



MARXIAN SYSTEM AND ITS MYTHOS

Alexey Burov, Fermi Society of Philosophy
Spring 2018



TALK 5: CRITICS OF MARX



“If you took the most ardent revolutionary, vested him in absolute power, within a year he would be worse than the Tsar himself.”

When the people are being beaten with a stick, they are not much happier if it is called "the People's Stick".

Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, 1873

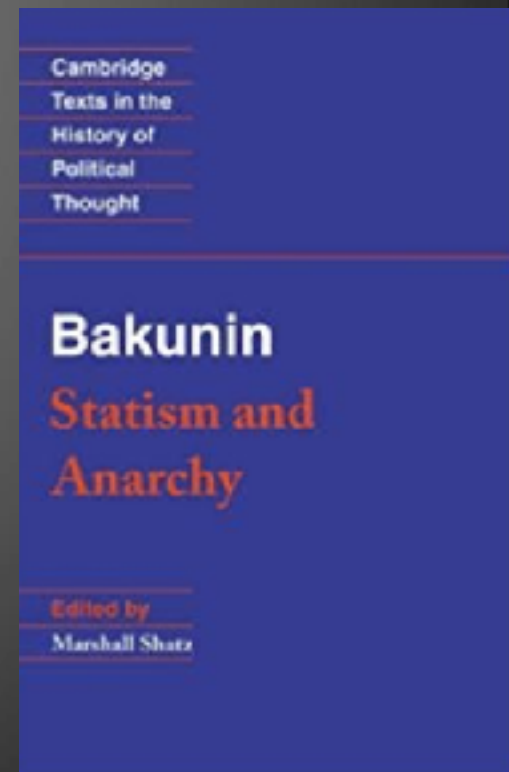
The expressions “learned socialist,” “scientific socialism,” etc., which continuously appear in the speeches and writings of the followers of Lassalle and Marx, prove that the pseudo-People’s State will be nothing but a despotic control of the populace by a new and not at all numerous aristocracy of real and pseudo-scientists. The “uneducated” people will be totally relieved of the cares of administration, and will be treated as a regimented herd. A beautiful liberation, indeed!

Marxists insist that only dictatorship (of course their own) can create freedom for the people. We reply that all dictatorship has no objective other than self-perpetuation, and that slavery is all it can generate and instill in the people who suffer it.

...according to Mr. Marx, the people not only should not abolish the State, but, on the contrary, they must strengthen and enlarge it and turn it over to the full disposition of their benefactors, guardians, and teachers – the leaders of the Communist party, meaning Mr. Marx and his friends – who will then liberate them in their own way. They will concentrate all administrative power in their own strong hands, because the ignorant people are in need of a strong guardianship; and they will create a central state bank, which will also control all the commerce, industry, agriculture, and even science. The mass of the people will be divided into two armies, the agricultural and the industrial, under the direct command of the state engineers, who will constitute the new privileged political-scientific class.



1814-1876



Marx made detailed notes throughout the Bakunin's book,
quoted it several times when it worked for him,
and never responded to its devastating criticism.

“These [Bakunin’s] dire and prescient predictions have been described by Noam Chomsky as “perhaps among the most remarkable within the social sciences”. That Marx made no attempt to publish his own responses suggest that he himself recognised their feeble inadequacy. That he seems never to have been seriously disturbed either by these or by earlier criticisms on the same lines constitutes a further confirmation that he was no more dedicated to increasing the liberties of individuals than to the discovery of social scientific truth.”

“Is there indeed so much as a single passage in the Collected Works in which anything at all is thus recognised as a challenging and worrisome difficulty for that never adequately stated theory?”

KARL MARX WAS NOT A SOCIAL SCIENTIST

ANTONY FLEW



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1923-2010

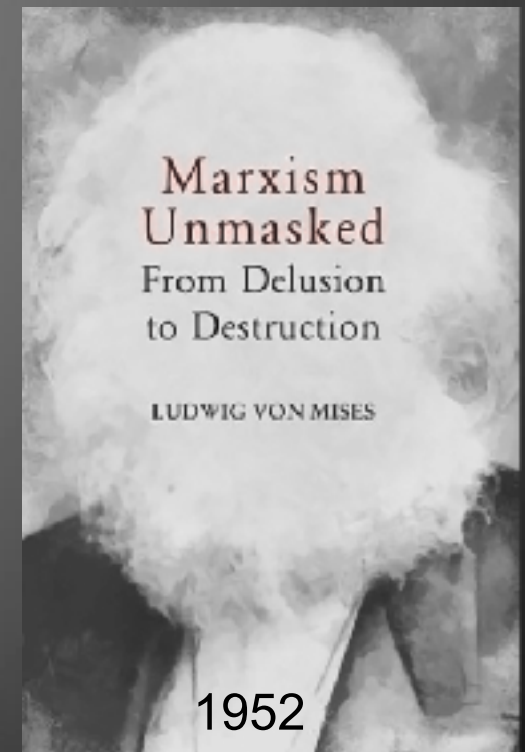
“I took the risk of prognosticating in this way, as I was compelled to substitute for you as correspondent at the Tribune ... It is possible I may be discredited. But in that case it will still be possible to pull through with the help of a bit of dialectics. It goes without saying that I phrased my forecasts in such a way that I would prove to be right also in the opposed case.”

Marx to Engels, 1857

“Communist purges are not something which happen just because men are imperfect. Purges are the necessary consequences of the philosophical foundation of Marxian socialism. If you cannot discuss philosophical differences of opinion in the same way you discuss other problems, you must find another solution—through violence and power. This refers not only to dissent concerning policies, economic problems, sociology, law, and so on. It refers also to problems of the natural sciences. The Webbs, Lord and Lady Passfield, were shocked to learn that Russian magazines and papers dealt even with problems of the natural sciences from the point of view of the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. For instance, if there is a difference of opinion with regard to science or genetics, it must be decided by the “leader.” This is the necessary unavoidable consequence of the fact that, according to Marxist doctrine, you do not consider the possibility of dissent among honest people; either you think as I do, or you are a traitor and must be liquidated.” (*Mises, 1952*)



Ludwig von Mises
1881-1973

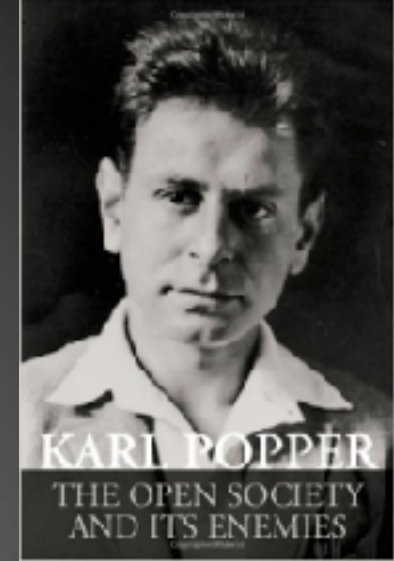


...dialectic is used by Marxists, following the example of Engels' Anti-Dühring, mainly for the purposes of apologetics – to defend the Marxist system against criticism. As a rule critics are denounced for their failure to understand the dialectic, or proletarian science, or for being traitors. Thanks to dialectic the anti-dogmatic attitude has disappeared, and Marxism has established itself as a dogmatism which is elastic enough, by using its dialectic method, to evade any further attack.

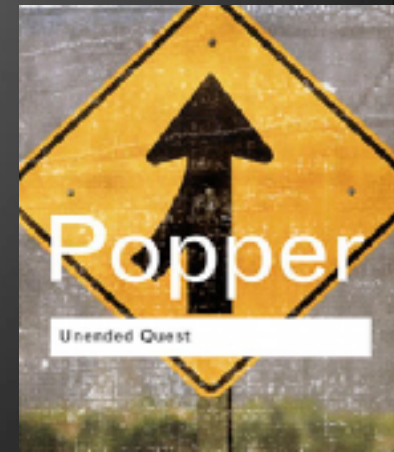
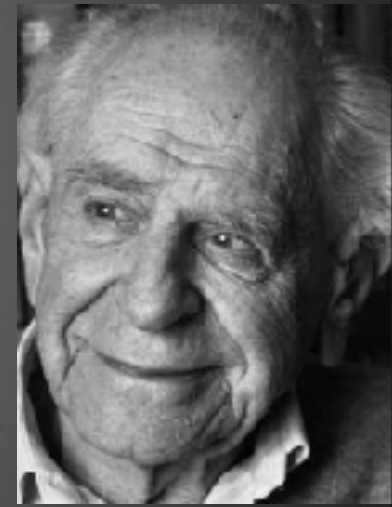
...the attempt to make heaven on earth invariably produces hell. It leads to intolerance.

It took me some years of study before I felt with any confidence that I had grasped the heart of the Marxian argument. It consists of a historical prophecy, combined with an implicit appeal to the following moral law: Help to bring about the inevitable! (UQ)

...the ruling religious belief that the social world we live in is a kind of hell. This religion is spread by the intellectuals, especially by those in the teaching profession and in the news media. There is almost a competition of doom and gloom: the more radically one condemns our Western society, the greater seems to be one's chance to be listened to (and perhaps to play a leading role in it).

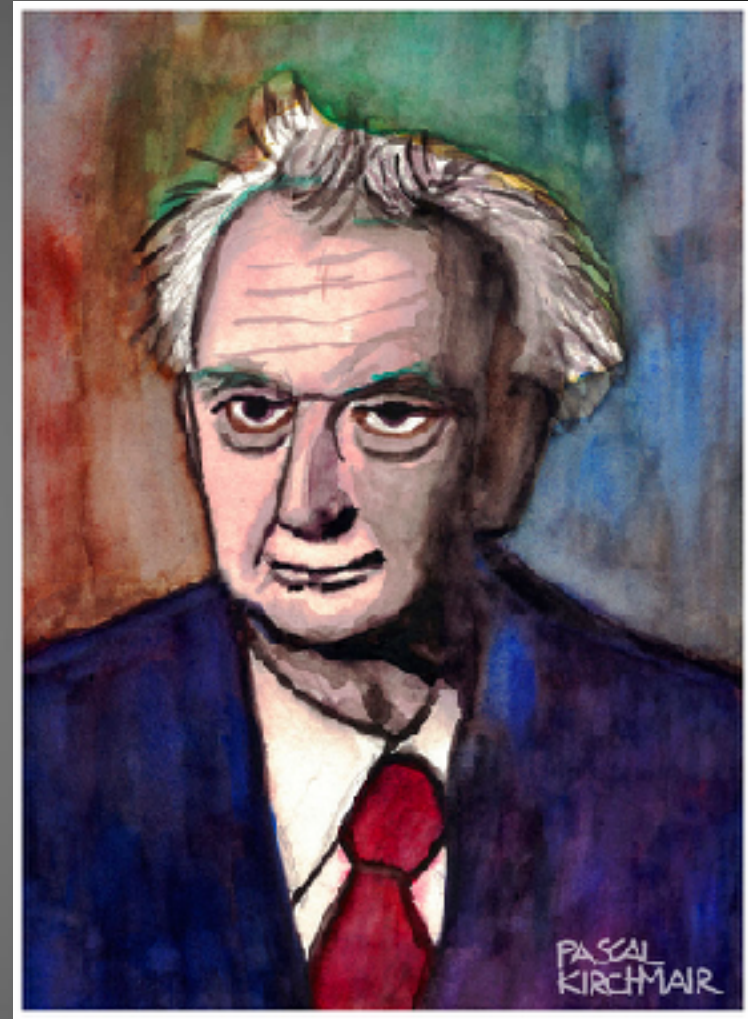


1902-1994



The style of Marx's writings is not that of the investigator...he does not quote examples or adduce facts which run counter to his own theory but only those which clearly support or confirm that which he considers the ultimate truth. The whole approach is one of vindication, not investigation, but it is a vindication of something proclaimed as the perfect truth with the conviction not of the scientist but of the believer.

Karl Jaspers, 'Marx und Freud' (1950).



1883-1969

Irrationality of Marxian Doctrine:

1. Historical Materialism generates the Epimenides paradox;
2. Prophetic self-assurance, taboo on any doubt on Marx' scriptures;
3. Scientific necessity, incompatible with political appeals and agitation;
4. 'Dialectical' insensitivity to any criticism and total ad hominem;
5. Failure of all predictions;
6. Catastrophic practice.

Criticism of the Marxian doctrine by prominent thinkers was devastating.

Its practical consequences were invariably catastrophic.

Intellectual defense of Marxism always was and still is just miserable.

Does it really matter?

POPULARITY OF MARXISM

No thinker in the nineteenth century has had so direct, deliberate and powerful an influence upon mankind as Karl Marx. (I. Berlin, *Karl Marx*, 1939, ...,1978)

The philosophy of today is that of Karl Marx. He is the most powerful personality of our age. Karl Marx and the ideas of Karl Marx—ideas which he did not invent, develop, or improve, but which he combined into a system—are widely accepted today, even by many who emphatically declare that they are anti-communist and anti-Marxist. To a considerable extent, without knowing it, many people are philosophical Marxists, although they use different names for their philosophical ideas. (Mises, 1952)

In the case of the Marxian system, such adverse judgment or even exact disproof, by its very failure to injure fatally, only serves to bring out the power of the structure. (J. Schumpeter, 1942)

Karl Marx has had more impact on actual events, as well minds of men and women, than any other intellectual in modern times. The reason for this is not primarily the attraction of his concepts and methodology, though both have a strong appeal to unrigorous minds, but the fact that his philosophy has been institutionalized in two of the world's largest countries, Russia and China, and their many satellites.

(Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals: From Marx and Tolstoy to Sartre and Chomsky*, 1988)

Part I: The Marxian Doctrine

Chapter 1: MARX THE PROPHET

“It was not by a slip that an analogy from the world of religion was permitted to intrude into the title of this chapter. There is more than analogy. In one important sense, Marxism is a religion. To the believer it presents, first, a system of ultimate ends that embody the meaning of life and are absolute standards by which to judge events and actions; and, secondly, a guide to those ends which implies a plan of salvation and the indication of the evil from which mankind, or a chosen section of mankind, is to be saved. We may specify still further: Marxist socialism also belongs to that subgroup which promises paradise on this side of the grave. I believe that a formulation of these characteristics by an hierologist would give opportunities for classification and comment which might possibly lead much deeper into the sociological essence of Marxism than anything a mere economist can say... Purely scientific achievement, had it even been much more perfect than it was in the case of Marx, would never have won the immortality in the historical sense which is his.

[The religious quality of Marxism also explains a characteristic attitude of the orthodox Marxist toward opponents. To him, as to any believer in a Faith, the opponent is not merely in error but in sin. Dissent is disapproved of not only intellectually but also morally. There cannot be any excuse for it once the Message has been revealed.]”



1883-1950

**Capitalism, Socialism,
and Democracy**

ECONOMIC CLASSIC

JOSEPH A. SCHUMPETER

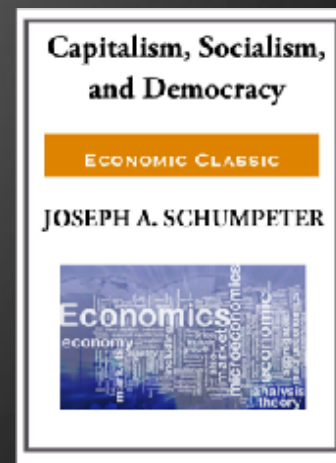


1942, 1946

“Observe how supreme art here succeeds in weaving together those extra-rational cravings which receding religion had left running about like masterless dogs, and the rationalistic and materialistic tendencies of the time, ineluctable for the moment, which would not tolerate any creed that had no scientific or pseudo-scientific connotation. Preaching the goal would have been ineffectual; analyzing a social process would have interested only a few hundred specialists. But preaching in the garb of analysis and analyzing with a view to heartfelt needs, this is what conquered passionate allegiance and gave to the Marxist that supreme boon which consists in the conviction that what one is and stands for can never be defeated but must conquer victoriously in the end.”



1883-1950



To be continued