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Dedicated to Metin Çulhaoğlu (1947-2022)

EDITORIAL

ACG The Foundations of *Marxism & Sciences*

INTRODUCTION

Cenk Saraçoğlu Marxism in the Times of Total Crisis of Capitalism

IN MEMORIAM

C. Saraçoğlu Learning from Metin Çulhaoğlu (1947-2022)

ARTICLES & ESSAYS

- Stuart A. Newman* Marxism and the New Materialism
Engin Delice The Objective Validity of Engels' Dialectic Theory
Melda Yaman Social Reproduction Theory: A Total Analysis
Haldun Güllalp From the Black Death to Covid-19
Omer Moussaly Losurdo's Interpretation of Class Struggle

INTERVIEWS

- Vesa Oittinen*
Sahotra Sarkar
Helena Sheehan
Christoph Henning Rethinking the Foundations of Marxism Today
Marcel van der Linden
Andrey Maidansky
Pepijn Brandon

CULTURAL WORKS

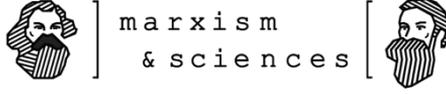
- Engin Ümer* Marx: A Nineteenth Century Ghost
Nazım Hikmet In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos
Ömer Er Cosmic
Yiğit Özatalay *Boyun Eğmeyenler* (The Ones Who Don't Bow Down)

MISCELLANY

- Jacinto R. Valila, Jr.* Revisiting the Semi-Feudal Question in the Philippines
Saladdin Ahmed The Cost of Freedom in the Neoliberal World

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MARXISM-I

Philosophy, Method, and Revolutionary Vision



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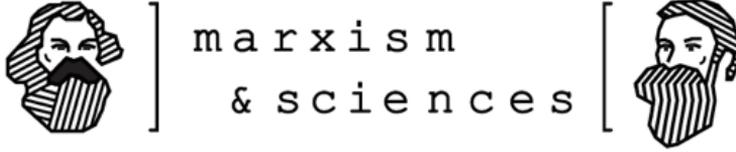
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	
v	The Foundations of <i>Marxism & Sciences</i> and ‘The Actuality of Engels’ ACG
INTRODUCTION	
xi	Marxism in the Times of Total Crisis of Capitalism. Cenk Saraçoğlu
IN MEMORIAM	
xix	Learning from Metin Çulhaoğlu (1947–2022) C. Saraçoğlu
ARTICLES & ESSAYS	
1	Marxism and the New Materialism Stuart A. Newman
13	The Objective Validity of Engels' Dialectic Theory as a Method of Reasoning Engin Delice
53	Social Reproduction Theory: A Total Analysis of Society And Life Melda Yaman
83	From the Black Death to Covid-19: The Rise and Fall of Capitalism Haldun Güllalp
131	Domenico Losurdo's Historical Interpretation of Class Struggles Omer Moussaly
INTERVIEWS	
157	Rethinking the Foundations of Marxism Today Vesa Oittinen, Sahotra Sarkar, Helena Sheehan, Christoph Henning, Marcel van der Linden, Andrey Maidansky and Pepijn Brandon
CULTURAL WORKS	
185	Marx: A Nineteenth Century Ghost Engin Ümer
189	In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos Nazım Hikmet
191	Cosmic Ömer Er
195	<i>Boyun Eğmeyenler</i> (The Ones Who Don't Bow Down) Yiğit Özatalay
MISCELLANY	
199	Revisiting the Semi-feudal Question in the Philippines: A Brief Review Jacinto R. Valila, Jr
223	The Cost of Freedom in the Neoliberal World of Blood and Oil Saladdin Ahmed
243	NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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EDITORIAL

The Foundations of *Marxism & Sciences*

In this Issue, published with the theme on the “Foundations of Marxism,” I would like to take this chance to briefly explain the foundations of our own journal here. Of course, this would also include some recent developments about the journal and, some remarks on the theme and the background of this issue. All these topics are closely related since they are all somehow part of the ongoing process in building the foundations of *M&S*.

Although we are glad to be able to publish the 2nd issue of *M&S*, there is no doubt that we are still in infancy considering the ambitious aim of the journal: “[. . .] contribute to rebuilding the Marxist conception of totality [. . .] in order to encompass the entirety of intellectual domain and thus merging class struggles in nature, culture and society again, as once developed by Marx and Engels.”

However, the growing interest and support to the journal since the first issue is promising. *M&S* became a partner with Marxism and Science & Technology (MST) research programme of SOC21¹ (*Socialisme in de 21^e eeuw*, Socialism in the 21st century) in May. As a result of this collaboration, MST launched a donation campaign to support the journal and thus we are able to register DOI and corresponding CrossRef for each contribution published in the journal. We are grateful for this support to SOC21 and those who donated, so far. Since *M&S* is an open access journal and operates with very limited resources, any amount of donation is vital for its survival.

Recently, *Monthly Review* (MR) offered to publish an advertorial of *M&S* to announce the debut of the journal and its first issue. The advertorial of *M&S* will be published in September issue of *MR*. We are also grateful to *MR* and its editor, John Bellamy Foster, who expresses his support to the

1. <https://soc21.nl/alle-activiteiten/marxism-and-science-technology/>

journal from the start. The readers will also see an advertorial of *MR* in the pages of this issue.

Furthermore, we have now left two issues behind which already brought together Marxists from natural sciences, humanities and social sciences sharing and contributing to the same goal.

~o~

One of the colleagues recently asked some questions about the journal upon our invitation to the Editorial Board: “Could you please first let me know how the team met? It is such a broad group of people from all kinds of places, I wonder what brought you together, what is the common frame?” I replied to the colleague mainly by addressing relevant sources published at the web site² and previous editorial.³

However, these questions require us to get into some further details of the whole process which was not shared publicly before; from the 1st *Marxist Inquiries on Science* symposium where the idea of publishing a journal on Marxism and science first proposed in September 2012 in İzmir to the first meeting which Alper Dizdar, Siyaveş Azeri and the author met face to face for publishing a journal at the *School of Marxism and Sciences* in September 2019 and then from those days to up today. We were all living in different cities and countries, and soon COVID-19 pandemic emerged. Therefore, I guess we have never met face to face again after that first meeting. However, we regularly met at monthly online meetings to discuss theoretical and practical issues about the journal. Soon after, Mesut Yıldız joined the team and we all together organized the *School of Marxism and Sciences-2020* online in December. Melda Yaman joined us after the *School* and we continued to meet monthly online. Eventually, we announced the launch of the journal in March 2021 and Cenk Saraçoğlu joined us after a short time.

Considering the ambitious aim of the journal it was natural to find colleagues from a wide geography and with diverse disciplinary backgrounds who were eager to take part in this collective work. We are grateful to those colleagues who accepted to join this collective, so far.

Two members of the Editorial Board, closely interested in contributing to the journal, joined as editors after the publication of the 1st issue; Joost Kircz as natural sciences editor and Sascha Freyberg as humanities editor.

2. <https://marxismandsciences.org/history/>

3. https://marxismandsciences.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MS_editorial.pdf

Our emailings ended up with a close comradeship—a comradeship among whom have never met face-to-face before. We owe much to Joost and Sascha for their invaluable contributions to the journal.

We are glad to announce that recently several colleagues joined the boards of the journal. Engin Delice who was among the contributors and organisers of the symposium *Marxist Inquiries on Science* and the *School of Marxism and Sciences* since 2013, joined the Editorial Board. Cristoph Henning, whom we also interviewed in this issue, joined the Editorial Board. We thank both for taking part in this initiative.

Recently, many Marxist colleagues joined the Advisory Board from distant geographies with backgrounds in natural sciences, humanities and social sciences. We are proud to announce their names, Ezequiel A. Di Paolo, Adrian Johnston, Marcel van der Linden, Pepijn Brandon and Lenny Moss. We would like to thank them again for accepting our invitations.

~o~

We have already three articles ready for publication in the next issue *M&S* 2(1)-Winter 2023 with the theme ‘The Foundations of Marxism-II: Ilyenkuvian Contributions.’ The CFP, announced few weeks ago and the titles of three articles in press are published at the back cover. Secondly, we are working on another CFP for *M&S* 2(2)-Summer 2023 issue with the theme ‘Radical Science Movements’ which will be announced soon. Finally, we also recently started to discuss 1st issue of 2024, *M&S* 3(1).

These developments mean that hard days of publishing a new journal is about to over. Thus, we hope to find a chance to organize much larger meetings at which all editorial collective members could meet both face-to-face and online. Although, we could not held one due to the rushings of first year of the journal, holding such annual meetings were among our main goals, as expressed at the last sentence of ‘About us’ web page⁴: “We call upon all comrades around the world for contributing to the journal, *the symposium* and *the school of Marxism & Sciences* for achieving [its] goal.”

~o~

Unfortunately, we have some bad news, as well. İlker İsaetli (1982–2022), an amazing musician and one of the first issue's contributors, passed away very young, only at his forty, a few months after its publication. During the battle with his illness, he contributed to the 1st issue with

4. <https://marxismandsciences.org/about/>

an essay and a wonderful recording of his electric bass improvisations, on Engels' amateur composition exercises.

He was one of the members of the brass band, *Bando Sol*, which we performed together at political meetings and concerts in İzmir and İstanbul during early 2010s. When he joined the group, we asked him to play guitar; he was such a committed communist militant that he never told us that he was a bass player until we needed one. Comrade İlker was also the only professional musician in the group; thus, he composed many songs and wrote their musical arrangements. 'Don't Bown Down'⁵ and 'The Bulb and the Hammer'⁶ were two of such songs. I would like to share one of the video recordings of İlker while performing 'Bella Ciao'⁷ in *Bando Sol* in memoriam.

Unfortunately, we lost one of our close comrades Metin Çulhaoğlu, few weeks ago, one of the few leading Marxist theoreticians in Turkey.

Çulhaoğlu had not only politically and theoretically but also practically impacted the historical background of the journal. Alper, Cenk and I, as the members of the editorial committee of this journal, were all in our early twenties when we first met him, started to read his articles and books, and joined the class struggle via same political organizations. He clearly shaped our political and theoretical development and thinking. His funeral strongly demonstrated that he was also beloved by great majority of socialist and communist comrades in Turkey.

As I wrote in the editorial of the 1st issue, he also contributed to the organization of the symposium *Marxist Inquiries on Science* and the *School of Marxism and Sciences* from the start in 2012. He gave talks in these symposiums and schools and his presentations were published in the books prepared based on these symposiums. He was also a member of the advisory board at the symposium and school.

~o~

Since Cenk Saraçoğlu presented the issue in detail in the Introduction, I would like to share only some details of cultural works: Four works published in this issue are especially related to one of the theme, the

5. . 'Don't Bown Down':

<https://soundcloud.com/ali-cenk-gedik/01-bando-sol-45lik-boyun-egme>

6. 'The Bulb and the Hammer':

<https://soundcloud.com/ali-cenk-gedik/02-bando-sol-45lik-ampul-ve>

7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhArscfEYIY>

revolutionary vision of Marxism. These four separate works, a digital photograph manipulation, a poem and two musical compositions with accompanying videos, in total, converges the past and the future in present time for the revolutionary vision of Marxism.

‘Marx: A Nineteenth Century Ghost’ by Engin Ümer is a digital manipulation of a photograph of Marx. The ‘ghost’ at the title of the work not only represents Marx, as a ghost still haunting the World, today but also the first sentence of his masterwork written with Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, as communism haunting Europe. Engin Ümer discusses his work in the accompanying short essay.

‘In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos’ (*Kosmosun Kardeşliği Adına*) by Turkish communist poet, Nazım Hikmet (1902–1963) tells the first encounter of a human messenger, representing an united communist World with an intelligent extraterrestrial life on one of the stars, in the future. Thanks to Mehmet Şahin and Jonathan M. Ross for the translation of the poem in English, for the first time.

‘Cosmic’ composed by Ömer Er in 2005 is a musical piece performed by synthesizers and electro-violin. *Çapuleyşin Müzik Orkestra* founded by Ömer Er and the author for performing music at street demonstrations during Gezi Park Uprising in 2013 in Turkey, published the music with a new title, ‘In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos,’ on Youtube. The accompanying video was edited by Volkan Mutlu and the poem of Nazım Hikmet was dubbed by actor Metin Coşkun by the support of Nâzım Hikmet Cultural Center (NHKM), İstanbul. Volkan Mutlu also recorded the video during the Uprising, showing the daily ‘commune’ life at Gezi Park, Istanbul in June 2013. Musical notation of the work, a short essay of the composer and the music video with English subtitles are published in this issue.

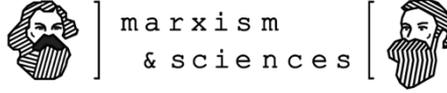
The Gezi Park Uprising was started on May 28, 2013, as an act of protecting the trees of the Gezi Park near Taksim Square, Istanbul, that were to be chopped for rebuilding an historical Ottoman structure. Around ten million people attended the demonstrations against the government in all major cities of Turkey until the end of August.

Boyun Eğmeyenler (The Ones Who Don’t Bow Down) is a song by Yiğit Özatalay whom both wrote the lyrics and composed the music during the Gezi Park Uprising. The phrase, ‘Don’t Bow Down’ at the name of the song was one of the popular slogans of the demonstrations and the lyrics clearly represents the revolutionary days of the Uprising. Musical notation of the

song, a short essay of the composer and the music video with English subtitles are published in this issue. One of the music video recorded and edited by Nâzım Hikmet Cultural Center (NHKM), shows the vocal performances of leading actors such as Genco Erkal and Tülay Günal, as well as leading rock singers and guitarists such as Nejat Yavaşoğulları and Akın Eldes, leading jazz singers such as Sibel Köse, leading folk and popular music singers such as Emin İgüs and Burhan Şeşen.

Finally, we would like to thank all authors and anonymous reviewers for their contributions and collaboration throughout the publication of this issue. Any comments and criticisms are welcome, as usual.

ACG.



Marxism in the Times of Total Crisis of Capitalism

Cenk Saraçoğlu

AS STATED BY MANY CRITICAL SCHOLARS and commentators, the Covid 19 pandemic, which still continues to haunt the world, has made capitalism’s political and economic crisis more apparent than ever. An abrupt suspension of the “normal” functioning of the global market mechanisms and the inability of the states and capitalists to develop coherent responses to the situation have unraveled once more the fragility of financial capitalism. The now-conspicuous and immediate repercussions of ecological crisis, which manifest themselves with soaring temperatures, unprecedentedly enormous wildfires, floods and droughts, are observed worldwide. This situation has also demonstrated how capitalism lacks any effective instruments to at least mitigate the imminent catastrophes stemming from its inherent propensity to commodify all of life to the detriment of life itself. Under these circumstances, contemporary capitalism is characterized no longer by economic growth, further globalization, or an ideological triumph but by rampant ontological insecurity, a gloomy sense of apocalypse, and bleak future scenarios. In search of the foundational reasons for this “total crisis,” even the mainstream intellectuals tend to emphasize the intrinsically destructive forces of capitalist production and the devastating consequences it has had on human to human, and, in general, human to nature relations.

As the “totality” of life itself, not only the human life but also the life of the earth in general, is at stake today, there emerged, even among the mainstream thinkers, a tendency to discuss the viability of some total solutions for a potential total catastrophe. The urge of the World Economic Forum, the leading capitalist platform of the world, for a total revision,

Saraçoğlu, Cenk. 2022. “Marxism in the Times of Total Crisis of Capitalism.” *Marxism & Sciences* 1(2): xi–xvii.

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epitomized by the phrase “Great Reset” is a quintessential and telling example of this tendency. Any Marxist would concede that a quest for developing “total” solutions to the total crisis of capitalism from within capitalism itself is not only unavailing but also manipulative. It is impossible to design any solution for such a massive and all-encompassing crisis by remaining within capitalism’s material and ideational confines. Even though there is a widespread acknowledgement of a crisis, answers are usually not sought in Marxist directions. Should not now be the time of recognition of those features in Marxist thought which give possible directions out of the impasse?

The totality of the contemporary crisis of capitalism invites us to rethink the fundamental premises of Marxism in its totality, as the method of understanding and transcending capitalism and reflecting on the historical, present, and possible future forms of human-human and human-nature relations. In an age characterized by the urgent need for a “new beginning,” the quest for revisiting, rethinking, and clarifying Marxism’s foundational premises in different fields of science is crucial. In this vein, in the second issue of *Marxism & Sciences*, we included scholarly articles, essays, interviews and artistic works that discuss and consider the fundamental premises of Marxism as a scientific method, as an epistemology, as a philosophy and as a revolutionary vision and strategy, and assess the extent of actuality and viability of these premises in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity. Apart from original research and scholarly articles, the interviews we conducted with seven leading Marxist intellectuals to compile their reflections on the total crisis of capitalism from the lenses of Marxism added so much to the breadth and depth of this issue. We are thankful for their invaluable contribution to this issue and their general support and encouragement to our journal in its “infancy.”

Inspired by the quest of our journal to highlight Marxism’s holistic and relational understanding of things in general, this introduction will not contend itself with summarizing each contribution’s main premises separately and individually. Instead, it will juxtapose and relate our authors’ reflections on the place of Marxism amid contemporary “total” crisis of capitalism, and thereby present a holistic portrayal of the issue in its entirety. In fact, what allows and encourages such a difficult attempt to combine each contribution is that they revolve around some common global socio-political problems and theoretical questions that Marxism has to deal with, and that their assertions are mostly complementary, otherwise productively clashing with one another.

The Foundations of Marxism and Today's "Crisis"

One of the essential concerns that we pursue in this issue is to identify the very core premises of Marxism regarding human-human and human-nature relations that would serve as a point of entry to discuss the contemporary crisis of capitalism and humanity in its totality. The other thorny problem that the authors of this issue elaborate on is how a Marxist, could lucidly delineate the recent impasse/crisis of capitalism by relying on the core premises of Marxism. If capitalism is going through a crisis today, how is this crisis different from its predecessors and what does this mean for a socialist strategy?

In his opening article of this issue, entitled "Marxism and New Materialism," Stuart A. Newman argues that what is at the core of Marxism as a philosophy is a specific conception of materialism that recognizes and puts at the center the *specificity* of life and living matter. This is what is denied by those ideologies of "new materialism" that seek to erase any ontological distinction between living and non-living matter and thereby refuse to attribute any central role to human agency to overcome the burning planetary problems today. One can infer from Newman's article that a productive discussion as to what is to be done to resist those destructive dynamics that threaten the entire planet could be possible only if we retain Marxism's quest for understanding the distinctive features of "self-formative dynamics of the species." From this, Newman reaches a precise definition of historical materialism: an inquiry into "the the social formation, a complex historical entity with developmental propensities determined, in the last analysis, by the means of production of basic and socially conditioned needs and the struggle between group—social classes—with different and unequal relationships to these productive forces and resources." It is through historical materialism as such that Marxism could possess the merit of being "simultaneously totalising and empirical" as aptly put by Helena Sheehan in our interview with her in this issue. For Newman, historical materialism could provide us with a much more realistic and well-founded strategy of exit from the current impasse of capitalism than the philosophy of so-called "new materialism" and "posthumanism," which disconnect ongoing disasters of climate, war, and inequalities from perennial socio-political issues like class divisions or socio-economic and ecological problems like capitalist extraction.

Marxism, however, is not concerned only with the domain of *production* when addressing the specific nature of human activity and agency. Human beings also *reproduce* the conditions under which they produce themselves. At this point, Melda Yaman makes a crucial intervention by asserting that an integrated conception of production and reproduction of labour, life and the material world distinguishes Marxism from other strands of thought. According to her, the dialectical unity of production and reproduction in Marx and Engels's thought is still the most productive genus of concepts and ideas to understand the deep and total crisis of humanity that unfolded itself conspicuously during the Covid-19 pandemic. For her, thinking about production and reproduction in a relational and united manner will enable us to diagnose the specificity of today's crisis as the "general crisis of the reproduction of society in all its dimensions".

Engin Delice, in his article with the title "The Objective Validity of Engels' Dialectic Theory as a Method of Reasoning" strives to outline, in reference to Frederick Engels's controversial works, the specific reasoning and method that Marx and Engels employ to investigate what Newman refers to as "specificity of life and living matter." Delice implies that it is the "dialectic" theory and method that is at the core of Marxism and the resolution of the controversy as to whether "it is process of nature's own functioning or the logical order of the concepts" that gives validity to dialectics is essential for rethinking Marxism in the wake of a total crisis of capitalism today.

While Newman, Yaman and Delice try to explore the core of Marxism in its methodology of understanding life and nature, Haldun Güllalp, in his very comprehensive and thought-provoking article "From Black Death to Covid 19: The Rise and Fall of Capitalism" explores the "core" of Marxism in the subject matter or the main question that Marx pursued especially in his later works: what is the historically specific and distinguishing feature of capitalism as a mode of production that differentiates it from pre-capitalist social formations? Here, Güllalp identifies accumulation through continual dispossession of masses as a continual and distinctive feature of capitalism, which is also emphasized in Sahotra Sarkar's interview in this issue. Güllalp's discussion shows that through an analysis of different forms of dispossession in the history of capitalism, we can discern the distinctive characteristics of the contemporary crisis and envision a post-capitalist society. For him, this final phase of capitalism is characterized by the "renewed primitive accumulation" in which capital owners forge an

unrestrained attack on natural resources and prevent people “from accessing basic necessities, including air and water.” He lucidly explains what makes the contemporary crisis of capitalism different from its predecessors: “Up to the present, crisis tendencies were caused by various economic, social and political limits to capital accumulation; today, however, capitalism is pushing against the limits of nature.” In the face of such a total crisis of humanity today, Vesa Oittinen highlights the need to rethink Marxist views on ethics, modernity and anthropology in a general sense, also in view of the legacy of emancipative aspects of the Enlightenment in Marxism. When reading our interview with Andrey Maidansky, one can see how these assertions could be questioned in the name of “scientific Marxism”.

The problem of envisioning and building a post-capitalist society socialism induces us to revisit the issue of “agency,” the subject of a revolutionary transition and hence the problem of (re)formulating class struggle today. Indeed, what is at the core of Marxism is not only its method, that is historical/dialectical materialism, it is subject matter, that is capitalism, but also its major reference point to understand the dynamics behind historical transformations, like class struggle and private property. As Pepijin Brandon states in our interview with him, Marxism is also a “history writing that foregrounds class and class struggles, starting from a fundamental identification with the oppressed and exploited.” Rethinking class struggle is not only a “theoretical” but also an exigent political question today because, as Marcel Van Linden, states in our interview with him that “one of the great paradoxes of the current era is that world working class continues to grow, while at the same time many labour movements are experiencing a crisis.” At this point Omer Moussaly’s rich elaboration on Domenico Losurdo’s interpretation of Marxism shows that the roots of a non-dogmatic, sophisticated and multi-layered conception of class struggle exist in the fundamental premises of historical materialism. As Marcel Van Linden puts it, such a non-dogmatic view of class struggle could also entail rethinking Marx’s theory of value in today’s rapidly changing dynamics of capitalism. Andrey Maidansky would most probably criticize and refute Losurdo’s position as well as Mousally’s endorsement on the grounds of his conviction that Marx’s earlier political essays are more prophecy than science. He controversially argues that an attempt to understand capitalism as a “natural historical process” should be at the core of a

scientific Marxism today. Again the tension between “ethics” and “science” seems to open up. However, it is exactly this tension that Marxism tries to overcome.

While seeking an answer to the question related to the core premises of Marxism and their relevance to understand the specificity of the crisis of contemporary capitalism in this issue, we see the emphasis oscillates between a Marxism as a philosophy of human being and a Marxism as a scientific exploration of the laws of capitalism. Christoph Henning presents in his interview a subtle formulation that combines both and represents Marx and Engels’ legacy in its entirety: “their approach is not only based on ethics, but also on a sound social scientific analysis that uncovers mechanisms of power, exploitation, ideology, alienation and ecological destruction.”

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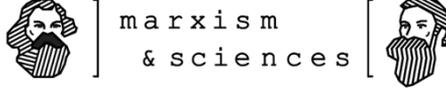
Marxism and Sciences is also open to review articles that fall outside the designated main theme for each issue. We have two pieces of this kind in this issue. J.R. Valila revisits the Marxist literature related to “transition to capitalism” debate in relation to the specific features of social formation in Philippines in his article entitled “Revisiting the Semi-feudal Question in the Philippines.” Finally, Salaadin Ahmad discusses “imperialism” in the context of Ukrainian War and eloquently discusses what kind of a position the left should take in “another war that force us to choose between two wrongs within a false duality.”

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As was the case for our first issue, we publish some very intriguing cultural works in this issue as well: a digital photograph manipulation, a poem and two musical compositions. The work of art titled, ‘Marx: A Nineteenth Century Ghost’ by Engin Ümer is a digital manipulation of Marx’s one of famous photographs. Engin Ümer discusses the context of his work in an accompanying short essay. In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos’ (*Kosmosun Kardeşliği Adına*) is the title of a poem written by Turkish communist poet, Nazım Hikmet (1902–1963). Mehmet Şahin and Jonathan M. Ross kindly translated this poem for our journal and, to our knowledge, this is the first ever translation of this fascinating piece of art. ‘Cosmic’ was composed by Ömer Er in 2005. The composer performs the musical piece by synthesizers and electro-violin. *Çapuleyşin Müzik Orkestra*, founded during Gezi Park Uprising in 2013 in Turkey, published

the music with the title of Hikmet's poem 'In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos,' on Youtube.

Boyun Eğmeyenler (The Ones Who Don't Bow Down) is a song by Yiğit Özatalay whom both wrote the lyrics and composed the music during the Gezi Park Uprising. The phrase, 'Don't Bow Down' at the name of the song was one of the famous slogans of the demonstrations and phrases such as "revolution winked at us" and "revolution became possible with them" clearly represents the collective hope unfolded during the uprising.



Learning from Metin Çulhaoğlu (1947–2022)

Cenk Saraçoğlu, translated by Buse Melisa Durukan

METİN ÇULHAOĞLU PURSUES A QUESTION from the thirtieth page of his 1997 book *Binyıl Eşiğinde Marksizm ve Türkiye Solu* (Marxism and Turkish Left on the brink of the Millenium), which I read when I was a university student: “Does attachment to a certain collectivity necessarily limit the intellectual?” Or in other words of Hilmi Ziya Ülken, whom he criticizes in his book, “Does engagement in social action impairs the intellectual maturity of a thinker?”

If you ask me “Who is Metin Çulhaoğlu to you?”; first of all, he is “the answer to this question he asked himself.” We are talking about a revolutionary who did not fall out of organized politics for a single day from his early youth until his last breath, and a Marxist intellectual with the ability to deepen even the most everyday and basic issue he analyzed by infusing it with theory, art and science. His writings on even mundane matters cannot fail to include a brilliant political inference. Nevertheless, I think Çulhaoğlu’s life is not limited to proving the “possibility” of the coexistence of collective action and intellectual depth. Beyond that he has a life that shows that an intellectually equipped person can become a “teacher” only when he connects with a community that transcends his individuality and does not isolate himself from political action.

“Teacher” was one of the words most frequently used by his acquaintances, comrades, followers and even political opponents who expressed their feelings in remembrance of him on the day of his death. This word also describes Çulhaoğlu’s influence on me as one of his friends and comrades and an intellectual follower. Metin represented neither the mission of an “educator” by pulling the other down with “information” and preaching the “truth” from above, nor a position of a “narrator” satisfied with synthesizing and presenting already mature theoretical and conceptual approaches. He was more of a “teacher.” A “teacher” who specifically selects the issues on which the minds are extremely confused, presents his thesis

on them, but explains his thesis by pointing out how he reached them in an intellectual sequence.

In this case, “learning” did not arise as a result of Çulhaoğlu's initial intention/goal to teach, but naturally and necessarily out of his effort to integrate his brilliant mind and vast knowledge with political and social action. And what was “learned” in the end? What was learned was neither the pure information, nor the final word on the disputed issue, i.e. the slogan, nor the incorrigible fallacy of the opponent. (This corresponds to “educating” in the context of this article). What was learned was the Marxist method of reasoning and reaching a conclusion on any social/political issue. By placing even the most “specific and topical” issue in a general historical context, by treating even the most “concrete and practical” problem with the abstract categories of Marxism, Çulhaoğlu was “teaching” how any person interested in politics could properly mature, substantiate and defend an idea in a sophisticated manner. In this respect, in his writings and speeches, Metin was exposing the art of applying Marian dialectics to the concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

Yes, he would be in a position to present his own theses, but he would not impose them as a doctrine, nor would he present them only to a small community of intellectuals. By presenting his theses with all the steps of reasoning and factual bases behind them, he created a field of discussion open to their fundamental questioning. Thus, learning and teaching became two facets of the same process for him. The “passion of listening and reading” about him that even those who oppose him the most acknowledge is, in my opinion, precisely related to this invitation to think together. Such a system of thinking and narration is of course a prerequisite for a mature, rich and improving intellectual debate. But the attitude it brings also has a “political and strategic” value: it is only through such intellectual maturity and openness that the bigoted organizational fetishism and vicious intra-left rivalries could be avoided, and thus the possibility of a genuine struggle together, could be possible.

Those familiar with Metin Çulhaoğlu's writings and speeches will acknowledge what I have said so far about his intellectual “teaching.” As someone who shared some “leisure” time with him, became more aware of his personality and knows what he had experienced during the turbulent and difficult political periods of the last ten years, I cannot pass without mentioning something else that I “learned” from him. As one of the leading and ambitious figures of the fragmented Turkish socialist movement, Metin received harsh political/theoretical criticism throughout his life of

struggle, some of which he acknowledged; this was inevitable and “teaching” at the same time. Metin took these criticisms seriously in his writings and personal conversations and try to enrich his thinking with them. Metin loved and paid attention to genuine criticism. What is really “teaching” for me is this: He never fell into the trap of "personally" discrediting any of his political opponents, because they were not in the same political position as him, and he remembered all of them, including those who attempted to do this to him, “with kindness and beauty.” A person can reach such a level of maturity only when he has a life practice that combines his intellectual depth with a revolutionary will. There is much to learn from this, not only about politics but about being human in these dark times.

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Metin Çulhaoğlu was born in Balıkesir in 1947. In 1970, Çulhaoğlu graduated from Faculty of Economics, Middle East Technical University (METU) and worked as an executive member of METU Socialist Idea Club in 1968-1969. Çulhaoğlu took part in the first and second Workers’ Party of Turkey (TİP) and worked as a writer and editor-in-chief of the weekly magazine *Yürüyüş* between 1975 and 1978. After the split at the Congress of 2nd Workers’ Party of Turkey, he started publishing the magazine *Sosyalist İktidar* in September 1979 with Yalçın Küçük, İlhan Akalın and Mesut Odman (Odabaşı). The monthly magazine was published for a total of 11 issues. Çulhaoğlu was the editor-in-chief of this magazine. The magazine's publication life was ended with the September 12, 1980 *coup d'état*.

Between 1983 and 1986 Metin Çulhaoğlu was imprisoned, and in 1986 he led the establishment of the *Gelenek* (Tradition) magazine collective. This movement later became a party and took its place on the political scene as the Socialist Turkey Party (STP). Çulhaoğlu left the party in 1993 and started publishing the magazine *Sosyalist Politika* (*Socialist Politics*). The *Sosyalist Politika* group took part in the founding of the United Socialist Party (BSP) and the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), respectively.

In 2001, he left the ÖDP with the *Sosyalist Politika* group, reunited with the *Gelenek* movement and joined the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP). He served on the party’s Central Committee from then until 2014. Metin Çulhaoğlu took part in the establishment of the People’s Communist Party of Turkey (HTKP) following the split in the TKP in April 2014, founded on November 7, 2017. Çulhaoğlu served on the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Turkey (TİP) and was a member of the TİP Party Assembly.

He wrote columns in many daily newspapers such as *BirGün* and *soL*. Since August 16, 2014, his articles have been published in *İleri Haber* on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Metin Çulhaođlu made some implicit but very significant contributions to the development of this journal, Marxism and Sciences by taking part and gave talks in the seminars, conferences and workshops that preceded and informed this journal initiative.

His most important works include:

- Tarih Türkiye Sosyalizm [History, Turkey and Socialism.](Gelenek, 1988; Doruk, 1996; Yazılama, 2012).
- Sovyet Deneyinden Siyaset Dersleri [Political Lessons from the Soviet Experience.] (1989, Gelenek).
- Binyıl Eşiğinde Marksizm ve Türkiye Solu [Marxism and the Turkish Left on the Brink of the Millennium] (1997, Sarmal Yayınları; 2002, YGS; 2015, Yordam Kitap).
- İdeolojiler Alanı ve Türkiye Örneđi [The Domain of Ideologies and the Case of Turkey.] (1998, Öteki Yayınevi).
- Dođruda Durmanın Felsefesi: Seçme Yazılar 1970-2000 [The Philosophy of Standing on the Right Side: Selected Writings 1970-2000.](YGS, 2002).

Marxism and the New Materialism

Stuart A. Newman

ABSTRACT: Materialism, the idea that nature's entities are manifestations of single protean thing and that there are thus no supernatural properties of life or mind, has come in and out of fashion in philosophy, but has always been a tenet of Marxism. A recent philosophical initiative, New Materialism, substitutes a "flat ontology" for the Marxist dialectics of nature, simultaneously denying the specificity of living systems and devaluing human agency. A typical stratagem of these philosophers is to separate their initiative from Marxism by misrepresenting the latter.

KEYWORDS: Louis Althusser, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, evolution, development, transhumanism.

MATERIALISM IS A PHILOSOPHICAL CONVICTION that everything that exists is one or another manifestation of a single thing, matter. If a philosopher holds that life, or mind, are intrinsically different from nonliving, or insentient, matter, then they are a dualist, a pluralist, or a vitalist since they posit something in addition to matter. Some philosophers, in contrast, are idealists, contending that what appears as matter is just expressions of mind or spirit. Marxism, a philosophy that emerged from the German idealist tradition, committed itself unequivocally to materialism. But since it also postulated that matter exists in a multiplicity of forms, it employed "dialectical" stratagems adopted from the idealist Hegel, such as the transformation of quantity into quality, but in the material realm.

After a century and a half of disrepute in mainstream philosophies that favored structuralist and linguistic approaches to comprehending reality, materialism is making a comeback, although some would argue that Marxism never went away. As signaled by its appellations, the philosophical

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tendency known variously as “the materialist turn” or the “New Materialism” takes seriously the primacy of matter in comprehending the world. But what precisely is matter?

The Marxist theorist Louis Althusser, writing in France in the politically tumultuous period of early 1968, found it important to revisit Vladimir Lenin’s understanding of the concept in an essay the latter wrote 60 years earlier, when materialist philosophy seemed to be challenged by the ideas of the physicist Ernst Mach, particularly as espoused by Lenin’s Bolshevik rival, the physician and philosopher Alexander Bogdanov. The controversies have faded in relevance—Mach’s challenge to the Newtonian absolutes of space and time prefigured Einstein’s relativity theory—but Lenin’s insights into the nature of matter are still pertinent. In Althusser’s description:

[. . .] the philosophical *category* of matter, which is conjointly a thesis of existence and a thesis of *objectivity*, can never be confused with the contents of the scientific *concepts* of matter. The scientific concepts of matter define knowledges, relative to the historical state of the sciences, about the objects of those sciences. The content of the scientific concept of matter changes with the development, i.e., with the deepening of scientific knowledge. The meaning of the philosophical category of matter does not change, since it does not apply to any object of science, but affirms the *objectivity* of all scientific knowledge of an object. The category of *matter* cannot change. It is ‘absolute’ [. . .] The consequences which Lenin draws from this distinction are crucial. Firstly, he re-establishes the truth about what was then called the ‘crisis of physics’ [i.e., that portended by the work of Max Planck and Albert Einstein]: physics is not in crisis, but in growth. Matter has not ‘disappeared’. The scientific concept of matter alone has *changed in content*, and it will always go on changing in the future, for the process of knowledge is infinite in its object itself. (Althusser 1971, 49 [written 1968]).

In Lenin’s own words from the work in question, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism. Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy*, “[. . .] the only ‘property’ of matter to whose acknowledgment philosophical materialism is bound is the property of being objective reality, outside of our consciousness” (Lenin 1970, 260).

Notwithstanding the protean and indeed revolutionary notion of matter embedded in Marxist thought, the New Materialism is associated with a rejection of dialectical and historical materialism, Marxism’s philosophies of nature and social evolution. Jane Bennett, in the influential *Vibrant Matter* (2010), discusses Karl Marx only in her preface, asking:

How did Marx’s notion of materiality—as economic structures and exchanges that provoke many other events—come to stand for the materialist perspective per se? Why is there not a more robust debate between contending philosophies of materiality or between contending accounts of how materiality matters to politics? (p. xvi)

Not mentioned in the book is Frederick Engels (1872, 82), Marx’s close collaborator and author of *Dialectics of Nature*, responsible for such passages as:

[. . .] the existence of such and such a number of physical forces was abolished from science by the proof of their inter-connections and transitions. Physics, like astronomy before it, had arrived at a result that necessarily pointed to the eternal cycle of matter in motion as the ultimate conclusion [. . .] The preparation by inorganic means of compounds that hitherto had been produced only in the living organism proved that the laws of chemistry have the same validity for organic as for inorganic bodies, and to a large extent bridged the gulf between inorganic and organic nature, a gulf that even Kant regarded as forever impassable. (Engels 1988, 326)

Manuel DeLanda, another new materialist, stated in a 2012 interview that:

The only good thing that Marxism ever gave us was its materialism, the idea that we need to explain things that happen right here without appeals to God, without appeals to Platonic essences, without appeals to anything transcendental. Of course, Marxists, to the extent that they bought Hegelian dialectics, were never really true materialists since dialectic is not at all something of this world. (DeLanda 2012)

And Bruno Latour, an eminence grise of the movement, similarly exhibits his lack of sympathy (and understanding) of the philosophical corpus by asserting that ‘capitalism does not exist’ (Latour 1988, 173; cited in Choat 2018) and asking, “when we speak of the misdeeds of capitalism, don’t we have to turn toward sorcery in order to understand the black magic that leaves us helpless in the face of its abuses?” (Latour 2013, 426).

The philosopher Simon Choat, in a 2018 essay, suggests that according to the new materialists Marxists are guilty of either adopting a view of science as a social product, ideologically laden as any other, with only class analysis having any claim to truth, or instrumentally, as an element of the productive forces employed as weapons in class conflict. While support for these caricatures can be gleaned from the writings of some Marxists, consultation of any of the Marxist sources mentioned above, and many others (e.g., Levins and Lewontin 1985; Harvey 1996; Foster 2020) shows it not

to represent the strength of the tradition. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the misrepresentation flows from an anti-left bias among these thinkers.

An illuminating case in point is provided by the discussion by Choat of Bennett's treatment in *Vibrant Matter* of the widespread North American power blackout that occurred in August 2003. Bennett attributed the grid failure to an assemblage of different "actants" (Latour's term for causal agents; see below): it involved consumers, energy companies and regulators, but also buildings, computers, coal, electrons and so on, with dispersed agency and no simple cause. Choat (2018, 1030) characterizes Bennett view as, "[W]e may have an impulse to blame rapacious corporations, lax regulators or industry deregulation and privatization, but we cannot reasonably do so when so many agents were involved." Bennett herself acknowledges that this argument echoes the assertion of the FirstEnergy corporation, grid's the owner and operator, that 'no one really is to blame.'

Contrast this with Althusser's concept of "determination in the last instance" to understand how deeply complex systems (such as social formations) can have causal structures that exhibit primary determinants (often reflective of their histories) and are thus not simply aggregates of interacting factors. In his essay "Contradiction and Overdetermination" he addresses the sometimes mechanically applied Marxist notion of determination of the "superstructure" (politics, culture, and so on) by the "economic base":

[. . .] the economy determines for the non-economic elements their respective degrees of autonomy/dependence in relation to itself and to one another, thus their differential degrees of specific effectivity. It can determine itself as dominant or not-dominant at any particular time, and in the latter case it determines which of the elements is to be dominant. (Althusser 1969, 255)

It might be an overwhelming task for a politically indifferent new materialist to attribute decisive causality to any of the inextricable actants in the 2003 power failure. A Marxist analysis of the social management of technology, however, would have no trouble identifying the callous logic of the profit system as the event's last-analysis determinant, as others on both the right and left recognized an obdurate centralized bureaucracy as the dominating factor of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

It is in its handling of the concepts of ontology and agency, however, that the limitations, and indeed unscientific character of the new materialist program, are revealed. Ontology, the philosophical discourse about

what exists, and what the relationships are among existent entities, is inherently time-dependent: historical, developmental and evolutionary. Since there is continuity between different forms of matter, no object is eternal and unsusceptible to change. But objects, however transitory they are in the grand scheme of things, still have inherent properties, predictable behaviors, “laws of motion.” Earlier in the history of the universe, for instance, temperatures were too high for atoms to exist, and smaller particles prevailed. As regions of the universe cooled, small and eventually larger atoms formed. But there was a limit: fewer than 100 discrete elements exist in nature, each with unique chemical properties. They are examples of what philosophers refer to as “natural kinds.”

Historical materialism, Marx’s theory of social formations, identifies feudalism and capitalism as such distinct entities, with their own organization principles and temporal developmental relationships to each other, and with the potential (though not the inevitability) of evolving into novel forms: socialism and communism. The analogy to chemical evolution is far from straightforward—societies are more complex and overdetermined than atoms. But there is a parallel in the possibility of abrupt reorganization of component parts, engendering new modes that operate according to new principles.

Charles Darwin, in his theory of evolution by natural selection, sought to abolish the notion of natural kinds from the world of living organisms, claiming that every species among the animals, plants, fungi, etc. were generated by a series of gradual steps from ancestral and intermediate forms. The implication was that there were no true jumps between types (just apparent ones) or qualitatively different organizational principles, that separate one kind of living being from another. As liberating as it was from the Biblical metaphysics of special creation, Darwinian gradualism is increasingly challenged in modern evolutionary theory. This has occurred through the concept of punctuated equilibrium of Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould (1997) which attributes authenticity to the discontinuities of the fossil record, and in contemporary evolutionary developmental biology—“EvoDevo”—which has identified genetic and physical/material determinants that distinguish different forms of life from one another. It can no longer be sustained that *natura non facit saltus* in organic evolution (Müller 2021).

The mid-twentieth century philosopher Karl Popper also resisted attribution of natural kind-ness, branding “essentialism,” the focus on intrinsic properties of objects and other entities, as an intellectual blind alley. While

not denying that something could have such properties, he thought it was unproductive to dwell on them rather than how its descriptor is used in a theoretical system. He thus called himself a “methodological nominalist” (Popper 1968).

It is clear from examples like the chemical elements that anti-essentialism cannot serve as a consistent scientific program. Popper’s main use of it was as a rhetorical cudgel wielded against thinkers he opposed, most prominently Plato, Hegel and Marx. But it’s equally clear that essentialism can itself be an ideological weapon. The new materialist Karen Barad, in her 2003 paper “Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter,” cites the social theorist Judith Butler on her notion of “gender performativity,” where Butler proposes that gender should be understood (in Barad’s words) “not as a thing or a set of free-floating attributes, not as an essence—but rather as a ‘doing’.” According to Butler, “gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity [. . .] gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort” (Barad 2003, 808).

The salutary deconstruction of gender essentialism (an element of oppression that forces a biological continuum into a binary) was a signature move for the new materialists that they converted into an inflexible doctrine. While most are not ready to deny reality to the world’s objects, most claim that nothing is more basic than, can be reduced to, or even explained by, anything else. There are no hierarchies, historically constituted or otherwise. DeLanda call this a “flat ontology” and it is clear how it supports his anti-Marxism. No one should imagine, for instance, that the means of production have any privileged role in social organization or the fashioning of hegemonic ideologies: societies are just (following the more general usage of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze) “assemblages” of such factors, i.e., things of interest interacting with each other (DeLanda 2019). His book on “philosophical chemistry,” for example, makes no mention of the elements having evolved over time from preexisting fundamental particles (DeLanda 2015).

While DeLanda’s earlier book *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (DeLanda 1997) presented an unexceptionable survey of scientific developments in complexity theory and concepts of self-organization, phase transitions, dynamical attractors, solitons, and the generation of emergent novelties, its Deleuzian perspective sought to erase the ontological distinc-

tions between the living and nonliving. In DeLanda's world (Latour, Bennett, and Barad seem similarly unconcerned with the specifics of the history, development and evolution of the world's material objects), not only is ontology flattened, but so is science itself.

Marx's philosophy, having emerged from the German philosophical anthropology school, was focused on the human, and was devoted to "normatively reconstructing the self-formative dynamics of the species" (Moss 2006). But this was just an entry point into a scientific approach to complex systems in general. Particularly in the hand of Engels in *Anti-Dühring* (1988 [1877]) and in the posthumous *Dialectics of Nature*, the applicability of this method to all material systems, and the notion of matter itself as changeable and dynamical became evident. Here is Choat, however, describing what the new materialists believe they have discovered:

The Western philosophical tradition has tended to treat matter as something that is brute and inert: a passive substance to be mastered and manipulated by active human subjects. In this view, if matter acts upon us at all, then it is only as a recalcitrant context that constrains our freedom. In contrast to this lifeless matter, new materialists posit what Bennett (2010) calls a vibrant materiality: the non-human world of things is itself creative and constitutive, producing effects and forming connections. Even apparently stable, inorganic entities such as metal are mobile and active. Matter does not need humans to shape or command it because all matter has generative properties of its own (DeLanda 2012, 43). (Choat 2018, 1030)

And here is Engels in *Dialectics of Nature*:

Motion in the most general sense, conceived as the mode of existence, the inherent attribute, of matter, comprehends all changes and processes occurring in the universe, from mere change of place right up to thinking [. . .] The whole of nature accessible to us forms a system, an interconnected totality of bodies, and by bodies we understand here all material existences extending from stars to atoms, indeed right to ether particles, in so far as one grants the existence of the last named. In the fact that these bodies are interconnected is already included that they react on one another, and it is precisely this mutual reaction that constitutes motion. It already becomes evident here that matter is unthinkable without motion. And if, in addition, matter confronts us as something given, equally uncreatable as indestructible, it follows that motion also is as uncreatable as indestructible. It became impossible to reject this conclusion as soon as it was recognised that the universe is a system, an inter-connection of bodies. (Engels 1872, 362–63)

Engels proceeds for another 200-plus pages to discuss thermodynamics, electricity and magnetism, the emergence of life from matter, the evolution

of humans, all with reference to the history of ideas on matter, idealism, and so forth. Taken along with Lenin's engagement with new developments in physics during his days as a revolutionary (discussed above) and the flourishing of critical ideas on the nature of matter, both nonliving and living, in the early days of the Soviet Union (e.g., the philosopher Boris Hessen's discussion of Newton's having failed to discern the concept of energy implicit in his laws of motion due to thermodynamics being unknown in his lifetime, and the physiologist Boris Zavadovsky's consideration of "The 'Physical' and 'Biological' in the Process of Organic Evolution",¹ both in the collection *Science at the Cross Roads* (1931), edited by the Marxist philosopher Nicolai Bukharin), the existence of this tradition shows conclusively that the repeated attempts to place Marxism in the "inert, passive matter" camp of Western thought is a slander, likely a politically motivated one.

The "democracy of objects" (Bryant 2011) implied by DeLanda's flat ontology reaches its apogee in the decentering and devaluation of the human evinced in New Materialism's treatment of agency. These philosophers assimilate the concept, and often the term itself, to Latour's notion of 'actant,' defined as something (i.e., everything)—an animal, plant, mineral, or chemical—that acts, makes things happen or produces effects. Choat (2018) quotes Bennett as asserting "that agency itself is located in the complex interinvolvement of humans and multiple nonhuman actants" (Bennett 2015), and Barad as using 'intra-action' to signify "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (Barad 2007, 33).

These formulations erase or demote the specificity of life and its living matter. According to the philosopher Lenny Moss, "Any entity that actively defines and regulates its own boundaries and sustains its integrity according to a set of internal motives and rules, can be regarded as possessing agency" (personal communication). This clearly only applies to life, including all living cells, and their derivatives, such as multicellular organisms and artifacts such as automata and robots, which are entirely dependent on the prior existence and ingenuity of humans. An individual life form

1. "[. . .] biological phenomena, historically connected with physical phenomena in inorganic nature, are none the less not only not reducible to physico-chemical or mechanical laws, but within their own limits as biological processes display varied and qualitatively distinct laws. Thereby biological laws do not in the least lose their material quality and cognisability, requiring only in each case methods of research appropriate to the phenomena studied" (Zavadovsky 1931, 76).

can contain multiple agents, as with humans and their enteric flora constituting ‘holobionts,’ but to democratize an ecological assemblage to the extent of putting the living and nonliving actants on par is inimical to a scientifically sound approach. For example, understanding the development of multicellular structures in the life cycles of microbes for which such stages are optional can partly be accounted for by active-matter physics, but there is an irreducible agential aspect that currently defies explanation (Angel et al. 2020). Agency and autonomy of living systems, how they originated and what their relationship is to other forms of matter, is an area of active investigation in the philosophy of biology that would suffer from the infusion of a metaphysics that leveled the distinctions between life and nonlife (Moreno & Mossio 2015).

To conclude, philosophy took a turn toward an active-matter ontology when Marx and Engels committed themselves to conceptualizing a world independent of supernatural design and purpose. This world (according to their theory) eventually engendered living organisms capable of organizing their own existence. In the words of the twentieth–twenty-first century Marxist evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin, these entities were both the “subjects and objects of evolution” (Lewontin 1983).

The original terrain of investigation for Marx and Engels was the constitution of human nature, a problematic inherited from philosophical anthropology. To address this question, they conceptualized a new scientific object, the social formation, a complex historical entity with developmental propensities determined, in the last analysis, by the means of production of basic and socially conditioned needs and the struggle between group—social classes—with different and unequal relationships to these productive forces and resources. This was the theory of historical materialism.

This kind of analysis was premature for the rest of nature, the physical and material sciences not having developed sufficiently far. But Engels did his best to frame such an approach in *Anti-Dühring* and *Dialectics of Nature*, complementing the century-old science of mechanics, a theory of static and inertial matter, with the recently devised and emerging theories of thermodynamics, chemistry, atoms and molecules, electricity and magnetism, the living cell, and evolutionary theory. Matter, according to Engels, was continuous throughout the universe but took different forms under different conditions as changes in quantitative balance of complex assemblages yielded new qualities. This was the framework of dialectical materialism, the Marxist program never being only about social change.

In the twentieth and then twenty-first century science found itself concerned with multidimensional dynamical systems, oscillatory and self-organizing phenomena, quantum mechanics, special and general relativity, quarks and strings, primary and secondary phase transitions, glassy and other amorphous states, deterministic chaos, and other previously unrecognized forms of matter. Additional exotic states of matter, pertaining to cell differentiation and embryonic morphogenesis, have even been detected in biology, (Newman 2019; 2020). These efforts have lost all overt connection to a political philosophy, but the persistent questions of what the relationship is among these forms of matter, the limits of inter-level reductionism, that is, the transformation of quantity into quality, trace their intellectual origins to nothing other than the dialectical materialism of Engels and Marx.

The new materialists are inheritors of this Marxist legacy, but they are either oblivious to it or deny it on thin grounds. What several explicitly reject, for reasons best known to themselves, is the original embodiment of the philosophy in the form of historical materialism, a theory which they disingenuously conflate with the entire Marxist program. This theory postulates that societies, including their own, have inherent instabilities and developmental propensities, for good or ill, related to how human subjects mobilize and disturb natural forces. This is now entirely uncontroversial.

With their attempted erasure of Marxism, the new materialists are inevitably taking political sides, promoting quietism on one hand, but on the other valorizing the spontaneity of the market in capitalist economies. These systems are fertile ground for such New Materialism-friendly enterprises as Transhumanism, which is striving to create “better people” by endowing the assemblages it identifies with natural humans with additional, beneficial actants (Rikowski 2003; Newman 2010). However, as stated by the philosopher Glenn Rikowski, “Post/transhuman theorists who terrorise today’s humanity with prognoses of genetically designed bodies, microchips in the brain and the rest typically lack an explanatory dynamic which underpins such developments and projections” (Rikowski 2003, 140).

Humans have unquestionably wreaked destruction on the planet in the past and continue to in the present. Their ability to do so has been enabled by varieties of anthropocentrism that have denied the agency of nonhuman organisms and, often as not, categories of humans. These ideologies have gone hand-in-glove with economic systems with clear beneficiaries and victims, whose fates have depended on their roles in the respective social

structures. Against this, the new materialist philosophers seem to suggest that their flattened pan-agentialism will address (insofar as they discuss them) the ongoing disasters of climate, war, and inequalities of wealth and personal autonomy in a way disconnected from the perennial class divisions problematized by historical materialism, and the understanding of the development of human consciousness for which dialectical science is an ongoing project.

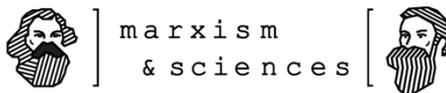
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The Objective Validity of Engels' Dialectic Theory as a Method of Reasoning

Engin Delice

ABSTRACT: What gives validity to Engels' dialectical theory? Is it the process of nature's own functioning that provides validity to the dialectic, or is it the logical order of the concepts? The orthodox Marxists, who take Engels' dialectic as the "dialectic of nature," are in favour of the former. The proponents of the latter seem to reject the dialectic of nature by associating the dialectic with Hegel's logical operations. The former reduces thinking to the object, while the latter reduces the object to thinking. For these two grounds of validity, Engels provides sufficient explanation in *Anti-Dühring* and the *Dialectics of Nature*. Along with these, in this article it is assumed that what ensures the validity of Engels's dialectical theory is the potentiality that the logical order of thought in the reasoning process can accompany the internal relations of the object. Based on this assumption, the article argues that dialectics is a method of thinking. Based on this assumption, the article assumes that different names, such as the dialectic of nature, society, and consciousness originate from the object of the dialectic, and therefore rejects the plurality of names of dialectics.

KEYWORDS: Engels, Marx, philosophy, dialectics, dialectic of nature, dialectic of thought, natural sciences, materialism, ontology.

Introduction

If we look from the viewpoint of the debates to define or refute Engels's theory of the dialectic of nature, it seems that the question of what provides the validity and justification of Engels' dialectic has not seemed to attract attention. However, even those who reject Engels's dialectical theory seem as convinced as those who defend the theory that Engels linked dialectics with nature. By opposing these two contradictory interpretations of Engels (and thus some of Engels' assumptions) at the same time, it seems difficult to argue that Engels' dialectical theory is not a law of nature

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but a way of thinking about nature based on “natural sciences.”¹ Above all, both sides base their assumptions on the words of Engels. Making the third comment by looking at the same sentences may seem like forcing the conditions. However, this article will attempt to justify the validity of the method as the subject’s act of establishing himself in the practice of the object (that is, the dialectic of consciousness as the object bond).

The term “Dialectics of Nature” is a symbolic representation of Engels in Marxist philosophy. However, when Dialectics of Nature is discussed, this representation also connotes the assumption that is both majestic and controversial. This relative paradox keeps the discussions about the exact intentions of Engels dynamic. On the other hand, within the discussions as to whether or not a dialectics exist in nature, it seems like whether Engels’ dialectics is associated with “nature” or “natural sciences” still stays uncertain. Is the dialectic that Engels has developed a “dialectics of nature” or is it the dialectics of thought as processing the information about nature?

The question depends on the doubt with regard to whether or not the relation established between the nature and the dialectics was brought up on the right ground. Although Engels was not a naturalist, the fact that he seemed to be investigating natural phenomena when correlating the data of the natural sciences² gives rise to the appearance that he grounded the dialectic as a law of nature. Evaluation of Engels’ dialectics theory is based on the assumption that his dialectics is “dialectics of nature”. Although Engels associated dialectics with “nature”, “law” or “science”, there are more reasons to assume that he has built dialectics merely as a method of thought. Even the term “the dialectics in nature” (Engels 2010b, 486) is about the thinking style that associates data. Even the “dialectics laws”

1. The terms “nature”, “natural science” or “science” used in the article are those of Engels. With the word “nature”, Engels emphasizes the “external world” and the empirical reality that fills it. By “natural sciences,” Engels means the individual disciplines that study the elements of “nature.” Epistemological discussions on “science” and “sciences” are also avoided in this article. However, efforts have been made not to consider “natural sciences” as a type of research and “science” as a type of knowledge.

2. It seems like this situation has confused Eduard Bernstein as well. Bernstein asked Albert Einstein for his opinion as to whether this manuscript should be printed. Einstein replied this with the content is of no special interest, either from the point of view of modern physics or even for the history of physics (30 June 1924) (Einstein 2015, 414). Both the question and the answer were created in terms of whether the *Dialectics of Nature* was a “natural science.”

that state how the objects exist” (Ibid., 356) act as a principle that determines how the phenomenon should be thought. When the assumption that the thought form that accompanies “the dialectical character of natural processes” is also a dialectics (Engels 2010a, 13) is considered, the characteristic of the *object of thinking* combines with the characteristic of the method that thinks it. Although dialectics seems like it was considered as the development law of the concrete existent that is called the “nature”, it was filled as the method of explaining the development of the object (and in that sense, as thinking).

Explanations that are scattered within the polemics of Engels and that have no systematics constantly change the ground of the explanations with regard to the definition and function of dialectics. Nevertheless, an uninterrupted path that passes throughout the explanations leads to the assumption that dialectics is a thinking method. The thinking style that Engels has applied in his studies confirms this as well.

The Problem of “Dialectics of Nature”³

In Marxist discussions, while nature and social phenomena are associated, despite the frequent usage of determinations that are applied like methodic as “dialectics in nature” or “dialectical law”; ontological as “dialectical materialism” and philosophical as “historical materialism”, arguments about all the notions haven’t completed yet.

Neither Marx nor Engels used the term “dialectical materialism”; however, the generation that followed them filled the works of Engels under the title of “dialectical materialism”. Direct impacts of Georgi Plekhanov and Karl Kautsky can be seen in this occurrence. Although Marxist literature assumes that Georgi Plekhanov was the first to use the term “dialectical materialism”, this content is clearly stated in the writings of Josef Dietzgen until 1887⁴. In *Ludwig Feuerbach and End of Classical German Philos-*

3. The explanations that follow this title are based on the explanations in the “Troubled relationship of Orthodox and Western Marxism to the ‘dialectic of nature’” sub-title of my article *Engels’in Diyalektik Teorisi: ‘Doğanın Diyalektiği mi? Düşüncenin Diyalektiği mi?’* [Engels’ Dialectic Theory: “Dialectic of Nature” or Dialectic of Thought] (Delice, 2022).

4. Joseph Dietzgen bases his work *The Nature of Human Brain Work* (1869) on materialist philosophy with the dialectical method, which explains being as a dialectically functioning structure. He says in *Letters on Logic* (14th Letter) (1870s), “The art of dialectics or logic which teaches that the universe, or the whole world, is one being, is the science of absolute evolution”. He uses the phrase “the system of democratic (dialectic) materialism” in his

ophy, Engels (1886) does not hide his surprise to the fact that Josef Dietzgen has met with “materialist dialectic” works: “And this materialist dialectic, which for years was our best means of labour and our sharpest weapon, was, remarkably enough, rediscovered not only by us but also, independently of us and even of Hegel, by a German worker, Joseph Dietzgen” (Engels 2010c, 384). “Dialectical method” and dialectical materialism” terms take place in the study of Plekhanov (1974, 421–26) titled *For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel’s Death* [1891]. Kautsky uses the term “dialectical materialism” (Kautsky 1899, 5) in order to state the positions of Marx and Engels against dialectics. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, V.I. Lenin (1977a, 40) makes his “dialectical materialism” analysis focused on epistemology rather than focusing on materialist ontology and determines what the methodology of the “orthodox Marxism” actually is. According to this, “The philosophy of Marxism is materialism”, “The main achievement was dialectics” and natural sciences have confirmed “Marx’s dialectical materialism” (Lenin, 1977b, 24).

The theoreticians of the Second International highlight the “science” approach, which was expressed together with Marx’s *German Ideology*, but which was mostly included in Engels’ *Anti-Dühring*.

Discussions about “dialectical materialism” e.g. Deborin’s discussions about “dialectics”—especially his discussions with mechanics based on Engels (Ahlberg 1962, 131)—and Bukharin’s about “materialism” (1921, Chapter 3), in the 1920s were sealed in the Stalin era by the phrase “Diamant.” As Perry Anderson (1976, 59) has noted, In the debates that started to emerge from the 1920s and were coded as “Western Marxism”, especially in the criticisms that started with Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch or Antonio Gramsci, it is stated that there cannot be a natural dialectic of the kind assumed by Engels. Based on their reading of the hitherto unpublished early works of Marx, Lukács and Korsch’s writings pave the way for new philosophical tendencies (for example, the desire to link Marx more to Hegel) rather than the claim of “dialectical materialism.”⁵

fifth speech in *The Religion of Social-Democracy* (1870s), and the phrase “us dialectic-materialists” in his *Social-democratic Philosophy* (1876). He distinguishes in *The limits of Cognition’ da* (1877) “dialectic-materialists” from idealists; in *Excursions of a Socialist into the Domain of Epistemology* (1887), he explicitly uses the phrase “dialectical materialism.”

5. Lukács (1957), in *My Road to Marx –Addition* describes the philosophical debates in 1929–30 as an effort to save these relations from Plekhanov’s orthodoxy and to open “new horizons” in philosophical research by explaining the relations between Hegel and Marx.

In the tradition of Western Marxism, it is accepted that the source of the negative attitude towards Engels' "dialectic of nature" hypothesis is the criticisms of Georg Lukács. Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* says that "the misunderstandings that arise from Engels' account of dialectics can in the main be put down to the fact that Engels following Hegel's mistaken lead extended the method to apply also to nature" (Lukács 1971, 24). Thus, while Lukács lays the groundwork for the assumption that the dialectical method will not be applied to nature, he also limits the method to the "fields of history and society" (Ibid.).

From this we deduce the necessity of separating the merely objective dialectics of nature from those of society. For in the dialectics of society the subject is included in the reciprocal relationship in which theory and practice become dialectical with reference to one another. (Lukács 1971, 207)

According to Lukács, Engels' dialectic makes no mention of "the dialectical relation between subject and object in the historical process" (Ibid., 203). However, it should be noted that although Lukács seems to criticize Engels' explanations of dialectics, he is only making a distinction. He does not say that his theory of the dialectics of nature is obviously false (otherwise he would contradict Hegel, to whom he refers on dialectics). However, Lukács does not reject the subject of "objective dialectics," but he, based on Hegel's assumption that the dialectical process is related to the subject,⁶ wishes to exclude Engels' theory of the dialectic of nature from Marxist dialectical theory. "For in the dialectics of society the subject is included in the reciprocal relation in which theory and practice become dialectical with reference to one another." (Lukács, 1972, 207).

Whatever the content of Lukács' critique of Engels, these critiques seem to have turned into a negative bibliography against Engels' dialectic within Western Marxism, giving rise to the spectre of a camp. To begin with the date of publication of *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), "over

⁶ "Nevertheless, Hegel does perceive clearly at times that the dialectics of nature can never become anything more exalted than a dialectics of movement witnessed by the detached observer, as the subject cannot be integrated into the dialectical process, at least not at the stage reached hitherto. Thus he emphasises that Zeno's antinomies reached the same level as those of Kant, with the implication that it is not possible to go any higher. From this, we deduce the necessity of separating the merely objective dialectics of nature from those of society. For in the dialectics of society the subject is included in the reciprocal relation in which theory and practice become dialectical with reference to one another. (It goes without saying that the growth of knowledge about nature is a social phenomenon and therefore to be included in the second dialectical type.)" (Lukács, 1972, 207).

the course of the twentieth century, a growing number of commentators have claimed that Engels fundamentally distorted Marx's thought, and that 'Marxism' and especially Stalinism emerged out of this one-sided caricature of Marx's ideas." When take the beginning the date of publication of *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) "over the course of the twentieth century, a growing number of commentators have claimed that Engels fundamentally distorted Marx's thought, and that 'Marxism' and especially Stalinism emerged out of this one-sided caricature of Marx's ideas" (Blackledge 2019, 1). This correlation and negation are what has been the discourse of Western Marxism. In his book *Soviet Marxism*, Herbert Marcuse ([1958]1969), while negating Soviet philosophy, describes it as a continuation of Engels' dialectical thought and he says for those principles of dialectics "in terms of Hegel's and Marx's dialectic, they are neither true nor false—they are empty shells" (Marcuse 1969, 143). A follower of this analysis, Alfred Schmidt (1971), in his work *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, relates Engels to Soviet philosophy, where the way dialectic deals with nature and historical materialism with society led to the "rigid and dogmatic distinction." Schmidt assumes that where Engels went beyond "Marx's conception of the relation between nature and social history", he transformed his thought into a "dogmatic metaphysics" "by introducing dialectics into the natural sciences he was inventing a philosophy of nature" (Schmidt 1971, 51). According to Schmidt "whereas in Marx nature and history are indissolubly interwoven, Engels saw two different 'areas of application' of the method of the materialist dialectic." Without separating nature and history as two separate fields, "Engels failed to appreciate that there can only be a 'dialectic of facts'" (Ibid., 56). It is assumed that Engels did not separate the field of nature and history for the sake of "objective dialectics."

Engels's attempt to interpret the area of pre- and extra-human nature in the sense of a purely objective dialectic must in fact lead to that incompatibility between the dialectic and materialism which has been repeatedly emphasized by a number of critics. (Ibid., 60)

Because the world looks collectively without separating phenomena such as history and society, "the dialectic becomes a *Weltanschauung* [world view], a positive principle for explaining the World" (Ibid., 57). It seems that Hegel, although he applied the dialectic to nature, was not criticized as much as Engels was. The observation of the disagreements about the dialectic of nature in the Marxist philosophy environment can be extended

further. However, considering the ongoing discussions, it is clear that positive or negative evaluations of the theory are not convincing for everyone. However, “therefore, the relation between dialectics and nature, and contributions of Engels in this respect, have been left untouched. Consequently, the core of the problem, resulting a ‘Marxism without Engels’, remained unsolved” (Gedik, 2022, xxxii)⁷. This gives us the opportunity to review the theory each time.

Is Engels' dialectical theory, as Engels himself tried to show, a “law of nature” or just a method of thinking? The question in this article, will attempt to answer with a relatively more problematic one: What validates the existence of Engels' dialectical theory? What does Engels say for validity where Aristotle calls “endoxa” (Aristotle 1991f, 24a 20–24b 15), Kant calls “metaphysics as a natural predisposition” (Kant 1998, 147; B21-22), Hegel's “the Notion that comprehends itself” (Hegel, § 1815; 1998, 842)? The condition that ensures the validity of the dialectic will be a basis for answering the question of whether it is a law of thought or a law of nature.

The Developments of Definition and Content of Dialectics in Engels' Explanations

Engels begins his letter to Marx (30 May 1873) (Engels 2010f, 500) by saying “This morning in bed the following dialectical points about the natural sciences came into my head.” It can be understood from the following sentences that Engels' basic interest and the assumption are clear from the very beginning: No matter how the direction of the reasoning is established, the object of interest is “motion”, the area where the movement appears is “bodies”; “natural science obtains knowledge about bodies”. The body is in motion; what an object is grasped in motion. “Hence natural science obtains knowledge about bodies by examining them in their relationship to each other, in motion.” Because “Cognition of the various forms of motion is cognition of bodies.” Thus, the main object of natural sciences is “forms of motion” and “changes in the internal structure of bodies”. This short letter shows that Engels' original orientation was not “nature” itself, or the relationships of the bodies that compose it, but the

7. “Marxism without Engels” refers to the practice to “exclude Engels from Marxism or make him invisible.” However, the practice causes a main problem: “For whatever reason, once Engels is gone, what remains of Marxism are separate Marxist approaches such as history, philosophy, economics, politics and sociology within isolated disciplines” (Gedik 2015, 99).

correlation of the data of the natural sciences. This assumption is supported by a note considered to have been written on the same day as the letter. Engels here uses the expression “Dialectics of natural science”; its subject is the knowledge of the manifestations of “matter in motion” (the development from mechanical motion to the corporeal and organic world) (Engels 2010b, 527). Of course, Hegel was the last to make such an observation.

In his discussions throughout Engels’s *Anti-Dühring* and *Dialectics of Nature*, his explanations of the definition of dialectics, its function or the object to which it is applied seem to have caused theoretical problems; nevertheless, it can be assumed that the theoretical identity of the dialectic as a method of thinking has been strengthened.⁸

The first designation for dialectic in *Anti-Dühring* is that it is a form of reasoning. Engels begins by assuming that German philosophy takes “dialectics as the highest form of reasoning”; He observes that dialectic is a form of reasoning from the Greeks to the French philosophy (Engels 2010a, 22). It determines what kind of way of thinking dialectic is: “Dialectics, on the other hand, comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin, and ending” (Ibid., 23). Engels then tends to associate dialectics with nature by saying, “nature works dialectically and not metaphysically.” However, it can be understood from the complaint that “the naturalists who have learned to think dialectically are few” (Ibid., 24), that Engels sees dialectics as a kind of research method as well as a method of thinking. Since the universe is a moving field of existence, dialectics is a method of thinking and research that accompanies this movement.

An exact representation of the universe, of its evolution, of the development of mankind, and of the reflection of this evolution in the minds of men, can therefore only be obtained by the methods of dialectics with its constant regard to the innumerable actions and reactions of life and death, of progressive or retrogressive changes. And in this spirit the new German philosophy has worked. (Engels 2010a, 24)

Accordingly, Engels associates the quality of his object (movement, transformation) with the style of thinking. From an epistemological point of

8. While the chapters in *Anti-Dühring* on philosophy, nature and dialectics attempt to justify the existence of real contradictions in nature and society, the gist of *Dialectics of Nature*, especially its late stages, is about universal structures and the history of motion in nature (Kangal 2019, 224).

view, exact systems of knowledge cannot be established for the object in change. This is why Engels says that a precise system of knowledge of nature and history is a “contradiction to the fundamental laws of dialectic reasoning”, because the principles of dialectics express the movement of reasoning. From this point of view, Engels characterizes the dialectic as a kind of reasoning law. The logical principles of reasoning confirm this assumption. This “dialectic method of thinking and the conception” is what remains of Hegel (Engels 2010d, 594). “That which still survives, independently, of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws—formal logic and dialectics” (Engels, 2010a, 25). “Logic and dialectics” are “the sciences which investigate the laws of human thought” (Ibid., 84). Contradiction has been the basic principle of dialectics since the Greeks (Ibid., 110). “Negation of negation” is the principle of overcoming contradiction (Ibid., 120). Engels, “What role does the negation of negation play in Marx?” (Ibid., 123) answers the question by referring to *Capital* (Marx, 2010a, 751). “But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation.” The principle is the logical foundation on which explanations about the functioning of economic and historical phenomena are based. “The process is a historical one, and if it is at the same time a dialectical process” (Engels, 2010a, 124). According to Engels, Marx describes the capitalist mode of production “as a process which develops in accordance with a definite dialectical law” (Ibid.). This principle applies from geological structures to organic structures “a very simple process which is taking place everywhere and every day” (Ibid., 125). So, Engels takes dialectics out of a subjective understanding and extends it to the entire field of objective existence. He has a tendency to see dialectics as a method of objective operation, particularly based on Marx’s application of the principle of the negation of negation to his economic and historical phenomena. However, there seems to be a tendency to assign an ontological function to the dialectic, since Engels also treats the negation principle as a general principle of being, albeit ambiguously. “When I say that all these processes are a negation of the negation, I bring them all together under this one law of motion, and for this very reason I leave out of account the specific peculiarities of each individual process” (Engels, 2010a, 131). With the principle of the negation of the negation, Engels tries to comprehend the whole process of becoming—the bond of presence of existents—under a single law of motion. However, while Engels’ excessive interest in sciences covered the relationship between dialectics and ontology, his tendency to ground dialectics as science

comes to the fore. “Dialectics, however, is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought” (Ibid., 131). (It also informs scientists of the task of learning dialectics as science [Engels 2010a, 24, 131]). Accordingly, dialectics is the “science of laws”; but the expression “general” here refers to the “law of motion and development” of what kind of object? It implies that dialectic is a way of thinking based on an ontological assumption (the coexistence of nature, society and moments of thought).

In the present work [*Anti-Dühring*] dialectics is conceived as the science of the most general laws of all motion. This implies that its laws must be valid just as much for motion in nature and human history as for the motion of thought. (Engels, 2010b, 545)

This ontological design provides the opportunity to talk about things despite the change of things. “A system of natural and historical knowledge, embracing everything, and final for all time, is a contradiction to the fundamental laws of dialectic reasoning” (Engels, 2010a, 25). However, Engels says that the law of dialectical reasoning “by no means excludes, but, on the contrary, includes the idea that the systematic knowledge of the external universe” (Ibid.). In this case “not only philosophy but all sciences were now required to discover the laws of motion of this constant process of transformation, each in its particular domain” (Engels 2010d, 594).

Engels both applies and continues to characterize dialectics as a method of thinking in the *Dialectics of Nature*, in order to relate the knowledge gained from these discoveries of the sciences and form “general” knowledge. Here, however, Engels relates the dialectic more to nature and the natural sciences; characterizes the dialectic as the law of nature and, moreover, recognizes it as “science.” Critics have interpreted these characterizations as an independent theory of the “dialectic of nature” (and there are numerous passages to corroborate these interpretations).

In his work plan for *Dialectics of Nature* (1878, late August-early September), Engels writes a title for dialectics as “science”: “Dialectics as the science of universal inter-connection” (Engels 2010b, 313). However, the expression “the science of universal inter-connection” and “Aperçus⁹ on the separate sciences and their dialectical content” (Ibid.) that Engels reported in the plan informs the most basic theoretical aim of *Dialectics of Nature*. This aim emphasizes that dialectic is basically a method of thinking—a

9. Thoughts, comments.

method of thinking and explanation that establishes a dialectical link between the data of sciences. Because “the general nature of dialectics to be developed as the science of interconnections, in contrast to metaphysics” (Ibid., 356).

But it is precisely dialectics that constitutes the most important form of thinking for present-day natural science, for it alone offers the analogue for, and thereby the method of explaining, the evolutionary processes occurring in nature, inter-connections in general, and transitions from one field of investigation to another. (Engels 2010b, 339)

Engels relates more the similarities between dialectics and the way of thinking in the natural sciences and says, “Only dialectics could be of assistance to natural science in negotiating the mountain of theory” (Ibid., 340). For this reason, Engels maintains that natural scientists should learn dialectics (Ibid., 341). These determinations strengthen the assumption that dialectics is a method of thinking. However, Engels' dialectic as thinking is not as a method of persuasion by reasoning like Plato or establishing speculative connections like Hegel. Rather, it is a method of logical reasoning that proceeds by relating the data of the natural sciences (or by following the object relations) in the dialectical style that Aristotle explains in *Topics* (One of the important differences between them is in the degree of truth of the premises. According to Aristotle, the dialectic method can take also ambiguous propositions as premises; whereas Engels's dialectical theory requires that definite propositions confirmed by the natural sciences be taken as premises. This means that the object-link is the condition for dialectical reasoning. Engels' dialectical theory is close to Hegel in terms of content logic.).

The standard way of seeing gives a style of reasoning the quality of “method.” It is the principles that provide the way of seeing the method and fulfil the function of the rule. Engels calls the rules of dialectical logic (the principles that determine the way of seeing) “laws.” While outlining his general plan of work for the *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels provides the definition of dialectics as “science” and the working “laws” of this science:

Dialectics as the science of universal inter-connection. Main laws: [1] transformation of quantity and quality [2]—mutual penetration of polar opposites and transformation into each other when carried to extremes—development through contradiction or negation of the negation—spiral form of development. (Engels 2010b, 313)

Engels clearly defines these “laws”, of which he speaks in his plan, as the laws of dialectics. “The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa; the law of the interpenetration of opposites; the law of the negation of the negation” (Ibid., 356).¹⁰ Basically, each of them is a necessary principle of subjective thought, but by explaining these principles as laws operating in the field of natural existence, Engels objectifies the principle. “It is, therefore, from the history of nature and human society that the laws of dialectics are abstracted. For they are nothing but the most general laws of these two stages of historical development, as well as of thought itself” (Ibid.). Engels objectifies the logical principles of thought by extending them to every field of existence; it takes this objectification out of being a logical operation and at the same time explains it as an empirical law of nature. “We are not concerned here with writing a handbook of dialectics, but only with showing that the dialectical laws are real laws of development of nature, and therefore are valid also for theoretical natural science” (Ibid., 357). Engels’ polemic containing dialectics as a method eventually turns into the argument that dialectic is the “law of development of nature.” In the excitement of associating the dialectic with the natural sciences, Engels finally identifies the dialectic with the law of nature and establishes the hypothesis of the dialectic of nature, reaching a more specific determination here: The law of development of the “theoretical natural sciences” is also dialectical. This means that Engels continues to give content to dialectics as a method of thinking. More importantly, the Engels’ dialectic has come to the brink of saying that it is a method of thinking in the context of the natural sciences; however, he seems to have delayed explaining it here. “Hence we cannot go into the inner inter-connection of these laws with one another” (Engels 2010b, 357). Although Engels did not explain it, the most specific statement throughout the book that explains exactly what the dialectic does lies beyond this sentence. Dialectical reasoning (theory or, as Engels put it, “science”) is a method that explains the knowledge of the inner relations (or *object practice*) of the existing by establishing the relationship between the laws of nature. This is exactly what Engels said, although he did not elaborate further on his specific determination. Critics focusing on the “dialectics of nature” assumption in *Dialectics of Nature* they did not see how the relation of dialectic with nature and natural sciences was limited. It is a fact that also the reason for

10. Can there be an underlying pattern which repeats itself in the workings, not only of society and thought, but of nature itself? Woods and Grant argue “that such patterns do indeed exist” (Woods & Grant 2003, 53).

this is Engels' polemical statements. Above all, even though Engels sees nature as a field of polar oppositions and push-pull balance (Ibid., 364–65), that is, as a dialectical nature, based on the results of his experience with nature, here still “dialectical thinking”, “at least as far as mathematical calculation” (Ibid., 378) is effective. Therefore, nature is only a field of oppositions; It is the method of explanation of thinking that dialectically establishes the internal relations in it. As in the example of physicists (P. G. Tait & G. Kirchhoff), who explain rest as a form of motion of potential energy, nature can be thought of as dialectically as well as calculable (Engels 2010b, 388). However, Engels assumes that natural scientists are unable to relate their results to a holistic understanding. (In another sense, this means that natural scientists do not think of the particular in relation to the universal because they do not have a dialectical ontology.)¹¹

Where he expresses this assumption, he uses the expression “the dialectics in nature” (Ibid., 486) for the first time. “Nevertheless, the bulk of natural scientists are still held fast in the old metaphysical categories and helpless when these modern facts, which so to say prove the dialectics in nature, have to be rationally explained and brought into relation with one another” (Ibid.). Although Engels used the phrase “dialectic in nature”, the operation he assumed in nature is still the subject of the dialectics of thought: “And here thinking is necessary: atoms and molecules, etc., cannot be observed under the microscope, but only by the process of thought” (Ibid.). It is clear that Engels sees the dialectic in nature when he acts from the nature's category of being (contradiction), and when he acts from his principles, he sees the dialectic in thinking. This assumption can be confirmed by the distinction between “subjective dialectics” and “objective dialectics” (Ibid., 492) in incomplete passages in *Dialectics of Nature*.

Although the phrase “the dialectic of nature” is branded with Engels' name, as the brief summary above can show, the assumption that Engels' dialectic has a different content than this standard setting awakens: (1) Dialectics is defined as the knowledge of internal relations (object practice—that is, practice as movement and work). (2) Dialectical reasoning is determined as method which has a content (thought accompanies the movement of the object with the movement of concepts). (3) Dialectics is the thinking (or object intention of consciousness) method of materialist ontology. For this reason, “modern materialism is essentially dialectic, and

¹¹ “Everything affects and is affected by every other thing, and it is mostly because this manifold motion and interaction is forgotten that our natural scientists are prevented from gaining a clear insight into the simplest things.” (Engels, 2010b, 459)

no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences” (Engels 2010a, 26). Expressions such as “internal relations”, “objectivity”, and “materialistic” indicate the fixed content of Engels’ dialectical method. However, what remains unclear here is whether the dialectical method is established only from the object or from the thought? What remains unclear, however, is the question of whether the dialectical method is constructed solely from the object or from the thought.

Dialectics: From Nature to Consciousness or Vice Versa

It looks like one question had not attracted much attention in the discussions made in the context of Engels’ determination of “dialectic in nature”: Is dialectic the reflection of nature’s workings in the mind, or is it a set of concepts dictated by the mind to nature? The question is about whether the dialectical operation (or, in general terms, “dialectical laws”) is in nature or in thought. It can be a starting point for an answer to look at whether the language (methodology) that explains nature is established by the logical system of pure thought or by empirical abstractions.

Engels places the “laws of thought”, which Hegel says he developed, at the centre of his theory, calling them “laws of dialectics.” As mentioned above, these are “[1] the law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa; [2] the law of the interpenetration of opposites; [3] the law of the negation of the negation” (Engels 2010b, 356). These “laws” are fixed principles of becoming that traverse Hegel’s system; they are the condition of the moment of existing in the actual realm of being. These three principles constitute the motion mechanism of the ontological system (of Idea in the fields of Logic, Nature, Spirit) in Hegel’s (1991, 42; §18) *The Encyclopaedia Logic*.

(1) Since “negation” functions as a transition mechanism between categories in Hegel’s dialectic, it pervades the whole of Logic. “The dialectic has a positive result”; because it contains “the negation of certain determinations” (Hegel 1991, 131; §82). However, “the negation of the negation is not a neutralisation” (Ibid., 151; §95). It means that something comes out of itself, passes into the other, and becomes someone else. “In this way being is re-established, but as negation of the negation.”

(2) “The transition quantity into quality” is a determination about the limit of quality. “Measure is qualitative quantum”; “measure is a quantum, with which a being-there or a quality is bound up” (Hegel 1991, 170; §107 A). “Quantum is the way that quantity is there” (Ibid., 161161; §101).

Therefore, everything that exists is a qualitative measure; because qualities can exist in a measure. “The measureless occurs initially when a measure, in virtue of its quantitative nature, goes beyond its qualitative determinacy.” “Both of these transitions, from quality to quantity and vice versa” are “infinite progress” (Ibid., 172; §109). We find this first “in nature, in a variety of forms” (Ibid., Addition). The notion of the necessity of measure brings to the thought of the limit of being and its inner nature. Thus, “the dialectical movement of quantity” in nature becomes “quality” (Ibid., 169; §106 A).

(3) “Contradiction” reveals the nature of being. “Distinction in its own self is the essential [distinction], the positive and the negative” (Hegel 1991, 184; §119). “Distinction of the essence” is “its own other facing it” (Ibid., 185; §119). It has its own opposite (Ibid., 206; §136). Contradiction is the antithesis of identity (Ibid., 185; §119). “The notion of polarity, which is so generally current in physics, contains within itself a more correct determination of opposition” (Ibid., 186; §119). For this reason, “it is contradiction that moves the world, and it is ridiculous to say that contradiction cannot be thought” (Ibid., 187; §119, Addition 2). According to this, negation and opposition are immanent to everything, as well as the determining principle of change and development. Therefore, “there is in fact nothing, either in heaven or on earth, either in the spiritual or the natural world that exhibits the abstract “either-or” as it is maintained by the understanding” (Ibid.).

With these explanations, Hegel wants to give the firsts an objective quality by showing evidence in the functioning of being, but these explanations do not remove them from being a principle of thought. The work of objectifying the concept first appears in Aristotle. The basic concepts of the theory of being (e.g., “substance”) developed by Aristotle (1991a) in *Metaphysics* are based on his discussion of the “kategoría” (predicate) (*Categories*, 1b 25–2a 4) that can be said about the subject in *Categories* (1991b). The problem of consistency in reasoning is basically based on the validity relationship that the predicate establishes with the object. In this respect, categoría’ in *Topics* (1991c) are the basic elements on which the topics of conversation in dialectical discussions are based (*Topics*, 103b 30–104a 2). Aristotle analyses the problem of disagreements or misinformation in dialectical debates in the context of this term. Aristotle tries to overcome the problems in this context by associating thought-language (or logic) and object link theory with knowledge of first causes (*Metaphysics*, 983a 2; 996b 12). The problem of first causes is associated with the search for the first

causes of “being as being” (*Metaphysics*, 1003a 22–33). Thus, although the knowledge of being and its essence is based on the explanation of a reality independent of human consciousness, all fiction is made with the rules of language and the principles of thought. Once the principles are formed, they become the starting point for all kinds of reasoning.

Aristotle speaks of the role of “common items” (*Posterior Analytics*, 76b 1–25; 1991, 14) on which reasoning is based when confirming or rejecting a predicate about the subject in *Posterior Analytics* (1991d). Axioms are the most influential principles in the knowledge process. “Axiom” as the proposition constituting “Demonstration” is the basis of world knowledge. “What necessarily is the case because of itself and necessarily seems to be the case is not a supposition or a postulate” (*Posterior Analytics*, 76b 24; 1991, 15). For example, since the principle of contradiction, which is an axiom, is necessary for the knowledge of existence, it is a knowledge that takes place at the beginning when knowledge of something is established. (*Metaphysic*, 1005b 10–19); subsequent demonstrations must be made according to this principle (*Metaphysic*, 1005b 25–35). In *Metaphysics* (IV, 3–8) Aristotle sets out the principles of “contradiction” and “impossibility of the third case” as the basis on which every argument rests (*Metaphysic*, 1011 b 23–1012a 28).

In this case, the *basic knowledge* that turns into the “principle” level works like the “axiom” of the next argument.

While Aristotle treats categories as a feature of both language-thought and being, Kant develops Aristotle’s categories only as a feature of thought. Kant ([1781]1998) in “Introduction” to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* connects experience and categories (pure concepts of understanding) by calling “although all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience” (1998, 136; B1). Categories are pure concepts of understanding and constitute the a priori condition of sensory data (1998, 212; A79/ B105). Accordingly, categories express a mechanism in the formation process of knowledge, prior to experience and determining experience. It is only through categories that the understanding can think, understand, and say something about the objects of intuition (Kant 1998, 213; A80/ B106). Categories are about predicates that can be said about objects; because “the faculty for judging (which is the same as the faculty for thinking)” (Ibid., A81). But categories cannot remain merely the a priori condition of knowledge; it also determines the perception of nature. “What reason would not be able to know of itself and has to learn from nature, it has to seek in the latter (though

not merely ascribe to it) in accordance with what reason itself puts into nature" (Ibid., 109; Bxiv). This means that in the process of knowledge formation, the categories of understanding precede experience and they determine every possible experiential knowledge. "For where would experience itself get its certainty if all rules in accordance with which it proceeds were themselves in turn always empirical, thus contingent?" (Ibid., 138; B5). The categories, then, should be explained "the possibility of as it were prescribing the law to nature and even making the latter possible, is to be explained" (Ibid., 261; B160). For example, "cause" is a conceptual regulative principle imposed on nature. "Categories are concepts that prescribe laws a priori to appearances, thus to nature as the sum total of all appearances" (Ibid., 263; B163). In this respect, "space and time" is the form of perception, of knowing why. The categories impose themselves on nature by providing the conditions for the "certainty of experience", and thus for knowledge, and they say exactly what happens to nature.

After determining the function of categories in the structure of knowledge in his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant pass on to examine the structure of dialectical reasoning (or how it falls into the illusion) in the chapter "Transcendental Dialectic". Kant, who keeps the boundaries of the knowledge within the boundaries of "possible experience", grounds dialectical reasoning as "logic of illusion" that creates knowledge about the unconditional by going out of the experience (Kant 1998, 384; B86 / A62; A293 / B249). By showing the error of dialectical reasoning, Kant imposes logical conditions on the mind so that it does not exceed the limits of experience.

However, also Hegel invents his own philosophy by going beyond these limits. Hegel not only places what Kant calls "logic of illusion" at the centre of his system, but he also transforms it into a method both for explaining the object of thought and for the becoming of being. The task of examining the being with the categories the number of that Aristotle determined as ten (Aristotle, 1991b, 1a 25), the task of examining the process of knowing with the categories of the understanding the number of that Kant increased to twelve (Kant 1998, 212; A80), are fulfilled in Hegel's system by the three principles mentioned above. Hegel thinks about the formation process of his object through these principles. Thus, just as Kant dictates his concepts to nature, Hegel also transforms his thought principle into the principle of being by explicating his object in thought. At last, nature reveals itself in the mind of the philosopher.

As the natural philosophies of F. Schelling and G.W.F Hegel will confirm, a mysterious metaphysical development process from nature to consciousness is the characteristic feature of the nineteenth century natural philosophies. This could mean that Engels matured in a philosophical culture that was prone to bring principles from nature. Schelling's philosophy of nature explains how subjectivity emerges from nature. Schelling's approach lies at the centre of the transition between Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *Philosophy of Nature*. Liberated Idea at the end of *Logic* to realized nature in *Philosophy of Nature*, transcending the organic field here and transforming into true liberated consciousness in the *Philosophy of Mind*.

From the notes, Engels took while listening to the Schelling lectures: "This is the mobile nature of thinking, according to which it cannot stop at mere thinking but must constantly pass over into being" (Engels 2010e, 202).

Hegel's explanation in *Philosophy of Nature* through the relationship he established between logic and nature provides an important example of an approach for Engels. Nevertheless, the ontological structure contained in Engels' "modern materialism" is irrelevant to the Hegelian system. By relating the data of natural sciences dialectically, Engels creates a "dialectical understanding of nature" (Engels 2010a, 26) of his own "modern materialism" (Ibid., 25). "Modern materialism is essentially dialectic" (Ibid., 26). The basic content expressed by the "materialist dialectic" (Engels 2010c, 383) is the ontological knowledge of the movement of matter and its manifestations. "The motion of matter is not merely crude mechanical motion, a mere change of place, it is heat and light, electric and magnetic tension, chemical combination and dissociation, life and, finally, consciousness" (Engels 2010b, 332). Accordingly, what Engels means by "Dialectics of natural science" is clearly the knowledge of "matter in motion." This knowledge is provided through the "Classification of the sciences", which begins with Mechanics and ends with Organics (Engels, 2010b, 527-28). What is meant by the classification of sciences is to create a system of knowledge of the dialectics of movement by relating forms at different moments. The fact that one movement originates from another makes transitions and relations between sciences necessary.

If I term first of all physics the mechanics of molecules, chemistry the physics of atoms, and furthermore biology the chemistry of proteins, I wish thereby to express the passing of each of these sciences into another, hence both the connection, the continuity, and the distinction, the discrete separation, between the two of them. (Engels, 2010b, 531)

According to Engels, “since the general evolutionary connection in nature has now been demonstrated,” one can no longer resort to “Hegel's artificially constructed dialectical transitions” (Engels, 2010b, 529).

However, while Engels generalizes the dialectic to the whole of beings, he may emulate the movement of the dialectic that goes through Hegel's ontological system in this regard. Hegel says, “It is in general the principle of all motion, of all life and of all activation in the actual world” (Hegel 1991, 128; § 81, A. 1). It is clear that Hegel sees the dialectic as about the revelation of things. Considering that Hegel's *Logic* expresses the formal structure of reality, then nature appears to be an embodiment of the dialectical structure. While Engels (2010b, 337) says, “The dialectical laws are real laws of development of nature.” He accepts dialectic as the determining principle of all processes in nature, like Hegel. However, the nature of which Engels speaks is not the same as the nature of which Hegel speaks. While Hegel's *Logic* explains becoming in the concept, Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* explains becoming in time.

Hegel does not research nature in the *Philosophy of Nature*; does not construct nature design through natural sciences; he simply takes some explanations from the current natural theories of his time and systematizes them based on the categories of his *Logic*. Hegel, the question “What is Nature?” answers the by saying, “We propose to answer this general question by reference to the knowledge of Nature and the *Philosophy of Nature*” (Hegel 2004, 3; [“Introduction”, Zusatz]). Hegel explains the question of “What is Natural Philosophy” by opposing it with “natural sciences”, which he sees as the “opposite.” “We find the *Philosophy of Nature* in a peculiar relationship to natural science in general, to physics, natural history, and physiology; it is itself physics, but rational physics” (Ibid., 2; [“Introduction”, Zusatz]).

The fact that the first part of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* is “Logic” and the second part “Philosophy of Nature” is not just a sequence related to the plan of the book; at the same time, it follows an expansion suitable for the ontological system (The third chapter, “Philosophy of Mind”, completes the dialectical development). In this ontological design, when nature forms are taken back, the concepts of logic; when the concepts of logic are advanced, the forms of nature are reached. This is a dual reasoning that leads to “Absolute Mind” in both conditions. The double reasoning of the “Circle” theory (Hegel 1991, 39; §15) shows both how categories can be understood by taking Spirit as a target, and how logic can be an expression of nature when nature is taken as a starting point. As Hegel

(1998, 841; §1812) puts it in the *Logic of Science*, “the retrogressive grounding of the beginning, and the progressive further determining of it.” In this ontology, nature begins with the logical Idea and is completed with its aim, Spirit.¹² According to Engels, “This way of thinking turned everything upside down, and completely reversed the actual connection of things in the world” (Engels 2010a, 25). They study to negate the logic of this inversion of Marx in the field of society, Engels in the field of natural sciences.

Statements designated as “laws”, then, are principles-based explanations of logical observations of facts. Despite all ontological content, these laws determine *how thought should see its object*. The effect of Kant’s categories on perception or the effect of Hegel’s dialectical principles on the construction of the concept determines the knowledge of the object of thought, albeit in different ways. Therefore, the reality notion emerges with the effect of the concept. Returning to the above question; when the reasoning is constructed not by abstraction from the material (empirical or factual) structure, but by only the pure logical system of thought, dialectics will always imply the metaphysical.

The Problem of the Validity of Dialectical Reasoning

Like Hegel, also Engels proves the validity of his argument through the quality of the object of thought. Hegel constructs the ontological foundations of their theory through the dialectical nature of being, and Engels through the dialectical attribution of being. While Hegel finds its grounds in logic, Engels finds it in the natural sciences. However, if dialectics removes from both their conception of nature, Engels’ dialectical reasoning may continue, while Hegel’s system of thought remains incomplete. Because Engels uses the dialectical method not to demonstrate the thought in nature, but to relate the data of the natural sciences. Then, it is not nature but the way of thinking about nature, that provides the validity of Engels’ dialectical theory. In this case, the question arises whether the source of the dialectic is the object or the subject. It seems that answerable by the determination of the object’s position of consciousness in dialectical reasoning.

12. Everything consists of cells. The cell is Hegelian ‘being in itself and its development follows the Hegelian process step by step right up to the final emergence of the ‘idea’—i.e., each completed organism (Engels, 2010l, 326).

Considering the decisive influence of the concept on the object in Kant's epistemology or Hegel's rational ontology, the object position of the dialectic in Engels' materialist ontology should become clear. Is dialectic the reflection of the object order (the functioning of nature) in the understanding or is it a logic system dictated to nature? The question is indirectly related to the problem of the source of the "dialectical law." In Engels' explanations, the position of his principles seems observable in terms of (1) "reason", (2) "nature" and (3) "the unity of mind and nature."

(1) The first source that gives validity to the existence of dialectical principles is the potentiality of the subject itself.

How does Engels position the dialectic against the object when he says (Engels 2010a, 11) that "it was almost only me and Marx who saved the conscious dialectic from the German idealist philosophy and applied it to the materialist understanding of nature and history"? It can be deduced from Engels' statement that fixed determinations are imposed to a nature whose structure is contradictory "by our reflective minds" (Ibid., 14), that Engels assumes that the concepts of the subject are determinative in his design of nature.

Does Engels give priority to the logical system (method) over the object, just as Kant dictates concepts to nature and Hegel prioritizes the concept? The method is a conceptual model of analysis that the reasoning applies to the object. While grounding dialectics as a method, Plato explains it as the path on which the mind walks for precise knowledge between the layers of existence (*Republic*, VII) and Aristotle between propositions (*Topics*, I). Engels also applies the dialectical method as a methodical intention to the object outside of consciousness. However, it is inevitable that the approach based on the principles determined as "law" interferes with its object. The law, which determines what the object is, turns into the position of the "example" (paradeigma) that corresponds to the "epagôgê" (induction) in the dialectic in Aristotle's expression (*Rhetoric*, 1356b 1–5). The example plays the role of induction, and the reasoning always draws conclusions that justify itself. If so, nature is "forced into the old Procrustean bed of metaphysics" (Engels 2010b, 341) by Engels' dialectic.

Engels and Marx often accuse Hegel of reducing reality to the concept. According to Engels, Dühring also makes such a metaphysical imposition on nature. Following Hegel, Dühring gives principle priority to thought and concept and forces the world to comply with this thought. Dühring applies "formal tenets derived from thought" to "nature and the human sphere", transforming them into rules that "nature and the realm of man"

(Engels 2010a, 33). “Herr Dühring’s contrary conception is idealistic, makes things stand completely on their heads, and fashions the real world out of ideas, out of schemata, schemes or categories existing somewhere before the world, from eternity—just like a Hegel” (Ibid., 34). “The object is then to conform to the concept, not the concept to the object” (Ibid., 89). Dühring, then, “shifting the basis of all reality from the real world to the world of thought” (Ibid., 35).

Looking at Engels’ critique of Dühring, it can be assumed that; Engels does not reduce the object to concepts. When he says that method applies to history and society, he is not suggesting that principles (method) precede reality. Above all, “forms of being, of the external world” “can never be created and derived by thought out of itself, but only from the external world” (Engels 2010a, 34). Similarly, principles are not purely logical concepts in the mind. On the contrary, in accordance with the materialist conception, concepts exist because of the relations that would cause it. Referring to Hegel’s “what he said on the French Revolution” (Engels 2010a, 630-31) Engels says that “the human head, and the principles arrived at by its thought, claimed to be the basis of all human action and association” must be “be turned upside down” (Ibid., 16). “If pure reason and justice have not, hitherto, ruled the world, this has been the case only because men have not rightly understood them” (Ibid., 20). So Engels’ dialectic does not force its object to enter the “Procrustean bed”; because “it is not nature and the realm of man which conform to these principles, but the principles are only valid in so far as they are in conformity with nature and history” (Ibid., 34). Then although the dialectical method is the subject’s way of reasoning in the object’s intention, the object is not its pure conceptual construct. Because dialectical reasoning does not take place in the concept alone. The assumption that pure thought or logical categories have priority over the object means both that the dialectical method dictates its principles to nature and that nature is reduced to concepts. This case, the validity of the dialectic as a method cannot be explained only by the potential of the mind (by possibilities such as analysis, abstraction, principle determination, conceptual inference, and synthesis). What is necessary is the object-conditional of dialectical reasoning.

(2) The second source that gives validity to the existence of dialectical principles is nature’s mode of being.

It is Engels’ grounding of the dialectic in nature that makes the “dialectic in nature” thesis appear as an independent dialectical genre. When Engels said that “the dialectical character of natural processes” imposes itself

on the mind (Engels 2010b, 340), it is clear that he sees the source of dialectical principles as the external world (nature). When Engels said that “the dialectical laws are real laws of development of nature” (Ibid., 357), he determined that the process of existence of the external world is dialectical.

When we consider and reflect upon nature at large or the history of mankind or our own intellectual activity, at first, we see the picture of an endless entanglement of relations and reactions in which nothing remains what, where and as it was, but everything moves, changes, comes into being and passes away. (Engels 2010a, 22)

If existing is in the dialectical character of natural processes (Ibid., 13), the nature of the object is dialectical in itself. What is the role of the subject in this object dialectic? Since it operates as a reality outside of consciousness Engels states that “the dialectical character of natural processes irresistibly forced itself upon the mind” (Engels 2010b, 340). According to these explanations, the nature of the object is dialectical and imposes itself on consciousness. So “dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain” (Engels 2010c, 360).

The dialectic nature of the natural process is explained by three basic “dialectical laws.” As mentioned above, these laws are the principle of quantity-quality, contradiction and negation (Engels 2010b, 356). While Engels makes specific reference to three principles, he actually talks about more. “Identity and difference—necessity and chance—cause and effect—the two main opposites which, treated separately, become transformed into one another” (Ibid., 497). Although, as in *Ludwig Feuerbach* (Engels 2010c, 384), since they are relative, “the antitheses, insuperable for the still common old metaphysics, between true and false, good and bad, identical and different, necessary and accidental” seem to have removed from being philosophical contradictions, the concept pairs of “essence-form”, “part-whole”, “simple-compound”, “action-reaction”, “positive and negative”, “attraction and repulsion” spread throughout *Dialectics of Nature* are also included in the explanations as principles. The number of principles may increase or decrease¹³; but the important thing is whether a basic knowledge about the existing is a logical abstraction. Principles are logical

13. I consider these principles not as given finalized laws to be followed or applied, but as the principles of a theoretical and a methodological framework to be researched and developed in every single branch of science, as a never-ending process, with the aim of unifying them (Gedik 2022, xxxv).

inferences from the empirical being-found. Presence is not a fixity, but existence in flux. Accordingly, the quality of presence of the existent is being in the state of becoming. Since empirical becoming expresses a movement from the identity of the object to its contradiction, *contradiction* is the basic *principle of being* in the ontological nature notion. In this ontology conception, principles such as “quantitative relation”, “opposite relation” and “negation relation” express the object practice, which is the inner relation of the process of becoming.

In this case, it is clear that the subject re-associates the practical relations that occur in natural events dialectically in the conceptual system. However, the assumption that the structure of material reality is the sole determinant in thought neutralizes the potential of thinking, renders meaningless the logical inferences that bind abstractions together. Such a determinism renders the role of the subject and historical accumulation ineffective in the knowledge process. Therefore, the source of the dialectic cannot be the logical system of the subject alone, nor is it the quality of existence of the elements of nature alone. Considering that dialectical reasoning is a style of reasoning based on overcoming the subject-object tension, it turns out that the only condition that ensures the validity of the dialectical method is the necessity for both effects to work together.

(3) The third and decisive source that gives validity to the existence of dialectical principles is the unity of the dialectical existence of the object and the logical nature of the arguments.

It can be assumed that Engels gave validity to dialectical thinking by basing the objects of thought and nature on the same laws. “The fact that our subjective thought and the objective world are subject to the same laws, and hence, too, that in the final analysis they cannot contradict each other in their results, but must coincide, governs absolutely our whole theoretical thought” (Engels, 2010b, 544). However, unless the condition of this “coincide —or the limit of the connection between language and the world- for an empirical knowledge of the world, is determined, the thesis that subjective thought and the objective world have the same law may lead to the conclusion that every explanation of nature must necessarily be valid. This means the same thing as what Kant calls “the natural dialectic of human reason” (Kant, 1998, 605; A669/B697)—, which makes the objectivity of the Marxist dialectic questionable. From the point of view of the empirical view of nature, then, neither the in itself-contradictory existence of the object nor the logic of in itself-contradiction of thought is sufficient to justify the assumption that the object and thought have identical

laws. (Only from the point of view of ontological design can identity be introduced, which Hegel does this by transforming thought and the object thought into the legitimacy of each other. If “dialectical materialism” is taken as a design of ontology, this identity may be possible on the basis of the law of development of the movement.)

However, Engels' determination of the unity of subject and object in a dialectical process of knowing is valid. Above all, it is the way in which object consciousness is constituted that distinguishes dialectical knowing from any other ordinary kind of knowing. Since consciousness is the realisation of the internal connections of something, the object is the condition of knowledge and the object connection is the condition of consciousness. In a dialectical process of knowing, knowledge is not a bond established in the concept (judgement based on the concept), but a movement that unfolds itself in consciousness. From the point of view of an ontological design, the quality of existence of the object (contradiction) and the principles of thought that can accompany this quality (the logic of contradiction), moreover their ability to work in harmony, make the objective validity of the dialectical method possible.

The validity of the existence of the dialectic is at the closest point between the subject and the object; It is based on the relationship between the *being quality of the object* and the *basic possibility of understanding*. The thought is revealed in the connection between the existential quality of the object and the act of knowing the subject that turns to it, is the field of the revelation of the dialectic.

Engels made the most basic explanation of the dialect when he said that it should not be “building the laws of dialectics into nature, but of discovering them in it and evolving them from it” (Engels 2010a, 12). Saying not building “into nature” indicates the quality of nature, saying “discovering them in it” indicates the function of the mind (sciences), and “evolving them from it” indicates the role of reasoning.

However, what is discovered? From the point of view of the logic of discovery, is it evidence of nature or proof of thought that is discovered? If the question is applied to the dialectic: What is discovered in the context of dialectics in nature—is it the principles of nature in itself or is it the process by which reason confirms itself in natural processes? The answer may be sought in the context of “the dialectical character of natural processes” (Engels 2010b, 340) imposing itself on the mind. Engels assumes that the dialectic of nature is accompanied by the dialectical progress of reasoning. “It is, therefore, from the history of nature and human society

that the laws of dialectics are abstracted. For they are nothing but the most general laws of these two stages of historical development, as well as of thought itself” (Ibid., 356). That a principle is historical means that it is neither the pure concept of reason alone nor the necessary law of nature alone; on the contrary, it means that it is acquired through the accumulation of human actions.

The development of a concept, or of a conceptual relation (positive and negative, cause and effect, substance and accident) in the history of thought, is related to its development in the mind of the individual dialectician, just as the development of an organism in palaeontology is related to its development in embryology (or rather in history and in the single embryo) (Engels, 2010b, 502).

So, the influence of the subject in the development of the concept together with the structure of the object—or the social history of thought—determines the dialectic as an objective method of reasoning. “Natural science, like philosophy, has hitherto entirely neglected the influence of men’s activity on their thought; both know only nature on the one hand and thought on the other” (Engels 2010b, 510). Whereas,

It is precisely the *alteration of nature by men*, not solely nature as such, which is the most essential and immediate basis of human thought, and it is in the measure that man has learned to change nature that his intelligence has increased. (Engels 2010b, 511)

For example, at the end of historical experiences, “by the activity of *human beings*, the idea of *causality* becomes established, the idea that one motion is the *cause* of another” (Ibid., 510). Such generalizations turn into effective principles in every act of knowing. In the case, “the principles are not the starting-point of the investigation, but its final result; they are not applied to nature and human history, but abstracted from them; it is not nature and the realm of man which conform to these principles.” (Engels 2010a, 34). Since principles are conceptual abstractions of the internal relationship of the existent or the practice of the object, the dialectical law is not something applied to nature. This is a consciousness about the bond of being of the existent.

While knowledge of the outer world, that is, laws of nature, is reapplied to the world as knowledge of technology, there is no similar application area for dialectical laws. Only the basic knowledge of the bonds of existence (that is, the principle) can be the axiom for any knowledge to be established thereafter; for example, the axiom of unity of contradictions does

not affect sensory perception, but the mind will act under the influence of consciousness in the act of understanding this perception.¹⁴ If the nature of the object is dialectical, although the epistemological reflection theory explains the question of how the subject perceives this movement and transforms it into the language of knowledge¹⁵, Marx's analyses in *Capital* are extremely important.

Marx's explanation of "use value" by associating it with "amount of labour" is a grounding based on the quality-quantity relationship of the dialectic.

A use value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article. The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours. (Marx 2010a, 48)

"Labour contained in a commodity" is an attribute in terms of "use value"; It is quantity in terms of "value" (Marx 2010a, 55). Because it does not look from these principles, classical political economy does not make a distinction "between labour, as it appears in the value of a product and the same labour, as it appears in the use value of that product" (Ibid., 91; n1). In Marx's ontology of "commodities", dialectical reasoning provides the possibility of both explaining the internal relation of the economic object (object practice) in the context of the socio-historical one, and grounding the categories through principles. "The first negation of individual private property" "produces capitalist private property." "But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation"; that is, "co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production" (Ibid., 751). Obviously, the principles do not apply to the object of thought (here, social history); on the contrary, as the phenomenon is unwrapped, the internal relations

14. Dialectics is a method of thinking and interpreting the world of both nature and society.

It is a way of looking at the universe, which sets out from the axiom that everything is in a constant state of change and flux. But not only that. Dialectics explains that change and motion involve contradiction and can only take place through contradictions [. . .] Dialectics is the logic of contradiction (Woods & Grant 2003, 39–40).

15. Just as man's knowledge reflects nature (i.e., developing matter), which exists independently of him, so man's social knowledge (i.e., his various views and doctrines—philosophical, religious, political and so forth) reflects the economic system of society (Lenin, 1977b 25).

(object practice) it contains are transformed into concepts of thought. In this respect, Dühring's proposition that "Marx has no other way [. . .] except by citing the Hegelian negation of the negation" (Engels 2010a, 120) is wrong. Because Marx does not define principles as reflections of autonomous operations. On the contrary, he explains on the basis of these principles the interaction of the numerous relations he discovers in his object. While these principles ensure the consistency of the historical explanation, the "dialectically reached" conclusions are supported by "historical evidence" (Engels 2010h, 381).

While explaining the "the kernel of the dialectical conception of nature", Engels points out the tension between the contradictory being of nature ("antagonisms and distinctions") and the faculty of thinking that fixes its structure, saying that "their imagined rigidity and absolute validity have been introduced into nature only by our reflective minds" (Engels 2010a, 14). Concepts are abstractions of fact relations. Dialectical reasoning makes this abstraction through the observation of the internal relations of the object. Engels' dialectic makes this observation not directly on the elements of nature, but through the data of natural sciences. Therefore, while reasoning establishes the knowledge of the internal relations of the object, what it does is associate the knowledge of the object with the dialectical laws. Dialectical reasoning is realized "If we deduce world schematise not from our minds, but only through our minds from the real world, if we deduce principles of being from what is" (Ibid., 35). The fact that the act of knowing acquires the knowledge of the internal relations of the object (that is, object practice) by turning to the object outside itself also means the establishment of object consciousness (or, of the thesis that the relations of the object are dialectical). Thus, reaching object consciousness through the dialectical method means (i.e., reaching the stage of grasping the knowledge of the object's internal relations in the context of its existence relation) that as consciousness unwraps its object, it enswathes itself by that wraps of the object. From this point of view, objective consciousness means not constructing consciousness in the object, but transforming consciousness itself through object bonds. This means that dialectical reasoning means bringing the essence (structural relation) of the existent to rational form. The "rational kernel" of the dialectic and the "standing on its head" issue in Marx's *Capital* is the most symbolic equivalent of this subject.

Engels(1859), his article *Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, after saying that Hegel's "conception of history was the direct

theoretical precondition of the new materialist Outlook” (Engels 2010g, 474), he explains Marx's intervention in Hegel:¹⁶

Marx was and is the only one who could undertake the work of extracting from the Hegelian logic the kernel containing Hegel's real discoveries in this field, and of establishing the dialectical method, divested of its idealist wrappings, in the simple form in which it becomes the only correct mode of the development of thought. (Engels 2010g, 474)

Marx in *Capital I* (1867) “Afterword to the Second German Edition” (1873) he repeats Engels' assessment, simplifying it.¹⁷ Due to “the mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands” dialectic “with him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell” (Marx 2010a, 18). Here, the issue of “rational kernel” and “standing on its head” represents what kind of thinking method dialectic actually is, as well as the way Marx intervenes in Hegel. Clearly, the determination to purge the dialectic of its Hegelian mystical character and to emphasize the “rational essence” in it is a statement developed together by Engels and Marx. According to this, the subject who reaches the knowledge of the object bond (“rational kernel”) with the dialectical method while the gives objective content to his own consciousness, he rationalizes the general consciousness through historical contribution. “Marx reduces the common content shared by things and circumstances to the most general conceptual expression; hence his abstraction merely reproduces in conceptual form the content already inherent in things” (Engels 2010k, 193).

The structure of the existent and the faculty of reasoning to accompany the relationship contained in this structure is the ontological basis of the

16. But in presenting Marx's results or 'outlook' Engels also likened his work substantively to Hegel's, saying that the great philosopher's epoch-making conception of history was the direct theoretical precondition of the new materialist outlook. Thus, he made Marx and his 'new materialism' the successor to Hegel's monumental achievements (Carver 2019, 237).

17. Marx clearly adopted Engels' determination. What should be seen, however, is the introduction to Marx's book, published under the same title, by Engels's article *Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859); it was written before *Capital I* (1867). However, Marx already has this assessment of Hegel. In the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* (1844), Marx, in his book, referring to paragraph §272 of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, says that he mystifies the “Concept” and turns it into the rational essence of the State. “The state has to differentiate and define its activity not in accordance with its specific nature, but in accordance with the nature of the concept, which is the mystified movement of abstract thought” (Marx 2010b, 19).

subject-object relationship (of consciousness). But this ontology is realized by historical human actions, not by a hierarchy of concepts. The historical development of the human mind also confirms this: The immediate basis of human thought is the “*alteration of nature by men*” interaction with nature has increased their mental skills (Engels 2010b, 511).

The conscious historical relationship of subject-object always follows this premise. If this assumption is valid, Lukács (1971, 3) judges Engels unfairly: “But he does not even mention the most vital interaction, namely the dialectical relation between subject and object in the historical process, let alone give it the prominence it deserves.” Reading the dialectic in the context of Hegel’s explanations, Lukács attributes Hegel’s shortcomings to Engels. However, Althusser sees this deficiency as necessary for Marxism to be a “historical science.” According to Althusser (2001, 122) “Lukacs who are almost ashamed of the *Dialectics of Nature*”, thinks wrongly; “the dialectic is by no means peculiar to History.” Althusser who sees in *Lenin and Philosophy* Marx’s *Capital* as “a process without a subject”, like Hegel’s *Logic* (2001, 121) says that:

[. . .] the Marxist tradition was quite correct to return to the thesis of the *Dialectics of Nature*, which has the polemical meaning that history is a process without a subject, that the dialectic at work in history is not the work of any Subject whatsoever.

However, like *Capital*, *Dialectics of Nature* takes the relationship with nature as the existential basis of man: “man also reacts on nature, changing it and creating new conditions of existence for himself” (Engels 2010b, 511). Just as there can be no consciousness without an object, there can be no history without a subject. Engels’ dialectical theory is based on the abstraction of the relation of consciousness—the subject in the act of knowing—to its object, that is, the historical process that started with the first movement of the hand reaching out to transform nature. Therefore, thought always begins with facts; the dialectical method is the conceptual observation of transitions between phenomena.

The inversion of Hegel’s dialectics is based on the assumption that it is the ‘self-development of the idea’ of which, therefore, the dialectic of facts is only the image, while the dialectic in our minds is but the reflection of the actual development taking place in the natural world and human history in obedience to dialectical forms. (Engels 2010i, 287)

In Engels’ theory, dialectical reasoning is not directly about things but is an argument based on the data of the sciences about things.

If we deduce world schematise not from our minds, but only through our minds from the real world, if we deduce principles of being from what is, we need no philosophy for this purpose, but positive knowledge of the world and of what happens in it; and what this yield is also not philosophy, but positive science. (Engels 2010a, 35)

Engels justifies his dialectical theory by correlating the data of the natural sciences. The need to theoretically relate the mass of “purely empirical discoveries” in the natural sciences requires a method of thinking in line with the “the dialectical character of natural processes” (Ibid., 13). The judgment that the phenomenon is dialectical is an inference that can only be reached with dialectical thinking.

It is possible to arrive at this recognition because the accumulating facts of natural science compel us to do so; but one arrives at it more easily if one approaches the dialectical character of these facts equipped with an understanding of the laws of dialectical thought. (Engels 2010a, 14)

From this point of view, the statement that “only dialectics could be of assistance to natural science” because of the intensity of theoretical problems, Engels calls dialectics a “science” separate from natural sciences. Accordingly, dialectic, as the subject's object intention and the object's transformation into consciousness, is finally defined as a type of knowledge. “Thus dialectics reduced itself to the science of the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of human thinking.” The definition of “science” here should be limited to the theoretical knowledge system.

While the natural sciences explain the operation procedure of things, the argument that the existent is dialectical belongs not to the natural sciences, but to a philosophical reasoning that proceeds with logical abstractions of their relations. This is what Hegel (1991, 93; § 48) calls “the dialectical movement of thinking;” understanding is “the dialectical movement of the concept” namely “the progressive determination of consciousness” (Hegel 2010, 144). But Hegel “By this dialectical movement, the universal representation reaches the point where it no longer needs the content of the image for its proof, but is proved in and for its own self, is, therefore, immediately valid” (Hegel 2010, 193; §415 Zusatz). The dialectic is a conceptual observation that grasps the internal relations of the object in the context of being (the particular with the universal), but in Engels' dialectic, as Hegel assumed, the concepts never exceed their ties and context. Engels' dialectical reasoning does not transcend the realm of the

senses, as Kant determined, but depends not on the concept, as he determined, but on the internal relations of its object. For this reason, Engels' dialectic is a method of philosophical reasoning that brings the boundaries of objects to the conceptual stage. The being knowledge of the object is not completed at the boundary of the object's own existence, but in its connections. The knowledge of being is not the knowledge of the natural sciences, but of philosophy—of dialectical materialist ontology in terms of materialist philosophy. From this point of view, Engels' suggestion of eliminating philosophy by teaching dialectics to scientists (Engels 2010a, 35) seems unacceptable, as it would technicalize the subject-object relationship as well as the essence of dialectical reasoning being a philosophical orientation. "Dialectical philosophy" is a "reflection of this process in the thinking brain" (Engels 2010c, 360). The fact that scientists learn dialectics does not make philosophy superfluous. Moreover, the dialectical method is not a procedure applied by the researcher in an object search. Dialectical reasoning is a philosophical process of knowing that advances knowledge about the object of science from internal relations, which are the data of sciences, to the context of existence. Conceptual observation, which takes precise knowledge as a premise, confirms that dialectic is a philosophical knowledge since Plato and Aristotle.

Subjective-Objective Dialectic: Dialectical Distinction or Object Distinction?

There is a paragraph in Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* that includes the dialectical distinction between the paragraphs that remain unprocessed.

Dialectics, so-called *objective* dialectics, prevails throughout nature, and so-called subjective dialectics, dialectical thought, is only the reflection of the motion through opposites which asserts itself everywhere in nature, and which by the continual conflict of the opposites and their final passage into one another, or into higher forms, determines the life of nature. (Engels 2010b, 492)

This distinction has an assumption that can falsify my suggestion that there is only one dialectic, which I am trying to ground in this article is inaccurate. Still, if we see from the standpoint of the totality of explanations in the *Dialectic of Nature*, it is assumed that this distinction is not related to dialectics, but to the object of dialectical reasoning. "Objective dialectic" refers to the form the dialectic takes when applied to the objects of nature, and "subjective dialectic" refers to the form the dialectic takes when applied to the concepts and problems of thought. When dialectics is

defined because of the object to which it is applied, it appears as if there are types of dialectic (for example, the dialectic of nature, the dialectic of history, etc.).

“Subjective dialectic” is the mode of reasoning that takes place in the object intention of the act of thinking. This is the method of reasoning with concepts and problems of thinking. The most basic feature of this orientation is the realization of the conceptual movement of reasoning that accompanies the internal relations of the object. For this reason,

[. . .] dialectical logic, in contrast to the old, merely formal logic, is not, like the latter, content with enumerating the forms of motion of thought, i.e., the various forms of judgment and conclusion, and placing them side by side without any connection. On the contrary, it derives these forms out of one another, it makes one subordinate to another instead of putting them on an equal level, it develops the higher forms out of the lower. (Engels 2010b, 503)

The principles of reasoning and its explanations are based on the principle of the existence of its object and its law of motion, although the principles on which the explanations are based seem to belong to pure logic. The succession of concepts is a derivation from the principle of ontological interdependence—the latter derives from the former; the former cannot resist the conditions that will derive the latter; takes its explanation from the latter. It is what is summarized as “necessity” in dialectical thought discovered by Hegel (Ibid., 502). It represents the interdependence of relations and the derivation of concepts from each other. Therefore, “On the other hand, dialectical thought—precisely because it presupposes investigation of the nature of concepts themselves—is only possible for man...” (Ibid., 503). However, this does not mean that the reasoning starts from the concept; the dialectic of Engels as well as of Marx is based on his data on the phenomenon. Thus, although there are intersections with Hegel in Engels's dialectical theory, Engels' dialectical reasoning is clearly related to the “only with the dialectical method used by Marx” (Engels 2010a, 114).

The dialectical form of thinking is not just an argumentation operating on its own with logical principles; it is a method of thinking that reveals the internal relations of the object in the context of existence. Since there is no consciousness without an object, there cannot be an analysis of consciousness without an object. Moreover, the path that reasoning draws for itself (conceptual movement) follows the traces of the object's own internal relations. Conceptual exposition in thought about the object is the *ob-*

ject relation abstracted (or the *practice of the object* transformed into a concept). For, as a method of thinking, “Dialectics, on the other hand, comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin, and ending” (Engels 2010a, 23). Nature, but logical abstractions based on it. So, dialectical reasoning grasps what is there with what is in itself. If “the motion itself is a contradiction” (Ibid., 111); existing is in contradiction and unity (Ibid., 23) and the apprehension of things in opposition is “the kernel of the dialectical conception of nature” (Ibid., 14). Repeating Hegel’s assumption that there is nothing in the universe that exhibits “abstract ‘either-or’” (Hegel 1991, 187; §119 Addition 2), Engels says that the as “method of thought” dialectics does this. “Dialectics, [. . .] besides ‘either-or’ recognises also in the right place ‘both this-and that’ and reconciles the opposites” (Engels 2010b, 493).

Accordingly, the act of reasoning, which reflects the knowledge of the internal relations of the object or the practice of the object in conceptual connections, is the method of the subject. What makes this method objective is the nature of its object-oriented style. The most general steps of this orientation are: (1) the object (knowledge of the practical fact or conceptual problem) is returned from its form to its own inner being (the rational core that governs relations). (2) The knowledge of internal relations (object practice or concept content) is gradually removed to the context of being that gives the object the reality of existence. (3) In reasoning, the unity of context and content is established as abstract conceptual knowledge. In this orientation, while the object is freed from its wrappings, the wrappings hold onto the language of consciousness. Accordingly, the subjective act of knowing becomes objectified as it follows the object bonds. What then does Engels call objective dialectics?

It is clear that the term “dialectic” refers to a process operating in nature, such as “dialectic of nature” referred to Engels’ theory, “dialectic in nature” expressed by Engels himself, “dialectical understanding of nature” or “dialectical law”. “Dialectics, so-called objective dialectics, prevails throughout nature” (Engels 2010b, 492). Even though the explanations strengthen the assumption that “objective dialectics” is a genre, they are not convincing enough. It is only the special quality of the object (its existence beyond consciousness) of dialectical reasoning that is emphasized by “objective dialectic”. The fact that the object of knowledge to which the method is applied is nature does not make it a dialectic of nature. What makes the reasoning towards the empirical object dialectical is its faculty

to accompany movement and transformation and explain the transitions between phenomena based on its own principles. The faculty to accompany the object in the act of thinking seems to have led to the assumption that the object of thinking is like the logic of thought. Thus, the so-called “objective dialectic” is nothing more than the appearance of the dialectic that emerges in the process of cognition of objects outside of consciousness.¹⁸ In this reasoning, consciousness reaches its object by going out of itself; grasps its object as a being outside and alien to itself. The object consciousness formed at the end of the reasoning is the expression of the being structure of the object. However, even if the evidence is external, the principles that organize the evidence are the mind's own concepts. Therefore, dialectics is still a method of thinking

The dialectical practice called “objective dialectic” emerges when reasoning is directed towards movement and its transformations. The subject of “dialectics of natural science” is “matter in motion.” “The different forms and varieties of matter itself can likewise only be known through motion, only in this are the properties of bodies exhibited” (Engels 2010b, 527). Knowledge about “matter” and its “movement” is not a speculative assumption; originates from the natural sciences. What Engels called “dialectic in nature” is based on the association of the data of natural sciences with a dialectical understanding, not elements of nature. The process of gaining the appearance of the movement can only be revealed with “dialectical laws of motion” (Engels 2010a, 11). According to Engels' assumption, the facts collected by the natural sciences are already dialectical; because nature already works according to “dialectical laws” (principles such as contradiction, negation, and unity of opposites). In this case, “objective dialectic” refers to the “dialectic of phenomena”, that is, the “the dialectical character of natural processes” (Ibid., 13) in which objects belonging to the natural sciences are involved. For this reason, it should be achieved by “building the laws of dialectics into nature, but of discovering them in it and evolving them from it” (Ibid., 12). The expression “exploring in na-

18. “There is a match between the so-called dialectic of nature and that of thinking because thought has no-dependent existence from human beings who act, cognize, perceive, and think. These two dialectics coincide because human thinking is a particular mode of human action; human action is tool in meaning that it conforms to forms mediated and object-oriented of objectivity within which human activity is actualized while all objects, even if they are not objects of immediate bodily action (say, galaxies that are hundreds of thousands of light year afar), bear the mark of human activity.” (Azeri, 2022, 93)

ture” clearly indicates the intention of thought, which is a mental act, towards nature. In this case, the expressions “objective dialectic” or “dialectic in nature” should limit the practice of the object to the act of knowing that transforms it into consciousness by basing it on the data of sciences. In this case, the assumption of “dialectical law” does not replace the law of nature; because it becomes clear that the principles of the explanation, not the functioning of the elements of nature, are.

If this interpretation is valid, Engels’s dialectical theory goes beyond Hegel’s dialectical theory, both in content and in operation.

Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasing daily, and thus has shown that, in the last resort, nature works dialectically and not metaphysically. (Engels 2010a, 23–24)

However, natural scientists make explanations based on “used metaphysical categories.” However, “In nature nothing takes place in isolation.” “Everything affects and is affected by every other thing”; since natural scientists do not take into account “this manifold motion and interaction”, they have a poor understanding of nature. (Engels 2010b, 459). What needs to be done is to associate and abstract the data of the sciences and conceptualize the knowledge as the knowledge of the wholistic (ontological where movement takes place, from atomic relations to history and consciousness) structure at a higher level. The dialectical concept in materialist ontology is the mind’s transformation of its own order into the order of its object.

Conclusion

Although Engels seems to be observing the empirical external world, his interest is in the natural sciences’ data on the elements of the external world. While grounding his world design by associating the data of natural sciences, he uses dialectic as a method of reasoning. Whether the object of thinking is nature or history does not determine the type of dialectic. Elements of nature as the external world are explained by empirical laws, which are the discoveries of natural sciences. The “dialectic of nature” (its principles), which is not an empirical law of nature, is not a procedure for the study of the external world. This approach does not remove the “dialectic of nature” claim, but changes its location it. Above all, the concept of “nature” is an ontological concept, not an empirical one. For this reason,

“nature’s dialectic” can only have a counterpart when it explains the motion of nature as a moment of an ontological system. However, this name does not lead to another dialectic autonomous from the dialectic as a method of reasoning, but only emphasizes the structure of the object that is independent of consciousness.

This article takes as the application of dialectical reasoning the act of thinking that moves from the knowledge of the inner connections of the object of consciousness—or the knowledge of its inner relations as object practice—to the context of being. From this point of view, Engels’s expression of exploring the dialectic in nature and evolving the relation (principle as basic knowledge) in nature should not be seen as reducing nature to consciousness, but as raising consciousness to object connections. While thought (or the conceptual expression of object practice) as the subject’s relationship with the object expands through the object, the object opens in thought and justifies it. The expansion of knowledge, then, means that thought expands the conceptual abstractions of object practice (its internal relations). Dialectical explains the object of reasoning in a developmental process from its internal relations to its external interactions. Thus, to grasp dialectically means that consciousness transforms its own order of knowledge into the order of the existence of its object. To understand dialectically, on the other hand, is based on grasping the thing in terms of existence with its oppositions, starting from its internal connections. Contrary to arguments that reduce appearance to consciousness, dialectical argumentation raises the inferences of thought from the inner workings of the object to its context. Thus, Engels’ problem of “dialectics in nature” is fundamentally concerned with the problem of how to relate knowledge about the objects of the natural sciences—or, how to advance knowledge dialectically. From this point of view, what is emphasized with the phrase “dialectic in nature” is not the formation processes of empirical natural phenomena (because this is the work of the relevant natural sciences), but the explanation on the functioning of the natural order in materialist ontology, which is the abstraction of the correlate of the data of natural sciences. This means that in the ontological design, dialectics assumes the explanatory function of the law of nature in the physical world. This determination is based on the dialectical method determination in Marx’s Preface to *Capital* (2010a, 19) as the “inquiry” of the “internal relations” of the object and the “presentation” of knowledge. The transitivity of the moments in the materialist ontology can only be achieved through a method

of thinking in terms of intention to internal connections. The most critical point in this process is to solve the transitivity problem.

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Roots of Social Reproduction Theory in Marx and Engels: A Total Analysis of Society and Life

Melda Yaman

ABSTRACT: The social reproduction theory aims to construct a total analysis of the production of things and the production and reproduction of people. Therefore, it broadens social production by including the care and reproduction work—by women—rather than just seeing it as capital accumulation/commodity production and reproduction of capital. Social reproduction theory is a materialist theory of (social) life and has its roots in Marxism. Historical materialist premises provide both a materialist explanation of social reproduction and women’s role in it and a ground for the struggle with capitalism and patriarchy. In this paper, I will argue that the materialist conception of history and methodology that Marx and Engels developed in *The German Ideology* establishes the ground for social reproduction theory. For this, I will show that, first, their consideration of human-beings as the product of their own labor, second, their evaluation of the production and reproduction of the human being as one of the three moments of history, and third, their thinking of human relations in a broader sense—*Verkehr*—are significant contributions to social reproduction theory. I will also argue that social reproduction theory makes an essential contribution to rebuilding the Marxist conception of totality based on a materialist conception of history and materialist dialectics to encompass the entire life and society, by expanding the concept of labor, putting the production and reproduction of life at its center, and including reproduction work that is overwhelmingly performed by women.

KEYWORDS: Social reproduction, *The German Ideology*, *The Origin*, materialist conception of history.

Introduction

The Covid 19 pandemic has displayed how important social reproduction is. The pandemic has also shown that production and reproduction activities, from childcare to elderly care, from formal to university education,

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from access to vaccines to health services, and from ecological concerns to agricultural production are the most crucial aspects of life. Moreover, we witnessed, especially during the lockdown, how production and reproduction activities are intertwined. Pandemic conditions also revealed the vital role in social reproduction, in Tithi Bhattacharya's (2020) words, of the "life-making activities" of women. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic should be understood, as Alessandra Mezzadri (2022) puts it, as a systemic crisis of social reproduction—a crisis of capitalist life.

The economic crisis, accompanying the pandemic conditions and getting worse, has once again revealed the importance of social reproduction. The circumstances of the crisis we have been through in Turkey have deadly affected the lives of working-class households because of high inflation and increasing unemployment. Therefore, again, the struggle for social reproduction becomes a struggle against capital. As Cynthia Arruzza (2016, 11) claims, the notions of financial and economic crisis alone are not sufficient to give an account of the current crisis in the survival conditions of the working class. The conception of social reproduction within the framework of a total theory allows us to understand the current crisis not only in economic terms but as a general crisis of the reproduction of society in all its dimensions. Therefore, the struggle for social reproduction—the struggle for health, education, shelter, food, etc.—is a part of the class struggle.

To explain the general crisis of the reproduction of capitalist society, that is, the crisis of capitalist life, we need to have a total theory of life. The social reproduction approach expands social production by including human production and reproduction, rather than just seeing it as capital accumulation/commodity production and reproduction of capital. Social reproduction theoreticians, arguing that social reproduction is essential to capital accumulation, contend that production and reproduction are "an integrated and unified process" (Ferguson 1999, 9).

To maintain our living, we need food, clothing, proper housing, etc. We also need to be cared for and loved. The fulfillment of these needs is the essential condition of human existence. Social reproduction theory encompasses all aspects of our life. On the one side, there is capital accumulation, commodity production and the value creation process. On the other side, there is another labor process, which is invisible and unpaid—the reproduction of life in the households by women. Most of the goods and services we need are not produced under capitalist conditions but by the unpaid labor of women in the houses. It means that it is mainly women's unpaid

labor that produces and reproduces people as humans, members of society, and productive forces. Women do not get paid for these labor activities, and the goods and services they produce are not commodities. They do not create value but produce and reproduce labor power daily and generically for capital. Thus, they provide capital with its unique source of value. So, they provide, in Isabella Bakker and Stephen Gill's (2003, 22) words "both a productive potential and a condition of existence for the expanded reproduction of capital and social formation."

However, this workload is the biggest obstacle for women to participate in wage work and to realize their human potential. It also continuously reproduces male domination and women's dependence on men.

What Marxist feminist theory calls social reproduction has three dimensions: (a) Biological reproduction of the species, (b) Reproduction of the labor force, and (c) Reproduction of provisioning and caring needs. Social reproduction theoreticians also expand the analysis to other relations, institutions, and organizations such as schools, hospitals, migrant workers, etc. Social reproduction thus involves fundamental social processes and institutions through which communities are reproduced and develop over time and upon which all production and exchange ultimately rest (Gill and Baker 2006, 41).

The production/reproduction of human beings and the reproduction of society as a whole bring up a new relationship between social sciences and humanities. A theoretical recognition of caring labor as critical for the reproduction of people is necessary for any adequate materialist analysis of science. Moreover, it is a crucial precondition for an alternative epistemology and method that will help us construct a new science and a new technology (see Rose 1983, 83). Besides, anthropological findings, biological facts, health sciences, educational sciences, technological innovations in agriculture, genetically modified foods, innovations in household appliances, industry 4.0 discussions, technological developments in biological reproduction, etc., open up essential debates in this context.

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Social reproduction theory is a materialist theory of (social) life and has its roots in Marxism. Marx and Engels made the first step of total analysis of the production of things and the production and reproduction of people.

In their work we call *The German Ideology*,¹ a well-known work written in 1845–46 but unpublished,² Marx and Engels included the production of humans as one of three essential historical acts:

[. . .] life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing and various other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life [. . .] The second point is that the satisfaction of the first need, the action of satisfying and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired, leads to new needs; and this creation of new needs is the first historical act [. . .] The third circumstance which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that men, who daily re-create their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the family. (Marx and Engels 2010b, 41–43)

These three moments, three *historical materialist premises* (Gimenez 2018, 3) draw a *methodological framework* to analyze society and historical development. They encompass all the production and reproduction processes of life and acknowledge so-called family relations.

In this paper, I will argue that these premises also establish the ground for social reproduction theory. Many social reproduction theoreticians accept this and begin to develop social reproduction perspective from here. For example, Susan Himmelweit (1992, 203) points out that according to Marx and Engels, human reproduction should be analyzed alongside the production of things if a materialist account of history is to be developed. However, only a few, such as Frigga Haug (2015b), Tithi Bhattacharya (2017b), Susan Ferguson (1999) and Lise Vogel (1983) elaborate on it.

I want to take it further and argue that Marx and Engels’s early perspectives made three interconnected contributions to social reproduction theory. As I mentioned above, Marx and Engels acknowledge that people have produced and reproduced themselves by their labor since the dawn of human societies. I will try to show that their evaluation of the production and reproduction of the human being as one of the three moments of history

1. However, the title “The German Ideology” is not found anywhere in the original manuscripts known as *The German Ideology*. See Carver (2014, 1).

2. There were several attempts by Marx and Engels to have their 1845–46 manuscripts published as a whole or even in parts. During their lifetimes, they succeeded to publish a part of it and some other parts were published later on by Peter von Struve and Eduard Bernstein.

is the first step in a total theory of production and reproduction. However, before that, I want to point out another conception of Marx and Engels, which is a precondition of it: human beings as the product of their labor. So first, I will argue that this conception logically provides a ground for a total theory of life. For Marx and Engels, the starting point of the materialist understanding is the real, living, acting, and producing human beings. As Marx posits in the eighth thesis on Feuerbach that all social life is essentially practical, social-reproduction-theoreticians begin by broadening the definition of labor as the producer of society, life, and labor itself. However, there is no comprehensive Marxist feminist analysis of Marx and Engels's this early conception except for a few references, such as Haug (2015b). She (2015b, 76) argues that Marx's theses on Feuerbach are significant for the feminist critique of mainstream science. The lesson she draws from Marx for contemporary feminism is the role of "real life." Starting from this, I will try to look at the thoughts of Marx and Engels a bit deeper and discuss them briefly in the context of social reproduction. After that, I will return to the fact that they have included reproduction alongside production—the *second* contribution—, which is—in a way—a logical consequence of the previous notion and gives it a concrete structure. And third, I will argue that their thinking of human relations in a broader sense—*Verkehr*—is a significant contribution to social reproduction theory. While producing their means of subsistence and producing/reproducing themselves, women and men enter into various social relations. Marx and Engels highlight that people realize these production processes through their *intercourse* (*Verkehr*) with each other and under a specific division of labor. *Verkehr* is also a logical consequence of Marx and Engels' consideration of human beings as the product of their own labor. This early insight of Marx and Engels has not found much place in Marxist debates, let alone Marxist/socialist feminist debates. Only a few Marxists, such as Göran Therbon (1976) or Georges Labica (1980), refer to the concept but not in the context of social reproduction. They find that *Verkehr* is inconvenient with the Marxist theory of history because of its broad meaning. On the contrary, I will try to show that this notion is at the heart of the social reproduction theory. It comprises essential social relations associated with social reproduction processes such as childcare or elderly care. Moreover, it provides a ground for discussing many patriarchal norms and linkages, such as "motherhood," "family," and "love."

In this work, I also want to draw attention to the fact that social reproduction perspective makes a critical contribution to rebuilding the Marxist

conception of totality based on a materialist conception of history and materialist dialectics to encompass entire life and society. As social reproduction feminists argue, Marxists have generally ignored how biological reproduction, housework, sexuality, and caring activities are arranged, and have taken them as “natural” or outside human history. Although Marx and Engels had a broader social production perspective in their early writings, they did not maintain it in their later work. Still, Engels turned back to this conception in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (*The Origin*, hereafter) writing in the Preface that according to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of immediate life. However, he, too, did not maintain it in the rest of the book.

Marxist/socialist feminists brought these issues back to the fore and developed a total analysis of society. They argue that women’s domestic labor provides capital with the condition of existence through its role in the reproduction of labor power and the production of human beings. The social-reproduction-feminist perspective enables a genuine total analysis of society and reveals the connection between male domination and capital. And therefore, as Susan Ferguson and David McNally (2013, xxxvii) argue, it opens up the possibility of a more genuinely historical materialist reading of the social relations of power by identifying the conditions under which race, gender, sexuality, and class are (co) reproduced, transformed and potentially revolutionized.

I will then conclude that the social reproduction approach contributes to the Marxist conception of totality by expanding the concept of labor, putting the production and reproduction of life at its center, and including (re)production work that is overwhelmingly performed by women. It also provides socialist/Marxist feminists a ground for a united struggle against capital and male domination.

The Roots of Social Reproduction Theory in the Materialist Conception of History

Social reproduction theory is a materialist theory of life. The materialist conception is an approach that posits the existence of a real, material world, one which conditions the social, political, and intellectual processes in general (Armstrong and Armstrong 1983, 9). The ways people co-operate to provide for their daily and future needs establish the framework

within which all human activities take place. In *The German Ideology*, breaking free of the qualitative and ontological separation between civil society and the state, economy, and culture, and between the political and public sphere and the private and familial, Marx [and Engels] present an integrated, constantly elaborating historical/social space—a social unity what social reproduction theory suggests (see Haug 2015b, 111). This understanding is significant for social reproduction approach since by conceiving the material foundation of social life as the productive and reproductive activities of everyday life, the social reproduction approach offers a materialist understanding of social relations that is better able to take account of contradictions and complexity than one based on the market alone (Ferguson 1999, 2).

Marxist scholars and feminists—such as Lise Vogel, David Ryazanov, Vladimir Adoratsky, August Cornu, C. J. Arthur, and Cohen and his colleagues—generally think that Marx and Engels developed “historical materialism” or the “materialist conception of history” in *The German Ideology*.³ However, according to some, such as Göran Therbon (1976, 368), although Marx and Engels drew the first sketch of historical materialism, the first part of *The German Ideology* cannot be regarded as a summary of historical materialism. I will turn to this issue in the next chapter.

Yet, Marx and Engels did not use either term—i.e. materialist conception of history or historical materialism—anywhere in the original manuscript (See Carver and Blank 2014, 1). Nevertheless, almost forty-four

3. Lise Vogel, one of the founders of feminist social reproduction approach points out that *The German Ideology* marks a turning point in the development of Marx and Engels’s work (2013, 51). For her, it also contains their first comprehensive formulation of a theory and history of the family. David Ryazanov, the founder of the Marx-Engels archive in Soviet Russia and the editor of the historical edition of the collected works of Marx and Engels, described it in his Introduction to the Feuerbach section of *The German Ideology* as being the earliest account of the materialistic conception of history See Carver and Blank (2014, 19). Similarly, Vladimir Adoratsky, the successor of Ryazanov, claimed that “I. Feuerbach” must be seen as the “first systematic exposition of their [Marx and Engels’s] historical-philosophical conception of the history of man” Carver and Blank (2014, 32). August Cornu (1957, 100), one of the greatest French Marxist writers, wrote that Marx and Engels saw the fundamental causes and purposes of human activity in the organization and production of material life. To Cornu, thus, they arrived at a materialist conception of history, and this is how historical materialism was formed. According to C. J. Arthur (1986, 149), the editor of one of the editions of *The German Ideology*, historical materialism was outlined and defended for the first time in this book. Similarly, according to the editors of *Marx and Engels’ Collected Works* (Cohen et al. 2010b, xiii), it was in *The German Ideology* that the materialist conception of history—or historical materialism—was first formulated as an integral theory.

years after this work (in 1888), in the Preface to his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of Classical German Philosophy*, Engels referred to their old manuscript as an exposition of the materialist conception of history (Engels 2010b, 519).⁴

By historical materialism or the materialist conception of history, we refer to “a guiding principle” Marx and Engels developed for their lifelong studies. Marx (2010c, 262) mentioned this early manuscript (i.e. *The German Ideology*) in his introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* as an essential work in which he arrived at a general conclusion—a guiding principle—for his studies. In other words, starting from real and active human beings, and on the basis of their real life-process, demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process, Marx and Engels established their methodological stance (see Marx and Engels 2010b, 36). Marx himself saw in this work the methodological prerequisite for a new political economy. In a letter to the German publisher Leske on August 1, 1846, he wrote that the polemical work against the German philosophers was necessary to prepare readers for his view on economic science (Marx and Engels 2010c, 50).⁵ It indeed constitutes the basis of social analysis of any kind.

This early insight takes us to the foundations of the social reproduction perspective. When analyzing contemporary society and the capitalist mode of production, we should start with living people, their labor processes (of whatever kind), and their relations with each other. While producing/ reproducing their life, people transform themselves, their thoughts, and the world. This conception has also established the ground for the methodological framework developed by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*.

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4. “I have once again ferreted out and looked over the old manuscript of 1845–46. The section dealing with Feuerbach is not completed. The finished portion consists of an exposition of the materialist conception of history.” Engels used the term “historical materialism” for the first time in his letter to Schmidt on 5 August 1890 (Marx and Engels 2010e, 8). In his letter to Kautsky on 16 February 1884, Engels (Marx and Engels 2010d, 103) mentioned it again: Within the limits set by his subject, Morgan rediscovers for himself Marx’s materialist view of history, and concludes with what are, for modern society, downright communist postulates. Further, in his 1886 letter to Schlüter (26 November), Engels (Marx and Engels 2010d, 529) writes that his *Anti-Duhring* revolves around the materialist-economic view of history.
5. Marx (Marx and Engels 2010c, 50) wrote the following: “For it seemed to me very important to precede my positive development with a polemical piece against German philosophy and German socialism up till the present. This is necessary in order to prepare the public for the viewpoint adopted in my *Economy*, which is diametrically opposed to German scholarship past and present.”

All Social Life is Essentially Practical

The roots of Marx and Engels' materialist understanding go back to their earlier writings, such as Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* or *the Holy Family*. In the *Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx, following Hegel, considered the real individual the outcome of her own labor. Marx takes this conception from Hegel but he begins with a real, sensual, and acting being rather than a self-conscious contemplative being (Santilli 1973, 76; Cornu 1957, 86; Arthur 1986, 161). In his eleven theses on Feuerbach, Marx made a parallel critique of idealism and mechanical materialism to posit the notion of action in the sense of practical activity and work (See Cornu 1957, 95). In the eighth thesis, Marx posits that all social life is essentially practical. Similarly, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels criticize contemporary German philosophers for not starting from real people but remaining in the world of ideas. On the contrary, the key to understanding the process of historical development lays in their physical productive activity. They write:

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. (Marx and Engels 2010b, 31)

Two things are essential here: On the one hand, Marx and Engels posit that people produce their life through their practical activities. On the other hand, they consider an individual “in all her peculiarities as a product of labor transforming both the external world and the individual himself” (Ilyenkov 1977, 253).

First, in opposition to the idealist view, Marx calls our attention to the crucial linking element between the natural basis of human life and the history we make.⁶ In the *Manuscripts of 1844*, he (Marx 2010b, 272) pointed out that the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of people through human labor.⁷ Marx emphasized that a period in social history cannot be understood without knowing the “industry of that period, the immediate mode of production of life itself” (Marx and Engels

6. As Arthur (1986, 159) asserts, Marx's historical materialism is materialism that prioritizes practice, material practice.

7. In *The Holy Family*, Marx and Engels developed it further and took a new step forward in clarifying the decisive role of material production in social development. (see Cohen et al. 2010a, xvii).

2010a, 150). This “immediate mode of production of life,” which consists of the reproduction of human beings both daily and generically, takes us to the theoretical framework that Marx and Engels developed in *The German Ideology*.

Second, naming labor as a life activity, Marx (2010b, 272) showed that it produces not only commodities but also both labor itself as a commodity and the worker.⁸ Here we find the roots of Marx’s theory of the reproduction of labor power and the laboring population, which he posited—but did not fully develop—in the *Capital*.

Thus, following Marx and Engels, our starting point is living and acting people. For this, we should analyze how people survive and by whose labor they meet their—basic—needs. Once more, as Pat and Hugh Armstrong (1983, 9) argue, production in this view is not simply an arena in which commodities are produced. As Ferguson (1999, 4) highlights, it is a broader system through which people organize to meet all their human needs. The central element of this organization is the daily and generational production of individuals, which, in the capitalist era, takes place mainly in the houses by women’s labor.

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According to Marx and Engels, by developing their material production and intercourse, people change their actual world as well as their thinking and the products of their thinking. People are also the products of the social conditions under which they do those activities. These conditions, which are both they find already existing and those produced by their activities,⁹ also determine their thoughts. As Ilyenkov points out (1977, 283), Marx and Engels established that the external world was not given to the individual as it was in itself simply and directly in her contemplation but only in the course of its being altered by her. The production of ideas, conceptions, and consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of people (Marx and Engels 2010b, 36). Hence, “consciousness [*das Bewusstsein*] can never be anything else than conscious being [*das bewusste Sein*], and the being of men is their actual life-process” (Marx and Engels 2010b, 36). Here another crucial point lies: It is through material production that we reproduce ourselves, learn about

8. In these years, Marx had not yet introduced the distinction between labor and labor-power.

9. While the materialist conception of history concedes its reality to the external world, it still regards its concrete reality as the product of the concrete practical activity of women and men. (see Cornu 1957, 96).

our world, and develop our social and human potentials (Arthur 1986, 159). Ilyenkov elaborates this more subtly in *The Dialectical Logic*:

Between contemplating and thinking, man and nature in itself there existed a very important mediating link through which nature was transformed into thought, and thought into the body of nature. That was practice, labour, production. It was production (*in the broadest sense of the word*) that transformed the object of nature into the object of contemplation and thought [emphasis added]. (Ilyenkov 1977, 257)

Marx summarizes it as follows:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (Marx 2010c, 263)

Just like the last sentence of the well-known paragraph above reads, according to the materialist conception of history, people themselves and their consciousness are determined by their social existence (Marx and Engels 2010b, 37). Therefore, a human being is, above all, one who produces herself objectively and is conscious of doing so, both in the activity itself and in the works produced (Santilli 1973, 76).

From Reproduction of Labor Power to Reproduction of Life

Marx and Engels included the production of humans as one of three essential historical acts in *The German Ideology*, which is a critical step for social reproduction approach. However, they did not maintain this point of view in their later works—except Engels's *The Origin*. However, the concept of reproduction was one of Marx's essential concepts—not in the context of human production but in the reproduction of labor power and the reproduction of capital. Social reproduction theorists constructed their perspective by developing the theory of reproduction of labor power that Marx left incomplete in *Capital*.

Reproduction of Labor Power and Reproduction of Capital

Reproduction is, first, the reproduction of capital. Marx (2010a, 565) writes that whatever the form of the production in a society, it must be a continuous process and go periodically through the same phases. Thus, he started to analyze the reproduction of capital in the first volume of *Capital* and devoted much of the second volume to elaborating it. He pointed out that there are two types of reproduction processes—simple and extended. When capitalist reproduction is a mere repetition of the process of production on the previous scale, it is simple reproduction. Extended reproduction is accumulation on an increasing scale—creation and reinvestment of an ever-increasing amount of surplus value. Simple reproduction is valid in all societies. However, extended reproduction gives capitalist production its specificity.

Second, the reproduction of labor-power is central to Marx's theory. In a capitalist society, labor power has become a commodity, but it has different characteristics—it is a specific commodity. It is inseparable from its owner, and its reproduction consists of activities such as feeding, sheltering, sleeping, etc. It also involves physiological and emotional concerns, such as compassion, love, care, etc. Since living labor is the sole source of value, the production and reproduction of labor are essential for capital accumulation. As Marx (2010a, 572) writes in *Capital*, "The maintenance and reproduction of the working class are, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital." Marx (2010a, 181) writes that given the individual, the production of labor power consists in her reproduction of herself or her maintenance. Here he accepts—implicitly though—the labor required to reproduce labor power. However, he then ignores all the labor processes associated with this maintenance, such as women's unpaid labor, and "safely" leaves laborer's reproduction to her instincts of self-preservation and propagation. As Pat and Huge Armstrongs (1983, 9) write, Marx, like the capitalists, leaves the reproduction of workers mainly to themselves. Besides, his account fails to explain an essential social fact that people also have to be produced if capitalism is to continue (Himmelweit 1992, 202).

Thus, Marx's theory does not encompass the reproduction of society as a whole, nor does it take into account the unpaid labor activity of women in the reproduction processes. Drawing attention to these shortcomings (Bhattacharya 2017a; Vogel 1983; Ferguson 2016), the social reproduction theorists try to develop further what Marx leaves unexamined (see Bhattacharya 2017b, 73):

- What are the implications of labor power being produced outside the circuit of commodity production, yet being essential to it?
- What other social relationships and institutions are comprised by the circuit of social reproduction?

Another essential point to discuss in this context is that some social reproduction feminists claim that Marx had failed to integrate the reproduction of labor power into his theory of capital. However, this is an inappropriate criticism since it is the only commodity that cannot be produced thoroughly under capitalist conditions. The problem here is not that Marx failed to integrate the reproduction of labor power into his theory of capital. On the contrary, Marx argues that the reproduction of labor power cannot take place under capitalist conditions. If it were, the worker could not be a “free” laborer—she would become a capitalist’s commodity like any other means of production. In a way, she would have ceased to be a free person and become a “slave” —not a commodity owner but a commodity (Marx 2010a, 178). In this case, the creation of surplus value would not be possible. In short, this criticism has been misplaced. Production within the household is not immediately related to the capitalist production process and therefore cannot be integrated into capitalist production. Martha Gimenez (following Louis Althusser) (2019, 298) argues that this criticism is wrong. She claims that Marx distinguishes “levels of analysis” —mode of production and social formation—for different social phenomena. Michael Lebowitz (2003, 65) participates in this debate, which has not found much space in the Marxist literature, by defining the production of labor power as the “second moment” of production as a whole. According to Lebowitz, not only human production but also the production processes of various use objects that provide input to human production are outside capital. He states that capitalist production consists of the production of capital and the production of wage labor, which are discrete moments of a whole.

The problem with Marx’s theory of reproduction of labor power is that Marx did not elaborate on it in detail and did not consider the gender division of labor. Social reproduction feminists start from the reproduction of labor-power and expand it to the reproduction of humans and society. Therefore, “social” reproduction has a broader meaning for social reproduction theory. Johanna Brenner and Barbara Laslett suggest a functional distinction between societal and social reproduction, with the former retaining the original meaning as Marx has used it and the latter referring to:

[. . .] the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, and responsibilities and relationships directly involved in maintaining life, on a daily basis and intergenerationally. It involves various kinds of socially necessary work—mental, physical, and emotional—aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined means for maintaining and reproducing population. Among other things, social reproduction includes how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, how the maintenance and socialization of children is accomplished, how care of the elderly and infirm is provided, and how sexuality is socially constructed. (Brenner and Laslett 1991, 314)

Producing and Reproducing Life

The primary condition of life, and therefore the living person, is to have the means to sustain her life: She must be brought into the world, fed, cared for, and thus reproduced, both biologically and socially. They wrote:

. . . the production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a twofold relation: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relation—social in the sense that it denotes the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. (Marx and Engels 2010b, 43)

Starting from the living human beings, Marx and Engels posited the production and reproduction of humans as one of three essential historical acts. In the first section of the Book, “Feuerbach”, Marx and Engels posited that social activity has three aspects, one of which is the reproduction of human life—the relation between women and men and the family. In brief, these are three moments that people begin to have a history: 1. Production of the means of subsistence and satisfying needs, 2. Creation of new needs, and 3. Production and reproduction of people.¹⁰ None of these moments are to be given the status of a primary fact.

Engels maintained this conception in *The Origin*, positing that according to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. Here Engels went a step further by merging the first two aspects of social activity they exerted in *The German Ideology* into one. Now we have only two moments: “the production of the means of existence [. . .] and of the tools necessary for that production” on the one hand and “the production of human beings

10. According to Santilli (1973, 80), the third moment is social interaction, *Verkehr*.

themselves, the propagation of the species” on the other—production and reproduction.¹¹

The emphasis on reproduction by socialist feminists can be viewed as an elaboration of the simplifications inherent in Engels’s initial formulation. Engels here offers a theoretical and methodological guideline for the origins of women’s oppression by formulating the relationship between the spheres of production and reproduction. Vogel (1983, 1996) argues that Engels’s methodological perspective in the Preface opens up a fruitful line of research into the dialectical histories of class and sexual divisions, which does not reduce the latter to the former.

Unfortunately, Engels did not maintain the theoretical approach he promised in the Preface, and he did not analyze reproduction throughout his book. Socialist feminists, in general, criticize him for not giving sufficient weight to reproduction.¹² Still, many of them appreciate him for integrating reproduction into the analysis of society as a whole. That is, in Humphries’ (2009, 11) words, “a path-breaking attempt” to develop a feminist methodology in the sense that reproduction is identified along with production as constituting the material basis of society.

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Consequently, Marx and Engels included reproduction and family in their analysis as the fundamental premises of the historical materialist conception of the world. This approach suggests encompassing a broader dimension of social life which establishes the ontology of social reproduction theory. Social reproduction theorists have constructed a more comprehensive meaning of reproduction, including several labor processes and physical and emotional relations.

Social Relations/Intercourses in Production and Reproduction

Marx and Engels posited that there is no production of life without a form of social interaction. Marx (2010b, 333) writes in *Economic and Philosophic*

11. In a letter to Joseph Bloch (21 September 1890), Engels (Marx and Engels 2010e, 34) wrote that, according to the materialist view of history, the determining factor in history is, in the final analysis, the production and reproduction of actual life. Engels continued: More than that was never maintained either by Marx or myself. Now if someone distorts this by declaring the economic moment to be the only determining factor, he changes that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, ridiculous piece of jargon.

12. For an overview of the critiques, see Yaman (2022).

Manuscripts of 1844 that the *real, active* orientation of human-being to herself as a species-being, or her manifestation as a human being, is only possible if she brings out all her *species powers*—something which in turn is only possible through the cooperative action of all of the people. Several Marxist feminist scholars draw attention to the importance of social interaction and cooperation in Marx and Engels' thought. For instance, Sara Carpenter and Shahrzad Mojab (2017, 81) highlight that for Marx and Engels, the social reality is a human activity, and social life is made up of all the labors we perform in cooperation with one another. Therefore, they (2017, 49) write, it is the notion of human co-operative activity on which Marx's ontology, put forward in *The German Ideology*, is based.

Those conditions under which people labor and live consist of the several kinds of relations that people have with one another to produce their life—the material relation between people and between people and nature. Producing life involves, thus, before everything else, eating and drinking, housing, clothing, and various other needs (Marx and Engels 2010b, 31–32). Their dialectical relation with these needs brings about the first system of material bonds between people. And it is the starting point of all history, in which production and need reciprocally engender one another (Labica 1980, 283). Thus, for Marx and Engels, the production of use-values to fulfill needs and the social relations of the production of human beings together form the basis of their materialist conception of history (Himmelweit 1992, 203). In his “Notes on Adolph Wagner,” for example, Marx (2010d, 539) criticized Wagner for he considered that people in satisfying needs find themselves in theoretical relation to the things of the outside world. On the contrary, he wrote they begin by actively behaving, availing themselves of certain things of the outside world by action, and thus satisfying their needs.

Therefore, while people establish relations during production/reproduction, their material relations determine their production and reproduction processes and themselves.¹³ As Georges Labica (1980, 283) writes, the most elementary relationship imaginable between human beings and nature is, for that reason, already historical and social, something which even materialist Feuerbach was unable to grasp. Following Labica, we can say

13. On the one hand, human life would not exist without humans living and working in cooperative social relations to produce and reproduce their lives. Carpenter and Mojab (2017, 49). On the other, production and the material instruments of individual activity are determined by social interaction. See Santilli (1973, 81).

that the most elementary social relationship has been perhaps the relation between a child and her caregiver(s)—the mother(s).

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Marx and Engels (2010b, 32) pointed out that the production process only makes its appearance with the increase in population. They added that people realize this production process through intercourse with each other and under a specific division of labor. They used the German word “*Verkehr*,” which means intercourse in general. The term is peculiar (Cohen 2000, 142–43) to *The German Ideology* and a central notion (Therbon 1976) of this work. However, there are a few references even among Marxists to this early notion, much less Marxist feminist debates. Marx and Engels seemed to use the term in its broad meaning, including emotional and familial as well as commercial and productive intercourse, as the social reproduction approach suggests. However, there is no consensus on the content of *Verkehr* among Marxists. Some scholars, such as the editors of *Marx-Engels Collected Works* (Cohen et al. 2010b, 590) and Göran Therbon (1976, 256), refer to the broad meaning of this term and write that it encompasses the material, commercial, emotional, and moral intercourses of both individuals and social groups. Therbon also points out that it sometimes becomes social relations themselves. Labica (1980, 283) takes a step further and writes that this concept has a considerable scope since it is concerned simultaneously with relationships between people, social groups or classes, and nations. Similarly, Lawrence Krader (1973, 274) asserts that *Verkehr* means the relations between the public, the external constitution of society, and its institutions. On the other hand, the personal side of social relations pertains to the individual and the subjectivity of humanity. The objective and the subjective sides are brought together, he concludes. Yet, some, such as Emile Bottigelli (1967), argue that the very generality of the concept *Verkehr* involves its usage in a certain ambiguity. He (1967, 187) writes, “the basis of relationships between human beings may be affective, familial, commercial, etc. The form assumed by these relationships does not imply a determined economic and social structure.” Similarly, Therborn and Labica find using the notion improper. For Therborn (1976, 368), it is a pre-Marxist concept since the notion of the relations of production is not present in the idea of *Verkehr*, and it is less an anticipation of historical materialism than an echo of Hegel and Adam Smith. He writes that what Marx and Engels have in mind when they discuss the *Verkehrsform* is Hegel’s civil society. For that reason, he thinks *The German Ideology* cannot

be regarded as an overview of historical materialism. Similarly, Alex Callinicos (1989, 161) writes that the first version of historical materialism in *The German Ideology* bears some resemblance to the views of the eighteenth century Scottish historical school such as Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and John Millar. However, he finds *The German Ideology* is a work of fundamental importance because it identifies as the source of historical change in the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and prevailing social relations (albeit not yet specified as the relations of production), which have become fetters on this development. Yet, Therborn (1976, 368) asserts that, in the construction of historical materialism by the later Marx and Engels, “Verkehr” was replaced as a central idea by *relations of production* and is related to a technological anchorage, which anticipates the later concept of the *forces of production*. Similarly, Cohen and his colleagues (Cohen et al. 2010b, 590) think that *Verkehrsform* is a precursor of *relations of production*. Moreover, they consider that Marx and Engels introduced the concept of *relations of production* to distinguish the social relations people have in production, which are accepted as the primary relations underlying everything included under the term intercourse.¹⁴

Contrary to these criticisms, I find this use of the concept compatible with what Marx and Engels *put forward theoretically*. They seemed to mean the broad meaning of the concept, including social and familial relations alongside production and commercial relations. In this context, their inclusion of reproduction, family, and woman-man relations as the third moment of history is an essential step. They also pointed to unequal relations and male domination within the family several times, such as the “latent slavery” (Marx and Engels 2010b, 33) in several works. They (Marx and Engels 2010b, 46) wrote: “the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property, the nucleus, the first form of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband.” Further, the “Verkehr” should have referred to sexual intercourse and care as well, for “increase in population” entails biological reproduction, childcare, and nutrition. However, they did not work out these topics. Nevertheless, whether or not they alluded to emotional, social, and moral intercourse and care-work, the theoretical framework they established includes them all. At least it opens the door to a unified theory,

14. In an endnote, they (Cohen et al. 2010b, 590) write that Marx and Engels used the term in *The German Ideology* to express the concept of relations of production, which was taking shape at that time in their minds.

including production, reproduction, and the intercourses associated with these processes. The etymology of the term gives us some clues about it. “Verkehr” is a noun from the verb *Verkehren*. “Verkehren” means traffic, interaction through movement in somebody’s sphere, and exchange. Surprisingly, *kehren*, from which the term was derived, has a meaning of “to care about” (reflexive).

Consequently, *Verkehr* refers to several relations between people, including reproduction and family. He (Krader 1973, 274) writes that for the materialist interpretation of history one would have to know not only history, including economic history, but also the system of economics aside from its historical aspect, and other matters of society, social history, etc., as well.

However, the conception of a broader social life so often referred to in the early Marx and Engels was relatively neglected in their later work (see Bakker and Gill 2003, 17; Himmelweit 1992, 196). It is the social reproduction feminists that bring about it into theoretical debates. And their consideration of the broad meaning of relations (of production and reproduction) resembles Marx and Engels’ earlier notion of *Verkehr*.

Materialist Conception of History and Its Implications for Social Reproduction Theory

Up to now, I have focused on three notions as the contributions of Marx and Engels to social reproduction theory: their consideration of human-beings as the product of their own labor, their evaluation of production and reproduction of the human being as one of the three moments of history, and their thinking of human relations in a broader sense—*Verkehr*.

Now, I would like to go over these briefly and draw a few conclusions on their implications in the context of social reproduction.

First of all, Marx and Engels’ view of social life as essentially practical and human beings as the product of their labor gives us a materialist perspective to consider the work of reproduction in a broader sense. What Marx and Engels identify as “the first premise of all human history” is the conception of labor at the heart of social-reproduction feminism. Social reproduction theoreticians broaden the concept of labor, defined narrowly by Marxism within the framework of capitalist value creation, as the producer of society, life, and labor itself. As Bakker and Gill (2003, 19) argue, that work broadly mediates relations between social and natural orders and

combines the theoretical and practical activity of human beings in an understanding of movement and change. This is a process that takes account of past, present and future. Bhattacharya (2017a, 2) highlights that the fundamental insight of social reproduction theory is, simply put, that human labor is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a whole. Ferguson (2016, 39) explains this more subtly:

[. . .] in historicising the work it takes to reproduce human labour-power, and positing it as essential to capital's existence but not directly under capital's control, social-reproduction feminism broadens and complicates our understanding of labour, conceiving of it as a 'concrete unity', an ontological category that captures—and a lived experience that mediates and produces—a richly differentiated, historical, and contradictory totality. This multi-dimensional concept of labour (or human practical activity) invites a dialectical understanding of the social [. . .] It allows us, in other words, to develop a rigorous integrative theory of the social.

It means that “practical human activity” creates life, people, their relations, and their ideas. That is, on the one hand, women produce and reproduce people and thus create life by their labor. On the other, they produce and reproduce themselves as “women”—the *second sex*. This does not mean that the oppression of women has its roots in women themselves. This means that women find themselves in established relations such as the gender division of labor and familial ties caused by patriarchal inequalities and that these unequal relations load reproduction and care work on their shoulders. This primary “duty” prevents women from developing their human potential. It creates difficulties in their participation in education, science, philosophy, employment, and politics. It, therefore, retains women from reaching social resources, keeps them out of decision-making processes, and enables men to maintain their domination over women. The oppression of women, then, is not merely an ideological problem. On the contrary, it has a material basis and is based on—gendered—labor relations in which women find themselves and reproduce them. Furthermore, the ideology of gender inequality is a reflection of this reality. These labor conditions also provide them the means to fight against capitalism and male domination and, therefore, open the ways for their emancipation.

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“Life-making activities” has a significantly broad content and comprise “the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis,

and intergenerationally” as Laslett and Brenner (1989, 382) defined it earlier. Antonio Gramsci (1999, 177–8), differentiating these activities from “labor” for capital, labels them as “work.” According to him, work is the specific mode by which people actively participate in natural life to transform and socialize it more and more deeply and extensively:¹⁵

[It is] the discovery that the relations between the social and natural orders are mediated by work [and] by man’s theoretical and practical activity [. . .] [that] provides a basis for the subsequent development of a historical, dialectical conception of the world, which understands movement and change [. . .] and which conceives the contemporary world as a synthesis of the past, of all past generations, which projects itself into the future. (Gramsci 1999, 178)

In other words, through participating in practical human activity, we become part of a wider reality, and we begin to understand it more deeply, change it, and create it anew. Ferguson (2016, 49) argues that this paradigm equips us with the necessary concepts and language to make it evident. On the other hand, Himmelweit (1995) questions labeling women’s domestic “contributions” as “work” since “work” is a category borrowed from economics. She argues that, therefore, much of such caring or self-fulfilling activity is excluded and remains in the background, essential to but unrecognized by the economics of work and by a society that operates within it:

However, these tendencies made visible the work that women were doing in the home only to the extent that it conformed to a notion of work derived from a model of commodity-producing wage labor in manufacturing. One unintended effect therefore was to reinforce a tendency within the economy to render invisible those domestic activities and needs which do not take a work/consumption form. (Himmelweit 1995, 15)

Tattwamasi Paltasingh and Lakshmi Lingam (2014, 45) point out that the traditional sociological definition of work has restricted its meaning to activity for the acquisition of financial resources. But women’s work is mainly concentrated in the unpaid household sphere. Problems in the concept of work are not as simple as raising the question of whether work is paid or unpaid but are more fundamental to the question of what constitutes work (see Beneria and Sen 1981).

15. “Here lies the ontological significance of Marx’s and Engels’s insight,” see Ferguson (2016, 49).

How should we name women's domestic labor in order to place it in the context of social reproduction, make it visible, and give it the value it deserves?

If we follow Gramsci, women's domestic activities should be called "work". Gramsci seems to follow Engels' claim in a footnote to the fourth German edition of Marx's *Capital*:

The English language has the advantage of possessing different words for the two aspects of labour here considered. The labour which creates Use Value, and counts qualitatively, is Work, as distinguished from Labour; that which creates Value and counts quantitatively, is Labour as distinguished from Work. (Marx 2010a, 57)

So, according to Engels, "work" could be used for all activities, regardless of their social context, while "labor" was associated with productive activities beneficial for capital—the creation of value. However, there is no such conceptualization in Marx.

Let's look at Marx's concept of labor a bit closer. Marx writes in *1861–63 Manuscripts* (Marx 2010e, 55), "real labor is purposeful activity aimed at the creation of a use value, at the appropriation of natural material in a manner which corresponds to particular needs". He wrote in German, where there is one common word for work and labor—*Arbeit*.¹⁶ The term *Arbeit* was translated sometimes as "work" and sometimes as "labor".

In the *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx made a distinction between two forms of labor:

As useful activity directed to the appropriation of natural factors in one form or another, labour is a natural condition of human existence, a condition of material interchange between man and nature, quite independent of the form of society. On the other hand, the labour which posits exchange value is a specific social form of labour. (Marx 2010c, 278)

In *Capital*, he developed the categories of *abstract labor* and *concrete labor* and clarified that these two are characteristics of labor, not types of labor:

All labour is, speaking physiologically, an expenditure of human labour power, and in its character of identical abstract human labour, it creates and forms the

16. Although there is also the term *Werktaetigkeit*—the activity of creating works—that is a much more general concept, but tends to be hardly used in German (see Fuchs and Seignani 2013, 240).

value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is the expenditure of human labour power in a special form and with a definite aim, and in this, its character of concrete useful labour, it produces use values. (Marx 2010a, 56)

Hence, for Marx, abstract labor and concrete labor are dual characteristics of—the same—labor. As Diane Elson (1979, 144) points out, “these are not concepts of different *types* of labour”. It is not that some labor is concrete and some abstract; they are concepts of different aspects of labor: “the ‘two-fold nature’ or ‘dual character’ of labor embodied in commodities; and as such they are all one-sided abstractions” (Elson 1979, 144). Here Engels seems to attribute the abstract character of labor to “labor” and the concrete character of labor to “work”. Therefore, the distinction Engels made between labor and work does not belong to Marx and seems incompatible with Marx’s—labor—theory of value.¹⁷

Moreover, as Olivier Frayssé (2014) points out, the distinction between work and labor is not germane to English as a lexical distinction, “it is a split that few people can make sense of in the English-speaking world” (Frayssé 2014, 469 quoted from Kley 2008).

Besides, the etymology of these concepts can say something. Labor, in general, means practical, physical, and manual work. It refers specifically to hard physical effort. Its etymology goes to Middle English *labouren*, to Old French *laborer*, to Latin *laborare* (“to labor, strive, exert oneself, suffer, elaborate”), and to labor (“labor, toil, work”) (See Patridge 2006, 1965).¹⁸ Therefore, I suggest calling women’s care and reproduction activities labor. Surprisingly, the etymology of labor also includes “to give birth”.¹⁹ However, “work” means mostly the material used by someone at work or what she produces. Its etymology goes to “energy” and “erg” and to Greek “or-

17. Engels’ distinction also brings about the following problem. How do we name the labor of a worker who works as a waged worker under capitalist conditions but is not involved in the *immediate* value creation processes, such as a waitress in a restaurant? According to Engels, we cannot call it “labor” while we are naming that of her coworker, let’s say a cook, as “labor.”

18. The effective base of labor is Latin *lābi*, to glide, to slip, (hence) to fail. Closely akin to *lābi*, a (heavy) weight, under which one totters or staggers, hence fatigue, hence work which causes fatigue. Labor has derivative *laborāre*, to bend under a (heavy) weight, to be engaged in heavy, hence difficult work, hence to be in difficulty or in pain. (see Patridge 2006, 1965).

19. Sense of “physical exertions of childbirth” is attested from 1590s, short for labour of birthe (early 15c.); the sense also is found in Old French, and compare French *en travail* “in (childbirth) suffering” (Online Etymology Dictionary).

ganon”, something used in working (Patridge 2006, 3818). Therefore, contrary to Himmelweit, I argue that we can call women’s domestic “contributions” “work” as well. Calling them “work” also helps give unpaid labor equal weight with paid work. As a result, “labor” refers specifically to people who labor—the *subject*—whereas work refers specifically to what or how workers produce—the *object*—. Consequently, I suggest using both terms to take women as producing subjects and their activities as significant as paid work.²⁰

Nevertheless, whatever we call their domestic activities, they are mainly women who produce and reproduce people as humans, members of society, and productive forces. The COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic crisis we have been through have revealed the vital role of the “life-making activities” of women.

Thus, socialist feminists redefine the concept of labor to include all the activities and behaviors related to social reproduction. Consequently, as Ferguson (2016, 39–40) points out, this multi-dimensional concept of labor (or humans’ practical activity) invites a dialectical understanding of the social and allows us to develop an integrative theory of the social.

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Second, for Marx and Engels, the third moment of historical premises is the production and reproduction of people. Thus, commodity production (*production*) and women’s non-commodity domestic production (*reproduction*) would be expressed in a unified theory within the framework of the interaction of capitalism and male domination.

In this context, we should appreciate Engels’s contribution (in *The Origin*) to social reproduction theory. Naming both spheres “production”, he established the starting point for this approach. Production and reproduction indeed condition and determine each other; in other words, as Marx writes in the *Capital* (2010a, 564), every production process is a reproduction, and the conditions of production are also those of reproduction. Similarly, every act of production is necessarily at the same time an act of social and economic reproduction (Paltasingh and Lingam 2014, 48). However, some Marxist feminist scholars, such as Lise Vogel, do not accept it. According to Vogel (2013, 143–44), while any production is at the

20. This does not mean that “work” and “labor” have exactly the same meanings. For example, one cannot substitute “work” for “labor” when speaking of the Labor unions, nor can one say he or she is looking for “labor” when in quest of employment. (see Frayssé 2014, 469)

same time a reproduction, reproduction is not a form of production. However, as Stevi Jackson (1999, 19) explains, the distinction between production and reproduction is spurious and nonsensical—something cannot be reproduced without first being produced. He notes housework is not only reproducing but also producing. As he highlights, rejecting that housework is a kind of production contravenes Marx’s position.

Social reproduction theoreticians analyze the dialectical relationship between production and reproduction by focusing on reproduction processes. Beginning with the reproduction of labor power that Marx left underdeveloped, they extend the analysis to the reproduction of society and capitalism. As Himmelweit (1992, 210–11) highlights, workers’ role in the relations of production as suppliers of labor power depends on their physical reproduction as human beings. “Labor power cannot be obtained in any form but as a personal attribute of living people. The number and physical well-being of the working class are therefore crucial aspects of the reproduction of the capitalist economy and its class relations”.

They also focus on the domestic labor of women and show women’s vital role in social reproduction. Moreover, they elaborate on women’s domestic work burden and its function for capital, especially in crises or pandemics. They also investigate the effects of capital on social reproduction processes, focusing on the connection of the households, institutions of education and health, social policies, etc., to capital. They show how capitalism determines the reproduction processes of social reproduction, especially of working class “families,” and draws the limits of the survival conditions of poor households.²¹

Further, social reproduction theoreticians have extended the analysis to include social life outside the household. They incorporated other social relations, institutions, and conditions that, in one way or another, contribute to the social reproduction of labor power and life in the theory. Thus, they included care institutions, the education and health system, and retirement. Gill and Bakker (2006, 36–37) further expanded the framework of social reproduction by examining monetary and fiscal policies. Ferguson et al. (2016, 31) included global institutions of imperialism, border policies, and immigrants in this framework. As a result, the domestic labor debate has moved to the axis of class relations and has also been associated with inequalities based on ethnic origin.

21. Social reproduction theoreticians, in general, claim that capitalism determines the social reproduction of people entirely, and they subordinate social reproduction to capitalism. I criticized their arguments elsewhere. (see Yaman 2019; see also Oksala 2015)

Therefore, social reproduction theoreticians broaden the class struggle to include the struggle for the reproduction of life—not only for wages but also for health and education services, child and elderly care institutions, or food. For example, Bhattacharya (2017b: 86) argues that every social and political movement “tending” in the direction of gains for the working class as a whole, or challenging the power of capital as a whole, must be considered an aspect of class struggle. She concludes that reproduction is, therefore, a site of class conflict.

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While reproducing and laboring, people establish various relationships with each other and with nature. The material conditions of their life—the relations they find already exist and those produced by their activity—determine their production and reproduction processes. It shows that social reproduction is related to many factors, including social inequalities such as class, gender, and race, ecology, social policies, and economic crises.

First of all, capitalism determines people’s reproduction through wages, social policies, and economic crises. That is, social reproduction is a class-based phenomenon, and the tendencies of capital accumulation determine the survival conditions of working-class houses. Moreover, women do unpaid reproduction work under patriarchal inequalities. Besides, they are responsible for reproduction work just because of the sexual division of labor grounded on patriarchy. These coercive conditions and the workload determine women’s life –from participation in paid work to realize their human potential. Apart from these, reproduction work involves several activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, and responsibilities and relationships such as love, care, and social and familial ties. Most of these emotions and social links are significant for humans and society. However, they put an additional burden on the shoulder of women and are indeed the means to make women responsible for all care and reproduction work. For an individual to develop as a human being and a social being, she definitely must be brought up in social relations. There is no necessity for the caregivers to be women at all.

As a result, much more complex and multilayered relations are involved in reproduction than mere relation of production in the Marxist sense. It is similar to Marx and Engels’ very early concept of intercourse—*Verkehr*—which Santilli (1973, 80) sees as the third moment of historical premises.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that the materialist conception of history and methodology that Marx and Engels developed in their early works, especially in *The German Ideology*, establishes the ground for social reproduction theory. I have tried to show that Marx and Engels' three notions—i.e. their consideration of human-beings as the product of their own labor, their evaluation of production and reproduction of the human being as one of the three moments of history, and their thinking of human relations in a broader sense,—*Verkehr*— are significant contributions to social reproduction theory.

Moreover, I suggest that the social reproduction approach contributes to the Marxist conception of totality by expanding the concept of labor and production, putting the production and reproduction of life at its center, and including (re)production work that is overwhelmingly performed by women. The social reproduction perspective shows how the production of goods and services and the production of life are parts of a one integrated process. It also identifies the activities involved in the daily and generational reproduction of life and allows for an explanation of the structures, relationships, and dynamics that produce those activities (see Luxton 2006, 36–37).

Thus, social reproduction can reveal the driving dynamics of both capitalist social relations and patriarchal relations and the social forms and relations in which they are hidden and reproduced. It can therefore open up new possibilities for organizing the struggle against these systems of exploitation/oppression.

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From the Black Death to Covid-19: The Rise and Fall of Capitalism

Haldun Gülalp

ABSTRACT: Capitalism was nearing the end of its life-cycle through its own dynamics when it was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, which not only threw the system into a devastating crisis but also began to generate the seeds of a possible post-capitalist order. This is reminiscent of the spread of Black Death across Europe in the fourteenth century, leading to the dissolution of feudalism and the eventual rise of capitalism. In an analytical comparison between these two periods that takes into account similarities and differences, the article attempts to identify certain trends by linking current events to long-term class dynamics.

KEYWORDS: Capitalism, Black Death, Covid-19, Digital Revolution, Agroecology.

Introduction

The start of the Covid-19 pandemic also caused an epidemic of publications on the future of social and political relations. I turned down an invitation to write at that time, feeling that it was too soon to say anything and that any predictions about the future at the very beginning of the pandemic would be premature. But now as pandemic restrictions are being relaxed around the world, I believe we may begin to speculate on trends that seem to indicate the rise of a threatening situation for the established order.¹

1. This article was originally published in Turkish, in *Praksis*, 55, January 2021. The work on it was completed during the summer months of 2020, and so any mention of “current” events refers to that period. I am grateful to the editors of *Marxism and Sciences* for their interest in publishing an English-language version of this article. I translated the text into English myself and took the liberty to make some minor changes here and there. I also added a brief update at the end of the article. Finally, I thank Özgür Çatıkkaş, who helped me locate some sources while working on the original version.

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I would like to begin with an observation that I made in the preface to my recent book:

Let me briefly state here an opinion that I hope to treat comprehensively in a separate book: I think that capitalism has reached its limits. I think that today we really face the choice between ‘socialism and barbarism’ that Rosa Luxemburg forewarned us about nearly a century ago. The destruction callously wrought by capitalism before our eyes every day will either bring the end of humanity along with the natural environment or it will end with the passing of capitalism and the establishment of a new order in which freedom, equality and solidarity will reign. (Gülalp 2018, 11–12)

I have not yet written the promised book, but presented my preliminary thoughts on the subject at various conferences and in a short article (Gülalp 2015).² Admittedly, I thought that we still had 10–15 more years before the beginning of the end. I know that the transformation of the system or its total collapse and replacement by another would not take place overnight. I am also aware that we cannot say exactly through what kind of process and at what human cost such a revolution would occur. But I believe that a turning point has been reached and that a good way out of the current situation is no longer available for the system. Also, I did not think that a crisis shaking capitalism so deeply could come from a virus, probably because climate and environment problems were foremost on my mind. But we now know that the pandemic caused by this virus is closely linked to the destruction of the natural environment (Carrington 2020).

The fact that the crisis came through a virus presented an issue that I had ignored: The fall of feudalism and the rise of capitalism were triggered in part by a great plague, known as the “Black Death.” This raised the intriguing question of the possibility of a cycle of epidemics. In this article, I aim to connect this seeming cycle with my reflections about a different concept of cycle, by which I attempt to explain the “rise and fall” of capitalism. As I still hope to write the promised book, here I will only briefly summarize my thinking on capitalism’s life cycle and instead mostly focus on the question of these two epidemics, with special emphasis on the Covid experience.

I should point out, however, that the epidemic itself does not cause the collapse of a system and its replacement by another one. In the same way,

2. See, e.g., the following, available on youtube: “Modes of Accumulation and the Limits of Capitalism” (Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Conference on Thinking Beyond Capitalism, Belgrade, June 2015) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5L8EvEFXDFA>, 1:09 to 1:23).

for example, that the lethal effect of Covid depends on the presence of other health problems in the patient, any possible lethal effect of an epidemic on the system will be fed by its already existing unhealthy features. Also, the replacement of the collapsing system by a new one depends on whether the elements that would form the new order already exist as seeds within the old one and gain prominence during the crisis. If the seeds find the opportunity to develop in this context, the established order is further undermined.

The Stages and Limits of Capital Accumulation

Marxist theory has no clear prediction or indication as to when or how capitalism's final crisis would arrive. Possibly because of this, many Marxist analysts tend to expect capitalism to break down and the longed-for revolution to arrive at every economic downturn. I do not intend to examine the specific aspects of the theory that lead to such failed expectations each time, but I will suggest that dividing capitalism into distinct periods and identifying them as stages that it has traversed would offer an alternative perspective.

It is well known that capital accumulation proceeds through two types of cyclical movements: periods of economic expansion and contraction, which usually take place at 8 to 10-year intervals, and long fluctuations that appear at intervals of about 50 years. Short-term cycles are capable of self-recovery. Long waves, on the other hand, come to an end with deeper recessions, and the revival of the economy can only occur with the transition to a new mode of capital accumulation that involves changes in institutional structures. Thus, long waves correspond to distinct modes of accumulation and different historical stages of capitalism. My thesis is that a comprehensive perspective would reveal the existence of another cycle that seems to have been ignored: in addition to short-term and long-term cycles, there is also a single life cycle that extends from the beginning to the end of capitalism.

In a previous article, I attempted to build a conceptual framework through a synthesis of the then dominant major theories and offered the following prediction:

Historically, major transformations have coincided with periods of crises, because it is during a crisis that previous arrangements are questioned and new alternatives sought. Hence the notion of the likelihood of a new stage of capitalism emerging out of the current crisis (Gülalp 1989, 83).

The crisis in question was the short-term failure of the New York stock exchange in the fall of 1987, which in retrospect may be identified as an indication of the incomplete transition to neoliberalism. Indeed, in the following years, with the fall of the Soviet regime and end of the Cold War, a new process of capital accumulation started, which was subsequently dubbed “globalization.” No doubt, the foundations for this were laid in response to the crisis of the mid-1970s. The neoliberal policies of the early 1980s weakened the welfare state and the institutional and organizational structures that supported it, and opened up the protected domestic markets of national economies to global competition.

Although the term “globalization” seems to refer to a single mode of capital accumulation, I have suggested that it can actually be divided into two periods corresponding to two different modes (Gülalp 2015). The first period, roughly from the early 1990s to the 2008 crisis, corresponds primarily to post-Fordist (or “flexible”) accumulation. The second period, following the 2008 recession, is characterized by the domination of what David Harvey has called “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2003; 2005) or what might alternatively be called “renewed primitive accumulation.” If we consider 1980 as the beginning of the long wave that followed the crisis of the 1970s, we may observe that it has lasted nearly forty years, with an upward phase until 2008 and a downward phase thereafter.³

In the last chapter of *Capital, Vol. I*, Karl Marx explains the emergence of capitalism as a mode of production that is based on a prior, “primitive accumulation.” Once this initial accumulation occurs through forcible appropriation, capital can then continue to accumulate by organizing the production process itself, reinvesting the surplus value that it generates and extracts. If capital has to resort to “primitive accumulation” again, as it does today, then clearly it has come back full circle, meaning it has reached the end of its life cycle. It is true of course that “dispossession” is an ongoing feature of capitalism, as Rosa Luxemburg noted. But if capital has started to ruthlessly attack nature, because it appears helpless to continue accumulating in ways other than plunder, it simply means that the system

3. My division of the globalization era into two distinct phases differs from the prominent approaches in the literature that tend to treat either the entire history of capitalism or its last (neoliberal) stage as a single regime (see, e.g., see Streeck, 2014, and Kotz, 2018, respectively). I may also point out that the currently prevailing regime of “renewed primitive accumulation” is perhaps better described as “neo-mercantilist” than “neoliberal” (see, e.g., Madra, 2017). Considering that mercantilism was the economic policy followed by colonial powers before the industrial revolution, describing the present state of affairs as “neo-mercantilist” is yet another indication of capitalism’s decline.

is in the course of dying. The current pandemic is linked to this deepening crisis of capitalism.

At this point, we must briefly mention the development of digital technology, alongside plunder, as another recently growing pillar of capital accumulation. While this is an important new area of accumulation, it does not violate our framework of analysis for two distinct reasons. On the one hand, the production of this technology lives off a pre-capitalist mechanism of revenue-making, that is, it maintains capital accumulation through the generation of rent rather than surplus-value. On the other hand, the fruits of this technology contain elements of a post-capitalist future. We will examine this dual-sided structural character of digital technology under a separate heading below.

In order to complete the argument that capitalism's life cycle began with "primitive accumulation" and will end with "*renewed* primitive accumulation" (including the appropriation of technological rent), we need to identify the intermediate steps along this cycle. With some simplification and the merging of some historical periods, we may speak of the existence of three main stages following the period of primitive accumulation: First, having become self-sustained, capital accumulation proceeded through expanding the sphere of capitalist production relations into new areas, in a process described as "extensive accumulation" and based on the creation of "absolute surplus-value." Next, capital fully subordinated labor and could increase productivity through management and use of machinery. This was the stage of "intensive accumulation," based on the creation of "relative surplus-value" (see Aglietta 1979, on these two stages). The third stage, before the final step of *renewed* primitive accumulation, was "*renewed* extensive accumulation." This third stage, as we shall presently see, corresponds to the first phase of globalization. In other words, capitalism going through the "extensive accumulation" stage on its ascent went through it again on its descent.

Extensive accumulation during the ascent involved the dissolution of pre-capitalist relations that still remained within the *national* economies. It entailed the creation of the mass of "liberated" workers to be brought under capitalist domination. This was the process that Luxemburg noted as continual dispossession. The same process was repeated during the descent, but this time it brought into the capitalist circuit previously untapped potential markets and masses of laborers on a *global* scale. It also involved the privatization of public entities. That is, it brought into capitalist relations those institutions that were established under the welfare

states to produce goods and services outside of the market mechanism. We may thus make sense of “globalization” as capitalism’s attempt to make sure that no part of the globe was left unconquered. This finding leads to a conclusion that at first seems counterintuitive but becomes meaningful upon scrutiny: The era of globalization, in which capitalism has been the most aggressive, and therefore appears as the most dynamic, is actually the period in which it is playing its last trump card on the way to decline.

By the same reasoning, the “intensive accumulation” stage between these two periods of “extensive accumulation” may be considered capitalism’s age of maturity. The mode of accumulation known as *Fordism*, whose institutional structures were formed between the “great depression” of the late nineteenth century and the “great depression” of the early twentieth century, and which dominated the entire world in various versions after WWII, can be regarded as the pinnacle of the capitalist mode of production. Capitalists went along with the working class in supporting the welfare state in this period, because it helped to pacify class conflict and also contributed to the “realization” of surplus-value by expanding the internal market. This period, in which the working classes were the strongest politically and organizationally, has often been misconstrued as being closest to the revolutionary situation and is still recalled with nostalgia. However, workers’ struggles in this period were primarily aimed at improving wages and working conditions but did not quite have a vision that suggested a post-capitalist system. We shall return to some of the current political implications of this point later in the article.

The Fordist mode of accumulation, which initially allowed wages to increase together with productivity, ran into difficulties as the gap between them began to close in favor of wages, causing a decline in the rate of profit. Flexible accumulation and globalization that emerged in response to this problem were effective in surmounting the organizational power of the working class and destroying the welfare state. Nevertheless, the dilemma encountered by Fordism in national markets was repeated on a global level. In a structure where the global winner takes all, causing an extremely polarized distribution of income and wealth both between and within nations, the realization of surplus-value could only be sustained through a growing “debt economy,” which means that in effect it has become *unsustainable*. In this period of capitalist descent, financial fluctuations have become more frequent and more traumatic. Primitive accumulation at the beginning of capitalism had separated producers from the forces of pro-

duction so that they could only meet through the mediation of capital. Renewed primitive accumulation in this final phase of capitalism prevents consumers from accessing basic necessities, practically including air and water, other than through the mediation of the capital-dominated market. This unrestrained attack on natural resources has manifested itself most clearly in the ecological crisis. Up to the present, crisis tendencies were caused by various economic, social and political limits to capital accumulation; today, however, capitalism is pushing against the limits of nature. The expectation was for climate to deal the final blow; instead, the Covid-19 pandemic erupted.

The Cycle of Pandemics

If the rise and (possible) fall of capitalism can be analyzed within the framework of a symmetrical cycle, can we also speak of a similar cycle regarding the impact of pandemics? Although the idea of symmetry may seem tempting, we must note that the social and economic consequences of the plague in the Middle Ages, which continually returned over decades and even centuries, shaking feudalism to the core, were very different from and in some respects the opposite of the tendencies observed today. Despite this clear asymmetry, however, the impact of these two shocks on the respective systems contains certain parallels. For example, a striking aspect of the Black Death was that it generally lowered the inequality between classes, whereas the current pandemic is intensifying class inequality as well as polarization across other lines of division in society. But this contrast translates into a parallel in terms of consequence. As already suggested, the long-term impact of each epidemic originates from the internal structures of societies in question rather than from these immediately salient features. In other words, just as the “levelling” effect allowed the dissolution of feudalism and the subsequent development of capitalism, it seems that in a similar way (though moving in the opposite direction), the “polarizing” effect will further accelerate the already ongoing disintegration of capitalism. The destruction of the system and its replacement by another will depend on the seeds of transformation that it contains and the potential growth of these seeds during the crisis. We shall see below that there are important differences between these two periods in this regard as well, but similarities in terms of actually containing such seeds.

We may also note another important difference: Feudalism was not a “global” phenomenon in its current sense. It was perhaps a form of society

that was dominant all over the globe, but it was not a globally integrated system like capitalism. Thus, local conditions at the time led to different responses to the epidemic. The same thing may be true today as regards health and economic policies. But, although different countries may be adopting different policies depending on their internal structures, the form and degree of global integration within capitalism makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for individual countries to turn inward and follow separate paths. The crisis of capitalism, unlike the crisis of feudalism, can only be global. The expectation today is that global recession will reach an unprecedented depth (Kennedy 2020). If the currently deepening crisis in the United States (US) spreads worldwide, and the rising social turmoil there triggers some global social mobilization, Marx's nineteenth-century prediction that transcending capitalism will begin from the "core" nations of capitalism will be confirmed. Marx's expectation, deriving from his deep foresight and perhaps an impatience that accompanied it, was unrealistic for his own time. It was therefore replaced by the Third Worldist thesis, prevalent for most of the twentieth century, that revolution would start from the "periphery." The falsity of this thesis will once again become clear, along with the fact that the characteristics of the "actually existing" socialist regimes were not really very different from the dynamics of capitalism.

The Black Death and the Collapse of Feudalism

The "Black Death," reaching Europe from Asia in 1347, killed millions in its first few years. It is estimated that in just decades it wiped out between 30 to 50 percent of the continent's population. Its recurring grip on Europe continued until the end of the seventeenth century, and only in the eighteenth century did the population of Europe recover and begin to grow again. The labor shortage caused by depopulation on such a ghastly scale weakened the established structures of feudalism through several channels (Byrne 2006; Pamuk 2007; Scheidel 2017).

The scale of losses already in the first years of the epidemic caused a doubling of workers' wages in the cities, where the disease spread more rapidly due to a higher population density. The consequent draw from the countryside to the city, in addition to the loss of life in the rural areas from the disease itself, resulted in a significant reduction of the peasant population. This situation intensified the rivalry among feudal lords, who experienced difficulty in finding peasants to work for them. The abundance of

land relative to population depreciated feudal wealth and increased the peasants' bargaining power. In the short term, the villagers were able to improve their working conditions. In the longer term, however, they began to rent land by paying cash, thus moving outside of the traditional corvee relationship. The institutionalization of this new order over time, which in some cases involved life-long lease agreements, in effect meant the dissolution of feudalism. Peasants in England even had the opportunity to expand the amount of land that they could cultivate to the extent of their cash-paying abilities. This led to the creation of an entrepreneurial peasant (*yeoman*) category, with a status between landlords and agricultural workers. But we should hasten to add that such changes undermining feudalism in the long run took place mainly in Northwest Europe, particularly in England. It did not take place in the same way or to the same extent in Southern Europe, where different social and political conditions pertained. In Eastern Europe, quite the opposite happened. The favored solution to the crisis there was what is known as the "second serfdom," whereby the increased relative power of the peasantry was crushed by the force of the state.

Changes in the urban economy also contributed to the dissolution of pre-capitalist structures and eventually the emergence of capitalism. Labor shortages and consequent wage increases encouraged more capital-intensive production and technological innovation. They also brought about changes in the internal structure of guilds. For example, journeymen felt relatively more strengthened vis-à-vis their masters and encouraged to become independent. Likewise, the substitution of capital and technology for labor reduced the need for apprentices. The weakening of the relations of interdependence within the guild order brought about a geographical mobility for both the masters and the journeymen in search of profits. Also, consumption patterns changed in both cities and the countryside. Rising incomes directed consumers toward more expensive foods with higher protein and more luxurious or better-quality goods in clothing, household items, and so on.

The structural effects of these changes included the acceleration of cash circulation, the commercialization of the feudal economy, and the economic actors' acquisition of the habits of seeking market opportunities and accumulating money. They also weakened the authority of the Church, whose helplessness became evident in the face of the epidemic, and urged the acceleration of scientific progress and other cultural transformations, including the diversification of the pleasures of consumption in daily life.

In short, the weakening of feudalism, primarily in Northwest Europe but especially in England, eventually paved the way for capitalism through the emergence in this period of the seeds of a new order, which blossomed over time. Marx opens the first volume of *Capital* with a chapter on commodities, because, he explains, to understand their properties is the best way to understand the logic of capitalism. We may conclude therefore that the social relation leading to the rise of capitalism through the weakening of feudalism was the expansion of market-oriented production and trade of commodities.

But capitalism is different from simple commodity production. Capitalism only came into existence after what Marx called “primitive accumulation.” This process separated the direct producers from their means of production, and their conditions of self-subsistence, by handing the socially owned means of production over to private ownership in the form of capital. The producers were turned into wage-laborers and made dependent on capital for their livelihood. The socio-economic order established through this historical process was based on the emergence of land, labor and money (capital) as “fictitious” commodities, in the words of Karl Polanyi (1944). The distinguishing feature of capitalism is that these particular factors of production have been turned into commodities. They have become subject to commercial purchase and sale just like any other commodity that is specifically produced for the market.

It must also be emphasized that capitalism did not immediately spring out of the ruins of feudalism. Marx himself and many of his followers interpret the course of history as unilinear “progress” and describe the transition from one mode of production to another as a release from the “fetters” imposed by the previous order on the path of this inevitable journey. This point of view, most explicitly stated in the *Manifesto* that Marx co-authored with Frederick Engels, is repeated in the chapter on “primitive accumulation” in *Capital, Vol. I*. According to Marx (1974, 703), in order for money capital accumulated through trade and usury to be transformed into industrial capital, the obstacles imposed by feudalism had to be removed. But, in fact, there was a time gap of at least two centuries between the dissolution of feudalism and the development of capitalism, and about two more centuries between the emergence of capitalism and the industrial revolution. Therefore, feudalism’s disintegration cannot be explained in terms of the notion that a new mode of production (i.e., capitalism) grew within its womb (Dobb 1963, 19–20). There was also no reason to expect the inevitable arrival of capitalism after feudalism. Just as feudalism did

not dissolve everywhere at the same time and in the same way, capitalism did not spontaneously develop wherever feudalism was dissolved. Capitalism arose, following the disintegration of feudalism, only in England and owing to the particular conditions of that country at that time (Macfarlane 1988). Arguably, Marx's view that social change involves "progress" actually stems from a generalization across history of his observations on the capitalist mode of production (Panayotakis 2004). Moreover, he not only generalizes the dynamics specific to a certain period of capitalism (i.e., *intensive* accumulation) to the entirety of the system, but he also generalizes the mechanism that operates within capitalism as it moves from one stage to another as if it serves to understand the historical transition from one mode of production to another (Gülalp 1989, 90–92).

Dispossession by Force

Neoliberal economist Milton Friedman (1982) argues that capitalism promotes freedoms because it separates economic power from political power. Polanyi, who opposes economic liberalism (and neoliberalism), defines capitalism as a self-regulating market system. Marx and Engels maintain in *The German Ideology* that the rise of private property creates an institutional separation between civil society (the economy) and the state, which then becomes responsible for protecting the property and mutual interests of the bourgeoisie. Likewise, Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas and many other Marxist writers argue that, unlike pre-capitalist social structures in which exploitation takes place through coercion, the economic and political instances are relatively separated in capitalism, where exploitation occurs as a result of the independent operation of the market mechanism. The essence of Marx's theory of capitalist exploitation is that, even when commodified labor is traded at its real exchange-value under given market conditions, and despite the superficial equality, freedom and appearance of fairness that this situation creates, a certain amount of surplus-value is generated and extracted by capital.

The right to private property over the social means of production and the freedom of contract for wage-labor are the basic conditions for the initiation and reproduction of capitalist relations of production; but both institutional arrangements need to be enforced by a centralized structure of power. The state resides in the public sphere, where necessary conditions are furnished and maintained, and capital accumulation takes place in the private sphere of relations between persons (Wood 1981; Kay and Mott

1982). In principle, the state is neutral between persons; it does not protect the private property and freedom of contract of some over others, it protects these two founding arrangements for all. The allocation of persons to their respective class positions takes place privately, in civil society, through the autonomous operation of the market mechanism. Moreover, as in the welfare state, the state may even intervene to change income distribution in favor of the lower classes *in order to* protect the conditions for capital accumulation.

Naturally, this mode of operation, which is valid for an established capitalist structure, could not exist during the formative period of “primitive accumulation.” Whereas pre-capitalist property involved communal rights of usufruct, primitive accumulation advanced by releasing land from its social bonds and turning it into the private property of individuals. The establishment of this regime proceeded through centuries of struggle, legal turmoil and legislative process (Tigar and Levy 1977). The first and best-known case were the enclosures in England. Communal lands of villagers were enclosed by feudal landowners or yeoman farmers for the purpose of commercial agriculture or husbandry, and peasants were forcibly deprived of access to their main means of production. This process was not completed in a single move, it progressed in waves that spanned a long time. In the first wave, from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries, landowners carried out enclosures in various illegal ways. After the Civil War of the mid-seventeenth century, fencing became “legal” through, for example, the passage of a parliamentary decree that allowed a landowner to enclose the land and turn it into private property (Moore 1966). Repeating this parliamentary procedure eventually led to a general perception of land as being suitable to private ownership and destroyed the peasants’ self-sufficient economy. In England, capitalism first took root in agriculture. The consequent increase in productivity made it possible to feed the low-waged masses who had left the villages and migrated to the city, in turn contributing to the acceleration of capitalism in the urban economy (Brenner 1976). By the early nineteenth century, as enclosures were coming to an end in the countryside, industrial revolution was taking off in the city.

Because capitalism in England started in agriculture and was led by landlords, the position of the state vis-à-vis social classes differed from the continental European experience. The state in England supported capitalist relations from the very beginning, so the conflict that later took place in Europe between the monarchies and the bourgeoisies did not occur

there. In continental Europe, the state became centralized in order to consolidate the aristocracy against the strengthening peasantry, but it ultimately yielded to capitalism and the bourgeoisie, on which it relied financially in order to maintain its own power (Anderson 1974). On the continent, the complete dissolution of feudal legal norms and the establishment of private property in land took place much later than in England. In some places it was completed through much conflict as late as the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, after originating in England, capitalism not only took root in Europe but also spread through colonialism to the rest of the world (like a pandemic!).

The state's relative separation from economic actors may be a regular structural feature after the establishment of capitalism, but it could not have been the case during the original "primitive accumulation" and is no longer the case in the current period of "renewed primitive accumulation." The loss of this feature is an outcome of neoliberalism, belying its libertarian claims. The neoliberal order identifies freedoms with the "market," meaning that it envisages the commodification of everything, including not just manufactured goods that are produced for the market, but also natural resources, social welfare services including health and education, and many other such things that are not specifically produced for the market. Their commodification is carried out by forcibly taking them away from their rightful users and putting them on the market for sale. Goods and services that used to be taken for granted as a social right can then only be accessed through the market by paying a monetary price.

We have suggested that the accumulation crisis in the last quarter of the twentieth century was due to the internal exhaustion of Fordism. In order to reignite accumulation, manufacturing initially began to be globally organized through methods called post-Fordism, which distributed different stages of the production process to different geographical areas. Profits and accumulation could thus be maximized by taking advantage of the differences in such factors as workers' wages, tax rates, raw material procurement, the size of the market and the like. The weakening of workers' organizations due to global competition also contributed to profitability by lowering labor costs. But then the growing gap in income and wealth distribution on a global scale caused a decline in the global purchasing power. In order to overcome this problem, consumer loans were made abundant. This solution did not prove to be a long-term fix for the post-Fordist model of accumulation, because resorting to speculation instead of production

became an easier way to make profits, making non-industrial forms of accumulation the driving force of capitalism. Finally, capital then set upon accumulation by plunder and spread into areas that were not already captured. Looting began to take place through the privatization of everything, not only public roads, bridges, health, and education, but also other natural items of consumption including even air and water. People could then only access these basic needs by purchasing them as commodities (see Sassen 2014. The title of this book alone neatly sums up the nature of plunder and its impact on people).

The wave of renewed dispossession, tearing people away from even their natural means of consumption, appears as the ultimate point of commodification and thus possibly the final stage of capitalism. It is impossible to keep this accumulation regime alive without violent state intervention. During the first phase of globalization, the state had to submit to the whims of capital and maintain conditions of stability for accumulation to thrive. In the renewed primitive accumulation phase, however, the continuity of accumulation has become dependent on constant and direct state involvement. The state has thus gained the power, not exactly to rule over capital as a whole, but to intervene in the affairs of some segments or units of capital so as to favor one over the other. As was the case at the beginning of capitalism, the state has come to protect through targeted interventions the property of some individuals or firms, not only against the propertyless, but also against other property owners. It is no longer a committee that manages the common affairs of the “whole” bourgeoisie, as in Marx and Engels’ original description, but acts as the board of directors of some “cronies.” The merger of the state and (some units of) capital has even evolved to the point of the direct occupation of government posts by business people. An obvious example of this trend is the US President Donald Trump, who is currently running for presidency for a second term. As a real estate tycoon, he campaigned during the presidential race in 2016 with such promises as building roads and bridges. He then appointed Rex Tillerson, CEO and chairman of Exxon Mobil, as secretary of state, a position that is more important than vice president in the US political system. Although Tillerson was in the post for just a little over a year, he was replaced by Mike Pompeo, who also has a business background and had been appointed head of CIA by Trump before assuming the cabinet post, and who in turn had appointed his former business partner as assistant director while in office at the CIA.

Like the primitive accumulation period that created capitalism, accumulation today has become sustainable only by bare coercion. This final stage of capitalism relies on a mode of accumulation that fosters structures of personalized power. At this point, the state would tend to be not only authoritarian and intrusive, but also *autocratic*, because capital accumulation can only proceed by arbitrary confiscations and transfers of wealth. This deep crisis of capitalism seems to be the reason for the widespread emergence of such regimes around the world. If this is a valid assessment, then the objectives that ought to be pursued become clear: First, the exclusionary property regime ought to be abolished. The means of production and subsistence that should belong to the public ought to be emancipated from private ownership. Second, the means of administration ought to be democratized. The power structures that protect this property regime by force ought to be removed and replaced.

Before closing this topic and moving on to Covid-19, a brief point must be made about digital technology, which was mentioned above in passing and to which a separate section will be devoted below. The autocratic state, eager to regulate capital accumulation for the benefit of cronies, often has difficulty in dominating the field of information technology. Besides, even if the autocratic state seizes this field itself, or attempts to bring the capitalists of this field into the government as is its custom, it cannot establish full authority over the citizens' use of digital tools. In terms of these and other characteristics to be examined below, information technology constitutes one of the seeds of a post-capitalist order. Like the seeds that blossomed during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, this technology further developed and began to be used more widely during the Covid-19 pandemic, suggesting yet again that this pandemic may be a trigger for the transformation of the system.

Covid-19 and the Crisis of Capitalism

Perhaps the most depressing narrative depicting the "Black Death" era is the one about the bodies of dead relatives thrown from windows to be collected by carts passing through the streets (Byrne 2006). Although it is too early to speculate on the dimensions of the humanitarian catastrophe that Covid-19 might still cause, it is clear that today we are far from medieval conditions. Medical science has amassed a significant amount of knowledge on epidemics, and the race is on to find a cure for the disease. Although nations tend to follow different paths in the face of the crisis,

there is an international order that includes the World Health Organization and other similar institutions. Most importantly, Covid-19, the deadliest and fastest-spreading pandemic encountered in a century, has confronted states with a task for which they were not prepared at all, that is, the obligation to follow a “politics of life” instead of a “politics of death” (Gambetti 2020). Governments were caught between keeping the economy running and issuing stay-at-home orders for protection from the disease, each going back and forth between these two options according to their own disposition. In a sense, the pandemic has been a litmus test revealing the economic conditions and the political regime of each nation. In a world which has shrunk in size due to globalization, governments are being tested not only by the way they treat their citizens but also by their performance vis-à-vis other nations. The pandemic has more clearly unveiled the contradictions and predicaments of capitalism, because the dilemma between the economy and human health has *not* been experienced to the same extent in countries where health services were not privatized.⁴

The social and economic effects of Covid have at least so far been very different from, and occasionally the opposite of, the Black Death. There is no labor shortage; unemployment is growing exponentially. There is no improvement in the distribution of income and wealth, there is a widening gap. As effective demand in the market is shrinking, bankruptcies are spreading will continue to spread especially among small businesses, while big units keep adding to their wealth. At the same time, it has become clearer than ever that the continuation of life, even during the pandemic, is ensured by the lowest segment of the working class, that is, those working for minimum wages in the service sector.

The Great Depression of 1929 began with the crash of the New York stock exchange, which was an indicator of the health of the economy then and has been treated as such in later recessions. In the current economic crisis, however, while a large section of society became unemployed and impoverished, the stock market, as the playground of a handful of wealthy persons who further increased their wealth, incongruously boomed in the first and most intense months of the pandemic and continued its upward trend, albeit somewhat erratically. This was the case in Turkey, the US,

4. See <https://www.thetricontinental.org/studies-3-coronashock-and-socialism/>. The contrast in this regard between the US and Cuba as two neighboring countries is striking. Cuba is sending its doctors and health workers across the world for help with the pandemic, while the US remains at the forefront of the deadly spread of the disease.

and other countries. As the Covid crisis further polarized the already lopsided distribution of income and wealth, those who had the opportunity to make money could easily activate the stock market. On 5 June 2020 (www.hurriyet.com.tr), Turkish Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak claimed that the economy was on the right track and added: “For the first time in its history, Istanbul Stock Exchange achieved the longest-running rise for thirteen uninterrupted days. Those who trust Turkey’s economy and assets today, as in the past, are winning. We have full confidence that we will reach our great goals together with all our stakeholders.” The fact is that at this point the stock market can no longer show the degree of the economy’s health as it concerns the people in general; it only shows that a narrow segment of society has the opportunity to make even more money than before. According to a report that appeared in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, at the beginning of August (2020), “...the survival of the low-income earners became more difficult than before... [but] even in the first four months of the coronavirus epidemic, the number of millionaires peaked. Within four months, millionaires added 210 billion 874 million TL to their wealth.” (Kıraç 2020). During the same period, large sections of the people had quite the opposite experience (Ertürk 2020).

The further enrichment of a handful of rich people in this context took place via state-sponsored methods of plunder, this time on the grounds (or pretext) of reviving the economy that stagnated because of the lockdown measures. In the US, between March and June (2020), more than \$500 billion of wealth was transferred directly or indirectly to large corporations through the joint efforts of the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve, and Congress. No restrictions were placed on how these resources could be used, so that the already weak link between the companies’ earnings and their productive investments was completely severed (Brenner 2020). The structural problems that characterize this last stage of capitalism have thus been deepened by the pandemic. Besides, while this transfer of wealth may have kept the stock market artificially high, it is unlikely to stimulate the real economy (Patnaik 2020). An entrepreneur would not be inclined to make new investments despite low or even zero or negative interest rates if the market lacks vibrancy due to persistent unemployment and poverty. Likewise, the consumer, who is already in debt and struggling with unemployment, will not have the desire to borrow more. Therefore, it is not a good sign for stock markets to rise when real economies are in deep crisis; on the contrary, it is a clear indication that the contradictions of capitalism have become more profound.

There is another reason for the US stock market to rise, apart from the government's pumping of money into corporate bonds and bills. In the period between the end of March and the end of June (2020), the Nasdaq index, composed mainly of information technology (IT) firms, rose by 40 percent (Patnaik 2020).⁵ The earnings and stock market values of such companies as Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple continued to grow rapidly until the end of July (Tillier 2020). Such a "success story" is not surprising in this period when many companies switched to working from home and schools to remote learning. Zoom, for instance, became a common household item around the world. While only 10 million people used it in December 2019, this number increased to 100 million in March and to 200 million in April 2020 (Wyld 2020). It is safe to predict that this number will grow exponentially. The fact that the IT sector has developed to such an extent during the Covid pandemic and become a prominent field of capital accumulation beside the state-sponsored looting is an issue that deserves further examination. We noted above that digital technology has a dual structure: on the one hand it benefits from a pre-capitalist earning mechanism while on the other hand it embodies elements of a post-capitalist future. We may now expand on this point.

Digital Revolution and Post-Fordism

The advancement of computer technology and the internet since the late 1970s had a paradoxical effect on capitalism's response to the crisis of Fordism. The logic of post-Fordist accumulation that evolved in this period entailed the organization of production on a global scale by taking advantage of cheap raw materials that could be found here, cheap labor there, and so on. In other words, digital technology was not used primarily to increase labor productivity, but to accelerate transportation, communication and financial transfers, to boost consumption through credit cards, to organize flexible employment, and the like. The post-Fordist use of digital technology therefore comprised a contradiction: the technology was used to create global commodity chains and capital fluidity, which in turn made it possible to rely on more primitive methods of production that took advantage of low-paid and precarious labor. Had capitalism not been the dominant system, there would have been no such contradiction. Robotization or other means of increased productivity would likely have reduced

5. Remarkably, Patnaik cites this piece of information but does not consider its significance and Brenner makes no mention of it at all.

necessary labor time to everyone's benefit. Within capitalism, however, the abundance of cheap and insecure labor, which post-Fordism created, tended to weaken the propensity to sustain accumulation by advancing production technology.

We noted above that even though post-Fordist globalization granted some additional time to capitalism, it could not provide a permanent solution. The low-paid and insecure workforce could not sustain the market needed for profit realization unless they were pumped with loans, leading in turn to the explosion of the financial sector and the shifting of resources away from production into this area. At the same time, digital technology continues to progress in search of new uses. Although currently it is mostly present in "social media," where people's private lives are monitored and their social relations are turned into a source of revenue, the progress in artificial intelligence has reached a level that would enable automation in production. Still, while technologically achievable and potentially capable of completely emancipating labor, this option seems impossible to implement under capitalism and is only realistic in a social order that prioritizes sharing and solidarity.

We have suggested that, under neoliberal capitalism, previously unimaginable items have become commodified and marketed. Culture, lifestyles, even emotional expressions are offered for sale. For example, when we purchase a greeting card that contains a ready-made note, we pay more for the cost of designing the expression on the card than for the cost of actually producing it. This type of commodification, unlike the production of goods or services, is actually a means of collecting rent. What is offered for sale is the right to enjoy a naturally existing or artificially created position of "monopoly." Similarly, in any "designer" product (such as jeans), copies of which can be easily manufactured, the main source of profit is the monopolistic position created by the design (or simply the prestige of the brand name) rather than the actual product itself. This becomes manifest if we compare information and communication, the fastest growing sector today, with industrial production. A shoe factory manufactures and sells shoes, each pair of which is a separate commodity and contains a certain value based on the labor input, even if mass-produced. A software company, however, can sell as separate commodities millions of copies of a software that was designed by expending labor only once. In other words, it collects rent arising from a monopolistic position. Likewise, a telephone company operates an established infrastructure and charges fees for calls made by the customers. Each call is now treated as a separate commodity.

Or, the company can sell in advance a monthly package as a commodity and receive a revenue only for providing access to the right to make a call, whether or not such a call is made. The profit obtained from this arrangement is reminiscent of the folktale, in which the overseer of the bridge collects a fee from both those who cross the bridge and those who do not. What is commodified here is not a newly produced product, but the opportunity to access an already existing infrastructure. The profit does not derive from the sale of a good or service created by expending labor, but from a position of monopoly. The possibility of making a profit arises solely from the ownership of private property.

As for the design, there is of course creativity and effort involved (albeit only once for each new design). But, from education to research, the technology and design that ultimately generate profits for a private company are actually the outcome of a collective effort that proceeds through the accumulation of a public body of knowledge. Private companies in this field benefit from publicly funded infrastructure, as well as from innovations generally led and supported by the state. While the public bears the cost, the private company collects the profit (Mazzucato 2018). This way of obtaining private profits by making use of public facilities is hardly different from state-assisted plunder. The contradictions and predicaments of the system are once again revealed by the fact that private entities market such goods and services as commodities, whereas they could have been used free of charge by the public that actually undertook the cost. Information and communication, hailed as the most “dynamic” sector of capitalism today, reveal the conflict between private property and public benefit no less than the mode of accumulation based on the plunder of natural resources, and offer a strong argument for ending private ownership and making such services public.

To conclude, the method of making money in what is currently the most profitable sector is as pre-capitalist as plunder. It actually goes against the logic of capitalism, in which accumulation is achieved by generating and extracting surplus-value for each item produced. But while its method of making money resembles looting, the sector itself potentially conforms to the logic of a post-capitalist order. We may now turn to this topic

Post-Capitalism?

The transition from feudalism to capitalism was a gradual process that took centuries. But for some reason the transition from capitalism to a post-

capitalist (socialist?) order is imagined (by those who look forward to it) as an instantaneous event, in which as soon as one collapses the other emerges from the wreckage. In this imagination, a crisis will end the existing order and an uprising will establish the new one. However, in both Marx's own writings and the later Marxist literature, a number of different mechanisms and objective and subjective conditions that would bring capitalism to an end are mentioned, yet without any certainty that they will operate together and in harmony. Crisis tendencies arising from the inner workings of capital accumulation and the forms that class struggle might take are evaluated from various perspectives in this literature, often mixing wishes with predictions and concealing emotional reactions under scientific expressions.

It is not necessary to elaborate these problems in the literature, but we may dwell on another important point here. Marx's thesis on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, detailed in *Capital, Vol. III*, is perhaps his most intensely debated thesis among Marxist and non-Marxist theorists alike. The importance of this thesis is that it appears to have been proven with mathematical precision, unlike the propositions about mechanisms that depend on the political conjuncture and therefore contain unpredictable elements, such as the deepening of class contradictions and the rise of class struggle. According to this thesis, an internal contradiction of capital accumulation will inevitably bring about its end. Since the source of value is labor and the creation of surplus-value depends on the purchase of labor-power in order to produce new values that exceed its own exchange-value, capital accumulation at any given level of mechanization and technology will depend on purchasing *more* labor-power so that *more* surplus-value may be created and exploited. But this will lead to an increase in the wage rate and a decline in the profit rate. If the level of mechanization and technology is raised in order to overcome this problem, there will again be pressure on the profit rate. This time, with the growth of investment in fixed capital, the share of labor-power in the composition of capital (i.e., the share of the element that actually creates value and surplus-value) will have been reduced. There may perhaps be no limit to the expansion of fixed capital, but since the number of laborers in a given population and the working time of a laborer during the day are not infinite, there is a natural limit to the amount of labor that capital can subordinate and exploit.

This thesis raises a number of questions. When Marx speaks of the downward trend in the profit rate, does he perhaps mean a tendency that occurs during the cyclical fluctuations of the system that is overcome by

recovery, rather than a general and unavoidable trend that would bring about the end of capitalism? Is the estimation about the decrease of labor-power in the composition of capital based on a miscalculation, considering that the value of equipment and machinery measured in terms of the amount of labor necessary for its production would also decrease thanks to increased productivity? If the rate of exploitation measured in terms of value falls, should the profit rate measured in terms of prices also fall? After all, did not Marx himself describe this as a “tendency” and speak of a series of counteracting mechanisms? Although the debate over such questions has generated thousands of pages since the thesis was first expressed, there is no clear conclusion. We cannot go into the details of this debate here (for overviews, see Heinrich 2013; Bellofiore 2018). Nor do we need to, because at one point in the *Grundrisse*, compiled from Marx’s notebooks long after his death, Marx touches on a contradiction of capitalism that is much more existential, and he does so with a reasoning that takes us to the logical end of his thesis on the rate of profit. According to Marx, capital itself is the embodiment of contradiction: it recognizes labor time as the only measure and source of wealth, but it also tries to minimize it, undermining its own foundation (Marx 1973, 625).

This is a striking argument that requires some explanation. According to Marx, the use of machinery increases the productivity of labor, reducing the worker’s share of the total value created during the day and increasing the share that goes to capital. But while capital reduces the time required to manufacture a product with the use of machinery, it also unwittingly prepares the conditions for the emancipation of labor. Because, as large industry develops, the source of wealth comes to be based less on the amount of labor-time spent in the production process than on the efficiency of the machines set in motion. It comes to be based, in other words, on the level of development of scientific knowledge and technology and their application to the production process. Labor then assumes a position that oversees and regulates the production process, rather than taking part in it. In this case, the basis of production and of the wealth thus created is no longer the time spent by the laborer at the point of production, but it is the socially owned knowledge and technology (Marx 1973, 620–25).

Here, Marx is pointing out that capital is moving from an arrangement where it exploits the surplus-value of the laborers that it directly employs to one where it exploits *collective* social labor. Capital’s application of science and technology to production involves using for its own exclusive

benefit a productive force that is generated by all and should therefore belong to all. Where general social knowledge becomes a “direct force of production,” Marx (1973, 628) notes, “the product ceases to be the product of isolated direct labour,” but rather the product of a collectively generated “social activity.” As will be noted later in this paper, this point has certain political implications that fall outside of customary Marxist interpretations. At this point we may return to Marx’s surprising conclusion stated above. When the products are generated by a “social activity” rather than the time spent by actual workers, direct labor ceases to be the source of wealth, and so the duration of labor-time expended ceases to be the measure of wealth. The value of a product can no longer be measured by the labor-time criterion, in which case the mode of production based on exchange-value collapses (Marx 1973, 625).

In *PostCapitalism*, Paul Mason (2015) suggests that Marx’s ideas in the *Grundrisse* about the use of machinery actually apply more directly to the “information society” that we live in, which Marx could not have known but the character of which he accurately predicted with his deep foresight. According to Mason, information technology is very different from previous technologies. Information cannot fit into and is not compatible with capitalist institutions, such as private property, the market, and the wage relationship. The main component of cost in a digital product comes from design; and once created, the product can be copied indefinitely at near zero marginal cost. Hence, the most fundamental contradiction of today’s information society is the abundance of products that could be obtained almost for free versus the existence of monopolies that limit access to these products and the state institutions that monitor those limits (Mason 2015).

Some examples will help clarify these ideas. If a non-durable item such as a food product is consumed by someone, no other person can benefit from it. Likewise, although a durable good will not be immediately destroyed while it is in someone’s use, it may still not be easy or even possible to share it with another person. Information, however, is completely different. Sharing information with someone else does not reduce one’s portion of it. Information and a product based on it (to the extent that the marginal cost of production approaches zero) can be distributed indefinitely and for free. Apart from the initial design cost, the only reason that they may be sold as commodities fetching a price is that knowledge and knowledge-based products are under monopolistic protection by law. The value of the commodity in question cannot be measured by the labor time

it takes to produce it or its further copies. The design itself, however, considering the path that leads to the acquisition of the skill, is clearly the result of a collective effort, including education, knowledge sharing, and so on. Regardless, consumers pay a price that is disproportionate to the production cost of the designed item, and the persons who actually design it necessarily hand over the fruits of their skills to the company that employs them.

Colleagues who publish in the journals of major international publishing houses are familiar with the process. Without any expectation of a royalty, the author not only prepares the original article, but also makes extra effort to put the text into the format demanded by the journal, including the adjustment of paragraphs to specified dimensions and the footnotes to a specified style, and then surrenders the copyright to the publishing company. In return for all this work, the author only gets a free PDF copy of the article, which moreover is bound by a number of rules for sharing with friends and colleagues. In order to obtain a hard copy of the journal in which the article appears, the author has to pay the inordinate tag price, albeit kindly allowed a modest discount! The profit mechanism here does not correspond to the logic of the capitalist market and potentially creates a broad front of opposition against a very narrow interest group. But the technology is such that, in spite of the desire of firms and governments to establish monopolistic control over information, a pirate website, for instance, may find a way to (illegally?) distribute books and journals free of charge.

It must be emphasized that these observations regarding digital products are to a large extent also valid for tangible ones. For example, objects produced by three-dimensional or *four*-dimensional printers are not simply the product of the laborer who presses the printer's button, and hence the value of the product cannot be measured by the labor-time that it takes to press that button. Furthermore, the possibility of obtaining an unlimited number of products by just pressing the printer's button, or by similar automation methods, will cause mass unemployment under capitalism (İnan 2019). Therefore, as Marx pointed out from the very beginning, capitalism as it stands today is capable of making absolute abundance an achievable goal, but at the same time it structurally makes it impossible for large masses to reach that goal (Panayotakis 2004). This is an untenable situation and trying to maintain it will involve huge social costs.

The Seeds of Post-Capitalism

If our thesis about social “seeds” helps to explain the transition from feudalism to capitalism, could we say something similar about the exit from capitalism? We suggested above that the unique properties of information technology can indeed constitute such a seed. Even representatives of global capitalism, such as the founder of the *World Economic Forum*, express concern that advances in this field will destabilize capitalist societies unless measures are taken to decrease inequalities and develop a sense of collective solidarity (Schwab 2016). Paul Mason, with his thesis on post-capitalism, seems to suggest that capitalism will collapse of its own accord as this seed grows. But this is unrealistic; and the proposals for social and political change that Mason puts forward at the end of his book are incompatible with some of his other arguments. Yet, instead of engaging in a critique, we may draw attention to an important point in Mason’s analysis. The development of industrial capitalism expanded the working class and brought multitudes under the same roof, which endowed them with the class consciousness and organizational capability that deepened their conflict with capital. Now, the development of information society expands and nourishes a skilled and educated class of people, numbering in the millions, who are horizontally interconnected through communication networks. They are able to exchange information instantly and are positioned against hierarchical centers of power such as states and firms. These masses have played a leading role in the social movements of recent decades, from Seattle to Gezi (Mason 2015).

We may briefly consider the mutual dynamics between the basic components of information society, that is, governments, firms and the millions of consumers connected over the internet. The growth of the firms’ earnings depends on the growth of the networks and the number of people joining it. Governments and companies compete and sometimes struggle over the control of these networks. Even though governments become troubled when the masses use the networks as a tool to organize opposition, they are limited in the measures they can take because they too are dependent on the same networks for their own propaganda and also have limited technological means to place obstacles. At the same time, the networks make it easier than ever to monitor individuals both by the companies, for profits through advertising, and by the governments, for political surveillance. Regardless, insofar as digital tools become a force of production in the information age, they will also become a means of resistance for those who use them for work. Just as workers on the

production line can demonstrate their power in unity by slowing down or stopping production, the new type of laborers who carry out their duties over the internet can do the same without even bothering to leave their living rooms. Besides, when the production relation is established not under the roof of a factory, but over digital ties on the internet, neither the government nor the company can afford to cut those ties. For instance, when the production process is based on digital communication, state officials may be unable to slow down the internet to prevent protesters from communicating to meet on the main city square. Power will again revert to the hands of the people.

It is evident that this seed both deepens the capitalist crisis and carries intimations of post-capitalism. Also, it is growing in the context of the pandemic via the encouragement of remote work, which may eventually turn into a norm. Concrete instances of this seed contain elements of post-capitalist sharing and solidarity already before the end of capitalism. They also illustrate how they help weaken its underpinnings. Digital networks operate in a way that makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for governments and private companies to monopolize their ownership and management, or to hold them over the long term. For example, *Wikipedia*, which was temporarily shut down by the Turkish government only to be reopened under political pressure, is an important resource for sharing information. It has been produced through *voluntary* collaboration over a wide network and it has quickly destroyed the *commercial* market for encyclopedias. In this sense, it offers a palpable alternative to capitalist market relations (Wright 2015).

What we have said so far about the long-term impact and benefits of the development of information, automation, four-dimensional printers, and the like, leaves a fundamental question unaddressed: Should people not be fed before everything else? What about the food supply? What kind of trends do we observe there? Interestingly, the seed that is flourishing in this field moves us in the opposite direction, that is, away from technology, back toward nature and in favor of downscaling.

In the early 1970s, when capitalism was far from its current stage of unrestrained assault on nature and at the apex of its life cycle, but on the eve of the oil shock that would start its descent, two important books appeared that pioneered the “environmentalist” movement. This movement, which has now gained a wide following, was new and puzzling at that time. The title of one of these books (“small is beautiful”) was later adopted as a slogan (Schumacher 1973). The title of the other (“limits to

growth”) implied that economic growth could not continue endlessly (Meadows *et al.* 1972). This latter book aimed to show through simulated projections into the future that if growth policies were kept unchanged, the limits of nature would be reached in less than a century. At the time, “economic growth” was an indisputable goal in all of the First, Second and Third Worlds. Therefore, the predictions and recommendations of these books, too shocking to be ignored, encountered a backlash. Their environmentalist perspective was decried as “reactionary.” It was deemed contrary not only to the welfare and lifestyle of the economically advanced nations, as well as the aspirations of the underdeveloped ones, but also to the policies and objectives of the “actually existing socialist” regimes. Industrialization meant progress; who would want to go back to the village? The idea was perhaps a trap set for non-Western countries.

In fact, it would have been perfectly in line with the Marxist critique of capitalism to observe that, given the penchant of capital to accumulate endlessly, and so long as raw materials obtained from nature are used as industrial inputs and fossil fuels as source of energy, natural limits to economic growth would eventually be reached. But according to the dominant perspective at that time, the peasantry, described by Marx in his *18 Brumaire* as having the class consciousness of a “sack of potatoes,” would melt away with urbanization and industrialization and get replaced by the progressive, revolutionary working class. This would bring societies closer to the post-capitalist ideal. Also, large-scale was always better. Just as capital grew by concentration, the working class, unlike the dispersed peasantry, would acquire revolutionary consciousness more easily if congregated under the same big roof. People had to be encouraged to migrate from the countryside to the city, from agriculture to industry, because urbanization paved the way to modernization and progress.

The environmentalist movement at that time tended to perceive the matter in terms of wasteful lifestyles or mistaken priorities rather than as an outcome of the socio-economic system. Although Marx’s own writings contained ideas that would support the environmentalist thesis alongside those that would oppose it, Marxists became interested in the issue much later and began to include in their theoretical critique of capitalism the system’s tendency to destroy nature (Benton 2018). Pioneering studies on the subject emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s (O’Connor 1988; Foster 1992). It had become easier in those years to reconcile environmentalism with the Marxist critique of capitalism, for the Cold War had ended and the concrete instances of “socialist” industrialization that

might be found wanting had disappeared (on the question of ecological sensitivity in the Soviet Union, see Foster 2015). By the turn of the century, the issue of “global warming” was already on the minds of large segments of society. Particularly in the current stage of renewed primitive accumulation, environmentalists have begun to directly oppose the firms that ruthlessly pillage nature and the governments that protect them. Just as the critique of capitalism has now become mainstream among environmentalists, so has the ecological critique gained mainstream status within Marxism. According to this critique, alongside capitalism’s other internal contradictions, its tendency to harm the environment places a limit to its own lifespan. But one could not just sit and wait for capitalism to disappear under its own weight. As capitalism goes down by upsetting the balance of nature it also drags down many species of life, including the humankind. Unless one thought that there is no destruction of the environment and that global warming is a myth, one had to take action to stop them.

The problem here is not simply the growth of industry at the expense of agriculture. As we have seen, in order for industrialization to take off, agricultural production (i.e., per capita productivity) must first increase so that the potential masses of industrial laborers may be fed. It is of course true that agricultural land is destroyed by urbanization and other infrastructural development, fossil fuels are consumed and air is polluted by factories, natural waterways are poisoned by industrial waste, and so on; but environmental damage is also caused by capitalist agriculture. Nearly 80 percent of agricultural land in the world is controlled by firms that engage in large-scale monoculture farming, which tends to destroy natural biological diversity and dooms certain species to extinction (Altieri and Nicholls 2020, 884; Özkaya 2018). Chemical pesticides used by global monopolies to increase agricultural productivity have as much potential as industrial waste to poison the environment and the consumers. Although the degree of potential harm that may be caused by genetically modified products (GMO) is still subject to debate, there is no question that the use of patents by private companies to monopolize DNA information poses a threat to food security (Yağcı 2018). In short, global monopolies that currently dominate capitalist agriculture endanger food safety and security to the point of threatening people’s physical health for the sake of profits, and they compete with industry in the destruction of the natural environment.

The problems caused by the global monopolies' domination of agriculture became more manifest during the Covid-19 crisis, when supply chains were disrupted by the failure of transportation and trade, affecting both consumers dependent on imported food and farmers dependent on imported inputs (Keyder *et al.* 2020). The Covid crisis demonstrated the vital importance of promoting small-scale, local and organic production in agriculture, and more generally revealed the interconnection between the health of the natural environment and of human beings and societies. It became clear that there was an urgency of shift from industrial to ecological agriculture, because the move from the market- and profit-oriented large-scale monoculture to small-scale local production would support biological diversity and facilitate both the producer's independence and the consumer's access to food (Altieri and Nicholls 2020).

In Turkey and around the world, environmentally sensitive groups do not only oppose large-scale industry and construction, they also tend to favor cooperatives that engage in small-scale, local and organic agriculture over monopolistic capitalist entities that use chemical inputs. The pioneers and activists that advocate a return to nature are mostly educated young professionals and students, who live in urban centers (*ibid.*, 887).⁶ In recent years, the growing consumer interest in organic and ecological products has been met by methods that allow small producers and consumers to meet directly over the internet, without the intervening trade chains. This trend, which had already started in the pre-pandemic period, further grew when people were quarantined in their homes. Online food orders from such cooperatives increased relative to those from the large chains. Also, while confined at home, people began to be concerned about, and experimented with, producing their own food, from baking bread to growing tomatoes in pots. As the Covid crisis and/or this pattern of working from home is likely to continue for some time, we may also expect this trend to continue as an expression, at a personal level, of the importance of localizing food production.

To conclude, we observe that both of the mentioned seeds had a chance to develop during the Covid pandemic. Both represent a model of individual autonomy combined with social solidarity that rejects capitalism and points to a post-capitalist vision, and both are carried by the same

6. On Turkey, see KONDA (2018), p.27: "the tendency to prefer the environment over the economy decreases with age and religiosity, and increases with education; environmental awareness increases as we go from rural to metropolitan areas, and those who actively use social media are more sensitive to the environment than those who do not."

social segment. Although the position of this social segment is not different from the traditional working-class in terms of property and production relations, it has a very different set of goals and expectations.

Culture and Politics

In the modern era, nation and class had been the two prominent and competing social identities, with nationalism and socialism as their corresponding political currents. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalism absorbed socialism, making national identity dominant, albeit without totally submerging class identity. Nationalism thus acquired a meaning beyond the assertion of identity and began to imply participation in popular sovereignty. The rise of the protectionist welfare state was key in turning national identity into a social bond with secured citizenship rights and effective in winning the working class over to nationalism. The welfare state was created partly through working-class struggles and partly through the acquiescence of capital. Three variants of this model appeared in the twentieth century: “democratic welfare state” in the West, “central planning” in the East, and the “populist developmental state” in the Third World. These variants had different degrees of state ownership and planning, but in all of them the state aimed to regulate the economy with an eye to working class and other popular interests and generally in order to protect citizens from unemployment and absolute poverty. This arrangement enabled the masses to identify with their nation-states that gave them certain social rights and entitlements. Beginning with the 1980s, however, the neoliberal transformation led to a weakening of this attachment to a state-centered national identity. Globalization further weakened the national consensus and created an environment conducive to the emergence of alternative communities and networks of solidarity that formed around competing identity claims. By the end of the twentieth century, political conflicts previously framed by nation and class were replaced by conflicts based on cultural identity, transcending nations and cutting across classes. There arose the “new social movements” and “postmodern communities,” coalesced around ostensibly pre-modern cultural identities such as religion and ethnicity (Gülalp 2013).

The post-Fordist model of accumulation that dominated the first phase of globalization weakened the traditional working classes by dismantling their organizations, while it strengthened the economic and political

position of the middle classes, such as professionals and small-scale entrepreneurs. The latter benefited from neoliberal globalization and relied on identity-based networks of solidarity. As the nation-state relinquished its commitment to the welfare of its citizens, these alternative solidarity networks gained prominence as political instruments for acquiring power. The struggles of competing identity groups for recognition gained priority over the struggle for the protection of citizenship-based right to social welfare. In the first phase of globalization, these struggles for recognition were carried out under the liberal banners of “human rights” and “multiculturalism.” The protection of human rights ensured political and market stability, freedom of enterprise, security of contracts, and domestic and international peace. By such criteria, post-Fordist globalization favored the rule of law, because it facilitated the circulation of capital with ease and security.

In what I characterize as the second phase of globalization, in which predatory neo-mercantilism is dominant, we see the global emergence of a political regime that is often defined in the literature as “populism” and erroneously described as unprecedented despite the abundance of previous historical examples. One of the most convenient and prevalent theses of neo-mercantilist nationalism is the hostility to immigrants. This response to the ongoing refugee crisis is a clear indication that the extant globalization model has reached a dead end. Not only is this response readily capable of uniting the right and the left, but it can also win over the traditional layers of the working class. I have argued in previous work that while identity politics may be (or seem to be) liberal, progressive and democratic in opposition, when it is in power or even vying for power, it tends to turn conservative, authoritarian and even totalitarian (Gülalp 2006). It is easy to see that in this last stage of capitalism, identities are no longer governed for the objective of seeking justice, but as elements of exclusionary and polarizing politics. We noted above that neo-mercantilism entails an authoritarian structure of state intervention. The dynamics of crisis in this stage of capitalism and the political currents originating from it are inevitably confrontational and destructive. Accumulation by dispossession cannot promote human rights, freedoms, peace and multiculturalism; it can only be violently exclusionary. Identity politics, which initially consisted of liberal ideas adorned with theses of pluralism and multiculturalism, can easily turn totalitarian when its essentialist core is mobilized to build an oppressive authoritarian regime. At the present, such regimes veer toward creating personalized *autocracies*

through the destruction of established state institutions. Such destruction deepens the crisis, but at the same time creates new windows of opportunity. When the autocracies are overthrown, the ground will have been cleared for building new institutions from the bottom up.

Autocracies around the world have taken advantage of the Covid crisis to advance their projects, fueling the polarization and conflict that exists within (and sometimes outside) their societies. But such efforts have unavoidable limits. Consider, for instance, the recourse to “*post-truth*,” a method frequently used by these regimes, which implies covering up the truth by appealing to emotions. The term itself legitimizes lying, for it embellishes and presents it as if it were a great philosophical innovation. Yet, even if this method could be used successfully in some areas, it becomes impossible after a point, for example, to conceal the number of Covid cases and deaths. In a situation where the government’s priorities cause the disease to spread more widely, deception through post-truth methods becomes difficult. Covid may have strengthened authoritarian tendencies in the short run, but it is likely to create a legitimacy question that renders current practices of power unsustainable in the long run.

Another interesting issue is the new cultural divisions caused by Covid. For example, the failure to use face masks, as the most basic protective measure against the spread of the disease, is largely due to indifference in some countries, including Turkey. But in some others, such as the US, where an individualistic culture prevails, it is cloaked by a superficial philosophy of opposition to authority and protection of personal freedom. In fact, the face mask aims to protect others with whom one interacts rather than the one wearing it. In other words, this most basic measure against the pandemic has a feature that prioritizes solidarity. Many Americans also initially opposed the use of the seat belt, which only protects the wearer, but then became accustomed to it. It may be safe to assume that, if properly explained, they would accept the use of masks as a “social obligation” instead of opposing it in the name of individual freedom. Certain personal practices necessitated by the pandemic may therefore lead to the development of a new culture of solidarity, fostered by the feeling of being included in the currently touted category of “responsible citizen.” Posts on US social media, mocking those who wear their masks incorrectly as the *below-the-nose community* ignorant of the link between the nose and the lungs, indicate the creation of novel identity groups that cut across all others. If this results in a real social division (considering the protest movements and political demonstrations against

mask mandates), even the natural selection mechanism of biological evolution is likely to favor the cultural identity group that supports solidarity.

Spreading problems out over time or resorting to violence to suppress opposition could perhaps conceal the economic and political unsustainability of global capitalism or prevent mass protests. But the sudden blow dealt to the foundations of the system by the outbreak of the Covid pandemic is real. Governments fell into a dilemma between keeping people alive and upholding the established order. The health measures that drive the economies to a dead end versus the threat of mass deaths caused by the disease reveal the contradictions of capitalism. It has become crystal clear that with the current structure of wealth distribution and the priorities of governments in protecting this system, neither public health nor the production and distribution of necessary goods and services could be ensured. Once it is understood that the problems originate from the imbalances in the system and that there are in fact sufficient resources to meet everyone's needs, people could make demands and the governments would be unable to meet them. Of course, the Covid pandemic cannot in itself change the system, but it has been an effective catalyst to expose its weaknesses. For the pandemic to strike the final blow, the system must have already decayed. Indeed, as in the US, any event that ignites a reaction has the potential to start a fire.

In the US, the most affected by the pandemic, both in terms of contracting and dying from the disease and in terms of becoming unemployed, unprotected and overall neglected in the economic recession that it caused, were those of African and Latin American descent. The killing of George Floyd, an innocent black man, by a white police officer on 25 May 2020 was not an unprecedented event. This time, though, the incident, observed by many in broad daylight, led to a destructive nationwide wave of uprisings unlike any before, continuing for weeks and months on end. The part played by the pandemic cannot be ignored (Eichengreen 2020; Yong 2020). One can speak of a layered causation. This general revolt was triggered most concretely by the murder of George Floyd, but also conditioned by the class and race dimensions of both the threat of illness and the unemployment that the pandemic caused. In other words, the mobilization is galvanized by anti-capitalist motives, irrespective of the conscious perceptions of the participants, and is thus a continuation of the "Occupy" riots of previous years. Even if this uprising is violently suppressed or it temporarily loses momentum, and then somehow the

pandemic ends, the tendency to revolt again will not easily subside in the foreseeable future because the economic crisis will likely continue. It will not be surprising if this trend leads to a revolutionary situation in the long term.

The Leading Class of Social and Political Change

President Donald Trump won the 2016 election with a campaign that emphasized US nationalism and earned the votes of the old generation, “blue-collar,” white working class. By contrast, socialist senator Bernie Sanders, who lost the Democratic nomination to Hillary Clinton, campaigned on an exactly opposite platform, addressing the themes of justice, equality and solidarity with a global vision, and mostly won the support of minorities and the young and educated (potential or actual) middle class professionals. Clinton campaigned on a more neoliberal platform that implied the perpetuation of the established order and unexpectedly lost to Trump, who was advocating a return to the past. It seemed that due to the absence in the final contest of a candidate who advocated going forward, the dissatisfaction with the present led to a preference for going back. The percentage distribution of votes by social segments reveals the sources of this preference. Trump was ahead of Clinton by 21 percentage points in white votes and behind by 80 points in black votes. He was 12 points ahead of Clinton among male voters, 8 points ahead among voters over the age of 65, and 39 points ahead among white voters without a university degree. Youth support was 18 points higher for Clinton than for Trump, but this was less than the gaps of 24 and 34 points that Obama had scored against his rivals in previous elections (Tyson and Maniam 2016; see also Cohn 2016), and possibly less than the gap that Sanders would have scored had he been the nominee. A similar distribution of votes by social segments also emerged in the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK and in the 2017 presidential election in France. Particularly targeted by the propaganda of the right-wing populist UK Independence Party, those who voted for Brexit were mostly industrial workers, whether currently employed or unemployed, and had low levels of income and education. In France, the far-right Marine Le Pen also appealed to, and received the support of, the same category of people (Becker *et al.* 2017).

Our assessments in this article sheds some light on these preferences and political positions of the working classes in the core nations of the

capitalist world.⁷ We suggested above that the organized working class developed in strength together with the development of capitalism and that they both reached their peak at the height of the welfare state. But this was the beginning of the decline for both of them, rather than a revolutionary moment as has been commonly assumed. Today, that working class is cast into a political position that looks to the past with nostalgia. The working classes of the core nations, longing for the twentieth century, took refuge in nationalism. Hoping that their nation-state would once again provide shelter, they failed to claim the leading role attributed to them for overthrowing capitalism.⁸

By contrast, Bernie Sanders, who brought the concept of “socialism,” abhorred during the Cold War, into mainstream politics in the US, received his greatest support from the youth of the nation. In the primaries for the presidential race, Sanders, born in 1941, got more than 2 million votes from those under the age of 30, despite his old age. The combined total of votes received by Clinton and Trump from the same age group lagged behind this number (Mead 2017). Several studies in this period reported that the US youth were opposed to capitalism (see, e.g., Ehrenfreund 2016). In the 2018 midterm elections, the socialist youth were successful in getting some of their representatives into the state assemblies and the federal congress (Goldberg 2018). The most prominent among them, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (known as AOC), was an activist member of the Democratic Socialists of America. Born in 1989, AOC graduated with honors in economics and international relations from Boston University and made a living as a waitress before she became a member of the House of Representatives. She has been busy giving a hard time to establishment politicians since the day she won the seat in Congress.

Historically speaking, there is no question about the contribution of the working-class movement to the development of democracy and the welfare state (Marshall 1964; Therborn 1977). In a sense, the traditional working class fulfilled its mission with the establishment of the welfare state (in its different versions), but was then weakened and organizationally scattered

7. Some Marxist analysts seem to have difficulty in interpreting this apparently unexpected picture. See Davis (2017a; 2017b). For an argument that class politics cannot be based on a narrow conception of class relations that is limited to the production process alone, see Radice (2015).

8. Regarding the expectations of the white working class and the cultural sources of its sympathy for Trump, see Williams (2016). An explanation of this social segment’s support for Trump in terms of the tendency to attribute economic problems to globalization and to the minorities is offered by Abramowitz (2018).

by the multiple dynamics of globalization, and subsequently displaced by a new class. This new class, defined in the literature as the “precariat,” consists of unorganized masses, isolated as individuals competing with each other, but actually sharing the same conditions of unstable and precarious employment. Derived from a combination of the terms “precarious” and “proletariat,” it refers to the typical worker of the “flexible employment” model that became normative since the era of post-Fordism. Remarkably, this class is also a novel social and political actor. According to Guy Standing (2011; 2014), who contributed significantly to the recognition of this term in the literature, the precariat, expanding under neoliberalism at the expense of both the traditional proletariat and the professional middle class, consists of roughly three layers: (1) Those who belong to a social group already discriminated against, such as immigrants or ethnic minorities, and can only find temporary employment. (2) Those who come from a working-class family but are unable to repeat the experience of the previous generation, such as a stable job and the possibility of retirement, and are therefore anxious and frustrated. (3) Finally, and most importantly, those who have acquired certain professional skills through education, regardless of family background, but cannot achieve a suitable career. There is much in common between the employment conditions and work experiences of these three layers; but the relationship of each group to their own experience, and hence the way they perceive and react to it, tends to be different. Standing argues that the first two groups are likely to slide into right-wing politics; but the third group, which constitutes the “progressive” core of the precariat, has the capacity to lead the whole class. Thanks to their aptitude to access and share information, they are also able to comprehend the existing conditions and envision alternatives. AOC, named above, exactly fits this description.

At the present, there seems to be no politician in Turkey like AOC, who comes from the “progressive” core of the precariat, or a socialist leader like Sanders, who is more senior but able to draw people from that same social group. Nevertheless, the Gezi Park revolt that erupted spontaneously in 2013 displayed brilliant instances of both a united front, across various cultural identities, and the practice of sharing and solidarity between different social groups (Kaldıraç 2013). The question of the class base of Gezi protests has been debated extensively (for an overview, see Yörük and Yüksel 2014). The lack of clarity on this issue arguably originated from the structurally ambivalent position of the progressive core of the precariat. There were no organized industrial workers in the Gezi protests, but

besides the various strata of service workers found in ordinary urban life, more visible on the frontlines were large masses of students and the often readily dispensable white-collar employees. These were young people with the credentials of a middle-class professional, but cognizant of the difficulty or even impossibility of reaching or maintaining such a position. In other words, the Gezi uprising was a spontaneous, anti-capitalist protest led by young people who actually or potentially belonged to the middle class, but were not guaranteed to find and keep a job commensurate with their educations and skills. They were proletarianized due to the structural characteristics of present-day capitalism, and fully aware of it. Moreover, they were above the divisiveness of identity politics, sensitive about capitalism's damage to the environment, and opposed to the authoritarian state intent on maintaining the established order (for similar conclusions via different routes, cf. Ercan and Oğuz 2015; Saraçoğlu 2015).

The insecurity of finding and keeping a job that generates a stable and comfortable income is a common experience for the majority of young people who have reached employment age and older laborers who have lost their jobs. This comes on top of having lost the welfare rights that used to be provided by the state. In this last stage of capitalism, a university degree, which was the key to a middle-class lifestyle for the previous generation, no longer guarantees a job that is compatible with it. It only expands the "white-collar" proletariat, whose occupations may appear compatible with their skills but are actually low-waged, often based on informal contracts, and involve noncreative and routinized tasks. It is clear that the Covid crisis, without a predictable end, has deepened and will continue to deepen this problem.⁹

The wave of riots that first erupted in Seattle in 1999, then spread to the rest of the world, and now continues in the US and elsewhere, is a class-based, anti-capitalist protest that tends to transcend the identity politics of the 1990s. Instead of futilely waiting for organized workers to overthrow capitalism by seizing the centers of power in a disciplined manner, as in the classical imagery of revolution, and then losing hope because it does not happen or complaining with elitist contempt that the working class has false consciousness, we may go a different route. We may instead recognize that a novel segment of society, with a different

9. The newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (3 September 2020) reports that, according to a study carried out by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, youth unemployment has become permanent in Istanbul. At the time of the study, 277,000 university graduates were actively seeking a job.

culture and experience than the traditional working class, has a forward-looking socio-political vision and also the ability to build organizational channels by sharing ideas and information through the skillful use of communication networks. We may choose to accept the possibility that they can very well play a leadership role toward a new social order.¹⁰

A study published in early 2020 covers the experiences of parts of the Turkish youth as members of the “precarariat” (Telek *et al.* 2020). It describes their feelings as “anger, discrimination, anxiety, alienation, lack of control, lack of a future, and inadequacy” (ibid. 37), but then adds a positive note: “Young people have negative feelings about the course of the country. But despite these feelings and their distrust of politicians and the political establishment, they believe that their generation can solve Turkey’s problems and look to the future with hope” (ibid. 46). Their American counterparts seem to take their plans a bit further: They do not see the need to save for retirement, because they think that capitalism will have ended by then (Spencer 2018).

Conclusion

The transition from feudalism to capitalism took centuries. The kind of social order that would replace feudalism after its collapse was not necessarily predictable. We can say in retrospect, however, that the production and circulation of commodities, which developed during the dissolution of feudalism, formed the core of capitalism that later became dominant. Now it is clear that capitalism itself is in deep crisis. Even advocates see it as signaling at least the end of neoliberalism. Then again, there are also many who believe that capitalism will survive this crunch and continue to advance in a new direction. I tried to argue in this article that this crisis will most likely bring about the end of capitalism, but I did so with a different thesis than those who enthusiastically greet every crisis as final.

Even if we were somehow certain that this is indeed the beginning of the end, we cannot say in advance exactly when and how capitalism will be destroyed and what will take its place. We can only conjecture based on

10. These considerations imply the need to revise the classical theory of “revolution.” I presented my preliminary thoughts on this subject in “Bringing Class Back In: The Historical Role of the Working Class According to Dialectical Materialism” (*European Sociological Association, Social Theory Meeting, Barcelona, August, 2016*).

what we know about the rise of capitalism. We also know from historical experience that a sudden change of power only reshuffles it and does not create a radical change in the system. We may therefore surmise, for example, that many structural features and institutions of capitalism will not disappear instantly, but the seeds of the succeeding order will grow and replace them, so that the new system will progress gradually over time. We may also say that if we have correctly identified the crisis tendencies of the current system, the dominant characteristics of the new one will likely include the following: A stronger motivation for solidarity as opposed to individual competition; a retreat from commodification and an increase of public service and sharing that is independent of the ability to pay; a shrinkage in the scale of farming, with more attention paid to the natural environment; a deepening of democracy and of the state's obligations toward the citizens. We cannot know for sure that these things will happen; but if what we have said so far is correct, perhaps we can part with another conventional assumption and suggest that revolutions do not occur during or after wars, but during or after epidemics. This is because wars can bring about a rise in nationalist sentiments and cause a defensive reflex frequently used by authoritarian governments. Epidemics, however, help to weaken the governments that cannot cope with it and fail to protect their citizens. Every crisis also opens up a window of opportunity. The one that we are currently in can only be overcome by building a credible socio-political imagination that goes beyond capitalism.

Postscript (November 2020)

Although a detailed assessment cannot be offered at this point, the results of the US Congress and Presidential elections of 3 November 2020 seem to confirm our analyses. I believe we may safely speculate that if Bernie Sanders (or someone else representing his political position) were the Democratic candidate, s/he would have won by a larger margin than Joe Biden.¹¹ Biden and the Democratic Party thought that black and immigrant (Latin) support was guaranteed, but actually Donald Trump got more votes than expected from these groups. The reason for this is what I have emphasized throughout the article: During the pandemic, the current

11. Although Biden won by a comfortable margin in terms of the total number of votes in the presidential race, he only narrowly won in some states and Trump actually increased his votes compared to 2016. Democrats do not exactly have a majority in the Senate, but pro-Trump justices have a majority in the Supreme Court. These are just some of the factors indicating that President Biden is not likely to have an easy time in office.

structure of capitalism has trapped people in the grip of the “health vs. the economy” dilemma. Trump promised to keep the economy running by dismissing the seriousness of Covid-19. Biden, on the other hand, only criticized Trump in general terms and refrained from saying anything clear on the matter; but at the same time, he in a sense intimidated small business owners and people in temporary occupations by avoiding crowded environments on his campaign, for which behavior he was subjected to Trump’s ridicule (see, e.g., Medina and Russonello 2020; Collins 2020). Under current conditions of capitalism, there is no way out of this dilemma. If any promise is to be made, it has to contain a vision of transcending the system. Bernie Sanders did not propose a revolution, but he did offer an alternative perspective to the establishment. It appears that the young and educated (white and non-white) people that actively worked on Sanders’ campaign did not lend the same kind of support to Joe Biden, who only represented the established order and had nothing to say beyond the need to rebuild the institutional structure battered by Trump.¹² This experience offers a lesson to the political opposition in Turkey. The devastation of recent years is immense, to the point of being unbearable; but a return to the established order can no longer be proposed as an attractive option, it merely expresses desperation. To expect that the crisis will of itself reverse the course of votes may result in a disappointment for the opposition in Turkey, just as it did for the Democrats in the US. The only way forward to a solution is to offer a comprehensive and credible alternative for the future. In the short term, I fear, instability, conflict, uncertainty and turmoil will continue to reign.

An Update (April 2022)

It has only been a little more than a year since I put down the last line above, anticipating turmoil in the near future; but it feels like years have passed since then. History seems to have accelerated after the long lull of lockdowns in the early phase of the pandemic, unleashing the forces of catastrophe on all fronts. The question we have to ponder as the world is falling apart is whether the selfish drive for profits and the carnage that it causes will end before life on earth as we know it comes to an end. Several

12. I gather this information about university students from colleagues in the US. As to Vice President Kamala Harris, who seems to be greeted in some circles with excitement because she is both female and non-white, the fact is that her political position is not very different from Biden (see, Herndon 2019).

issues strike me as worthy of mention in this final update for the English-language version of this article. No doubt, each of these topics deserves an extended treatment that go beyond my remit and expertise; so, I will only briefly attempt to relate them to the framework of analysis proposed in this article.

The year 2021 opened with an unimaginable attack on the US Capitol. Although US history, like the history of all modern nations, contains numerous instances of political violence, including a civil war and series of targeted assassinations, a semblance of “democratic procedure” has always been jealously protected. The thankfully botched attempt, on January 6, by an outgoing president to overthrow the democratic mechanism and overturn the election result revealed the lengths to which autocratic forces are prepared to go. More than a year has passed, and the investigation is moving very slowly, intentionally or unintentionally protecting the higher-ups within the establishment that were among the instigators, organizers, and contributors. It is clear, however, that a conspiracy of this sort could not possibly be the spontaneous outburst of a crazy mob. All available evidence indicates that it was planned and targeted.

In response to a shock like this, one wonders whether the Republicans have lost some face and legitimacy? The answer is unfortunately no: they may even be stronger now than before. Joe Biden seems to have scored the lowest approval rating of any president in memory in their first year in office. There is a concerted effort not only to stop the administration’s legislation efforts promoted by the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, but Republicans are making progress on another pernicious front: in several states they are trying to systematically disenfranchise non-white citizens. This is typical of all fascist movements in their approach to the “rule by the people.” They are indeed eager to win the support of the people, but only of those whom they count as deserving “true citizenship,” to the exclusion of those whom they count as “internal enemies,” defined in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, or even political views.

The inflationary situation in the world economy is another indication of the ongoing crisis. Pumping money to float a sinking system that cannot generate productive investments causes nothing but inflation. Any anti-inflationary measures would in turn risk the creation of a serious recession. In recent decades, pumping liquidity seems to have been the only means of fighting a recession in capitalist economies. This was perhaps temporarily successful in the 2008 recession, but now the same recipe is unlikely to succeed, leading the system into yet another *cul-de-sac*!

Another issue is the state of the pandemic. I noted in the original essay above that a cure for Covid-19 might soon be found. Indeed, effective vaccines were created in record time. But the disease has not yet let up. At this point in time (April 2022), restrictions are not just being relaxed, but have almost been completely lifted in the West and the North, as if the pandemic has ended, which of course is far from the truth. Economic concerns have been paramount in this decision, as has been the case previously, but that is not all. There is another and far more serious problem. Despite the technological breakthrough that created the vaccines, global capitalism has shown its ugly face in the inequality of access to the vaccines both within and between nations (Amnesty International 2022).

The current situation, which may well prolong the pandemic, is best described in the words of Jeremy Menchik (2022), a professor of international relations at Boston University, who volunteered in Moderna's vaccine trials:

Instead of going all out to end the pandemic as quickly as possible, Moderna is helping prolong it by not making its mRNA technology available to the U.S. government or other manufacturers so global production can be scaled up quickly—and thereby maximizing its profits. [...] Without decisive action to make mRNA technology more widely available, the world will increasingly face the rise of Omicron and likely other even more dangerous and ominous new variants in the months and years ahead. This status quo is in no one's best interest, except of course the companies that will profit when new variants arise, threatening repeated waves of death and infection. (Menchik 2022)

It is therefore clear that even if capitalism was only indirectly responsible for the eruption of the pandemic, it is directly responsible for its prolongation. Another relevant point has to do with the generally detrimental impact of industrial farming, as discussed above. Experts note that large-scale, intensive livestock and poultry farming increases the possibility of the transmission of diseases like Covid-19 from animals to humans, and also that “supporting more sustainable farming would lower greenhouse gas emissions and could decrease the risk of emerging infectious disease” (Smith 2021).

Finally, and perhaps most damningly, a clash of imperialisms is currently taking place in Eastern Europe. This clash is best understood in the context of neo-mercantilism, which has led to a revival of the territorial colonialisms of a seemingly bygone era. The Cold War had disciplined the global system under the divided hegemony of two superpowers. US leadership of the so-called “free world,” established at the end of the Second

World War, was essential for the stable operation of international capitalism. The collapse of the Soviet system opened a new era of globalization, but it did not quite lead to the unambiguously unipolar world that some theorists at the time had wishfully anticipated. Thus, NATO was not dissolved but charged with a new task, although its original reason for existence had disappeared. After some wavering in the midst of hopes of a “peace dividend,” Islamic fundamentalism was declared the new enemy, an enemy that was in fact originally nurtured by the leader of the “free world,” but had then been turned into a convenient tool for the establishment of a new hegemonic global order.

But hegemony requires an ideological legitimation that has at least some measure of credibility. Being opposed to Islamic fundamentalism was a weak foundation on which to build such hegemony. Islamist politics could not be clearly distinguished from Islam as religion or tradition. How exactly were the growing Muslim populations in Western nations to be treated? The thesis could not be pursued consistently in foreign relations either. Why was Iraq invaded after 9/11? How was Saddam Hussein an Islamic fundamentalist? How could Saudi Arabia be treated as a model of “moderate” Islam? The failure of this attempt at ideological legitimation actually led to the opposite outcome. Islamists took the offensive, based on the charge of “Islamophobia.” Indeed, more generally, in the context of the rise of identity politics and multiculturalism, fundamentalists of all stripes gained the upper hand in these decades. The autocracies of recent years are all built on identity politics. This is true for Putin’s Russia, as it was for Trump’s America, thriving on the decline of cosmopolitanism, even though the latter was bent on turning inward while the former is expansionist.

The stability during the Cold War did not mean that no regional wars took place, but only that they were relatively easily contained. In the age of neo-mercantilism, however, it seems as though anyone with the power and audacity to grab some land from a neighbor or from afar can get away with it. While Russia was uneasy with NATO expansion, it did not previously refrain from occasional collaboration with it, particularly in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. As a former imperial power, Russia had the ambition to assert itself regionally but was certainly unable to recover the balancing act of the Soviet Union. The US, on the other hand, was unable to maintain stability through hegemony, which further declined during the Trump presidency. We noted above that Joe Biden primarily aimed

to restore what had been lost. Now, with NATO reenergized against Russia, the US may seem to have *temporarily* strengthened its ties with the EU and reestablished its leadership in the West. Russia is rich in raw materials and Ukraine in foodstuffs. NATO's threats to expand further eastward, for no apparent reason or looming threat, may have appeared like encroachment and put fear in Putin's heart. If war is one method of neo-mercantilism, another is the economic sanctions currently implemented, which help to indirectly lay claim to Russian capital and economic resources. With the nuclear threat terrifyingly real this time, nothing good is likely to come out of this conflict. Just more turmoil, more instability, as no new hegemonic order is in sight. We have never been closer to the choice between Rosa Luxemburg's two stark alternatives: it is either socialism or barbarism!

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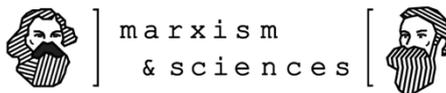
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Domenico Losurdo's Historical Interpretation of Class Struggles

Omer Moussaly

ABSTRACT: This paper explores a misunderstood aspect of the Marxist scientific paradigm. It proposes to develop the idea first elucidated by Domenico Losurdo that the class struggle approach to history, as theorized by Marx and Engels, is in fact a general and scientific theory of social conflict. This general theory was consciously developed by Marx and Engels in opposition to certain irrational and subjectivist paradigms that attempted to explain the political behaviour of subaltern groups living under capitalist conditions. By returning to Losurdo's explanations of Marxism but also by revisiting classical Marxist works on this topic, this paper reinforces the class struggle centric understanding of Marxism against other possible readings of this worldview. The emphasis on class struggles in no way diminishes the discoveries made by Marx in his critique of Political Economy that also deserve to be actively pursued. This research paper also demonstrates that a scientific understanding of human history requires an insistence on the centrality of class struggle and that the critiques of Marx's elaboration of his general theory of social conflict are often partial and undialectical. This paper responds to some of these critiques through an exegesis of several key Marxist writings, from Marx to Fanon, that demonstrate the non-dogmatic approach that historical materialists adopted when examining history and social conflict. This return to classical Marxist works also demonstrates that despite certain differences in tone and style the major revolutionary theoreticians shared a common strategic and intellectual framework regarding the class struggle.

KEYWORDS: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, Losurdo, Marxist philosophy, class struggles.

For a Scientific Study of Class Struggles

There seems to be little consensus in the social sciences about the most appropriate methodology to study human history. Several approaches are competing for hegemony and there is an acceptance that no single theory can provide global answers about social dynamics. Marxism has been

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criticized for its attempt to provide a general theoretical framework to understand the history of class-divided societies. This has led to a partial abandonment of historical materialism by new generations of researchers in favour of other paradigms. Few researchers comprehensively discuss the political and theoretical issues raised by the gradual disappearance of sociological analyses using the concept of social class as developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. But what exactly is this Marxist definition of social class in the broadest sense? This is the main topic we shall explore in this article. In the era of late capitalism and global imperialism, historians should attempt to re-evaluate the legacy of more than a century and a half of Marxist theorizing on this question. One political thinker that will serve as a connecting thread in this article and who attempted to summarize Marx's conceptualizations of this topic is Domenico Losurdo. His fundamental statement on this issue is developed especially in his book *Class Struggle*. The subtitle *A Political and Philosophical History* reveals Losurdo's ambitions. Unfortunately, this Marxist philosopher passed away in 2018. Losurdo initiated what can be termed a new philosophical reading of Marxist political views that combined theoretical analyses of political economy with a historical study of the development of capitalism. He attempted to bridge the gap between abstract-conceptual applications of Marxist notions and concrete historical analyses of specific social formations. In his efforts, Losurdo drew on the tradition of historical materialism, from Marx to Gramsci, and beyond. His exegesis of the class analyses of these authors enriches his own research. This article explores the merits and some limits of Losurdo's approach and how it might contribute to refining current historical research programs. The theory of *class struggles*, the plural being emphasized by Losurdo, is the key to his reappraisal of the Marxist paradigm, which he presents as a central theoretical current. Losurdo proposed a systematic re-examination of the *Communist Manifesto* by comparing this work and other writings of Marx and Engels to those of non-Marxist intellectuals. This article deals with two essential points that orient contemporary efforts to revitalize the utilization of the Marxist paradigm 1) The genesis of the use of the concept of social class or classes in the social sciences and 2) Some attempts to update, redefine, or refute the concept. The article is divided into four key sections mainly to facilitate the understanding of the whole.

Originality of This Scientific Approach

The first step in defining the Marxist concept of social class is to reexamine some fundamental texts of this tradition. Losurdo offers a close reading of some writings of Marx. He notes that, from an early stage in his intellectual career, Marx elaborated the concept of social class by going beyond any economic vision of social formations. In his early writings, Marx noted the simplification of the class structure in the nineteenth century. For example, in *the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx underlined the gradual economic transformation of landowners into a type of bourgeois who exploits land workers capitalistically: “The final consequence is thus the abolishment of the distinction between capitalist and landowner, so that there remain altogether only two classes of the population the working class and the class of capitalists” (Marx 1988, 63). This transformation pointed to the fact that classes can be integrated into fractions of another class. In the same way, intermediary classes can transform themselves to form segments of the proletarian class. It is important to note that Marx did not claim to have discovered social classes. For example, French historians had preceded him: “And now as to myself [Marx], no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society [...] What I did that was new was to prove: (1) *that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production*” (Marx and Engels 1969, 679). Another idea developed by Marx is that the class struggle can only intensify once the dominant class consolidates: “So long as the organization of bourgeois class rule is incomplete, and has not taken on its purest political expression, the opposition of other classes cannot emerge in a pure form” (Marx 2002, 56). These notions of purity and form as relates to class formation and struggle, are important as they involve the idea that a variety of ideological and political superstructures can contribute to hiding or exposing the fundamental antagonisms existing between social classes. The class struggle is a dialectical and political process with progressive developments as well as defeats and setbacks. As Henri Lefebvre explained: “At once objective and subjective, the class conflict is perpetual, though sometimes only latent or hidden and sometimes overt and explosive” (Lefebvre 1969, 102). The historical reality of class struggles as noted by Marx takes, according to Losurdo, complex forms, which Marx detailed when he deemed it necessary to explain specific outcomes. To substantiate this claim, one needs to look no further than the first pages of *Wage-Labour and Capital*. As Marx states: “The June struggle in Paris, the fall of

Vienna [...] the starving of Ireland into submission—these were the chief factors which characterized the class struggle between bourgeoisie and working class” (Marx 1978, 15–16). For example, the social question in Ireland took on the form of a national struggle for liberation. As Losurdo explains: “The ‘social question’ is the more general category here—the genus—which in the concrete situation of the unhappy island [...] takes the form of the ‘national question’” (Losurdo 2016, 14). According to Losurdo, it is the domestic, national, and international division of labour that determines the forms the class struggle will take. Losurdo affirms that the three main social protagonists of the struggle against capitalist domination have historically been the proletariat, colonized populations, and women: “Each of these three struggles challenges the prevailing division of labour internationally, nationally, and within the family” (Losurdo 2016, 44). By “prevailing division” he means the patriarchal and racially based hegemonic capitalism humanity has experienced over the last few centuries. He goes on to state that these struggles challenge, each in their own way, an aspect of the relations of compulsion capitalism imposes on subaltern groups: “The three struggles for emancipation challenge the three fundamental ‘relations of compulsion’ constitutive of the capitalist system as a whole” (Losurdo 2016, 44). His historical assessment of capitalism and his identification of the fundamental protagonists are convincing and well documented. Losurdo affirmed that Marx, as well as Engels, elaborated, without systematizing it in a single treatise, what he termed a general theory of social conflict. One element that appears underdeveloped in Losurdo’s genealogy of the concept of social class is what G.A. Cohen calls the primacy of the productive forces. According to him, Marx emphasized that certain forces of production allow specific types of social relations to come into being. This is the key to understanding the economic structure of a given society and the forms of class power. As he explains:

But why does the successful class succeed? *Marx finds the answer in the character of the productive forces* [...] The class which rules through a period [...] is the class best suited, most able and disposed to preside over the development of the productive forces. (Cohen 2000, 149)

This view of history does not remove agency from social classes. Cohen illustrates this by stating that Marx obviously believed that the bourgeoisie played an active role in the English Revolution. Yet it played this role in large part because it was the class best suited to manage the produc-

tive forces that were developing at that time in England (Cohen 2000, 160). It must be mentioned that the limitations of what classes can accomplish are largely determined by the level of development of the productive forces and the corresponding social relations of production. For his part, Werner Bonefeld explains that the concept of class is a contradictory one: "The category class has thus a double meaning: it entails the notion of class unity as the manifestation of the class antagonism between the classes, and it entails class disunity as a competitive relationship between the sellers of labour power" (Bonefeld, 2014, 107). This idea, of class as a contradictory category, was not always affirmed unequivocally by Losurdo and thus weakens certain of his positions.

This can be explained by Losurdo's desire to promote the idea that social classes exist and play the main role in shaping human history. He highlights this role without always delving into the economic foundations of class formation. The main thing for Losurdo is that the theoretical model developed by Marx and Engels avoided the pitfalls of naturalism, psychologism, or ethno-racialism. Many of the competing theories to explain social conflicts developed in the nineteenth century were based on one of these perspectives. As Georg Lukács remarked, they were sometimes a combination of all of them, for example in the social philosophy of Nietzsche (Lukács 1981, 61–62). For his part, Losurdo notes that Nietzsche's political valuations observe similar situations of servitude as does Marx's but with an opposite appreciation: "The implacable critic of revolution as such [Nietzsche], including the feminist revolution, compared the condition of woman to that of 'sufferers of the lower classes', 'slave labourers [*Arbeitsklaven*] or prisoners'" (Losurdo 2016, 18). Nietzsche took a contrary attitude to the Marxist tradition which saw in the resistances to exploitation the potentiality for greater freedom. They were mainly viewed by Nietzsche as unhealthy manifestations of a slave morality. Contrary to such elitist interpretations of history, the Marxist theory of social conflict, focused on the productive forces of capitalist social formations, offered rational tools to analyze class-divisions. It analyzes social formations without falling into idealist mystifications. For example, Marxism does not develop one-size-fits-all descriptions of the history of humanity, divided between superior elites, on the one hand, and servile masses, on the other.

The Marxist theory of social conflict, according to Losurdo, has implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, opposed other paradigms that attempted to explain social movements articulated by groups that Antonio Gramsci

called subaltern. Gramsci insisted that the understanding of history can only be achieved through a study of resistances to class power:

Hence it is necessary to study: 1. the objective formation of the subaltern social groups [...] 2. their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations, their attempts to influence the programmes of these formations in order to press claims of their own. (Gramsci 1992, 53)

He also stated that the integral study of history must analyze the formation of these groups in the overall division of labour. This is a key aspect of any research program that claims to be inspired by the principles of historical materialism. According to Losurdo the main paradigmatic opponents of Marxism were: 1) What can be described as an ethnological-racial paradigm, sometimes taking the form of a clash of civilizations paradigm 2) A psychopathological paradigm that can be found notably in the writings of Tocqueville, Taine, Le Bon, and Nietzsche (Losurdo 2016, 28–29). Sometimes the two paradigms intertwine in peculiar ways. For example, Tocqueville viewed racial mixing in a negative light and attributed French socialism and the propensity to revolt, typical of his countrymen, to a form of congenital-national-mental disease. The identification of group pathologies replaced the concrete analysis of social relations of production. This was the case in Gustave Le Bon's psychological analyses of crowds. Little thought was given to the objective economic contradictions of society and the social reactions they provoked. Many reactionary thinkers expressed in more abstract terms the shock caused in the upper classes by the Paris Commune, among other significant events involving class struggles. These philosophies of history nourished irrational currents of thought on social conflict.

The movements of economically exploited classes and subaltern groups in class-divided societies would not be, according to these paradigms, the result of the different forms of class struggles, based on objective economic antagonisms. They are rather explained by various forms of irrationality inherent to the working masses, to women, to colonized peoples, or to other subaltern groups. Rather than viewing human nature as being essentially determined by the ever-changing ensemble of objective social relations of production and by class relations connected to the economic structure, these theories postulated an innately defective nature to some groups. Losurdo explains that, according to the Marxist paradigm, it is the concrete experience of exploitation and oppression by ruling classes which engenders organized movements for emancipation.

This is the key to understanding revolutionary social change. Other Marxists, such as Raya Dunayevskaya, emphasized the importance of Hegelian dialectics in the formation of Marxism as a radical philosophy of universal human emancipation: “The Hegelian dialectic was the crucible wherein materialism was transformed into a world-historic philosophy of freedom” (Dunayevskaya 1982, 75). The alternative theories of social conflict postulated that the resistances of subaltern groups stem from an inherent irrationality. The intellectuals who promote these theories view the political status quo as the only acceptable form of society and interpret disturbances from below as emotional outbursts. They lack a dialectical, materialist, and class based, view of history. The subaltern groups were often described as essentially inferior in comparison to the supposed normative standard of the civilized bourgeois man. This aspect of Losurdo's historical analysis of bourgeois and imperialist modernity is covered in his book *Liberalism. A Counter History*.

The Pitfalls of Revisionism

In the two aforementioned books, Losurdo points out that the attacks on Marx and the general theory of social conflict he developed with Engels affirmed themselves soon after Marxism began to gain attention. Critiques came from within the ranks of Social Democracy itself. The spread of Marxism, first in Europe, then across the globe, provoked reactions among intellectuals of all persuasions. It is impossible to list all the opponents of the new theory of social conflict. Every generation sees a new refutation make an appearance on the theoretical stage. Losurdo remarks that in the mid-twentieth century the well-known sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf attempted to put the final nail in the coffin of the Marxist paradigm. Social classes in the Marxist analysis, which Dahrendorf tended to mechanically reduce to the opposition between capitalists and proletarians, no longer held up, according to the eminent thinker's results (Losurdo 2016, 1). The less sharp divisions that Dahrendorf claimed characterized advanced social formations of capitalism, invalidated, in his view, the basic principles of Marxism. But Losurdo resituates the theoretical positions developed by Dahrendorf in their proper context, the so-called Golden Age of Capitalism. He asserts that what disappeared was not the fundamental classes themselves nor their struggles, but rather the capacity of modern sociologists to correctly understand Marx's dialectical method. These thinkers became masters at ignoring certain facts and

tendencies that might validate Marxism, especially concerning political conflicts structured around class antagonisms (Losurdo 2016, 260). They ignored the fact that class struggles took on many forms. In his critique of the modern revisionisms and refutations of Marxism Losurdo was preceded by Rosa Luxemburg. For example, in *Reform or Revolution*, Luxemburg took Eduard Bernstein to task for caricaturing historical materialism. She reminded Bernstein of the class nature of the state:

Its class character obliges the state to move the pivot of its activity and its means of coercion more and more into domains that are useful only to the class character of the bourgeoisie and have for society as a whole only a negative importance. (Luxemburg 2008, 64)

The increased involvement of the state in civil society does not rhyme automatically with the improvement of the condition of subaltern groups. Increased militarism and wars during the imperialist stage of capitalism spelled the doom of millions of workers. Or, for example, the mass incarceration of subaltern groups such as racial minorities in North America, especially among the poorer classes. One can speak not only of a military industrial complex but also of a carceral industrial complex that forms an integral part of the economic structure of the United States. Lenin was correct in his explanation of the process by which the state comes into being. It develops on the basis of irreconcilable class interests. He was also correct in describing the state as an armed force that subjugates those who reject the rule of the dominant class: “What does this [state] power mainly consist in? It consists in special bodies of armed men which have prisons, etc., at their command” (Lenin 1976, 12). Max Weber’s alternative definition of the state and of state power simply reformulates these Leninist ideas using complex sociological jargon that adds little to the comprehension of their essence. For their part, the early revisionists of Marx’s theory of social conflict tended to reduce Marxism to an economic paradigm. They refused to see that from quite early on, Marx and Engels understood class struggle as a broad genus which could manifest itself in a variety of specific forms. Yet, for all his merits, Losurdo does not engage enough with certain structural considerations concerning the class struggle. For example, Moishe Postone explains that although class struggles are important, they only play a key role in history because of the structuring effects of certain social forms: “class conflict is a driving force of historical development in capitalism only because it is structured by, and embedded in, the social social forms of the commodity and capi-

tal” (Postone 2003, 319). For Postone, it is capitalism as a totality in movement that pushes the class struggle forward. According to him, a thinker such as Losurdo does not pay enough attention to the dynamic and totalizing aspects of capitalism or to social forms. This is indeed a limit to his more descriptive approach.

For his part, Losurdo gives the example of another key figure in contemporary social science, Jürgen Habermas, who is recognized as a serious reader of Marx. According to Losurdo's understanding of Habermas, there is no longer for him any antagonistic conflict between two clearly defined groups in capitalist society, but rather a general pacification of class struggles (Losurdo 2016, 2). However, as Losurdo notes, this pacification, perceived especially in the context of advanced capitalist states, is precisely the result of major class struggles led by the working class and its allies against economic exploitation and constraints since the end of the Second World War. The welfare state and the socioeconomic rights for its citizens are not some unexplainable offerings sent from above to the workers and their allies, nor a concession freely offered to the subaltern groups of capitalist economies by ruling classes. They are the product of protracted social struggles by workers and other groups against the fundamental economic tendencies of capitalism (Losurdo 2016, 3). According to Losurdo, it is currently the capitalist counter-revolution of neoliberal financial elites which is destroying what is left of the welfare state and its socioeconomic benefits for subaltern classes. It is a coordinated dismantling of socioeconomic rights acquired through direct class struggle in the last several decades. In other words, a coalition of fractions of the dominant classes have been engaging in direct class warfare. Losurdo could have added nuance to his political vision of the class struggle if he used the notion of the power bloc developed by Nicos Poulantzas: “The State maintains its relative autonomy of particular fractions of the power bloc [...] so that it may ensure the organization of the general interest of the bourgeoisie under the hegemony of one of its fractions” (Poulantzas 2000, 128). Indeed, Losurdo does not provide a thorough analysis of state power, of its hegemony, nor of its relative autonomy. On this issue, Lenin believed that a correct understanding of the motivations of the ruling classes, and its hegemonic fraction, was the key to interpreting their management of international affairs:

Proof of what was the true social, or rather, the true class character of the war is naturally to be found, not in the diplomatic history of the war, but in an

analysis of the objective position of the ruling classes in all the belligerent countries. (Lenin 1970, 4)

For his part, Losurdo reminds the critics of Marxism, that Marx and Engels included the struggles of the dominant classes among themselves as one form of class conflict.

According to him, the two thinkers, Dahrendorf and Habermas, seem to relegate the struggles that occurred all over the colonial world to a marginal phenomenon. This is incompatible with a Marxist understanding of history. Masses of exploited human beings on every continent fought to obtain their political independence from imperialist powers and to construct socialism. These transformations of the capitalist world order cannot be brushed aside, as having little to do with class struggle, despite the limits to organizing socialist economies in the peripheral zones of capitalism (Losurdo 2016, 3–4). These forms of class struggle, involving several subaltern groups on an international scale, would have little to do with the Marxist theory of social conflict in the narrow sense of Dahrendorf and Habermas. In this sense, Losurdo is closer to Postone’s critique of modern sociology. Both authors criticize Habermas for slightly different reasons. According to Postone, Habermas attacks what he perceives as Marx’s romantic critique of capitalism. This reading of Marx is based on a misunderstanding of his theory:

The categorical social forms of commodity and capital do not simply *veil* the real social relations of capitalism, according to Marx; rather they *are* the fundamental social relations of capitalism, forms of mediation that are constituted by labor in this society. (Postone 2003, 256)

One should mention that there already existed a correction to such erroneous readings of Marx during the era in which Dahrendorf and Habermas were writing their revisionist works. Circulating globally, the theories of Frantz Fanon utilized the tools of historical materialism to study the nature of the struggles occurring in the peripheral countries of capitalism. Fanon noticed that in a situation of colonization certain classes play a different role from the one they did in advanced capitalist countries. According to Fanon, only a class-centric analysis of social formations can make the proper distinctions: “In certain circumstances, however, the peasant masses make a crucial contribution to the struggle for national liberation [...] For the underdeveloped countries this phenomenon is of fundamental importance” (Fanon 2004, 76). Dunaevskaya, writing at the same time as Habermas and Dahrendorf, noted

the revolutionary aspects of Fanon's Marxism: "Clearly, the dialectics of liberation is not anything pragmatic, nor something only black [...] It is global as well as revolutionary; it is total as well as historically continuous. It is, as he [Fanon] put it, a 'new humanism'" (Dunayevskaya 1982, 284). This is the dialectical approach that any critical researcher, convinced of the scientific character of historical materialism, should ideally adopt. Losurdo finds it odd that these forms of struggle are excluded by some. In fact, the economistic reading of Marxism contradicts the actual analyses produced by such militants as Luxemburg, Lenin, Gramsci, and Fanon. The expert academic interpreters of Marx such as Dahrendorf and Habermas, supposedly acquainted with the analytical grid of historical materialism, seem not to understand the idea that Marx never reduced class struggles exclusively to the conflict between capitalists and proletarians. Nor did he dogmatically give a political essence to certain classes who must behave politically in a predetermined way.

To demonstrate this, Losurdo rightly recalls Marx's famous sentences in the *Communist Manifesto* according to which: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian [...] in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another" (Marx and Engels 2002, 219). Losurdo then affirms that Marx specifies that the class struggle takes multiple forms: "The transition from the singular to the plural clearly signals that the conflict between proletariat and bourgeoisie is but one class struggle among others and the latter, running throughout world history" (Losurdo 2016, 4). And to make sure that the reader of the *Manifesto* has understood what is at stake in his analysis, Losurdo shows that a little further on in Marx's text, he recognizes not only the multiplicity of class struggles throughout history, but also the multiplicity of the specific forms that they take. In all three major struggles that Losurdo identifies there are two elements that link them together: "On the economico-political level, it comprises the objective of altering the division of labor [...] on the politico-moral level, that of overcoming the dehumanizing and reifying processes which characterize capitalist society" (Losurdo 2016, 83). He thus takes up where Dunayevskaya left off in her understanding of Marxism as an emancipatory and humanist project. The adversaries of Marxism have, according to Losurdo, tried to reduce this paradigm to a purely economic analysis which ignores the importance of ideological, political, and moral aspects of social conflict. For example, a Roman slave or prisoner living during Julius Caesar's or Octavian's reign, given the

productive forces and social relations of production, could perhaps join a slave revolt to escape his miserable fate. Perhaps he could find solace in an eschatological religion circulating among subaltern groups of that social formation or follow a philosophy of indifference such as stoicism. In contrast, he could not join something like a modern-day labour union or vote in an election for a leftist party that defends slaves' interests. His class position, historically situated, limited his capacity to act in many ways. Even non-marxist historians admit the importance of sociohistorical context and material conditions. The same basic idea applies even more to a female slave in this specific context. She might find other, perhaps even more limited ways of resisting class constraints and exploitation, due to the patriarchal nature of Roman society. She could not, for example, join something akin to a modern feminist movement or actively support politicians promoting women's rights. These examples illustrate in a concrete manner the idea of the forms of class struggle developed by Domenico Losurdo. For any person with some historical sensibilities, these statements are self-evident, as they would have been for Marx and Engels. For his part, G.E.M. de Ste-Croix, a historian who wrote a study of antiquity using the tools of historical materialism, class is the key factor to explain history:

I have no wish to pretend that class is the only category we need for the analysis of Greek and Roman society. All I am saying is that it is the fundamental one, which *over all* (at any given moment) and in the *long run* is the most important. (De Ste-Croix 1998, 45)

This is a point of view shared by most Marxist historians and which Losurdo develops at length. Some social theorists argue that class is a term that is fully valid only for the capitalist era and does not apply to previous societies. But it is Marx himself who, in *Capital*, gives the readers the key to understanding the nature of the class struggle in ancient Greece and Rome: "The class struggle in the ancient world, for instance, took the form mainly of a contest between debtors and creditors, and ended in Rome with the ruin of the plebeian debtors, who were replaced by slaves" (Marx 1976, 233). This passage is important, not only because it does away with the idea that the mature Marx only applied the notion of class struggle to the capitalist era, but also in that it validates Losurdo's claim that the class struggle—the genus—takes on specific forms according to how productive forces and social relations of production are organized. To give another example, Lenin did not content himself with

restating general remarks about capitalism from an abstract theoretical perspective but tried to understand how it was developing concretely in Russia and in other peripheral zones of the world economy. The theoretical result was the publication of a major work on the development of capitalism in one of its peripheries, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Lenin, 1977).

The specific forms the struggles of antagonistic social groups change according to the evolution of the economic structure of the societies in question and according to the specific developments of the various groups that compose them. As mentioned, the development of productive forces plays a central role in transforming the economic structure which in turn allows certain classes to push for social changes. There is not some universal key that allows Marxist researchers to know exactly which elements will play a determining role at what precise time. Fundamental contradictions emerge when social relations of production become fetters on developing productive forces. It is at this point that new class relations emerge. A view of the totality of the developmental process appears only after the historical phase has passed. It is then easier for the researcher to examine the relative weight of the productive forces, social relations of production and antagonistic class relations that produced a given result. In general, Marxist studies give a determining role to the development of productive forces and to the social relations of production, which are the material and social foundations of any class-divided community. The class struggle pushes the economic process forward and is the mechanism by which contradictions are overcome. A materialist approach to history includes the factoring in of the uneven development of various modes of production in interaction as well as phases within modes of production. For example, the pre-imperialist and imperialist phases of capitalism are qualitatively different as are also the pre-monopoly and monopoly phases of capitalist production. The study of each social formation must always be fleshed out concretely. The methodological tools of historical materialism are what allow the researcher to do this. This materialist fleshing out of economic structures does not invalidate the general principles of Marxism but tends to demonstrate their epistemic strength. Marx and Engels's theory of social conflict is often presented by its adversaries as an economic strawman. The core of Losurdo's defence of a Marxist, class-centric analysis, consists in showing that this strawman is at best a misunderstanding of the theory, at worst, a purposeful misrepresentation. By placing class struggles at the

heart of his approach, Losurdo hoped to reinvigorate Marxist analysis. This centering on class struggles allows Marxism to do what it does best, analyze the social forces in each situation to orient the social struggles aiming at emancipation from class oppression.

Unfinished Aspects

In *Class Struggle* Losurdo explains that Marx and Engels left unfinished analyses of some forms of class conflict in capitalist societies. These forms are present today and determine our political horizons. According to Losurdo, Marx and Engels perceived, and analyzed, three major forms which are 1) The economic and political struggles of the working class against the capitalists in the industrial metropolises 2) The economic and political struggles of oppressed nations against imperialism and colonization 3) The economic and political struggles of women against exploitation within the capitalist division of labour in the workplace, but also within the context of the patriarchal family. This bourgeois family structure was pushed, through proselytism, onto colonized peoples who had often developed less patriarchal social arrangements that were incompatible with capitalism. What is interesting about Losurdo's explanations is that they demonstrate, using Marxist texts, that this plural vision of the class struggle and its multiple forms was indeed the vision elaborated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Mao. Moreover, Losurdo argues that none of these revolutionary thinkers ever exposed this way of interpreting class-divided societies in an exhaustive manner. There is no equivalent of *Capital* for the study of class conflicts in general, although *Capital* itself is filled with examples of struggles from previous modes of production as well as from capitalism. This partial failure by the Marxist tradition at explaining that class struggle is a sort of genus which takes on multiple forms has facilitated the popularization of irrational interpretations of history. Also, the lack of systematicity in the exposition of key Marxist principles has fuelled reductive currents within Marxism itself, making its use by new generations of social scientists less attractive. The complex effort to dialectically relate the current international division of labour and economic exploitation to specific forms of class struggles is sometimes lacking in contemporary research. For his part, Bertell Ollman criticized readings of Marx that do not appreciate the relational aspect of his theory. According to the subject being explained by Marx the concepts he uses are modified. As Ollman explains: "Class, for

instance, has a vital role in explaining the state, but only a small part in accounting for exchange, and the size of the Relation, class, in Marx's thought (and the meaning of 'class' in Marx's writings) varies accordingly" (Ollman 1996, 21). This difficult aspect to grasp in Marx's writings has led some to view his theory as inconsistent. Yet this flexibility of Marx's approach is the only dialectical way to approximate social reality. The undialectical limitation of some Marxist approaches has led to the reinforcement of non-scientific forms of sociohistorical approaches in the social sciences. For his part, E.P. Thompson also noticed this weakness in some corners of the Marxist tradition and attempted to remind historians that the Marxist paradigm is richer than is generally assumed by its critics. The proof of the scientific superiority of Marxism is often to be found in the Marxist studies themselves. He believes, as does Losurdo, that social class is a historical phenomenon that can take many forms and manifestations: "By class I understand an historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events [...] the notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship" (Thompson 2003, 9). Losurdo's project of renewal of Marxism consists not only to return to the classical texts, but to see that at the methodological level, the theory of the forms of class struggle, as specific historical struggles, allows researchers to deepen their understanding of social conflicts.

This return to the classics of Marxism operated by Losurdo allows Marxist researchers to engage in a debate with other paradigms: rational choice theory, Michel Foucault's analyses of power, Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy paradigm, feminist and decolonial theories, and others that occupy an ever-larger portion of research in the social sciences. A better understanding of the limits of other perspectives can only be achieved once the solid foundations of historical materialism are understood. To do so effectively, the centrality of class struggles is the terrain that should be reclaimed by Marxists. Some alternative paradigms which seek to delegitimize Marxism cannot be properly confronted from a weak standpoint. There is a tradition of Marxist theorists that confronted alternatives to Marxism, integrating their stronger points within its own framework. One can mention, for example, Gramsci's confrontation with Benedetto Croce as well as Paul Mattick's critique of John Maynard Keynes (Mattick 1969). Neither of these Marxist thinkers attempted to confront and absorb their adversary without first possessing a firm grasp of their own intellectual tradition. Paradoxically, Losurdo contrasts the reductive reading of Marxism that he calls usual, with the unusual interpretation, his

own, which is more faithful to the letter and spirit of Marx. How, indeed, do adversaries of Marxism explain, for example, the mention of the national liberation of Poland in the *Communist Manifesto* and the frequent references to the colonial situation in Ireland in which the social question takes the form, according to Marx, of a struggle for national liberation. As the exploitation of one nation by another does not necessarily imply the direct struggle of workers against capitalists, Marx's critics believe he is speaking about something outside the purview of his specific theory of class struggles when he approaches such topics. When one can understand that a people's resistance to imperialism is also a form of class struggle in the Marxist perspective, the apparent contradiction evaporates.

Unless one believes that Marx and Engels were confused in their own methodology one must provide a rational explanation for their studies on colonialism, patriarchy, etc., that go beyond the pure capitalist-worker relation. Losurdo notes that while the emancipation of the proletariat directly concerns an economic and political struggle against the capitalist class, the national liberation struggle of a colonized nation concerns a complex conflict involving a multiplicity of class actors (petty bourgeois, proletariat, peasantry, various fractions of the capitalist class, imperialist agents). The mechanism that explains the outcome of the national struggle comes down to the basic rules elaborated in the general theory of social conflict developed by Marx and Engels. Gramsci put it in terms of an analysis of the social forces in contention, the final political result is the product of the struggles that play out historically. He also expressed the activist and partisan aspects of Marxism which wishes to radically change society through struggle:

If one applies one's will to the creation of a new equilibrium among the forces which really exist [...] basing oneself on the particular force which one believes to be progressive and strengthening it to help it to victory – one still moves on the terrain of effective reality. (Gramsci 1992, 172)

In other words, Marxism is both a scientific method and a partisan camp in class struggles. It not only studies the various forms of historical exploitation, but it also tries to promote the social forces that could be able to overthrow them. This does not mean that Marxism possesses an unerring capacity to predict the results of social struggles. Ellen Meiksins Wood explains the revolutionary aspects of Marxism as follows:

Class struggle is the nucleus of Marxism. This is so in two inseparable senses: it is class struggle that for Marxism explains the dynamic of history, and it is the abolition of classes [...] that is the ultimate objective of the revolutionary process. (Wood 1998, 12)

Her standpoint is close to Losurdo's although she does not attempt to identify three social protagonists that have defined the recent history of class struggles. As Marx specified, it is once the dust has settled that the materialist historian can fully analyze the various forces in presence and explain causally why a particular outcome rather than another took place. Yet, as Marxism is also a revolutionary doctrine, it attempts to promote the cause of the classes that are struggling for emancipation. As Losurdo remarks, many critics of Marx have seen in his interest in national liberation and anti-colonial resistances a deviation from his main economic analyses. The international division of labour structured according to a global class hierarchy would, on the contrary, according to Losurdo, be central to Marx's attempt at understanding capitalism: "Far from being of minor relevance from the standpoint of class struggle, the exploitation and oppression that obtain internationally are a precondition, at least methodologically, for understanding social conflict and class struggle at a national level" (Losurdo 2016, 12). A little further on, Losurdo repeats that it would be wrong to understand the class struggle according to Marx as being only focused on the political actions of the proletariat. Marx understood that the changes occurring in advanced capitalist nations were transforming the face of the world and that the struggles of those nations being dragged into capitalism's nets would play a determining role in its overthrow.

The Sacred Circle of the Ruling Classes

If the examples given by Losurdo were not convincing enough, he turns to another text presented at the beginning of the article and which, on the surface, should have been primarily concerned with the economic struggle between proletarian and capitalist. Losurdo analyzes the pamphlet entitled *Wage Labor and Capital*. As he notes, we see that Marx does not hesitate to broaden his horizon and include elements other than the typical mechanism of economic exploitation found in capitalist industry when analyzing various forms of class struggle. He remarks that Marx mentions explicitly, among other things, "present class struggles and national struggles" and concludes that the second element must be sub-

sumed under the general category of class struggle in the generic sense. For Marx there could not exist a pure national struggle which is separate from the objective mechanisms of economic and political class struggles. These national struggles could not be explained by a national spirit or by a presumed racial or psychological factor proposed by other paradigms. According to Losurdo: “The species cannot be understood if it is detached from the genus [...] class struggle is the genus which, in determinate circumstances, takes the specific form of ‘national struggle’” (Losurdo 2016, 14). A more recent example which would have stood out to Marx, is the national liberation struggle of black South Africans against the the apartheid regime led by a minority oligarchy of white capitalists. To want to mechanically separate the struggle against economic exploitation from the national liberation struggle, in this colonial context, would be an undialectical approach that separates the species from the genus. Yet, as Losurdo notes, a liberal historian of imperialism, who always receives a warm reception in the academic world, Niall Ferguson, argues that the twentieth century was not fundamentally determined by class struggles or economic antagonisms. According to Ferguson’s subjectivist view of history and social change, the century developed under the sign of ethno-racial conflicts on a global scale. In other words, Ferguson detaches the external form from the social and economic genus. He operates as if the racism that accompanied capitalist imperialism had little to do with the historical spread of capitalism and the consequent geopolitical division of the world by advanced capitalist states. Nonetheless, Losurdo’s vision is not perfect. An approach to Marxism which could seriously challenge his views should be mentioned here. Siyavez Azeri, in an important article on social classes, presents arguments from the Open Marxism approach and other critical perspectives. This theoretical model presents class struggles in a different manner. The article also highlights the work of creative Soviet Marxist thinkers, notably on the topics of class and class consciousness. Class, in this perspective, is the manifestation of particular social relations: “Class and class struggle emerge simultaneously; they are two forms of appearance of the same essence, that is, capitalist social relations of production” (Azeri 2016, 440). The antagonistic relations of production are what fundamentally define the identities and the development of classes and their struggles in capitalism. Losurdo, who does not make this clear, may be open to the criticism that he conceptualizes human labour and exploitation transhistorically. This potentially weakens his argument.

In a certain sense one can say that Losurdo shares Gramsci's historicism which perhaps downplays certain structural differences between various societies and forms of economy. In the case of capitalist imperialism, Losurdo states that Ferguson not only misrepresents Marxism in general, but also affirms that this historian offers a weak alternative analysis. He adds that Marx was not an amateur historian, unable to understand the differences between social struggles in different material contexts: "The specific difference that characterized the social question and class struggle in the colonies [...] has to be registered. There the international division of labour converted the subject peoples into a mass of serfs or slaves" (Losurdo 2016, 14–15). It is this specific distinction which alters the nature of the class struggles and continues to this day through the exploitative mechanisms of neocolonialism explained by Samir Amin (Amin 1976). And to be as precise as possible, in his interpretation of Marx's general theory, Losurdo returns to the latter's use of the plural to describe class conflict: "The plural is not employed to denote repetition of the identical, the continual recurrence of the same class struggle in the same form. It refers to the multiplicity of shapes and forms that class struggle can assume" (Losurdo 2016, 15). Here, Losurdo might be criticized for being too historicist and insufficiently conceptual. Azeri notes that Marx's economic analysis is simply not descriptive: "Marx's analysis of capitalist relations of production is not historical-descriptive, but conceptual-critical. It aims at explaining the logic of capital and how, once constituted, it metamorphoses all phenomenon preceding it historically into moments of itself" (Azeri 2016, 450). Losurdo does, on occasion, signal the importance of the capitalist division of labour and its specific social relations as the determining factor. He offers something in between the conceptual and the historical-descriptive visions of Marxism, which might very well disappoint both theoretical camps. In any case, his reading of Marx has nothing to please the opponents of Marxism, because it highlights its continued relevance. But Losurdo's understanding of class struggles also causes problems for a very small minority of theoreticians in the anti-racist and feminist camps who affirm that Marxism has little of import to say about contemporary forms of neocolonialism and patriarchy, as these issues are outside what they claim is Marxism's only area of theoretical competence.

For any researcher who is convinced of the correctness of the principles of historical materialism, there is no great difficulty in subsuming the struggles identified by Losurdo as particular historical forms of class

struggle within the context of the hegemonic international division of labour imposed by global capitalism. However, for those who reject the theory of class struggle, Losurdo's affirmations are unacceptable. Opponents of Marxism believed that Marxist analysis of society had been discredited since the fall of the Soviet Union. One of the shortcomings of Losurdo's arguments is that he mostly criticizes alternative currents opposed to historical materialism that can be classified as liberal or conservative. He engages only minimally with more recent currents of critical theory. It is here that more intellectual effort is needed to validate Marxism. Paraphrasing Marx and Engels, Losurdo notes that for them the oppression of women "was the first class oppression" and adds:

Taken as a whole, the capitalist system presents itself as a set of more or less servile relations imposed by one people on another internationally, by one class on another in an individual country, and by men on women within one and the same class. (Losurdo 2016, 16)

For example, one could see all three species of class subjugation at work during the Vietnam War and through the simultaneous social protests of the 1960s in the United States, France, and elsewhere. One could first include the species of the class struggle of the Vietnamese people and the Communist party against American imperialism, but also the anti-war and socialist student movements in the United States which temporarily threatened the hegemony of the capitalist class and its allies. Simultaneously to these two forms of struggle, the women's liberation movement was ramping up in several countries, and the radical movement of the large exploited black population in the United States also became very militant at that time. The appearance of an open struggle against racial oppression materialized itself in the form of militant political organizations such as the Black Panther Party and in the civil rights movement at large. All these struggles were, in Losurdo's view, manifestations or forms of the class resistance against the capitalist organization of social relations on the international, national, and domestic levels. They mobilized social classes and subgroups within classes in what one could even term a revolutionary cycle of subaltern forces. Losurdo's main hope for the future was to show that the Marxist tradition still possesses conceptual tools that allow for a relevant reading of complex historical developments. Losurdo takes inspiration from Antonio Gramsci, with his notions of war of position and war of movement and from Mao Tse-Tung and his

distinction between the principal and secondary contradictions, for innovative theoretical elements that can enriched Marxism.

Indeed, Gramsci asserted that the preference of subaltern groups for a war of movement or for a war of position depended on the specific kind of hegemony exercised by the dominant class, the power of its state and the trenches it built in civil society. By trenches Gramsci meant the types of cultural and educational systems that are laid in place to promote the legitimacy of the capitalist social order in each country. For his part, Losurdo argues, for example, that in the context of the Japanese invasion of China in the twentieth century, Mao was correct to assert that the priority class struggle was the struggle of all social groups against imperialism and for the national liberation of China. This meant a collaboration between workers and peasants against foreign invaders and national elites: "At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes in the country [...] are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position" (Mao 2007, 87). Once national independence was achieved and the foreign imperialist forces defeated, other contradictions and priorities would take priority such as building a socialist economy and ensuring the hegemony of the working class in China. Losurdo may be giving power to certain movements while forgetting the most powerful subject in capitalism, capital itself:

Subject-ness of capital is the consequence of the constitution of the specifically capitalist relations of production based on bourgeois private property (separation of the immediate producers from the means of production) that amounts to the separation of the head to the hand. (Azeri 2016, 451)

One cannot put aside the fact that none of the political movements mentioned by Losurdo managed to completely abolish capitalist social relations of production.

For Losurdo the different revolutionary thinkers he mentions are not heretics deforming the pristine theory of Marx. Rather, they were trying to apply it according to a reading of their specific historic context. The specific social configurations within a wider capitalist world order make some options for emancipation more plausible than others. An understanding of the class forces involved informed Gramsci on how to proceed with no guarantees of success. This is a principle observed by Trotsky who remarked that opposing classes may utilize similar means: "the evolution of humanity exhausts itself neither by universal suffrage, nor by

"blood and honor," [...] The historical process signifies primarily the class struggle; moreover, different classes in the name of different aims may in certain instances utilize similar means" (Trotsky 1973, 14). Marxists and subaltern class movements can adopt a variety of strategies and tactics according to the concrete situation. Obviously, Trotsky never stated that he could not be mistaken in his evaluations, he simply affirmed that he based his judgments on a Marxist reading of events informed by the class struggle. Losurdo agrees with this understanding of history and highlights the contributions of different revolutionaries. The simple attempt to show the richness of this intellectual tradition opens itself to criticism. Different Marxist camps: Leninist, Trotskyite, Maoist, could claim that Losurdo neglects a particular thinker, party, or movement. Beyond this critique, academic proponents of the political Marxism school such as Wood, might criticize him for his less-than-optimal understanding of the origins of capitalism (Wood 2002). Similarly, the Neue Marx-Lektüre school, with thinkers such as Michael Heinrich, could criticize Losurdo for his marginal interest in the Marxist theory of value and for his overstatement of the importance class struggles (Heinrich 2012, 191–192). The Open Marxism approach could reproach him his lack of a sufficiently abstract conceptualization of capitalism. Despite his differences with various schools of thought Losurdo would mostly agree with Azeri's statement about the political nature of class relations and class politics: "Politics is the form of existence of class relations, exertion of power, domination, resistance, and struggle in capitalist society [...] Class is a conceptual constitution: it is the conceptualization of political horizon that participates in class struggle" (Azeri 2016, 456). Gramsci expressed this idea differently when he wrote: "the general notion of State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society in the sense that one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion" (Gramsci 1992, 263). Class, State and Capital are all intertwined in the economic tendencies and relations which constitute capitalism.

Most disagreements among Marxists can be debated within a somewhat common theoretical framework. The case is different when debating those who attempt to disqualify Marxism as a scientific approach to history. In *Class Struggle*, Losurdo remarks, for example, that Hannah Arendt finds the mechanism of the class conflict to be a kind of collective nightmare and that those militants and organic intellectuals who promote it, often lead subordinate groups of society to their ruin. It is, in her assess-

ment, largely an aggressive doctrine of social catastrophism and is politically dangerous for humanity. It is better, according to Arendt, to wish for a partial escape from extreme poverty for the exploited masses through the gradual development of technology, mass production, and science. It would thus be necessary, in her perspective, to exorcise the class struggle from society and from popular consciousness (Losurdo 2016, 269). Habermas, for his part, according to Losurdo's understanding of his social philosophy, affirms that if the mechanism of class struggle perhaps made some sense in Marx's time, the post Second World War period would be characterized mainly by a pacification of social struggles based on class. According to Losurdo, even when inequalities begin to grow again and the figure of the working poor re-emerges globally in the North and South, as well as that of the lumpenproletariat, Habermas, would still attempt to repress at all costs the return of an intensified class struggle in the Marxist sense (Losurdo 2016, 275–276). Yet, for Losurdo, the greatest danger for Marxism would not come from either of these two revisionist perspectives but from a populist-religious current characterized by the return of a moralizing, almost theological, understanding of Marx. The great ideological representative of this populist and moralistic-religious tendency in the twentieth century was best articulated by Simone Weil. In Losurdo's view, Weil did not understand how Marx explained that class struggles manifested themselves in several political forms. The only authentic class struggle, according to Weil's ideological reading of Marx and Marxism, would be that of the poor and the wretched of the earth against a powerful oligarchy of capitalists. All those who would attempt to nuance this tragic vision of history would be viewed as opportunist and Machiavellian politicians seeking power. In this populist worldview of emancipation, the Marxist analysis of the complexity of the struggles is replaced by a binary and moralistic vision of social struggles (Losurdo 2016, 310–311).

Regarding Losurdo's book *Liberalism*, he notes that liberalism, in the broadest sense of the term, despite its claims of universalism, has tended to create marked distinctions between the elitist circle, hailing from imperialist countries, and the various subaltern groups that are part of a profane world of exploitation: the working classes, the colonized or recently decolonized peoples, and women. The great strength of liberalism, according to Losurdo, has been to allow a small fraction of these subaltern groups to partially enter the periphery of the inner circle of the privileged classes. This ideological current sometimes even goes so far as to

legitimize certain struggles for recognition by oppressed groups to better corrupt their leadership and submit them to capitalism's global hegemony. According to Losurdo, for Marx and most Marxists, the class struggle is almost always and profoundly an ethico-political struggle for recognition and respect. Whether it is the struggle of the working class to be recognized as something more than a source of surplus value, the struggle of colonized peoples for recognition as free, independent, and equal human beings, or the global struggle of women for the same type of respect and dignity, Losurdo affirms that these struggles go beyond economics and the exploitation of labour power. He thus joins Gramsci, Dunayevskaya, Fanon, and other revolutionaries who refused to reduce Marxism to an economic doctrine. Losurdo recognizes the importance of the ethical-political issues that are an integral part of the class struggle. This is a strong point in favor of his interpretation of history.

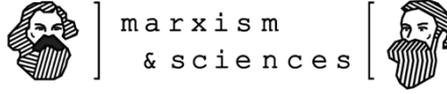
As indicated at the beginning of the article, there exist contemporary thinkers influenced by economic readings of history who have reduced the explanatory value of the class struggle. But there are also some intellectuals who fall into more grave errors. What unites all these reductive critiques of Marxism is that they tend to naturalize social conflict and attribute it to the defective natures of exploited groups living under capitalist constraints. Instead of recognizing the social struggles of oppressed groups as manifestations of the class struggle in a generic sense, they attempt to justify the status quo by essentializing the groups who revolt against the capitalist order. They sometimes end up defending what Losurdo called "a master race democracy." This reactionary tendency within liberalism is a continuation of a long-standing intellectual tradition. For this elitist worldview, workers and the poor in capitalist metropolises should never have been given full political rights. Freedom is useful only for the rational and bourgeois man living in imperialist nations. It should therefore not be accorded to women, especially not to those who do not enjoy a certain level of economic prosperity and supposed racial purity. Full human rights and the respect of basic rules concerning war are applicable only between bourgeois nations and among so-called civilized peoples, not in the colonies. These arguments held sway for long periods in many developed capitalist nations. This elitist vision naturalized the difference between those living within the sacred space and those subaltern groups living outside it. As Losurdo explains: "But the metropolis/colonies opposition, with its tendential exclusion of the latter from the sacred space of civilization and liberty, was bound to pro-

voke a reaction” (Losurdo 2011, 49). Losurdo reiterates that not only is every class struggle a political struggle, it is almost always also a struggle for recognition and dignity. Disparaging remarks about subaltern groups, to different degrees, and concerning their specific forms of class struggle, can be found in the works of Tocqueville, Le Bon, Mill, Spencer, Gobineau and Nietzsche. Beyond their different ideological allegiances, they each promoted, in one way or another, a similar elitist vision of the world. Historically, liberals, conservatives and even reactionaries get along better than is believed. Losurdo demonstrates this with references to numerous texts by the most important thinkers of these currents. Against this shared elitist vision of freedom and rights for a minority of masters of the world, Losurdo opposes a radically democratic political tradition that has its origins in republican texts and discourses produced since at least the Enlightenment and the French revolution. It has also been expressed in the praxis of emancipatory movements, notably during the famous San Domingo-Haiti revolution which ended slavery in that nation. C.L.R. James reminds us that a common trait of ruling classes is their incapacity to understand the motivations of subaltern groups. For the elites, these groups are inherently inferior and incapable of initiative: “The slaves had revolted because they wanted to be free. But no ruling class ever admits such things. The white cockades accused the Patriots and the Friends of the Negro of stirring up the revolt, while the red cockades accused the royalists” (James 1989, 95). According to Losurdo, Marx, Engels, and their followers would be the heirs of this radical political tendency. Going politically further than the Enlightenment project ever did, Marxism developed a coherent theory of social conflict that did not rest on any form of naturalism which eternalizes the unequal division of labour typical of capitalism. Losurdo’s political hope was to have these diverse struggles recognized as authentic forms of class struggle. Only by dialectically relating them together as a totalizing movement can a comprehensive portrait of the forms of resistance to capitalism emerge.

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INTERVIEW

Interviews: Rethinking the Foundations of Marxism Today

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CENK SARAÇOĞLU (CS) & ALI C. GEDİK (ACG): The following text and the four questions below were sent via email to the authors and they were requested to answer all four or the ones they select.

The totality of the contemporary crisis of capitalism rather invites us to rethink the fundamental premises of Marxism in its totality, as the method of understanding and transcending capitalism and reflecting on the historical, present, and possible future forms of human-human and human-nature relations. In an age characterized by the urgent need for a “new beginning,” the quest for revisiting, rethinking, and clarifying Marxism’s foundational premises in different fields of science is crucial. In this vein, we would like to kindly ask you to answer one of the following questions, at least, preferably in relation to your expertise:

- 1) To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism is actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?
- 2) In what respects the foundational premises of Marxism could inform a political strategy of exit from the contemporary crisis of capitalism?
- 3) How would you position some recent non-Marxist critiques of contemporary state of the world such as “Material turn,” post-humanism and new materialism vis a vis Marxism? Do you think these paradigms represent a complete rupture with the fundamental premises of Marxism? Do you think a productive/critical engagement with these paradigms possible? How should Marxist scholars respond to the epistemological tenets of these paradigms?
- 4) What is the most pressing task of Marxist scholars and intellectuals today in the wake of the total crisis of capitalism? To what extent the fundamental premises of Marxism could inform the possible roles that intellectuals are supposed to fulfill in such a tumultuous times?

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Interview with Vesa Oittinen

CS & ACG: *To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism are actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?*

VESA OITTINEN: What are “the fundamental premises of Marxism?” A complicated question! I believe most of us are acquainted with the claim of the young Lukács, according to which it does not matter, if every one of the concrete claims of Marxist theory would prove to be wrong—provided that we do not budge from the dialectical method which constitutes the core of Marxism.

The problem of Lukács’ assertion is that it does not explain why we should cling to just a dialectical method. If we take the assertion in its face value, it implies a claim that theoretical reason stays above practical reason—actually, a rather typical intellectualist position. In contrast to views like this, Kant, for example, the reader of Rousseau, noted that the questions of practical reason have a primacy in respect to those of theoretical reason. In the case of Marxism, it is rather easy to point to the main motive behind its practical reason: Marxist theory has an emancipatory interest, and in the first instance, it is interested in the emancipation of the class which has “nothing to lose but its chains,” the proletariat. The theory has this goal as its practical leitmotif.

It is specifically this peculiar interest which makes the difference when we compare Marxism with other social, political and economic theories which make up the mainstream in the West. One gets often the impression that the Western scientific community would gladly embrace Marx as one of the “classics” in the pantheon of social sciences, *al pari* with Adam Smith, Max Weber and others—if only he had not created that annoying theory of surplus value, which does not suit as a theme for conversation in finer company.

The stress on the emancipatory significance of theory is a trait which indicates that Marxism stays in intellectual continuity with other emancipatory ideas and movements. Essentially, Marxism is an heir of Enlightenment traditions, which of course does not mean it would receive them in an uncritical manner. But I think it is today worthwhile to underline these connections, since, from the 1960s and 70s on, many Left thinkers have, in the wake of postmodernism, contested the significance of the Enlightenment heritage, turning instead to embrace such figures as Nietzsche or Heidegger. In some cases, this has resulted in effects one cannot but call suicidal, for example when in the field of Postcolonial Studies some writers

have denounced the Enlightenment thinkers as eurocentrist colonialists and racists. It goes without saying that the horizon of the eighteenth century philosophers was not as wide as ours, but if we for this reason abandon the Enlightenment tradition with its arguments for equality, democracy and freedom, we only do a backhanded favor for the cause of emancipation. That these arguments were for the first time formulated in Europe does not diminish their universal value, as little as the fact that geometry as a strict science was first created in Greece would imply that Pythagoras' theorem is not valid outside Greece.

The “postmodern parenthesis” from the late 1960s to early 2000s has been detrimental for the Left tradition in other respects, too. I believe that it was not accidental that postmodernist ideas (here I speak of “postmodernism” *sensu lato*, as an ensemble of different theoretical currents advocating relativism and the extinction of *grands recits*) surged up about at the same time as neo-liberalist politics began to gain acceptance among the elites of Western economy and politics. Of course, that what we call “postmodernism” was not identical with neoliberalism, but they were nevertheless parallel trends. While neoliberalism inaugurated an attack against the social security of ordinary people and the organizations of the working class, postmodernism took care of their ideological dismantling.

This said, one should, however, keep in mind that the parallel triumphs of neoliberalism and postmodernism were greatly facilitated by the defects of the socialist movement and the Marxism of the epoch. The countries of the so-called real socialism were not able to offer an attractive alternative to capitalism, at least not to the form it had in the metropolises of the imperialist world system. And as Marxist theory is concerned, it had obtained the form of either a dogmatic system of Soviet style or an intellectual pastime isolated from the everyday life of the people, as the Western university marxism. In this situation, postmodernism and neoliberal politics were able for a while to present themselves as real solutions to the problems of the modern world. Today, it is obvious that the period of the hegemony of neoliberalism and postmodernism will go into history as a rather short parenthesis only—a parenthesis which emerged as a result of a quite specific constellation of powers in the last third of the twentieth century. Neoliberalism lost its hegemonic grasp on politics at the latest after the financial crisis of 2007. Postmodernism, for its part, is receding since then it had proved that the intellectual tools it has to offer cannot deliver credible solutions for the ecological crisis. As Andreas Malm recently wryly remarked, the effects of the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are

hard to dismiss by reverting to the claim that nature is but a “social construct.”

The decline of neoliberalism and postmodernism opens new spaces for a Marxist theory. Which would be the tasks for the Marxist theory in the emerging situation? The first thing which comes to mind is of course the need to respond to the ecological state of emergency into which humanity is now sliding. This is, I think, the most urgent question we now face. Despite this, I would not formulate the task so that we should simply “add” an ecological dimension to Marxism. Such a view would imply that we already have the answer and the only thing to be done now is to apply it to the ecology. This attitude fails to deal with the radicality of the task. What we need is a re-assessment of what I might call Marxist philosophical anthropology, i.e. its views on the human essence (if such an essence exists), what is to be understood with good life and ethically sound pursuits.

In the conditions of present epochal changes, it would be arrogant to believe that Marxism is able to carry out such an intellectual feat alone, without an open discussion with other currents, as the experiences of indigenous people and other traditions which do not share the utilitarian logic of capitalist accumulation. Marxism has here its own traditions on which to build, starting from Marx's critique of Feuerbach's anthropological materialism. Marx had criticized Feuerbach for lack of understanding of the socio-historical dimension of human development, and this will remain the starting-point of further Marxist theory. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the significance of the ideas for a practical materialism Marx sketched in his *Theses on Feuerbach* have sometimes been exaggerated, especially among the so-called Western Marxists. The concept of “praxis” is not a panacea which is able to solve all theoretical questions of a Marxist philosophical anthropology. The ecological crisis which has set limits for the claims of the postmodernists, requires in a like manner the Marxists to take seriously the question of the limits of human practice and reflect on its dependency on our natural surroundings.

A discussion of the anthropological foundations of Marxist philosophy is further needed in order to remove a further defect of the theory, namely the insufficient elaboration of the questions of ethics and morality. Marxists have always stressed that they stay for a science which does not base its analysis of social reality on moral arguments, such as that capitalism is “bad.” This is a correct and materialist position. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the naturalist and positivistic interpretations of the role of ethics which were current in the Marxism of the Second International have a kind

of afterlife in much of today's discussions. To my mind, the new assessment of a Marxist philosophical anthropology I would support should again reconsider some of the fundamental ideas of Kant. In the first instance, let us note that Kant's ethics were anti-utilitarian. In this respect, it offers a well-defined contrast to the logics of capitalist accumulation, which aim at an unlimited exploitation of "useful" natural resources. Secondly, Kant's sketch of the possibilities of a perpetual peace has a bearing for the present situation, too. Although we can find already in Kant a critical discussion of many of the shortages of the previous Enlightenment philosophy, there has been in the Marxist tradition a tendency to dismiss Kant's theory of cognition as a form of "agnosticism," because Kant spoke of the unknowability of things-in-themselves. However, if one takes a closer look, this famous Kantian sentence reveals itself as a tautology only: things-in-themselves are things outside of our cognition, and they remain such so long as we do not cognize them. I think that the German philosopher Hans-Jörg Sandkühler was on the right track when he already in the 1970s spoke of Kant's 'cognitive materialism' (*Erkenntnismaterialismus*), a tradition that Marxist philosophers should take in account. This is not the place to discuss further the subtleties of Kant's philosophy, so I think it suffices to say here, that this new, more positive assessment of Kant that I wish the Marxist philosophers are able to carry out does not have much in common with the project of a "Kantian socialism" of the early 1900s, a project which actually was more Neo-Kantian than genuinely Kantian. Indeed, as for example the studies of such well-known Marxist scholars as André Tosel and Domenico Losurdo have shown, the "real" Kant was much more radical than his later alleged followers. It goes without saying, that this rehabilitation of Kantian positions (especially in gnoseology) would lead to a decline of Hegelian interpretations of Marx—but as everyone of us knows, Hegelianism and dialectics are different things.

CS & ACG: *In what respects the foundational premises of Marxism could inform a political strategy of exit from the contemporary crisis of capitalism?*

VESA OITTINEN: At the moment, there does not exist a widely accepted theory of contemporary capitalism. Nonetheless in the 1970s we had the theory of the so-called state monopoly capitalism (Stamocap), which to a large extent built on the preparatory work of the Hungarian-born Soviet economist Eugen Varga. It became the leading theory of most Communist parties; for example in France the team around Paul Boccara produced their own version of the theory. After the demise of the USSR, the Stamocap

theory, too, disappeared almost in one night. The theory had its faults—above all, it was rather eclectic—but there was no discussion about its further potentialities. As a result, the Left has lost an internationally orienting theory of capitalism.

Today, we have an array of different theories of global capitalism, such as Wallerstein's world-order theory, or attempts to describe the present neoliberal stage of capitalism. They contain many good and important insights, but the old Stamocap theory had one advantage: it pointed to certain political consequences to be drawn from its analysis of capitalism. The Stamocap theory viewed monopolies as the latest form of the development of capitalism. The big capitalist monopolies attempt to force the whole of society to succumb and serve their interests. Thus, the primary task for the Left and all democratic forces was to fight against the influence of monopolies, for democracy and for the rights of ordinary people. In other words, the Stamocap theory helped to define the “enemy” and the concrete political slogans for the Left. The immediate demand was *not* that of a socialism. Rather, what was needed was an increased democracy, a claim supported not only by the working class but by all the stratas of society which suffered from the aspirations of the capitalist monopolies. In some respects, these political recommendations reminded of the *Front Populaire* strategies of the 1930s. To my mind, we need today a theory of global capitalism, which in a similar way helps to formulate concrete political tasks. The big difference to the situation of the 1930s is today that we are facing an immense ecological challenge, a dimension which was not present in the anti-Fascist struggles of those days.

Besides the need to revamp the general theory of present-day capitalism into such a form that it is able to give recommendations for actual politics, there exists in Marxism a yet unsolved theoretical problem concerning capitalism as a socio-economic formation. To this day it has not become clear, how the concepts “capitalism” and “modernity” relate to each other. I think that it is wrong to say that the Enlightenment was but a preparation for capitalism. The ideas put forth by the Enlightenment were, essentially, ideas about how a modern society should look: democracy, equality, human rights, rule of law. Capitalism, on the other side, can very well thrive without democracy or human rights; in fact, these institutions rather form an obstacle to its expansion.

It seems to me that one of the biggest mistakes of received Marxist thought has been the identification of modernity with capitalist economic formation. As a result, the achievements of modernity, like democracy,

have been declared to be positive accomplishments of capitalism, which actually does not deserve such credit. In similar flawed optics, the demise of the Soviet Union has been interpreted as the victory of “capitalism” over “socialism,” although the main problem with the so-called real socialism clearly was that it was not sufficiently modern. Obviously, here we have yet something to think about.

Finally, as I am preparing a book on the theme ‘Marx and Russia’ (forthcoming in Palgrave Macmillan), I think it is pertinent to stress that it is important to be able to discuss without prejudices the heritage of Russian and Soviet Marxism. Among the Western Marxists, it has for a long time been customary to reject this heritage. I find this as an unfair and unproductive attitude, to a large extent an inheritance from the days of the Cold War. But especially we think that we should study the experience of the *perestroika* launched by Gorbachev. As it led to the demise of the Soviet Union, the *perestroika* has mostly been viewed as a big failure only. However, the *perestroika* had moments—if you like, you can call them “utopian moments”—which are worth of a further study. It not only attempted to open for Russia a path to real democracy, but, in addition, the foreign policy inspired by it put forth the important theme of “general human interests.” This is a concept and idea which I think has a great potential. Above all, because it builds on the acknowledgement of the material interests of all men, it would offer a better lodestar for Left politics and diplomacy than the much less concrete liberal idea of “human rights.”

Interview with Sahotra Sarkar

CS & ACG: *To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism are actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?*

SAHOTRA SARKAR: Marxism remains a living ideology, that is, a worldview with a deeply normative (or political content). Among political ideologies it has been unique during the last two centuries insofar as it attempts to provide a comprehensive account of the world, what it contains, what kind of dynamical processes govern its history, and how the world should be studied. Rephrasing one of the celebrated theses on Feuerbach, it is not only about changing the world, it is also about interpreting it. By Marxism I don't want to restrict myself to the works of Marx or Marx and Engels alone, or even to the classic contributions of Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, or Gramsci, but to others who have followed including more recent work such as those produced by the Subaltern Studies collective and figures such as C. L. R. James or even Thomas Piketty. Nevertheless, the extent to which problems such as those posed by globalization are anticipated even in such early works as *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) is quite remarkable. What is invariant over all these different viewpoints is a recognition of the primacy of base over superstructure, the determining role in society and culture of the subsisting economic relationships, and an accompanying commitment to reorganize them in the interest of equity,

Marxism allows us to conceptualize our global problems in different ways than typically done. I will give one example. We are all correctly worrying about climate change. But, ask yourself why we are worried about climate change. It is not because an increase of the ambient temperature by 2 or 3 degrees would be physiologically devastating to us as organisms. It won't. It is because the structure of society around us—including, of course, national economies—would collapse. That this itself a Marxist insight. But there is more to come when we get down to specific details: we worry about climate change causing sea levels to rise and how that would lead to some regions such as small island nations (e.g., the Maldives) to sink in several centimeters of water. But there already are large areas of land that are below sea level, for instance, most of the Netherlands. What keeps the water out are expensive dams and walls that the Netherlands can afford because it is a rich country with a long history of trade and imperial theft. If the Maldives had access to the same resources as the Netherlands, it could build barriers of this kind and prevent the

rising oceans from flooding its land. The problem of climate change is a problem of the distribution of resources. The culprit is unbridled capitalism.

The same type of analysis also applies to other global change problems, for instance, extinction and the depletion of biodiversity. Biodiversity is in steep decline because of land-use-land-cover (LULC) change driven by the global flow of capital and the destruction of natural habitats in the interests of . And note that this chain of reasoning has a long Marxist pedigree starting with Engels (1844) in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

CS & ACG: *In what respects the foundational premises of Marxism could inform a political strategy of exit from the contemporary crisis of capitalism?*

SAHOTRA SARKAR: In the so-called democratic North, “liberal” and “left-wing” politics today is driven by fleeting coalitions of special interest groups advocating, for instance, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender-based, and other similar agendas (and sometimes, as in western Europe this year, environmental agendas promoted by “green” groups). One consequence of this is, as in the United States during the last decade, these “liberal” political entities such as the Democratic Party (in the United States) have lost their traditional working class base. In country after country the working class has been coopted by fascist populist agendas going back to the Reagan-Thatcher era and now represented by figures such as Boris Johnson and Donald Trump.

From my perspective, the only way out is to organize on the basis of class interests. This cuts across divides based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, and so on. Instead of fragile alliances, it has the potential to lead to a genuine Left committed to equity and justice. (Of course, class has to be conceived more broadly than Marx and Engels did in the nineteenth century. Besides the so-called proletariat, we have to take subaltern social groups into account thereby integrating concerns motivated by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and so on.)

It is my claim that such a class-based analysis, and political activism on that basis, can incorporate the concerns and interests of the special interest groups when they are politically valid. One example (again from the United States, which is my home) will suffice. Last week a woman’s federally mandated right to get an abortion was abrogated by a Supreme Court dominated by Religious Right bigots. What does that mean? Some states will allow abortions, others will not. A woman who lives in a state where abortion is banned will still be able to travel to another state to get an

abortion. (The same situation holds in many, many other regions of the world.) An upper-class woman will be able to exercise this option; even though it will still be inconvenient, money will buy the ability to end an unwanted pregnancy. Lower-class women will find it much more difficult to exercise the same option. So, the right to abortion is not merely about a woman's right to control her own body, it is also a class issue. This means that there is a potential for common cause organizing between labor activists and women's rights.

There are many other such examples. But the point I am making should be clear. It should also be clear that the Marxist emphasis on class is crucial for areas in the global South, whether it is to reject Trump clones such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil or religious fundamentalists such as Narendra Modi in India and Recep Erdogan in Turkey.

CS & ACG: How would you position some recent non-Marxist critiques of contemporary state of the world such as "Material turn," post-humanism and new materialism vis a vis Marxism? Do you think these paradigms represent a complete rupture with the fundamental premises of Marxism? Do you think a productive/critical engagement with these paradigms possible? How should Marxist scholars respond to the epistemological tenets of these paradigms?

SAHOTRA SARKAR: It would take a book to answer this question fully. Marxism has been under attack and gone out of fashion in the academy since the emergence of post-structuralism and post-modernism. (I recommend the analyses of Frederic Jameson.) That led to a celebration of disunity that exists primarily in the minds of humanities professors but not in the real world. New Materialism has no contact with science which makes it a somewhat odd discipline since what we know of matter comes from science. Moreover, all these new movements think of politics as an academic enterprise rather than attempt to engage in the everyday struggles of working people. These are self-centered elite ideologies that pretend to be part of the Left. All they generally achieve is to make theoretical analyses appear even more removed from the concerns of practical politics than what happened in the heyday of structuralism and critical theory. I remain to be convinced that engagement with these developments are worth the time it would take.

But there are important exceptions. The Subaltern Studies movement, initially organized by South Asian scholars, has produced work of singular significance in the field of history. (As the name indicates, Gramsci was a major inspiration for this movement by expanding class analyses to include

marginalized groups beyond the conventional economic classes of Marx and Engels.) Subaltern studies have since expanded to many other areas of the global South and provide a valuable counterpoint to postcolonial studies inspired by poststructuralism. I view the emergence of subaltern analyses as the most important intellectual development within Marxism (broadly construed) in the last half-century. Of course, it did not emerge from a vacuum and Gramsci is not the sole source of the movement as it has expanded. Howard Zinn's work was an important predecessor in the United States; that of C. L. R. James in the case of the Caribbean. In the United States I have great hopes for Critical Race Theory as it matures but it must go beyond its obsession with only race.

CS & ACG: What is the most pressing task of Marxist scholars and intellectuals today in the wake of the total crisis of capitalism? To what extent the fundamental premises of Marxism could inform the possible roles that intellectuals are supposed to fulfill in such a tumultuous times?

SAHOTRA SARKAR: Times are no doubt difficult but that is not an unusual situation for those on the Left. We should take inspiration from the words of Joe Hill as he faced the gallows: "Don't waste any time mourning. Organize." I am glad that you have called it a total crisis of capitalism. That is the right way to think of it even if the popular press will continue to call it an environmental crisis most of the time and focus on climate change as if it were an end-in-itself. We won't disappear as a species. But our social structures will be transformed as entire regions run out of water and productive habitats disappear along with culturally deeply valuable features such as the diversity of life. We will be left with barren lands and unhealthy populations living in misery. The culprit is capitalism and, in my view, the problem started in eighteenth century England with the enclosure of the commons and the assertion of private property by feudal lords so as to accumulate capital to drive the Industrial Revolution.

What can academics do about it. For one thing, they can expose the causal connections and, if they can organize with struggling working people, change the political landscape. I am optimistic about that. But academics and intellectuals right now also have to begin with some home cleaning and recapture universities around the world that have become corporatized and the market model for society has come to dominate all aspects of our life. In the United States, we have evolved a class of professional administrators who move around from university to university as Presidents, Provosts, and Deans, never teach or do

intellectual research, and carefully maintain power by structure of patronage reminiscence of ancient satraps. Administrators thrive by the ancient practice of divide-and-conquer exploiting differences between genuine faculty, students, and support staff. They maintain power because they are supposedly in tune with the market and bring money into the university. Of course, this particular class structure is not found everywhere in the world but it represents the kind of thing that intellectuals can organize against as a stage in participating in the broader struggles of political society.

Interview with Helena Sheehan

CS & ACG: *To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism are actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?*

HELENA SHEEHAN: Marxism is still the unsurpassed philosophy of our times. Nothing else is so coherent, so comprehensive, so cognizant of the constant flow of empirical knowledge. Nothing else comes even close to it in explaining the world in which we are now living. The key to this is that it is simultaneously totalizing and empirical.

CS & ACG: *In what respects the foundational premises of Marxism could inform a political strategy of exit from the contemporary crisis of capitalism?*

HELENA SHEEHAN: First of all, it names capitalism. It exposes the nature of capitalism as a system and shows how it functions, often contrary to all the deceptions and seductions of the culture generated by capitalism. Further, it names socialism as a vision of an alternative, an alternative we have seen embodied, however imperfectly, in past and present socialist societies. Moreover, it has inspired movements to transform the world in this direction. This alternative needs to continue to animate our movements protesting against the injustices of capitalism in such a way that we envisage concrete steps to get us from here to there. I see it as a long march in which we bring elements of socialism into being first within our own movements and also within the larger the society. I do not think there can be capitalism on one day and socialism the next day. I once thought in vaguely insurrectionary terms in the grip of the power of the magnificent October revolution, but today I see it more as a process of electing left governments, transforming institutions of civil society, especially schools, universities, parties, trade unions, cooperatives. It is true that many of these efforts have failed, basically because they have been crushed by the power of the global system itself, whatever about the betrayals and corruption of power. I try not to despair after experiencing so many defeats of movements in which I have invested my efforts and my hopes. I keep going, because there are still people and movements seeing things this way and pushing this way. I would like to believe that socialism will displace capitalism on a global scale, however complicated and difficult that might be. I no longer feel confident that it will happen, but I still think arguing and acting for that is the only choice I have, the only way to live my life.

CS & ACG: *How would you position some recent non-Marxist critiques of contemporary state of the world such as “Material turn,” post-humanism and new*

materialism vis a vis Marxism? Do you think these paradigms represent a complete rupture with the fundamental premises of Marxism? Do you think a productive/critical engagement with these paradigms possible? How should Marxist scholars respond to the epistemological tenets of these paradigms?

HELENA SHEEHAN: I find that a lot of younger intellectuals know very little history, even the history of their own disciplines or of ideas they espouse, as if they are the first to discover the wheel or to speak prose. I think the material turn is a reflection of the stubborn reality of matter in the face of a lot of sophisticated froth denying it. That said, I see the new materialism as a weak and pale thing compared to the rich Marxist tradition of dialectical materialism. Many of its exponents proceed as if Marxism had never happened. I think that one form of constructive engagement might be to bring this to their attention. They should read *The Return of Nature* by John Bellamy Foster, for example. It is also necessary to enter into constructive polemic with their premises, as Andreas Malm has done in *The Progress of This Storm*. The new materialism is not anchored in a world view that connects philosophy to political economy, to the whole interacting nexus of forces in motion, with a complex but determining role played by the mode of production.

CS & ACG: *What is the most pressing task of Marxist scholars and intellectuals today in the wake of the total crisis of capitalism? To what extent the fundamental premises of Marxism could inform the possible roles that intellectuals are supposed to fulfill in such a tumultuous times?*

HELENA SHEEHAN: The total crisis of capitalism is seen clearly only by Marxists, whose approach is characterised by totalizing thinking. Otherwise, capitalism generates fragmentation of experience and fractured perspectives on almost every question. Capitalism functions most effectively when it is not named, not apprehended as a system. It is our responsibility to bring the clear light of Marxism to bear in every situation and through every channel of communication we can possibly mobilize. We should also be on the streets where people are protesting the present and reaching out for a better future.

Interview with Christoph Henning

CS & ACG: *To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism are actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?*

CHRISTOPH HENNING: I do not think that the crisis of humanity is “total” —yes, the climate crisis could lead to an uninhabitable planet within a rather short time, and that is very horrible. But the language of “totality” invites a mindset of giving up on everything and letting go even those things that have worked quite well in the past—e.g., the sciences have made some progress in understanding the climate crisis, we have achieved at least some rights for women and minorities in some countries, and democracy and human rights are not replaceable. One fundamental premise of Marxism, as a school of thought founded by Marx and Engels, but which draws from many other sources as well, is the insight that “nature” was there before us, exists independently from us (even in this time of crisis) and is the foundation of human life on this planet, and of everything humanity has ever built. Hence, radical ecological thinking is very much in line with the Marxism of Marx, Engels and a group of scholars in the Marxian tradition, as described by J.B. Foster and others. I know that some scholars think differently, but I think the case is pretty clear.

CS & ACG: *In what respects the foundational premises of Marxism could inform a political strategy of exit from the contemporary crisis of capitalism?*

CHRISTOPH HENNING: Another foundational premise of Marxism, besides the importance of nature for political economy, is that nature is transformed by human labor. Hence, political changes need to focus on the ways human labor could be organized differently in order to fulfil human needs without destroying the planet. Recent research on the “ethnological Marx” has shown that a lot can be learned from pre-capitalistic modes of production all over the planet, where common property and practices of sharing have been much more sustainable (both socially and environmentally) than our current profit-oriented model of growth for growth's sake.

CS & ACG: *How would you position some recent non-Marxist critiques of contemporary state of the world such as “Material turn,” post-humanism and new materialism vis a vis Marxism? Do you think these paradigms represent a complete rupture with the fundamental premises of Marxism? Do you think a productive/critical engagement with these paradigms possible? How should Marxist scholars respond to the epistemological tenets of these paradigms?*

CHRISTOPH HENNING: In as much as popular new-materialist-approaches are informed by a post-structuralist attitude of downplaying the sciences and notions of truth, objectivity and ontology, their radical attitude often remains a boastful rhetoric that in the ends turns out to be rather affirmative, precisely by affirming techno-fixes and industrial destruction as our new future, and thus abstracting away global imbalances of power and the destructive forces of capitalism.

CS & ACG: *What is the most pressing task of Marxist scholars and intellectuals today in the wake of the total crisis of capitalism? To what extent the fundamental premises of Marxism could inform the possible roles that intellectuals are supposed to fulfill in such a tumultuous times?*

CHRISTOPH HENNING: Marxists are not the only groups that see how pressing the climate crisis has become, and how it worsens global inequality and exploitation on a daily basis. It is most important to form global alliances of pressure and awareness groups that demand global changes towards sustainability and ecological justice. This can only be achieved without extractivism, nationalist populism and without wars of aggression. Marxists should give up claims that they are destined to “lead the revolution,” however, within any rainbow coalition of progressive forces they have important things to contribute exactly because their approach is not only based on ethics, but also on a sound social scientific analysis that uncovers mechanisms of power, exploitation, ideology, alienation and ecological destruction.

Interview with Marcel van der Linden

CS & ACG: *To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism are actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?*

MARCEL VAN DER LINDEN: One of the great paradoxes of the current era is that the world working class continues to grow, while at the same time many labour movements are experiencing a crisis. According to the ILO (International Labour Organization), the percentage of pure wage dependents (“employees”) rose between 1991 and 2019 from 44 to 53 per cent. Ever greater numbers of workers worldwide maintain direct economic contacts with one another, even though many are probably unaware of this. And the proportion of international migrants in the world population increased from 2.8% to 3.5% between 2000 and 2020. Despite this absolute and relative growth of the global working class and its increasing interconnectedness traditional labour movements are in trouble almost everywhere. Consumer cooperatives have mostly disappeared, trade unions are declining (global union density is now down to a mere 6 per cent), Social Democratic and Labor parties are not doing very well electorally. “Real socialist” attempts in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, and Southeast Asia ultimately led to capitalist societies, while many of the communist parties in other countries have disappeared, or, if they still exist, are having a hard time.

This generalized crisis appears to mark the end of a long cycle, which roughly includes the period from the 1820s to the present. Following a prelude since the fourteenth century, countless efforts at self-organization and political articulation of labour interests have been observed from the eighteenth century, peaking inter alia with the revolutions in Haiti, Russia, and Bolivia and the rise of powerful labour organizations in parts of the Americas, Europe, Southern Africa, East Asia, and the western Pacific. Of course this advance has not consisted exclusively of successes, and the defeats may even have outnumbered the victories. For a long time, however, the general trend seemed to be improvement: “tomorrow the International will be the human race.”

Critical analysis of this great cycle—specifically in combination with the continuously growing global working class—is a challenge of enormous scholarly and political interest, especially because in many countries the decline coincides with a revival of the radical right, which presents itself as an alternative to the traditional workers’ organizations. The long cycle needs to be studied in depth to discover what the movements’ results and

prospects are. Why could some results be achieved? Why did some failures and defeats happen? Obtaining such insights is not an antiquarian exercise. A second “great cycle” is by no means inconceivable and in fact already seems to cautiously announce itself. Class conflicts will not diminish, and workers all over the world will continue to feel the ever-present need for effective organizations and forms of struggle. If a second great cycle emerges, historical research might offer insights and help avert mistakes.

Our theoretical and political tasks are huge. I see a number of important issues that need to be tackled. Let me mention three of them. First, there is the theory of value, the core of Marxism. This theory is in need of reconsideration. The fact that after more than 150 years of debate on *Capital*, vol. I, there is still not even the beginning of a consensus on basic conceptualizations, seems to indicate that the fundamental problems of the critique of political economy are not only due to “misreadings” of Marx, but may well be partly caused by inconsistencies in Marx’s work as such. Why, for example, should we assume that wage-earners “sell” their labour power? Ordinarily, one may call such a transaction (i.e. the piecemeal ‘sale’ of a commodity, without change of ownership) *letting* and not sale. It would make much more sense to say that wage-earners hire out their labour power. And why can slaves (fixed capital) not produce value? And so on.

A second major problem lies in the logic of capitalist development. Merchant capital is commonly understood to have been the *precursor* of industrial capital. At first, traders acted as mere intermediaries, collecting commodities from producers and distributing them to consumers. Subsequently, they increased their hold on the production process by advancing part payment for commodities to be fairly and duly delivered, and ultimately, they fully came to control the whole production process and became “productive capital” (Marx). Nowadays, however, many capitalists appear to have, by contrast, gone back to the former practice. They usually are able to do so while tightening rather than weakening their control over the chain of production which has grown much longer than used to be the case in the past. Backed up by the latest communication technology and state-of-the-art business management ploys, these multinational conglomerates succeed in dictating the terms of the global trade. As a result, we see a return of merchant capital at a much larger scale than was usual in the past. Connected with this is the increasing power of mercantile money capital and rent-seeking capital. One of the outcomes of this is that

the growing influence of merchant and money capital has changed the balance of power within the capitalist class. Productive capital is often no longer dominant, but has become subordinate. The power of trade unions where they are allowed to operate is weakened by this development, since they are often much stronger in the productive than in the mercantile and financial sectors.

A third problem concerns strategy. It appears that socialist movements in highly developed capitalism have reached a historic impasse. So far, the two classic strategies for creating a post-capitalist society—reform or revolution—have both proved ineffective. The revolutions of the twentieth century all took place in pre-industrial or industrializing countries, and never in fully developed capitalist societies. Some might consider this a coincidence, but the consistent absence of working-class revolutions rather suggests a structural reason. Although the working class became extremely numerous as economic growth advanced during the twentieth century, it never again behaved anywhere as radically as it had in Russia in 1917. Another symptom of the non-arrival of revolutions in advanced capitalist societies seems manifest in the fact noted by Perry Anderson that counter-institutions of dual power have never arisen in consolidated parliamentary democracies: “all the examples of soviets or councils so far have emerged out of disintegrating autocracies (Russia, Hungary, Austria), defeated military regimes (Germany), ascendant or overturned fascist states (Spain, Portugal).” There has been a considerable growth in collectively useful state functions in advanced capitalist countries, and the importance of public administration for the daily lives of the people has accordingly increased enormously. A revolution would therefore completely disrupt daily life. The changed role of the state has driven sharply upwards the ‘costs’ of attempts to overthrow capitalist society. On the other hand, the peaceful abolition of capitalism through reform has also so far proved impossible, a problem most clearly to be seen in the popular front governments in Spain (1936-39), France (1936-38), and Chile (1970-73).

Should there be a revival, the new forms of socialism will probably look different from the more traditional ones. It seems safe to say that success will be possible only if the major challenges (global economy, ecology, gender equality, social security, climate change, etc.) are substantively combined and tackled transnationally. If socialism is to survive it will therefore presumably have to combine ‘from-below’ and ‘from-above’ approaches by strategically uniting government policy, self-organization, and large-scale mobilization. Such change will take a great deal of time. According to Max

Weber, “the spirit” of capitalism has been “the product of a long and arduous process of education,” a development continuing over centuries. Likewise, a socialist society is probably conceivable only as the outcome of a comprehensive process of education, a process in which social change is accompanied by self-change.

Interview with Andrey Maidansky

CS & ACG: *To what extent do you think, the fundamental premises of Marxism are actual and viable in the wake of “total” crisis of humanity?*

ANDREY MAIDANSKY: If I may, I would strike the reference to the crisis of humanity from the question. This ideological cliché is not conducive to a reasonable answer to the question posed. Another reservation: Marxism is highly heterogeneous. For instance, Soviet Marxism was mainly a *state ideology*, although within it profound *scientific* concepts could emerge, e.g., in the works of Evald Ilyenkov and his circle. Already in Marx’s own writings, scientific concepts were mixed up with political ideologemes, so it is not a trivial task to identify the actual and viable premises of Marxism. I would point out three fundamentals:

(i) Human labour is the substance-subject, i.e. the basis and driving force, of world history. This is the Copernican discovery in social sciences. Marx’s teaching overall, like social life itself, revolves around the ‘sun of labour.’ All the concepts of his theory, without exception, are derivatives of the concept of labour.

(ii) The means of labour are the backbone of history and “the indicator (*Anzeiger*) of the social relations within which labour is carried on.” Show me the means by which you labour, and I will tell you how your society is organised. This is how a palaeontologist reconstructs an animal’s appearance and way of life from its bones.

(iii) The development of labour tools and technologies, or man’s “productive forces,” inevitably comes into conflict with the existent social relations, from property relations to family ties. This contradiction is resolved in the social revolution.

‘Actuality’ is often referred to as the relevance of an idea to current historical circumstances. I prefer to call such relevance ‘topicality’, because of the respect for the category of the actual (*wirklich*) that Hegel’s *Logic* instilled in me.

The true actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of Marx’s doctrine is neither the waves of vogue for *Das Kapital*, nor the crises and other symptoms of the ‘decay of capitalism’ that so excite political communists. It is the appearance of new scientific theories, powerful and unorthodox, from the bosom of classical Marxism, that makes it actual. In principle, the same can be said of Euclidean geometry. Any theory is actual and viable as long as it helps to

give birth to new ideas—insofar as it serves as a springboard for the human mind.

CS & ACG: *In what respects the foundational premises of Marxism could inform a political strategy of exit from the contemporary crisis of capitalism?*

ANDREY MAIDANSKY: “The contemporary crisis of capitalism” is an ideological myth, like the “eternal return” of the Nietzscheans. Crisis is a natural cyclical phase in the development of bourgeois society, not something like a stroke or premortal convulsions. In the middle of the nineteenth century Marx thought that capitalism was already decrepit, so that the next economic crisis might be its last. Today we know that it was an illusion—*Capital* was still a pimply teenager. Since then, the scientific and technological revolution has transformed the world, proving quite compatible with private property, the “invisible hand” of the market, the exploitation of man by man and other attributes of bourgeois civilisation. In our century human productive forces are growing faster than ever before in world history. Capitalism is still in full swing. “No social formation perishes before all the productive forces for which it gives ample room have developed” (Marx).

Marx called politics one of “ideological forms,” placing it on a par with legal, religious, artistic or philosophic forms of consciousness. The assumption that there are any political (philosophical, religious, etc.) “strategies of exit” from capitalist formation is totally incompatible with the materialist understanding of history. Here Marx himself ceased to be Marxist, turning from a scientist into an ideologue. Just as Newton ceased to be a Newtonian when he betrayed physics with theology and alchemy.

In my view, Marx’s political beliefs (including the dictatorship of the proletariat and the 10 precepts of *Manifesto*, borrowed from communist utopias along with the terms) are, as it were, Marxist alchemy. The alchemists had some useful ideas, indeed, but it is better not to confuse alchemy with the science of chemistry.

CS & ACG: *How would you position some recent non-Marxist critiques of contemporary state of the world such as “Material turn,” post-humanism and new materialism vis a vis Marxism? Do you think these paradigms represent a complete rupture with the fundamental premises of Marxism? Do you think a productive/critical engagement with these paradigms possible? How should Marxist scholars respond to the epistemological tenets of these paradigms?*

ANDREY MAIDANSKY: Since I am not familiar with the “recent non-Marxist critiques” in question, I will answer it in a general way. If critical dialogue with this or that non-Marxist scholar contributes to a deeper understanding of *reality*, i.e. social life, then such a dialogue can and should be conducted—no matter whether or not the rupture with the fundamental premises of Marxism is complete. Uncritical reliance on Marx’s words has done incomparably more harm to Marxist theory and practice than any rupture, revision or hostile attack.

CS & ACG: *What is the most pressing task of Marxist scholars and intellectuals today in the wake of the total crisis of capitalism? To what extent the fundamental premises of Marxism could inform the possible roles that intellectuals are supposed to fulfill in such a tumultuous times?*

ANDREY MAIDANSKY: Perhaps, for people who lived in Russia a hundred years ago, our “tumultuous times” would have seemed like a standing swamp of history. But the idea that Marxist scholars and intellectuals have a special role to play, especially in times of “total crisis of humanity”, goes back directly to Marx. We find this view already in his very first newspaper articles, when he was a Hegelian idealist who had not yet read Adam Smith.

Two natures coexisted in Marx—that of a true scientist and that of a prophet. As early as in 1843, he compared himself with Luther and dreamed of “stroking with a lightning of thought deeply into this naive soil of the people.” He was a firm believer in the inevitability of mondial revolution for “universal human emancipation” even before he took up political economy.

Marxists are used to cursing capitalism and prophesying its imminent end. Many of them reiterate, like a mantra, the idealist formula: “Theory becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses.” Who remembers that it was uttered by a Young Hegelian? Let us turn this thesis upside down in a materialist way, as recommended by the author of *Capital*. It is not an idea that grips the masses, but the masses that grip the idea which fits their material needs. Who cares there about verity or logical proofs?

The most pressing task for Marxists today and ever is not to deride or curse capitalism, but to understand it as “a natural historical process” (*einen naturgeschichtlichen Prozeß*).

Interview with Pepijn Brandon*

CS & ACG: *What are some of the fundamental features of a Marxist approach to history writing?*

PEPIJN BRANDON: This seems to be a straightforward question, but to answer is much harder than one would think. We could address it at the very general level of the relationship between structure and agency (“human beings make their own history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing,” etc.). But Marxist historians can be found on either end of the spectrum, from the completely structuralist to the highly voluntarist. Another approach would be that it is a form of history writing that foregrounds class and class struggles, starting from a fundamental identification with the oppressed and exploited. This seems to me to be a crucial feature, but it also begs the question where to put most of the world systems literature, or the important Marxist literature on the state and conflict within or between ruling classes. Or one could see Marxist history writing as applying “historical materialism,” using Marx’s discussion of the relationship between base and superstructure as a starting point. However, Marxist historians have diverged widely in how they interpreted this analogy (starting with Engels’ “final instance”), and to what extent they found it useful for their practical work at all. Marxists who rigidly try to fit their findings within such a rough and elemental philosophical framework tend to write texts that are stale, predictable and didactic at best, if not simply empirically flawed.

Marx’s own work does not give us much direct guidance on what defines Marxist history writing. His writings on revolution and counter-revolution in France (*Class Struggles, The Eighteenth Brumaire, Civil War*) are brilliant exposures of the role of class in politics and history. But they were written as journalism, not as systematic histories, and partly it is the fact that they are comments on events that have not yet fully run their course that gives these texts their dynamism and sting. In contrast, a text like *The secret diplomatic history of the eighteenth century*, where Marx did squarely engage in history writing, is largely forgettable. The famous chapters on “original accumulation” at the end of *Capital*, Volume I are unsurpassed in the way they conjure up the whirlwind of global processes that aided in the formation of the capitalist system. These chapters form a point of depar-

* Upon the request of the author, questions of the interview were reformulated.

ture for my own work, as they do for many other historians of global capitalism. However, it would be mistaken to read them as an attempt by Marx to write an actual history of capitalism in England, let alone of capitalism in general. Here like elsewhere in his magnum opus, Marx introduces “real” history for the purpose of developing specific theoretical problems that emerge at a certain stage of moving from capital in the abstract to the concrete operations of the capitalist mode of production.

For me personally, the most fruitful way of approaching the question of “fundamentals” is to say that what makes a history “Marxist” is that it starts from the broad problematic outlined by Marx, and creatively applies concepts and ideas drawn from Marx to further develop this problematic. Concretely, this means 1. trying to understand capitalism *in* history by situating it within the history of humanity, including the socially mediated place of human beings in nature; 2. understanding capitalism *through* history, i.e. studying concrete history to better understand its inherent tendencies and contradictions; and 3. understanding capitalism *as* history, i.e. as not the inescapable outcome of human nature, but as a specific form of social organization that emerges historically as a result of social struggles and that will end through social struggles (in ways that are ruinous, joyful, or probably a combination of both). We can then begin to translate these points into ambitious research programs covering specific periods and problems, encompassing both micro-history and large scale comparisons. In terms of scientific practice and standards of proof, Marxist historiography should be judged on the same criteria as any other attempt to make sense of the fragmented source-record through which we try to access the human past. Too often, Marxist writers contend themselves with providing theoretical reformulations of old problems based on secondary literature (also reflecting the fact that traditionally, a lot of Marxist historiography has been produced by sociologists and political theorists). Marxists can only hope to have any influence on their field, if they can show the value of their theoretical baggage by employing it to write better histories.

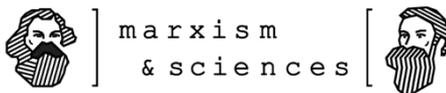
CS & ACG: *How would you position non-Marxist critiques of Marxist historiography. Do you see room for a fruitful dialogue?*

PEPIJN BRANDON: Marxist historiography as we know it had its heydays from the 1960s to the 1980s, as a result of the global explosion of social movements. It had a massive influence both in its more structuralist iterations, and in its “from below” variants that stimulated the rise of the new social history. The “cultural turn” within the field in general, leading to a

privileging of issues of representation and loosely related to the rise of postmodernism in philosophy with its stress on textuality, greatly damaged the prestige of Marxist historiography. Important, and unfortunately not always unjustified, critiques also came from writers who went through the new social movements that accused Marxist historians of blindness for issues of race, gender and oppression. Of these various critiques on Marxism “from the left,” postcolonial theory probably was the most effective. Branding Marxism as just another form of eurocentrism robbed it of what for most of the twentieth century had been its greatest point of pride: its ability to link an account of domestic exploitation and social struggles within the more industrialized countries to anti-imperialist solidarity with the most oppressed and exploited peoples worldwide. It must be acknowledged that even the best Marxist historiography of the preceding period left its flank wide open for this charge. Think of the work of the famous one-time members of the British Communist Party Historians Group. With all their strengths, they also shared fully in the British exceptionalism and methodological nationalism of their intellectual environment. Dipesh Chakrabarty was simply right when he asked what his own teacher E.P. Thompson’s stress on the traditions of the “free-born Englishman” had to offer the Indian working class.

Of course, this is not the whole story. That such critiques by and large did not lead to viable reformulations but to a complete rout that relegated explicitly Marxist historiography to a niche in academia cannot be seen outside the wider political context of that period. The defeat of social movements, the turn towards neoliberalism, the collapse of most of the dictatorial states that described themselves as socialist, the failures (often through brutal repression) of Marxist movements in the formerly colonized countries, all aided in the turn towards social conservatism and politically “safe” liberal criticism in academia. Unfortunately, that has also fostered a certain defensiveness among many who do continue to write histories inspired by Marx. Such a defensive starting point is understandable, but it is also self-defeating. This is especially true in the current conjuncture. The cultural turn is over. The multifarious crises of capitalism (economic, geopolitical, environmental, social) have again pushed larger systemic questions to the fore. The most influential historical works of the past decades have grappled with issues such as the long-term evolution of social inequality, the role of violence and slavery in capitalist development, the roots of systemic racism, and the origins of the Capitalocene (as opposed to the socially and historically undifferentiated Anthropocene). To

these efforts, Marxist historians potentially have to offer an unrivalled apparatus of systemic social critique. However, they will not be able to do so by standing on the sidelines and lambasting everyone else for “not having the proper definition of capitalism.” Marxist historians can contribute to these debates if they use their theoretical sophistication to produce original investigations that deal with these large questions that now confront society as a whole, are capable of doing so in terms that speak to the rest of the field, and are willing to critically consider their own fundamental premises in the process. After all, the purpose of critical history writing is not to prove the correctness of this or that theory, but to gain a better understanding of the past in order to bolster the fight for better futures.

**ESSAY**

Marx: A Nineteenth Century Ghost

Engin Ümer

THE “GHOST” THEME IS THE MAIN POINT of the manifesto's famous sentence. “A ghost of communism haunts Europe.” The ghost is the repressed one. But here the ghost is the spirit of new life. The ghost is the enemy pursued by those who use ancient rituals to banish him. Marx and Engels spoke of the regenerative power of this specter by looking at history. What was this life? The moment of history, which is a class conflict, has established a revolutionary system that extinguishes the spirit of life. At the same time this was the bourgeois revolution which was charmed Marx and Engels. The ghost idea of Marx and Engels is different. A ghost is a nightmare that wanders for a new life. It was the soul of utopia. Perhaps the ghost is an unknown relative or metamorphosis, of the spirit in Hegel.

Jacques Derrida dealt with the ghost theme much later. He even established relations between Shakespeare and Marx. The ghost of Hamlet and the ghosts of Marx. I quote the expression “ghosts” from Derrida. Derrida mentioned not one but several ghosts: this can mean a crowd, if not masses, the horde, or society, or else some population of ghosts with or without a people, some community with or without a leader-but also the less than one of pure and simple dispersion”. On the other hand, I am more attracted to Lacan than Derrida. Slavoj Žižek writes that Lacan thinks the concept of “symptom” was invented by Marx. Marx before Freud. We can think of it like a psychoanalytic question: Why is communism shown

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in ghost form? Does this mean the spirit of the world that is not wanted to be seen or to be seen and wanted to be suppressed?

My work, “Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Ghost,” seeks to bring to mind this symptom. It's a constructed punctum. The technique of my work is digital manipulation. My inspiration is nineteenth century ghost photographers. Its visual aesthetic is gothic, a reference to the metaphors of ghosts and nightmares that Marx chose to use.

The ghost interpretation in contemporary culture is based on that communism is over. The ghost is dead (end of history theories in the 1990s). But the ghost is staring. It is always nearby. There's a ghost when it comes to mind. For the time being it has haunted the form of Marx. But he/it wants to say the same thing. “This new life is possible.”

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WORK

Marx: A Nineteenth Century Ghost

Photomanipulation by Engin Ümer, 2017





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CULTURAL WORK

**WORK**

In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos

Nazım Hikmet

Is there anyone in the cosmos who thinks differently from us?
 yes, there is
 whether it looks like us
 i don't know
 perhaps it's more beautiful than us
 looks like a buffalo, say, but is gentler than a meadow
 maybe it looks like sunlight on a river
 perhaps it is uglier than us
 it may look like an ant, say, but be mightier than a tractor
 perhaps it looks like the creaking of a door
 perhaps it is neither more beautiful nor uglier than us
 perhaps it looks exactly like us
 and on one of the stars
 on which one i don't know
 on one of the stars our messenger will speak
 in which language i don't know
 on one of the stars our messenger will speak with it
 will call it Tovarish
 i know it will open like that
 will call it Tovarish
 i have not come to your star to build a base
 nor to ask for petroleum or grain concessions
 i'm not here to sell you Coca-Cola either

Hikmet, Nazım. (1963) 2022. *In the Name of the Comradeship of the Cosmos*. Translated by Mehmet Şahin and Jonathan Maurice Ross. *Marxism & Sciences* 1(2): 189–190.
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i've come to greet you in the name of terrestrial hopes
in the name of free bread and free carnations
in the name of satisfying labor and satisfying rest
and so that we can celebrate
"Sharing everything —except beloveds—all together, everywhere and al-
ways"
in the name of the comradeship
 of houses
 homelands
 worlds
 and the cosmos

13 April 1961, Paris

Translated by Mehmet Şahin and Jonathan Maurice Ross

**ESSAY**

Cosmic

Ömer Er

THE MELODY OF THE WORK IS BASED on adjacent pitches written within an octave. The most distinctive feature of the work is the use of the same note throughout the tonality changes. Another striking feature of the work is the use of enharmonic notes. Stable contour of the melody is achieved by chromatic motion. The fluid and harsh qualities of this smooth melodic structure is achieved by the use of a string orchestra. Neither a cadence nor a final could be heard throughout the work which is in A minor tonality. On the contrary, change to another tonality could be heard at the end of each phrase. In summary, the composer tries to transform the stable character of the long melodic phrases to a more fluid one by the tonality changes applied in each measure. Acoustic string orchestra is used as a contrast to the electronic structure in this work written for electro-violin.

Ömer, Er. 2022. *Cosmic*. [Essay and Musical Score]. *Marxism & Sciences* 1(2): 191–193. <https://doi.org/10.56063/MS.2208.01211>

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WORK

Cosmic

Composed by Ömer Er, 2005

COSMIC

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Cosmic". The score is written on a single system of seven staves. The first staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The music consists of a series of notes, some with stems and some without. Below the notes are various chord symbols and performance markings. The chord symbols include Am9, Gm, E#5/C#, F/A, Bbm, Gb/Bb, Bm, G/B, F#m/A, Em/G, D/F#, Gm, F#, Gm, rit., F#m, F, E, C/E, E, Fm, Accelerando, F#m, D/F#, Eb/G, Am, Fm/Ab, E/C#, Fm/Ab, E/C#, C/E, Em, C/E, Fm, Db/F, Dm/F, Db/F, Dm/F, Db/F, Fm, D/F#, E/C#, Am9, Am9, and Am9. Performance markings include "rit.", "a tempo", and "Accelerando". The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.



VIDEO

Music video of the *Cosmic*; electro-violin was performed live by the composer in front of the jury at the 14. *Halıcı Bilgisayarla Beste Yarışması* (14th Halıcı-Composing with Computers Contest) in 2007:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ECTibqacas>



VIDEO

Adaptation of the work with a new title 'In the Name of the Comradeship of Cosmos' by *Çapuleysin Müzik Orkestra* in July, 5, 2013.

The video record and edit: Volkan Mutlu.

Dubbing: Metin Coşkun, Nâzım Hikmet Cultural Center (NHKM), İstanbul.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psmsYBDDseY>



ESSAY

Boyun Eğmeyenler (The Ones Who Don't Bow Down)

Yiğit Özatalay

BOYUN EĞMEYENLER (A.K.A. “ESKİ YOL”) is a composition which came into being during the Gezi Resistance in 2013 in Turkey. As the lyrics reveal with the phrases like “revolution winked at us” and “resistance till the victory”, this little piece of art believes in standing up for an egalitarian revolution. It was first performed by a group of artists in order to reflect the opposition against the ruling government via a video clip organised by Nâzım Hikmet Cultural Center (NHKM) in Istanbul. Being a composition of the pianist Yiğit Özatalay, this music was performed in numerous concerts and in numerous ways by *Yürüyen Merdiven*¹ a drums-piano duo formed together with the drummer Mustafa Kemal Emirel. In 2021, *Yürüyen Merdiven* recorded it as a part of his live album “Live at Yeldeğirmeni Sanat” and continues to play this little song in his every single concert, with different guests.

Last year, the song was recorded with a new arrangement and with new texts for *Yürüyen Merdiven*'s new album called “Yürümek.” In this new version which will be released approximately in November 2022, 3 texts by 3 socialist poets (“Buluşmak Üzere” by Can Yücel, “Çocuklarıma” by Aziz Nesin and “Aya Gidilecek” by Nâzım Hikmet) are read by Genco Erkal and Tülay Günel. The arrangement includes also a bass clarinet part performed by Çağdaş Engin.

1. <https://yuruyenmerdivenmusic.com/>

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WORK

Boyun Eğmeyenler

Composed by Yiğit Özatalay, 2013

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece "Boyun Eğmeyenler" by Yiğit Özatalay. The score is written on three systems of staves. The first system is marked with a box containing the letter 'A' and a double bar line. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'pizz.' (pizzicato) and 'arco' (arco). The second system is marked with a box containing the letter 'B' and a double bar line. It continues the piece with similar notation and includes a '1. 2nd x' marking. The third system concludes the piece with a 'FINE: (G-)' marking. The score is written in a clear, legible hand and includes various musical notations such as accidentals, slurs, and dynamic markings.



LYRICS

The Ones Who Don't Bow Down

Lyrics by Yiğit Özatalay

They are the “chapullers!”

They are the resisters!

They are the hundred thousands, millions!

Whatever you say they are the PEOPLE!

One day or one week is not enough

Resistance, till the victory!

In the Gezi Park of Taksim

The Revolution winked at us!

Taksim, Kizilay, Antakya

The Revolution became possible with them!

They are the hundred thousands, millions!

They are the ones who don't bow down!

One day or one week is not enough

Resistance, till the victory!

They are the “chapullers!”

They are the resisters!

Dersim, Rize, Adana

Izmir, Konya, Isparta

They are the hundred thousands, millions!

They are the ones who don't bow down!

One day or one week is not enough

Resistance, till the victory!

In the Gezi Park of Taksim

The Revolution winked at us!

Taksim, Kizilay, Antakya

The Revolution became possible with them!

They are the hundred thousands, millions!

They are the ones who don't bow down!

One day or one week is not enough

Resistance, till the victory!

FOREVER!



VIDEO

Music video of the work with English translation of the lyrics by Nâzım Hikmet Cultural Center (NHKM), Istanbul in July 13, 2013:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2Ug0BvNAxQ>



VIDEO

Video recording of the work by *Yürüyen Merdiven* as a part of the group's live album "Live at Yeldeğirmeni Sanat" in 2021:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-M32ECqpJ_E



VIDEO

Video recording of the work by *Yürüyen Merdiven* featuring Barış Ertürk::

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5hShrMAYSk>



VIDEO

Video recording of the work by *Yürüyen Merdiven* featuring Ülkü Aybala Sunat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvfKvnG7CYs>

Revisiting the Semi-Feudal Question in the Philippines: A Brief Literature Review

Jacinto R. Valila, Jr.

ABSTRACT: Notwithstanding the insistence of the mainstream left that the Philippines' mode of production remains semi-feudal and semi-colonial, even as other left organizations persevere in their belief to the contrary that the country is already capitalist, albeit an appendage to the world capitalist system—Marxist thinkers must never cease from studying the question on the foreground that different social movements in the Philippines advocating socialism appear to have been stalled in struggles since the 1930s. While there have been radical upsurges in the 1950s, 70s, and 80s, the left, in general, has failed to exploit them. A myriad of causes could be attributed to the prolonged stasis of the Philippine left. One reason is undoubtedly rooted in their analysis of the mode of production. Among the imperatives of such an analysis is that it sets forth the precise accounting and identification of classes for the revolution and counter-revolution. Without a clear grasp of this balance from a Marxist inventory of classes, a movement may lose both its social relevance and revolutionary elan. The subsequent modest and brief literature review offers a fresh invitation for a reexamination of the question at hand, far from simplifying and dogmatizing some Marxist categories. Hopefully, this paper will encourage every concerned party and student of the Philippine left tradition and development studies to revisit the question from the multi-disciplinary perspectives within the rich treasury of Marxist-Leninist literature. This is with an end-view that such a collective review which may happen soon will help approximate and reconfigure a truly Marxist specificity of the Philippine mode and contribute to the rekindling of the otherwise hindered struggles of the Filipino workingmen and people for national liberation towards a socialist future. The paper centers on the debates on the mode of production question in the Philippines among Marxists, and it does not cover bourgeois economics and post-Marxists' thoughts.

KEYWORDS: Marxism, Philippines, mode of production, semi-feudalism.

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Prisoners of Articulation Theory?

In *The Philippine Peasant as Capitalist: Beyond the Categories of Ideal-Typical Capitalism*, Aguilar (2013) advances the thought that the Marxist debates on the question of the Philippine mode of production since the 1970s were influenced mainly by the articulation theory like those within the non-Marxist fields. Accordingly, such a theory posits that the peasantry is necessarily subordinated to the commodity economy in peripheral countries of the world capitalist system.

With the dependency theory in mind, Aguilar (2013) emphasizes further that even the mainstream left's semi-colonial and semi-feudal thesis is afflicted with this articulation theory. Citing Rivera, he describes the main left's proposition as:

[...] founded on the conviction that unevenly developed different modes of production coexist and yet are in obvious contradiction with each other. Agriculture, in particular, is viewed as dominated by a variant of the feudal mode of production, that is, by a semi-feudal mode harnessed to serve a predatory imperialist bourgeoisie. The basis for this interpretation is the historical predominance of tenancy in the Philippine countryside, especially in rice, corn, and coconut-growing areas. (Aguilar 2013, 41–42)

The countryside, accordingly, is characterized by widespread tenancy relations between landlords and the peasantry. The land rent, corvee labor, and usury on the tenants appropriated by the landlords through coercive mechanisms are considered unpaid surplus labor.

Aguilar (2013) further insists that independent academics like Rene Ofreneo and M. Magallona, who are influenced by the dependency theory, are with the position that Philippine agriculture is now maybe capitalist, considering the land reform campaign of Marcos, Sr. in the 1970s which may have broken the back of feudalism in the countryside. This is not to discount the more precise position taken by the Bukluran sa Ikaunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa-BISIG (Socialist Detachment in Theory and Practice) that “the dominant and governing relations of exploitation in both agriculture and manufacturing are capitalist. It adds that while feudal relations may exist in some parts of the country, they operate mostly under the logic of a dominant capitalist mode of production [which] is why the Philippines is not semi-feudal but capitalist” (Aguilar 2013, 42).

Aguilar (2013) never lost sight also of the earlier proclamation of the old Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas- PKP1930 (Communist Party of the

Philippines, 1930) that the land reform of Marcos Sr. was a radical proposition against the centuries-old feudalism in the Philippines, with the PKP healing the dictator as a scion of the radical middle class who was instrumental for the industrialization of the Philippines. Thus, the PKP fell into the trap of supporting Marcos Sr. and abandoning its revolutionary struggle for socialism in the mid-1960s. Törnquist (1991) confirms such positioning of the left in his exposition on Communists and Democracy in the Philippines.

The above-cited conceptions of the Philippine mode of production, of course, if one has to take them seriously, are arguably more sophisticated than the official thesis adopted by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP, 1968). The party has been asserting up to now, more than fifty years since the publication of the Philippine Society and Revolution (PSR) and the founding of the CPP itself (Guerrero, 1970; Sison 1987; 2020) that the Philippines remain a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country as a result of the intermarriage of global finance capital with that of domestic feudalism. The resultant offspring, therefore, between the union of the West and the East (Lagman, 1994) is a concomitant semi-feudal economy whose growth is restricted by the local domestic production economy and the weight of global monopoly capital in consumer industries.

The inability of the country, therefore, to go forth in industrializing spells a prolonged yet agonizing delay in the transformation of Philippine agriculture into a capitalist industry.

How can we make sense of these Filipino Marxists' and socialists' positions on the issue? Is it possible to approximate the exact mode of production at any given historical specificity, the way Marx concluded with utmost conviction in his *Das Kapital* that the British economy was capitalist, or the controversial declaration of Lenin in his work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* that indeed such a country at the turn of the last century was already marching inevitably towards capitalism, despite the immense obstacles posed by the remnants of feudal bondage and serfdom?

Aside from *Das Kapital* and *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* which the subsequent Marxists have used in modeling out their templates for their analyses of the supposed modes of production of other countries—are there advances in Marxist thought which could be used as a platform of analysis? Was Mao's semi-feudal characterization of China a deviation from the paradigm constructed by Marx and Lenin?

Lenin on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in Russia and Lagman's Polemics against the Mainstream Left

Since Marx preoccupied himself with the question of the extraction of surplus value in socialized labor with the otherwise privatized appropriation of the same surplus through his analysis of British capitalism in *Das Kapital*, most Marxists come to regard Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* as the most authoritative reference on the question of how indeed late-developing economies transformed from feudalism to capitalism within the ambit of monopoly capitalism.

Lenin (1899), in this seminal work, begins by emphasizing that such a transformation is compelling and inevitable, considering that the "basis of commodity production is the division of labor" (Ch.1–The Theoretical Mistakes of the Narodnik Economists). When social labor is divided between agriculture and the emergent industries, to Lenin, the march to capitalism is to be anticipated. Thus, Lenin asserts that with the penetration of the cash economy into the hitherto feudal economy, the foundation of this natural and self-sufficient economy starts to erode, giving way to the division of labor in agriculture.

This division of labor in agriculture, therefore, leads to the depeasantization/differentiation of the peasantry within the transition from feudalism to capitalism. As Lenin (1899) emphasizes, the peasantry as a class gradually disintegrates into various classes in the countryside. He classified these classes into rich, middle, landless, and jobless peasants who are utterly proletarianized by selling their labor power to survive. Meanwhile, the middle peasants struggle to maintain their farm lots under capital penetration. In contrast, the rich peasants turn to the modernization of their farmlands, employing the proletarianized and the middle peasants and, in the process, extracting surplus value from them. At times, the rich peasants lease out their lands to the middle peasants, maximizing rent as a form of surplus value. These rich and middle peasants are the precursors of capitalist farms and the commercialization of agriculture in the countryside. They are the future capitalists in the agricultural sector, as Lenin would see it. Lenin (1899) in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* declares (Chapter II Differentiation of the Peasantry):

The sum-total of all the economic contradictions among the peasantry constitutes what we call the differentiation of the peasantry. The peasants very aptly and strikingly characterize this process with the term "depeasantizing." This process signifies the utter dissolution of the old, patriarchal peasantry and the creation of new types of rural inhabitants. (Lenin 1899)

And he asserts even earlier that (Chapter I The Theoretical Mistakes of the Narodniks Economists):

The growth of industrial population at the expense of the agricultural (or it is bound up inseparably both with the evolution of the industry and with the evolution of agriculture; the formation of industrial centers, their numerical growth, and the attraction of the population by them cannot but exert a most profound influence on the whole rural system and cannot but give rise to a growth of commercial and capitalist agriculture. (ibid., 1899)

Lenin's prediction of the massive uprooting of the rural population close to 200 years ago seems to have been confirmed by the study of Araghi (1995), which estimates that by the year 2000, close to half of the world population is already living in urban and industrial centers. He counsels that de-peasantization should not be viewed as a local phenomenon in a certain country but as a global trend given the capitalist intensification on a global scale. Insinuating on the presence of global monopoly capitalism, although it has an uneven presence in the different parts of the world, Araghi confirms that the trend is irreversible. Therefore, we are now witnessing the spectacular dissolution of the feudal economy and the uprooting of the peasantry from the countryside on a worldwide scale.

In the Philippines, another study confirms the migration of peasants to urban centers. Macrotrends (n.d.) provides data on the steady increase of rural migrants' flights. Currently, nearly fifty percent of the country's population is living in urban areas. This invalidates the long-held view that more than seventy percent of the populace are rural-based and are predominantly peasants.

Lenin may have also referred to the work of Friedrich Engels which is *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*. In his review of the book, Chandra (2002) affirms the theory of Engels on the depeasantization and the proletarianization of the small peasant sub-class due to capitalist penetration in agriculture.

As to the timeline of this transition process, Lenin (1899) appears to be silent as it seems that it is not the business of Marxist science to assign neither specific dates for the completion of the transition nor to point-out junctures of transition. What is important to Lenin consists of the development trajectory, the inner laws of development, and the pattern by which the same trajectory may have to follow in the general transition from feudalism to capitalism.

In fact, upon finalizing this trajectory and the inner laws of the development of capitalism from the wombs of feudalism, Lenin (1899) thus declared Russia during his time to be decisively capitalist. This was despite the gigantic remnants and survivals of feudalism and serfdom and even Tsarism. Surprisingly, he was never concerned with the so-called obstacles in Russia's march to capitalism. And among them were the persistence of the widespread serfdom and the agonizing process of peasant differentiation. To him, at the beginning of the peasant class differentiation through the division of labor, and with the gradual and at times rapid conversion of agriculture into an industry itself—the foreseeable march to capitalism has already begun. The continuing and irreversible decay of the old natural economy sets in.

Some Marxists would tend to worry that the slow, gradual, and even agonizing process of depeasantization which hampers and deters the growth of capitalism is a confirmation that capitalism itself may have never set in indeed in a particular country. In his work, Aoki (2020) recalls the debate among Marxists that ensued in pre-war Japan upon its embarkation on industrialization. Accordingly, the Japanese Marxists could not understand that despite Japan's massive drive for industrialization, widespread remnants of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation persisted in the countryside. To uncover this phenomenon, Aoki cites Yamada, who avers that "semi-feudal capitalism" is a deviation from the law of the reproduction of capitalism. On the other hand, Saisaki, as cited by Aoki, insists that capitalism in Japan then was immature; hence, the persistence of semi-feudalism which would eventually coalesce in the future with the general laws of capitalist development.

Again, citing Uno, who asserts that both Yamada's and Saisaki's analyses are culled from highly theoretical categories on the laws of capitalist development and reproduction akin to those in *Das Kapital*, Aoki (2020) says Uno calls to focus the study on the development stages in Japan to understand the phenomenon at hand. He affirms that analyzing a certain mode of production should grasp all the necessary historical, class, and political-state antecedents in a particular country.

In other words, the Marxist analysis of the actual and specific conditions has had to be undertaken in Japan. With this, Aoki (2020) finds out that late-developing capitalism would undergo an excruciating process of depeasantization with widespread persistence of the remnants of feudalism and semi-feudalism as imperialism supplies most of the capital goods and types of machinery into the industrial sector of Japan. This made the

locally emergent capitalism takes off gradually, given the persistence and abundance of supplies from imperialist enterprises. The demand for more workers in the cities and the mass migration from the countryside were therefore delayed considerably by this phenomenon. Such, however, is not a valid reason to deny that capitalism has already taken roots in pre-war Japan.

This understanding is only made possible through Lenin's (1916) analysis of imperialism, the global monopoly capitalism that exports surplus products and capital to the Third World, and the late-capitalizing nations.

By contrast, the mainstream Philippine left, unmindful may be of Lenin's theory on the transition from feudalism to capitalism—persists in the assumption that the Philippines' limited commodity production hinders the full development of capitalism in agriculture (Guerrero 1970; Sison 1987, 2020). Therefore, agriculture could not and would not transform at all. Hence, because of the limited development in the agricultural sector enmeshed with the capital of global monopoly corporations which require raw materials for production—the feudal forms of exploitation continue alongside the capitalist forms of exploitation in the countryside. In simple terms, the country's production model is stalled between feudalism and capitalism. Thus, the semi-feudal label.

Among the feudal modes of exploitation are the corvee labor, rent, usury, and sharecropping arrangement in leasehold lands. In contrast, the forms of capitalist exploitation or extraction of agricultural surplus are wage labor among the landless peasants and even the middle peasants who employ themselves with other farms and odd “sideline” jobs.

With the country's limited industries including those dealing with the processing raw materials, the mainstream left asserts that the country remains semi-feudal and semi-colonial by the marriage of the global monopoly capital with feudal agriculture (Guerrero 1970; Sison 1987; 2020). To them, domestic feudalism serves as the social base of imperialism, as the PSR would put it. The country appears therefore to be in suspended animation within the semi-feudal mode paradigm and without any possible and probable en-route escape towards commercialization or mechanization of the agricultural sector, the classical hallmark of capitalist inroads in the countryside.

This prompts Lagman (1994) to chastise the mainstream left. He asserts that with the phenomenon of depeasantization and as the peasantry is being liquidated by commodity production, the same constitutes a sure sign that capitalism has already penetrated the Philippine countryside. To

him, it is undeniable that the Philippine peasantry has been depeasantized even at the turn of the last century. If not, how could one explain the existence of the national democratic revolution in 1896? To insist on the suspended semi-feudal mode is to Lagman—to deny Lenin’s theory of depeasantization and the swelling of the urban centers of the disenfranchised middle and small peasants from the countryside.

Lagman (1994) emphasizes that the business of Marxist political economy is not to determine the number of the proletariat based on the available statistics. This is an obvious allusion to the mainstream left’s belief that the peasant population still predominates in number over the working class. To him, as long as these inner laws on the development of capitalism from feudalism are valid, it is apt that Filipino Marxists declare the Philippine mode as capitalist, no matter how agonizing the transition to capitalism may be and how long it would take. He cites Marx declaring England as the most advanced capitalist country in the world during his time with only around a million workers. And, Lenin for that matter, proclaimed the dawning of capitalism even in the most underdeveloped, moribund, and Tsarist Russia before the October Revolution of 1917, the first socialist victory of the workingmen.

The Particular Features and Specificities of the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism

Our reviewed literature from Marxist authors appears to be in concession to the following:

(1) Under different conditions, e.g., social formation, nature of the state, degree of the penetration of monopoly capital into the local economy, resistance, and negotiation of peasant sub-classes in the disintegration process of the entire class, and other features—there is no such thing as a Marxist developmental template in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Since different countries differ in these attributes, each country has its general development trajectory. What is certain is that once the division of labor begins in the commercial/industrial sector, it would permeate the countryside, setting forth the division of labor therein. The same will trigger the differentiation of the peasantry, constituting the agricultural sector into a distinct industry.

(2) The works of Marx (*Das Kapital*) and Lenin (*The Development of Capitalism in Russia*) deal chiefly with British and Russian capitalism. What are applicable from these works in the analysis of the modes for other

countries are the mere inner laws of the development of capitalism: (a) the division of labor which starts in industrial enclaves penetrating agriculture and thereby triggering depeasantization, and the transformation of agriculture itself into a distinct industry; (b) the transformation could be slow and agonizing as class struggles permeate among the differentiated classes in the countryside; (c) the remnants of feudal relations and exploitation may persist over a long period, and (d) peasant differentiation will trigger an exodus from the countryside to the urban centers (Lenin 1899).

(3) Social formulations are different from the mode of production category and interchanging the two may result in a distorted accounting of the class forces in the inventory of classes through the analysis of the mode of production.

On a larger issue, Aguilar (1989) appears to concede that the Marxist categories may be insufficient in fully grasping, describing, and comprehending the societies' mode in the capitalist periphery such as the Philippines. Although he takes refuge in the methodology of historical materialism, Aguilar points out in his paper that the mode of production has a complex dynamism as different classes within each specificity enter into different relations with several classes, making it almost impossible to dichotomize the dominant from the secondary and so forth.

Citing Eric Hobsbawm in his *Introduction to Marx's Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, Aguilar (1989) has this to say:

The clear implication of this methodological tenet of historical materialism is that theory cannot prescribe only one form of societal arrangement: what it can do is identify "the limits of the logically possible, while history reveals the selection of phenomena from the logically possible which have been actualized" (Kitching 1987, 43). The study of the historical conditions which account for the possibility or impossibility of the forms themselves requires an examination of the 'actually existing' relations of production, the 'essential relations' of society which ultimately consist entirely of "the actions of 'real, living individuals'" (Sayer 1987, 131-132). Consequently, the point of departure for any theoretical analysis must be the concrete social forms of productive phenomena, remembering that "the subject, society, must always be kept in mind as the presupposition" (Marx 1973, 102). (Aguilar 1989, 45)

Pointing to this as the theoretical fallacy of ideal capitalism and, therefore, any official trajectory or projection on how capitalism may develop in a certain country could not exist and may not exist at all, Aguilar (1989) suggests that each Marxist has to rely on the inner laws of the development of capitalism and apply these laws creatively to the specific conditions of

each country, taking into account the web of the complex relationships among the classes, the role of the state, and the role of international capital penetrating the local agriculture, among others.

This view appears to gain support from Ruyle (1975) who proposes to revise the popular linear and paradigmatic theory on the development of society within the historical materialist context. To him, the popular model of the development of societies from primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and world communism could be a mechanical attribution to Marx's and Engels's historical materialism. And Ruyle (1975) would thus proclaim:

Finally, the evolutionary typology espoused by this Soviet brand of "Marxism" is inadequate. The unilineal, Eurocentric (model primitive clan society, slave-owning society, feudal society, capitalist society) forces Asian, African, and aboriginal American societies into preconceived slots with little regard for their characteristics and development potential. For example, what can we make of a "slave system" that lumps ancient Sumer, Egypt, and China with the Aztecs, Incas, and the Roman Empire? Or feudalism that includes the Tang dynasty in China, the Islamic caliphates, pre-Taika Japan, and medieval Europe? How can we understand East Asiatic history without understanding the major social changes that occurred during the late T'ang and Sung dynasties, both "feudal" societies? Surely concepts that can be applied to such diverse societies have lost their specific usefulness for understanding the societies themselves. (Ruyle 1975, 8-9)

Short of suggesting that Marx and Engels were not definitive on the mode of production concept, Ruyle (1975) says what is important to them is the question of the extraction of surplus value and how this generates the contradiction of class struggle. To take Marx's and Engel's suggested development path of societies as motored by the development of the productive forces and the attendant class struggles mechanically without the attendant modification, as shown by concrete evidence in history, is to dogmatize and vulgarize historical materialism accordingly. There are variants and deviations apparently in the actual evolution of societies from what had been suggested by Marx and Engels and the Soviet Marxists as well.

A loose categorization of the modes might be more logical, and thus, Ruyle (1975) in *Mode of Production and Mode of Exploitation: The Mechanical and The Dialectical*, devises the following development schema:

Primitive communism. This is the original social order of mankind, appearing simultaneously with social production. In this primitive communal social order,

humanity evolved its present physical and mental nature. Primitive communism is characterized by the absence of social classes and the related institutions of coercion and thought control, by equal access to the social product and the means of violence, and by the equal obligation of all to participate in social production.

Bronze Age feudalism. As civilizations began to emerge in the “nuclear areas” of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and the Indus Valley, the earliest fully class-structured societies were organized into relatively weakly integrated “feudal” structures. Unlike the later Iron Age feudalism of Europe, these Bronze Age feudalisms evolved into centralized empires following the development of irrigation, iron technology, and improved techniques of statecraft.

Agro-managerial bureaucratic empires. These are the classic “hydraulic” societies, in which a central authority controls the key economic resource, the irrigation system, and, through a bureaucracy, controls and exploits the underlying population. Such bureaucratic empires exhibited a cyclical pattern of rise and fall but also a progressive development of the productive and exploitative systems, resulting in improved agriculture, larger populations, improved bureaucratic techniques, etc. The Near East, China, and India’s historic civilizations fall into this category.

Nomadic feudalism. Pastoral nomadism develops on the periphery of the hydraulic world, where agriculture is impossible. Because of their mobility and warlike character, such nomads can periodically conquer bureaucratic empires.

American civilizations. The New World, peopled by primitive communal hunters and gatherers by 15,000 B.C., underwent a parallel evolutionary development to that seen in the Old World, but somewhat later and with certain distinctive characteristics.

Maritime slave capitalism. In the Mediterranean, maritime trading nations emerged, which traded with the advanced empires. Slavery became economically important as these nations began to engage in precapitalistic commodity production for trading purposes.

Feudalism. In Europe, a decentralized feudal system developed in which competition between feudal rulers conditioned an extremely rapid development of the forces of production, trade, and warfare (largely borrowed from the more advanced Asiatic empires).

Capitalism. The decentralized social structure of European feudalism permitted the rise of the bourgeoisie which performed the task of integrating the entire world into a single economic system.

Protosocialist states. As the international working class attained state power on the periphery of the advanced capitalist nations, it attempted to establish socialism. The development of socialism was deformed by the material conditions under which the working class revolution was undertaken: the underdeveloped character of the production planted the threat of capitalist reconquest. The result was what Trotsky called ‘degenerated workers’ states.

World socialist industrial society. When the working class completes its revolution and becomes a world-ruling class, it will abolish class antagonisms and exploitation and establish a world socialist order. As Morgan foresaw, this will be a “revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity” of primitive communism.

(Rulye 1975, 17-18)

These are supposed to be broad-stroke outlines of developmental stages based on the development of technology/productive forces and the theory of class struggles. Ruyle (1975) avers that what is important is the mode of exploitation rather than the mode of production. Instead of ceaselessly debating the mode of production, therefore, the task of every Marxist is to determine who exploits who and how these forms of exploitation will be summed up in totality concerning the class balance of forces for social change and reaction.

On the other hand, Nadeau (1994) appears to uphold Ruyle’s views when she affirms that Marx and Engels did not define the mode of production at all as a concept. She is instructive when she posits:

There have been debates over this very issue. Marx himself did not consistently use the term in his writings. Yet, mode of production is a key conception of Marxist thought and has been used (and confused) to distinguish between social formations in history (primitive communist, ancient, Asiatic, feudal, capitalist socialist, and advanced communist), even though social formation and mode of production are two different concepts. A social formation is an entity (a particular type of society) constituted by “a specific overlapping of several ‘pure’ modes of production.” On the other hand, a mode of production can be defined only tentatively because it is subject to change. It is a complex of social relations which link human beings together in any production process, and the means of production (e.g., tools, technology, knowledge, skills, abstract forms of organization) around which work is organized to ensure the material survival and reproduction of a particular human group. Rarely are social formations found to be composed of a single type of mode of production, as may be the case in ‘primitive communism.’ (Nadeau 1994, 139)

Given the above premises, Marxists have to cease thinking mechanically and dogmatically that the mode of production within a certain social formation can be singularly defined by one specific relation of production and one mode of exploitation or surplus-value extraction method. Several relations within a certain juncture could present a web of complex relations among classes. And the exploiters can be exploited on the one hand, while the exploited can be exploiters on the other hand (Aguilar 1989).

In his paper, Aguilar (1989) demonstrates that in the transition from feudalism to capitalism—multifaceted relations and various forms of exploitation may simultaneously occur even within the differentiated peasants. For instance, the middle peasant, in engaging the labor of landless peasants scoops up surplus-value. At the same time, he is being exploited simultaneously because he has numerous “sideline” jobs aside from tilling his land. These “sideline” jobs could be in the form of engaging with other agricultural plantations, running his own tricycle business, and so many more.

And Where is Mao in All This?

Mao, to his followers, is the acme of Marxism-Leninism as he was supposed to have uncovered the art and science of Marxism at the time of semi-feudalism and colonialism. If Marx had analyzed capitalism and Lenin had contributed a lot to the theory of imperialism, uncovering the laws governing the development of competitive capitalism towards monopoly capitalism—Mao is being regarded by his admirers (including the mainstream Filipino Marxists) as the one who had theorized and applied Marxism-Leninism at the age of imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Not surprisingly, many Marxists in the Third World—from Asia, Africa, and Latin America revere Mao. Some have dogmatically flirted with his semi-feudal and semi-colonial categorization of the Chinese society before its liberation from Imperial Japan in the Second World War.

Mao’s eminence coincided with the ideological schism between the then socialist USSR and China even as most Marxist movements on various continents likewise gravitated for support either to the USSR or China. The Philippines’ and Indonesia CPs were clear examples of how the movements abandoned the USSR and pivoted to China. No wonder, therefore, that the Philippine thesis of the semi-feudal and semi-colonial mode is almost synonymous with that of Mao’s formulation for China.

Perhaps due to the difficulties of war, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was in perpetual war with the northern warlords and various imperialist nations and then with Japan during the Second World War, Mao may have never grappled with the question of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the way Lenin comprehensively studied and profoundly understood the same question. He thus automatically classified the Chinese society as semi-colonial, owing to the presence of imperialist powers in China, collaborating with her local warlords.

Mao (1939), nonetheless, never lost sight of the development of capitalism in China. In fact, he provides (3. Present-Day Colonial, Semi-Colonial and Semi-Feudal Society):

The Chinese society remained feudal for 3,000 years. But is it still completely feudal today? No, China has changed. After the Opium War of 1840, China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Since the Incident of September 18, 1931, when the Japanese imperialists started their armed aggression, China has changed further into a colonial, semi-colonial, and semi-feudal society. We shall now describe the course of this change.

As discussed in Section 2, Chinese feudal society lasted 3,000 years. It was not until the middle of the 19th century, with the penetration of foreign capitalism, that great changes took place in Chinese society.

As China's feudal society had developed a commodity economy and carried within itself the seeds of capitalism, China would have developed slowly into a capitalist society even without the impact of foreign capitalism. Penetration by foreign capitalism accelerated this process. Foreign capitalism played an important part in the disintegration of China's social economy. On the one hand, it undermined the foundations of her self-sufficient natural economy and wrecked the handicraft industries in the cities and the peasants' homes. On the other, it hastened the growth of a commodity economy in town and country.

Apart from its disintegrating effects on the foundations of China's feudal economy, this state of affairs gave rise to certain objective conditions and possibilities for developing capitalist production in China. The destruction of the natural economy created a commodity market for capitalism, while the bankruptcy of large numbers of peasants and handicraftsmen provided it with a labor market.

Some merchants, landlords, and bureaucrats began investing in modern industry as far back as sixty years ago, in the latter part of the 19th century, under the stimulus of foreign capitalism and because of certain cracks in the feudal economic structure. About forty years ago, China's national capitalism took its first steps forward at the turn of the century. Then about twenty years ago, during the first imperialist world war, China's national industry expanded, chiefly in textiles and flour milling, because the imperialist countries in Europe

and America were preoccupied with the war and temporarily relaxed their oppression of China.

The history of the emergence and development of national capitalism is the same as the history of the emergence and development of the Chinese bourgeoisie and proletariat. Just as a section of the merchants, landlords, and bureaucrats were precursors of the Chinese bourgeoisie, a section of the peasants and handicraft workers were the precursors of the Chinese proletariat. As distinct social classes, the Chinese bourgeoisie and proletariat are newborns and never existed before in Chinese history. They have evolved into new social classes from the womb of feudal society. They are twins born of China's old (feudal) society, at once linked to each other and antagonistic. However, the Chinese proletariat emerged and grew simultaneously not only with the Chinese national bourgeoisie but also with the enterprises directly operated by the imperialists in China.

Hence, a very large section of the Chinese proletariat is older and more experienced than the Chinese bourgeoisie and is, therefore, a greater and more broadly based social force.

However, the emergence and development of capitalism is only one aspect of the change that has taken place since the imperialist penetration of China. Another concomitant and obstructive aspect is the collaboration of imperialism with the Chinese feudal forces to arrest the development of Chinese capitalism. (Mao, 1939)

To Mao, Guerrero, and Sison, imperialism impedes the development of national and industrial capitalism. Accordingly, imperialist capital restricts the growth of national capitalism which is necessarily founded on heavy industries. For Mao and Sison, without heavy industries, there could be no capitalism. Nonetheless, Mao was sensitive to the inroads of capitalism in China; had it not been for imperialism, capitalism may have been solidly planted in China.

Proceeding then to his exposition of the Chinese society's specific characteristics, Mao (1939) enumerates the following: the dissolution (*depeasantization*) of the foundation of the natural rural economy (feudalism); the development of capitalism in China but not on the national scope; the replacement by the bureaucrat-warlords of the autocratic old nobility; the imperialists' total and partial domination, control of China's territories and finance in collaboration with the bureaucrat warlords who partitioned China into several spheres of influence; the emergence of sharp contradictions between imperialism and the Chinese people and between feudalism and the great masses of people.

Short of saying that China was a direct colony of the various imperialist nations through conspiracies with local bureaucrat warlords, Mao thus formulated his people's protracted war theory, a strategy in civil and national wars against the warlords and the imperialist aggressors, the latest of which was Imperial Japan. Yet, even much earlier, Mao (1928) had already foreseen the possibility of Red Power's existence in China's vast landmass. Among his justifications were the absence of a centralized economy and government, the constant warring of the bureaucrat warlords among themselves, and the sheer vastness of the Chinese territory suitable for maneuvers of big military formations in guerrilla and positional warfare.

The question that may arise now is: was Mao, in the cited two books, presenting the mode of production of China, or was he merely elaborating a description of China's social formation before the Second World War, which is characterized in international politics with the collapse of the old colonialism and the nascent imperialism. In fairness to Mao (1939), he seems to have not used the phrase mode of production. Instead, he emphasizes the "*characteristics of China's semi-colonial and semi-feudal society*" (Ch. I No.3- The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party).

Nonetheless, since the Cultural Revolution and the demise of Mao, Maoist cultists in China and around the world elevated "*Mao's thought*" as the universal theory in Marxism-Leninism in the era of imperialism and semi-feudalism. No wonder Mao's semi-feudal and semi-colonial thesis on the Chinese society became the model by which various CPs in the Third World patterned their analyses of their respective modes of production. But yet again, Mao's expositions of the Chinese society's characteristics were so unique that he would think the conditions in China during his time could not happen in any country around the world, owing to the interplay of various factors, e.g., the vastness of China's landmass, absence of central government and a unified economy, constant warring of the bureaucrat warlords with their respective imperialist patrons and so on. Mao asserts that the same combinations could not be found in any other country and at any given juncture in history.

Now, where can one find the basis affirming that these specific characteristics of the Chinese society during those times could be held as a universal truth, albeit a dogma, and as the so-called acme of Marxism-Leninism in the era of imperialism?

A universal theory encompasses the inner logic of universal development applicable to all nations. Mao's specific theories are applied

to China's specificities and China's alone. Maybe his contributions to the Marxist methods of work, dialectical materialism, and the theory against modern revisionism could be held universal. But the texts may speak for themselves on the mode of production and/or precisely on the Chinese society's specificities.

Emphasizing the particularities of every situation, Mao (1939) counsels that "the social and economic investigation aims to arrive at a correct appraisal of class forces and then formulate correct tactics of the struggle" (Ch V-Oppose Book Worship). However, maybe owing to the very dynamic and fluid situation in which China found itself at the turn of the last century and at the eve of the Second World War and noting that China was in perpetual war externally with imperialist powers and internally among the warring warlords—Mao may have been affected by the reasonable requirements of trying to unite the vast Chinese people against the Japanese aggression and other imperialist nations. He would thus appear that his main preoccupation was for the national unity and the liberation of the Chinese people from foreign aggression, rather than the analysis of the prevailing classes and their interplay among each other, the way Marx analyzed England and Lenin focused on Russia.

Making Sense of the Review: Where are We Now?

Having located the unique and non-universal character of Mao's semi-feudal and semi-colonial thesis which is maybe applicable to China alone and given that the same appears to be far from a thorough appraisal of China's mode of production, but rather an exposition of China's social formation during his time, can we now make sense on the thesis of the mainstream left as regards its semi-colonial and semi-feudal mode of the Philippines? Could it stand against the rigors of the Marxist analysis on the transition from feudalism to capitalism based on the theories of the division of labor, peasant differentiation, massive migration of rural population to urban centers, creation of agriculture as a distinct industry, and the penetration of cash economy to the countryside through the commodity production?

Both Sison and Guerrero are silent about these treatises advanced by Lenin. Rivera (1994) nonetheless would appear to support Sison's and Guerrero's arguments that the hacienda systems may have been retained in the Philippines as the social base of imperialism, given the near-monopoly of the *hacendero* class of the Philippine state in the post-

independence epoch. He demonstrated this by his study on the struggle of landlords against the emergent capitalists within the realm of import-substitution industries (ISI) in the late 1960s.

Rivera (1994) tacitly agrees in his paper with the official line of semi-feudalism from the mainstream left. He has shown the inter-elite struggles among the landed-based manufacturers with the emergent capitalists in the import substitution industries, with the former eventually winning this struggle. Several factors have been cited by him as to why indeed the landlords vanquished the emergent non-land-based capitalists: (1) the land-based oligarchs or in the language of Guerrero, the big comprador bourgeoisie (landlords in the countryside, importer-exporter in the cities) were well-entrenched in the bureaucracy and the state that enabled them to block plans and legislations against the tightening of import control to let local manufacturing flourish. Such landed elite class' interest in the exportation of agricultural raw materials and importation of finished products eventually clashed with their desire for industrialization; (2) a weak state dominated by these landed elites which wallowed in corruption, subservience to foreign dictates, and non-homogenous policy-making process; (3) dictates of multilateral agencies which were extending aids and loans to the country in order to do away with control mechanisms and continue to open the country's floodgates for imported products.

Eventually, because of this unfavorable situation, the emergent elite in the manufacturing sector had to relinquish its struggle for dominance over the landed elites. Implicitly, Rivera confirms Guerrero's thesis on the marriage of imperialism and the landed-elite class, which subsequently produced the semi-feudal mode of production in the Philippines.

On the other hand, Simbulan (1965) traces the historical evolution of this landed elite which held the state captive—from the old nobility of the pre-Hispanic *Baranganic* societies towards being the Spanish conduits, the *encomienderos*, then the *hacienderos* up to their collaboration with the new colonialists in the American era, down to the post-independence period. He appears to provide the historical evolution of the class whose interests are consistent with America's designed export-oriented and import-dependent economy in the Philippines. Hence, the class loathed the idea of national industrialization and agrarian reform. And since they held the state captive, the same state is paralyzed in undertaking neither industrialization nor agrarian reform.

Now, if the categorization of the mainstream left's position is neither Marxist nor Maoist, how do we describe then the mode of production in

the Philippines, and what is compelling the left from studying further and afresh the concrete conditions of classes in Philippine society? Nemenzo (1992) suggests Stalinism and the lack of inner-organizational democracy among communist parties and socialist organizations as among the causes of the theoretical stasis within the left movement. We will, however, cease exploring these issues as this will distract us from the main question at hand.

Excluding Lagman's thoughts here, for we have already discussed such above, Raquiza (2012; 2014) asserts that at least in the service and commercial sectors, the Philippines can be said to be capitalist. Discussing the massive remittances from the OFW sector which accounts for at least a sizable portion of the GDP, reaching 22B dollars per annum, Raquiza assumes that the Filipino capitalists are cashing it out on the service sector businesses like the malls, housing, education, and banking for deposits and remittances. Consumer goods, like cars, electronics, and appliances have likewise flooded the market, given the OFW sector's penchant for consumerism.

Again, with the enunciation of the Private Public Partnership (PPP) scheme of the government under the ambit of the neo-liberal policies of the state on liberalization, deregulation, and privatization—the top billionaires and the capitalists class in the Philippines are foraying into power generation, transmission, water services, tollways construction and concessions and other social services which were previously within the domain of government functions, so Raquiza (2014) believes.

Now, if the peasant class in the country has already been differentiated, while the migration of peasants is steadily happening from the countryside to the urban centers and with the urban centers being alive on commercial and service capitalism, can we still label the country with the semi-feudalism stamp?

Conclusion

Marxism, in general, is concerned with social progress through class struggles and the development of productive forces. Without these two, societies could not have evolved into higher forms with all the discoveries and advances in mathematics, natural sciences, and social theory. Under capitalism, the world proletariat has to be freed from the predatory worker-capitalist relation which is instrumental in privatizing the fruits of social labor. Likewise, the workingmen must be freed from all the remnants of

feudalism as others would call it semi-feudalism, for its continued development as a class would inevitably speed up without these hindrances. The forces of production may not develop as well unless the proletariat is unchained from all the obstacles of exploitative relations, whether feudal or capitalist in nature.

Yet again, the task of freeing the proletarian class is the task of the proletariat alone, as Marx and Engels (1948) would assert. It is the only revolutionary class in capitalism, and it is the only class that is desirous of socialism. All other classes, including the peasantry and even the petty bourgeois in the countryside are reactionary classes in as much as socialism is concerned.

Without the complete freedom of the proletariat, social progress would be impossible to achieve as the world would continue to suffer from massive poverty and famines, wars, and other forms of social disorder while the surplus value of labor is turned into a means for private accumulation despite the socialized nature of human labor on a global scale.

The questions on the remnants and fetters of feudalism, however, belong to the ambit of the democratic revolution, the first part of the 2-phase democratic and socialist revolutions as proposed by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. While the proletariat is desirous of freeing other classes from the shackles of feudalism, e.g., the peasant and the constrictions from imperialism, the ultimate task of the proletariat is building socialism the world over, cementing fraternal unities within the proletarian class around the world.

The question of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, therefore, represents a tactical juncture in as much as the strategic objective for building world socialism is concerned. Nonetheless, it occupies a central part in the democratic revolution agenda of the world proletariat, for it would be impossible to build socialism under the most underproductive relations and backward productive forces in feudalism and monopoly capitalism.

The liquidation of the feudal remnants in the countryside and the purging of imperialist influence in the reactionary state are necessary preconditions for the liberation of the proletariat in the democratic stage of the revolution. But such a proletariat must never lose sight of the ultimate aim of socialism. And thus, freedom from the bondage of soil and national liberation from imperialism are preconditions for building socialism. They are still far from the ultimate goal of social progress.

Let everyone listen to Engels (1890) when he counsels in his letter to Conrad Schmidt:

[...] our conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever for (the reconstruction of reality to fit a predetermined mold) in the manner of the Hegelians. All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of the existence of the different social formations must be examined individually before any attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-legal, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc. notions corresponding to them. (Pr. 3)

The mainstream left's thesis on the semi-colonial and semi-feudal mode of the Philippines appears to be a priori. It could not certainly justify the revolutionary strategy and tactics of a prolonged peasant war in the countryside as the path towards proletarian emancipation when the peasantry itself is being *differentiated* (fragmented), uprooted in the countryside, and is not desirous of socialism at all. Under such a condition, how can one expect to organize the peasantry as the primary force of the revolutionary struggle for socialism through national democracy? Is it not utterly impossible to build the bulwarks of socialism in the countryside when the task of liberating the proletariat belongs to the proletariat alone?

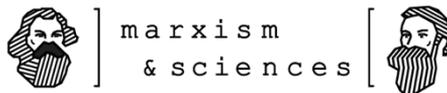
A sincere Marxist reexamination of the mainstream left's analysis of the Philippines' mode of production has been long overdue.

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The Cost of Freedom in the Neoliberal World of Blood and Oil

Saladdin Ahmed

The False Dichotomy of Imperialism vs. Imperialism

Once more, atrocities committed against a marginalized population are used to validate the collective punishment of another silenced population. The sanctions on people in Russia have been justified in the name of defending Ukrainians—as if the Western governments’ record in manipulating economies is spotless and their mandate to defend others’ freedoms is utterly unquestionable. This is another war that is about to force us to choose between two wrongs within a false duality. Put plainly, Putin’s regime and the NATO bloc do not represent two opposing ideological poles. To the contrary, they represent the same species. Both sides are anti-egalitarian, racist, and, of course, above all, capitalist. Nation-states within the capitalist world order clash, and this is neither the first nor will it be the last such war. By the same token, we should not be allured to commit the nationalist mistake of equating a state and the population who happen to be under the rule of that state. This is a common, but rudimentary, mistake regardless of whether we speak of democracies, autocracies, or so-called theocracies. The ruling groups in Russia and the NATO countries are guilty of many things, one of which is this war. Similarly, the plights of the defenseless Ukrainians and the oppressed Russians should not be subject to compromises. The question that should become the subject of wide public discussion and motivate internationalist mobilization is the same old-new one: How can we, the oppressed, join forces against the ruling groups, including our elites and our colonizers? Obviously, that entails an-

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other question. Namely, how can we, the oppressed of all countries and regions in the world, stop being used in the ruling groups' wars? The fundamental step toward such a goal is to expose the irrationality of the dominant discourses and, thus, ideologies. These nationalist and capitalist discourses are totalitarian in their influence, but exposing their absurdities could also have a universal effect on their global hegemony.

In this war, we can and should be able to take the side of both the Ukrainian and Russian oppressed. We should be able to recognize that their plights are in many ways similar even though they might be suffering in different ways at this particular moment. Victims should not compare their right to victimhood but rather claim their uncompromisable equality in the face of their rulers, oppressors, and colonizers. Indeed, there are many Russian citizens, like many Ukrainians, who know for a fact that Putin's regime cannot be a force of liberation in any sense whatsoever. There are also many Ukrainians who realize that the NATO states are concerned about neither Ukrainians' lives nor the Ukrainians' freedom. We do not know about them because they are silenced. When and where they are allowed to speak up, their voices are drowned in the frenzy created by the established order, the dominant mode of perception, and the armies of opinion makers whose sole concern is to take one of the two sides in the false duality (of Putin's regime versus NATO). Both sides speak the same language, belong to the same anti-egalitarian type of ideology, and use the peoples they claim to protect as disposable war materials. Both sides have been imposing the maximum exploitation of people and the environment. Both sides have been manufacturing, selling, purchasing, and deploying various means of mass murder. Both sides use the victims to create more victims.

This is precisely why a different hegemony must take place, and its pioneers can only be internationalists from all parts of the world, especially those in the margins of all margins. The only meaningful position to take is the side of the silenced whose voice is the voice of reason and, therefore, whose voice must be echoed loudly in the face of the prevalent barbarism represented by the capitalist ruling groups who have brought the world to the edge of yet another abyss. Once more, this barbaric regime of a few capitalists is pushing the world toward total or near-total destruction. The existing order has once more proved to be death driven, absurd, and unsustainable. It must be stopped. All its fronts and blocs must be denounced. As always, there is another option. That option is the negation

of the existing irrationality. Out of such a revolutionary negation, a new world can crystalize step by step.

The discriminatory nature of the international regime has been so normalized, that Western politicians do not even bother to clarify the basis on which they assume a policing role in world politics. Even when addressing ordinary people in the West, they do not bother providing any legal or semi-legitimate ground for their actions in the international arena. All they need to explain is the potential consequences of their policies at home. Western governments have been somewhat careful not to cause direct financial harm to their constituencies (such as a steep rise in energy prices) without providing some sort of justification. For instance, on March 8, 2022, justifying the imposition of further economic sanctions on Russia, Joe Biden said, “Defending Freedom is going to cost. It is going to cost us as well in the United State” (cited in Bade, Okun, and Ross 2022). He was addressing Americans, and the cost he had in mind was the cost of, for example, fuel in the US. British and EU leaders have been using a similar discourse regarding the cost of freedom in relation to energy prices. For the rest of the world, including Ukrainians and Russians, such a “cost” has implications that go far beyond commodity prices.

Indeed, when it comes to Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, the common Western discursive strategy is war propaganda, openly encouraging Ukrainians to shed their blood without any guarantee of victory, whatever such a promised victory may mean for millions of brutalized Ukrainian children. In the meantime, the Western governments’ have been pouring weapons into Ukraine (imagine if these governments had been so quick and efficient in transferring Covid-19 vaccines or basic personal protective equipment to impoverished regions). The same discursive machine that poetically glorifies Ukrainian death deliberately imposes more suffering on Russians who have already been suffering at the hand of Putin’s autocratic and oligarchic regime. It is a discourse that uses the word “Russia” to refer to the country, or the state, or the government, or the population interchangeably. As for the sanctions, it does not take a genius to realize that they most severely affect the poor. We all know that those who will suffer severely due to the sanctions are the poor, not Putin or the Russian oligarchy and their thugs.

Thanks to the white sense of entitlement, a global apartheid regime has been normalized. The apartheid regime is legitimized in the name of liberal democracy, but it is totalitarian in every sense. Imagine if, in response to the American invasion of Iraq, the Chinese government had organized in-

ternational sanctions to starve Americans while threatening to punish Europeans for any attempt to ease the effect of the sanctions on Americans. Imagine then if Chinese politicians had told the Chinese people that it is alright to pay a little more for certain commodities because “defending freedom is going to cost. It is going to cost us as well, in China.”

The sense of white entitlement has not changed since the colonial era, and as always, the supremacist exercise of power is masked with some meaningless phraseology about freedom and civilization. The dichotomy of Putin versus Western elites is a false one. Ideologically, politically, and historically, they belong to the same thing, which is the anti-egalitarian, racist, and imperialist bourgeoisie that has been responsible for most of the atrocities and destruction since the colonial era. Whether when they committed genocide in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, or when they fought each other, they did so in the name of freedom and civilization. This is a class that has never stopped employing every idea and ideal, including God and freedom, to recruit the miserable and hopeless ones in their campaigns for total hegemony. It is a class that in the course of its unlimited exploitation creates tragic situations for certain populations, only to exploit that very situation to further totalize its hegemony, thereby creating more tragic situations for other populations, and so on. Therefore, especially since the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie has never run out of discursive means of moral distortion. While until the nineteenth century most individual and mass murders were committed in the name of God, since then, most of the murders have been committed in the name of freedom.

What freedom are Biden and his friends in the UK and EU talking about? Whose freedom is so gruesome that it comes at the cost of the collective suffering of entire populations? Why is it that this freedom must always involve punishing the most vulnerable, who are the least responsible for whatever it is that supposedly justifies sanctions, whether the invasion of a neighboring country, persecution of political opposition, or potential manufacturing of “weapons of mass destruction?”

The International Apartheid Regime and Sanctions

Economic sanctions are typically presented as a means to disempower the ruling regimes in the sanctioned countries, or to pressure the populations of those countries to bring down their respective regimes. And because the ruling groups in the West have appointed themselves as the global moral authority, they believe it is up to them to decide where and when this

method—among others—should be applied. These days, hundreds of opinion makers shamelessly keep repeating the absurd sanctionist argument. We are supposed to believe that punishing 146 million Russians is somehow in the interest of Ukrainians. Opinion and policymakers who justify the imposition of “crippling” economic sanctions seem to be obsessed with a sadistic desire to inflict endless suffering on millions of already marginalized people.

There is simply no sound reasoning behind the doctrine of sanctions. We have plenty of rational proof and empirical evidence to assert that sanctions have the exact opposite effect of their proclaimed objectives. Namely, they intensify governments’ exercise of power, militarize societies, and destroy the prospect of social peace and political freedoms. By decimating conditions of wellbeing, economic sanctions politically disempower the population in question. Any population that lives under the constant threat of poverty will inevitably become more, not less, prone to democratic underdevelopment, institutional corruption, and subjugation by means of violence. This is a global regime of segregation that uses economic sanctions to collectively cut off entire populations from the rest of the world, which can only make those populations more dependent on their ruling groups.

Only the capitalist logic can rationalize human-made famine in the name of freedom. Only in a totalitarian capitalist world can committing mass murder be morally legitimized through a few meaningless phrases and armies of opinion makers. Only in such a world can the lives of hundreds of millions of human beings be rendered completely faceless, nameless, and worthless. These lives are used in the same way weapons are used, that is, purely for militaristic ends.

The assumption that starving a population severely enough and for long enough would force them to rise up and bring down their ruling regime is utterly barbaric in its indiscriminate cruelty. Policies that are based on such an assumption are also strategically irrational. Civilians who are deprived of both basic needs and political freedoms cannot change undemocratic governments. At the bare minimum, democracy itself must be available and well established for civilians to be able to exercise this kind of political power. Moreover, even in a country where democratic institutions and practices are well established, if the majority of the population experience economic hardships, the collapse of democracy, whether through free elections or armed insurrections, is a likely outcome. The imposition of collective isolation, starvation, and brutalization does indeed drastically change political activities within the population in question, but that change cer-

tainly will not amount to a move toward peaceful coexistence or the recognition of political freedoms.

Empirically, the senselessness of economic sanctions is equally evident. The first contemporary cases of severe economic sanctions are those imposed on North Korea, which started in 1950, and on Cuba, which started in 1962, and both increased in the following years and decades. Four decades after the fall of the USSR, both systems are still alive and well. Generations of North Koreans have lived and died under conditions that resemble medieval collective starvation, and today the North Korean regime is more powerful than ever. Yet the sanctionists shamelessly continue their policies of the collective punishment of the North Korean population in the name of peace and freedom. According to the normalized ideology of the prevalent international order, starving 26 million people, who happened to be born in North Korea and have already been brutally oppressed, is somehow supposed to serve the cause of democracy and world peace.

Due to endless sanctions, Cubans have been forced to create a self-sufficient economy while constantly fending off American interventions to destabilize the island. Regardless of one's position on Cuban politics, the Cuban case has proven that sanctionism does not have any justification whatsoever, whether politically, ideologically, strategically, or pragmatically. Of course, there are other sanctioned countries, but there is not a single case where the imposition of economic sanctions on a country actually proved effective in terms of what the self-appointed global punishers allegedly wanted to achieve.

A well-known case is the UN sanctions that were imposed on Iraqis for more than a decade. Between August 1990 and February 1991, the American-led coalition destroyed the infrastructure of the entire country, dropping 88,500 tons of bombs on the country in the first six weeks alone (Allen, Berry, and Polmar 1991, 147). Yet not only did they leave Saddam Hussein's regime in power, but they also made sure the regime had enough air force at its disposal to crush the anti-government popular uprisings across the country. As if living under Saddam's regime had not been bad enough, Iraqis were now further punished through a strict embargo on everything, including medicine and food. For thirteen long years, from 1990 to 2003, this same international regime imposed a set of sanctions that were described as "a policy that satisfies the definition of genocide" (cited in Pilger 2000). Those are the words of none other than the well-known UN official in Iraq from 1996 to 1998, Denis Halliday, who resigned in protest of the sanctions. In 1996, when asked about the rationale of the

sanctions and about the death of half a million children that had already been reported, Madeleine Albright's response was unambiguous: "the price is worth it."¹

The number of direct casualties is in the hundreds of thousands. The fact that there is nothing close to an accurate estimate of the number of victims of the imposed starvation and the two invasions speaks to the worthlessness of those lives from the perspective of the prevalent international order. There is also the uncalculatable damage caused by the sanctions, including the near-total destruction of the education, industry, and agriculture sectors.

Yet, as if the 1990–91 war and the imposed famine were not painful enough when the sanctions proved ineffective in bringing about a "regime change," in 2003 the country was invaded once more. In the 1991 and 2003 invasions of Iraq, the American forces alone fired more than one million tons of depleted uranium weapons (Edwards 2014), which continue to have devastating health ramifications for the population ("US Broke Its Own Rules," Pax for Peace, 2016). Divided among the population today, each Iraqi child, woman, and man gets a share of 27 kilograms (about 60 pounds) of the fatal material. This is part of the neoliberal package of freedom. The cost of the neoliberal gifts was the starvation of the vast majority of the population for more than a decade, hundreds of thousands of deaths, and the destruction of public institutions, and this cost continues to be paid by surviving Iraqis every day.

In the case of Iran, all Iranians have been paying the price of someone's freedom, except nobody knows whose freedom (Ahmed 2021b). While the regime in Tehran has been brutally oppressing Iranians for more than four decades, Western governments decided that further intensifying the suffering of the majority of Iranians would somehow hurt the regime in Tehran. Not surprisingly, the most marginalized, impoverished, and silenced have been suffering the most because of the economic sanctions.

Whatever this mysterious freedom may be, it cannot come at the cost of the suffering of impoverished Russians, Cubans, Koreans, Venezuelans, Iranians, Syrians, or any other population. Sanctions that hurt the wellbeing of entire populations are one of the most barbaric forms of inflecting collective suffering. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict does not change any-

1. This was from an interview she gave to *60 Minutes*, "Punishing Saddam," that aired on May 12, 1996. A clip of her making this statement in the interview can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iFYaEoE3n4> (accessed March 31, 2022).

thing about this basic truth. No amount of suffering inflicted on Russians will make any Ukrainian freer, and vice versa.

The Neoliberal Version of Freedom in the Post-Soviet World

Not long ago we were told that communism was the last obstacle to the triumph of democratic liberalism crowned by the sanctity of the free market. Welcome to the post-Soviet world where nationalism has been spreading like a virus, and its fascist variations are gaining more power by the day. Every nationalist group has its own myths and territorial claims, and different nationalist myths and claims inevitably collide with each other. Nationalists fail to see people as concrete human beings. To them, the world is composed of entities called “nations.” The nation is the shadow of the people. The nation is personified precisely in order to de-personify the actual human beings it supposedly embodies; it fictionally includes all in order to actually exclude everyone.

The ruling groups have adopted a mindset that disturbingly resembles the racist/nationalist language of WWI, which reached its fascist phase during the interwar period. On one side, there is Euro-nationalism/racism that is quite similar in its discourses and sentiments to those adopted by the nationalists during the first half of the twentieth century. Of course, most European elites have made cosmetic adjustments to their exclusionary discourses, replacing race talk with culture talk, and “traits” with “values,” etc. (Ahmed 2021a). On the opposing side, there is a despotic regime led by Putin who, like many Russian nationalists, wants to revive the Russian imperialist hegemony that was terminated by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

One of Putin’s heroes is General Anton Denikin, the fanatic anti-Bolshevik commander of the White army in southern Russia from 1918 to 1920. Denikin was a sworn enemy of the Bolsheviks and a fervent opponent of Ukrainians’ right to self-determination. Also, Putin’s speech before his invasion of Ukraine is quite comparable to Nicholas II’s declaration of war in 1914 in terms of the appeal to Russophile tendencies (“Imperial Manifesto” 1914). In fact, Putin barely hides his Tzarist inclinations, and practically, he seems to be attempting to establish a tripartite Russian nation—of Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians (or Great Russians, White Russians, and Little Russians, in the Russophile terminology of the nine-

teenth century).² He is especially influenced by Ivan Ilyin, a Russian anti-communist, nationalist, and fascist philosopher who died in Nazi Germany in 1938. In terms of political economy, Putin's regime wants a capitalist Russian empire as prescribed by neoliberals such as Anatoly Chubais.³

Gorbachev brought the USSR to its ultimate death, and the media in the West turned him into an adorable figure for that. Yeltsin went further than his former boss and threw the Soviet project into its grave, and he quickly became the new anti-communist hero in Western media. Then, it was Putin's turn to go even further to the right than his former boss, Yeltsin. If Yeltsin was admired by Western liberals, Putin's admirers were further to the right. The trajectory during the first post-Soviet decade steeply moved toward the far-right. During the second decade of the post-Soviet era, Putin's star among Russian nationalists and Western fascists started to rise.

Until very recently the far right in the West admired Putin for his conservative values and vulgar exhibition of power. As a matter of fact, Putin was well on his way to becoming an inspiration for more and more Western fascist leaders whose followers long for a father figure, or the "great little man," the leader who is invincible but at the same time feels the ordinary people's grievances and speaks like them (Löwenthal and Guterman 2021, 134, 149; Adorno 2001, 142; Adorno 2004, 226). The privileged are often fearful of losing their privileges, so the persecution complex is not uncommon, especially during times of economic uncertainty. Fascist ideologues play an essential role in intensifying and politicizing the persecution complex among the lower middle class and the poor within the majority in order to further racialize all class problems. There is nothing more characteristic of the rise of fascism than the racialization of class politics, which transforms every potentiality for a socialist revolution into a race war, which is of course led by fascists. It is no wonder that even the liberals in the capitalist class always prefer fascists over communists. During severe crises, capitalist elites must allow fascists to assume the position of political leadership; without fascist politics, the social unrest will most likely take the shape of a class revolution. Fascists, in turn, feed into the persecution complex and try everything to spread the belief that the world is fundamentally and eternally structured on the basis of nations and that

2. For more on this see, for instance, Plokhly 2018.

3. Chubais reportedly left his position as Putin's adviser in late March 2022, but he had been among Putin's supporters since the early days the latter's rise to power in the end of the 1990s.

great nations could become miserable in the absence of a wise, fearless, and honest patriotic leadership.

The revival of the volkish anxieties, such as the sense of being threatened by the outside world and betrayed by state politicians and elites, gave rise to a desperate search for a new savior, a father figure who does not hold back from saying it as it is, a leader who does not shy away from standing for family values and national/racial interests, etc. Putin became a role model for a leader who presents himself as the ultimate guardian who protects the great nation that is about to lose its greatness forever because of the threats of elimination from without and decay from within.

The nationalist father figure is mandated with one semi-sacred task: to make it great again, and the rest of the story is fascism unfolding. The following fascist pattern is universal from the beginning to the last stages. First, during the first years of the savior's reign, some economic points are scored. In this stage, there is also a substantial increase in the exhibition of national strength, often through deploying forms of bullying and intimidation, directly reflecting the leader's own personality, against the most disempowered both within the country and regionally. These perceived victories result in the second stage: more popularity for the leader, who in turn gains more confidence in his own wisdom and way of governance. Within a few years, the father figure becomes certain that his historical role had been determined metaphysically. In the third stage, the absolutism reaches its ultimate peak, whereby the leader becomes the nation, and the nation becomes the leader. He treats his hallucinations as pure visions freshly revealed to him by the divine power, the fascist ingratulators who surround him act as if that is the case. If the leader has a bad dream due to, say, overindulging, the following day the visionary dream could be interpreted into an executive order of some sort.

Once the nationalist mission that is executed under the leadership of the savior becomes a divine plan, no amount of failure will deter him from going ahead with his plan all the way to the end to make the nation great again. In the fourth and last stage, the destruction has already begun and will not stop until the savior is physically removed from the scene. Every single time, the one who is mandated to make it great again will only succeed in destroying it again.

NATO, the EU, and Racial Demarcations

There is a famous Chekhovian rule according to which every item on the stage must be used at some point in the play. This has become known as “Chekhov’s gun.” The common interpretation of this principle is that if there is a gun in act one, you can anticipate what will happen in a later act.⁴ In the first chapter of the post-Soviet era, NATO not only persisted but also kept expanding. Of course, the pretext is that the new members demanded membership in the pact. However, NATO neither admitted Ukraine nor explicitly rejected its request. Today, NATO’s ambiguous policies and politics suggest that NATO members want to fight a war against Russia in Ukraine using Ukrainians. Unfortunately for Ukrainians, Zelenskyy and his allies have accepted the sacrifice of Ukrainians in an imperialist clash between the two parties. Western governments explicitly declare that they will not provide protection for Ukraine, but at the same time, they exploit the hopeless situation of the Ukrainians by playing the Pan-European card. NATO might have been able to prevent the war if it had either accepted or rejected the Ukrainian government’s repeated membership requests.

What is certain is that no population will become freer, no matter the cost they are asked to pay in order to be admitted into an imperialist camp. On the contrary, all these imperialist recipes, including Putin’s Russia, NATO, Erdogan’s Turkey, and Khamenei’s Iran, only generate unfreedom and suffering for those who have already been marginalized. Incidentally, in the name of protecting Syrians, all these parties, in various degrees and forms, have been engaged in the Syrian bloodbath. There has not been a shortage of weapons and fighters, yet al-Assad is still in power, and the Syrian society and individual is more damaged than ever. The Syrian case is indicative of the irrational violence at the heart of the existing order. Of course, there are other cases of damaged societies and lives in the neoliberal world, where every form of mass murder can be normalized after a while, and where the most privileged are entitled to ask the most marginalized to sacrifice the most. In the neoliberal world, the more we are asked to pay for freedom, the less free we become. Capitalism in all its phases, including the neoliberal one, has never failed to demark new regions to pay

4. This principle is interpreted and used in many different ways. Plokhy (2015, 5) refers to it in relation to the threat of nuclear weapons in the beginning of his book, *The Last Empire*. In this book Plokhy shows that there were many reasons behind the collapse of the USSR, but it was not an American accomplishment as the American politicians claimed immediately after the regime in Moscow crumbled.

the ultimate cost. Every time, the doomed population ends up being further slaughtered at the hands of the capitalist class's own creatures, the sung heroes of anti-communism, the likes of Yeltsin, Putin, and other nationalists, conservatives, and fundamentalist thugs.

Recall the liberation scenario of Afghans that turned Afghanistan into the first locus of jihad in the world. The jihadis were handsomely funded and armed by the governments of Pakistan, the Gulf countries, and the US in the 1980s in the name of liberation. Since the day the jihadis took power, Afghans have been paying the price for a freedom they have never tasted. In 2001, freedom, as prescribed by the White House, had an added cost. Now the jihadis were the problem. Yesterday's "freedom-fighters" were suddenly labeled terrorists. Suddenly, white elites started caring about Afghan women, as if in the 1980s, when the jihadis were fully supported, there had been no women in Afghanistan.

Still, the relabeling of the mujahideen and the repricing of the imaginary commodity, freedom, could have been a fortunate turn of events for Afghans, but alas it was just an indication of another long and deadly chapter of occupation.⁵ After 20 years of humiliating occupation, the liberators made a hasty deal with none other than the Taliban and handed them back Afghanistan and its people. Most recently, as Americans were being lectured about the cost of freedom, the Taliban rulers, Qatar's foreign minister, and an American delegation were enjoying Turkish baklava in a special reunion in Antalya (The Associated Press 2022). Such is the freedom obtained from buying and selling peoples, countries, and dignities in capitalism's neoliberal world.

Today, it is the Ukrainians' and the Russians' turn to be demarked, to enter the deadly phase of neoliberalism, where the promised freedom might cost millions of lives, and the resulting unfreedom might cost even more. This is another war the victims are forced to fight and forced to lose. While Putin, just like Erdogan, follows a regressive path to revive yet another long-dead empire, the opposing bloc follows its own traditional measures whereby blood becomes just another cost calculated into the price of raw materials and energy.

5. The Concurrent Senate Resolution number 74 in 1984 stated, "the freedom fighters of Afghanistan have withstood the might of the Soviet Army for over four years and gained the admiration of free men and women the world over with their courageous sacrifice, bravery, and determination," adding that "it would be indefensible to provide the freedom fighters with only enough aid to fight and die, but not enough to advance their cause of freedom" (US Congress Committee on Foreign Affairs 1985, 352).

This time around, however, the EU and American leaders are prepared to pay some of the cost because Putin committed a different kind of crime, which is not killing civilians per se, something he had already been committing for a long time. In fact, NATO's Turkey under Erdogan has been doing the same thing for a long time. Here is where European capitalist elites expose their deep racist prejudices: It was only when Putin committed the crime against Europeans that he became a war criminal. Keep in mind Ukrainians have never been quite included as members of the European family even though they have not been quite Othered as the Russ. To the European tribalist mindset, Turkey is a fence to insulate the European clan from Arabs and Asians. It seems Ukraine's new role is to be another gatekeeper to keep the Russ, Europe's unwanted children, at a safe distance from the clan. However, the European leadership clearly considers Ukrainians more admissible, than Turks, into the Euroclan, which is something Erdogan was sensitive enough to sense and insensitive enough to comment on (TRT 2022). Also, notice how Turkey has been a long-time member of NATO but the European states have resisted admitting the Turks into the EU. On the other hand, there is not much European resistance against admitting Ukrainians into the EU while NATO membership has not been an option for Ukraine.

Only when he started murdering Ukrainians, did Putin become a war criminal for Western elites. Of course, it still took these elites some time to take such a sharp stance, which is not surprising given that Ukrainians have not been considered fully European. Let us face it, what brought the European curse on the Nazis was not mass murder, of which every colonial power—including Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Dutch, Belgian, Italian, and Turkish colonialism—had been guilty for a long time. Even Hitler's violation of the territorial integrity of other European states was tolerated. And the ultimate red line was certainly not the genocide of the European Jews, which Hitler planned and started executing while he was still considered a legitimate member of the European family. Rather, what brought the Western elites' eternal condemnation upon Hitler without any hope for redemption, as Aimé Césaire argued, was the killing of white Christian Europeans using means that were only meant to be used against non-Europeans. The following passage by Césaire is worth quoting:

Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his de-

mon, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa. (Césaire 2001, 3)

Putin, like Erdogan, could have gone on bombing cities and killing defenseless civilians as long as the victims had not been white Christians. The Ukrainian crisis is the continuation of many similar crises, some of which NATO has had a direct role in creating. The Yezidis, who were starved under the embargo like other Iraqis, suffered a genocide on the hands of Islamists, who have been openly supported by Turkey, a major NATO member. In fact, Al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS until he was killed in an American raid in October 2019, turned out to be housed and cared for in a territory that is under the direct control of Turkey and its Islamist proxy groups. His successor, Al-Quraishi, was also living in the same area when he was killed in February 2022, also in an American raid. It is therefore reasonable to assume that NATO members have been well aware of the Turkish state's ties with ISIS and similar groups in Syria.

Putin and his philosopher-teachers, Dmitry Galkovsky and Aleksandr Dugin, may have mastered racism and nationalism, but they missed the crucial point regarding European nationalism's criteria for blood kinship. Those who liken Putin to Hitler make a good point, albeit unconsciously: like Hitler, Putin dared to kill and force the migration of white Christians. This is also the same reason Putin lost his European and American far-right allies. This is not Putin's first war, but it might be his last because he breached the sacred code of white tribalism. That said, the sympathy for Ukrainians is both temporary and limited. Only after they started to be killed in large numbers did privileged Europeans consider them European, but still not European enough to deserve living in peace, rather, just European enough to die for the privileged Europe. Today, Ukraine is demarked, and its inhabitants are asked to pay the highest price for a freedom in Europe only they cannot enjoy.

Conveniently, Zelenskyy does not miss a chance to further market Ukrainian blood as purely European, and thus as deserving a higher price tag. His soldiers, too, have learned to speak of defending Europe and European values while Ukrainians are being sieged by enough weapons to eradicate Ukraine's inhabitants many times over. In the meantime, the tribalists in the EU are convinced that when the cold season passes, they

will partake in the sacrifice: cutting down on Russian natural gas. Until then, from their point of view, all Ukrainians need to do is die. After all, membership in the European club, like freedom, is going to cost. Those who have full membership, those whose white clanship is not questionable, pay the regular fee, but those who are not fully admitted must pay with their (or others') lives.

Ultimately, it is the majority of the silenced Russians and brutalized Ukrainians who are pushed into war and poverty while, as in all other imperialist wars, the elites continue to glorify a disaster and endless death of the miserable in the name of freedom and dignity, both of which, to them, mean consolidating more power and accumulating more capital. In this imperialist war, the silenced majority of Russians and Ukrainians will inevitably lose simply because they are being used as the cheapest war materials by Russian nationalist elites, whose conception of a great Russia is not concerned with actual human beings, and by Western elites who proudly push Ukrainians to die for a free Ukraine that is already transforming into a mass graveyard.

Yet, we should ask what this gloomy moment that is caused by capitalism's savagery could bring about. Millions of Russians, Ukrainians, and others who are suffering because of the war and its impact on their livelihoods will reflect on this savagery; they must be asking questions to which the ruling groups have no answers, as Lenin would say (more on this below). Like the anti-war internationalists who opposed WWI, today's anti-war internationalists should be the voice of the silenced reason and the rational hope, only this time they should be better prepared.

Despair and the Coming Revolution

When WWI started, the socialists were adamantly against it. In 1915, Eugene Debs, the popular American socialist leader, stated, "When I say I am opposed to war I mean ruling class war, for the ruling class is the only class that makes war. It matters not to me whether this war be offensive or defensive, or what other lying excuse may be invented for it, I am opposed to it, and I would be shot for treason before I would enter such a war." Then he added, "I have no country to fight for; my country is the earth; and I am a citizen of the world" (Debs 1939, 4). On February 8, 1916, in a speech addressing anti-war socialist delegations in Berne, strongly agreeing with Eugene Debs, Lenin said:

Neither Russia, nor Germany, nor any other Great Power has the right to claim that it is waging a “war of defence;” all the Great Powers are waging an imperialist, capitalist war, a predatory war, a war for the oppression of small and foreign nations, a war for the sake of the profits of the capitalists, who are coining golden profits amounting to billions out of the appalling sufferings of the masses, out of the blood of the proletariat. (Lenin 2005, italics from original)

He argued that the millions of the oppressed and brutalized, “are pondering over the real cause of the war, are becoming more determined and are acquiring a clearer revolutionary understanding” (Lenin 2005). Lenin insisted, “we must not, and we have no reason whatever, to view the future with despair,” asserting that “the European War will be followed by the proletarian revolution against capitalism” (ibid. 2005, italics from original). In a piece originally published in 1918, he makes a similar point:

Because capitalism has concentrated the earth’s wealth in the hands of a few states and divided the world up to the last little bit. Any further division, any further enrichment could take place only at the expense of others, as the enrichment of one state at the expense of another. The issue could only be settled by force and, accordingly, war between the world marauders became inevitable. (Lenin 1965)

Socialists, including American and Russian internationalists, opposed WWII as well. Trotsky (1939) thought Western democracies both fear and admire Hitler, and he warned that if the fascists are not stopped, they will take over more regions. Anticipating the war, Trotsky added:

It will be a war of slave owners who cover themselves with various masks: “democracy,” civilization,” on the one hand, “race,” honor,” on the other. Only the overthrow of all slave-owners can once for all put an end to war and open an epoch of true civilization. (Lenin 1965, 3)

Fascism, Trotsky (1939, 3) argued, “does not come at all ‘from without.’ In Italy and Germany fascism conquered without foreign intervention.” Like both Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg in 1918 (Lenin 1965; Luxemburg 2004, 364), in 1939 Trotsky (1939, 3) insisted that the only possible way to stop the disastrous capitalist wars was a socialist revolution. Much of what was said by these socialists about imperialist and fascist wars in the first half of the twentieth century remains to be true today. Also, whether a revolution is already taking shape or not, as Lenin (1965) said, “revolution can never be forecast; it cannot be foretold; it comes of itself.”

Each failed revolution is a foundational step toward the ultimate liberation of human society. Revolutions fail in the short run, but they will in-

evitably be victorious in terms of the long march toward cosmopolitan emancipation. The cosmopolitan project will continue reviving, each time leaping progressively toward its emancipatory end. As long as inequality exists, there will be revolutions. The more severe the inequality, the more powerful the coming socialist revolution will be. The impoverished may not know what capitalists know about monopolies, but they understand something capitalists cannot grasp. Namely, they understand that certain truths are never outdated or ignorable. These truths concern life itself in its most tangible and real sense. In fact, they live these concrete truths. It is the privileged who need to grasp such truths, including the fact that food, shelter, peace, and dignity are essential needs of all human beings, and those who are deprived of these needs will continue to make new revolutions. This truth will never become outdated. And it is a communist premise.

The communism of bourgeois bohemians fell out of fashion everywhere, and communism as such fell out of fashion for bourgeois intellectuals. However, as long as there are people who are deprived of food, shelter, peace, and dignified life, the communist question will continue to haunt capitalist elites.

As long as capitalism remains prevalent, communism will continue to be present in multiple revolutionary forms. Every project that aims to challenge capitalism's monopoly on life and negate capitalist hegemonic ideologies of regression is a communist project. The truth of communism, like all basic truths, is simple: when large numbers of people are deprived of their basic needs, large revolutions will take place.

No amount of virtual entertainment, idealist education, subservient spiritualism, rationalized superstitions, sanctified deprivations, mystified subjugations, or celebrated symbolisms will change this basic truth. The revolution is as certain as it was 100 years ago. In fact, over the centuries, the revolution against enslavement has only become more powerful. Capitalism has proven more boldly than ever that it is a force for destructive irrationality and sadistic destruction. While every communist in the world has been told that communism does not work because it is utopian, what is truly illusional and bizarre is the belief that capitalism is actually working. Merely counting the ecological disasters caused by capitalism should suffice to make this point. By the hour, capitalism is failing and fails those who once believed in its promised land. By the hour, the little fascists that were planted inside those believers are coming out, betraying the real face

of the prophets of the post-Soviet world. They actively plan and call for cross-continental wars and collective starvation.

The marginalized do not want a world ruled by racist warlords and sadist imperialists. Today's world rulers deploy nuclear weapons on every continent, bomb cities and pour weapons into the destroyed regions, and impose collective starvation on entire populations. This has been the case since the 1950s. The Koreas, Vietnam, Colombia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, Venezuela, and Ukraine are just a few obvious examples of what liberty amounts to in the capitalist world's imperialist order. Rejecting every morality, religion, nationalism, and patriotism that justifies these massive crimes of violence, communist movements plead guilty to inciting peace forcefully and unapologetically.

The marginalized may not have any assurances of a communist future, but they reject the ongoing misery and endless violence imposed on them. They might not have a clear plan for socialism, but the capitalist nightmare leaves them with no option but to reject it. We have no other choice but to stand with those who have never had the privilege of dreaming of a different world in the first place due to the suffering and hunger imposed on them by the international apartheid regime. We have no other choice but to stop this train on which human society is kept captive as the operator speeds up toward the abyss. While the fascist opinion makers once again glorify war, one should not be under the impression that the fascists from one's own country is somehow better than fascists from elsewhere. If fascists are disempowered locally, those who have been pitted against each other on nationalist bases will inevitably turn against their ruling groups, and that will be a world revolution.

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The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure a clear, standard format for submissions. Please follow all guidelines as closely as possible. *Marxism & Sciences* is an open access journal. Publication of articles/essays and access to accepted and published material is free. The journal does not charge any article/essay submission, processing or publication fees. We have no budget for proof-readers or typesetters. These tasks are therefore the responsibility of the authors.

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- **Book, film, music recording, exhibition and performance arts reviews** (1000-2000 words)
- **Conference and symposium reviews** (1000-2000 words)
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**THE FOUNDATIONS OF MARXISM-II:
ILYENKOVIAN CONTRIBUTIONS**

Due to both the extensiveness of the topic and the interest in the issue of Foundations of Marxism-I: Philosophy, Method, And Revolutionary Vision (M&S Volume 1, issue 2, 2022) we decided to further pursue the main theme for future issues. Therefore, the next issue will be discussing the contributions of Soviet Marxist Evald V. Ilyenkov to the foundations of Marxism and present approaches which bear the mark or continue his line of thought.

In this vein, in Volume 2, Issue 1 (Winter 2023), we intend to include scholarly articles or essays and cultural works that discuss Ilyenkovian contributions to Marxism as a scientific method, as an epistemology, as a philosophy and as a revolutionary vision and strategy, and assess the extent of actuality and viability of Marxism in general and Ilyenkov in particular in the wake of a crisis of humanity. We especially welcome contributions which take his approach further and engage with contemporary issues.

ARTICLES IN PRESS

<i>Joost Kircz</i>	Time=Money: The notion of the <i>Ideal</i> applied to physics
<i>Alexander Surmava</i>	Marxism: from ideology to science (Ewald Ilyenkov and his contribution to Marxist thought)
<i>Corinna Lotz</i>	A theory and practice of cognition for our time

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