

# Part I

## **The Sociological Theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels**

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## **Introduction to Part I**

Although he is conventionally regarded as one of the “founding fathers” of modern sociology, Karl Marx (1818–83) was not a professional academic. Nor was he directly a part of the nascent field of sociology in his day. Instead Marx was trained as a philosopher and saw himself as an economist and social critic. His enduring legacy in sociology results from the way that his work brought a theoretical focus to empirical social analysis. Marx provided a theory to understand the connection between the concrete economic relationships among people and the broad patterns of social order that emerge from them in specific eras – an argument now known as “historical materialism.” In developing historical materialism as a theoretical system, Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels laid the foundation of what was to become a Marxist school of sociological thought and analysis. Marx continues to fascinate not only because of his brilliance as a philosopher and social scientist, but because he represents the epitome of the scholar-activist, the social critic who is, to paraphrase Marx’s own words in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, not content with criticizing the world but who is also trying to change it.

### **Marx’s Life and Intellectual Outlook**

Karl Marx was born in Trier, a commercial city in western Germany near the border of France, in 1818. He was the son of a prosperous merchant family and attended University (first in Bonn, and then in Berlin) in order to study law. Marx soon shifted his interest to philosophy, eventually earning a doctorate at Jena. Abandoning the idea of a university career, Marx became a political journalist and a member of a radical philosophical circle known as the “Young Hegelians.” In 1842, he met Friedrich Engels, who would be his friend, collaborator, and benefactor throughout his life. Owing to press censorship and political repression in the Prussian dominions, Marx, now married, moved to Paris. There he met many of the most important literary and political figures of his day. His continuing political journalism led to his being charged with high treason by the Prussian government in 1844. In 1845, under pressure from Prussia, the French government banished Marx from Paris as well and he moved to Brussels, then briefly to Cologne. Marx finally settled in London in 1849.

Throughout his career Marx was strenuously engaged both in the development of a philosophical system based on the principle of negative critique of existing social conditions and as political activist, journalist, and agitator. Early in his career, Marx rejected the idea that liberal reform – that is, gradual political emancipation and the right to political participation in a democratic state – would be enough to redress the social crisis and gross inequalities of the capitalist system. For Marx, the mistake of liberal political theory was that it assumed that a particular class – the bourgeoisie – would claim political and social rights, and then

extend them to the rest of society. According to Marx, this was a mistake, because it missed the real material foundation of such rights in the power that adheres to the ownership of property. Thus, bourgeois democracy depends on the possession of rights that actually reside only in wealth. In Western countries at least, the abolition of slavery meant that workers were formally free under law, but according to Marx, this was an empty reality so long as real power flowed from economic possession. While Marx advocated the extension of suffrage and other democratic rights, he never considered these the goals of political struggle, only a means by which a revolutionary transformation of society might be achieved.

Alongside Engels, Marx became involved in an organization known as the Communist League, which advocated radical socialism as an answer to the social and political crises created by the industrial revolution in Europe. In February 1848, Marx and Engels published the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, a call to arms for a great working-class social revolution and one of the most important political and social tracts ever written. Alongside its polemics, the *Manifesto* sketched out a philosophy of world history as the struggle between contending social classes. This class struggle could only be resolved through putting an end to the alienation between people created by the institution of private property. As if on cue, revolutionary insurrections grew out of economic crisis and social unrest in France in February and in Germany in March 1848. Marx and Engels returned to Germany and took an active part in the revolution, editing a radical Cologne newspaper and involving themselves in political struggles.

Marx's move to England followed the collapse of the revolution and the triumph of reactionary forces in Germany and France. Marx began to devote his energy to the full-time study of economics, spending long hours in the public reading room of the British Museum. Marx supported himself through the contributions of wealthy friends like Engels, and through work as a journalistic contributor to many publications, including the *New York Daily Tribune*. Many of Marx's journalistic works on such subjects as the collapse of the second French republic, the consequences of British imperialism in India, and on slavery and the Civil War in the United States are recognized as masterpieces of social analysis. In 1864, Marx helped to found the first international socialist movement, the International Working Men's Association in London. In 1867, Marx published the first volume of his masterpiece, *Capital*, which he intended as a radical critique of the science of economics and of the material basis of bourgeois society. In the following years, Marx labored on a second and third volume (which remained uncompleted) and remained an active force in steering the political affairs of the international socialist movement. In 1883, Marx died and was buried in London. Engels then adopted the role as the leading intellectual in the socialist movement until his own death in 1895.

### **Marx's Philosophy and Social Thought**

Marx's philosophical system was influenced, first and foremost, by the work of the prominent philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and his followers. However,

Marx's thought also had a more practical and empirically engaged dimension than did Hegel's. This can be seen in Marx's ongoing dialogue and critique of the early science of economics, which provided the core themes of his sociological thought. Marx objected to the overly abstract and ideal conception of the world represented by Hegel's philosophy. For Marx, Hegel's discussion of "spirit" as the force driving the history of the world was an abstract mystification of the actual force in world history: an active humanity making and unmaking the material world. Marx also rejected Hegel's claims about the role of the state. Rather than civil society growing out of the state, Marx argued that the state sprang from society. Marx's confrontation with Hegel's thought is reflected in the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" (excerpted below).

Marx's material analysis has radical implications for how we understand knowledge. For Marx, humanity's objective economic activity is the base upon which the ideas and institutions were balanced. As a result, ideas cannot be understood in isolation, but rather only in direct relation to the social context within which they were born. In the *German Ideology* Marx noted, "The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is directly interwoven with material activity and material intercourse of men and appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior." In other words, it is not ideas that determine the material world, but rather the other way around. Marx called this "turning Hegel over on his head."

Nevertheless, Marx adopted much from the method, if not the content, of Hegel's philosophy, particularly Hegel's dialectical mode of logic. Simply put, "dialectic" refers to a process of change in human society where the contradictions contained in a given idea or era produce a change that can be seen as its negation. Where Hegel focused on the dialectical relation of ideas, Marx's dialectic was based on social relations of the material world, analyzing the way that opposing forces produce contradiction and conflict. So, for example, increasing exploitation of workers by the capitalists may have the consequence of causing workers to become more militant. In the face of this militancy, the capitalists may become more exploitative and repressive in order to crush their resistance. This may inadvertently help the workers to realize that only a complete revolution against existing conditions can be their salvation. Marx argued that social analysts must be aware of the reciprocal economic relationships among social actors and the broader social structure that results from them.

Marx used social criticism as his standard form of social analysis. Marx defined criticism as the "radical negation of social reality." Instead of accepting existing social relations on face value, Marx subjected them to analysis. In rejecting Hegel's idealization of the state, for example, Marx provides a searing critique of calls for state-led development as an alternative to market forces and proclaims the proletariat the social force destined to negate the existing order and replace it with another. For Marx and his followers, the purpose of social critique was to measure society's claims about itself against the reality of its operations. This focus is apparent in Engels' early classic, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, an attempt based on an empirical survey of existing conditions in order to critique the idealized claims of the proponents of capitalist development. Hegel had remarked, "Periods of bliss are history's blank pages." As is dazzlingly

presented in Marx's celebrated essay *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* excerpted below, in his own analysis of historical events, Marx's attention was focused on periods of conflict. Marx understood processes of social change in terms of the clash of opposing interests and the material forces that determine them.

Like Hegel, Marx saw human history as one of estrangement and conflict. And Marx broke with the economists by arguing for what we might see today as a *sociology* of economic relations. Marx tried to reveal in his posthumously published *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (excerpted below) that the cause of this was not alienation from an abstract "spirit," but a deeply human process, involving social estrangement and material dispossession. Marx argued that the foundation of society was humankind's joint involvement in free, productive and creative work. However, for Marx the history of civilization revealed the progressive coercion of human labor and the dispossession of the product of labor from its producers. Driven by greed and need, creative work had become wage labor, the motives for which did not speak to the creative capacity that is essential to what it means to be human. For Marx, work had become inhuman in a literal sense – it contradicted human nature. Hence, the working classes were being both materially dispossessed and estranged from their own human nature as people. Marx suggested the image of the capitalist as a sort of vampire that literally drains away the productive life of the worker objectified in the goods that his labor has created.

Although this tendency was apparent throughout human history, it had become accelerated under industrial capitalism. Yet hope was not lost. Marx regarded capitalism as a system of *creative destruction*, as a force that provokes epochal social change. In the *Communist Manifesto* (excerpted here), Marx and Engels reveal how the forces of production unleashed by capitalism were sweeping away the old world while a new one was still in the making. Marx and Engels observed that in the modern world "Everything solid melts into air" including old ways of life, beliefs and social relations that dissolve under the pressure of material transformation. In view of the technological achievements and scientific spirit of the industrial revolution this was not altogether bad. Marx's analysis of capitalist production led him to conclude that the system was inherently unstable, destructive and exploitative. In time, it would become an obstacle to human progress. But the new industrial technology and productivity unleashed by capitalism offered a way out by freeing man from the shackles of subsistence and ignorance through universal enlightenment and prosperity. Revolution would achieve this by liberating workers and putting the ownership of the means of production in their own hands, thereby abolishing the exploiting class.

*Capital* was Marx's monumental effort to lay out a systematic theory of the capitalist economy, its genesis and its tendency towards terminal crisis. In the excerpts from this volume included in this section ("Commodities," "The General Formula for Capital," "Division of Labour and Manufacture," "The So-Called Primitive Accumulation," and "Classes") one can see the outline of Marx's sociology of capitalism and how his analysis led him to general propositions concerning the origins and probable fate of bourgeois society. Marx tried to show that the roots of all profit in the capitalist system could be traced to the extraction of surplus

value from human labor. As capitalist competition increased, the owners of capital would be compelled by falling profit margins to attempt to increase the exploitation of workers. Capitalists would oversupply the market with commodities for which there were insufficient buyers. A cycle of boom and bust would result, and industrial depressions would become ever more frequent and destructive occurrences. At the same time, as the scale of production increased and workers were herded together into factories and industrial cities, they would begin to see themselves as members of the same social class with the same objective interests. In time, they would reject their increasing misery, band together as a political force and overturn the capitalist system. In the place of private ownership of capital, social ownership of capital would be introduced. Gradually, the need for a coercive administration of economy and society would vanish as solidarity and cooperation replaced estrangement and competition. Marx suggested that the capitalist system of production was so riddled with contradictions and contending aims and the growing solidarity of the working classes so evidently apparent that the final crisis of capitalism and the great proletarian revolution was practically inevitable.

Marx envisioned the great social revolution as an opportunity to end humankind's self-alienation and make the Enlightenment dream of a "positive humanism" as a reality. In the new world of the future, human beings would become conscious producers and be free to engage in creative pursuits beyond the coercive dictates of the labor market. And once the estrangement of humankind from itself and from its product was eliminated, there was no longer a need for a state whose real purpose was the enforcement of this alienation. Marx's practical utopianism was thus not merely a scientific response to the irrationalities of the capitalist system, but also an ethical vision of human emancipation and self-realization.

### **Marx's Legacy**

An advantage of Marx's thought is that it is grounded in material facts of human existence and inspired by the effort to apply scientific reason in the analysis of social life. In contrast to many social philosophies, Marx's theories yield testable propositions that allow rigorous evaluation and even falsification. Marx's influence can be clearly observed in a number of sociological traditions. Max Weber, in particular, was impressed by Marx's thought and much of his own work was inspired by it, even when he was critical of Marx's specific claims (see Part II of this volume).

Despite his contribution to empirical social science, it is only by considering the ethical appeal of Marx's thought that we can understand why it became the foundation not only of a school of sociological and historical analysis, but also of the modern socialist movement. Marx offered a way to understand society framed in a morally empowering language of critique that savaged the half-hearted and incremental reforms that were endorsed by many in Western societies and unflinchingly took the side of the oppressed.

In both its brilliance and menace Marx's thought represents a thorough indictment of capitalist modernity – the only theoretical system to offer such a complete repudiation of existing society and radical call to arms. The Critical Theory of the

Frankfurt School was directly inspired by this element of Marx's thought (see Part V). Over the century and half since Marx began his work, his radical rejection of the status quo and his indictment of exploitation have had enormous resonance, for good and for ill. Workers, women, colonized peoples and other marginalized and dispossessed groups have seen in Marx's theory a diagnosis of their oppression and a set of conceptual weapons in their struggles. However, for much of the twentieth century, Marx's thought was also used to promote dogmatism, intolerance and a dangerous strain of utopianism in which radical ends were thought to justify any ghastly means that might be used to achieve them. Marxism became a rigid and confining ideology that at worst justified the reign of tyrants and the exercise of mass murder against those deemed obstacles to the final triumph of the revolution.

In contemporary social science Marxian concepts are of continuing relevance, even if many of the specific propositions and predictions that Marx and his followers have made have been shown to be mistaken. Few today would argue that the capitalist system is so inherently flawed that it must collapse. Most would agree that profits are generated not only by extracting labor power, but also by investment in technology and human capital. In most Western nations working people are not worse off, as Marx predicted, but substantially better off than they were in the nineteenth century. Rather than the working class growing ever larger and more militant, in most developed nations the industrial "proletariat" is an ever-smaller fraction of the workforce as the service sector grows and new industries such as information technology and biological engineering expand. Moreover, as personal investment becomes common, even for people with modest incomes, the meaning of "ownership" of productive means is no longer so clear. And although Marx rejected the possibility of liberal reform, working-class movements did succeed in improving their living standards and political rights without overturning the system. At the same time, however, alienation is still felt. Even many well-paid workers would understand and agree with Marx's comment that in their work – which should be a satisfying and creative experience – they are often treated like expendable commodities. Moreover, contemporary processes such as economic globalization, commodity fetishism in a society of mass consumption, and the persistence of inequality and social conflict continue to provide fertile ground for Marxian analysis.

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# A: ALIENATION AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

## 1 Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law

*Karl Marx*

### Introduction

For Germany the *criticism of religion* is in the main complete, and criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.

The *profane* existence of error is discredited after its *heavenly oratio pro aris et focus*<sup>a</sup> has been disproved. Man, who looked for a superhuman being in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the *reflection* of himself, will no longer be disposed to find but the *semblance* of himself, only an inhuman being, where he seeks and must seek his true reality.

The basis of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being encamped outside the world. Man is *the world of man*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, an *inverted world-consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification. It is the *fantastic realisation* of the human essence because the *human essence* has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against *the world* of which religion is the spiritual *aroma*.

*Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.

To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the

Editorial footnotes in this and the following selections by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are reprinted as they appear in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975).

<sup>a</sup> Speech for the altars and hearths. – Ed.

*demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions.* The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears*, the *halo* of which is religion.

Criticism has torn up the imaginary flowers from the chain not so that man shall wear the unadorned, bleak chain but so that he will shake off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusioned man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve round himself and therefore round his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself.

The *task of history*, therefore, once the *world beyond the truth* has disappeared, is to establish the *truth of this world*. The immediate *task of philosophy*, which is at the service of history, once the *holy form* of human self-estrangement has been unmasked, is to unmask self-estrangement in its *unholy forms*. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of lay* and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*.

The following exposition – a contribution to that task – deals immediately not with the original, but with a copy, the German *philosophy* of state and of law, for no other reason than that it deals with *Germany*.

If one wanted to proceed from the *status quo* itself in Germany, even in the only appropriate way, i.e., negatively, the result would still be an *anachronism*. Even the negation of our political present is a reality already covered with dust in the historical lumber-room of modern nations. If I negate powdered pigtailed, I am still left with unpowdered pigtailed. If I negate the German state of affairs in 1843, then, according to the French computation of time, I am hardly in the year 1789, and still less in the focus of the present.

Yes, German history flatters itself with a movement which no people in the firmament of history went through before it or will go through after it. For we shared the restorations of the modern nations although we had not shared their revolutions. We underwent a restoration, first because other nations dared to carry out a revolution and second because other nations suffered a counter-revolution, the first time because our rulers were afraid, and the second because our rulers were not afraid. We – and our shepherds first and foremost – never found ourselves in the company of freedom except once – on the *day of its burial*.

A school which legitimates the baseness of today by the baseness of yesterday, a school that declares rebellious every cry of the serf against the knout once that knout is a time-honoured, ancestral historical one, a school to which history only shows its *posterior* as the God of Israel did to his servant Moses<sup>a</sup> – the *historical school of law* – would hence have invented German history had it not been an invention of German history. For every pound of flesh cut from the heart of the people the historical school of law – Shylock, but Shylock the bondsman – swears on its bond, its historical bond, its Christian-Germanic bond.

Good-natured enthusiasts, Germanomaniacs by extraction and free-thinkers by reflection, on the contrary, seek our history of freedom beyond our history in the primeval Teutonic forests. But what difference is there between the history of our freedom and the history of the boar's freedom if it can be found only in the forests?

<sup>a</sup> The Holy Bible, Exodus 33:23 – Ed.

Besides, it is common knowledge that the forest echoes back what you shout into it. So let us leave the ancient Teutonic forests in peace!

War on the German conditions! By all means! They are *below the level of history, beneath any criticism*, but they are still an object of criticism like the criminal who is below the level of humanity but still an object for the *executioner*. In the struggle against those conditions criticism is no passion of the head, it is the head of passion. It is not a lancet, it is a weapon. Its object is its *enemy*, which it wants not to refute but to *exterminate*. For the spirit of those conditions is refuted. In themselves they are not objects *worthy of thought*, but *phenomena* which are as despicable as they are despised. Criticism does not need to make things clear to itself as regards this subject-matter, for it has already dealt with it. Criticism appears no longer as an *end in itself*, but only as a *means*. Its essential sentiment is *indignation*, its essential activity is *denunciation*.

It is a case of describing the dull reciprocal pressure of all social spheres on one another, a general inactive ill humour, a limitedness which recognises itself as much as it misjudges itself, within the frame of a government system which, living on the preservation of all wretchedness, is itself nothing but *wretchedness in office*.

What a sight! This infinitely proceeding division of society into the most manifold races opposed to one another by petty antipathies, uneasy consciences and brutal mediocrity, and which, precisely because of their reciprocal ambiguous and distrustful attitude, are all, without exception although with various formalities, treated by their *rulers as licensed existences*. And they must recognise and acknowledge as a *concession of heaven* the very fact that they are *mastered, ruled, possessed!* On the other side are the rulers themselves, whose greatness is in inverse proportion to their number!

Criticism dealing with this content is criticism in *hand-to-hand combat*, and in such a fight the point is not whether the opponent is a noble, equal, *interesting* opponent, the point is to *strike* him. The point is not to allow the Germans a minute for self-deception and resignation. The actual pressure must be made more pressing by adding to it consciousness of pressure, the shame must be made more shameful by publicising it. Every sphere of German society must be shown as the *partie honteuse*<sup>a</sup> of German society; these petrified relations must be forced to dance by singing their own tune to them! The people must be taught to be *terrified* at itself in order to give it *courage*. This will be fulfilling an imperative need of the German nation, and needs of the nations are in themselves the ultimate reason for their satisfaction.

This struggle against the limited content of the German *status quo* cannot be without interest even for the *modern* nations, for the German *status quo* is the *open completion of the ancien régime*, and the *ancien régime* is the *concealed deficiency of the modern state*. The struggle against the German political present is the struggle against the past of the modern nations, and they are still troubled by reminders of that past. It is instructive for them to see the *ancien régime*, which has been through its *tragedy* with them, playing its *comedy* as a German ghost. *Tragic* indeed was the history of the *ancien régime* so long as it was the pre-existing power of the world, and freedom, on the other hand, was a personal notion, i.e., as long

<sup>a</sup> Shameful part – Ed.

as this regime believed and had to believe in its own justification. As long as the *ancien régime*, as an existing world order, struggled against a world that was only coming into being, there was on its side a historical error, not a personal one. That is why its downfall was tragic.

On the other hand, the present German regime, an anachronism, a flagrant contradiction of generally recognised axioms, the nothingness of the *ancien régime* exhibited to the world, only imagines that it believes in itself and demands that the world should imagine the same thing. If it believed in its own *essence*, would it try to hide that essence under the *semblance* of an alien essence and seek refuge in hypocrisy and sophism? The modern *ancien régime* is only the *comedian* of a world order whose *true heroes* are dead. History is thorough and goes through many phases when carrying an old form to the grave. The last phase of a world-historical form is its *comedy*. The gods of Greece, already tragically wounded to death in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, had to re-die a comic death in Lucian's *Dialogues*. Why this course of history? So that humanity should part with its past *cheerfully*. This *cheerful* historical destiny is what we vindicate for the political authorities of Germany.

However, once *modern* politico-social reality itself is subjected to criticism, once criticism rises to truly human problems, it finds itself outside the German *status quo* or else it would reach out for its object *below* its object. An example. The relation of industry, of the world of wealth generally, to the political world is one of the major problems of modern times. In what form is this problem beginning to engage the attention of the Germans? In the form of *protective duties*, of the *prohibitive system*, of *national economy*. Germanomania has passed out of man into matter, and thus one morning our cotton barons and iron champions saw themselves turned into patriots. People are therefore beginning in Germany to acknowledge the sovereignty of monopoly within the country by lending it *sovereignty abroad*. People are thus about to begin in Germany with what people in France and England are about to end. The old corrupt condition against which these countries are rebelling in theory and which they only bear as one bears chains is greeted in Germany as the dawn of a beautiful future which still hardly dares to pass from *cunning*<sup>a</sup> theory to the most ruthless practice. Whereas the problem in France and England is: *Political economy* or the *rule of society over wealth*, in Germany it is: *National economy* or the *mastery of private property over nationality*. In France and England, then, it is a case of abolishing monopoly that has proceeded to its last consequences; in Germany it is a case of proceeding to the last consequences of monopoly. There it is a case of solution, here as yet a case of collision. This is an adequate example of the *German* form of modern problems, an example of how our history, like a clumsy recruit, still has to do extra drill in matters that are old and hackneyed in history.

If therefore the *whole* German development did not exceed the German *political* development, a German could at the most participate in the problems of the present to the same extent as a *Russian* can. But, if the separate individual is not bound by the limitations of the nation, still less is the nation as a whole liberated by the

<sup>a</sup> In the German *listig*, probably an allusion to Friedrich List, who was an advocate of protectionism.  
– Ed.

liberation of one individual. The fact that Greece had a Scythian<sup>a</sup> among its philosophers did not help the Scythians to make a single step towards Greek culture.

Luckily we Germans are not Scythians.

As the ancient peoples went through their pre-history in imagination, in *mythology*, so we Germans have gone through our post-history in thought, in *philosophy*. We are *philosophical* contemporaries of the present without being its *historical* contemporaries. German philosophy is the *ideal prolongation* of German history. If therefore, instead of the *œuvres incomplètes* of our real history, we criticise the *œuvres posthumes* of our ideal history, *philosophy*, our criticism is among the questions of which the present says: *That is the question*.<sup>b</sup> What in advanced nations is a *practical* break with modern political conditions, is in Germany, where even those conditions do not yet exist, at first a *critical* break with the philosophical reflection of those conditions.

*German philosophy of law and state* is the only *German history* which is *al pari* with the *official* modern reality. The German nation must therefore take into account not only its present conditions but also its dream-history, and subject to criticism not only these existing conditions but at the same time their abstract continuation. Its future cannot be *limited* either to the immediate negation of its real conditions of state and law or to the immediate implementation of its ideal state and legal conditions, for it has the immediate negation of its real conditions in its ideal conditions, and it has almost *outlived* the immediate implementation of its ideal conditions in the contemplation of neighbouring nations. Hence it is with good reason that the *practical* political party in Germany demands the *negation of philosophy*. It is wrong, not in its demand, but in stopping at the demand, which it neither seriously implements nor can implement. It believes that it implements that negation by turning its back on philosophy and with averted face muttering a few trite and angry phrases about it. Owing to the limitation of its outlook it does not include philosophy in the circle of *German* reality or it even fancies it is *beneath* German practice and the theories that serve it. You demand that *real living germs* be made the starting point but you forget that the real living germ of the German nation has grown so far only inside its *cranium*. In a word – *you cannot supersede philosophy without making it a reality*.

The same mistake, but with the factors *reversed*, was made by the *theoretical* political party originating from philosophy.

In the present struggle it saw *only the critical struggle of philosophy against the German world*; it did not give a thought to the fact that the *hitherto prevailing philosophy* itself belongs to this world and is its *complement*, although an ideal one. Critical towards its adversary, it was uncritical towards itself when, proceeding from the *premises* of philosophy, it either stopped at the results given by philosophy or passed off demands and results from somewhere else as immediate demands and results of philosophy, although these, provided they are justified, can be obtained only by the *negation of hitherto existing philosophy*, of philosophy as such. We reserve ourselves the right to a more detailed description of this party. Its basic

<sup>a</sup> Anacharsis. – Ed.

<sup>b</sup> This sentence is in English in the original. – Ed.

deficiency may be reduced to the following: *It thought it could make philosophy a reality without superseding it.*

The criticism of the *German philosophy of state and law*, which attained its most consistent, richest and final formulation through *Hegel*, is both a critical analysis of the modern state and of the reality connected with it, and the resolute negation of the whole *German political and legal consciousness* as practised hitherto, the most distinguished, most universal expression of which, raised to the level of a *science*, is the *speculative philosophy of law* itself. If the speculative philosophy of law, that abstract extravagant *thinking* on the modern state, the reality of which remains a thing of the beyond, if only beyond the Rhine, was possible only in Germany, inversely the *German* thought-image of the modern state which disregards *real man* was possible only because and insofar as the modern state itself disregards *real man* or satisfies the *whole* of man only in imagination. In politics the Germans *thought* what other nations *did*. Germany was their *theoretical consciousness*. The abstraction and conceit of its thought always kept in step with the one-sidedness and stumpiness of its reality. If therefore the *status quo* of *German statehood* expresses the *perfection of the ancien régime*, the perfection of the thorn in the flesh of the modern state, the *status quo* of *German political theory* expresses the *imperfection of the modern state*, the defectiveness of its flesh itself.

Even as the resolute opponent of the previous form of *German* political consciousness the criticism of speculative philosophy of law turns, not towards itself, but towards *problems* which can only be solved by one means – *practice*.

It is not the *radical* revolution, not the *general human* emancipation which is a utopian dream for Germany, but rather the partial, the *merely* political revolution, the revolution which leaves the pillars of the house standing. On what is a partial, a merely political revolution based? On the fact that *part of civil society* emancipates itself and attains *general* domination; on the fact that a definite class, proceeding from its *particular situation*, undertakes the general emancipation of society. This class emancipates the whole of society but only provided the whole of society is in the same situation as this class, e.g., possesses money and education or can acquire them at will.

No class of civil society can play this role without arousing a moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses, a moment in which it fraternises and merges with society in general, becomes confused with it and is perceived and acknowledged as its *general representative*; a moment in which its demands and rights are truly the rights and demands of society itself; a moment in which it is truly the social head and the social heart. Only in the name of the general rights of society can a particular class lay claim to general domination. For the storming of this emancipatory position, and hence for the political exploitation of all spheres of society in the interests of its own sphere, revolutionary energy and intellectual self-confidence alone are not sufficient. For the *revolution of a nation* and the *emancipation of a particular class* of civil society to coincide, for *one* estate to be acknowledged as the estate of the whole society, all the defects of society must conversely be concentrated in another class, a particular estate must be the general stumbling-block, the incorporation of the general limitation, a particular social sphere must be looked upon as the *notorious crime* of the whole of society, so that liberation from that sphere appears as general self-liberation. For *one* estate to be

*par excellence* the estate of liberation, another estate must conversely be the obvious estate of oppression. The negative general significance of the French nobility and the French clergy determined the positive general significance of the immediately adjacent and opposed class of the *bourgeoisie*.

But, no particular class in Germany has the consistency, the severity, the courage or the ruthlessness that could mark it out as the negative representative of society. No more has any estate the breadth of soul that identifies itself, even for a moment, with the soul of the nation, the genius that inspires material might be political violence, or that revolutionary audacity which flings at the adversary the defiant words: *I am nothing and I should be everything*. The main stem of German morals and honesty, of the classes as well as of individuals, is rather that *modest egoism* which asserts its limitedness and allows it to be asserted against itself. The relation of the various sections of German society is therefore not dramatic but epic. Each of them begins to be aware of itself and to settle down beside the others with all its particular claims not as soon as it is oppressed, but as soon as the circumstances of the time, without the section's own participation, create a social substratum on which it can in turn exert pressure. Even the *moral self-confidence of the German middle class* rests only on the consciousness that it is the general representative of the philistine mediocrity of all the other classes. It is therefore not only the German kings who accede to the throne *mal à propos*; every section of civil society goes through a defeat before it has celebrated victory, develops its own limitations before it has overcome the limitations facing it and asserts its narrow-hearted essence before it has been able to assert its magnanimous essence. Thus the very opportunity of a great role has on every occasion passed away before it is to hand, thus every class, once it begins the struggle against the class above it, is involved in the struggle against the class below it. Hence the princes are struggling against the monarchy, the bureaucrats against the nobility, and the bourgeois against them all, while the proletariat is already begging to struggle against the bourgeoisie. No sooner does the middle class dare to think of emancipation from its own standpoint than the development of the social conditions and the progress of political theory pronounce that standpoint antiquated or at least problematic.

In France it is enough for somebody to be something for him to want to be everything; in Germany one has to be nothing if one is not to forego everything. In France partial emancipation is the basis of universal emancipation; in Germany universal emancipation is the *conditio sine qua non* of any partial emancipation. In France it is the reality of gradual liberation, in Germany the impossibility of gradual liberation, that must give birth to complete freedom. In France every class is *politically idealistic* and becomes aware of itself at first not as a particular class but as the representative of social requirements generally. The role of *emancipator* therefore passes in dramatic motion to the various classes of the French nation one after the other until it finally comes to the class which implements social freedom no longer on the basis of certain conditions lying outside man and yet created by human society, but rather organises all conditions of human existence on the presupposition of social freedom. In Germany, on the contrary, where practical life is as spiritless as spiritual life is unpractical, no class in civil society has any need or capacity for general emancipation until it is forced by its *immediate* condition, by *material* necessity, by its *very chains*.

Where, then, is the *positive* possibility of a German emancipation?

*Answer:* In the formation of a class with *radical chains*, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no *particular right* because no *particular wrong* but *wrong generally* is perpetrated against it; which can no longer invoke a *historical* but only a *human* title; which does not stand in any one-sided antithesis to the consequences but in an all-round antithesis to the premises of the German state; a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word, is the *complete loss* of man and hence can win itself only through the *complete rewinning of man*. This dissolution of society as a particular estate is the *proletariat*.

The proletariat is coming into being in Germany only as a result of the rising *industrial* development. For it is not the *naturally arising* poor but the *artificially impoverished*, not the human masses mechanically oppressed by the gravity of society but the masses resulting from the *drastic dissolution* of society, mainly of the middle estate, that form the proletariat, although it is obvious that gradually the naturally arising poor and the Christian-Germanic serfs also join its ranks.

By proclaiming the *dissolution of the hitherto existing world order* the proletariat merely states the *secret of its own existence*, for it *is in fact* the dissolution of that world order. By demanding the *negation of private property*, the proletariat merely raises to the rank of a *principle of society* what society has made the principle of the *proletariat*, what, without its own co-operation, is already incorporated in it as the negative result of society. In regard to the world which is coming into being the proletarian then finds himself possessing the same right as the *German king* in regard to the world which has come into being when he calls the people *his* people as he calls the horse *his* horse. By declaring the people his private property the king simply states that the property owner is king.

As philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *spiritual* weapons in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has squarely struck this ingenuous soil of the people the emancipation of the *Germans* into *human beings* will take place.

Let us sum up the result:

The only *practically* possible liberation of Germany is liberation that proceeds from the standpoint of *the* theory which proclaims man to be the highest being for man. In Germany emancipation from the *Middle Ages* is possible only as emancipation from the *partial* victories over the Middle Ages as well. In Germany *no* kind of bondage can be broken without breaking *every* kind of bondage. The *thorough* Germany cannot make a revolution without making a *thoroughgoing* revolution. The *emancipation of the German* is the *emancipation of the human being*. The *head* of this emancipation is *philosophy*, its *heart* is the *proletariat*. Philosophy cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality.

When all inner requisites are fulfilled the *day of German resurrection* will be proclaimed by the *ringing call of the Gallic cock*.