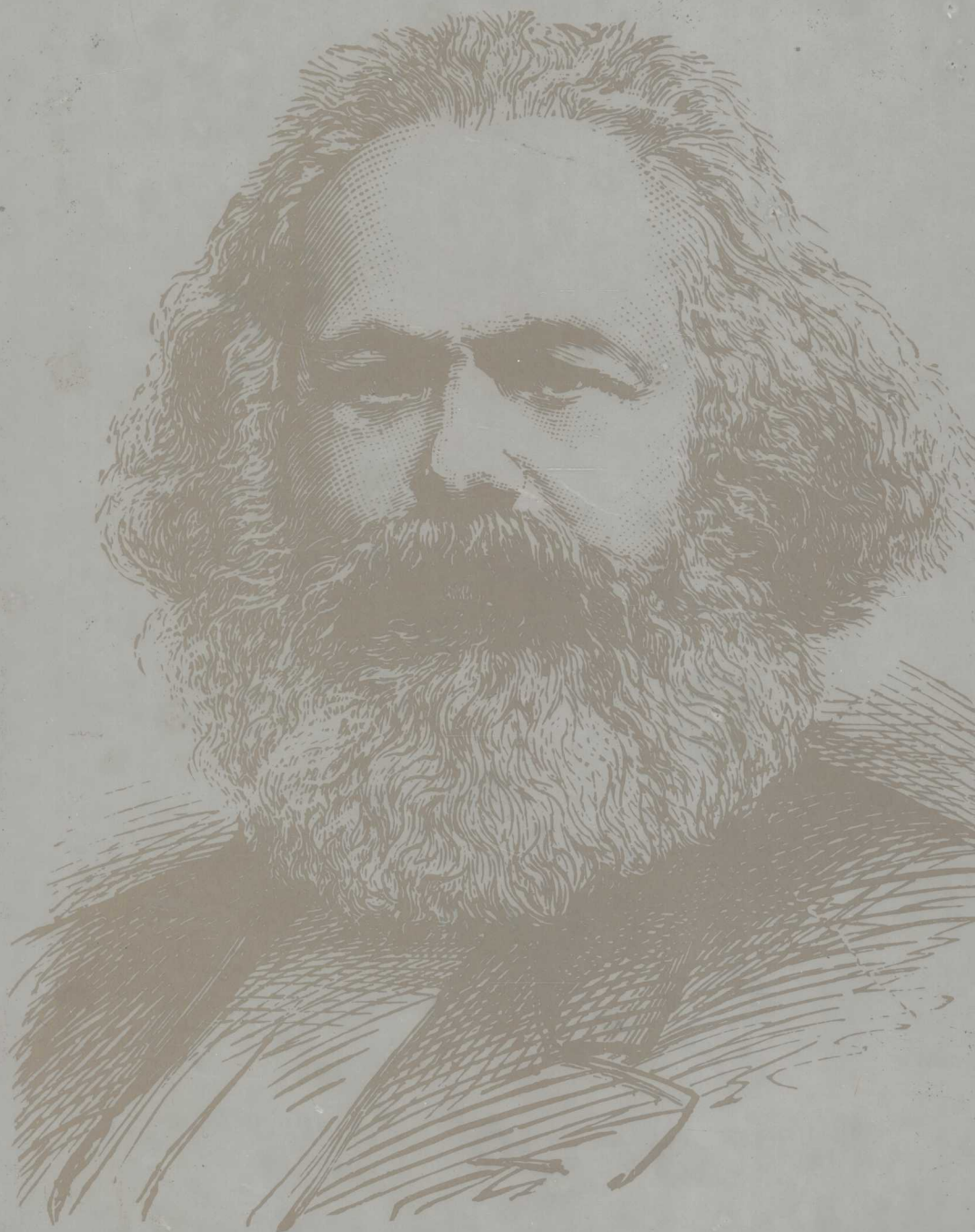


Terrell Carver

A MARX DICTIONARY



A Marx Dictionary

TERRELL CARVER

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A Marx Dictionary

For students and colleagues

Preface

This work is intended to help undergraduate students and other readers who are tackling Karl Marx's social theory as beginners. It incorporates my own approach to Marx and the lessons I have drawn from teaching his social theory to British and American students of different ages and backgrounds. While I hope that *A Marx Dictionary* may also interest more advanced students of Marx and the political and scholarly communities where his work is discussed, the book was not written specifically for such an audience. As it is from that audience that reviewers are usually drawn I shall try now to anticipate some of their criticisms and to recommend the book to its intended readership.

In *A Marx Dictionary* students will find an introductory essay on Marx's life and works. This is followed by my selection in alphabetical order of the sixteen major concepts that need careful explanation before his work can be grasped and criticized adequately. Through cross-referencing at appropriate points I aim to show the student how his concepts cohere. Cross-references are indicated by **bold-face** type the first time they appear in my introductory essay and in each entry in the dictionary section. It is possible to start with the introductory essay or with any entry in the dictionary section and then proceed along diverse logical paths until all the other entries have been covered. In that way the student can commence with an interest in any one aspect of Marx's theory, e.g. **alienation** or **exploitation** or **communism**, and work from there. Readers are advised to consult the Entry Finder and index, where many other terms used by Marx are keyed to dictionary entries, e.g. for 'constant capital' see **value**.

In presenting my interpretation of Marx's social theory I have limited references and quotations to works accessible to students and commonly assigned to beginners. And I have not introduced other interpretations from secondary literature into the text,

because I prefer that students quarrel with Marx in the first instance and with me in the second. For those who prefer a more complicated scheme, there are suggested references to further reading at the end of each entry. Information about these books can be found in the bibliographical essay and bibliography following the dictionary section. A number of famous names in the secondary literature on Marx are absent from these reading lists because I have not found their works helpful in my teaching.

Friedrich Engels's role in interpreting Marx and establishing Marxist theory seems to me best dealt with once Marx's own work has been examined, and I have defended that position at length in my *Marx and Engels: The Intellectual Relationship* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). To do otherwise is to risk begging questions about Marx's social theory that are profoundly important. Readers who wish to pursue the work of Engels and other Marxists might begin by consulting Tom Bottomore *et al.* (eds), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). Further reference from key words to short textual excerpts from Marx and Engels can be found in Gérard Bekerman, *Marx and Engels: A Conceptual Concordance*, trans. Terrell Carver (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

Someone else would choose a different selection of concepts and write a different book about them. My intention is to start discussion and stimulate inquiry, so I do not presume to have said all that needs to be said about any aspect of Marx's thought. Rather I aim to make the student's first contact with Marx less forbidding than is often the case, without making Marx seem overly simple and dogmatic or giving the impression that this is the commentator's job. I have tried to make more use of Marx's masterpiece *Capital*, volume 1, than is usual in introductory works on social theory, and rather different use than is made of it in introductory economics when Marx is considered. Thus I hope to make *Capital* more accessible to the student, without neglecting the published and manuscript works of Marx that currently attract attention.

This is a book to start with, to move on from and (I hope) to come back to. I am grateful to Marianne Graves of Virginia Commonwealth University for her speedy, cheerful work on the typescript.

Terrell Carver, Richmond, Virginia,

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Karl Marx

Life and Works

Karl Marx's impact on politics has been overwhelming. But it has occurred through the medium of Marxism as interpreted and pursued by states, parties, leaders and followers all over the world. No more than a very few religious movements could challenge the position of Marxism as an influence on the goals towards which people strive and the judgements and activities that they use along the way.

The relation between founder and followers, between message and application, is just as vexed for Marxists as for adherents to the world's major religions. It is not surprising that Marxism has been interpreted as a religious or quasi-religious phenomenon, since texts and interpretation, orthodoxy and heresy, discipline and commitment, proselytization and exclusion have all been features of Marxist movements.

However, Marxism is not a movement that makes appeals to the supernatural. This is not to say that religious people and Marxists cannot communicate with each other (because they do), nor that Marxists never accommodate themselves to religious practices and views (because they have). Rather one of the most significant features of Marxism has been its appeal to **science** in some form or other as the validating factor that should convince us that the goals and political actions that Marxists propose are worth adopting.

Marxists have also attempted to undercut other major means of political persuasion with which we are familiar. These include particularistic views, such as nationalism and racism, as well as general appeals to natural rights and equal liberties. All of these are used to validate political programmes. Marxists argue that these approaches are deficient intellectually compared with the science that they recommend. This explains a good deal of the confidence so characteristic of adherents to Marxism, and the lack of common ground between it and other political move-

ments which do not crucially depend on any view of science or may even reject it altogether.

The Marxist appeal to science may be powerful in principle, but how many Marxist movements owe their political success to pragmatic accommodations with nationalism? And conversely how close to real political activity are the highly theoretical debates about science for which Marxism is particularly noted? Science is not, so far, the political inspiration or intellectual activity that has decisively shaped the world of mass politics.

Yet there is no doubt that Marxists and Marx himself have contributed very substantially to social science as it is currently, albeit very imprecisely, defined and demarcated. Under social science I include anthropology, economics, political science, sociology, geography and archaeology. Literary studies, philosophy, history and aesthetics make use of material developed by these disciplines and overlap them. The terms of this list are not themselves important, because these disciplines do not share a common definition of science nor are they separated by agreed boundaries.

Marx is regarded as a founder of modern social science and a potent force within it. Indeed no other single figure in social science has had the intellectual impact that he has had. The political theory and practice of Marxists bears some relationship, however puzzling or controversial, to his thought. It is for those reasons that students are interested in Marx, and that his works are so extensively taught and used.

How has Marx's work stimulated social scientific theory and research? How did he attempt to use social science in politics, and what have been the consequences for Marxists? These are important questions to consider in a brief survey of his career. To answer them we must examine two issues very closely. One of these is the nature of his politics and the other is the nature of his works.

Marx was born into a Jewish family in Trier in the German Rhineland. In the Marx family liberal ideals and political compromise were familiar. But there was more compromise than idealism, as successive Prussian monarchs sought to contain the liberalism that they considered dangerous. Karl was born in 1818, just as the Rhineland passed from French rule under the relatively liberal Napoleonic code to rule by the king of Prussia.

In the Prussian kingdom 'the rights of man and the citizen' advocated by liberals were closely associated by loyal monarchists with the French Revolution and the ultimate political crimes of treason and regicide.

Under the Prussian administration of the Rhineland, Jews were no longer tolerated in the professions, where Christianity was made the rule. As careers were no longer freely open to talented individuals, Marx's father, a lawyer, had been obliged in 1816 to convert formally to Christianity, though he chose Lutheranism in a Roman Catholic community.

Although the Marx family do not seem to have been particularly concerned about religion of any kind, nor to have had strong feelings about their cultural heritage from European Jewry, the conversion marked a step backwards from the free-thinking rationalism that they valued. This outlook, associated with the Enlightenment in France, promoted critical scrutiny, scepticism and careful logic in considered opposition to mystical religious thought and to orthodoxies of faith. Revelation, arguments from authority and the weight of tradition were all rejected in favour of debate, persuasion, education and criticism.

When Marx's father accepted Christian orthodoxy and professed loyalty to a paternalistic ruler who enforced conformity, stifled criticism and claimed absolute powers, he opted for security. We cannot know all the feelings within the Marx family whilst Karl was at school, but it is recorded in correspondence that his father wanted him to be a lawyer and to enjoy the advantages of a secure professional livelihood. Karl never showed the slightest sign, however, of professing the loyalty to the law and to the Prussian monarchy that being a lawyer would necessitate.

Marx's time as a student at the universities of Bonn and Berlin from 1835 to 1841 was intellectually and personally exciting, a mixture of conventional and unconventional rebellion. He was transferred by his father from Bonn to Berlin because of duelling, debts and poor studies, but the stricter regime at Berlin failed to make a proper lawyer of Karl. Instead he associated himself with a crowd of philosophers, poets and student critics who promoted political liberalism and individual inquiry despite the pronouncements of university authorities. He wrote romantic poetry for a time, but soon progressed to the mainstream of philo-

sophical debate at Berlin – the works of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831).

Later in life Marx was not keen to dwell on this period of philosophical debates and associations, because he wanted to distance himself from the ‘Young Hegelians’, as the politically liberal interpreters of Hegel called themselves. He particularly objected to their facile optimism that intellectual activity alone could move mountains. At the height of his career he wished to recommend himself to his readers as a conscientious scientist who analysed **capitalism**, the economic system of modern society. He contended that his theories were constructed with scrupulous regard for facts and logic and were not dependent on anything so insubstantial as a philosophy or philosophizing.

However, many commentators have asserted that this was the truly formative period in his life. Most argue that the scientific Marx only emerged after a crucial period of conflict within Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy, and that his concept of science cannot be understood without a reconstruction of this epic struggle.

There are two ways to present this conventional view. The first is that Marx’s mature conception of science incorporated important ideas that arose from his contact with Hegelian philosophy, and that this defines a unique outlook. The second is that his mature conception of science required the rejection of his early criticisms of Hegel and indeed of any philosophy altogether, otherwise his mature works would not be scientific at all.

The latter view is by far the less successful, as it is difficult to imagine any work of social science, let alone Marx’s, conforming to a science/philosophy dichotomy so strictly put. But the problem with the former conception is that it assumes a lengthy intellectual introduction to his work on capitalism that might have displeased him greatly, that might be daunting to contemporary students and that might shift the focus of his thought from social issues and action back to traditional problems in philosophy.

Perhaps Marx was mistaken in offering his works to the public without some prefatory consideration of the way that his premisses evolved. There is some evidence for this in his response to critics who, so he complained, had misunderstood the methods of inquiry and presentation that he employed. Yet

his methodological corrections and rare comments on Hegel were brief and commonsensical, and they did not burden his readers with the 'Young Hegelian' debates or other philosophical issues in any detail. A reconstruction of Marx's early criticism of Hegelian philosophy has become standard even for novice students of his thought, but it is not clear to me that this is strictly necessary.

For our purposes in considering Marx's intellectual development, it is important to grasp that his student philosophizing was political, and not merely academic. He practised free-thinking criticism which praised Hegel's achievement in bringing history and politics into the realm of philosophy where the activities of real people and institutions were subject to assessment. Philosophical studies of a more abstract character, such as logic, metaphysics, theories of knowledge and perception etc., were thus made relevant to contemporary culture and politics as Hegel's system progressed.

Because of the ambiguities that Hegel loved, his work was subject to conservative and liberal interpretations, and Marx allied himself with the latter. To do so was to become involved in politics, not least because the university authorities were agents of a government that discouraged the very free-thinking criticism that liberals believed in and practised, perforce outside university premises.

The conservative warrant to discourage criticism derived from the most basic beliefs and values that they held. They identified truth with revealed religion as interpreted by the established churches. They supported philosophies that resolved awkward questions of faith or morals in ways that were compatible with orthodox Christianity. Toleration, scepticism and criticism were no virtues in conservative eyes. Rather they were vices to be stamped out, especially amongst intellectuals who might subvert the very training grounds of church functionaries and civil servants whose job it would be to oversee the thoughts and actions of the king's subjects at large. For most conservatives even moderate liberals were revolutionaries, even if they explicitly disavowed violence.

Marx's university philosophizing was political because the authorities saw it that way, and he was fully aware of this. He took his plans for a university job to the point of submitting a

Ph.D. dissertation to the University of Jena and obtaining his degree very promptly by post. It is clear that he intended to use an academic position to help liberalize the conservative Prussian regime. The liberal opposition in Prussia promoted rationalistic attacks on the established Christianity and the conservative version of Hegelian philosophy from which the king and Prussian authorities claimed their right to rule, including their supposed duty to regulate the religious beliefs and moral practice of the community. When the government cracked down on Marx's liberal friends who already had academic posts, he knew that he had to find another career. In 1842 he turned to journalism.

For Marx this was not a radical shift from philosophy and the academic life towards politics, since, as we have seen, his university period had been deeply political by the authorities' definition and by his own. Rather his work for the liberal newspaper *Rheinische Zeitung* marked a shift in political perspective from a strategy of elitism – by which intellectuals close to government service and the professions were to be radicalized – towards a broader strategy.

The *Rheinische Zeitung* was backed by businessmen in Cologne wanting a liberalization of government attitudes and practices that would favour the business community at the expense of the traditional beneficiaries of Prussian rule – feudal land-owners and nobility, the military forces, established churches. Rhenish business interests wanted increased middle-class participation in politics and therefore in government decision-making. They wanted to be heard and recognized through elected representatives, not patronized by hereditary rulers who burdened them with taxes and restricted their trading activities. The twenty-four-year-old Marx soon became editor, an indication of the difficulty of finding someone more experienced to run an organ that criticized the provincial government and defied the censor.

It is significant that Marx, in his articles, declined to stay within the political framework of which the newspaper's backers approved. He broadened his outlook to include a politics of social **class** that was unwelcome to liberals supporting the interests of the business community. For example he detailed the way that business interests and the monarchical **state** found common ground in revoking those customary rights in feudal

law which benefitted peasants, such as the right to comb the forests for fallen wood to use as fuel. This legislation substituted statutory rights to exclusive private property for shared rights of use, so aristocratic and middle-class property-owners gained advantages at the expense of the peasantry. The rights of the poor to live modestly on the land were then superseded by economic necessity, and they were forced to seek paid employment anywhere it could be found. Marx also accused the state of ignoring the plight of wine-growing peasants who were the unwitting victims of natural and commercial forces. Under his editorship the *Rheinische Zeitung* grew increasingly provocative.

The possibilities for a mass politics that would involve the poor as well as benefit them directly were addressed in some of the very early literature of socialism and **communism** that came Marx's way whilst he was a journalist. One of his colleagues, Moses Hess (1812–75), advocated a **revolution** in politics and society and a determining political role in future for the industrial working classes of Europe, especially in Britain. Those ideas were obviously not welcome in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, which was forced to close in the spring of 1843 after censorship restrictions were imposed on it for publishing articles of a much less radical character.

The identification of communism with the current interests and political actions of the working class (or 'proletariat' in the French literature) was an unusually radical position. Yet it was such a view that Marx promoted immediately in his succeeding works of 1843 and 1844. These were published outside Prussia in small-circulation journals for radical intellectuals – for example, 'Letters from the *Franco-German Yearbooks*', *On the Jewish Question* and *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*. *Introduction* (in *Early Writings* 199–209, 212–41, 243–57). He identified himself with a communism that proposed the abolition of private property in land and industry and the achievement of this goal through a proletarian revolution.

Marx continued to upbraid German liberals who failed to raise the economic issue of social class and to grasp its fundamental relation to the contemporary state and to politics. The contrast between the liberal approach to ameliorating political conflicts through democratic representation and bargaining, and the thoroughgoing social and economic revolution

that he associated with the communist movement, was a point that he developed assiduously.

By 1844 Marx's intellectual position with respect to politics was complicated and somewhat paradoxical. In addressing intellectual elites, he argued for mass politics. Though he accepted the need for social science, he advocated action by the academically uneducated proletariat. Though he admitted the progressive character of constitutional liberalism as opposed to the Prussian monarchy, he undermined the liberal vision of representative and responsible government by arguing that property-owners, not the poor, would be the real beneficiaries. Though he advocated communism, he eschewed speculation about a communist future and focused attention on contemporary class-divided societies.

Marx addressed elites on the inadequacies of elitism. He employed philosophical arguments to expose the inadequacy of philosophy. He used theoretical abstractions to explain the real world. He insisted on an economic framework for any consideration of political action. He theorized very abstractly about the very concrete character of contemporary social circumstances.

Marx has defied conventional forms of characterization, because the usual categories applied by biographers and commentators do not fit his activities. Accounts of his intellectual development which detail a supposed progression from the academic to the political, from philosophizing to action, from liberalism to revolution and from theoretical to practical activity misdescribe his early years. Marx did not become a Hegelian, a liberal or a communist in the course of his intellectual development. Rather he pushed Hegelians, liberals and communists towards an engagement with democratic politics. His relation to Hegelianism, liberalism and communism was always critical, and it is the concerns from which his criticisms flowed that mark an underlying unity in his career.

Marx's thought has an underlying unity, despite the diversity apparent in his works. This apparent diversity is largely explained by the different audiences for which he was writing and the various media he used. He wrote for a censored liberal newspaper, for uncensored journals published outside Prussia, for friends and associates in private correspondence, for legal publication and for himself. His audiences were middle-class