

**BIOGRAPHICAL
DICTIONARY
OF
MARXISM**

Edited by

ROBERT A. GORMAN

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Biographical dictionary of Marxism.

1. Communists—Biography

I. Gorman, Robert A.

335.4'092'2 HX23

ISBN 0-7201-1819-0

Published in the United Kingdom 1986 by Mansell Publishing Limited

(A subsidiary of the H.W. Wilson Company)

6 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, England

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ISBN: 0-7201-1819-0

First published in the United States and Canada in 1986 by
Greenwood Press

A division of Congressional Information Service, Inc.

88 Post Road West

Westport, Connecticut 06881

Printed in the United States of America

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For Jane, Emily, Michael, Linda, Netzach, and Nechemya

Preface

This volume contains biographical essays for over 210 Marxian philosophers and activists from almost fifty nations on five continents. Whereas the *Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism*—also published by Greenwood Press—encompasses nontraditional philosophical variations of Marxian theory, this book focuses only on materialist or orthodox Marxism. Since most contemporary Marxists and Marxist parties are materialist, the problem of deciding who to include has been vexing. Two factors have particularly complicated the selection process. First, once materialist Marxism is established in the work of its seminal theorists, very little else of philosophical interest or significance is produced. And second, orthodox parties everywhere are represented by ideologues committed to rationalizing, justifying, and occasionally modifying Marxian theory to meet current national or regional conditions. Although these intellectual efforts may be interesting, they rarely transcend in significance the narrow geographical and temporal interests involved, and they are simply too numerous to all be included here. This dictionary will therefore concentrate almost equally on philosophy and strategy. Seeking to minimize the risk of redundancy, I have included only the major theoretical formulations of materialist Marxism as well as the significant and influential applications of materialism to concrete national conditions. One consequence is the extensive coverage given Third World Marxists, whose practical contributions have retooled materialist Marxism for the postcolonial liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—without, however, altering its philosophical base.

As in the *Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism*, the final list of entrants herein has been formulated, debated, and ultimately approved by at least three indigenous scholars from each nation or region represented. I am certain that it is a fair and representative sampling of twentieth-century materialist Marxian thought and praxis.

In the introductions to both books I have tried to define carefully relevant terms and explain the criteria by which names are included and excluded. Nevertheless, some entrants rudely blur these distinctions. Where a nonmaterialist's impact on Marxist theory or praxis is noteworthy, or the editorial decision

regarding exclusion problematic, I have listed the name alphabetically with the notation "See the *Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism*." An asterisk in the text indicates that a separate entry is listed (alphabetically) in this book for the preceding name; a dagger, that an entry can be found in the *Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism*. The designation "n.a." means relevant information is either unavailable or purposely withheld at the subject's request.

In addition to the biographical essays, five group entries have been judged crucial to understanding Marxian theory and practice either within a nation or internationally. These include the Clarté group in France, the Tribunists in Holland, and the First, Second, and Third Internationals. Members who are considered significant in their own right are also given separate entries.

The bibliographies that follow each essay are intended as guides to further reading rather than as exhaustive compilations. They are divided into two parts: paragraph A lists relevant primary works; paragraph B, useful secondary material. When secondary readings are judged inferior or are nonexistent, paragraph B has been omitted. Where politics rather than theorizing distinguish an entrant, paragraph A is omitted. Wherever possible, English translations of original works are used.

This biographical dictionary, like its companion, offers students and scholars of Marxism a useful and handy resource. Organized alphabetically, essays on major twentieth-century materialist Marxists—with bibliographies—are quickly located. The introduction examines the meaning of philosophical materialism and historically situates Marx's version. Allen Wood's biographical essay on Marx offers a materialist interpretation of Marx's lifework that stresses the origins and meaning of historical materialism. The List of Names by Nationality (Appendix) encourages area specialists to relate both materialist theorizing and Marxian liberation movements to the diversity of national and regional cultures, facilitating cross-cultural comparison and analysis. Finally, the index lists all individuals, groups, and institutions, as well as key phrases, which are matched with their appropriate author(s).

I enthusiastically applaud those scholars from countries throughout the world who have given their limited time and unlimited energy and knowledge to formulating lists and writing essays. Their consistently high-quality work is, for me, the treasure at rainbow's end. I am also indebted to the chorus of translators, typists, and assorted aides whose contributions have been timely and invaluable. Cynthia Harris provided expert guidance in addition to solving a bevy of practical problems. Douglas Gall's editorial skills and general knowledge carefully smoothed the edges. The joy of being with my family would have been more than enough, even without the extra care, help, and encouragement they have given me throughout these years of occasionally frustrating work. I owe them more than words can tell.

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Introduction

With contemporary Marxism splintered into categories ranging from nihilism to theology and including almost the entire spectrum of bourgeois philosophical alternatives, it is perhaps wise for intellectuals to remind themselves that its first, most politically successful, and still most acknowledged version is based on materialism. Materialist Marxism has become the philosophical rationale of main-line Communist parties throughout the world, daily shaping the beliefs and actions of millions of workers and peasants. In the following pages we will examine the meaning of materialism, reconstruct a materialist reading of Marx, and distinguish between Marxism and neo-Marxism.

MATERIALISM

Materialism, which has a long and rich history in Western philosophy dating from the Ionian school in ancient Greece, perceives valid knowledge as existing objectively at a level removed from common-sense thinking. Reality, in other words, exists only as matter: properties that scientific and everyday experience ascribe to physical bodies. Science must utilize observed facts to unearth their material substratum, excavating a world that molds our empirical experiences.

Although materialism originated in ancient Greece and matured in the early Stoic period, its social influence peaked during the Renaissance, when scholars like da Vinci and Galileo devised an experimental method emphasizing measurement of observable physical relationships without recourse to primary forms, essences, or divinities. This new thought system was philosophically expressed by Descartes, from whom the modern usage of the term “materialism” is derived.

Although a medievalist in attributing the universal cause and substance of all physical movement to God, Descartes in his philosophical writings described reality as thinking substance (mind) and extended substance (matter), a dichotomy that shaped modern Western philosophy. Henceforth, an idealist is one who denies ontological reality to matter; a materialist to mind. Yet despite Descartes’s metaphysical dualism, as a physicist he was a rigid materialist, perceiving organic and inorganic nature as qualitatively identical and relating plant and animal

behavior to the functioning of machines. Philosophy from this perspective depends on physics and chemistry. The significance of Descartes's other pillar of reality—mind—is soon obliterated by this material logic. Mechanical explanations are applicable to both mental and social phenomena. Mechanistic materialism, born in Descartes's physics, perceives human beings as nothing more than complex physical mechanisms.

In England, Francis Bacon and especially Thomas Hobbes systematized the materialist study of human and social behavior. Hobbes described the motion of irreducible particles as the prime source of substance and change. Geometry, mechanics, physics, ethics, and politics are scientific to the extent they trace the effects of motion in nature, mind, and society. John Locke asserted that ideas and knowledge are derived from experience and reflection, which Condillac and Helvétius later reduced to sensations. French Enlightenment philosophy, especially Diderot and Holbach, explored how the movement of matter generates consciousness. Diderot in particular argued that the quality or degree of human consciousness is determined by the complexity of material surroundings, in the same manner as sound or light copies the quality and quantity of matter from which it is composed.

Early nineteenth-century materialism strove toward the perfection of man through his reasoned manipulation of nature. This is not surprising since materialism presupposes that decent, knowledgeable people can be mechanically propagated by apposite conditions. Speaking practically, this means reorienting society toward the people's welfare, initiating concrete reforms to create desirable surroundings. Justice grows from a science of human welfare. First utopian and then scientific (Marxian) socialism appeared as nineteenth-century fruits of philosophical materialism. By the twentieth century, materialism was associated primarily with Marxism, while the non-Marxist, mechanistic brand was gradually absorbed by the methodology of empirical science.

MARXIAN MATERIALISM

The most immediate and direct materialist influence on Marx was Ludwig Feuerbach. In the early 1840s Germany was rife with Hegelian idealism, with variations ranging from the Young (or Left) Hegelian radicals on the left of the political spectrum to the more orthodox conservatives on the right. Feuerbach, who was himself once an Hegelian, emphasized the reactionary, undesirable social consequences of abstract—particularly religious—ideas. In the context of Germany's unquestioned Hegelianism, he became a beacon of materialist rationalism. In his *Lectures on the Essence of Religion* (1848), Feuerbach argued that religion and idealism generally were symbols of ignorance and weakness, reflecting our inability to comprehend and control nature. As knowledge increased, Feuerbach anticipated the demise of both abstract thinking and its social consequences: poverty, exploitation, and inequality. Rationality alone would guarantee social peace and complete freedom.

Feuerbach's materialist critique of German idealism, unexceptional when compared to British and French Enlightenment thought, was radical and exciting in Germany. Marx's own early flirtation with Hegel was quickly tempered by his reading of Feuerbach. Although Marx eventually rejected Feuerbach's own rather naive assumptions regarding enlightened, rational human beings, Marx's early writings (1842–45) expanded the notion of religious alienation and critically examined Hegel's blatant idealism.

Marx's materialism emerged first in his earliest published writings in the journal *Rheinische Zeitung* (1842–43), where he began reflecting on matter's influence on social behavior. In the article "Defense of the Moselle Correspondent," Marx noticed the "objective character" of politics, and the fact that social behavior "can be determined with almost the same certainty as a chemist determines under which external conditions given substances will form a compound."¹ Here, inchoately, is the materialist emphasis on concrete factors lying hidden in society's substructure.²

In the introduction to *A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843), Marx criticized the utopian socialist belief in an irresistible ideal that, cognitively experienced, alters consciousness and liberates humanity. Marx foresaw human progress as an aspect of history's objective telos, making an unconscious historical tendency a conscious one.³ For Marx, there are no mystical subjective qualities, only material processes bending minds toward history. Scientific socialism must expose these concrete forces. "In demanding that . . . [workers] give up illusions about this condition, we demand that they give up a condition that requires illusion. . . . The criticism of heaven is thus transformed into criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."⁴

Even the *1844 Manuscripts*, often cited by nonmaterialists as evidence of Marx's own idealism, envisioned exploitation and alienation as necessary and even positive historical occurrences, unavoidable benchmarks in history's evolution to pure communism.⁵ The compelling account of human alienation is intended by Marx as a vivid illustration of the quality of life experienced in one kind of society, i.e., at a capitalist stage of material development. Although man and woman are "active," "sensuous," and capable of creative labor, they are also "suffering, conditioned and limited creature[s], like animals and plants."⁶ Alienation, in brief, is an impersonal condition equally affecting all exposed subjects and is embedded in material factors that "condition" and "limit" us.

The Holy Family (1844–45) ties historical progress to the contradictions that accompany capitalist production. The concrete modes of human reproduction negate themselves by breeding and cultivating classes that will eventually reshape these economic processes. Capitalism, for example, simultaneously generates the need for wage labor and the alienated, oppressive life style that workers endure, thus assuring its own downfall. Oppressed workers, on the other hand, need capitalists to survive, but in surviving realize that they can live better without capitalists. Subjugated classes, in brief, eventually seize and alter the

extant mode of production in order to satiate their own needs. Each mode of production spawns an exploited class that it cannot do without, assuring its own destruction as the exploited inevitably become exploiters, who then create ideas and institutions that rationalize and protect their newly acquired hegemony. As matter historically unfolds through negation and revolution, there are corresponding movements in philosophy and social organization. The history of ideas depends on the history of production.⁷

Just as capitalism created the proletariat, who will carry history to communism, so the philosophy of materialism—which flourished in capitalism—will evolve into a theoretical rationale for worker rebellion and communism. Since materialism presumes that men and women are products of matter, then human potential is realized only when matter (e.g. society) is made human. “If man is formed by circumstances, then his circumstances must be made human.”⁸ This, Marx argued, is possible only in communism, where real material human needs are satiated, not merely the selfish urge to profit. Materialism is thus an authentic philosophical expression of working-class interests. Its own evolution from a mechanistic doctrine that turns humans into homunculi and rationalizes bourgeois science to a dialectical philosophy guaranteeing human freedom and creativity—what Marx called in the tenth *Thesis on Feuerbach* the “humanizing” of materialism—will be described in later works.

It is *The German Ideology* (1846), however, that materialist Marxists usually point to as Marx’s and Engels’s* most convincing early statement. In refuting the popular argument that mental aberrations cause social injustice and human alienation, Marx expounded his theory of historical materialism, his materialist science of history.

Asserting that human beings are extensions of nature who must battle to survive in inhospitable surroundings, Marx traced the origin of society to humanity’s efforts at collectively creating and using the tools needed to extract sustenance from nature. Human history, for Marx, is the totality of those actions by which we produce in the material world to satisfy changing needs. “What . . . [individuals] are . . . coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce it. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions of their production.”⁹ Oppression originates when humanity begins producing more than it consumes and one group appropriates the excess goods produced by others. The forms of appropriation Marx called the “relations of production,” including property relations, the social division of labor, and the organs of exchange and distribution. The means and relationships of production comprise society’s material base. As technology develops, new forms of appropriation become feasible. In brief, society’s base or substructure comprises the technical level of productive forces as well as the relationships involved in production, exchange, and distribution.

One’s position in the base determines class, which in turn conditions one’s perception of reality. The dominant economic class owns and controls society’s productive apparatus, appropriating excess goods and distributing them to max-

imize their own interests. Their enormous wealth generates leisure activities (e.g. writing, worshiping, drawing, playing) that intellectually justify their dominance. Culture is therefore interpreted by Marx as the ideas and institutions by which a society defines itself and rationalizes the dominant class's hegemony. The level of productive forces and the social relations of production, distribution, and exchange determine all facets of a culture. "The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas."¹⁰ Cultures, however, also rise and fall in history. Hence human history can be explained by its patterns of technological innovation and the social forms taken by divided labor and property. First came the "primitive" world, with its tribal-owned property. Next, the "ancient" world, with communal and state-owned property. The "feudal" world was characterized by private estates and the beginnings of landed property. Finally, the modern "capitalist" world is marked by private ownership of land and factories, and the initiation of wage labor. Each successive historical stage represents a higher level of productive technology, encompassing foraging, hunting, farming, and modern commodity production. Each successive stage also embodies a new, more technically sophisticated division of labor.

Only communism will abolish the division of labor, which Marx and Engels saw as the first cause of social oppression. With workers controlling the productive apparatus—deciding what to produce and how to produce it—labor will no longer be estranged from workers' creative potentials. Our current sophisticated technology will generate personal fulfillment and social justice, ending capitalism's reification of commodities, private property, and wealth. But such dramatic changes can occur only after capitalism's human residue, that is, its impoverished and angry class of workers, has ripened. Moreover, these changes can survive only through a productive apparatus that efficiently and effectively satisfies workers' material needs. Finally, they require a world market in which all countries are economically interdependent. The proletariat, a worldwide class, must mature and rebel collectively. In sum, capitalism's maturing productive capacity produces an increasingly large and volatile class of workers, who experience material and cultural exploitation and eventually rebel. Revolution materializes when society's productive forces conflict with its relations of production.

Despite the human costs and benefits of this revolutionary process, Marx and Engels nevertheless argue that such violent and emancipatory activities are part of history's impersonal evolution. As matter evolves, as productive forces are transformed from ancient to modern proportions, the voices of discontent will simultaneously grow louder. Each productive mode, as it technically matures, will generate a disaffected class whose material needs will finally be satisfied only through a revolutionary transformation of the base. Consequently, at certain historical junctures revolutions occur regardless of subjective personalities or feelings. They are as natural and inevitable as a sunrise. Our eager expectations each morning are the *result* of matter's undeniable process, not its cause. Similarly, revolutions are fought because matter makes such battles, and their ac-

companying rhetoric, inevitable. The proletariat's understanding and evaluation of capitalism is purely practical, inseparably linked to their activities. Ethics, practical activity, and history's necessary material process comprise an irreducible totality. Human energy is "conditioned by the circumstances in which men find themselves, by the productive forces already acquired, by the social form which exists before they do, which they do not create, which is the product of the preceding generation."¹¹ Marx's harsh critique of utopian socialism, particularly in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), is based on the latter's naive moral and economic ideals, which ignore history's innate propensities.

Historical materialism, in sum, sees reality—including human perceptions and ideals—unfolding impersonally. Technology determines society's productive capacity, conditioning relations of production. This economic base consists of antagonistic classes, which appear historically when human labor is appropriated. Culture reflects the base. Antagonistic economic classes, therefore, produce social classes with opposing interests, expressed in conflicting ideologies. Society's institutions and ideas reflect the interests of its dominant economic class. When material conditions ripen, oppressed classes seize the means of production and replace existing institutions—including the state—with their own. Workers are thus destined to achieve economic and cultural hegemony, which will emerge concretely as communism.

Particularly after 1846, Marx emphasized the engine of this historical process: the dialectical quality of matter, its innate tendency to negate itself. Dialectics thus became, for Marx, an aspect of materialism. Each mode of production internally contains its own negation. As substructures mature, inequities grow, and oppressed classes cognitively and physically congeal and finally seize the means of production. History, therefore, necessarily unfolds through conflict and progressive change, culminating in proletariat hegemony and, ultimately, the abolition of classes altogether.¹² The dialectic, as part of matter, is impersonal and determining, an inexorable law of evolution generating negation, revolution, and progress. The science of historical materialism presupposes the philosophical worldview later called dialectical materialism.

For the materialist Marx, empirical reality is a multidimensional process, encompassing past and future as well as a present in which seemingly unrelated phenomena are in fact intertwined. Dialectics perceives each concrete society as a progressive synthesis of past contradictions and as a portent of new antagonisms, and each reflective individual as defined by objective matter. Reality exists of opposites coexisting in dynamic, tense unity.

Grundrisse (1857) analyzes the multifaceted contradictions between free and equal consumers and capitalism's drive for profit, the source of worker exploitation, oppression, and alienation. It powerfully conveys the fluid, dynamic, contradictory nature of society. Marx now perceived dialectics as a total social process of change, historic (diachronic) and spatial (synchronic), with observable features shaped by stages of economic development. Each aspect of society

(economic, political, social, aesthetic, legal, and so on) comprises a moment of the total whole constantly interacting, defining, and influencing others. Consequently, concrete levels of social intercourse are neither independent nor identical. In a narrower sense, each aspect of the economy (production, distribution, exchange, and consumption) is similarly defined by its interactions with every other economic aspect, as well as with the noneconomic totality. The emerging picture is multidimensional and alive, where “everything that has a fixed form . . . appears as merely a moment, a vanishing moment, in this [social] movement.”¹³

For Marx, bourgeois liberty, equality, and legalism simultaneously obscure and justify the hideous conditions found in capitalist factories. Eventually, *Grundrisse* argues, the antagonism between worker and capitalist will negate empirical reality, the underlying contradiction will be suspended, and the totality will turn into its opposite—with identities and contradictions at a new, more progressive level. The hordes of specialists who accompany capitalism are incapable of perceiving this social totality in its separate parts. Conversely, mechanistic (non-dialectical) materialism’s overly simplistic, deductive theories obliterate the totality in a haze of abstract generalizations. Dialectics alone can reassemble the parts into a coherent whole that will simultaneously explain the past and present and generate the future. Dialectics grasps matter’s dynamic total movement within which particulars are only incomplete moments.

Capital examines empirically capitalism’s concrete developmental processes, conceptualizing each separate phase within an impersonally functioning dialectical material totality.

MARXISM AND NEO-MARXISM

The dialectical materialist version of Marxism is undoubtedly the most popular brand of contemporary radicalism. Its intellectual lineage goes from Marx to Engels, Kautsky,* Plekhanov,* Bukharin,* Lenin,* Mao,* and the legions of activists associated with orthodox Marxist-Leninist parties throughout the world. Materialists emphasize history’s impersonal necessity and the inevitability of proletarian rebellion. Particularly since the publication of Lenin’s *Philosophical Notebooks* in 1914, however, there is a small but lively effort to revitalize materialism dialectically, reasserting the subjective moment of the material totality. Both orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy, however, presuppose the epistemological priority of matter and anchor history in matter’s predictable, dialectical patterns. As the reader will quickly notice, most Marxian theorists, particularly those from the Third World, where practical concerns usually outweigh theoretical speculation, unquestioningly accept materialism. Their important contributions deal primarily with organizing and mobilizing effective revolutionary movements. They seek, in other words, to read the material components of their time and place accurately and to push history toward its progressive, inevitable dénouement.