivity, lacking a fully developed theory of individual consciousness and its development in communication, symbolic action, and culture. Unlike later social theorists such as Durkheim, Mead, and Dewey, Marx failed to perceive the importance of wider communication in the development of new forms of association and solidarity. He thus put too much emphasis on class struggle, on direct action, and not enough on communication and democracy.

Indeed, Marx never grasped the significance of the institutions of liberal democracy as an important heritage of modern societies that should be absorbed into socialism. Although he espoused a model of radical democratic self-government in his writings on the Paris Commune, and while Marx long championed democracy as an ideal, he never properly appreciated the separation of powers and system of rights, checks and balances, and democratic participation developed within bourgeois society. Thus, Marx had an inadequate theory of democracy and failed to develop an institutional theory of democracy, its constraints under capitalism, and how socialism would make possible fuller and richer democracy.

There are also certain methodological limitations to the Marxian theory having to do with a too uncritical acceptance of modern science. There are certain dogmatic and positivistic tendencies within Marxism having to do with Marx and Engels's failure to criticize modern science in a sufficiently radical fashion.¹ From the moment of The German Ideology, Marx and Engels always saw their theory as exhibiting the method, rigor, and other virtues of natural science. They described their theory as science and adopted the term "scientific socialism" to describe the specificity of their theory. In his later works Marx wrote of "the natural laws of capitalist production" and of "tendencies working with iron necessity toward inevitable results" (MER 296). Such determinist discourse runs against the voluntarism and emphasis on revolutionary practice in other Marxian texts and points to a too uncritical bias toward science typical of modern theory.

Other dogmatic elements in the Marxian theory include an excessively reductive focus on production and economic factors which sometimes took the form of economic reductionism. Yet here the emphasis on social relations and a dialectical model of social analysis provides a more critical optic and method. Likewise, although there is a version of Marxism close to historical determinism and a tendency to project the inevitable triumph of socialism in some Marxian discourse, there are other examples of historical analysis in the Marxian oeuvre that contrast tendencies of capitalist crisis with those of stabilization and that delineate the possibilities of historical regression and working class defeat (as, for example, in Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon). And while some Marxian narratives of history are rather grandiose and sweeping in their import and reach, there is also patient and detailed historical research that does not fit facts into the preconceptions of the theory.

Marx in the Present Age

Hence, there are tendencies within Marx's voluminous corpus that undercut some of the more reductive tendencies in his thought that often are grounds for dismissal. Moreover, despite the collapse of communism Marx's ideas continue to be relevant for comprehending and criticizing the contemporary era. Marx is widely acknowledged as one of the first theorists and critics of capitalist globalization and as capital continues to be the major organizing force in the world today, relentlessly destroying past forms of life as it creates new forms of economy, society, culture, and everyday life, Marx's critical optic on capitalism is as relevant as ever. Moreover, Marx's mode of dialectic helps avoid the twin forms of economic and technological determinism which are dominant modes of theorizing the new economic and technological forms of the current era (see Best and Kellner 2001).

Indeed, Marx's intense focus on technology and social forms and relations provides a useful optic to theorize the new forms of economy, society, politics and culture. His dialectical thought articulates the interaction between the economy and other domains of life, providing a method and a mode of thought that continues to be pertinent during an era in which the global restructuring of capital is producing vast transformation, turmoil, and conflict requiring new theories and oppositional practice. Moreover, as a new millennium unfolds, anti-globalization movements are emerging that are reconfiguring and expanding Marxian ideas.

Arguably, growing divisions between the haves and the have nots in the current constellations of global capitalism render Marx's critique of exploitation, poverty, and oppression a still-valuable legacy, and whether Marx's crisis theory and analysis of capitalist contradictions producing a new form of civilization will anticipate future development remains an open question. Marx's stress on democracy remains an important political legacy and it should not be forgotten that Marx himself never posited a vanguard party, was critical of all forms of bureaucracy, and advocated radical democratic self-government and not party-rule, so cannot be held responsible for the failures of "really existing communism" (see Kellner 1995).

From the vantage point of philosophy, Marx's great intellectual and political achievement was to develop a synthesis of existing knowledge linking economics, politics, history, human nature, and to develop it in a comprehensive and critical fashion. Marx produced a body of writings which is still one of the most impressive and influential theoretical achievements of all

times and that presents us with one of the great bodies of thought in the western philosophical tradition. A product of its time, some aspects of the Marxian theory are obviously obsolete, but since we continue to live in an era defined by capitalist globalization, growing divisions between the haves and have nots, and political conflict, Karl Marx's thought continues to speak to our contemporary situation.

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