

Relevance of Karl Marx in the Contemporary World

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ABSTRACT: Karl Heinrich Marx FRSA (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883) was a German philosopher, economist, historian, sociologist, political theorist, journalist, critic of political economy, and socialist revolutionary. His best-known titles are the 1848 pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto* and the four-volume *Das Kapital* (1867–1883). Marx's political and philosophical thought had enormous influence on subsequent intellectual, economic, and political history. His name has been used as an adjective, a noun, and a school of social theory. Born in Trier, Germany, Marx studied law and philosophy at the universities of Bonn and Berlin. He married German theatre critic and political activist Jenny von Westphalen in 1843. Due to his political publications, Marx became stateless and lived in exile with his wife and children in London for decades, where he continued to develop his thought in collaboration with German philosopher Friedrich Engels and publish his writings, researching in the British Museum Reading Room. Marx's critical theories about society, economics, and politics, collectively understood as Marxism, hold that human societies develop through class conflict. In the capitalist mode of production, this manifests itself in the conflict between the ruling classes (known as the bourgeoisie) that control the means of production and the working classes (known as the proletariat) that enable these means by selling their labour-power in return for wages.^[4] Employing a critical approach known as historical materialism, Marx predicted that capitalism produced internal tensions like previous socioeconomic systems and that these tensions would lead to its self-destruction and replacement by a new system known as the socialist mode of production. For Marx, class antagonisms under capitalism—owing in part to its instability and crisis-prone nature—would eventuate the working class's development of class consciousness, leading to their conquest of political power and eventually the establishment of a classless, communist society constituted by a free association of producers.^[5] Marx actively pressed for its implementation, arguing that the working class should carry out organised proletarian revolutionary action to topple capitalism and bring about socio-economic emancipation.^[6] Marx has been described as one of the most influential figures in human history, and his work has been both lauded and criticised.^[7] His work in economics laid the basis for some current theories about labour and its relation to capital.^{[8][9][10]} Many intellectuals, labour unions, artists, and political parties worldwide have been influenced by Marx's work, often modifying or adapting his ideas. Marx is typically cited as one of the principal architects of modern social science.^{[11][12]}

KEYWORDS: Karl Marx, philosopher, relevance, germany, theories, revolution, socialist, emancipation

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1843, Marx became co-editor of a new, radical left-wing Parisian newspaper, the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (German-French Annals), then being set up by the German activist Arnold Ruge to bring together German and French radicals.^[53] Therefore Marx and his wife moved to Paris in October 1843. Initially living with Ruge and his wife communally at 23 Rue Vaneau, they found the living conditions difficult, so moved out following the birth of their daughter Jenny in 1844.^[54] Although intended to attract writers from both France and the German states, the *Jahrbücher* was dominated by the latter and the only non-German writer was the exiled Russian anarchist collectivist Mikhail Bakunin.^[55] Marx contributed two essays to the paper, "Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right"^[56] and "On the Jewish Question",^[57] the latter introducing his belief that the proletariat were a revolutionary force and marking his embrace of communism.^[58] Only one issue was published, but it was relatively successful, largely owing to the inclusion of Heinrich Heine's satirical odes on King Ludwig of Bavaria, leading the German states to ban it and seize imported copies (Ruge nevertheless refused to fund the publication of further issues and his friendship with Marx broke down).^[59] After the paper's collapse, Marx began writing for the only uncensored German-language radical newspaper left, *Vorwärts!* (Forward!). Based in Paris, the paper was connected to the League of the Just, a utopian socialist secret society of workers and artisans. Marx attended

some of their meetings but did not join.^[60] In Vorwärts!, Marx refined his views on socialism based upon Hegelian and Feuerbachian ideas of dialectical materialism, at the same time criticising liberals and other socialists operating in Europe.^[61] On 28 August 1844, Marx met the German socialist Friedrich Engels at the Café de la Régence, beginning a lifelong friendship.^[62] Engels showed Marx his recently published *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844,^{[63][64]} convincing Marx that the working class would be the agent and instrument of the final revolution in history.^{[65][66]} Soon, Marx and Engels were collaborating on a criticism of the philosophical ideas of Marx's former friend, Bruno Bauer. This work was published in 1845 as *The Holy Family*.^{[67][68]} Although critical of Bauer, Marx was increasingly influenced by the ideas of the Young Hegelians Max Stirner and Ludwig Feuerbach, but eventually Marx and Engels abandoned Feuerbachian materialism as well.^[69]

During the time that he lived at 38 Rue Vaneau in Paris (from October 1843 until January 1845),^[70] Marx engaged in an intensive study of political economy (Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Mill, etc.),^[71] the French socialists (especially Claude Henri St. Simon and Charles Fourier)^[72] and the history of France.^[73] The study of, and critique of political economy is a project that Marx would pursue for the rest of his life^[74] and would result in his major economic work—the three-volume series called *Das Kapital*.^[75] Marxism is based in large part on three influences: Hegel's dialectics, French utopian socialism and British political economy. Together with his earlier study of Hegel's dialectics, the studying that Marx did during this time in Paris meant that all major components of "Marxism" were in place by the autumn of 1844.^[76] Marx was constantly being pulled away from his critique of political economy—not only by the usual daily demands of the time, but additionally by editing a radical newspaper and later by organising and directing the efforts of a political party during years of potentially revolutionary popular uprisings of the citizenry. Still, Marx was always drawn back to his studies where he sought "to understand the inner workings of capitalism".^[73]

An outline of "Marxism" had definitely formed in the mind of Karl Marx by late 1844. Indeed, many features of the Marxist view of the world had been worked out in great detail, but Marx needed to write down all of the details of his world view to further clarify the new critique of political economy in his own mind.^[77] Accordingly, Marx wrote *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.^[78] These manuscripts covered numerous topics, detailing Marx's concept of alienated labour.^[79] By the spring of 1845, his continued study of political economy, capital and capitalism had led Marx to the belief that the new critique of political economy he was espousing—that of scientific socialism—needed to be built on the base of a thoroughly developed materialistic view of the world.^[80]

The *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 had been written between April and August 1844, but soon Marx recognised that the Manuscripts had been influenced by some inconsistent ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach. Accordingly, Marx recognised the need to break with Feuerbach's philosophy in favour of historical materialism, thus a year later (in April 1845) after moving from Paris to Brussels, Marx wrote his eleven "Theses on Feuerbach".^[81] The "Theses on Feuerbach" are best known for Thesis 11, which states that "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to change it".^{[79][82]} This work contains Marx's criticism of materialism (for being contemplative), idealism (for reducing practice to theory), and, overall, philosophy (for putting abstract reality above the physical world).^[79] It thus introduced the first glimpse at Marx's historical materialism, an argument that the world is changed not by ideas but by actual, physical, material activity and practice.^{[79][83]} In 1845, after receiving a request from the Prussian king, the French government shut down Vorwärts!, with the interior minister, François Guizot, expelling Marx from France.^[84]

Marx moved to London in early June 1849 and would remain based in the city for the rest of his life. The headquarters of the Communist League also moved to London. However, in the winter of 1849–1850, a split within the ranks of the Communist League occurred when a faction within it led by August Willich and Karl Schapper began agitating for an immediate uprising. Willich and Schapper believed that once the Communist League had initiated the uprising, the entire working class from across Europe would rise "spontaneously" to join it, thus creating revolution across Europe. Marx and Engels protested that such an unplanned uprising on the part of the Communist League was "adventuristic" and would be suicide for the Communist League.^[129] Such an uprising as that recommended by the Schapper/Willich group would easily be crushed by the police and the armed forces of the reactionary governments of Europe. Marx maintained that this would spell doom for the Communist League itself, arguing that changes in society are not achieved overnight through the efforts and will power of a handful of men.^[129] They are instead brought about through a scientific analysis of economic conditions of society and by moving toward revolution through different stages of social development. In the present stage of development (circa 1850), following the defeat of the uprisings across Europe in 1848 he felt that the Communist League should encourage the working class to unite with progressive elements of the rising bourgeoisie to defeat the feudal aristocracy on issues involving demands for governmental

reforms, such as a constitutional republic with freely elected assemblies and universal (male) suffrage. In other words, the working class must join with bourgeois and democratic forces to bring about the successful conclusion of the bourgeois revolution before stressing the working class agenda and a working-class revolution.

After a long struggle that threatened to ruin the Communist League, Marx's opinion prevailed and eventually, the Willich/Schapper group left the Communist League. Meanwhile, Marx also became heavily involved with the socialist German Workers' Educational Society.^[130] The Society held their meetings in Great Windmill Street, Soho, central London's entertainment district.^{[131][132]} This organisation was also racked by an internal struggle between its members, some of whom followed Marx while others followed the Schapper/Willich faction. The issues in this internal split were the same issues raised in the internal split within the Communist League, but Marx lost the fight with the Schapper/Willich faction within the German Workers' Educational Society and on 17 September 1850 resigned from the Society.^[133]

Marx continued to write articles for the New York Daily Tribune as long as he was sure that the Tribune's editorial policy was still progressive. However, the departure of Charles Dana from the paper in late 1861 and the resultant change in the editorial board brought about a new editorial policy.^[155] No longer was the Tribune to be a strong abolitionist paper dedicated to a complete Union victory. The new editorial board supported an immediate peace between the Union and the Confederacy in the Civil War in the United States with slavery left intact in the Confederacy. Marx strongly disagreed with this new political position and in 1863 was forced to withdraw as a writer for the Tribune.^[156]

In 1864, Marx became involved in the International Workingmen's Association (also known as the First International),^[122] to whose General Council he was elected at its inception in 1864.^[157] In that organisation, Marx was involved in the struggle against the anarchist wing centred on Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876).^[135] Although Marx won this contest, the transfer of the seat of the General Council from London to New York in 1872, which Marx supported, led to the decline of the International.^[158] The most important political event during the existence of the International was the Paris Commune of 1871 when the citizens of Paris rebelled against their government and held the city for two months. In response to the bloody suppression of this rebellion, Marx wrote one of his most famous pamphlets, "The Civil War in France", a defence of the Commune.^{[159][160]}

Given the repeated failures and frustrations of workers' revolutions and movements, Marx also sought to understand and provide a critique suitable for the capitalist mode of production, and hence spent a great deal of time in the reading room of the British Museum studying.^[161] By 1857, Marx had accumulated over 800 pages of notes and short essays on capital, landed property, wage labour, the state, and foreign trade, and the world market, though this work did not appear in print until 1939, under the title *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*.^{[162][163][164]}

In 1859, Marx published *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*,^[165] his first serious critique of political economy. This work was intended merely as a preview of his three-volume *Das Kapital* (English title: *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*), which he intended to publish at a later date. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx began to critically examine axioms and categories of economic thinking.^{[166][167][168]} The work was enthusiastically received, and the edition sold out quickly.^[169]

II.DISCUSSION

Marx drank heavily until his death after joining the Trier Tavern Club drinking society in the 1830s.^[30]

Marx was afflicted by poor health (what he himself described as "the wretchedness of existence")^[192] and various authors have sought to describe and explain it. His biographer Werner Blumenberg attributed it to liver and gall problems which Marx had in 1849 and from which he was never afterward free, exacerbated by an unsuitable lifestyle. The attacks often came with headaches, eye inflammation, neuralgia in the head, and rheumatic pains. A serious nervous disorder appeared in 1877 and protracted insomnia was a consequence, which Marx fought with narcotics. The illness was aggravated by excessive nocturnal work and faulty diet. Marx was fond of highly seasoned dishes, smoked fish, caviare, pickled cucumbers, "none of which are good for liver patients", but he also liked wine and liqueurs and smoked an enormous amount "and since he had no money, it was usually bad-quality cigars". From 1863, Marx complained a lot about boils: "These are very frequent with liver patients and may be due to the same causes".^[193] The abscesses were so bad that Marx could neither sit nor work upright. According to Blumenberg, Marx's irritability is often found in liver patients:

The illness emphasised certain traits in his character. He argued cuttingly, his biting satire did not shrink at insults, and his expressions could be rude and cruel. Though in general Marx had blind faith in his closest friends, nevertheless he himself complained that he was sometimes too mistrustful and unjust even to them. His verdicts, not only about enemies but even about friends, were sometimes so harsh that even less sensitive people would take offence ... There must have been few whom he did not criticize like this ... not even Engels was an exception.^[194]

According to Princeton historian Jerrold Seigel, in his late teens, Marx may have had pneumonia or pleurisy, the effects of which led to his being exempted from Prussian military service. In later life whilst working on Das Kapital (which he never completed),^[195] Marx suffered from a trio of afflictions. A liver ailment, probably hereditary, was aggravated by overwork, a bad diet, and lack of sleep. Inflammation of the eyes was induced by too much work at night. A third affliction, eruption of carbuncles or boils, "was probably brought on by general physical debility to which the various features of Marx's style of life – alcohol, tobacco, poor diet, and failure to sleep – all contributed. Engels often exhorted Marx to alter this dangerous regime". In Seigel's thesis, what lay behind this punishing sacrifice of his health may have been guilt about self-involvement and egoism, originally induced in Karl Marx by his father.^[196]

In 2007, a retrodiagnosis of Marx's skin disease was made by dermatologist Sam Shuster of Newcastle University and for Shuster, the most probable explanation was that Marx suffered not from liver problems, but from hidradenitis suppurativa, a recurring infective condition arising from blockage of apocrine ducts opening into hair follicles. This condition, which was not described in the English medical literature until 1933 (hence would not have been known to Marx's physicians), can produce joint pain (which could be misdiagnosed as rheumatic disorder) and painful eye conditions. To arrive at his retrodiagnosis, Shuster considered the primary material: the Marx correspondence published in the 50 volumes of the Marx/Engels Collected Works. There, "although the skin lesions were called 'furuncles', 'boils' and 'carbuncles' by Marx, his wife, and his physicians, they were too persistent, recurrent, destructive and site-specific for that diagnosis". The sites of the persistent 'carbuncles' were noted repeatedly in the armpits, groins, perianal, genital (penis and scrotum) and suprapubic regions and inner thighs, "favoured sites of hidradenitis suppurativa". Professor Shuster claimed the diagnosis "can now be made definitively".^[197]

Shuster went on to consider the potential psychosocial effects of the disease, noting that the skin is an organ of communication and that hidradenitis suppurativa produces much psychological distress, including loathing and disgust and depression of self-image, mood, and well-being, feelings for which Shuster found "much evidence" in the Marx correspondence. Professor Shuster went on to ask himself whether the mental effects of the disease affected Marx's work and even helped him to develop his theory of alienation.^[198]

Marx's thought demonstrates influence from many sources, including but not limited to:

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy^[211]
- The classical political economy (economics) of Adam Smith and David Ricardo,^[212] as well as Jean Charles Léonard de Sismondi's critique of laissez-faire economics and analysis of the precarious state of the proletariat^[213]
- French socialist thought,^[212] in particular the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henri de Saint-Simon, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Charles Fourier^{[214][215]}
- Earlier German philosophical materialism among the Young Hegelians, particularly that of Ludwig Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer,^[69] as well as the French materialism of the late 18th century, including Diderot, Claude Adrien Helvétius and d'Holbach
- Friedrich Engels' analysis of the working class,^[65] as well as the early descriptions of class provided by French liberals and Saint-Simonians such as François Guizot and Augustin Thierry
- Marx's Judaic legacy has been identified as formative to both his moral outlook^[216] and his materialist philosophy.^[217]

Marx's view of history, which came to be called historical materialism (controversially adapted as the philosophy of dialectical materialism by Engels and Lenin), certainly shows the influence of Hegel's claim that one should view reality (and history) dialectically.^[211] However, whereas Hegel had thought in idealist terms, putting ideas in the forefront, Marx sought to conceptualize dialectics in materialist terms, arguing for the primacy of matter over idea.^{[79][211]} Where Hegel saw the "spirit" as driving history, Marx saw this as an unnecessary mystification, obscuring the reality of humanity and its physical actions shaping the world.^[211] He wrote that Hegelianism stood the movement of reality on its head, and that one needed to set it upon its feet.^[211] Despite his dislike of mystical terms, Marx

used Gothic language in several of his works: in *The Communist Manifesto* he proclaims "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre", and in *The Capital* he refers to capital as "necromancy that surrounds the products of labour".^[218]

Though inspired by French socialist and sociological thought,^[212] Marx criticised utopian socialists, arguing that their favoured small-scale socialistic communities would be bound to marginalisation and poverty and that only a large-scale change in the economic system could bring about real change.^[215]

Other important contributions to Marx's revision of Hegelianism came from Engels's book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844, which led Marx to conceive of the historical dialectic in terms of class conflict and to see the modern working class as the most progressive force for revolution,^[65] as well as from the social democrat Friedrich Wilhelm Schulz, who in *Die Bewegung der Produktion* described the movement of society as "flowing from the contradiction between the forces of production and the mode of production."^{[219][220]}

Marx believed that he could study history and society scientifically, discerning tendencies of history and thereby predicting the outcome of social conflicts. Some followers of Marx, therefore, concluded that a communist revolution would inevitably occur. However, Marx famously asserted in the eleventh of his "Theses on Feuerbach" that "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point however is to change it" and he clearly dedicated himself to trying to alter the world.^{[6][209]}

Marx's polemic with other thinkers often occurred through critique and thus he has been called "the first great user of critical method in social sciences".^{[211][212]} He criticised speculative philosophy, equating metaphysics with ideology.^[221] By adopting this approach, Marx attempted to separate key findings from ideological biases.^[212] This set him apart from many contemporary philosophers.^[6]

Like Tocqueville, who described a faceless and bureaucratic despotism with no identifiable despot,^[222] Marx also broke with classical thinkers who spoke of a single tyrant and with Montesquieu, who discussed the nature of the single despot. Instead, Marx set out to analyse "the despotism of capital".^[223] Fundamentally, Marx assumed that human history involves transforming human nature, which encompasses both human beings and material objects.^[224] Humans recognise that they possess both actual and potential selves.^{[225][226]} For both Marx and Hegel, self-development begins with an experience of internal alienation stemming from this recognition, followed by a realisation that the actual self, as a subjective agent, renders its potential counterpart an object to be apprehended.^[226] Marx further argues that by moulding nature^[227] in desired ways^[228] the subject takes the object as its own and thus permits the individual to be actualised as fully human. For Marx, the human nature – *Gattungswesen*, or species-being – exists as a function of human labour.^{[225][226][228]} Fundamental to Marx's idea of meaningful labour is the proposition that for a subject to come to terms with its alienated object it must first exert influence upon literal, material objects in the subject's world.^[229] Marx acknowledges that Hegel "grasps the nature of work and comprehends objective man, authentic because actual, as the result of his own work",^[230] but characterises Hegelian self-development as unduly "spiritual" and abstract.^[231] Marx thus departs from Hegel by insisting that "the fact that man is a corporeal, actual, sentient, objective being with natural capacities means that he has actual, sensuous objects for his nature as objects of his life-expression, or that he can only express his life in actual sensuous objects".^[229] Consequently, Marx revises Hegelian "work" into material "labour" and in the context of human capacity to transform nature the term "labour power".^[79]

Marx had a special concern with how people relate to their own labour power.^[233] He wrote extensively about this in terms of the problem of alienation.^[234] As with the dialectic, Marx began with a Hegelian notion of alienation but developed a more materialist conception.^[233] Capitalism mediates social relationships of production (such as among workers or between workers and capitalists) through commodities, including labour, that are bought and sold on the market.^[233] For Marx, the possibility that one may give up ownership of one's own labour – one's capacity to transform the world – is tantamount to being alienated from one's own nature and it is a spiritual loss.^[233] Marx described this loss as commodity fetishism, in which the things that people produce, commodities, appear to have a life and movement of their own to which humans and their behaviour merely adapt.^[235]

Commodity fetishism provides an example of what Engels called "false consciousness",^[236] which relates closely to the understanding of ideology. By "ideology", Marx and Engels meant ideas that reflect the interests of a particular class at a particular time in history, but which contemporaries see as universal and eternal.^[237] Marx and Engels's point was not only that such beliefs are at best half-truths, as they serve an important political function. Put another way, the control that one class exercises over the means of production include not only the production of food or manufactured goods

but also the production of ideas (this provides one possible explanation for why members of a subordinate class may hold ideas contrary to their own interests).^{[79][238]} An example of this sort of analysis is Marx's understanding of religion, summed up in a passage from the preface^[239] to his 1843 Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right:

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.^[240]

Whereas his Gymnasium senior thesis at the Gymnasium zu Trier [de] argued that religion had as its primary social aim the promotion of solidarity, here Marx sees the social function of religion in terms of highlighting/preserving political and economic status quo and inequality.^[241]

Marx was an outspoken opponent of child labour,^[242] saying that British industries "could but live by sucking blood, and children's blood too", and that U.S. capital was financed by the "capitalized blood of children".^{[218][243]}

III.RESULTS

Marx's thoughts on labour and its function in reproducing capital were related to the primacy he gave to social relations in determining the society's past, present and future.^{[211][245][246]} (Critics have called this economic determinism.) Labour is the precondition for the existence of, and accumulation of capital, which both shape the social system.^[246] For Marx, social change was driven by conflict between opposing interests, by parties situated in the historical situation of their mode of production.^[173] This became the inspiration for the body of works known as the conflict theory.^[245] In his evolutionary model of history, he argued that human history began with free, productive and creative activities that was over time coerced and dehumanised, a trend most apparent under capitalism.^[211] Marx noted that this was not an intentional process, but rather due to the immanent logic of the current mode of production which demands more human labour (abstract labour) to reproduce the social relationships of capital.^{[172][174]}

The organisation of society depends on means of production. The means of production are all things required to produce material goods, such as land, natural resources, and technology but not human labour. The relations of production are the social relationships people enter into as they acquire and use the means of production.^[245] Together, these compose the mode of production and Marx distinguished historical eras in terms of modes of production. Marx differentiated between base and superstructure, where the base (or substructure) is the economic system and superstructure is the cultural and political system.^[245] Marx regarded this mismatch between economic base and social superstructure as a major source of social disruption and conflict.^[245]

Despite Marx's stress on the critique of capitalism and discussion of the new communist society that should replace it, his explicit critique is guarded, as he saw it as an improved society compared to the past ones (slavery and feudalism).^[79] Marx never clearly discusses issues of morality and justice, but scholars agree that his work contained implicit discussion of those concepts.^[79]

Marx's view of capitalism was two-sided.^{[79][150]} On one hand, in the 19th century's deepest critique of the dehumanising aspects of this system he noted that defining features of capitalism include alienation, exploitation and recurring, cyclical depressions leading to mass unemployment. On the other hand, he characterised capitalism as "revolutionising, industrialising and universalising qualities of development, growth and progressivity" (by which Marx meant industrialisation, urbanisation, technological progress, increased productivity and growth, rationality and scientific revolution) that are responsible for progress, at in contrast to earlier forms of societies.^{[79][150][211]} Marx considered the capitalist class to be one of the most revolutionary in history because it constantly improved the means of production, more so than any other class in history and was responsible for the overthrow of feudalism.^{[215][247]} Capitalism can stimulate considerable growth because the capitalist has an incentive to reinvest profits in new technologies and capital equipment.^[233]

According to Marx, capitalists take advantage of the difference between the labour market and the market for whatever commodity the capitalist can produce. Marx observed that in practically every successful industry, input unit-costs are lower than output unit-prices. Marx called the difference "surplus value" and argued that it was based on surplus labour, the difference between what it costs to keep workers alive, and what they can produce.^[79] Although Marx

describes capitalists as vampires sucking worker's blood,^[211] he notes that drawing profit is "by no means an injustice" since Marx, according to Allen Wood "excludes any trans-epochal standpoint from which one can comment" on the morals of such particular arrangements.^[79] Marx also noted that even the capitalists themselves cannot go against the system.^[215] The problem is the "cancerous cell" of capital, understood not as property or equipment, but the social relations between workers and owners, (the selling and purchasing of labour power) – the societal system, or rather mode of production, in general.^[215]

At the same time, Marx stressed that capitalism was unstable and prone to periodic crises.^[93] He suggested that over time capitalists would invest more and more in new technologies and less and less in labour.^[79] Since Marx believed that profit derived from surplus value appropriated from labour, he concluded that the rate of profit would fall as the economy grows.^[248] Marx believed that increasingly severe crises would punctuate this cycle of growth and collapse.^[248] Moreover, he believed that in the long-term, this process would enrich and empower the capitalist class and impoverish the proletariat.^{[248][215]} In section one of The Communist Manifesto, Marx describes feudalism, capitalism and the role internal social contradictions play in the historical process:

We see then: the means of production and of exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged ... the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder. Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted in it, and the economic and political sway of the bourgeois class. A similar movement is going on before our own eyes ... The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring order into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property.^[4]

Marx believed that those structural contradictions within capitalism necessitate its end, giving way to socialism, or a post-capitalistic, communist society:

The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.^[4]

Thanks to various processes overseen by capitalism, such as urbanisation, the working class, the proletariat, should grow in numbers and develop class consciousness, in time realising that they can and must change the system.^[211] Marx believed that if the proletariat were to seize the means of production, they would encourage social relations that would benefit everyone equally, abolishing exploiting class and introduce a system of production less vulnerable to cyclical crises.^[211] Marx argued in The German Ideology that capitalism will end through the organised actions of an international working class:

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.^[249]

In this new society, the alienation would end and humans would be free to act without being bound by selling their labour.^[248] It would be a democratic society, enfranchising the entire population.^[215] In such a utopian world, there would also be little need for a state, whose goal was previously to enforce the alienation.^[248] Marx theorised that between capitalism and the establishment of a socialist/communist system, would exist a period of dictatorship of the proletariat – where the working class holds political power and forcibly socialises the means of production.^[215] As he wrote in his Critique of the Gotha Program, "between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat".^[250] While he allowed for the possibility of peaceful transition in some countries with strong democratic institutional structures (such as Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands), he suggested that in other countries in which workers cannot "attain their goal by peaceful means" the "lever of our revolution must be force".^[251]

IV.CONCLUSIONS

Marx's ideas have had a profound impact on world politics and intellectual thought,^{[6][7][260][261]} in particular in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution.^[262] Followers of Marx have often debated among themselves over how to interpret Marx's writings and apply his concepts to the modern world.^[263] The legacy of Marx's thought has become contested between numerous tendencies, each of which sees itself as Marx's most accurate interpreter. In the political realm, these tendencies include political theories such as Leninism, Marxism–Leninism, Trotskyism, Maoism, Luxemburgism, and libertarian Marxism^[263] and Open Marxism. Various currents have also developed in academic Marxism, often under influence of other views, resulting in structuralist Marxism, historical materialism, phenomenological Marxism, analytical Marxism, and Hegelian Marxism.^[263]

From an academic perspective, Marx's work contributed to the birth of modern sociology. He has been cited as one of the 19th century's three masters of the "school of suspicion", alongside Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud,^[264] and as one of the three principal architects of modern social science along with Émile Durkheim and Max Weber.^[265] In contrast to other philosophers, Marx offered theories that could often be tested with the scientific method.^[6] Both Marx and Auguste Comte set out to develop scientifically justified ideologies in the wake of European secularisation and new developments in the philosophies of history and science. Working in the Hegelian tradition, Marx rejected Comtean sociological positivism in an attempt to develop a science of society.^[266] Karl Löwith considered Marx and Søren Kierkegaard to be the two greatest Hegelian philosophical successors.^[267] In modern sociological theory, Marxist sociology is recognised as one of the main classical perspectives. Isaiah Berlin considers Marx the true founder of modern sociology "in so far as anyone can claim the title".^[268] Beyond social science, he has also had a lasting legacy in philosophy, literature, the arts and the humanities.^{[269][270][271][272]}

Social theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries have pursued two main strategies in response to Marx. One move has been to reduce it to its analytical core, known as analytical Marxism. Another, more common move has been to dilute the explanatory claims of Marx's social theory and emphasise the "relative autonomy" of aspects of social and economic life not directly related to Marx's central narrative of interaction between the development of the "forces of production" and the succession of "modes of production". This has been the neo-Marxist theorising adopted by historians inspired by Marx's social theory such as E. P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm. It has also been a line of thinking pursued by thinkers and activists such as Antonio Gramsci who have sought to understand the opportunities and the difficulties of transformative political practice, seen in the light of Marxist social theory.^{[273][274][275][276]} Marx's ideas would also have a profound influence on subsequent artists and art history, with avant-garde movements across literature, visual art, music, film, and theatre.^[277]

Politically, Marx's legacy is more complex. Throughout the 20th century, revolutions in dozens of countries labelled themselves "Marxist"—most notably the Russian Revolution, which led to the founding of the Soviet Union.^[278] Major world leaders including Vladimir Lenin,^[278] Mao Zedong,^[279] Fidel Castro,^[280] Salvador Allende,^[281] Josip Broz Tito,^[282] Kwame Nkrumah,^[283] Jawaharlal Nehru,^[284] Nelson Mandela,^[285] Xi Jinping,^[286] Jean-Claude Juncker,^{[286][287]} and Thomas Sankara^[288] have all cited Marx as an influence. Beyond where Marxist revolutions took place, Marx's ideas have informed political parties worldwide.^[289] In countries associated with Marxism, some events have led political opponents to blame Marx for millions of deaths,^[290] while others argue for a distinction between the legacy and influence of Marx specifically, and the legacy and influence of those who have shaped his ideas for political purposes.^[291] Arthur Lipow describes Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels as "the founders of modern revolutionary democratic socialism."^[292]

Marx remains both relevant and controversial. In May 2018, to mark the bicentenary of his birth, a 4.5m statue of him by leading Chinese sculptor Wu Weishan and donated by the Chinese government was unveiled in his birthplace of Trier. The then-European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker defended Marx's memory, saying that today Marx "stands for things which he is not responsible for and which he didn't cause because many of the things he wrote down were redrafted into the opposite".^{[287][293]} In 2017, a feature film, titled *The Young Karl Marx*, featuring Marx, his wife Jenny Marx, and Engels, among other revolutionaries and intellectuals prior to the Revolutions of 1848, received good reviews for both its historical accuracy and its brio in dealing with intellectual life.^[294] Another fictional representation to coincide with the bicentenary was Jason Barker's novel *Marx Returns* which, despite being "[c]urious, funny, perplexing, and irreverent", according to philosopher Ray Brassier "casts unexpected light on Marx's thought."^[295]

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