



The Legacy of Marxism

Contemporary Challenges, Conflicts
and Developments

Edited by Matthew Johnson





The Legacy of Marxism

Contemporary Challenges, Conflicts
and Developments

Edited by Matthew Johnson



Continuum International Publishing Group

The Tower Building
11 York Road
London
SE1 7NX

80 Maiden Lane
Suite 704
New York
NY 10038

www.continuumbooks.com

© Matthew Johnson, 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the permission of the publishers.

ISBN: 978-1-4411-4302-0 (hardcover)
978-1-4411-0349-9 (paperback)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This collection was the result of a project developed by the journal *Global Discourse* (global-discourse.com). As editors, Mark Edward and I sought to examine the contemporary relevance of Marxism by holding a conference entitled 'Examining the Relevance of Marx and Marxism to Contemporary Global Society' at Newcastle University on January 29th and 30th, leading to two special issues of *Global Discourse*. Some of the papers in this collection are drawn from the conference and the special issues and it is important that I acknowledge the contribution of those who helped in the organization of both: Russell Foster for dealing with emails and administrative tasks prior to the event as well as contributing greatly over the weekend of the conference; Gerard Thomas for assisting with the organization of the evening meal and refreshments; Megan O'Branski for her help during the conference and for her work as an editorial assistant; Esteban Castro for his enthusiasm and for chairing a panel; Paul Reynolds for his advice on the nature and format of the conference; William Maloney for supporting the event and Norman Geras and Stuart Sim for their keynote speeches; Steven Robinson for assisting in the processing of submissions; the referees for their comprehensive and constructive reviews; Mark Cowling for his advice and the publishers who provided review copies of the books in the symposia.

In relation specifically to this collection, I would like to thank Norman Geras for his advice and comments; Kay for her proof-reading; Selina for her enthusiasm, encouragement, cooking and financial support; Ell for improving my self-image by being more sarcastic and morbidly depressed than me and Mark Edward for his magnanimity. In particular, I must recognize David Walker's ceaseless, though reluctant, contribution to my career. As well as embellishing my cricketing abilities by serving up duff long-hops and half-volleys during three-man matches in Saltwell Park, David has also tolerated persistent requests for assistance with publications, providing a generous endorsement of this book. I thank him for his ten years of grudging toleration.

Matthew Johnson
Newcastle upon Tyne
25 November 2011

CONTRIBUTORS

Norman Geras

Norman Geras is Professor Emeritus in Politics at the University of Manchester, where he was a member of the Department of Government from his appointment in 1967 until he retired in 2003. Between 1997 and 2001 he was Head of the Department. He was a member of the editorial committee of *New Left Review* from 1976 to 1992 and a member of the editorial committee of *Socialist Register* from 1995 to 2003.

Among Norman Geras's books are *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg* (1976), *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (1983), *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind: The Ungroundable Liberalism of Richard Rorty* (1995), *The Contract of Mutual Indifference: Political Philosophy after the Holocaust* (1998) and *Crimes against humanity: birth of a concept* (2011). He has also had essays and papers published in academic and professional journals, including *New Left Review*, *Review of International Studies*, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *Res Publica*, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, *The European Legacy*, *Dissent*, *Imprints* and *Critical Horizons*. Since 2003 he has been blogging at *normblog* (<http://normblog.typepad.com/normblog/>). He was the principal author of *The Euston Manifesto* (2006). Norman Geras is also the author of two cricket books: *Ashes '97: Two Views from the Boundary* (with Ian Holliday); and *Men of Waugh: Ashes 2001*.

Joseph V. Femia

A political theorist, Joseph V. Femia is the author of several books: *Gramsci's Political Thought* (Oxford University Press, 1981), *Marxism and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1993), *The Machiavellian Legacy* (Macmillan, 1998), *Against the Masses: Anti-Democratic Thought since the French Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2001), *Machiavelli Revisited* (University of Wales Press, 2004) and *Pareto and Political Theory* (Routledge, 2006). He has also edited volumes entitled *Vilfredo Pareto for the International Library of Essays on the History of Social and Political Thought* (Ashgate 2009) and, with G. Slomp and A. Korosenyi, *Political Leadership in Liberal and Democratic Theory* (Imprint Academic 2009). He has also published articles in a wide range of academic journals, including *Political Studies*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *History of Political Thought*,

and *Political Theory*. He has served on various editorial boards, and is co-founder and co-convenor of 'Workshops in Political Theory', the main international conference for political theorists, held annually in Manchester. He has held visiting appointments at the European University Institute in Florence (1989–90), Yale University (1981–82) and Princeton University (1997). Before coming to Liverpool, he taught at the Universities of Oxford and Manchester. Professor Femia is Subject Leader for Politics and Chair of the School's Research Ethics Committee. He teaches three undergraduate modules (POLI 201: History of Political Thought, POLI 202: Twentieth Century Political Thought and POLI 315: Marxism and Democracy) and contributes to the M.A. module on International Relations Theory (POLI 132).

Alan Johnson

Alan Johnson has been working at Edge Hill University in the Social Sciences Department since 1991. He was made a Reader in 2001 and a Professor in 2007. His research has mostly been about the intellectual history of the Left and social movements. He has been active on the left and in social movements since 1979 when he worked as a volunteer in the Days of Hope bookshop in Newcastle; he was an editorial board member at *Socialist Organiser* in the 1980s, at *Historical Materialism* (1990–2003) and *New Politics* (1999–2003). He has been involved in supporting the Iraqi trade unions since 2003, co-authoring *Hadi Never Died: Hadi Saleh and the Iraqi Trade Unions* (2006, TUC) with Abdullah Muhsin. In 2005, he founded the online quarterly journal *Democratiya* and edited 16 issues (now archived at the British Library and at the Dissent website) until merging *Democratiya* with the US journal *Dissent* in 2009. He blogs at *Comment is Free* and now at the new transatlantic blog created by the merger of *Democratiya* and *Dissent*, *Arguing the World*. He co-authored The Euston Manifesto and has been involved with the 'Progress' think tank, especially its Progressive Internationalism policy group.

In 2008–10 he was engaged in consultancy work for the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU), which is based in the Office of Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT), using social movement theory and in-depth interviewing to examine the dynamics of 'radicalisation' and 'deradicalisation' and effective communications to encourage desistance and disengagement.

Paul Bowman

Paul Bowman, Cardiff University, is the author of *Post-Marxism versus Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh UP), *Deconstructing Popular Culture* (Palgrave), *Theorizing Bruce Lee* (Rodopi), and editor of *Interrogating Cultural Studies* (Pluto), *The Truth of Žižek* (Continuum), *Reading Rancière* (Continuum) and *The Rey Chow Reader* (Columbia UP). He has edited

special themed issues of the journals *Postcolonial Studies*, *Social Semiotics*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and many issues of *Parallax*. He has recently completed a book called *Beyond Bruce Lee*, is preparing a collection on Rancière and Film and is working on a study of Rey Chow. He is on the editorial board of *Culture Machine*, *The Poster* and *Ctrl-Z: New-Media-Philosophy*.

Ronaldo Munck

Professor Munck has authored or edited more than 20 books on various topics related to globalization, international development and social movements as well as over 100 academic journal articles. His books have been translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, Korean, Turkish Chinese and Japanese. He serves on the editorial boards of a number of international journals including *Globalizations*, *Global Social Policy*, *Global Labour*, *Labour History* and *Latin American Perspectives*. He represents DCU on the board of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, on NorDubCo, the Ballymun and Whitehall Partnership, the Creative Dublin Alliance and on the Financial Development and General Strategic Policy Committee of Dublin City Council. He is the Irish representative of the Council of the Development Studies Association of UK and Ireland. He has acted as External Examiner at Cambridge University, the London School of Economics, University of Warwick, Queen's University Belfast, National University of Ireland Maynooth, the Open University, University of Sussex, University of Lancaster, University of Florence, Leiden University, Institute of Social Studies: The Hague. Recent keynote speeches include the International Society for Third Sector Research in Bangkok, the Migration and Informal Labour Conference in Istanbul, the International Transport Workers Federation in Oslo, the Critical Development Forum in Zacatecas, Mexico, the Latino(a) Migration Futures at Omaha, US and the International Development Studies Association in Montreal, Canada. Currently Professor Munck is coordinator of the Irish Aid funded inter-university project the Irish African Partnership for Research Capacity Building (www.irishafricanpartnership.ie), editor of *Translocations*, an inter-university online journal on migration and social transformation in Ireland (www.translocations.ie) and is Visiting Professor of Labour and Migration Studies at the University of Linköping in Sweden.

Matthew Johnson

Matthew Johnson is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of York. His research interests lie in the assessment of cultural practices, with a monograph entitled *A Theory of Cultural Evaluation* to be published by Palgrave in early 2012. He has particular interest in invasive rites, such as male and female genital mutilation, and in the potential contribution of Marxism to the examination of cross-cultural encounters. He has published

articles in *Ethnicities*, *Social Indicators Research*, *Educational Theory* and *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* and taught at the University of Queensland and the University of Iceland. He is the founding editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Global Discourse* (www.global-discourse.com) and co-editor of *Studies in Marxism* and has refereed articles for *Ethnicities*.

Lawrence Wilde

Lawrence Wilde is Professor of Political Theory at Nottingham Trent University in England. He is the co-author (with Ian Fraser) of *The Marx Dictionary* (London: Continuum) and sole author of *Erich Fromm and the Quest for Solidarity* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), *Ethical Marxism and its Radical Critics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), *Modern European Socialism* (Aldershot: Dartford, 1994) and *Marx and Contradiction* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1989). He is editor of *Marxism's Ethical Thinkers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) and co-editor (with Mark Cowling) of *Approaches to Marx* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989). His current research focuses on the concept of solidarity and employs a radical humanist perspective, as outlined in 'A Radical Humanist Approach to the Concept of Solidarity' in *Political Studies* 52 (1) 2004 and 'The Ethical Challenge of Touraine's "Living Together"' in the *Journal of Global Ethics* 3 (1), 2007. He is currently working on a book, *Global Solidarity*, for Edinburgh University Press.

Mark Cowling

Dr Mark Cowling is Professor of Criminology and Marxism at Teesside University. He is the convener of the Political Studies Association Marxism Specialist Group, and, as a consequence, has been the editor or joint editor of four edited volumes on aspects of Marxism. He is also the editor of *Studies in Marxism* and the author of *Marxism and Criminological Theory: A Critique and a Toolkit* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008) and *Date Rape and Consent* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

Andrew (Chengyi) Peng

Andrew (Chengyi) Peng obtained his PhD degree in the Department of Public and Social Administration at City University of Hong Kong in 2011 and is currently a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Previously he was the first one to be supported by China's 'Project of Hope' to study abroad and attained his BA and MA degrees in political science at St. Thomas University and University of British Columbia in Canada respectively. His research interests include comparative political philosophy, classical political thought, constitutionalisms and political thoughts in contemporary China. His dissertation *The New 'Romance of Three Kingdoms': The Competition of Three Constitutional Blueprints for Twenty-first Century*

China seeks to crystalize and compare the three constitutional discourses advocated for the future of China.

Terrell Carver

Terrell Carver is Professor of Political Theory at the University of Bristol. He has published extensively on Marx, Engels and Marxism, including theoretical and biographical studies, textual editions and translations. His work has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, German and Farsi. Recently he has given papers and keynote speeches at a number of universities in China, including Tsinghua, Peking, Renmin, Beijing Normal, Fudan and Nanjing.

Oliver Harrison

Oliver obtained his BA Politics from Nottingham Trent University in 2003, his MA in Social and Political Thought at the University of Warwick in 2004 and his PhD in Politics from the University of Nottingham in 2011. His PhD research used Marx's theory of revolutionary subjectivity as a benchmark for assessing the post-Marxist nature of the work of Ernesto Laclau, Antonio Negri and Alain Badiou. Oliver is interested in theories of collective subjectivity, sociological theories of revolution and modern ecological thought. He teaches various modules in Political Theory at Nottingham Trent University, and while aiming to secure a book contract for his PhD thesis, is also developing the future MA in Politics at NTU.

Stuart Sim

Stuart Sim retired as Professor of Critical Theory in the English Dept., University of Sunderland, 2008. He is currently Visiting Professor in the English Dept., Northumbria University. He has published widely on the subject of critical theory, particularly postmodernism and poststructuralism. Among his recent books are *The Carbon Footprint Wars: What Might Happen If We Retreat from Globalization?* (EUP, 2009), *The End of Modernity: What the Financial & Environmental Crisis Is Really Telling Us* (EUP, 2010) and the edited collection *The Lyotard Dictionary* (EUP, 2011). Forthcoming in June is his edited collection *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* (3rd edition).

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii

Contributors viii

Introduction 1

Matthew Johnson

1 What does it mean to be a Marxist? 13

Norman Geras

2 An image in a curved mirror: Pareto's critique
of Marxist science 25

Joseph V. Femia

3 Slavoj Žižek's theory of revolution: a critique 37

Alan Johnson

4 How to not read Žižek 57

Paul Bowman

5 Marxism and development: a search for relevance 75

Ronaldo Munck

6 Progress, anti-isms and revolutionary subjects: the
importance of transcending liberalism 91

Matthew Johnson

7 Marx, morality and the global justice debate 117

Lawrence Wilde

8 Can Marxism make sense of crime? 135

Mark Cowling

- 9 Sinicized Marxist constitutionalism: its emergence,
contents and implications 151
Andrew (Chengyi) Peng
- 10 Varieties of constitutionalism: a response to
'Sinicized Marxist Constitutionalism' by Andrew
(Chengyi) Peng 171
Terrell Carver
- 11 Revolutionary subjectivity in post-Marxist thought:
the case of Laclau and Badiou 183
Oliver Harrison
- 12 'Post' or 'Past'? : does post-Marxism have any future? 199
Stuart Sim
- Index* 213

Introduction

Matthew Johnson

Marx's nineteenth-century thought provided the intellectual inspiration for a range of twentieth-century political movements and academic approaches, each with distinctive features and each, unfortunately, complicated by failings and contradictions. With the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, and the emergence of an economically reformed China, the events of the final years of the twentieth century seemed to have granted credence to Francis Fukuyama's *End of History* thesis. At the same time, the academic left gravitated towards approaches which eschew 'authoritarian', 'essentialist' and 'ethnocentric' elements of orthodox Marxism. As a result, Marxism has seemed to be in danger of slipping from a method and subject of social scientific inquiry, to an object of historical intrigue or even indifference. Yet, given the nature and gravity of the events and issues of this new century, Marxism as both a political movement and an academic approach should be as relevant as ever.

In order to consider its relevance, we have to consider, first, the various ways in which Marxism since the time of Marx has been fractured and splintered and developed and evolved in various directions. There are several trajectories which are considered in this book. The first trajectory is the revisionism of Eduard Bernstein – the father of evolutionary socialism. For Bernstein, Marx's empirical claims regarding the laws of historical development were confounded by the experiences of capitalism. The chances of achieving real socialist ends lay most prominently in the recognition of proletarian demands within the existing liberal democratic framework, with the attainment of rights a core goal of political praxis. The second trajectory is the autocratic vanguardism of Lenin, which, combined with his understanding of imperialism as the highest form of capitalism, laid the foundation for revolutionary action in the developing world. Lenin's Bolshevism served to shift the attention of Marxism from the developed West to impoverished, developing regions of the world. This movement was strengthened by the emergence of Mao Zedong's Sinicized Marxism, with its focus on agrarian relations of production and the revolutionary potential of peasants.

The association between socialism, the developing world and anti-imperialism was firmly entrenched by the thought and praxis of guerrilla figures, such as Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh. From the protest movements of the 1960s onwards, various positions have emerged which have sought to incorporate external intellectual resources in order to revitalize the radical left. Some, such as Slavoj Žižek, have retained their Marxist identities, while rehabilitating Hegel and adopting elements of such figures as the psychoanalyst Jaque Lacan. The third trajectory, post-Marxism, differs both in content and identity. Post-Marxists have drawn intellectual inspiration from Marxism's rejection of capital and retained elements of the thought of self-professed Marxists, such as Antonio Gramsci and Mao, while increasingly moved towards postmodern positions on essentialism, materialism, voluntarism, pluralism and democracy, as exemplified by Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's seminal *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

The revisions made by and within each of these trajectories have been in response to perceived deficits or oversights in classical and, subsequently, orthodox Marxism. These revisions have themselves, though, led to significant paradigmatic quandaries. Whether attempting to conserve, transcend or reject elements of Marx, those influenced by his work have to deal with the legacy of Marxism in light of several contemporary events.

Contemporary conflicts, challenges and developments

The beginning of the twentieth century saw significant confidence in neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus and the possibility of a truly integrated global economy. Some talked readily of the need for global governance as what were intended originally as trading blocs, such as the European Union, expanded and took increasingly political forms. While international economic institutions such as the WTO and IMF focused much of their attention on facilitating liberalization and privatization in developing countries, the most significant economic success stories appeared to emanate from states, such as China and India, which maintained substantive commitments to protectionism and public ownership. Those countries which appeared to have benefited from elements of neoliberal engagement with the global economy, such as Iceland and Ireland, found themselves at the heart of the late-2000s global financial crisis, having previously maintained that the rapid increases in real estate prices, which had brought dramatic growth, were both genuine and sustainable. Now, with those claims seriously undermined, the Washington Consensus has come to appear anything but consensual and neoliberalism as a project has been damaged, though certainly not defeated.

At a time when confidence in neoliberalism was perhaps at its height, the United States suffered the attacks on 11th September 2001. This marked

the most dramatic incident in the campaign of Jihadist groups against Western targets and Western people as well as those in other parts of the world deemed to exist in contradiction to their theology or aims. The resulting campaigns waged by US-led coalitions against regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq marked the most brutal incidents in a decade of conflict in the Islamic world. Even now, with the stiflingly slow development of a broadly democratic system in Iraq and the death of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, these conflicts seem certain to continue, with their wider effects throughout the region and among migrant groups in Western countries unquantifiable. Alongside these conflicts, Western states continue to offer varying degrees of support to Israel, particularly in its confrontations with Hamas and Hezbollah, and have recently become involved militarily in the civil war in Libya.

One extremely significant development, in the context of 'The War on Terror' has been the invocation by liberal states of security imperatives to justify constraints on civil liberties. Autocratic or authoritarian societies, such as China and those currently being attacked or overthrown in the Middle East and North Africa, have often been criticized, by liberals in particular, for these actions on the basis that constraints served simply to ensure the stability and security of the regime against populaces whose interests were regarded as naturally antagonistic. However, the first decade of this century has seen steady encroachments on individual entitlements, among other things, to privacy, freedom of speech and freedom of movement. The actions taken by successive governments throughout the liberal world have, at times, appeared anything but liberal.

Now, with the most significant international proponents of the unconstrained market mired in conflict and debt, it would seem that the opportunity for Marxist contributions to debates regarding the future of the world is significant. However, such responses to the events and processes outlined above have been markedly negative and reactive. That is, the most visible popular opposition to neoliberalism, the finance crisis, the conflicts in the Middle East and encroachments on civil liberties has been encapsulated in a series of 'anti-s': anti-capitalism, anti-globalization, anti-war and anti-imperialism.

This contemporary trend, which some have seen as a continuation of the spirit of revolt from 1968, emerged most clearly in the final year of the previous century. Since 1999, self-professed anti-globalization and anti-capitalist campaigners have led public protests against global capitalism and the organizations and institutions, such as the WTO, IMF and G7, deemed responsible for propagating the expansion of neoliberalism. This has resulted in direct action in, among other places, Seattle, Washington, Genoa, London and Athens. Such protests have garnered significant attention in the media and have served to associate leftist politics with opposition. At the same time, anti-war and anti-imperialist groups have opposed US-led actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, Israeli actions against Hamas and Hezbollah and, now, NATO bombing in Libya.

While there are various reasons to support or oppose these positions (to be clear, the contributors to this volume are likely to adopt a range of different positions on each of these issues), 'Marxism' has found itself almost exclusively associated with or subsumed within movements of opposition and reaction. Although this may afford Marxists a means of involving themselves in broader movements, it also serves to lower the profile of Marxism and hinder the articulation of certain Marxist or even post-Marxist alternatives. It is important that these alternatives, however diffuse and contradictory, be developed and articulated and that the different forms of the Marxist left become defined by what they seek constructively to offer, rather than by what they oppose. Only by engaging openly and fully in ultimately normative questions of the nature, form and desirability of revolutions, the shape and scope of democracy, the actions of opponents of capitalist societies, the content and possibility of distributive justice, the place of civil liberties in socialist societies, the shape of constitutions and the relative weight afforded consequentialism and deontology, and the possibility of legitimate diversity in political form, will leftist approaches be able to escape pragmatic anonymity.

The project of post-Marxism was intended as a response to these questions in order to create a scheme capable of making real political progress, with essentialist understandings of human nature and justifications for authoritarian politics rejected in favour of inclusive, pluralist radical democracy. Yet, while these ideas have gained currency within, and often beyond, the radical left, there remain pressing concerns about the viability of post-Marxism as a project. Does it have the organizational capacity and can it exert the emotive appeal to attract and sustain support for the radical democratic alternatives it proposes?

This book is an attempt to outline the challenges faced by those influenced by Marx and to put forward a range of ways in which the left, in its various, diverse ideological forms, can make real, substantive and positive contributions to contemporary debates and concerns.

Structure of the book

While the contributors to this collection may disagree, in some cases fundamentally, on the nature of, and responses to, contemporary challenges, conflicts and developments (and, perhaps, to the phrasing of this introduction), there exists a recurring theme of reflection: on paths chosen, on strategies adopted and on paradigmatic shifts. This serves, not simply to provide an account of where particular branches of the Marxist left stand in relation to current issues, but to identify lessons from the past which can enable those influenced by Marx to achieve relevance in the future. There are no impenetrable boundaries between sections of the collection precisely because the issues with which the chapters engage are broad and dealt with in different

ways by different paradigms. The chapters within the volume are eclectic, representing the diversity and fragmentation within the field, but build upon one another. They move from definitional work on the meaning of Marxism to critical concern regarding forms of revolutionary praxis and dismissive approaches to developing societies, to substantive engagement with the global justice debate, to consideration of principles and processes of justice and the scope for pluralism within Marxist constitutions, to the nature of revolutionary subjectivity in post-Marxism and, finally, to evaluation of post-Marxism, its effect on Marxism and its potential actively to foster political change, returning to and expanding upon the core concerns of Norman Geras in Chapter 1. If there is a thematic structure to the collection, it is that the early chapters deal with Marxism and its relationship with liberalism, the middle chapters focus on the practical application of Marxism and the influence of local conditions, while the final chapters examine post-Marxism.

Norman Geras has been at the forefront of Marx scholarship for several decades. In recent years he has contributed to public discourse on current affairs through his widely read normblog.typepad.com. Well known for his iconoclasm, Geras sets about examining what it means to be a Marxist, putting forward three core definitions: personal, intellectual and socio-political. Through analysis of these definitions, Geras argues that attempts to circumscribe Marxism by those on the Marxist left should be rejected. Citing apologetic or ambivalent responses to apparently regressive or anti-democratic movements and regimes, he claims that the Marxist left has served to stifle possibilities for diversity, plurality and debate within the left over such issues as international intervention or the participation by Israeli academics in public discourse. Rather, Geras claims that a range of Marxist-influenced approaches can, and should, be developed, in particular, those which seek reconciliation with that other, much maligned, Enlightenment approach – liberalism. In order to rejuvenate itself and to play an important role in socio-political life, Geras believes that the left needs to supplement contextual understanding of the functioning of societies and critical assessment of inequalities with acknowledgement of the comparative successes of democratic societies despite their flaws.

In Chapter 2, Joseph Femia explores the scientific credentials of Marxism. For Femia, those who examine this aspect of Marx (and Marxism) usually adopt one of two contrasting positions. Marx is either depicted as a great scientist, on a par with Copernicus, whose findings are ‘objective truth’ (as in the case of Plekhanov), or he and his followers are derided as scientific imposters, whose elastic terminology allows them to explain away any contrary evidence (as in the case of Popper). In Femia’s opinion, Vilfredo Pareto, the pioneering Italian sociologist, provided a more measured evaluation. To Pareto, Marx made two impressive scientific discoveries: that the struggle between social groups is a key element in social life and that moral and political ideas are historically and culturally variable rather than

universal and timeless. However, according to Pareto, Marxist 'science' had been subverted by the 'essentialism' Marx inherited from Hegel (resulting in metaphysical concepts such as 'surplus value' and the 'dialectic'), and by the intense moralism he inherited from the utopian socialists (accounting for the obvious value preferences that coloured his description of capitalism). Femia, for the most part, endorses Pareto's analysis, but also notes that his attack on Marx's use of abstraction might be considered somewhat unfair, given that Pareto himself insisted – when he was not discussing Marx – that abstraction was essential to the scientific enterprise. The value of Pareto's account, for Femia, lies in his assertion that Marx sought, 'with limited success, to unify two contrary human impulses: the one that drives us to extend our knowledge of the external world and the one that impels us to seek the existential comfort of metaphysical postulates'.

Alan Johnson, in Chapter 3, builds upon Geras' chapter in his examination of Slavoj Žižek's theory of revolution. Žižek has gained attention in recent years as one of the key intellectual figures on the radical left, stimulating interest in Marx and critical theory in general through his melding of Marxian, Hegelian and Lacanian thought. For Johnson, however, this contribution is far from an unalloyed good. Drawing on his personal engagement with Žižek, Johnson highlights a number of troubling trends towards violent, totalitarian and 'psychotic' politics. For Johnson, there is good reason to treat cautiously Žižek's faith in *a priori* Hegelian dialectical models of development and Blanquist forms of praxis which lead him to inflict revolution in order to make reality conform to transhistorical laws. Johnson argues that Žižek's understanding of revolution as a self-less, voluntaristic Badiouan 'Event' is derived from a misconceived application of the Lacanian 'Act'. Johnson draws on the anti-totalitarian resources of Charles Lefort to suggest that Žižek's thought amounts to an all-pervasive and narcissistic desire for abstraction from society, a spiritualized aesthetic of death and a totalitarian communitarianism. Johnson then demonstrates the fundamental dislocation of this approach from the validation of autonomy, self-realization and maturation in Marx's account of revolution before concluding that Žižek's theory of revolution, by repeating a number of twentieth-century tragedies, serves simply to undermine two aims which should be central to the left: the extension of the democratic revolution and the 'complete reconceptualization of the political in the light of the totalitarian experience'.

In affirming and expanding upon Alan Johnson's contribution, Paul Bowman, in Chapter 4, reflects on the objects and nature of Žižek's polemics and their reception in left-leaning circles. Bowman's focus lies on the difficulty of reading and disentangling Žižek's eclectic, erratic and inconsistent works and his tendency to reject critiques, such as those of Johnson, as 'misreadings'. For Bowman, Žižek contradicts his occasional self-professed objectivism by rejecting as inaccurate attempts to present a 'true' position on his work. This may, unintentionally, suggests Bowman, be seen as a virtue, with Žižek demonstrating commitment to provocation and critique,