Karl Marx: New Perspectives

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Thinkers are but the scouts of humanity along the unknown paths of the future. It is true that they break the trail, but mankind never travels by the precise way they have prescribed: it takes upon itself to make the break-through which best suits its multiple designs.
(Constantin Pecqueur 1839, cited in Evans 1951: 1)

Introduction: Marx and Marxism

Of all the major writers widely regarded as the founders of sociology, Karl Marx is unique. He is the only one of the early pioneers whose ideas were selectively codified after his death for political purposes on a wide scale by mass socialist parties. The practice began in Germany when the Social Democratic Party, needing to protect the status of Marx in response to antisocialist laws, adopted a particular, formalised, 'scientific' interpretation of his ideas and linked his work closely to that of Engels. This was

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partly because Engels's own understanding of Marx's thought was readily available to them in the numerous works, prefaces, introductions and editions published by Engels in the 12 years from Marx's death in 1883 to 1895, when Engels died. In that way, as Terrell Carver (2010: 108–109) explains, 'a tradition, framed as philosophical system-building on certain self-styled "materialist" principles was founded'. George Kline (1988: 175) refers to this process as the 'Engelsisation' of Marx. This scientised reading then came to be used in practice as part of an ideology for consolidating state power for Communist Party elites in Russia after 1917 by Lenin and Stalin and further standardised later in the Soviet Union, until its collapse in 1989.

All this is well known. However, one significant consequence of this process was that this reading effectively 'de-Hegelised' Marx's work, something which masked how arcane and visionary it actually was, both in its method and as a secularised, politicised, world-historical vision of universal human freedom manifesting itself (see O'Malley 1977: 22–26; Kilminster 1998: 101–103). In the words of George L. Mosse (1977: 4), 'Marx was riveted to his age'; he was 'a child of Hegelianism and the Enlightenment'. These insights into the nature of Marx's vision came to light much later. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the narrower, scientific model had been embraced as Marxism by the Russian and most other European socialist parties, with the significant exception of the UK (Löwenstein 1980/2010: 187). However, as Maximilien Rubel (1977) has shown, the term 'Marxism' became a political label having been used in radical debates in the 1870s as a stigmatising term by political *adversaries* of the followers of Marx. Engels unfortunately sanctioned the term as the followers' self-description, but it was an epithet that they had not themselves created. With hindsight, this move effectively made Engels 'the godfather of a mythology destined to dominate the twentieth century (Rubel 1977: 45)'.

One important consequence of the organised distillation in an abridged form of what were seen as the essentials of Marx's work and its widespread promotion as embodying scientific truth was that it consolidated the mythical aura surrounding his name which went with that interpretation. As Stedman Jones (2016: 2) has put it: 'Marx was celebrated as communism's epic founder and lawgiver in an increasingly monumental

mythology. He was venerated as the founder of the science of history—"historical materialism"—and together with his friend Engels as the architect of the scientific philosophy to accompany it—"dialectical materialism"'. As Lenin famously announced: 'The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true' (Lenin 1913: 23). The subsequent development of the authoritarian Russian state and arrival of Soviet communism would suggest that Lenin's dictum could plausibly be reversed: the Marxist doctrine was true *because* it was omnipotent. Later, Jean-Paul Sartre even declared that Marxism was the 'untranscendable philosophy of our time' (quoted in Habjan and Whyte 2014: 2) apparently meaning that as a closed system it was complete in itself, so it required no further supplementation or elaboration. Whereas today there is a growing chorus of voices saying that precisely what Marxism crucially needs is to be *truly* transcended (e.g., Leopold 2007; Habjan and Whyte 2014). This could be the beginnings of a collective process of reflection and discovery in relation to Marx which continues for some years to come.

Any attempt to make a contribution to this process of reappraisal has to be cognisant of the nature of the texts that come down to us as the collected writings of Marx, the vast majority of which were uncompleted drafts not published in Marx's lifetime. So, in relation to Marx in particular, there is from the outset a delicate issue of textual interpretation. I am not suggesting that the unpublished material should not be used but that its extent and character in Marx's case impose on the expositor a different kind of moderation than that required when working with texts that have been polished by the author for publication. In relation to Marx's early unpublished writings, Kołakowski (1971: 75) gave a warning that is applicable across the broad sweep of Marx's unfinished manuscripts that is the danger of 'spinning out suppositions based on unfinished and not unequivocal texts'.

As part of the systematisation of Marx's ideas as Marxism the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow published his writings in many translations and disseminated them widely. A surprising fact is that excluding journalism, lectures, pamphlets and works written jointly with Engels, the number of scientific books that Marx published in his lifetime solely in his own name is three: *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), *A Contribution to The Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and *Capital*, *Volume I* (1865).

All the rest of his voluminous works, the ones we know as Marx's *Collected Works* and which are quoted extensively, were drafts or discursive working notes taken from his reading and were unpublished in his lifetime. Also, the way in which translations of Marx's manuscripts were presented by the Institute was in identically bound volumes, a format which blurred the important difference between which of them had been published in Marx's lifetime and which had not. Since the vast majority had not been published, this elision was in any case probably inevitable. Even though the provenance of the texts was usually mentioned in the editorial material, it was done in such a way as to construct the texts retrospectively as a stage in the development of Marxism. This led sometimes to adjusting texts for doctrinal reasons central to official Marxism. For example, as Carver (2010) has shown in relation to *The German Ideology* manuscripts, its brief opening chapter on Feuerbach was purposely constructed by its Russian editors from a selection of pages from the copious unfinished manuscript to solve the problem posed by an enigmatic reference Marx made in 1859 to the manuscripts which he had produced many years before for 'self-clarification'. The intention was to create an impression of consistency over Marx's intellectual development. Carver comments that *The German Ideology* manuscripts were in fact 'editorially constructed' to produce the book that arguably became one of the most influential texts of twentieth-century philosophy (Carver 2010: 116).

Most of these manuscripts (whatever their merits) might not have seen the light of day had Marx's ideas not become codified as Marxism as part of mass political movements and parties. The publication process took place gradually in the years following the Russian Revolution of 1917 and up until the present day. Just to give an idea of the scale of the problem, here is a long list of Marx's works which were unpublished in his lifetime. They include many famous works: *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, *The Paris Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, *Capital, Volumes II and III*, *Theories of Surplus Value*, all three volumes, *Grundrisse* and the *Ethnological Notebooks*. It is worth noting, too, that the original handwritten manuscripts of two pamphlets published under the joint names of Marx and Engels—*The Holy Family* (1845) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)—show that Marx wrote nearly all of the two texts

(Stedman Jones 2016: 187, 242). The extensive nature of Marx's manuscripts, their often unfathomable 'dialectical' language, polemical tone and relentless complexity, make the task of reevaluating Marx challenging to say the least.

The issue of textual interpretation is only one aspect of the reappraisal of the scientific status of Marx. A further aspect discussed later is bringing to notice the distorting effect of the overestimations, formalisations and simplifications of Marx's ideas, which were further amplified and complicated during the explosion of Marxist ideas during the 1960s and 1970s. The broader intention in the chapter is offer new perspectives on the work and person of Marx himself, from the point of view of his place in the development of *sociology* as a discipline. That is my overriding concern: the importance of Marx's undoubtedly significant ideas to the continuing development of a relatively detached sociology *as such*. The present period seems to offer an opportune moment to begin a re-examination of Marx's scientific status as many have become aware. David Leopold (2007: 8) has rightly said that: 'The existence of Soviet communism undoubtedly helped distort our knowledge of [Marx's] work, and its subsequent collapse might provide an unexpected opportunity, not to bury Marx, but better to understand him'. This is also the spirit of my approach, which does not dismiss or otherwise minimise Marx's considerable sociological achievements but focuses on the challenge of establishing his standing as a sociological pioneer in his own right.

To achieve a more detached, balanced perspective on these complications and challenges surrounding Marx's work, I think it is advantageous to take a longer view. This means going back in the next subsection into the sociogenesis of Marx's ideas in a formative, transitional phase in European history—that is, the years immediately leading up to the 1848 revolutions when he first formulated his ideas—long before they were selectively transformed into the ideology of Marxism. Looking anew at Marx's long-term contribution from this point of view inevitably also entails reopening the questions of his originality and the explanatory status of his work as a theoretical synthesis. This will be followed by an analysis of Marx's much-quoted, almost mythical, text, The *Theses on Feuerbach* of 1845, which will hopefully focus the issues

more concretely. The section following that will bring the story up-to-date by looking at the reception of Marx in the UK, with a particular focus on the expansion and institutionalisation of sociology from the 1960s onwards, followed by some concluding remarks. Let us now look back to the 1840s.

The Sociogenesis of Marx's World-View

Marx did not fall from the sky. In order to gain an understanding of the nature of his system and to assess its originality, we need to go back to its genesis to uncover what conceptual resources he had in common with other thinkers of the time and what, if anything, was distinctive about the particular synthesis of those elements which he put together. The pioneers of sociology in the first half of the nineteenth century (including Marx) were all participating in the social reality of the tensions and conflicts of the rapidly emerging industrial society as well as at the same time observing them from different angles and perspectives (see Kilminster 2013b). Unsurprisingly, social observers of all political persuasions (including Marx) in the 1840s inevitably shared a common technical vocabulary, including 'capital', 'labour', 'individualism', 'class antagonisms', 'socialism', 'communism', 'capitalism', 'class struggle', 'bourgeoisie', 'proletariat', 'class interest', 'collectivism', 'industrial society', 'industrial system', 'industrial revolution', 'social science' and 'the state' (Evans 1951: 18–80; Manuel 1965: 310ff).

Some of these concepts had come into currency slightly earlier, but together they formed the working technical vocabulary of social critics, revolutionaries, politicians and the early social scientists of that time. It is not too difficult to see that this common economic and political vocabulary arose from the developing structural features of the dominant relations between social classes of the time, which went back into earlier centuries but which had reached an important turning point in the 1840s in the years leading up to the 1848 revolutions. The people who were living through the social developments which these abstractions articulated and those who were combining them in an effort to understand those developments and their direction all shared a common, interdependent

social life together. Marx was not the only thinker by any means who was aware of this interconnected and increasingly enmeshed social reality.

Furthermore, nor was Marx the only one to have perceived the plight of the multitude of wage labourers in the new factories. Their poverty and the squalor of their living conditions was a cause for widespread concern across the entire political spectrum—liberals, socialists, communists and conservatives. Concern and compassion sometimes went hand in hand with a fear of the revolutionary threat of the proletariat, although obviously less so in communist circles. The German jurist Robert von Mohl caught the anxiety of the time when in 1840 he warned: 'Fifty to sixty years have sufficed to produce millions of factory workers and to corrupt them at the core; a shorter period may be sufficient to have them confront in closed battle formations the other elements of society' (quoted in Mengelberg 1964: 33). Marx was right when he said in *The Communist Manifesto* that the 'powers of old Europe' were being haunted by the 'spectre of communism' because many communists were calling for revolution at this time, which provoked various governments into sending spies into centres of proletarian, communist politics, in Paris, Brussels and other cities.

Marx was an ardent politico from an early age, an observation that is not meant pejoratively. Paradoxically, it was his political passions that enabled him to reach the important insights into class conflict and economic power that are his legacy. The 'vision' that Marx had of the socialist destiny of this emerging industrial capitalist society was a fantasy wish image of human equality and freedom which he had formed *prior* to undertaking his extensive researches into political economy. This intense labour was largely intended to confirm and to help realise the image rather than to correct it in a scientific sense. The vision was derived partly from a Saint-Simonian propaganda centre located in his home town of Trier and from his father who belonged to such a group which was dissolved by the police on suspicion of engaging in subversive activities (Evans 1951: 19). Marx also had a Saint-Simonian teacher Eduard Gans at The University of Berlin. Marx's knowledge of socialist radicalism was deepened through reading socialist writings and by contact with socialists and communists in Paris in the 1840s whilst working on the journal *Rheinische Zeitung*. As Joseph Schumpeter noted, Marx's vision of history was

conceived as an epic of struggles between classes, 'defined as *haves* and *have-nots*, with exploitation of the one by the other, ever increasing wealth among ever fewer *haves* and ever increasing misery and degradation among the *have-nots*, moving with inexorable necessity towards a spectacular explosion (Schumpeter 1949: 354)'.[1] Marx ended Part I of *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 1848: 46) with a flourish, claiming that the fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat 'are equally inevitable'. Marx had an unshakeable conviction of the certitude of the outcome of these contradiction-driven social developments and pursued its realisation relentlessly with an unflagging political intransigence[2] and a contempt for compromise.

Since Marx would not allow himself to take seriously a rapprochement of classes, he had no alternative but relentless opposition at all costs. He interprets the situation as one where there is an irreconcilable class antagonism (or 'contradiction') of bourgeoisie and proletariat. Against the model of the imperative of proletarian rule to solve all social problems, there could be no politics of compromise in the present as an end in itself, only wholly negative, intransigent opposition, which eschewed or minimised working for immediate gains for the organised proletariat. Consider, for example, Marx's concluding comments to an address he made on 20 June 1865 to the General Council of the First International in which he castigates trade unions for limiting themselves to 'a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system' (Marx 1865: 226). I think it is fair to say that the reform/revolution relationship has often been a knotty problem in the Marxian tradition.

The price Marx paid for his compulsive channelling of all of his immense talents into a politics of total opposition at the expense of everything else is that he neglected to develop issues and fields of inquiry which he hinted at in many manuscripts unpublished in his lifetime. In *The German Ideology* manuscripts of 1845, for example, there are many suggestive remarks on what we would call today the sociology of science, which were undeveloped. The fact that this manuscript was left stored in a cupboard during his lifetime indicates where his priorities lay. It was

published much later by the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, first appearing in part in Russian in 1924 and in full in German in 1932 (Beecher and Fomichev 2006: 123, 129). Also, in the unpublished *Grundrisse* manuscripts (Marx 1857), there are passages in which he appears to show an awareness of different dimensions of interdependence other than the purely economic ones but does not take issue any further.

Furthermore, Marx's perception of the relationship between social class, power and knowledge was never developed very far beyond his largely polemical critique of political economy and the dualistic, quasi-metaphysical generalities of his base and superstructure model. He is, however, correctly seen as one of the founders of the sociology of knowledge (Remmling 1967: 23; Stark 1977: 99) but which again which he did not develop very far. Karl Mannheim (1929: 278) rightly said that this field emerged with Marx, 'whose profoundly suggestive *aperçus* went to the heart of the matter'. However, Mannheim pointed out the drawbacks of Marx's self-limiting political viewpoint which held him back from taking these matters further, empirically and theoretically. In Marx, the sociology of knowledge is still indistinguishable from the one-sided unmasking of ideologies, since for him social strata and classes were the bearers of ideologies (ibid.).

By the 1840s people from various walks of life and political persuasions—philosophers, diplomats, lawyers, journalists and including Marx, Auguste Comte, Henri Saint-Simon, Victor Considerant, Constantin Pecqueur and others—began to write about what we would today think of as sociological matters of wider scope than those addressed by most political economists. For example, Pecqueur's work in the 1830s and 1840s (from which Marx drew much) marks a definite advance over the classical political economists with his conception of 'social economy' as embracing not only society but 'humanity at large'. Pecqueur writes in 1842:

> From our point of view economics embraces all the spiritual, as well as material, factors that can guarantee the ends of solidarity, equality and liberty pursued by the human race […] in a word, the sum total of elements constitutive of societies will be an integral part of social and political

> economy, which accordingly is synonymous with social science. (Cited in Evans 1951: 75)

For these writers, questions for investigation were to do with the motor of change and the overall direction of society as a whole. These were the grand questions formerly addressed by philosophers of history, in particular Hegel and Comte. Marx's contemporary, the Hegelian political economist and writer on public administration, Lorenz von Stein, analysed social developments with a form of economic 'materialism' and class analysis comparable with that of Marx, anticipating him by several years.[3] It was Stein who coined the concepts of a 'social movement' and 'class interest'. He explicitly focused on the proletariat as struggling for power in the pursuit of that 'class interest'. As Werner J. Cahnman (1966: 746) remarked: 'Marx's sociology is […] as Steinian as his economics is Ricardian'.

The emerging 'social science' had a common ambition, which Stein summarised: 'It is the great path of development itself that we seek' (quoted by Weiss 1963: 80). This was the Holy Grail for many social and political thinkers and writers at this time (including Marx) who were trying to find patterns and sense in the sweeping and disorienting political and economic changes which had brought about the French and Industrial Revolutions. On the question of what is the driving force of historical change, Marx's answer was essentially the same as that of Stein, that is, conflicts arising from 'class interest', produced by 'class struggle'.

The other question was what is its direction? For Marx, the self-moving social 'contradiction' (a Hegelian term also used in the same sense by Stein until he dropped the idea in later work) or antagonism of capital and labour would more or less inevitably lead to communism through a revolution. The interests of the proletariat and bourgeoisie were fundamentally antagonistic and irreconcilable, inevitably leading to an explosive clash between them—a revolution—which, in the mid-1840s, Marx probably believed was imminent. He talked of the opposition of classes as finally culminating in a 'brutal *contradiction*, the shock of body against body' (Marx 1847: 174, italics in original). After the success of this projected revolution, Marx imagined that as the rising class the proletariat would apparently become the new ruling class, something which Stein

flatly rejected as infeasible on a number of grounds, one of which was simply because they did not possess the appropriate administrative, political and diplomatic skills to enable them to do so. Some years later this realisation spurred Mikhail Bakunin's polemics against what he saw as the hidden elitism in Marx's far-fetched idea in *The Communist Manifesto* that at some point after the proletarian revolution they would be 'raised to a governing class' (cited by Stedman Jones 2016: 526).

For all of this scattered grouping of social and political thinkers, the relationship between workers and capitalists constituted an interlocking of interests, which Stein referred to as 'the reality of the human order' (quoted in Mengelberg 1961: 270), which Saint-Simon called the 'industrial system', and Stein termed the 'industrial society'. These new 'social scientists' (except Marx) were committed in various ways to incremental social change through various modes of class cooperation and negotiation, consonant with the nature of the developing enmeshment of classes, a stance which embraced compromise—something abhorrent to Marx. Another telling illustration is provided by Taylor (2015: 53) who has observed that Marx and Engels regarded Saint-Simon, for example, as a fundamentally 'utopian' thinker simply because of his 'belief in a harmony of interests between capitalists and proletarians'. Furthermore, human existence, Stein insisted, was 'unalterably embedded in *society*' (quoted in Mengelberg 1961: 269; original emphasis), something upon which, as a basic truth, he and Marx probably agreed. They had both sensed the social interdependencies lying beneath overt economic, political and military action. But Stein went that little bit further, providing a glimpse of a more nuanced view of interdependence, noting that: '[T]he various orders of society and its classes are linked together so that they supplement and fulfil one another' (quoted in Marcuse 1968: 380).

However, the key difference between Marx and Stein was that for Stein, revolution was not predestined and might be forestalled. Also, that Marx has misconceived the nature of the state, which he thought would eventually disappear along with the bourgeoisie. For Stein, the class conflicts could be managed through reform, that is, politically, for the benefit of all, avoiding the destructive upheaval of revolution with its uncertain consequences. He had a clear early conception of the possibilities of the state as a welfare state, as it would be called today, which could protect its

citizens. Marx, on the other hand, looked for revolution to overturn the entire system as the only thoroughgoing alternative to resolve the unfairnesses of society, something that was for him inevitable anyway as the 'contradiction' of the class struggle of capitalists and proletarians would resolve itself in the historical dialectic, as such contradictions always had in the past. As Sidney Hook (1973: 277) pointed out, Marx underestimated the possibility of modifying 'by politically democratic means' the unjust and harsh aspects of economic relations in society which brought about suffering for the working class. As I have been arguing, that was because Marx rejected that option *in principle* because it was 'fighting with effects […] but not the causes of those effects'. Trade unions, Marx suggested, 'are applying palliatives, not curing the malady' (Marx 1865: 78).

Unlike Marx, Stein considered the state to be a necessary institution in social life. A stateless society could only result in increased inequality, social conflict and loss of freedom. The state specifically has to guarantee freedom of the individual against the arbitrariness of socio-economic developments. The misuse of state power by a ruling class, which so angered Marx, does not imply, Stein argued, that we should abolish the state altogether, as Marx advocated (see Benthem van den Bergh 1977). As Elias put it, 'Marx simply took over the basic conceptual scheme of the liberal ideology, but infused it with negative values' (Norbert Elias 2009 [1971]: 8). Revolution was also explicitly disavowed as counter-productive by Stein, Pecqueur and Considerant who also rejected Marx's appeal to only *one* class because it would increase class antagonism. Considerant saw the inequities of the nineteenth century 'as a threat to *all* classes' (emphasis added). Democracy must be based not on force but on 'intellectual combat' (quoted by Davidson 1977: 82).

The Theses on Feuerbach Reconsidered

Thus far I have been discussing the general issue of the amnesia that has fallen over the provenance of the Marxian canon, correcting for which affects any reappraisal of his work. I have mentioned the overestimation and mythologisation of Marx, the perils of the overinterpretation of his

often equivocal texts, the suppression of the Hegelian character of his outlook, Marx's failure to develop key insights into the nature of knowledge, and the way in which his political intransigence and dialectical certitude consumed his intellectual effort to the detriment of substantive matters of sociological interest. This section is an attempt to give concrete expression to these themes through the examination of one text by Marx, dating from the formation of his world-view. The *Theses* have been chosen because they are renowned in political history and have a legendary (but unjustified) reputation as an epistemological breakthrough and as the founding document of an entire world outlook that embraced historical truth.

The *Theses on Feuerbach* were published by Engels in 1888 after Marx's death as an Appendix to Engels's book *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. These 11 aphoristic statements had been 'hurriedly scribbled down' as Engels puts it (Engels 1888: 6) by Marx in one of his notebooks in 1845 whilst he was working on *The German Ideology* manuscripts. The title *Theses on Feuerbach* was given to the document by Engels. The publication of these aphorisms was one of the first steps on the long road of the mythologisation of Marx that was to follow, which I alluded to in my Introduction. Engels assigned a particular theoretical importance to this text, as 'the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of a new world outlook'—surely an overstatement, given the sketchy and equivocal nature of the text. This judgement became part of Marxian lore that has been perpetuated for well over 100 years, the main carriers of which have been Social Democratic Parties and Russian and Soviet Communist Parties, which now no longer exist in their previous form. Thesis XI, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it', became one of the most famous and much-quoted sayings of the twentieth century. Bearing in mind that it was written by Marx to himself in a personal notebook, it seems to be simply a private voicing of political impatience with certain Hegelians ('the philosophers') who criticised everything but had no plans or intentions to contemplate radical change to the social order in a communist direction.

Further sophistication has been added to the meaning of the statements of the *Theses* by subsequent philosophical and political interpretations

from inside and outside of Marxism. For example, they have been seen as an 'original and new' departure from 'all previous' philosophical definitions of truth as correspondence of concept and reality couched in the traditional dualisms of materialism and idealism and subject/object (Bloch 1971: 81) or as a project to seek in practical politics the unity of the Kantian philosophical realms of theoretical and practical reason (Rotenstreich 1977: 58–82). Referring to Marx's thesis XI, Levine (1995: 224) says that 'In one of his more famous lines, Marx suggested that philosophy had a single point and that point was to change the world. With that he denied any justification for an independent body of theoretical knowledge […]'. However, it is not justifiable to attribute to thesis XI such a broad and radical epistemological conclusion. If we step back for a moment, it is clear that this remark was an exclamation of political impatience, rhetorically appealing as such, but in fact substantively vacuous.

To repeat, the 'philosophers' Marx referred to were not all philosophers in history, or the leading philosophy professors of his time, but specific Left Hegelian political opponents who were not in their practical politics radical enough for Marx. In these internal reflections Marx did not take up the issue of independent valid knowledge at all, which he certainly would have understood as an issue which philosophers think about. He left this idea untouched and undeveloped because it was irrelevant to what he was concerned about. All his thoughts and efforts were for better or for worse geared to one aim alone—the urgent politics of the proletariat—which took precedence over everything else.

The key point emerging from this discussion is obvious: Marx was not consciously trying to make a contribution to issues within the discourse of philosophical epistemology and ethics. These preoccupations have been projected into the text. The *Theses* are unpublished notes towards a fuller discussion of Feuerbach that Marx planned to include in his unfinished *The German Ideology* manuscripts, a point in fact made by Engels (1888: 6). They are far too ambiguous and cryptic to permit the deduction from them of unequivocal principles or arguments about the relations between knowledge and action. They have been wrongly taken as definitive statements. What we find at work in the *Theses* generally is Marx's intense and focussed political mission, reinforced by the dialectical

certitude of his synoptic vision, deriving from his secularising of the Hegelian dialectic. Thesis XI provides the clue: the *Theses* are in actual fact Hegelised political musings. They are replete with characteristic phrases and concepts from Hegel: for example, 'reality and power', 'prove the truth', 'self-contradictoriness', 'standpoint' and other examples of Hegelian terminology such as *Diesseitigkeit* and *gegenständliche* (further analysis in Kilminster 1979: 15–21).

The key to understanding the *Theses* lies in way in which Marx experimentally and speculatively yokes together in his own mind traditional epistemology with the great ideologies of the nineteenth century—liberalism, socialism and conservativism. Like many other writers, Marx realised that materialism[4] is closely bound up with individualism and linked with bourgeois liberalism and 'civil society' or, in its reflective mode, with types of socialism involving political education, on the lines of Robert Owen, as Engels suggested. This approach was socially divisive because it sought to regulate people's lives instead of allowing them to create their own circumstances (see Rotenstreich 1965: 54–55). Thesis X defines Marx's new anticipatory proposition: 'The standpoint of the old materialism is "civil society"; the standpoint of the new is *human* society, or socialised humanity'. As MacIntyre (1994: 279) put it, in the *Theses* Marx was trying to 'transcend the standpoint of civil society', that is, the individualism of early liberal, industrial society and looking towards a future of collective equality, self-determination and justice.

Marx's starting point in the *Theses* is the primacy of practical activity in human life. He has a secular stress on the mundane productive activity of people as the world-constituting, real site for understanding history as human history, something that had been 'metaphysically disguised' by Hegel, as Marx and Engels put it in *The Holy Family* (1845: 164). It was a finite concrete process that had been presented by Hegel as simultaneously embodying particular determinations of an active, universal, infinite, abstract substance or spirit force. Today, in the twenty-first century the proposal to base social science firmly in the concrete reality of society, including in economic power, is hardly novel, even a truism. But for Marx it was important to maintain this secular, concrete stance politically against conservative and liberal religious opponents who drew on Hegel. They regarded the mundane, real, concrete society as representing a lower,

vulgar form of activity measured against the spiritual reality of the divine level present in all humans, which they, the Hegelians, sincerely believed their own individual consciousness embodied—however preposterous that sounds today.

Once Marx had made the methodological switch in Hegel's historical dialectic to regard social reality as actively constituted *solely* by secular, human activity, which mediated through work the metabolism of man and nature, this suggested that people could actively move to change the world that their active, practical cognition constituted, something urgent in the dire social conditions of the proletariat in the industrial cities of Europe at the time. The religious, spiritual inflection of Hegel had been used to justify a conservative viewpoint which wanted to glorify the status quo—that was the stance of the more conservative Hegelians. The same Hegelian viewpoint with a different emphasis on consciousness informed the radical, liberal politics of swingeing social *critique* associated with Hegelians such as Bruno Bauer. The whole point of Marx's references to materialism and idealism, subjectivity and objectivity in the *Theses*, is that various epistemological positions defined within these polarities carried with them by their very nature, different practical, *political* implications—once Hegel's dialectic had apparently been brought 'down to earth'.[5]

In a word, the *Theses attempt a practical solution to the problem of the justification of political ideals.* He is suggesting that Hegel's objective idealism mystifies the *real* alienation of humans from their secular potential. Marx was very obviously instructed by the way in which Feuerbach had shifted the ground of the post-Hegelian debates of the time towards the problematic issue of the basic assumption of all forms of objective idealism—that is, that socio-natural reality is acknowledged but ultimately conceived as reality in thought. Following Wartenberg's (1986) analysis, for Feuerbach, Hegel's attempt to overcome the contradiction of 'thought' and 'being' is inadequate. The distinction is basic and something that we have to accept and not try to transcend. Idealism is inadequate because in the end it entails 'denying the reality of the real' (p. 20). It does distinguish thought from the real, but the real becomes only the thought of the real. This argument appears to be what Marx found attractive. All he is calling for in the *Theses* is that the 'real', that is concrete socio-economic

relations in the here and now, should be analysed carefully, prior to 'revolutionising' them in the direction of communism, equality and freedom. The continuation of Feuerbach's pragmatic, dualistic strategy for overcoming Hegel can be seen in Marx's explicit appeal to 'social being' and 'consciousness' in his later summary of the economic base and legal and political superstructure model of society (Marx 1859: 20–21). This model effectively signals a return to metaphysics, not its transcendence. As Giorgio Agamben has argued, by attributing to the economic level the status of first principle of everything, Marx 'duplicates the theological conception of God as first cause'. Marx's theory is 'the obverse of metaphysics, not its rout' (quoted in Whyte 2014: 182; see also footnote 4 above).

Few of the interpretations of the *Theses* have drawn attention to the Hegelian logic of Marx's overall argument. It reveals clearly the depth of Marx's indebtedness to Hegel, as he sat at his desk jotting down the reflections that come down to us as the *Theses*. Marx later said explicitly, 'I am a disciple of Hegel […] [but] adopting toward my master a critical attitude' (cited by O'Malley 1977: 30). The theoretical 'standpoints' discussed in the *Theses* are visualised as oppositions (materialism v idealism, individualism vs. socialism, subject/object). Marx's methodological switch in Hegel's dialectic gives rise to a conception of the primacy of secular, sensuous, corporeal practice in real life, hence those standpoints simultaneously coincide with political positions defined along different lines from those of the Hegelians. In technical terms, Marx has reversed the primacy of the infinite over the finite, the general over the particular and the sacred over the profane. Marx's position, the 'new materialism', is the authentication, the 'truth' of the other standpoints, having been reached through the Hegelian procedure of traversing them and raising them to a higher standpoint ('socialised humanity'), whilst none of the overcome positions are 'false' (see Hegel 1812: 580).

This form of argumentation enables Marx, as he sees it, to theorise the real, collective politics of the proletariat in the historical dialectic. This is the theoretical source of his total certitude. His conception of the dialectic is of an inevitable process which he says (paraphrasing Hegel) 'lets nothing impose upon it […] [it] is in its essence critical and revolutionary' (Marx 1873: 20). However, it would be highly misleading to read out

of the *Theses*, in particular thesis II, as some have done, a generalised exhortation to go out and *act* politically in unspecified or untested ways, thus 'proving the truth' in practice. And it is also a grave misunderstanding to find in the *Theses* the idea that acting to change something in the social realm provides the only genuine opportunity of reaching an adequate understanding of its nature. From what is known of Marx's scientific outlook, it is clear that he would have regarded that idea as a form of mystical intuitionism. One may come to believe that either of those two above interpretations is cogent and correct, but my point is that thesis II cannot plausibly be regarded as recommending or justifying either of them.

Nor is there any suggestion in the *Theses* of how to determine the all-important *extent* to which certain relations between 'thought' and 'reality' may remain the same whilst others undergo revolutionising change, or of suggesting which relations are more readily subject to being altered by specified forms of practical activity. Also how does the conception of correspondences between 'thinking' and 'reality' apply to knowledge of non-human nature? Its ontological independence from man is left in obscurity. Giles-Peters (1985) rightly describes Marx's conception of activity in the *Theses* as 'objectless'. In short, a great deal could potentially be determined in theory on a number of practical levels which other kinds of practice would not affect. These issues are not raised because they are not what these jottings are about. Marx is simply thinking his way in a Hegelian fashion towards an anticipatory 'standpoint of socialised humanity'. Feuerbach is essentially a bourgeois individualist and a philosopher who has no intellectual resources to analyse the 'contradictions' in the real secular economic structure of society, which he can only conceptualise as a level of 'being' which determines 'consciousness'. To summarise, the *Theses* are working political notes written in the idiom of epistemology which are not intended to be an explicit contribution towards a sociological theory of knowledge, nor to 'philosophical' issues, as such.

Let us now turn to the reception of Marx generally in the UK and into the canon of sociology in particular, which should help us to ascertain what images and interpretations of Marx have been created inside sociology itself and how far, if at all, they perpetuate the myths surrounding

Marx. This further source of influence on the versions of Marx we encounter needs to be recognised and controlled for as necessary.

Marx and the Institutionalisation of Sociology

In recent years, the latest phase of the British reception of Marx was intertwined with what I have documented and called sociology's Conflict Phase, from about 1965 to 1980s (Kilminster 1998: 155ff). Any reassessment of Marx today has to be cognisant of the legacy of this phase, which has been described as sociology's 'war of the schools' (Bryant 1989: 69, 74–76). During this time rival paradigm groups and schools such as structuralism, Weberianism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism flourished, challenging the structural-functionalist/action theory orthodoxy of Parsons which, although based on European sociological sources, was an analytic synthesis imported from the USA (see Kilminster 1998: chap. 4).

At the same time, British sociologists were absorbing large amounts of 'Continental' philosophy, sociology and Marxism at a fast pace for the first time on a large scale. In addition to the Marxist literature, philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Jaspers, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Nietzsche, Sartre, Adorno and many more became staples of the sociological theory diet. As I said earlier, by the early twentieth century, scientific Marxism had been embraced by most European socialist parties. The UK was an exception, which made the sudden arrival in the 1960s–1970s of erudite Marxist texts from Europe very probably an exciting, but sometimes perhaps confounding, experience for people brought up in the British empiricist philosophical and ameliorist socialist traditions.

Furthermore, until the large expansion of sociology in the 1960s, the discipline of sociology itself had a very limited institutional presence in the UK. As is well known, the dominant social science in the UK was the British social administration tradition, which was a form of Fabian-inspired, policy-orientated, ameliorative inquiry. It was committed to acquiring factual knowledge of social inequality and deprivation to be fed into long-established, receptive political institutions to facilitate reform. The inertia of this tradition should not be underestimated. It was from

European sociology that came the larger questions: what is society? How does it hold together? How can we see through political ideologies? What should be our political commitments, national allegiance and moral choices? These questions—in twentieth-century Europe often asked with an urgency of purpose in a mood of bewilderment and anxiety—arose from continental European experiences of recent social revolution and crisis (Hawthorn 1976: 112) not experienced to anywhere near the same degree here. In the British context these questions, whilst intellectually understandable, were not posed in such a way that sociological categories needed to be developed in order to answer them (see Kilminster and Varcoe 1996: 8–10). Concepts and theories derived from this large variety of new intellectual resources which were pouring into sociology introduced further levels of theoretical complexity and often misunderstanding into the British reception of Marx in the 1960s–1970s.

Different philosophical models of 'man' were attributed to Marx and discussions taken up on questions such as whether there are two types of rationality, positivism and 'dialectics', whether Marxism needs a separate philosophical anthropology and whether the concept of alienation in *The Paris Manuscripts* is a theme that pervades all of his work and issues of theory and practice. Some groups identified themselves with various politically inflected theoretical combinations and fusions, such as Althusserian Marxism, Gramscian Marxism or phenomenological Marxism. Elements of the New Left tended to regard those in the Western Marxist tradition (Lukács, Gramsci, Korsch, Frankfurt School) as the carriers of the authentic, activistic Marxism, shamefully distorted by the deterministic Soviet ideologists. Other scholars focussed on unresolved dilemmas, ambivalences or tensions in Marx's work, sometimes attributed to his profound perception of a dualism at the core of the human condition or his attempts to solve fundamental philosophical dilemmas such rationalism versus empiricism, voluntarism versus determinism or ethical relativism versus objective moral superiority of socialism (see Kilminster 1979: 3–5).

The result was a theoretical cacophony, generated by these intricate and often highly emotional political and philosophical debates about the first principles of the human sciences, which shaded over into a generation's search for new behavioural codes as older ways of life, taboos and

conventions were being fundamentally questioned (Wouters 1986, 1987; Kilminster 1998: 155–162). Again, in outline these developments have been well established. Amidst this tumult the issue of Marx's status as a sociological pioneer in the long-term development of a serious, well-founded, discipline was something rarely raised. It is not too far-fetched to suggest that the prominence in sociology of allegiance to Marxism as a political imperative in this phase meant that to raise the issue of the scientific stature of Marx as a pioneer in the development of an independent, social science was in many sociological circles near inconceivable.

One notable exception was a rarely cited but insightful article by Talcott Parsons (1967) on Marx which did address the subject directly, separated from the political phenomenon of organised Marxism.[6] Otherwise, the question of Marx's scientific stature in his own right—stripped of mythology and political overstatements—was simply not on the sociological agenda. Parsons, whose prestigious institutional base at Harvard was outside the hothouse of European Marxian controversies at this time, was arguably insulated from the largely political appropriations of Marx, both in the USA and in Europe. The layers of interpretation and reinterpretation unwittingly perpetuated some of the myths by adding new levels of theoretical sophistication which obscured the geopolitical function for the communist party and for various dissident groups in Eastern Europe and other political factions elsewhere, which was partly driving the nuanced interpretations of Marx, a reality of which the British sociologists in particular were only just beginning to become aware.

A telling example of British theoretical naiveté at this time surrounds the work of Louis Althusser. Flying in the face of Marx's obvious indebtedness to Hegel's developmental and historical approach, in *For Marx* (Althusser 1969) he deployed a formidable array of convoluted structuralist concepts, ideas from French philosophers of science such as Gaston Bachelard and others, as well as dense and forbidding scholastic argumentation. In a radically *discontinuiste* interpretation producing an entirely synchronic orientation, a genre which Hermínio Martins dubbed as 'caesurism' (Martins 1974: 280), Althusser argued that the early Marx of '*The Paris Manuscripts*' represented an ideological form of 'humanism'. Marx made an 'epistemological break' from humanism around 1845 to found in *Das Kapital* the science of historical materialism, in which Marx

had abandoned the dialectical view of societal change. The point is that the connections between this interpretation and the Communist Party's interest in managing the Soviet empire were not always self-evident to his UK readers. His work was effectively orthodox Marxism in structuralist clothes.

Another reason why Althusser's work satisfied the political requirements of communist parties linked to the Soviet Union was because it ruled out as un-Marxian any reliance on Marx's early, so-called pre-scientific, writings. These were precisely the Hegelianised texts frequently drawn upon by dissidents in Eastern Europe (see e.g., Kołakowski 1971) and by elements of the New Left in Western Europe as a stick with which to beat the official, positivistic version of Marxism. Affirming the early work of Marx had political significance because it appeared to cast doubt upon the authority of the scientised, official Soviet historical and dialectical materialism and exposed its ideological function for the communist elites. Soviet unease about the continued fascination with the early writings of Marx in the Eastern countries of the communist bloc and elsewhere in Europe led as recently as the 1960s to the editors of the collected *Marx-Engels-Werke* 'relegating most of them to an unnumbered *Ergänzungsband*, published outside of the chronological sequence of the other volumes' (Leopold 2007: 5).

In the British context, Althusser's formalisation of a politically inflected version of Marx's base and superstructure model ('repressive' and 'ideological' state apparatuses, economy as 'structure in dominance', etc.) was a version which later came to appear in textbooks as an authentic rendering of Marx's theory. Or, if not making that claim, versions of Althusser's arguments are frequently uncritically used in textbooks to illustrate a 'Marxist' perspective, with no reference made to the orthodox Soviet Marxism underpinning their original elaboration. Althusserians also instigated a barren debate around the theme of 'one Marx or two?' which was based on a forced and suspect dichotomy. It had been generated by Althusser's notion of the 'epistemological break' (Bachelard) in Marx's writings which Althusser employed entirely for external reasons. In the context of the reception of Marx, Althusser's interpretation effectively pre-empted any efforts even to consider as a possibility, subject to empirical investigation, that his works might have a nucleus of enduring insights

which have a place in the developing discipline of sociology. The 'two-Marxes' trope was an obstacle to a fuller understanding of Marx's writings as a whole and was a further impediment to any realistic evaluation of his scientific stature in his own right, divorced from the effects of political misrepresentation. Another obstacle was that Althusser's structuralist leanings laid a false trail away Marx's work as a form of 'humanism' in the broadest sense, which it evidently was. It is telling to note that Marx's favourite maxim was from the writings of the Roman playwright Terence: '*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*' or 'Nothing human is alien to me' (quoted in Wheen 2000: 388).

With hindsight it can be seen clearly that the generational and industrial conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s and the highly polarised, ideological battles of the Cold War were played out in the expanding sociology institutions. At that time, it still appeared to some people that socialism, led by the labour movement, was an imminent prospect. In the meantime, within the institutions of sociology, a humanistic, anti-communist 'critical theory' or 'emancipatory' paradigm was developed to attack what was widely seen as the main obstacle: bourgeois ideology. This tension-filled and conflictual situation generated the pervasive and politicised polarisation of two different types of social science: politically committed Marxism *versus* 'value-free' sociology (Kilminster 1979, 1998: 158–162; Kilminster and Varcoe 1996: 8–9) partly reflecting an important level of the conflicts and antagonisms of the time that is between the sociology establishment and younger 'critical' Marxian outsiders.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has been a ground clearing exercise, designed to contribute to a reappraisal of the scientific status of Marx as a sociological pioneer. I sought to establish in a preliminary way the need for a new view of Marx's contribution to sociology, as such, correcting for the overestimations of his stature that have accrued from the codification of his ideas for political purposes in mass parties and social movements in the twentieth century. The distorting effect of these overestimations, formalisations and simplifications of Marx's ideas penetrated even into the translations

themselves, to which further attention needs to be paid. The misrepresentations were further amplified and complicated during the explosion of Marxist ideas during the 1960s and 1970s and their absorption into the expanding institutions of sociology, something that has tended to perpetuate them as 'critical theory' or 'critical' sociology.

Looking back to the origins of Marx's ideas in the 1840s, it is clear that he had a great deal more in common with his social science contemporaries than received views of Marx have suggested. Marx drew on the standard socialist and communist propaganda of the time and the available political economy. Virtually all of his analyses of the nature of capitalism and the demands of communists in the *Communist Manifesto*, for example, are to be found in Victor Considerant, Henri Saint-Simon, Lorenz von Stein and Constantin Pecqueur, often in close paraphrase. They had analysed in depth various tendencies of *laissez-faire* capitalism set out in the *Manifesto* which appear to have originated solely from Marx: the growth of monopolies, the concentration of wealth, big business, exploitation of the proletariat, class antagonism, overproduction, imperialism, progressive contamination of society by capitalism, world markets and social developments as arising 'independent of people's wills'. Marx is frequently quoted as having said in a letter to Weydemeyer in 1852 that long before him bourgeois historians and economists had already set out the rudiments of the class struggle and the nature of capitalist expansion. What he did that was new, he claimed, was to show that the class struggle 'necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat' as a transition to 'the abolition of all classes and to a classless society' (Marx 1852). Marx comes over here as proud of his achievement in this respect. These sincere words are clear evidence of just how far Marx was burdened with the teleological aspects of the Hegelian system that he was struggling to overcome, which were carried through into Marx's dialectical image of history as a series of socio-economic formations mediated by the *telos* of communism as the end of the 'prehistory' of humankind. Developing *content* (forces of production) determine changes of *form* (relations of production), which parallels Hegel's categoreal unity of content and form (Kilminster 1998: 49).

Whilst Marx did make a significant beginning to the understanding of social classes, the impulse behind the whole edifice of his work is the

world-historical dialectic of Hegel expressed in the socio-economic terms which Hegel's philosophy disguised, according to Marx. Hegel's colossal synthesis provides an invaluable introduction to processual, 'totality' thinking, a movement away from individualism, rigid dualism and abstraction, rooting morality in concrete social relations, a historical approach to the succession of philosophies and much more (see Kilminster 1998: 35–40). My view is, however, that the pioneers of social science realised that the explanatory problems they found in philosophy were potentially better solved if they made a *break* with it. This realisation is very obvious in the works of Auguste Comte, for example, implicit in Marx's politicised work and later explicit in Durkheim, Mannheim and Elias. From the point of view of a post-philosophical, post-metaphysical sociology from which I am arguing (Kilminster 1998: 14–15, 2007: chap. 2) once the more arcane elements in Marx are removed from the reckoning as hangovers, in the context of the nineteenth century, Marx's dynamic model of the class struggle of bourgeoisie and proletariat begins to look less distinctive. Furthermore, if the other premodern metaphysical elements in Marx such as social being (base)/consciousness (superstructure), appearance/reality, dialectical method, teleology and social 'contradictions' are also shed from Marx's synthesis as unserviceable from that sociological point of view, then what is left?

From a *political* point of view, Marx's uncompromising stance was overtaken by social developments he did not foresee but which Lorenz von Stein and others did. As the nineteenth century proceeded into the twentieth, the process which Elias calls 'functional democratization', that is, 'the narrowing of power differentials and the development towards less uneven distribution of power chances' (Elias 2012 [1978]: 64), was far reaching. It had the effect of pulling the rug out from under Marx's class-war mode of revolutionary politics in the developed countries, which was predicated on the deepening polarisation of the main classes towards a final explosion. The relative social levelling process corresponded to the greater *integration* of interdependent strata and institutions within the emerging industrial society (see Loyal 2013: 588ff).

From a *sociological* point of view, Marx's theory of power recognised only one basic dimension, albeit an important one—economic power arising from the relations of production—an insight reached from the

overwhelming experience of an early stage of the development of the factory system and the conflicts between factory owners (bourgeois) and workers (proletarians) viewed in class terms. He realised that economic power was relational, structured and directional, an important and useable insight, once divested of its teleology. Inevitably, other dimensions of power were never systematically considered, since their full significance only emerged as the result of later social developments long after Marx's death. These dimensions include, as relatively independent sources of power, the monopolisation of the means of force, of orientation and of information, bureaucratic and professional power and the shifting balance of power between men and women and global power networks (Loyal 2013: 596). Also, Marx's theory of ideology showed that social classes and belief systems were closely related, and he interpreted political economy within this framework. He is rightly regarded as having thus played a major part in founding the sociology of knowledge, although apart from some underdeveloped asides about the natural sciences, he did not take the field beyond the unmasking of class ideologies, significant though that was (see also footnote 6 above on Marx's lack of a sociological psychology).

The reception of Marx in the 1960s and 1970s in the course of the expansion of the universities confirms that the high level of social and psychological tensions of the time was not ideal for the fostering of a more realistic and balanced picture of Marx's scientific status as a pioneer among others in a developing discipline, which realistically corrected for overstatements, one-sidedness and blind spots in his thinking. The stark polarity of two types of social science—Marxism versus sociology—was widespread in sociological culture for some years and still persists today in a less strident form. In its various forms it is probably the most prevalent, although by no means the most cogent, perspective in the discipline. It is therefore not surprising that there is a conspicuous absence in the culture of institutional sociology of a balanced conception of Marx himself as a pioneer of a relatively detached sociology, separate from Marxism. The version of Marx which has survived in academic sociology today appears to be an adaptation of the politicised intellectual persona derived from versions of Marxism, which tacitly valorises a value-committed, 'critical' sociology as the leading and *only* morally legitimate approach. It

is erroneously presented as the fusion of social science and politics or theory and practice and contrasted with the mainstream, so-called value-free sociology, a viewpoint which fails to distinguish between what Elias calls 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' evaluations in sociology which takes us beyond the whole problematic of committed versus value-free sociology (further discussion in Kilminster 2004).

In its new garb traditional Marxism is, in a sense, alive and well but pared down to the bare essentials of 'critique'. It now appears minus the proletariat as the liberating agent, minus the authority of the Party and minus the conception of the 'scientifically' proven, law-like necessity of socialism. What is left is a diffuse identification with the underprivileged more generally. From that point of view, a new perspective on Marx is unnecessary and even inconceivable. The codeword 'critical' refers to this generalised political commitment. Together with the image of Marx, it functions for sociologists as a talisman, conveying certain moral and political leanings. It satisfies the writer's conscience as well as signalling to others a broad commitment or allegiance. They will, in turn, recognise that the author is 'one of us', a partially real and partially imagined community of like-minded people who occupy the moral high ground. Even though its advocates are embedded in sociological or similar institutions, they apparently see themselves as at the same time possessing a separate, independent radical identity. The 'critical' tendency constitutes a further obstacle to developing a balanced relatively detached understanding of Marx's scientific status because of the power of its 'We-identity', which becomes life defining. The critical outlook is too closely linked to the innermost meaning of the critics' lives to be given up easily or even suspended.

The 'critical' approach looks forward to a radical, fundamental change in society, in the name of which contemporary society is relentlessly criticised and found wanting in virtually every aspect. The problem is that a self-consciously 'critical' sociology runs the risk of a destructive outcome which I have called 'overcritique' (see Kilminster 2013a, 2017). Another downside is that this moral and political inflection inevitably perpetuates the misleading and divisive either/or opposition of Marxism versus sociology. And just as inevitably it goes hand in hand with the fallacious devaluation of the more distanced tradition in sociology as producing

pseudo-'value-free', positivistic, amoral inquiries that are complicit in 'domination', as it is often expressed. From this viewpoint, the very idea of sociology as a science is an anathema, so adherents of this perspective propound instead a kind of liberal, socio-political 'critical' commentary as the peak of all sociological ambition.

In research practice, this 'critical' allegiance shows itself in sociological work on behalf of various groups and factions, which is much to the fore today in feminist research and theorising, disability studies and much of the work in gender, sexuality studies and postcolonialism, to mention only a few areas. There is also the 'critical realism' strand associated with the philosopher Roy Bhaskar (2008) and others which developed partly as the antidote to social constructionism. The message of this tendency appears to be that Marx was a critical realist *avant la lettre*. It implicitly endorses a 'scientific' version of Marxism as the only valid model for social science in a post-positivist world, something which, in the light my overall argument in this chapter, is a retrograde step. These developments add a further obstacle to those that I have uncovered which have to be overcome before a more balanced picture of Marx's status can emerge.

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Notes

1. The vision of the historical struggle between the 'haves' and the' have-nots' is to be found in at least Henri Saint-Simon, Constantin Pecqueur, Charles Fourier and Victor Considerant, all of whom have been credited with having influenced Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, where the vision is most trenchantly enunciated (see Beecher 2001; Evans 1951; Schumpeter 1949). Davidson (1977) contends that in the *Communist Manifesto*, particularly part I, the paraphrasing and other derivation from Considerant's *Manifeste de la démocratie pacifique* of 1843, reissued in 1847, are so extensive as to amount to plagiarism.

2. Marx's intransigence and uncompromising stance have their roots in the habitus of the German intelligentsia, isolated as they were from both aristocratic life and public politics, unlike the French reformers who were within the ethos of the court society. The excluded Marx had no counter-concept to the court society in Germany but simply a comprehensive rejection of it. Contemptuous both of social reform and of courtly 'civilisation', Marx had little alternative but to identify totally with the lower classes. The uncompromising attitude was also linked to the warrior nobility which remained more dominant in Germany than in France. Warriors see social relations in terms of friend/foe or us/them (see Kilminster 2014: 105–107).
3. There is some controversy surrounding how far Marx was influenced by Stein's work directly in the 1840s or perhaps by a review of one of Stein's books by Moses Hess in the *Rheinische Zeitung* (see Mengelberg 1961: 267–8, 1964: 25–32; Strasser 1976: 235; Singelmann and Singelmann 1986: 447–8); Rutgers 1994: 400, 410; Beecher 2001: 132).
4. In a comprehensive linguistic analysis of Marx's theoretical writings, Kline (1988) warns that we should construe Marx's use of the words 'materialism' and 'material' with care. (A similar caveat about the imprecision of the term 'materialism' in Feuerbach has been made by Wartenberg (1986: 22)). Kline shows how in texts of Marx produced under the auspices of the Soviet Union a number of words of widely different meanings have been rendered as '*materiell*', giving a false impression of Marx as an ontological materialist. Kline also makes the important point that because of his central focus on *production*, Marx himself contributed to the conceptual confusion surrounding this term by sometimes using it to mean 'economic'. He was apparently oblivious to the fact that, as Kline says, 'there is nothing peculiarly material […] about economic activities and institutions' (ibid: 168). For a further discussion of the sociological character of Marx's so-called materialism, see Schmidt (1971).
5. In fact, Hegel did not have to be brought down to earth, as Marx put it (Marx 1873: 20). As a philosophical monist Hegel was, as it were, already there. He had a clear grasp of real social and economic conditions, as did Marx's *bête noire*, Bruno Bauer. Marx's Feuerbachian appeal to a material 'substratum', 'sensuousness' or economic relations, which Hegel allegedly neglected or neutralised was a misconceived, politicised objection. Hegel's system of objective idealism was elaborated with the express intention of understanding the world as without a substratum. Hence to introduce one in the form of forces and relations of production determining all

other levels, misses the point. Space does not permit me to pursue this contentious issue further here (see Kilminster 1979: Part I and passim; 1982; and 1998: chaps. 2 and 3).

6. Parsons also perceptively noted the lack of a developed sociological psychology in Marx and in Marxism: 'Marxian theory was […] psychologically naïve […] it has been particularly concerned to avoid involvement with this type of theory' (Talcott Parsons 1967: 133–134). This hiatus may possibly be part of the legacy of the classical Utilitarian belief that individuals must be the judges of their own utility which will manifest itself in their behaviour, a principle that may have been taken forward by Marx from political economy. It would partly explain why Marx was not interested in people's personalities, emotions or feeling states and the issue of how these would be shaped and affected by social conflicts and other social phenomena. The work of the neo-Marxist social philosopher Zygmunt Bauman exemplifies the same lack of sustained interest in a sociological psychology or any kind of psycho-dynamic or psychoanalytic approaches. (see Kilminster 2017: 204–208).

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