

# Karl Marx: An Essay

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To H. G. Wells.

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I.

No name in the history of social ideas occupies a place more remarkable than that of Karl Marx. Save Machiavelli and Rousseau, no thinker has been the subject of a condemnation so unsparring, and, like Rousseau, it has been his fortune to preside after death over a revolution conceived in his name. His books have received from a chosen band a scrutiny as earnest as ever the Bible or the Digest have obtained. Yet the precise grounds of the position he occupies among "Socialists is a more complex problem than is usually assumed. His theory of value is no more than a formidable adaptation of a concept already worked out in full by a group of English predecessors. Men like Harrington and James Madison realized, hardly less clearly than he, the significance of the materialist interpretation of history. His appreciation of the fact of class antagonism had been anticipated in detail by Saint-Simon. Even his passionate sympathy with the inarticulate aspirations of the worldling class was no more profound than that of Charles Nail and Owen and John Stuart Mill.

His position, indeed, cannot be appreciated unless it is seen in its historical perspective. Born between two revolutions, he utilized the method produced by the reaction from the excesses of France to the service of its fundamental principles. The disciple of Hegel, he was the first of those who felt his master's influence to apply his dialectic to the analysis of social facts. Hardly less important was the material of which he made use. Beginning to write when the full implications of capitalism were becoming visible, he utilized its own description of its economic consequences as the proof of its moral inadequacy. The evidence was impressive and complete; and the induction therefrom of a social order at once new and inevitable, suited to a nicety the yearnings of his generation.

The main result of the Hegelian movement was to lend a new sanction to philosophic conservatism. The impact of the revolutionary wars seems to have turned the mind of its founder towards the justification of established order. In that sense, Hegel is a chief of reactionary romanticism, and his affinity to men like Burke and Savigny is obvious. Yet the essence of Hegelianism is, at the same time, the idea of evolution, and, to an age which, as with de Maistre, was chiefly concerned with finding the basis of a permanent social scheme the notion of evolution was a definitely radical one. For Hegel insists on the impermanence of institutions. Each age is its predecessor with a difference. There is a change of tone and outlook, a tendency to emphasize the antithesis of what has been characteristic of the earlier period. To the period of religious intensity there succeeds the age of religious indifference; Bossuet begets Voltaire, as Lord Eldon implies the reforming zeal of Henry Brougham. The law of life is the warring of contradictions, with growth as its consequence. This process, which Hegel called dialectic, is, as it were, a kind of rhythm which moves from the concrete hardness of some definite idea to its opposite; from that repulsion it shifts towards a synthesis in which the two first stages interpenetrate each other to form a new concept by their union.

This notion is the ruling method of Marxian thought. Obviously enough, it provides a means whereby the foundations of any given social system may be criticized at their base. For if we can be certain that any interpretation of a period is necessarily a partial view, we have only to emphasize its antithesis to call forth the possibility of a new standpoint. Hegelianism, for example, might insist on the moral adequacy of the Prussian State. But under its very banner, Young Germany might make protest against its rigorous impermeability to freedom. Where Hegelian doctrine had emphasized birth and position, Young Germany could point to the frustration of talent and the tragedies of the poor. Where it insisted on the value of religion, the newer thinkers might question the very

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foundations of faith. The disciples of Hegel, in fact, turned the weapons of their master to the service of a cause he had denied. Strauss and Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer and Heine are essentially a part of the same general tendency of which Marx is the representative in social ideas. They are the heralds of revolt against the reaction. Their difference from Marx consists in their failure to see the political implications of their position. Marx grasped: them from the outset; and the Hegelian dialectic in his hands is an effort at the overthrow of the existing social order.

The time, indeed, was singularly fitted for the ideas of which he was the protagonist. The shadow of two French Revolutions bestrode Europe like a colossus; and the very reaction they had provoked was compelled to make grudging concessions to ensure even its temporary survival. The mood of the people was everywhere bitter and discontented; and the criticism of existing institutions secured a widespread and eager welcome. In France, the work of Saint-Simon and Fourier and Enfantin had shown how prolific of novelty the revolution remained; and its influence was hardly less apparent in the new liberalism of Sismondi and the Catholic experiments of Lamennais. England was in the throes of a convulsion not the less profound because it was silent. Bentham had at last come into his own; and, under the stress of his urgent protests English institutions were being transformed into the organs of a middle-class state. The relics of feudalism had at last submitted to the assaults of Ricardo and his school; and the newborn industrialism, even if, to an observant eye, it seemed but the grim doctrines of Calvin translated to an economic sphere, completely altered the atmosphere of social life.

The revolution, indeed, did not achieve its purpose without suffering. As early as 1805, Charles Hall had uttered a remarkable protest against the implications of the new civilization and that half-forgotten school of economists who form a link between the individualism of Bentham and the co-operation of Owen, were riddling its protective armour in the name of social justice. The masses had regarded the Reform Act of 1832 as the prelude to the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and their disappointment expressed itself in the revolutionary activity of the trade unions and the formation of the Chartist movement. Thinkers like William Thompson and J. F. Bray, noble-minded agitators like Francis Place and William Lovett, are every whit as indicative of the new capitalism as the great merchants and the incredible machines of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The Industrial Revolution reaped what it had sown. It ground a whole generation into intolerable despair, and dreams of its destruction were the sole refuge of its victims. Those dreams were the background which made possible the emergence of Karl Marx. They gave him the foundation of his social philosophy.

## II.

Karl Marx was born at Treves on May 5th, 1818, of Jewish parents who were descended on both sides from rabbinic ancestors. Neither his father, who was a lawyer, nor his mother seems to have had any special ability; and Marx himself was the only one of several children who attained intellectual distinction. When he was six years old, the family was converted to Christianity, not, it appears, from any desire to avoid the stigma then attached to the Jewish faith, but as a result of that romantic idealizing of Christianity of which Chateaubriand was the most famous representative. It is not easy to measure exactly what influence this change had upon Marx. If it later opened to him avenues that would otherwise have been closed, he never availed himself of them. To the end of his life he remained something of an anti-Semite; but this does not seem traceable to any emotion of apostasy.

Marx's childhood was passed in the normal atmosphere of a patriotic lawyer's life. His father was a zealous Prussian, to whom the defeat of Napoleon offered the opportunity, of which his son did not take advantage, of a lyrical hymn to Prussian victory. He went to the grammar school of his native town, where his ability was immediately marked by his teachers. There too, he was intimate with the Privy Councillor, von Westphalen, whose house was a kind of salon for the intellectual youth of Treves. At least Marx learned there a love of literature and the dedication of his doctor's thesis is testimony to his grateful regard for his future father-in-law. For even before his departure, in 1835, to Bonn University, he had become secretly engaged to Jenny von Westphalen, whose beauty and strength of mind had awakened in him an affection which did not diminish through life.

Marx remained a year in Bonn, studying jurisprudence; but he seems to have devoted himself to the more convivial side of the University, and it was not until his removal to Berlin, in 1836, that he threw himself into intellectual work. Berlin was then at the very height of its reputation; and the influence of Hegel was still paramount in its instruction. No sort of learning seems to have come amiss to Marx. History and philosophy geography and jurisprudence, literature and Aesthetic, all of them aroused in him the typical enthusiasm of an undergraduate in search of omniscience. Nor--it is a grateful thought--did he fail to write poetry; and if his verses are a fair index to his state of mind, he was full of a restless insatiability for knowledge, and a zealous desire to solve the problems of the universe, from which at least there must have been derived many hours of happy work. He tried his hand at composing philosophic systems. He attempted to compile an outline of jurisprudence. He went hardly at all into society, and it was not until the winter of 1837 that his experiments resolved themselves into a settled system. He surrendered the neo-idealism of Kant and took refuge in a complete acceptance of Hegelian metaphysic. That this change represented for him a very real mental crisis is evident from the passionate, if turgid, letter to his father of November 10th, 1837. There he summarizes the intense struggle through which he had passed, the desire "to dive into the deeps of the ocean . . . bringing up chaste pearls into the sunlight." He was ill and troubled. His poems and short stories were burned; he sought escape from the seductions of Hegel in discussion at the Graduates' Club, only to find himself the more securely enmeshed therein. It is the typical intellectual history of an ardent mind, conscious of great powers, and eager to secure a foothold from which to survey the universe.

Not unnaturally, it greatly disturbed his father. He, good man, was anxious above all to see Karl at work in a lawyer's office, or, even better, in Government service. Why did he not do as other students, attend his lectures, meet the right people, and embark upon his future career? He did not understand this mental torment save to see that it involved physical ill-health and a good deal of miscellaneous reading totally unconnected with the law. But Marx's ideals had already passed beyond so pedestrian an existence; and his father seems to have reconciled himself to the new ambitions. Marx determined upon a University post, and for that purpose devoted himself to the study of philosophic jurisprudence. With friends like Bruno Bauer and Friedrich Koppen, he buried himself in study and discussion. A thesis was written on the philosophical systems of Democritus and Epicurus, and in 1841 Marx became a doctor of the University of Jena. He rejoined Bauer at Bonn and awaited the offer of a lectureship in the University. Had that offer come, the history of European Socialism might have been very different. But the Prussian educational system did not look with affection upon eager young men whose views did not square with orthodox teaching. The post did not arrive, and it was shortly enough obvious that it was not likely to arrive. An academic career being thus impossible, Marx set to work to find a living in journalism, and in 1842 an opportunity of an attractive kind presented itself.

The first number of the *Rheinische Zeitung* was published on January 1st, 1842, and Marx was a warm friend of the editor, who had met him at the Graduates' Club in Berlin. Invited to assist, he wrote philosophical articles which not only brought him to the notice of a wider circle, among whom were men like Feuerbach and Moses Hess, but also secured for him the direction of the journal on the retirement of its first editor in the next October. Thereby Marx was compelled to deal, and for the first time, with immediate political issues. He came into contact with French and German Socialism, then in their Utopian stage. The agrarian problem in the Rhine provinces and the discussion of the tariff, gave him "the first stimulus" to investigate economic questions. French socialist ideas were already being discussed in the paper, but Marx, as always, determined upon a thorough grasp of the issue, did not as yet pronounce upon their worth. An editor who takes time to make up his mind is obviously lost; and the directors of the paper decided to make a change in its management. Marx, who had just married, seems to have resigned without regret, and to have buried himself for the next two years in those economic studies from which he emerged a Socialist.

Of the inner history of those years we know practically nothing. Certain alone it is that as early as May, 1843, he detected within society "a breach which the old system cannot heal"; and it was not long before he showed in his letters an intimate knowledge of Fourier, Proudhon and Cabet. Already he had done with Utopias; the problem was "to explain the struggles and yearnings of the time." In the winter of 1843, when he had settled with his wife in Paris, he wrote the introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*, which remains, perhaps, his profoundest piece of technical criticism. Already he was thinking in terms of revolution, and insisting that the task of the proletariat was to free itself from the existing social order. Poverty he viewed, thus early, as the artificial product of a bourgeois society; and the denial of the right to private property had become for him the fundamental avenue

of release. But we catch glimpses only of this time. All that can be said with certainty is the fact that reflection had made him a Socialist. He had realized, too, the inadequacies of the abstract remoteness of French Socialism. He had seen that the political state was, at any given time, the reflection in structure of the ideas of that epoch. He had realized that the main need was to make plain to the mass of men the implications of the state, and the end to which their half-conscious struggle should lead them. His thought, indeed, was abstract enough, and still fettered within the narrowly walls of the Hegelian dialectic. But at least it was moving forward.

Meanwhile, the problem of how to live had still to be solved. He had gone to Paris in October, 1843, to become editor of the Franco-German Year Books. But that periodical lasted only for a single issue, and, for Marx, its chief importance was the appearance therein of a long and frankly, bad article by Friedrich Engels on political economy. The article led to correspondence between them, and in the autumn of 1844, Engels went to Paris to visit Marx. That visit was the commencement of a friendship which even death did not terminate.

Friedrich Engels was the son of a rich manufacturer in the Rhineland. His father owned a cotton mill near Manchester, to which, in 1842, Engels had been sent to study English business conditions. He was already an eager critic of social conditions, and how carefully he observed the life about him, his *Condition of the Working Classes in England* in 1844, which he published in 1845, bears witness. A sympathizer with the Chartist Movement, and a contributor to Owen's *New Moral World*, he was exactly in the frame of mind to be receptive to Marx's ideas. And his personal qualities admirably fitted him to be the complement of Marx. Thoroughly loyal, without an atom of personal ambition, generous, and self-effacing, practical and energetic, he brought to Marx all the necessary characteristics of a *Fidus Achates*. His unstinting literary assistance hardly less than his constant financial aid were the materials which determined Marx's future career. It is, indeed, almost impossible to disentangle the labours of the two. Clearly enough, it was to Engels that Marx owed both his knowledge of English blue-books as a source of economic theory, and his introduction to the work of the English socialist school. Without Engels, too, it would have been difficult for Marx to undertake the research to which the first volume of the *Capital* bears witness; and the posthumous publication of the two latter volumes was the tribute that Engels paid to the memory of his master. That Marx would have been an important figure without Engels is clear enough; but the aid rendered by the latter made all the difference between the comparative calm of London and the restless wanderings of which hapless exiles like Bakunin were the miserable victims.

The sudden end of the Franco-German Year Books made Marx turn to more solid production. The *Holy Family* (1845) is important, not only because it contains the first clear outline of the materialistic conception of history, but also because its attack on Bruno Bauer is evidence that Marx had already broken with the young Hegelians. He had come to place all his faith in the significance of mass-movements. where Bauer believed that the ideas by which mankind is moved cannot hope for more than superficial understanding from the mass and depend for their success upon the efforts of great men. Simultaneously, also, he was answering Ruge's attacks upon the German proletariat with an impassioned defence of socialism and revolution. Weitling is held up as proof of proletarian virtue against the mediocrity of the political literature of the German bourgeoisie. And in the polemic against Ruge it is insisted that the time for political revolution, the only revolution of which the German bourgeoisie is capable, had passed; the capacity of Germany is the capacity of its workers, and it is to a social revolution that Marx directs attention.

This Paris period is important not only for the advent of Engels. Mingling with the German workers then living in Paris, Marx naturally met those who were already in sympathy with his own views. From them to Proudhon was a natural step, for Proudhon was already the dominant socialist influence in France. Proudhon was interested in the Hegelian dialectic, and he and Marx spent countless hours in discussing its application to social science. But this fruitful intercourse was interrupted by his expulsion from France (January, 1845) at the demand of the Prussian Government. Marx went from Paris to Brussels, where he remained, but for short intervals, until the outbreak of the revolution of 1848. Engels gave him a selection of his library and Marx devoted himself to the composition of his singularly able and unpleasant criticism of Proudhon. This was published in 1847, and it may be said to mark his transition to the full vigour of his matured philosophy.

Proudhon's reputation as a social philosopher has undergone an interesting reconstruction in our own day. (1) As an economist he has hardly survived the analysis of Marx. A self-taught man,

originally a printer, he came into prominence by the publication, in 1840, of his prize essays *What is Property?* in which, with much brilliance of style and no small genius for paradox, he repeated in the economic sphere the substance of those criticisms of social organization which Rousseau had expressed in a prize essay not less famous. But Proudhon's aspirations were not limited by his knowledge. With undoubted ability and with a real gift of social insight, he yet lacked that rigorous training in the method of intellectual inquiry without which the production of a logical system is rarely possible. Discovering the work of Hegel, he attempted an interpretation of social life in terms of the dialectic. It is, broadly, a mass of ill-arranged jargon with some brilliant asides. But the work was written while in contact with Marx, and the *Philosophie de la Misère* is the exposition of exactly that type of Utopia-mongering which aroused Marx's anger. It depended for its success mainly upon the unconscious ease with which it determines the most complex economic problems, and the reckless certitude of its own conclusions. It is, indeed, at the same time, a very attractive book. Proudhon realized, not less keenly than Marx, the evils of capitalism, and he was not less anxious to point the way to an economic order of which the motives were freedom and justice. In the *Du Principe Fédératif* and the *Justice dans la Révolution*, indeed, he outlined a type of federalism of which the suggestiveness is immense; and it would be legitimate to argue that not the least significant source of the ancestry of Guild Socialism could be traced to his; writings.

But the conflict between Marx and Proudhon was an inevitable one. At bottom, the ideals of Proudhon were those of a peasant socialism, in which the authority of a central state was reduced to a minimum; he was reformist in outlook, despite the vigour of his phrases, and his economic views were always subordinate to certain ethical assumptions. Marx was the typical representative of the new industrialism, and the source of change for him was solely to be traced to developments in industrial technique. Authoritarian and materialist in both outlook and temper there was no real contact between Proudhon and himself. Marx, moreover, was a trained scholar, to whom the luxuriance of Proudhon's speculations was never an adequate substitute for fact. He was able without difficulty to show that Proudhon understood neither the theory of value nor the process of production. At bottom, as he insists, Proudhon had done little more than urge, first that labour was the source of value, and next that riches and poverty co-exist. Proudhon could see that the source of economic injustice lay somewhere within the system of production, but he could not, with any clarity, explain its development. Marx overwhelmed him with ridicule, abuse, and sarcasm, and it must be admitted that from the standpoint of an economist, right is on his side. And Marx's answer, the *Poverty of Philosophy*, is noteworthy also for its firm grasp of the economic processes of history and for his insistence upon the part that an oppressed class has always played in the development of any system founded upon class antagonism. But the main value of the book consists less in any positive doctrine that it announces than in the atmosphere by which it is permeated. It is definitely revolutionary, and it is revolutionary because it is historical. Its lesson is the argument that social evolution implies economic revolution. That was a new note to strike in the history of European Socialism.

### III.

The controversy with Proudhon was the natural prelude to the Communist Manifesto. It had been evident to Marx, for several years before 1848, that Europe was on the verge of revolt. England was passing through a period of intense agitation. Socialism was growing in Germany by leaps and bounds; and the lyrical falsifications of Lamartine seemed to the Paris workmen infinitely preferable to the mediocre corruption of Guizot and Louis Philippe. Marx, indeed, did not see that the political situation was far too complex to admit of an interpretation in uniform terms. Democratic nationalism like that of Mazzini, individualist republicanism like that of Ledru-Rollin, such hostility to dynastic oppression as Kossuth embodied, state socialism as typified by Louis Blanc--the forces of upheaval were too various and incompatible to admit of any continuous co-operation. Bitterly as the worker might resent the consequences of industrialism he had not yet reached the stage where the seizure of political power for economic ends seemed to him the one ideal worthy of attainment. And he was to no small degree, still attracted by the kind of unrealistic thinking of which Robert Owen was so prolific, the sense that the difficulties of the time might be evaded by extra-political organization. Marx realized that this attitude was definitely unconstructive. The seizure of the State was to him the starting point of successful effort, and when Frederic William IV summoned the United Assembly in February, 1847, it was not unnatural for him to assume that the hour for action was at hand.

From the outset of his life in Brussels Marx had mingled with the German socialist residents there. He had come into contact with the League of the Just, an organization of German workers with branches in the chief European towns. This society, founded in 1836, had in 1840 moved its headquarters to London, probably to escape the unwelcome attentions of the political police. The attention of the London group had been drawn to Marx by the members in Paris and Brussels. The London branch commissioned inquiries to be made about him, and when the first Congress of the League was held in London in the summer of 1847, Engels and Wilhelm Wolff, the latter, through Engels, a disciple of Marx, were present at its deliberations. Engels had spent the year in efforts at revolutionary propaganda in Paris and the Rhineland; and it is probably due, in the main, to him that the League of the Just was transformed into the Communist League. The ground was thus prepared for Marx, who appeared at the second Congress, also in London, in December, 1847. Engels had already conferred with him as to the ground to be taken there; and he had sent Marx the outline of a programme to be offered to the Congress for acceptance. Engel's outline contains the substance of the famous manifesto; but it lacks the ringing challenge and firm grasp of its successor. At the Congress, Marx and Engels were commissioned to draw up a programme. They were prepared for the effort; and the German edition of the Communist Manifesto appeared a few days before the outbreak of the Paris revolution.

It is not easy to over estimate the significance of the Manifesto. It gave direction and a philosophy to what had been before little more than an inchoate protest against injustice. It began the long process of welding together the scattered groups of the disinherited into an organized and influential party. It freed Socialism from its earlier situation of a doctrine cherished by conspirators in defiance of government and gave to it at once a purpose and an historic background. It almost created a proletarian consciousness by giving, and for the first time, to the workers at once a high sense of their historic mission and a realization of the dignity implicit in their task. It destroyed at a stroke both the belief that Socialism could triumph without long preparation, and the hope that any form of economic organization was possible save that which was implicit in the facts of the time. It insisted upon no natural rights. It did not lay down any metaphysic. It was, on the contrary, a careful and critical historic survey of the institutional process regarded as a whole.

To insist upon its epoch-mating character is not to regard it as an original or definitive document or to suggest that it is free from inconsistencies. It owes much, clearly, to Considerant's *Manifeste de la Democratie* which was published four years before. (2) There have been Utopian socialisms in despite of Marx; and we are doubtless not at the end of them. The belief in natural rights revives with every age of discontent, and it would be possible to prove that the idea of natural rights is necessarily implicit in the juridical structure of Socialism. Nor is its treatment of the middle class at all adequate. At one point it is subject to a vituperation so scathing and relentless, as to make it seem the nurse of all social evil. At another its great historic achievements are exalted beyond all praise. Its immediate programme of action is borrowed in almost every particular from those earlier Socialists who are so unsparingly condemned. Nor can Marx's claim that he substituted "a critical insight into the facts, progress and general results of the actual social movement" for the systems of his predecessors, be entirely accepted; for, after all, it is not the least merit of Fourier and Saint-Simon that they had described with not less sober accuracy than that of Marx the economic conditions of their time. Even the use of the class-war as the key to history was brilliantly in the Genevan Letters of Saint-Simon.

Yet the general superiority of the Manifesto to previous Socialist writing is incontestable. It contains, broadly speaking, four definite groups of ideas. Beginning with a history of the growth of the middle class it recounts its victory over feudal privilege, its emergence into the full development of capitalistic enterprise, and its necessary result in a revolutionary proletariat. A second section deals with the philosophic interpretation of this history. It argues that the doctrine of the class struggle, the necessary and inevitable conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, with the consequent revolutionary role that is assigned to the latter, are the plain deductions to be drawn. Ways and means are then discussed, the main object of which is to bring within the ambit of state control the whole economic life of the people. There then follows a criticism of previous Socialist literature of which it must be said that, forcible and eloquent as it is, much of it is inaccurate and the whole unfair. No description can do justice to the brilliant vigour of the whole. Every phrase of it is a challenge, and much of it has the same moving passion that distinguishes the exordium of the Social Contract or, in a very different type of polemic, the *Paroles d'un Croyant* of Lamennais. It is the book of men who have viewed the whole process of history from an eminence and discovered

therein an inescapable lesson. It is at once an epilogue and a prophecy--an epilogue to the deception from which the workers suffered in the Revolution of 1789 and a prophecy of the land of promise they may still hope to enter. A movement that could produce a challenge so profound came hardly less to fulfil than to destroy.

It had hardly appeared before the Revolution broke out in Paris, and Marx, as a precautionary measure, was banished from Brussels by the Belgian Government. "Tyranny has banished you," wrote the French Provisional Government, "but a free France opens her gates to you." Marx proceeded to Paris, but remained there only a short time. Germany was already seething with revolt, and the natural vantage-ground for him was obviously the Rhineland. Gathering about' trim the members of the Communist League Marx went to Cologne where the editorship of the revolutionary paper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, was entrusted to him. Brief as was its life, its substance was not merely brilliant but of great significance as an indication of the Marxian tactic. Engels and Wilhelm Wolff were its chief contributors, and Freiligrath and Lassalle sent poems and essays. Mehring has published a selection of the chief articles of Marx in this paper. Dominantly, they insist upon three ideas: the disarming of the bourgeoisie, the erection of a revolutionary terror "to abridge and concentrate the hideous death agonies of society," and the creation of a revolutionary army. There is no room in Marx's thought, save perhaps as an ultimate, for any democratic system. Revolution opposes counter-revolution, and a reign of terror is the path to triumph. Liberty is dismissed as a purely bourgeois ideal, which impedes proletarian advance to its goal. The idea of a general upheaval, Russia linking hands with France, Berlin uniting with Vienna, is emphasized, though it should be added that Marx had no full realization either of the difficulties the Revolution would encounter, or the speediness of its destruction. The paper hardly lived for a year, when troubles with the censorship put an end to its existence, Marx left Cologne and returned to Paris, but only to witness the bloody suppression of the days of June. Banished by the French Government in July, 1849, to a remote corner of Brittany, he decided to move to London. Thither he went with his family, and he remained in England, with one or two brief intervals, for the rest of his life.

#### IV.

Marx's London period is, creatively, the most important part of his career; but it was a difficult and tragic struggle for existence, and his work was accomplished only by heroic effort. For the first ten years, the family was hardly over the verge of starvation, and Marx had even to pawn his clothes for necessary expenses. For was his intellectual environment easy. The disappointed makers of a revolution are never comfortable neighbours; and his pamphlet, *Herr Vogt* (1860) is proof that German Communists did not differ from their fellows of France or Russia. ten years (1851-60) Marx acted as European correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, a post which was the sole source of any continuous income. It was, however, very poorly paid, and if the selection of his articles therein published by Eleanor Marx after his death is at all representative, it is clear that the taste of the American reader has changed in remarkable fashion since the 'sixties. For Marx does not abate one iota of his convictions in his correspondence; and the manner of interpretation is that of the philosopher rather than the journalist.

That income apart, Marx had no consistent means of livelihood during his first ten years in London. Then came one or two family legacies, and a generous tribute from Wilhelm Wolff; later, Engels was able from his own means to allow Marx some three hundred and fifty pounds a year. Yet, with all their penury, these were not unhappy years. His wife seems to have had a real genius for deriving contentment from misfortune; judges like Heine and Paul Lafargue paid her the tribute of profound admiration. His children were growing up, and Marx was passionately fond of his children. Their nurse, Helene Demuth, was a source of infinite help and comfort, and there was always the sure knowledge of the inevitable triumph of the revolutionary cause.

For Marx did not share in the sense of depression which fell upon Liberals after the failure of 1848. He shut himself in the British Museum and, sometimes working sixteen hours a day, set himself to the composition of a socialist economics. One or two minor pamphlets were written, as the unsparing denunciation of the coup d'etat of 1851, which he called the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852) and the *Critique of Political Economy* (1859) which is important in part because it is the groundwork of the *Capital* itself and in part because of the valuable light it throws upon his



own conception of his method. But outside his relations with the international, it was to the Capital that these years were devoted. And they were years of unremitting and devoted service. He was at the Museum as it opened and never left until the attendants turned him out. A chosen band of helpers, all fellow-exiles, used to accompany him and aid in the researches he conducted; though it should perhaps be added that they were not admitted as assistants until they had shown their agreement with Marx and passed certain craniological tests. Phrenology was not typical merely of the Utopian period of Socialism. Marx, moreover, never considered the exchange of conviction for comfort; offers of position came to him, as when Buchar sounded him, possibly on Bismarck's behalf; but he never dreamed of desertion. There is certainly no more remarkable instance of great sacrifice for intellectual discovery than that of which Marx's life is a record. Darwin, it is true, devoted twenty years to the testing of his hypotheses, but he had ample means at his command. Marx was surrounded by difficulties, of which not the least was the knowledge that his self-imposed task condemned his wife and family to profound suffering. Neither he nor they seemed to have flinched from the consequences, and one may judge not unfairly that their pride in his work was for Marx his happiest achievement.

Of Marx's intellectual environment in London, we know all too little. Men like John Stuart Mill he never met, though he was on friendly terms with the leading trade unionists as Odger and Applegarth. With the latter, however, he had no intimate political relations, and in the contemporary history of English labour, his name has no large place. That, perhaps, was natural enough; for English trade unionism was then a system of compromises with which Marx's revolutionary dogmas had little connection. For the most part his affiliations were with Engels and the German exiles in London, though only the former seems to have enjoyed his full confidence. He had, moreover, a close relation-ship with that mysterious figure, half-fanatic and half-knight-errant, David Urquhart, whose loathing of Russia Marx seems fully to have shared. Both of them saw spies at every street corner, and at one time or another, in each case without a shadow of justification, Marx was able to convince himself that Herwegh and Bakunin were government emissaries. It is, of course, sufficiently intelligible that an exile who had himself been the object of police attentions should live in an atmosphere of nervous suspicion; but it is a regrettable corollary of Marx's accusations that both Herwegh and Bakunin belonged to different sections of the Socialist party. Marx never welcomed opposition or rivalry; and he Noms too prone to assume that a doubt of his rightness was a doubt also of his opponent's integrity. Yet it must be counted to his great credit in these years that he is in no small degree responsible for the sympathy shown to the North by the working class during the American Civil War. It was Marx who advised the union of the labour leaders with Cobden and Bright to arouse the enthusiasm of the trade unions; and it was Marx who proposed in the General Council of the International, that a vote of congratulation be sent to Lincoln, on his re-election as President of the United States. Marx played some part also in arousing the trade unions to protest against the brutal suppression by Russia of the Polish revolt of 1863.

But, apart from the preparation of Capital, Marx's chief occupation in London was with the early stages of the First International. In 1862 a group of Paris workmen paid a visit to the London Exhibition of that year. A trade union committee received them and a joint international Council was founded. When the Polish rebellion of 1863 broke out, it was this Council which prepared the gigantic protest meetings against Russian barbarity which represented the first intervention, failure though it was, of British labour in foreign politics. It was in connection with this campaign that Odger, a member of the Junta, suggested that the needs of the working class involved the holding of regular international meetings. The idea was taken up with enthusiasm and a great meeting was held in London in September, 1864, to organize the movement. Marx, who had held rather aloof from the initial stages was present at the meeting, and joined the Founders' Committee that was created. He perceived at once the significance of the new movement, and though he seems to have had little but contempt for its leaders, he was appointed to draw up the inaugural address. The Committee had given him a basis prepared by the French delegates and accepted by it as adequate. Marx, characteristically enough, destroyed the basis, and produced instead an address of his own detailing the progress of the working class in England during the past thirty years, and insisting that its meaning must be read in terms only of his own theories. It is, in fact, a new edition of the Communist Manifesto, with the revolutionary period of trade unionism as the basis of its deductions instead of universal history. The special interest of the address, however, lies in Marx's use of the history of the Factory Acts as a proof of the value of working-class agitation. "In the bright sunlight of day," he said, "the bourgeois political economy was here vanquished for the first time by the political economy of the working class." The Factory Acts were, indeed, revolutionary in the sense that they were a direct admission of the inadequacy of laissez-faire; but their passage was

hardly due to the type of influence Marx had in mind. At least in other moods he would not have called Lord Shaftesbury a revolutionary Communist.

Marx henceforward devoted much energy to the International, and as he hurried it forth from its cradle, so he may be said to have hastened it towards the grave. Its origin began in dissension--the struggle between the idealist nationalism of Mazzini and the revolutionary and class-conscious aggressiveness of Marx. On the latter's victory Mazzini withdrew, though with characteristic selflessness he advised his followers to continue their support. Marx henceforth dominated the organization, though he waged a continuous warfare to maintain his supremacy. To him, the movement was essentially an effort to propagate the ideas of the Communist Manifesto and thus to prepare the way for the revolution. But to the English members the International was essentially an organ for promoting trade unionism; and when Ogden perceived, in the Commune of 1871 and Marx's defence of it, the real drift of its purpose, he resigned from the organization. The English section always remained aloof from the directorate; for it was that special brand of Radicalism of which William Lovett was perhaps the finest representative that they were really concerned to foster. Nor was the English section the only difficulty. For the first two years, the followers of Proudhon were not able rivals, and they had no sympathy with Marx's idea of a direct and immediate political revolution. They were, moreover, hostile to Communism; and racial differences played their part. Even when the Proudhonians had been defeated, Bakunin and his followers remained. They were anarchists and bitterly opposed to the centralized dictatorship of which Marx was the exponent; and there were grave differences between them on the degree to which property was to be confiscated. Bakunin, it must be admitted, was as difficult as Marx himself in colleagueship. He founded a rival organization and did much intriguing against Marx when he was readmitted on its abandonment. By 1872 his influence had so increased that a frontal attack upon him was impossible. In the Hague Congress of that year, Marx therefore proposed the removal of the headquarters to New York. The motion was carried; but it was obviously impossible to direct European Socialism from a position three thousand miles away. By 1875 the International was extinct; and hostile as were the attentions given to it by the Governments of Europe, it rather perished of internal dissension, the struggle between two powerful and antithetic personalities, than from external attack.

Not, however, before it had rendered one great service. The Second Empire perished in the defeat of Sedan, and the provisional government created by Thiers was not merely hostile to a democratic re-organization, but even looked forward to the building of a new monarchy. The working men of Paris had no sympathy with these ideas; and the Commune was their answer to them. The effort lasted only seven weeks, when it was overthrown amid scenes of unexampled butchery. Marx had been definitely hostile to its inception. For him the essential function of the workers was to strengthen their own organizations and to prepare themselves thereby for their coming freedom. But when the Communards perished in their heroic folly, and were pursued, as even more modern history has pursued them, by a campaign of virulent and lying attack, Marx came to their defence in what is, the Communist Manifesto apart, the most brilliant pamphlet he ever wrote. The Civil War in France, published as an official statement of the International, is, of course, a partial and incomplete view of the complicated events it narrates; but nothing that has been written since so admirably depicts the ideas and sentiments by which the Communards were inspired, or more energetically displays the savage brutality with which they were treated. The defence was the more generous when Marx's low opinion of the French Socialist movement is remembered, as also his conviction that Sedan was the just price of Bonapartist imperialism. Yet even in the hour of a victory he welcomed, Marx addressed the German workers in a manifesto which demanded a fair and honourable place for the vanquished.

Meanwhile, the great labour of his life had been partially completed by the publication, in 1867, of the first volume of the Capital. It cannot be said to have received the welcome it deserved. Written, of course, as it was in a German particularly cumbrous and involved in structure, it was necessarily caviare to the multitude. The Saturday Review perceived the value of the material of which it made use; though not even Professor Beesly's persuasiveness could induce George Henry Lewes to insert a long notice from Engels in the Fortnightly. Russian and French translations soon followed; and in Russia, particularly, the book soon made its way to that position of commanding influence it has never lost. Marx, it must be remembered, was already well-known in Russia. Belinsky had already praised the Franco-German Year Books; Annenkov had published a long critique from Marx on Proudhon; and his relations with Herzen and Bakunin had made him a notable figure among international Socialists. In Germany the book seems to have made its way but slowly; and the second edition (1873) contains a long protest by Marx against what he deemed an organized

conspiracy of silence. It had, of course, presently to undergo the inevitable attack incidental to all learned German controversy--on the ground that its doctrines had been anticipated; and Marx was ludicrously assumed to have stolen his thunder from Rodbertus. But within five years from its publication *Capital* had become the pivotal part of German Socialist literature, and his name assumed the position from which all other socialists might be surveyed.

Marx, was not, however, destined to complete it. The long struggle against poverty had left its mark upon his frame, and the last twelve years of his life were an incessant fight against pain and disease. Asthma and inflammation of the lungs left him little chance of continuous work, though typically- enough, he devoted his rest to the study of the Russian language that he might speak the more authoritatively, upon its agriculture, and to such recreations as physiology and advanced mathematics. He wrote, too, in 1875, his *Criticisms of the Gotha Programme*, which contains, perhaps, the clearest statement of his attitude towards the transition to Socialism. He was able, further, in 1877-8, to do something towards preparing the second volume of *Capital* for the press. But visits to Karlsbad and Algiers did not improve his shattered health; and he did not lift his head again after the death of his wife on December 2nd, 1881. To her, Marx had intended, as Engels has told us, to dedicate the completed structure of his work. He had no strength for the effort. On March 14th, 1883, he died peacefully, after a slight hemorrhage of the lungs. His old nurse, Helene, and Engels were present at his death; and three days later he was laid to rest in the cemetery at Highgate. Engels and Wilhelm Liebknecht spoke at his graveside; and the former devoted the remaining twelve years of his life to completing the unfinished edifice of his master. Marx would have wished no other wreath upon his tomb.

## V.

Marx's personality is no easy one to dissect. There is no trace of the rebel in his inheritance; and his early education would have fitted him for any career rather than the one he chose. If he became the head and centre of the destructive forces of Europe, that was the inevitable outcome of the reactionary regime into which he was born; and he would doubtless have countered that description by insisting that destruction is the parent of creativeness. His work dealt with the historic foundations of the permanent source of revolution, and the only weapon, as we realized, for flesh that has mortified is the knife. The view that makes of him the compeer of Darwin, the discoverer of the universal law of economic evolution, has not a little truth in it; but it is less true than that which places him alongside of Rousseau and Carlyle, as one of the great prophets of the human race.

For it is essentially by the qualities of the prophet that he is distinguished. He was unmoved by oracles other than his own. Impatient of difference; as with Proudhon and Bakunin, contemptuous, as his correspondence with Engels shows, of all who did not think exactly in his fashion, he never learned the essential art of collegueship. He was too prone to regard a hostile view as proof of moral crime. He had not a little of that zest for priority he was so unwilling to recognize in the discoveries of others. He was rarely generous in his recognition of intellectual stimulus. With Marx, to enter a movement was to dominate it; and he was incapable of talking the second place. "Hatred," wrote Mazzini of him, "outweighs love in his heart, which is not right even if the hatred may in itself have foundation." There is a penetrating truth in that criticism. Marx's absorption in the wrongs of the disinherited undoubtedly blinded him to the universality of human nature. He had brooded so long over the method of their redress, that he became incapable of weighing the value of alternative channels. He never realized how partial and incomplete were the views upon which he based his conclusions; and vast and patient as were the researches he undertook, he was not always exact in his measurement of evidence.

He is, in fact, a noble, but not an attractive figure. That there was a Marx eminently lovable in himself, the testimony of friends makes certain; but it was not the Marx of public life. There is something unhealthy; in the venom with which he assails early friends like Bruno Bauer, or not less ardent seekers after light like Proudhon. His accusations against Proudhon even when the temptation to destroy is remembered were singularly ungenerous. Learned, courageous, capable of profound sympathy with the mass of men, he was never able to grasp the secret of dealing with individuals. Much, is to be pardoned to an exile who never enjoyed comfort, and had often risked his personal safety but Mazzini was able to emerge from trials not less difficult with a sweetness

unembittered. Nor could Marx accustom himself to the necessary compromises of political life. One is tempted to feel that Marx confined his introspection to other men, and never attempted that sober examination of self which is often the beginning of political wisdom.

That effort, after all, is fundamental. The unstated assumptions of a thinker's personality are the more urgent because they do not appear in the printed word. Every great philosophic interpretation is at bottom a spiritual autobiography, and Marx never realized how greatly his work is a palimpsest within which one can read the history of his personal experience. It is significant for his books that his early radicalism should have proved a barrier to his university career. It is significant also that he should have known the pains and penalties of exile. Nor is it irrelevant that, after thirty years in London, he was still, at the end, a German stranger testing facts and constructing theories in terms quite alien from the circumstances around him. The impalpable penumbra of his thought never impressed him, even while it remained the subconscious touchstone by which he judged the thought and acts of other men. Thus, while he wrote with superb profundity about the material environment of men's lives, he rarely penetrated into the inner substance of those lives. With such tracts of experience--religion for example--as were alien from his own knowledge he could neither sympathize, nor understand. He wrote a philosophy which expresses in the mass the aspirations of men; but it is not a philosophy, like that of Rousseau which, with all its defects, springs directly from their deepest emotions. In a sense, that is to say, the seeming logic of his attitude is deceptive, for it in part rests upon a failure to test his own assumptions, and in part upon an abstract view of human nature with which the totality of facts is in direct contradiction.

Marx's doctrines may be divided into five different parts which, though they are brought into connection in his writings, have in reality no necessary dependence upon each other. Their central economic position is a theory of value, by which he endeavoured to explain the methods by which the workers are exploited under capitalism; and as a corollary, a view of the increasing concentration of capital from which he derived important consequences in his prophecy of the future. Historically it is an attempt to explain the growth of movements and institutions entirely in economic terms. Predominantly, Marx insists, the antagonism of classes is the motive-power which underlies the historic process; and it is to the impulses which are at work in the satisfaction of economic demand that all changes are to be traced. Philosophically, this view results in a purely materialistic view of human nature--a view, be it noted, which has obvious and important connections with the general attitude of the Benthamite school. Politically, the doctrines of Marx resolve themselves into a defence of revolution as the method by which the workers are to attain to power, and dictatorship as the method by which they so consolidate it as ultimately to secure a condition of general freedom.

Upon Marx's theory of value it is not necessary to spend much time. It has not stood the test of criticism; it is out of harmony with the facts, and it is far from self-consistent. It represents essentially a narrow interpretation of some loose sentences of Ricardo. The latter had argued, with certain qualifications, that the value of any commodity is to be measured by the quantity of labour which goes to its production. Marx, however, ignored the qualifications, and the proof he offered of the thesis is essentially different from that of Ricardo. Exchange value, he argued, is not the singular quality of the commodity in which it inheres. Exchange value is the quality which it possesses alike with all other qualities for which it can be exchanged. Since human labour is the only quality which all commodities possess in common, human labour must be the measure of exchange value. And, be it noted, by human labour is meant "undifferentiated human labour," it is a quantitative and not a qualitative equation. It is a measure simply of effort in time and not of effort in result or quality of result. Labour is paid differently simply in relation to the different amount of labour "congealed" in any given commodity produced. That which will suffice to produce the necessaries of life for the labourer is therefore the price of labour power. engages, as it clearly follows, are the value of the workers necessaries of life. But the worker produces in a day more than suffices for his necessaries of life. If we assume that by working six hours each day the worker can produce his necessaries, while his working day is eight hours long, then the value of what he produces is as eight hours is to six, is, that is to say, one-third greater. Marx termed this extra-production surplus-value, and he assumed that the capitalist, taking his surplus as his profit, robbed the worker of it. For by buying labour-power at its market price! the capitalist at once grows rich and exploits his workers. And in any capitalistic society, especially where there is free competition, this is bound to be the case; from which it of course follows that only by the abolition of capitalism can we stop the exploitation of labour.

It is unnecessary to dwell at any length upon the fallacies implicit in this analysis. As a matter of logic, Marx had no right to assume that the quality of labour is, other differences being subtracted, the common basis of measurement. Nor did he mention that in addition to labour, all commodities to have value must have this at least in common, that they satisfy some need. Utility, in other words, is a necessary factor in value; it would be impossible to produce aeroplanes except upon the assumption that some people wanted to fly in them. Nor can "undifferentiated human labour" be taken as a measure of value. It is an economic platitude that differences in wages are not merely due to differences in the effort in time of production. It costs no less to produce a bad carpenter than a good one, but the quality of a good carpenter's work has a value quite apart from cost as effort; it has the type of value which the economists call a quasi-rent, and this quasi-rent appears in the value-in-exchange of the product.

Nor is this all. Wherever there is a type of production the phenomena of which result in rent, the measurement of value is not the mean cost of production but the marginal cost of production. Marx failed to note this limitation, with the result that he cannot understand the nature of rent and was led into obvious contradictions. (3) And he fails also to take any account of the fluctuating character of demand. He seems to have regarded demand as purely static, and falls, as a consequence, into all the difficulties which Bohm-Bawerk and the Austrian school have emphasized. To say, moreover, with Marx that the "cost of a labourer is the socially necessary cost," the lowest cost, that is, at which he can be produced, is immediately to bring within purview tests of his hypothesis which he entirely failed to apply. For if wages represent the cost of necessities, the existence of a proletariat whose wages are above the bare cost of necessities clearly invalidates the whole process. And, in fact, the question of a wages level is an historical problem in which logical considerations do not play the whole part. Social conscience, for example, as with the Trade Boards, may insist upon a rate of wages historically above "the socially necessary cost," and trade unions may by the combined strength they represent, lead to the same result. If a state, even though it be a capitalistic state, chose to adopt a policy of a minimum basis of civilized life, in which a wage-standard was fixed, the iron law of wages, which Marx deduced from his theory of value, would immediately be obsolete.

It must not be forgotten, moreover, that in the Marxian analysis whatever does not appear as wages, is always regarded as unearned profit. Of rent and interest this is, perhaps, no unfair account, but it is outside the evidence of facts to argue that the task of directing business, the work of the entrepreneur, is not to count as labour and does not create value. Even when a suspicion of this impossibility dawned upon Marx, he dismissed the earnings of direction simply as cunning, (4) and argued that all profits contain an element of surplus value which differs from interest, wages and payment to the entrepreneur. But if profits are not a payment for work then it should surely follow that the capitalist must take it also; otherwise he is gifted with a quality of moderation with which Marx does not normally endow him.

In such a general background, the Marxian theory of value seems clearly untenable not less on theoretic grounds than from an analysis of the facts of business. It is equally undeniable that Marx's view has obtained the assent of a whole class of society to its truth; and it is, therefore, worth while for a moment to inquire exactly what magic it possesses from which its strengthening hold is derived. That, it may be suggested, is simple enough. For the technical economist, the difference between profits and rent seems fundamental. Men like Ricardo and Nassau Senior saw a natural distinction in source of origin which manufacturers like Bright embodied in the legitimate earnings of a hardworking mill-owner, whatever his wealth, and the illegitimate because unearned income of a land-owning duke. They saw it the more clearly when, as in the period of Marx's own maturity, they were struggling to free his business from the environment of a hostile squirearchy. But to the labourer, as Marx clearly saw, such a distinction seems for practical purposes irrelevant. The world was divided for him into those who lived by wages and those who did not. Those who lived by wages were poor, those who did not live by wages were rich. Assume, as Marx assumed, that the surplus theory of value is true, and the riches of those who do not live by wages are due to the poverty of those who do. The worker was able to see that he was poor; he saw also that he produced more than he could consume, and that his surplus production was divided among a relatively small class of rich, and often idle, men. A theory such as Marx's inevitably appealed to him as the natural explanation of his oppressed condition. He clung to it, not by virtue of any logical estimation of its theoretic adequacy, but because it summarized the most poignant experience he knew. The Marxian law of wages, moreover, will, from its very nature, win new adherents at every period of commercial depression. At any moment when there is a decline in the effective demand for commodities, or when the strength of trade union resistance is at a low ebb, the impact of capitalism

upon the wage-earner will closely resemble what Marx insisted is its normal relation; for few business men have imagination enough to realize that there are other ways to the rehabilitation of markets than the reduction of price by means of lower wages. Inevitably, therefore, the worker will move from the acceptance of surplus value to the philosophy which Marx constructed as its natural environment.

The law of the concentration of capital stands upon firmer ground. The greater the degree of complexity involved in the productive process, argues Marx, the fewer will be the number of persons controlling its instruments. Everything contributes to the intensification of this process. New means of communication are established, the problems of which are beyond the solution of the small capitalist. Important mechanical inventions are beyond his financial means. Territorial consolidation destroys the local market in which he was once a privileged person. The process, indeed, is neither immediate nor direct. It took the bourgeoisie three centuries to expropriate the artisan and create the proletariat. But once the process had begun, the development was inexorable. Over production created a new army of reserve workers. The substitution of pasture for arable farming concentrated a large rural population in the towns. The economies of large scale production forced hitherto independent producers into the ranks of the wage-earners. The capitalistic system moves from a national to an international character; its market becomes the world. Its nature involves increasing centralization, until the control of the forces of production reaches a point where its further development in private hands is impossible. For alongside the development of accumulation is the increase of the proletariat. The workers cannot any longer endure the misery that is involved in the capitalist regime. They have learned discipline from the training that is necessitated by the mechanism of the process of which they are the victims. "The knell of capitalist private property then sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." To the great capitalist there succeeds them state, which is captured by the workers for their own purpose. The result of capitalism is, in fact, its own destruction. It produces, in Hegelian fashion, its own antithesis. The very condition of its growth is that it should involve the laws which imply its inevitable ruin.

We need not accept the conclusion of the argument to insist on the important truth that it contains. The wastage of competition in large scale enterprise is a commonplace of modern business, and the trust or cartel is the characteristic symptom of industrial development. There are, indeed, certain important limitations to the simplicity of the Marxian view. The growth of joint stock enterprise distributes over a wider circle the number of those interested in the receipt of profits, even while it limits those who actually control the industrial process itself; while there are many minor industries, of which photography and the repair of motor-cars are examples, in which the tendency is to the increase of small firms rather than to the development of great ones. But parallel with this evolution has gone a very striking centralization of credit which concentrates in continuously fewer hands the finances of the community. Agriculture, indeed, despite the large-scale farming of Western America, and the development of agrarian co-operation, remains persistently individualist in temper. (5) Yet, on the balance of inquiry it is impossible to deny the emergence of an increasingly collectivist spirit. And its reaction upon industry is the more important because it leads, without question to the demand by the workers of certain nominal standards from the state which are increasingly insisted upon as the condition of business enterprise. Nor is that all. It becomes obvious that certain industries are, from their very nature, too vital in their results to be left to the chaotic possibilities of private effort. If the expropriators are not actually expropriated, there comes, as with mines and railways, a demand for some form of nationalization, and just as the investigations of the 'thirties and 'forties produced the Factory Acts, so it is legitimate to argue that the results of inquiries like the Coal Commission of 1919, and the Dockers' Inquiry of 1920, are likely to put a term to the continuance of private enterprise. Capitalism, in fact, prepares monopolies which immediately affect the community towards some form of state administration.

So regarded, of course, this view does not involve the theory of revolution which Marx regarded as the inevitable corollary of capitalistic concentration. It need not, indeed, involve a transition towards a socialistic state at all. All that would seem to be implied would be the removal of industries essential to the welfare of the community from the danger of exploitation by private interests. The logic of a necessary conflict resultant upon the concentration of capital is derived by Marx from other sources. It is the corollary of his interpretation of history. That, broadly speaking, may be summarized by saying that all the phenomena of history are the result of economic motives. To them are traceable legal and social institutions not less than the religion and philosophy of each age. The system of production is the ultimate factor, in short, by which the mass of human relationships is determined. Protestantism, Engels wrote, is "essentially a bourgeois religion"; so

too, in a feudal period we should expect the legislation to reflect not general ideas of right, but those ideas of right which are compatible with the maintenance of feudalism. But ideas change, and in Marx's view, the source of change is to be discovered in the transformation of one economic system into another. A new external world produces new internal ideas. Let women enter industry in the mass and, as Mr. Bertrand Russell has pointed out, ideas which not even the logic of Plato and Stuart Mill could make obvious, become accepted without question. Two hundred years ago, it was unthinkable that a peer should go into the city; to-day, finance has enmeshed political life within its fold, so that no company prospectus is complete until the peerage is represented there.

No one can doubt the very large measure of truth in this outlook. No one can write the history of English Puritanism, of the struggle for toleration, or of the American Revolution, without making the defence of an economic incentive fundamental to their explanation. But it is equally clear that the insistence upon an economic background as the whole exclamation is radically false. No economic motive can explain the suicidal nationalism of the Balkans. The war of 1914 may have been largely due to conflicting commercial imperialisms; but there was also a competition of national ideas which was at no point economic. Historically, too, the part played by religion in the determination of social outlook was, until at least the peace of Westphalia, as important as that played by material conditions. Luther represents something more than a protest against the financial exactions of Rome. The impulses of men, in fact, are never referable to any single source. The love of power, herd-instinct, rivalry, the desire of display, all these are hardly less vital than the acquisitiveness which explains the strength of material environment. Engels, indeed, seems to have realized the narrowness of the orthodox view, for in the later years of his life he insisted that the dominant part ascribed by Marx to the economic motive was due mainly to its neglect by his opponents, "and there was not always time, place and opportunity to do justice to the other considerations."

But with Marx the economic motive is not only final, it is final in a particular way. "The only durable source of faction," said Madison, "is property," and, for Marx, the emergence of private property in history is the beginning of the class struggle. Immediately society can be divided into those who do, and those who do not, possess private property, a power is released which explains the changes of history. For the class which possesses property moulds the civilization of that society in the service of its own interests. It controls the government, it makes the laws, it builds the social institutions of the commonwealth in accordance with its own desires. Slave and free man, master and servant, these have been the eternal antitheses of history. With the advent of capitalism the struggle is at once simplified, and made more intense. Thenceforward, the final stage of the class-war, the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, emerges. And just as each social order of the past has secreted within its womb the germ of its successor, as for example, feudalism produced capitalism, so does the latter contain within itself the germ of its communist successor. "Capitalism," said Marx, "produces its own gravedigger." The conflict, in his view, was an inevitable and a bitter one, and it was bound to result in the victory of the proletariat. "The bourgeoisie," he wrote in the Communist Manifesto, "is incapable of continuing in power because it is incapable of securing a bare subsistence to its slaves"; and the result is a growing sense of revolt in the worker who ultimately, by a revolutionary act, assumes the reins of power.

In a large sense, it is obvious that the substance of this interpretation is accurate. The fact of the class struggle, as Marx himself pointed out, is a commonplace of historians and economists; and it may be added that to deny its importance is to make history unintelligible. Where Marx parted company with his predecessors was in the deductions he drew from his perception of its significance. For whereas with men like Madison and Guizot, the fact of conflict produced a sense of horror at its implications, and a search for a technique that its dangers might be obviated, with Marx the conflict was fundamental and both its method and ultimate outcome were to him alike obvious. Whereas with Madison there is an ever present uncertainty whether a just victory may not suffer betrayal, or a wrong object be pursued, with Marx the process is predetermined and, save for a brief period in 1870, no hesitation seems to have crossed his mind.

The method by which the proletariat was to secure power lies at the very root of Marx's doctrine; and it has been in our own day, perhaps, the main source of his influence. The method was revolution, and a dictatorship of iron rigour would consolidate the new system until the period of transition had been effectively bridged. Marx did not blind himself to what all this implied. The history of capitalism was the history of a relentless defence of each phase of the rights of property. They were maintained by methods at each point unconnected with ethical demands. If the conflict was extreme as in the days of June, 1848, or with the Commune of Paris, the last ounce of misery was wrung

from its opponents, that capitalism might be secure. A period of comparative quiescence may produce the concession of social reform, but this is merely deception. Once a really vital point is touched by the workers' demands, they are met by armed resistance. That means, of course, that only by conscious violent intervention can communism be realized. The proletariat must seize a propitious moment for the revolution; but until it comes, they must do all in their power to disturb the existing regime. Even if minor successes have been achieved by the aid of the liberal-minded bourgeoisie "from the first hour of victory, the workers must level their distrust against their former allies." They must create a working-class organization of their own workers' committees, local workers' councils, to oppose proletarian institutions and their influence to those of the middle-class state. The Communists must arm the proletariat and do all they can to cut down the army of the State as the chief weapon of defence possessed by the bourgeoisie. Where the workers are in the militia, they must form within it a secret organization to obtain its control. They must form their own independent, if hidden, military force and acquire arms by every method. Influential democrats to whose word the working class seems to respond, must be discredited. The old social order, in fact, must be attacked at every point. Communists have two functions only, to prepare for the revolution, and to consolidate it successfully when it has been prepared. They must think of themselves not as realizing an ideal, but only as setting free the elements of a new society concealed within the womb of the old.

The period of consolidation, moreover, must be a period of iron dictatorship. Marx had no illusions about the possibility of a democratic governance in such an hour. The ideals of freedom were impossible to maintain until the ground so conquered had been made secure. Revolution provokes counter-revolution; and a victorious proletariat must be on its guard against reaction. Revolution, in fact, demands of the revolutionary class that it secure its purpose by every method at its disposal. It has neither time nor opportunity for compassion or remorse. Its business is to terrorize its opponents into acquiescence. It must disarm antagonism by execution, imprisonment, forced labour, control of the press. For as it cannot allow any effort at the violent overthrow of what it has established, so must it stamp out such criticism as might be the prelude to further attack. Revolution is war, and war is founded upon terror. The methods of capitalism must be used for the extinction of capitalism. For as capitalism has made of life itself the cheapest of commodities, there need be no repining at its sacrifice, and the result, in any case, is worth the cost, since it destroys the possibility of future sale. It would have been a wanton betrayal of trust, said Marx of the Paris Commune, to observe the traditional forms of liberalism. The end, in fact, is too great to be nice about the means employed.

Nor can we expect that a peaceful revolution is possible. While Marx had certain doubts of England, on the whole he was certain that a violent struggle was inevitable. The workers might capture Parliament at the polls; but political power of that kind is in any case a shadow, and were it used for an assault upon property, it would inevitably provoke an armed resistance. Marx indeed, went further and was openly contemptuous of democracy. It was a bourgeois invention unrelated to the real, and used only to deceive the people. Again and again the proletariat is betrayed; and throughout Marx's writings there is the assumption that reliance must be placed upon a class-conscious minority. For in his view there is no place in history for the majority principle; the record of States is the clash between determined minorities, contending for the seat of power. To introduce considerations of consent, to wait on in the belief that the obvious rightness of communist doctrine will ultimately persuade men to its acceptance, is entirely to ignore reality. The mass of men will always acquiesce in, or be indifferent to, whatever solutions are afforded. Communists must proceed upon the assumption that nothing matters save the enforcement of their will.

Upon the end this revolution is to serve, the forms its purpose will adopt, Marx has written but little. Obviously, with justice on his side; for speculation in distant historical futures is the worst form of gambling. It was with the destruction of capitalism and the period of transition therefrom that he was mainly concerned. A new productive system was bound to involve new institutions which no man could foresee. That the Communist maxim, "From each according to his powers, to each according to his wants," would become operative was, of course obvious to him; that performance would be measured in terms of labour-time (a possibly inconsistent hypothesis) he took for granted. But he was always emphatic that the future must settle itself. He insisted that the measure of distribution would be necessarily unequal in the period of transition. You may, as he saw, destroy by catastrophe, but creation is not an immediate and spontaneous process. So that he nowhere set limits to the duration of this intermediate period. It was necessary to wait until the habits engendered by a new productive system created a psychology in which the dogma of equality superseded the bourgeois hypothesis of individual rights. The main thing was the destruction of a regime in which



class distinction made possible the servitude of the many. It was possible to have confidence in an order in which the whole force of social effort was deliberately placed at the disposal of the common welfare.

VI.

A generation which has seen this doctrine supported by machine-guns and bayonets is unlikely to belittle its importance. Nor can it be denied that not a little of social evolution has taken the course Marx predicted. Anyone who reads the history of the industrial struggle in Colorado or West Virginia will find it difficult to discover a limit of unreason which capitalism is not willing consistently to overpass. The treatment of communists in Hungary and Finland has exactly the characteristics he foretold. An isolated community like the miners of South Wales becomes, naturally communist in the background of incompetence and ill-treatment from their employers. And representative government, at least in its classical form, seems unlikely to justify the high hopes of its Benthamite exponents. Every country in the world that has experimented with universal suffrage has experienced a sense of disillusion. It is even commonplace to argue that reason has little place in political struggle, and to pin faith to an irrational impulse which seeks no more than the satisfaction of individual desire. If there has been an improvement in the general standard of civilization, an increasing unwillingness, for example, to inflict unnecessary pain, there are no signs of the mitigation of the class-conflict. On the contrary, the events of the last decade point directly to its exacerbation; and we have obviously entered upon a period in which the rights of property are challenged at their foundation. Certainly it is unquestionable that the purchase-price of capitalist survival is the offer of concessions which a generation ago would have seemed not less unnecessary than unthinkable.

Yet the approximation of the general atmosphere to the condition Marx had in view hardly justifies the principles upon which he placed his reliance. To begin with, the preparation for revolution is a qualitatively different problem from what it was in the days of the Paris barricades. It is possible in a mood of defeat for a civilian population to destroy a regime which the army and navy no longer uphold, and, as was demonstrated long ago by Cromwell, a military force which is dissatisfied with its civilian superiors can without difficulty become their master. But for a party of men in the position of communists in the modern State, the situation is very different. Unless they are the majority and, consequently, the government, the hostility of the army and navy is certain. Nor can they obtain, on any large scale, the necessary equipment for insurrection. They would have to obtain control of the national arsenals; and that would mean the dispersion of forces in any case small by hypothesis. They would have to meet in the people at large at least a mood of acquiescence. They would have to guarantee a supply of food, which, in any but a dominantly agricultural society, would be practically impossible if international credit was seriously impaired by the revolution. Even if we regard a general strike as tantamount, in the conditions of modern industry, to a revolution the difficulties are overwhelming. A general strike might well succeed as a protest against war, for its penumbra might, in the future, arouse emotions of determination that would be irresistible. But upon any less dramatic issue, it seems tolerably certain that once again, the army and navy must be in the control of the strikers if success is to be assured. For a modern army can supply all services connected with transportation; it can secure the distribution of food, and the problem of fuel is becoming less and less a matter of mining coal. The Marxian view of a secretly armed minority assuming power at a single stroke is unthinkable in the modern state. It would have to imply either the existence of a government so weak that it had practically ceased to be a government at all, or, what perhaps, an equivalent, a population actively sympathetic to the revolutionary minority. The resources of publicity in modern civilization make impossible the private preparation of the gigantic effort assumed by the Marxian hypothesis.

But this is only the beginning of the difficulty. Marx assumed throughout his analysis a system of compact states the life of which was mainly determined by economic considerations, and each relatively independent of its neighbours. Each of these assumptions is only partially true of the modern world. A State like England, which is wholly dependent on foreign trade, could not undergo a successful revolution except upon the assumption that her neighbours viewed its results with benevolence. Such an attitude on the part, for instance, of America is very unlikely, and the rupture of Anglo-American Trade would be fatal to any revolution in this country. For is that all. It is quite

clear that the division a revolution would imply must, in its workings, be very partially determined by economic considerations. In a country like America, for example, there would be at least three other factors of vital importance. An American communist revolution would have to cope with problems of distance which would probably render it abortive at a very early stage. It would not, as in France, be a matter of the immense impact of the capital on the life of the nation; Washington is relatively insignificant in the perspective of America. To control the whole continent would involve controlling the most complicated railway system in the world. And even if that difficulty could be surmounted, a complex of nationalist differences would have to be assuaged. German, French, English, Irish, Polish, these have their special characteristics which the American capitalist has been able to exploit to their common disadvantage; it is difficult to see how an appeal to a communist minority of each would result in the transcendence of these differences. Even then, the religious problem remains; and the hold of the churches upon the mind, particularly, of the Latin peoples would not be easy to loosen. For Marx, insisting only upon the economic motive, it is easy to ignore these difficulties, but it is far too narrow an outlook not to realize at the outset that appeal can be made to other incentives every whit as strong. And even if it were argued that Marx could in our own time assume that the day of such prejudice as nationality and religion engender is passing (which is doubtful), and that the barriers built by economic difference are now alone important, his conclusions would not follow. For in a period of universal suffrage, it ought then to be possible to capture the seat of power at the polls, and throw upon the capitalist the onus of revolting against a socialist democracy.

There are, however, other approaches to the problem which Marx did not adequately consider. There is, in the first place, the general result upon society of the practice of violence, particularly when the destructive nature of modern warfare is borne in mind; and, in the second, there is the special psychological result upon the agents of the opposing forces in such a regime. Marx did not consider these possibilities, in part because he judged that, in any case, the conflict was inevitable, and also because he was convinced that whatever sacrifices had to be made would be ultimately justified by the result. Such an attitude is, of course, simply an instance of his general failure to weigh sufficiently the substance of a political psychology. In part, also, it is the corollary of a determinism which the facts in issue at no point justify. For it is obvious that if revolution, with its attendant violence, is justified for any cause in which you happen to believe profoundly, no modern state can hope for either security and order. The war has shown clearly that the impulses of savagery which are checked by peace are, when loosed, utterly destructive of the foundations of a decent existence. If life became an organized and continuous jacquerie, civilization could quite easily be reduced to the state where, as in Mr. Wells's imaginary but far from impossible picture, some aged survivor may tell of an organized Europe as a legend which his grandchildren cannot hope to understand. Violence, on the grand scale, in fact, so far from proving an avenue to communism, would be the one kind of existence in which the impulses demanded by a communist state had no hope of emergence. For the condition of communism is the restraint of exactly those appetites which violence releases; and Marx has nowhere indicated how this difficulty could be met.

Even beyond this issue, a further point must be raised. Marx has assumed the seizure of power, and a period of rigorous control until the people are prepared for communism. But he has not shown what approximate length that period is to be, nor what certainty we have that those who act as controllers of the dictatorship will be willing to surrender their power at the proper time. It is a commonplace of history that power is poisonous to those who exercise it; there is no reason to assume that the Marxian dictator will in this respect be different from other men. And, ex hypothesi, it will be more difficult to defeat his malevolence since his regime will have excluded the possibility of opposition. No group of men who exercise the powers of a despot can ever retain the habit of democratic responsibility. That is obvious, for instance, in the case of men like Sir Henry Maine and Fitzjames Stephen, who, having learned in India the habit of autocratic government, become impatient on their return to England of the slow process of persuasion which democracy implies. To sit continuously in the seat of office is inevitably to become separated from the mind and wants of those over whom you govern. For the governing class acquires an interest of its own, a desire for permanence, a wish, perhaps, to retain the dignity and importance which belong to their function; and they will make an effort to secure them. That, after all, is only to insist that every system of government breeds a system of habits; and to argue as a corollary, therefrom that the Marxian dictatorship would breed habits fatal to the emergence of the regime Marx had ultimately in view. The special vice of every historic system of government has been its inevitable tendency to identify its own private good with the public welfare. To suggest that communists might do the same is no more than to postulate their humanity. And it may be added that if they surrendered power at a

reasonable time, the grounds for so doing, being obviously in their nature non-economic, would thereby vitiate the truth of the materialistic interpretation of history.

All this, it is worth noting, is to omit from consideration the ethical problems that are involved. It is obvious, for example, that it involves the complete erosion of the whole historic process. But the erosion of responsibility in the governing class is the destruction of personality in their subjects. In such a regime notions of liberty and equality are out of place. Yet it is obvious that the two main defects of capitalism are its failure to produce liberty and equality for the mass of humble men and women. Marx, that is to say, contemplated a condition which reproduces exactly the chief vices of capitalism without offering any solid proof of their ultimate extinction. For, after all, the chief effort that is worth making is towards a civilization in which what Mr. Graham Wallas has termed, "the capacity of continuous initiative," is implied in the fact of citizenship. It is clear enough that the possibility upon which the existence of that capacity turns is a wide distribution of power. A man whose thought and acts are at the disposal of other men is deprived of his personality, and that deprivation is implied in the rigorous centralization to which Marx looked forward. Unquestionably, he was right in his insistence that the distribution of economic power in a capitalist state makes the enjoyment of such personality impossible to most; but it does not seem any more likely to emerge in the successor to it that he contemplated. We may go further and argue that it is impossible in any state where the main purpose of, and motive to, effort, is the increase of material wealth. No society can realize itself in any full sense of the word until the mainspring of its existence is a capacity to value things of the mind as more precious than material commodities. That involves a sociology in which the economic motive which Marx emphasized is appraised at a low level. Obviously, to achieve the condition in which that appraisal is possible, involves an educational system far different, both in scope and purpose, from what we now have. It involves a complete transformation of values, in which things like the wider appreciation of art, the study of science and philosophy. the release, in short, of the creative energies of men from their present bondage, are regarded as the main and immediate effort of political organization.

Yet, if historic experience is to count for anything-- and Marx's philosophy is nothing if not the interpretation of historical experience--it is exactly this transformation of values which cannot take place in the development Marx had in view. The barbarian invasions of Rome did not produce a great art and a great culture, they produced the dark ages. The Thirty Years' War impeded constructive effort in Germany until the threshold of the nineteenth century. Nor has our own experience been different. The idealism of 1914 has perished before the greater strength of the purely destructive forces released in the struggle. What we have realized is how tenuous and fragile are the bonds of civilization, how little likely they are to be reinforced by any effort save that of peace. In such a background, the conflict that Marx envisaged looms before us as the harbinger of precisely those evils from which we are seeking release. It emphasizes in men the impulses against which civilization is a protest. That wrong can be wiped out with wrong, that we are to regard ourselves as the victims of blind and impersonal forces against which it is useless to strive, that the possessive impulses of men cannot be transcended by creative effort--these and things like these are a gospel of impossible despair. In that aspect, surely, the older socialists were right who made the basis of their creed a doctrine of right and fraternity and justice. For right and fraternity and justice imply love as their foundation; they do not spring, even at the last vain striving from a doctrine founded upon hate.

## VII.

The real power and influence of Marx lie in a direction essentially different from what is generally assumed. He was the first thinker to expose in all its hollowness the moral inadequacy of a commercial civilization.: He showed that in any society where the main effort is the attainment of wealth, the qualities that are basically noble cannot acquire their full vigour. He did, in fact, for the economic relationships of peoples what Grotius did for their international relationships. He founded both a science and an ideal. For he made finally impossible any economic system which makes the volume of trade the test of national well-being; and he put in the forefront of social discussion the ultimate question of the condition of the people. And he performed the incalculable service to his generation of bringing to it a message of hope in an epoch where men seemed to themselves to have become the hapless victims of a misery from which there was no release. In every country of

the world where men have set themselves to the task of social improvement, Marx has been always the source of inspiration and prophecy.

His weaknesses, of course, are obvious and important. "He diagnoses a disease admirably," says Mr. Wells, in an excellent phrase, "and then suggests rather an incantation than a remedy." Yet the diagnosis is an essential part of the cure. No one can read unmoved the picture he drew of the results of the Industrial Revolution. Massive in its outline, convincing in its detail, it was an indictment such as neither Carlyle nor Ruskin had power or strength to draw. It is relatively unimportant that his explanations of the phenomena he depicted have not stood the test of criticism. What is vital in the whole was his perception that a society dominated by business men and organized for the prosperity of business men had become intolerable. Hardly less splendid was his insistence that no social order is adequate in which the collective energies of men are not devoted to their common life. It does not matter that such perception had been given to others, that such insistence was not new. No thinker of the nineteenth century drove home the lesson with force so irresistible or with urgency so profound. Even his advocacy of catastrophic revolution has this much of truth in it, that a point is reached in the development of any social system where men will refuse to accept any longer a burden they find too great to bear; and, in that moment, if they cannot mitigate, they will become determined to destroy. The condition, in fact, upon which a state may hope to endure is its capacity for making freedom in each generation more widespread and more intense. Where Marx was wrong was in his belief that the catastrophe was, in itself, worthy of attainment and in his emphasis upon its ultimate benefit. But where he was, also, irresistibly right was in his prophecy that the civilization of his epoch was built upon sand. And even the faults of his prophecy may be pardoned to an agitator in exile to whom the cause of the oppressed was dearer than his own welfare.

At bottom, the main passion by which he was moved was the passion for justice. He may have hated too strongly, he was jealous, and he was proud. But the mainspring of his life was the desire to take from the shoulders of the people the burden by which it was oppressed. He realized that what, in all varieties of time and place, has caused the downfall of a governing class, has never been some accidental or superficial event. The real cause of revolution is the unworthiness of those who controlled the destinies of a people. Indifference to suffering, selfishness, lack of moral elevation, it was for those defects that he indicted the class from which he sprang. He transformed the fears of the workers into hopes, he translated their effort from interest in political mechanisms to interest in social foundations. He did not trust in the working of laws, he sought always for the spirit that lay behind the order of which they were the expression. He was often wrong, he was rarely generous, he was always bitter; yet when the roll of those to whom the emancipation of the people is due comes to be called, few will have a more honourable, and none a more eminent place.

## Notes

1. See A. Berthod, *Proudhon et la Propriété*; C. Bougle, *La Sociologie de Proudhon*; G. Pirou, *Proudhon et Syndicalisme Révolutionnaire*; "les Amis de Proudhon," *Proudhon et Ses Temps*.
2. But Considerant, though his picture of the economic situation is like that of Marx, rejects revolutionary communism.
3. See *Das Kapital*, vol. III, pp. 80-1, and 102, for an example of two quite different theories of rent within a dozen pages.
4. Vol. III (German edition) Part 1, p. 343 ff.
5. Cf. Herman Levy, *Large and small holdings* (1911).

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