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Our Mandate
This journal represents an attempt to explore issues, ideas, and problems that lie at the intersection between the academic disciplines of social science and the body of thought and political practice that has constituted Marxism over the last 150 years. New Proposals is a journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry that is dedicated to the radical transformation of the contemporary world order. We see our role as providing a platform for research, commentary, and debate of the highest scholarly quality that contributes to the struggle to create a more just and humane world, in which the systematic and continuous exploitation, oppression, and fratricidal struggles that characterize the contemporary sociopolitical order no longer exist.

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Cover: Camas on míqan (Beacon Hill), Victoria BC, April 28, 2021 (Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace | date of death of Thomas Berger)

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Misinformation, Ideology and Capitalism

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ABSTRACT: The general orthodox explanation for misinformation in American politics stalls because it fails to fully appreciate history and ideology. Instead, because American modernity is characterized by contradictions between its basic social forms this creates a bind for rulers. These contradictions mean that their rule is never stable, while acknowledging the contradictions risks courting advocacy that they be addressed which also threatens their minority rule. Due to the imperative to reconcile or mystify these contradictions, social problems are treated as anomalies or otherwise externalized; they can never be features of the capitalist political economy. Misinformation is a common by-product of this externalization as the capitalist ruling class uses it to weld together pacts and alliances that preserve the social hierarchy. To illustrate this argument, I draw upon examples from Reconstruction and Red Scares to argue that the same basic phenomenon is occurring in Russia-gate.

KEYWORDS: Race; Class; Fake News; Disinformation; Modernity; Minority Rule.

I

The general orthodox explanation for misinformation in American politics stalls because it fails to fully appreciate history and ideology. The prime example is 'Russia-gate' a state-sponsored event where Russian 'active measures' sought to interfere in the 2016 United States elections through seeking to limit Hillary Clinton's campaign, boost Donald Trump's campaign, and otherwise enflame existing social discord in that country. Although an incredibly small exercise with no meaningful impact on the election (Sides, Vavreck, and Tesler 2018; Howard *et al*. 2018), it subsequently became a prolonged media event with several looping effects that reveal many of the deep cleavages in American society. While considerable attention is given to online protocols to safeguard against misinformation (e.g. Claesson 2019), as the foundations for these cleavages do not lie in the event itself it is doubtful whether these protocols will be successful, even on their own terms.

My goal in this essay is to argue that misinformation practices are products of modernity. By this I mean that as American modernity is characterized by contradictions between its basic social forms, misinformation arises due to the imperative to reconcile or mystify these contradictions; social threats are externalized because acknowledging the contradictions risks courting advocacy that they be addressed. By forms, I have in mind some of the entities Marx refers to, like the money form, the commodity form, and so on. In developing this point, my aim is tangential to weighing in on the actual, presumed, and symbolic threat presented by authoritarian regimes in the international system as they use digital tools to pursue their agendas. Neither am I interested in assessing the technological efficacy or foreign policy utility of 'active measures.' Nor, might I add, the lapses in media ethics as American cable news organizations happily partook in perpetuating unevi-

denced plots involving 'active measures,' with those spreading falsehoods achieving professional success (see Taibbi, 2019). I will leave those critiques to others more steeped in the specifics of those debates.

Instead, I will develop three interrelated points. First, that orthodox attempts to explain misinformation do not engage with technology as a historical social formation. Second, that Russia-gate is not a discrete event. Rather it is but one of the more recent incarnations of processes in American capitalist modernity that stems from how social power is mediated through various social forms, including communication. Third, that misinformation hardly presents a conceptual crisis in the social sciences. Adequate concepts do exist but given the character of American society wherein the reification of technology produces opacity about the social relations to which it is set (see Timcke 2021), these concepts are often 'at a distance' when it comes to typical accounts of misinformation.

To begin, I will outline the broad argumentation offered by securocrats, reactionaries, and technologists on Russia-gate. Here I look at the proof put forward, the ethical reasoning invoked, and the emotive appeals employed. I will also look at why these explanations fall short. Thereafter I give attention to the some of the contradictions in American modernity. To illustrate this, I will turn to selected, but notable, processes in American history. Given my disciplinary inclination as a social theorist and not as a historian – plus the need for brevity – I fully admit that my approach in the coming sections is selective and episodic. In defence, my purpose is not to undertake an extensive reading of American modernity. Others do a better job than I on that front. And so, I recommend consulting those sources.

II

Although they have somewhat abated following the release of the Mueller Report and Trump's Impeachment Hearings in March 2019 and February 2020 respectively, American national security analysts' popular writings on Russia-gate are replete with astonishment, dire emotive warnings about authoritarians upending democratic life (e.g. Wittes and Hennessey 2017; Rosenberger 2019; Boot and Bergmann 2019).[1] Here misinformation is a tactic in the theatre of information warfare, itself set within geopolitical contests (see Theohary 2018, Maréchal 2017).[2] Even *The New York Times* wades into this territory in their "Operation InfeKtion" documentary series (Ellick and Westbrook 2018). In this genre, elected representatives tend to be framed as woefully technologically illiterate thus lessening the effectiveness of their oversight abilities. Conversely, the US national security establishment is depicted as morally and factually correct on long-standing Russian aggression. An associated trope is reliance upon nameless intelligence professionals whose judgement is impeccable, above reproach and who serve a higher purpose on the frontlines of a global information war to preserve democracy, even covertly extracting a highly placed Russian informant (Barnes, Goldman and Sanger 2019). Hereunto theirs has been a rearguard defence; although now, the aesthetics in the genre suggest, these security forces must be permitted to actively intervene to prevent an intrusion of unwanted foreigners into American domestic politics.

Similarly, on enough occasions to become a broad pattern, there is an insinuation that Trump's erratic political behaviour stems from him being a Russian intelligence asset, beholden to debts accrued over forty years of real estate financing and money laundering (e.g. Chait 2018). In the same vein, members of Trump's base are framed as 'deplorable' partly due to their bigotry and partly due to their continued support of Trump despite his geopolitical concessions to Russia which are said to jeopardize American economic and political predominance the world over. Herein misinformation is understood as a weapon of the weak deployed against the United States by its geopolitical adversaries. From the orthodox standpoint, the traction of misinformation is explained as certain Americans lacking patriotism, resilience and as otherwise being psychologically predisposed to manipulation.[3]

1 By Russia I mean to signal the state as opposed to the country in general or its citizens in general.

2 From Catherine Theohary's perspective, synonyms for "information warfare include active measures, hybrid warfare, and gray zone warfare," while "the types of information used in [Information Operations] include propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation" (2018, i).

3 For a critical genealogy of the roots of this anxiety, see Jeffrey Whyte (2018) on the emergence of the American security institutions' concern with psychological warfare through news and information, and the vulnerability of United States citizens to these practices in the lead up to World War II.

From another vantage, Trump and his base construe that the leadership of American intelligence agencies repeatedly sought to undermine his administration, even before it took office.[4] Among other happenings, this meta-narrative has been mythologized in two events. The first supposedly begun in June 2016 by intelligence agencies seeking to marginalize the Trump Campaign by suggesting it was a beneficiary of Russian state assistance and cyber sabotage. Apparently Obama pushed this agenda, forcing Paul Ryan, Nancy Pelosi, Mitch McConnell, and Harry Reid to write a public letter in September to Todd Valentine wherein they wrote that "the states face the challenge of malefactors that are seeking to use cyber attacks to disrupt the administration of our elections" (Ryan *et al*. 2016, 1).

Similar statements came from the Obama Administration in October and December of that same year (see Sanger and Savage 2016; Obama 2016). The second is the January 6th, 2017 meeting between Trump and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, FBI Director James Comey, CIA Director John Brennan, and NSA Director Admiral Mike Rogers, where they briefed Trump on the Steele Dossier and Russian 'active measures' (see Perez *et al*. 2017). Here, the subsequent firing of James Comey, as but one example, is read as Trump asserting his formal legitimacy that derives from electoral victory over Clinton, a candidate perceived to be preferred by those 'inside-the-beltway.'[5]

For Trump, Russia-gate is a clarifying divisive issue, an encumbered narrative with villains who hinder democratic will. His demonization of Democrats, government officials and the press was undertaken to galvanize his base, these being white socially conservative working-class people, underscoring that he is the only person who can address the perceived deficiencies in American life. As he conducts his politics on platforms, his base revels in how institutional struggles, once behind closed doors, play out in public. In addition to a theatrical component, to his constituents this performance gives credence to Trump's otherwise dubious remarks that "There has never been, ever before, an administration that's been so open and transparent" (see Jacobson 2019). For them, misinformation arises from elite corporate media and holdover Obama government appointees like Preet Bharara and Sally Yates who seek to thwart their due democratic will.

Lastly, another set of inter-related concerns involve how it is not in the business interests of platform companies like Facebook to curb the spread of misinformation. Doing so would acknowledge that they view themselves as responsible for third-party content and thereby alter their status under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, a subcomponent of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This means platforms would lose immunity from liability from the effects of the content third-party users post. This is primarily why Mark Zuckerberg argues that "Facebook shouldn't be the arbiter of truth of everything that people say online" (quoted in Halon 2020). But platforms do already have rules for truth on a variety of content. So their inaction is a form of action.

As a result, platform companies are publicly raked over the coals (see House Financial Services Committee 2019). Ritualistically, like it has for a decade now, Facebook offers apologies for privacy violations (Yglesias 2018) and donates funds to the elected representatives charged with oversight (OpenSecrets 2020). In the meantime, the company steadfastly refuses to ban microtargeted untruthful political advertising (Ortutay and Anderson 2020), proposing instead a system of fact-checkers. But even setting aside thorny first order normative questions about moral facts, truthfulness, and democratic theory, the fact-checking partners have limited resources. Besides which, under corporate policy, claims by politicians and political parties are exempt from this evaluation. Facebook defends this position by invoking commitment to core American values, like "free expression" and a "respect for the

4 See Ethan Zuckerman (2019) on the role played by the "Unreal, an approach to politics that forsakes interpretation of a common set of facts in favor of creating closed universes of mutually reinforcing facts and interpretations" as it provides "a meta narrative that knits together contemporary politics and hoary racist tropes with centuries of history behind them" to generate support for the Trump Administration.

5 In just over a year, all four officials were replaced. Clapper and Brennan retired on January 20th, 2017, the same day as Trump's inauguration. To public alarm Comey was fired by Trump within a month, on May 9th, 2017, and Rogers retired in May 2018.

democratic process," even while legislators remain unconvinced.[6]

To my mind, a more compelling explanation for the struggle over partisan political descriptions (like misinformation) can come from generally appreciating how these descriptions are licensed by capitalist ideology. Many of the participants debating misinformation and its associated constellation of concepts miss this. Accordingly, in the remaining sections, I offer an alternative account of misinformation that draws upon Marxian notions of ideology.

III

Thomas Piketty is correct to note that, absent external discipline, r>g is capital's natural tendency and mode of operation. But where Piketty's more general explanation about the operation of capital falls short is in his attempt to account for changes in the comprehension of subjective experience as it relates to the tacit acceptance for the reproduction of that mode of operation. By contrast, *Capital* is a good starting point for a theory of ideology. In the opening pages, Marx proposes that understanding capitalism requires moving beyond the "immense accumulation of commodities" (1976, 125). With brevity in mind, a commodity has both a use-value and exchange value, but the fetishism of the latter and the neglect of the former demonstrates how the market comes to structure conceptualizations of society, which in turn factors into how social relations are legitimated and naturalized. Instead, the market, as an appearance is the manifestation of production, the "hidden abode" (Marx 1976, 279) as it were. As an example, supposedly workers are nominally free to sell their labour power, but as a commodity, labour power "becomes a mere form, which is alien to the content of the transaction itself, and merely mystifies it" (Marx 1976, 729-730).

Labour is not the only 'mere form.' There are many appearances in capitalism. They arise because of the wider contradictions between the basic forms in capitalist society. Consider how the United States economy requires extensive cross-sector cooperation but as the means of production are privately held, it creates a suboptimal economic configuration, the parts of which frequently work at cross purposes from one another. Moreover, despite this extensive cooperation between many people, the benefits of production are returned to a few people in the form of private profit. Additionally, commodity fetishism comes to shape the parameters of these social relations. Fetishism has two consequences. The first "makes the actual relation invisible," while the second establishes the parameters by which "all the notions of justice [are] held by both worker and capitalist" (Marx 1976, 680), i.e. that notwithstanding cooperation in the production process, it is deemed fair that profits exist and go to but a few people.

Effectively, Marx's analysis surrounding commodity fetishism is less about the manipulation of persons to act against their interests, and more an illustration about the character of subjective experience when social life is only understood through the lens of exchange value which guide material reproduction. In short, ideology is a factor in the formation of the subject as well as how subjects come to comprehend experience. From these insights, in the late 20th century there were several projects to expand upon how communication and culture was related to subjective experience. Stuart Hall's (1988) articulation is one of the most notable efforts to establish the boundaries and capabilities communication has for reinforcing or altering existing social relations, in addition to reinforcing or altering how societies and persons come to understand the meaning of these social relations. He has another point worth relaying, which is that race and class relations are not autonomous from one another, and that indeed what is treated as robust concepts are but the ossified by-products of weak distinctions (Hall *et al*. 2019). As such, Hall concludes that subjects are always in the process of forming. Accordingly, it is vital that we look at subjects in the totality of the social process and its history, with media environment aiding in that ongoing formation.

With this background in mind, I now want to turn to the issues involving ideology and politics within capitalist societies. To begin, in formal American

6 While it is not a mainstream view, in part because their views are verboten on cable news, democratic socialists are wary of the state, party and market. They judge Russia-gate to be a face-saving exercise pushed by Democratic Party operatives in light of Clinton's defeat by Trump, an electoral race these operatives believed they would win with ease. Moreover, given the debacle around the pretext of using weapons of mass destruction to invade Iraq in 2003, to give a recent example, democratic socialists do not automatically give credence to US intelligence agencies say so (see Marcetic 2019).

electoral politics, the two parties are both committed to a program which prioritizes the protection of capitalist interests.[7] Still, Noam Chomsky describes the Republican Party as a candidate for the "the most dangerous organization in human history" (Goodman and Chomsky 2016, 1) while Kevin Phillips (1990, np) understands "the Democrats as history's second-most enthusiastic capitalist party." Chomsky means that Republicans' unrestrained enthusiasm for capital accumulation enables war-capitalism and petro-capitalism that has and will kill millions of people in the 21st century alone. Philips means that Democrats collude with this imperative, raising narrow questions to temper revolts from the working class when that imperative is questioned. Due to this loyalty to capital, W. E. B. Du Bois was adamant that "there is but one evil party with two names" (1956).

The shared agenda between the Republican and Democratic parties should not come as a surprise. For example, in the Gilded Age, Grover Cleveland had close connections to big financiers (see Welch 1988) while Democratic presidential nominees in the 1920s – James Cox, John Davis and Alfred Smith – followed the same pattern. Smith even opposed Roosevelt's New Deal (anon 1936).[8] These joint ventures arise because under capitalism, government becomes an apparatus for capitalists to protect their ability to continue exploiting labour and appropriating the surplus value of labour as profit. This involves "the creation of 'order.'" The imperative of this order is to mediate the legalization, perpetuation, and moderation of class conflict, while adopting a rhetoric in which it is the mechanism for the alleviation and reconciliation of class conflict (see Lenin 1999, np).

Due to this project, loyal parties of capital are limited by how much they can provide sustained and permanent relief to the social issues that arise from subordination in a stratified class system. Given systemic silence, they must instead contrive divisive political issues to motivate their voters. Ignoring the role of capitalism, these contrivances paper over and distract from the fact that both parties are generally prohibited from doing anything substantive about the main forms of oppression, the stratified economic system, the forms that enable it, and the resultant maldistribution.

Put simply, US political parties must distract citizens from the primary causes of oppression and alienation. Subsequently matters that are apolitical, even technical, become venues for politics, proxy sites for contest between the parties, like the various culture wars that have been waged in the neoliberal era (see Hartman 2019). While the intensity of these proxy wars may wax and wane, polarization is nevertheless a key component in the differentiation required for electoral success. As a result of differentiation, certain practices and beliefs become coded as either the province of the Democratic or Republican Party, even if this signification ostensibly has little to nothing to do with those parties' politics or platforms.

As this template applies to Russia-gate, irrespective of the degree and kind of Russian espionage, from the beginning Trump framed the issue as a last-ditch effort by Democratic-aligned elites to delegitimise his presidential victory and thereby hinder his legislative agenda. It does not matter that in practice, the Democratic Party has for the most part endorsed his agenda. What matters is the appearance of conflict. Through uncritically parroting this narrative, right-wing media benefits by continuing to position themselves as counter-elite programming, which relies on contrarianism to sell advertising to conservative audiences. Accordingly, this information fits with those audience members' beliefs. Explaining how these beliefs have been made requires turning to selected issues in American modernity in the next few sections.

7 Given the need for brevity, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the degree to which state managers implement programs rationalized through the interplay of structured relations or whether they have a ruling class consciousness. While the causal mechanisms may be different, either way the material outcome remains the same.

8 This is not to say that there are no appreciable differences. For example, in line with the ethos of Normalcy, Gene Smiley and Richard Keehn note that Democrats agreed in principle with the 1921 tax cuts for top income brackets. By broad agreement, this was nominally justified to incentivise capitalists to "shift their investments from tax-exempt government bonds to productive private enterprises," as well as tackle "tax avoidance by higher-income taxpayers" (Smiley and Keehn 1995, 302). Within the press, the 1924 cuts had support from traditional democratic bastions like *The Chicago Daily Tribune*. Accordingly, one may be inclined to "view Democrats and Radicals as adopting Mellon's agenda and just quibbling over the details," Anne Alstott and Ben Novick write. But the summative view does not take account of the political maneuvering in the era. Indeed, Radical Republicans and Progressive Democrats sought a more redistributive line, especially over a service compensation for war veterans. And so Alstott and Novick are correct to conclude that "the politics of 1924 reflected a fierce ideological contest over income redistribution by the federal government" (2006, 377).

IV

Poor whites have been active and passive participants in their own oppression. It is not surprising that "one of the finest historians ever developed in the United States," Du Bois provides the preeminent analysis of that subject, tracing the alliances that consolidated during the 19th century, a set of implicit bargains the consequences of which still reverberate in the early 21st century (Robinson 2000, 185). Initially, "the opportunity for real and new democracy was broad" for the masses of European migrants fleeing European autocratic states before and after the Revolution (Du Bois 2013, 14). In America, these migrants found power loosely associated with landholding, while the needs of an economic form generated an adaptable workforce able to acquire wealth and the ability to change station more easily than in Europe, Du Bois noted. This subjective experience was only possible because of the spatial fix whereby indigenous genocide and colonial dispossession on the frontier created 'free land' that underwrote the suspension of capital's contradictions for the first century of the 'American experiment in self-government.' This meant that White workers "were not willing to … regard itself as a permanent labouring class" (Du Bois 2013, 14). This was the material foundation upon which White workers began to affiliate with the class interests and practices of capital.

Over several decades these subjective ideals increasingly clashed with free Black urbanization which among other things reduced wages for Whites, thus threating social mobility. Fighting over scraps, race riots were a common occurrence throughout Northern cities between the 1820s and 1840s, with new White migrants blaming Black labour for the prevailing misery. In the decade prior to the Civil War, notable labour organizations, like the Congress for Trade Unions tended to "ignore the Negro" and explicitly emphasized race over class, thus leading to skilled labour establishing closed shops that had racial boundaries (Du Bois 2013, 19). "They wanted a chance to become capitalists," Du Bois writes, "and they found that chance threatened by the competition of a working class whose status at the bottom of the economic structure seemed permanent and inescapable" (Du Bois 2013, 15).

The Southern experience was slightly different. Du Bois argues that Southern Planters were driven primarily by desires to consume, to keep themselves in the habits resembling the *ancien regime*, with little interest in productive innovation, leaving that to Northern Industrialists. "The planter wanted results without effort. He wanted large income without corresponding investment," is how he describes the circumstances (2013, 32). There is another factor. In the corresponding struggles with Northern industrial finance and its attempts to create a national competitive economy, because Southern Planters held their capital as the enslaved, they aggressively resisted any and all economic changes that threatened to devalue their wealth and holdings. At the same time, through items like the Three-Fifths compromise, the enslaved were one means to inflate Southern congressional representation to somewhat match Northern representation. Yet this balance of power was weakening. With the rise of industrialism, bonded labour was being replaced by contract labour. Indeed, Steven Hahn summarises how Southern Planters well understood that "amid a deepening crisis of colonial and monarchical regimes, the bonds of servility were steadily weakened, while the contours of political authority were refashioned" (1990, 75). When the Confederacy was formed, only Cuba, Brazil and Puerto Rico maintained systems of slavery in the Western Hemisphere.

Concurrently, Du Bois relays how in 1860 five million Southern Whites held no slaves. Certainly two million did, but ownership was largely concentrated among 8000 slave owners (Du Bois 2013, 22). Existing class tensions between Southern Whites deteriorated further during the Civil War as the Confederacy conscripted poor Whites using the Second Conscription Act of 1862, while that same act provided an exemption for slaveholders who owned more than 20 slaves. With the Union permitting a $300 commutation fee, there is a degree of truth to the adage that the conflict was 'a rich man's war, a poor man's fight' (see Martin 2003). Still, while some of these Whites were "united in interest with slave owners," the "mass of poor whites," Du Bois explains "were economic outcasts" (2013, 28).

In the lead up to the Civil War, as a way for planters to shore up support for their otherwise tenuous position, they sought to justify racial hierarchy through the church, school system, and periodicals. "In order to maintain its income without sacrifice or exertion,

the South fell back on to a doctrine of racial difference," and these beliefs were "primarily because of economic motives and the inter-connected political urge necessary to support slave industry" (Du Bois 2013, 34). Through affective, motivational, and cognitive elements, the project of whiteness cashed out in giving poor Whites higher status offsetting their low economic wage. This civic ascription served as a recruiting device for a cross-class political alliance between rich and poor Whites, while also positioning them as antagonistic against Blacks (also see Roediger 1999).

During Reconstruction, Civil War planters were institutionally marginalised as the Union oversaw the formation of new state governments. As one means of their power was curtailed, planters also feared the rise of cross racial labour unity which could oppose their interests. To stall this type of consolidation, planters sought to intensify racial prejudice. It did not matter if there was Black political representation in Washington, in state legislatures or even new constitutions. What mattered was relationships on the plantation, on the farm, and in town. Planters used divisive tactics to stoke racial resentment in the wake of abolition, this to try to preserve their place in the economic order and fragment any nascent class solidarity. In effect, class solidarity was replaced by racial solidarity. Poor Whites took up this invitation and became important enforcers of the pact. John Calhoun understood this very well, saying that "With us the two great divisions of society are not the rich and poor, but white and black; and all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals" (quote by Robin 2018, 54). The result is that the Reconstruction Era seeds an American racial order predicated upon an alliance between poor white workers and capitalists, one that grew into the current order.

It is imperative to appreciate the power dynamics in the construction of this racist pact. Southern capitalists had resources to mobilize and strategically deployed their wealth to divide the working class. Born before the Civil War and to planters, Ben Tillman's political career in South Carolina exemplifies the decades-long project to form a cross-class consistency united by white supremacy, a project that involved terrorism and massacres of Blacks by Red Shirts throughout Reconstruction (see Kantrowitz 2000).

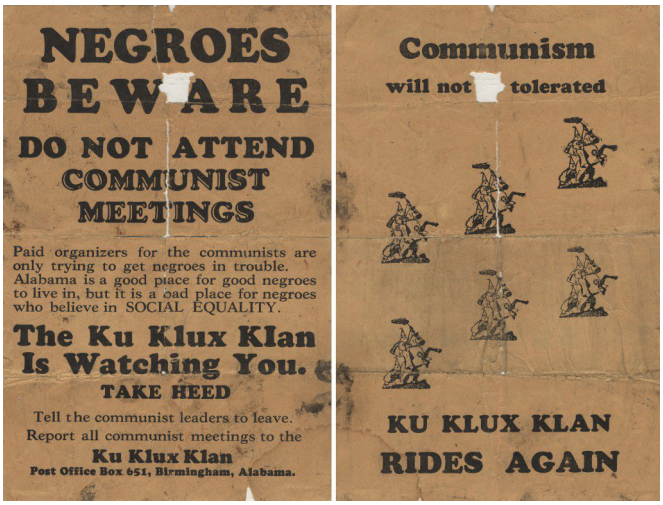

Figure 1. Anti-communist flyer issued by the Ku Klux Klan in Birmingham, Alabama, time period, 1930-1939. Alabama Department of Archives and History. Q2583, Q2584

As Elaine Frantz Parsons notes

> White Southerners still had immense advantages over their black neighbours: they owned the vast majority of land and other capital; as a group they were considerably more literate and numerate; they had experience controlling and working within institutional structures such as local government, the military, and other voluntary organizations; and they had important allies. (Frantz Parsons 2015, 1)

Considerable effort and propaganda by Redeemers went into undercutting poor workers from forming a political movement. Notwithstanding their more secure positions, "white southerners shared a widespread fear that their former slaves would rapidly overtake them" (Frantz Parsons 2015, 1). By contrast, despite good efforts, due to poverty, their place in the social order, and having been recently enslaved, Blacks had fewer resources to counter the planters' project. This project was helped, in the broader context, by tensions with the Republican party. Conservative Republicans balked at the Radicals' aim to remake the South as well as pursue a Great Reconstruction that included the West. Liberal Republicans, on the other hand, had a more limited agenda which prioritized restoring the Union over making sure freed people could practice their rights. It also did not help that "many Radicals and most Republicans were racist," Richard White

writes. "It would have been astonishing had they not been" (2017, 61).

Greatly influenced by C. L. R. James and Du Bois, Noel Ignatiev wrote that "the ideology of white chauvinism" is "aimed primarily at the white workers, utilized as a weapon by the ruling class to subjugate black and white workers," holding back "the struggle of the American working class" (Ignatin and Allen 1976, 28). Du Bois (2013, 626) speaks to this point when he wrote that "race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers." Likewise, he adds that "there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest" (Du Bois 2013, 626). And so strategically Ignatiev is programmatically correct to note that "the fight against white supremacy becomes the central immediate task of the entire working class" (Ignatin and Allen 1976, 28).

The results of this campaign are enduring: During Reconstruction each "additional black official increased per capita county tax revenue," thereby improving land tenancy and Black literacy, but these effects were halted "once black politicians were removed from office at Reconstruction's end" (Logan 2020, 1). Moreover there is a correlation between Black innovation, measured as patents and targeted community violence, measured as lynchings (Cook 2014); the doubling of racial residential segregation between 1880 and 1940 (Logan and Parman 2017) which itself is associated with lower Black property ownership and more targeted violence against Blacks (Cook, Logan and Parman 2018). These are enduring, categorical inequalities. In short, the intensification of prejudice made cross-racial working class organizing more difficult, if nigh impossible. But it also ensured that poor Whites perpetuated their general conditions of exploitation, oppression, and domination through the acceptance of racial othering.

V

These episodes from Reconstruction are emblematic of what Corey Robin calls "the emancipation of the lower orders" (2018, xi). For Robin, conservatism is "a meditation on – and theoretical rendition of – the felt experience of having power, seeing it threatened, and trying to win it back" (Robin 2018, 4). Herein contemporary rhetorical tenets like refrains for limited government and the like are by-products of an "animating purpose" that "has favored liberty for the higher orders and constraint for the lower orders" (Robin 2018, 16, 8). For example, in Robin's reading, Burke's objection to the French Revolution has less to do with its gratuitous violence and more to do with the overhaul of established deference and command. Indeed, conservatism claims that unequal relationships need to be preserved, as they are necessary for the advancement of civilization. Thus, a politics that even tangentially threatens these hierarchies is said to be a threat to civilization itself, a signal of grand decline. While conservatism may have intellectual elements, the primary desire is to keep the relationship between the subordinated and the superior intact. So, a good portion of these intellectual elements are post-hoc justification for pre-determined ends.

During modernity, conservatives came to understand that preserving minority rule in mass industrial society required fostering alliances with segments of the masses. As Du Bois conveys, this occurred in the racial bargain struck in the American South. Selected subordinated groups could be co-opted through borrowing from the left's repertoire of contention, asserting agency, duty, redress, and rights as it suited their purpose. But also, they could be petitioned through an array of rhetorics of perversity, of futility, and of jeopardy, while identifying scapegoats that have caused immanent loss (see Hirschman 1991). Here reactionaries insist that they, and only they, are the political force that can restore any number of things lost, whether that be dignity, standing or safety. This is very much evident in rhetoric used during the 20th Century Red Scares and against the Civil Rights Movement.

To comprehend the politics informing the Red Scares, it is important to note how during the 20th Century capitalism became synonymous with 'The American Way of Life' in the popular social imaginary; by extension this support became a prerequisite of patriotism and civic mindedness in general. It also cloaked an economic system predicated upon the exploitation of wage labour. In combined operation with the naturalization of a private property regime

for the means of production, social inequality was intensified. To account for the evident structural failures, American ideology made the virtues or vice of the individual person the primary explanation for social success or failure. As such, this conflation meant that in one way or another all the primary values in American Life came to justify and enable exploitation.

By contrast, socialism was coded as a foreign threat to The American Way of Life. Therefore, American citizens who advocated for socialism were deemed treasonous, like in the First and Second Red Scares. Indeed, anything that threated relentless exploitation – or sought to upend hereunto naturalised orders and hierarchies – was labelled as socialist even if it ostensibly had little to do with that political philosophy. As such, the Red Scares are not moments of irrationality in the history of American political life. Rather, they were purposeful attempts by conservatives to marginalize advocates for redistributive politics by associating them with Soviet espionage for instance (see Storrs 2013). Accordingly, as Marxism provides an alternative explanation for the development of American social life, just simply by its presence alone it is deemed a threat. Marxism is therefore not something to be debated, but something to be defeated. Again: If socialism is a threat, then capitalism must be protected.

In graphing capitalist social relations onto American cultural values, and marginalising other kinds of sociological accounts, American capitalist ideology sought to reinforce that national identity trumped class solidarity. As it manifested on the shop floor, the ideological message to workers was that foreign socialists were the problem, not those that exploited them. Like in Reconstruction, this project sought to stall a cross-racial working-class solidarity while also obscuring class interests through inducing affiliation between workers and their oppressors. In effect, cultural projects became useful protections of the exercise of power in the public space, so that these could later protect power in the private realm.

Conservatism has two expressions according to Robin. First, as a ploy to gain power, reactionaries indict the existing rulers for permitting egalitarian groups to form and organize, gain public traction and claim rights. Second, reactionaries are very willing to repurpose the motifs of revolutionary politics, as well as mobilise the associated grievances to push for power. For example, in 1968 and 1972 Republicans expanded their constituents by emphasizing national themes and downplaying commercial interests. There were popularist rhetorical attacks on inflation and big government, civil rights and the Liberal establishment. Through embracing outside politics and an anti-elite façade, it used these issues to intensify exploitation and the concentration of wealth, in doing so ending the radicalism and unrest from the 1960s and kicking off the neoliberal era.

Like in the Gilded Age, Roaring Twenties, and Reagan-Bush years before, these techniques were on display in Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. He famously indicted Republican Party leaders during the 2016 Republican primary, arguing that these elites had bargained away standing and privileges. He also mobilised rhetorical attacks on neoliberalism, pointing to democratic and republican elites' positions on trade deals, foreign wars, economic inequality. "On a variety of issues," Kelley summarises,

> Trump appeared to 'take a page from Bernie Sanders' playbook' as he vowed to increase [the] minimum wage; suggested the wealthy might pay higher taxes than he had originally proposed, and attacked Hillary Clinton 'from the left' on national security and Wall Street." (Kelley 2018, 49)

During his term in office, Trump's Administration hardly followed through on any of these projects; this should not be surprising because the point was to use grievances to attain power. This is what, in Robin's view, makes Trump the "most successful practitioner of the mass politics of privilege in contemporary America" (Robin 2018, xi). Trump's skill has been to harness an affective charge by mobilizing slights then connecting them to a reactionary agenda. In that way Trump is a conventional figure in the conservative tradition. His racism, his authoritarianism, his inconsistencies, his behaviours are quintessentially counter-revolutionary.

As this applies to the contests over power and Russia-gate, Trump's supporters believe that they are defending the American Way of Life, a system that in practice is actively oppressing them. They are poor and miserable, because at a general level, poverty and misery are the inevitable outcomes of relentless accu-

mulation. And so capitalists and their political agents must redirect criticism away from fundamental social relations and otherwise obfuscate the harm capitalism causes. They do so by providing scapegoats for misery because it can never be the inherent fault of capitalism. Tactically, it repeats the dynamics in Reconstruction and the Red Scares. It can only be these scapegoats who are hindering the extension of market relations and the rigid hierarchies required to reproduce these relations. Yet by not being able to mention any of these dynamics, the loyal parties of capital turn to polarizing issues as strategy – because of this, the comprehension of public issues are partial, based upon appearances, and are not tamed by good faith effort discursive engagement. As a result, misinformation is rampant in capitalist societies like the US. It is the status quo.

VI

Let me bring my argument into focus. Due to the various contradictions between the basic forms in capitalist society, ideology shapes the parameters of social relations and identity. The larger point of the episodes I have described – Reconstruction, the Red Scares, and revanches – is to illustrate the role of ideology in the formation of subjective identity and the comprehension of subjective experience. Each episode involves a politics of misinformation whereby class solidarity is fragmented by obfuscating the first causes of harm in a capitalist society. While the capitalist polity tends towards frequent revolutions in the means of production, it has a reactionary character insofar that it seeks to preserve the hierarchy of bosses over workers. But whereas these groups do not share strategic interests or goals, misinformation is deployed by rulers and their agents to form the requisite alliances needed to preserve this basic inequality. Misinformation, then, is certainly promoted by communication technology, as it is in commodities, politics and other forms. Therefore to put it as plainly as I can: Misinformation is not an engineering problem, it is a social problem.

Be that as it may, I endorse Robin's argument that reactionary politics seeks to define a new era in a political system through decisive action just as the current settlement is crumbling. This involves the application of various forms of violence – physical, slow, and symbolic – to restrain emancipatory politics and counter specific social movements located in specific places and time with specific agendas. Misinformation then is a slow, symbolic, and methodical set of maneuvers used to legitimate subordination to the market, it conveys the naturalism of capitalist social relations. Accordingly, anxieties about American citizens susceptibility to Russia 'active measure,' arises because these same citizens have been conditioned by misinformation for several centuries.

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Who Best Fills the Gap in Marxism Where the Individual Should Be: Althusser, Garaudy or Sève?

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ABSTRACT: Jean-Paul Sartre pointed to the 'gap' in Marxism where a theory of the individual should be. Three attempts to fill it vied in the context of an intense ideological debate within the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) which still resonates today. On the one hand, Louis Althusser's denial of individual agency as traditionally understood, structuralist theory which proved difficult to apprehend, let alone apply, in a capitalist world. On the other, Roger Garaudy's Marxist humanist explanation of personality, most likely unsatisfactory for many Marxists on account of its spiritualistic leanings. Finally, Lucien Sève's approach: very preliminary, often awkwardly formulated, and diluted over time, but a real alternative to structural Marxism and perhaps, in its final diluted form, not incompatible with a humanist approach after all. If the debate could be settled in his favour, the detailed practical work of applying the theory to psychology and other social sciences should take over with some urgency from here.

KEYWORDS: Lucien Sève, Louis Althusser, Roger Garaudy, Personality, Biography, Individual, Marxism

Something Missing in Marxism

It was Jean-Paul Sartre who pointed to what he argued was the 'gap' in Marxism where a theory of the individual should be. As he famously wrote in *Search for a Method*, "So long as Marxism fails to do it, others will attempt the coup in its place" (Sartre 1963, 82). This mattered, for two reasons. Firstly, Marxists have historically distrusted psychology (Sève 1978, 11), which has led them to being historically unable, or at least unwilling, to engage in debate over the comparative importance of individual and collective factors in human development. This despite the fact that the mediation between the general movement of society in history and the lives of individuals is at least arguably the core of the problem of social science (Burkitt 1991, 114). The theoretical terrain of individuality has been for the most part thereby abandoned to a psychology which even in its 'social' form, superficially more attractive to Marxists than alternatives, is largely oblivious of class (Aronson *et al*. 2019), let alone alienation, and comfortable with capitalism, which is no doubt keen to appropriate it.

Second, and as if not more importantly, Sartre's key point was that without an adequate theory of the individual – even at its core – Marxism would in practice slide into an inhuman anthropology ripe for the abuse of individuals. His own preferred solution was however an adaption of existentialism, not one about which Marxists might be expected to be especially enthusiastic.

Both of Sartre's reasons stand ultimately on political ground: the absence of a theory, even a proper recognition, of individuality and its consequences has indeed been held to be at least partially responsible for a variety of evils and failures attributable to Marxism. These included the attitude towards violence and the embrace of autocracy, tracing a line from an absence of theory through the dictatorship of the proletariat

to Stalinism and Maoism in particular. That threat to Marxism may long have disappeared, but the inability to come to terms with personal motivations that escaped purely economic analysis remains problematic: most notably human emotions, and the significance of interpersonal relations and institutions such as family, friendship, but with ramifications stretching to the analysis of gender and sexuality. Marxism has already paid a heavy political cost on this score, and without an adequate understanding of individuality and human personality, if this criticism were correct, it would have to be paid indefinitely.

Aware of Sartre's threatening claim, many others pitched in with attempts to fill the gap. Three especially distinctive attempts were developed at the time of, and in the context of, an intense debate over policy and theory within the Parti Communiste Français (PCF). On one side was Louis Althusser, who together with his allies formed and developed structural Marxism. On the other, his bitter rival within the PCF, its then chief ideologist, Roger Garaudy. Attempting to navigate the Party towards what he argued was a unique third position that represented a closer interpretation of Marx's own understanding of the human individual than either of them was Lucien Sève.

At the policy level, the 'Marxist humanism' promulgated by Garaudy and his allies stood for what Party loyalists of the time regarded as revisionist policies – sympathy towards the Czechoslovak rebellion, a wider definition of progressive forces than the traditional proletariat, and broader, more ambiguous definitions of revolution and socialism (Garaudy 1968). Structural Marxists such as Althusser may also have had sympathy with anti-Soviet positions, but with the Cultural Revolution, rather than with Czech revisionism (Althusser 1974). It was left to Sève to identify with the PCF, his time to leave the Party decades hence (Sève 1978).

All three PCF theoreticians agreed that "tying Marx's conception of history to his philosophical anthropology" (Jaffe 2015, 39) was desirable: but after that, agreement largely ended. The debate was stormy, the citations of Marx frequent, with their meaning hotly disputed, and the personal antagonisms enduring. For example, Althusser told Sève in 1969 that the concept of a personality itself is not a Marxist concept but a bourgeois ideological notion (Sève 2008, 123). Althusser's view was shared by others in French Marxism, for example Étienne Balibar, who refused even to read Sève's 1968 magnum opus, *Marxisme et théorie de la personalitié* (Sève 2015, 36). It is therefore little wonder Sève had continually to engage with Althusser (Sève 1978, 161-167, note 27), including throughout a lively correspondence, now published (Sève 2018). By comparison Garaudy loftily almost completely ignored his critics.

From the standpoint of more than five decades on, however, how distinct were each of the positions, how important was the argument beyond the drama, which of the three competing approaches stands best the test of time, and perhaps most important of all, is it possible to decide on an approach that will best hasten the end of capitalism?

The Structural Marxism of Louis Althusser (1918-1990)

Of the three, Althusser is almost certainly best known, not only for his philosophical contribution in developing structural Marxism in opposition to Marxist humanism.

Althusser's radical, negative answer to Sartre's question, and response to his Marxist humanist opponents (Althusser 1965) is that there are obviously individual biological human beings, but conventional anthropology is wrong: there is no acting subject, at least in the sense upon which existentialists from Sartre to Søren Kierkegaard have depended in order to try to close the gap. Rather, the individual as a subject should be understood only structurally, not as an isolated entity, not as a personality developed through social relations between individuals but – at least under capitalism – entirely as a function of necessarily ideological social relations.

This rejection of the need for a Marxist theory of personality was buttressed by Althusser's insistence on a clean break in Marx's thought. Individuals were incapable of creating their own history, for, as encapsulated in his famous expression, "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects" (Althusser 1970, 50), they can only ever be bearers of the forces that would determine their own future. In this view, the true 'subjects', or rather, the correct subjects of analysis, are the real definers and

distributors: relations of production and associated political and ideological social relations (Althusser and Balibar 1970, 180). Individuality can therefore only have subsidiary significance, only ever playing a supportive and constitutive role (Stolze 2015, 201), as biological human beings are only bearers (*Träger)* of the guises (*Charaktermasken*) dictated to them by the changing structure of social relations, which in turn generate specific forms of historical individuality (Althusser 1965).

Such a dismissive view of individuality must be supported, and Christian, bourgeois ideological legacies of freedom of action, individual responsibility and ethics strenuously combatted if "the politics of liberal individualism and the conception of man as a 'possessive individual' on which it rests" (Smith 1984, 533) are to be assaulted. As for individual responsibility, it is an oxymoron, fit only for a capitalist legal and ethical system that is built on the lie of a self-determining individual. For Althusser, individuality was irretrievably ideological, so in summary, the less of it, the better. In its place should be firmly set analysis of relations of production, and the political and social relations that they in turn generate. Class, state apparatuses, dominant ideologies – all of these have a role in determining individual human behaviour, but individual autonomy is a redundant and reactionary idea.

Garaudy caricatured the Althusserian view as placing individual human beings in the role of marionettes (Garaudy 1977, 27), but if he were to confine his criticism to one term, that of robot, at least as conventionally understood – physically differentiated, highly capable, but *programmed* – incapable of creative thought and feeling, and certainly not *free*, in Garaudy's sense of the word – might have been a better jibe. Above all, Garaudy would say, robots are incapable of love, the most powerful force for change in the world. There is certainly not much room for individual, romantic love in Althusserian Marxism, if any. In a world dominated by hostile ideological traditions, the Althusserian view of individuality is a hard sell.

Criticism of the Althusserian dismissal of personality need not however be as cursory nor as dismissive as that of Garaudy. Althusser's determinist conception has been in tension with both biography (Stolze 2015, 208) and individuality as understood outside Marxism, most obviously in psychoanalysis (Dolar 1993, 76).

There might certainly be no need to post a universal human essence; but instead of Träger, individuals could be involved in dialectical relationships in which "social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation, and a partial penetration of those structures" (Wills 1981, 175). It might even suffice to say that "the fact that the production and reproduction of social life is above all a skilled performance sustained and made to happen by intelligent social actors" (Smith 1984, 532). Such nuanced reformulations can surely vary almost infinitely, but there comes a point, after all, when robots pass the Turing test, and perhaps individual actors can pass a similar test even in the future, if Althusser's potentially awkward apparent insistence on the eternality of ideology can be conveniently sidestepped. There is no need even to deny personality to an individual who exhibits determined behaviour: Pavlov was fond of his dogs individually; he named them all (Tully 2003, R117), whilst Slavoj Žižek went further, suggesting that prior to ideological recognition there is even "an uncanny subject that precedes the gesture of subjectivisation" (Žižek 1994, 61), even "obscene impenetrable interpellation without identification" (Žižek 2014, 64), which if so would surely be a fatal objection to Althusser's theory of the individual.

An easier criticism to make is that Althusser was inclined to argue as if the Marxist case was already made: the PCF debate over structuralism vs. humanism was within agreed parameters of the importance of economics, the existence of classes within society, even the necessity for the Party. Claims regarding individuality, however, rapidly got away from both Althusser and Sève: perspectives emerged which, whilst entirely prepared to concede the anti-humanist case, refused to permit the dominance of economic causes of individual human behaviour. Judith Butler's introduction of the incoherence of identity (Butler 1997, 149) was intended to be constitutive of an ideology of subjective resistance specifically aimed at a riposte to Althussser, whilst anthropologists continued to debate the already widely promulgated cause of the cultural determination of the concept of personality (Sampson 1983, 162; Spiro 1993, 113). Post-structuralists following Derrida presented an even sharper critique, that

of deconstruction, attempting to reconstruct Marxism (MacDonald 1999, 145), even whilst denying the very concept of centre and of a self-present author, rendering it epistemologically impossible for any subject to be set apart from multiple others. Evidently, Althusserian Marxists were to enjoy no monopoly on the rejection of the liberal individual as a philosophical subject, or even a psychological one, as the rapid development of debate in France and globally demonstrated. Althusser himself elided over the exact meaning of 'social roles,' knowing full well the challenge to a specifically Marxist interpretation of '*Träger*' would be as hard to resist as that from critics of structuralist explanations *tout court*.

Evaluating Althusser's Attempt

How far indeed Althusser himself subscribed to the structuralist view, at least eventually, is open to question. He himself was hardly content to settle within any structure at all, whilst an autobiography is a strange choice of medium for a structuralist, wherein the lament that "any individual who is declared unfit to plead is destined to be placed beneath a tombstone of silence" (Althusser 1992, 18) seems to sit ill with the denunciation of personality as an analytical superfluity.

But let that lie: what should we conclude Althusser's own structural Marxism, insofar as it is an identifiable whole, suggests about individuality? Althusser's answer to Sartre is defiant, and shared by poststructuralists: in summary, there *is* no gap, it is an invention that serves counter-revolutionary ideological purposes. Those who claim to fill it may claim to be Marxists, but they should be denied that status: even to insist upon a theory of personality is to fail to understand the theoretical revolution that Marx brought to the social sciences. A theory of personality, a focus on biography as conventionally understood – even a theoretical dwelling on the individual – all are most likely to be lamentable ideology in the service of capitalism, and best opposed, not developed.

The Marxist Humanism of Roger Garaudy (1913-2012)

Garaudy was a strident advocate of Marxist humanism within the PCF, at least after the XX CPSU Party Conference in 1956, and one of its most well-known public figures until political disagreements forced his expulsion from the Party in 1970. If he is largely invisible to Marxists now, this is largely explained by his eventual conversion to Islam in 1982 and finally his conviction for Holocaust Denial in 1996. The inclusion of Garaudy here as the representative of Marxist humanism is therefore deeply problematic, although recent commentary on the Marxist-Christian dialogue has begun the task of reaching back to his earlier work (Boer 2019, 123).

As a Marxist humanist, then, Garaudy insisted that there was a direct link between structural Marxism and ineffectual politics. Garaudy insisted that in any deterministic form, Marxism is perverted, transformed into a dogmatism that is unable to integrate the prophetic dimension whether in the form of artistic creation, love, or faith (Garaudy 1968; 1970). For Garaudy, the origins of this perversion of Marxism lay well before its inception, in a dichotomous and false view of Man, which, although prevalent since the Renaissance, can trace its origins back to Ancient Greece, through Galileo and Copernicus onto positivists (Garaudy 1979, 46). In his view, Marxism therefore stood in dire need of both a remedy for its positivism, and a new mechanism to explain and then to direct history. Only a Marxism that recaptured what Garaudy regarded as Marx's original humanist project, but reinfused it with a strong subjective element, could achieve both tasks.

Garaudy's argument, that Marx's conception of the species essence is to be found in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Marx 1844), whilst by no means finding unanimous agreement amongst Marxists, has found significant and continued support (Mulhall 1998, 9). Garaudy was certainly not alone in denying that Marx ever subsequently denied the existence of the individual subject: another leading Marxist humanist, Adam Schaff, took the view that in suggesting that "the 'human essence' is no abstraction, but is in reality the ensemble of social relations" (Marx 1845, 4), Marx was engaged in metaphorical polemic (Schaff 1971, 164). Further, Garaudy asserted that Marxist humanism allows the retention of the entire concept of human nature. That the Marxist humanists believed in a universal human essence is a matter of record (Fromm 1962; Schaff 1967). Garaudy was no exception: his advocacy of Fichte as a major influence on Marx (Garaudy 1967, 33-43) is one example: although

at least in his Marxist humanist phase couched in terms that any materialist might at least recognise as their own, that "the primacy of essence was advanced vis-à-vis the a priori theological or anthropological 'definition' of Man"' (Garaudy 1967, 36). These arguments were made in the context of an intense political debate within the PCF, and Garaudy's polemical appeal is obvious: "No greater mistake, again, than to believe that Man does not exist for Marxism, that what does exist is a sum of social relations, that men are not the subject of history but only the effects and the props of a sum of social relations" (Garaudy 1970, 148-149). In this struggle, Garaudy could ill afford to lose the abstract conception of 'Man' and the subjectivity he took from Christianity (Garaudy 1970, 85), as they represented a bastion for Marxist humanism against Althusserian claims that structuralism could give an exhaustive account of society without the need either for 'Man,' or for religion.

For Garaudy, the idea of a universal human essence served as a useful shorthand for the uniqueness of humanity, the possibility of individual relationships with God and other men, and, recognising Sartre's warning of the slippery slope to tyranny, the need for Marxists to treat individual human beings with respect and dignity. To a significant extent, the philosophical debate over Man was a metaphor for the political direction of the PCF and Communist Parties more widely. If the latter, then there was no room for a human essence beyond social relations (Turner 2013, 815).

But for both Althusser and Sève, and other of Garaudy's critics, let alone for Marxist structuralists, the invention of a universal human essence was not only entirely unnecessary but both philosophically and politically wrong. Sève agreed with Althusser that Marxist humanists focused too much on Marx's early works and failed to appreciate the decisive break from his early work (Sève 1978, 50) to his later (Sève 2008, 142) that Marx made to create historical materialism. To fail to appreciate this was to deprive Marxism of its critical focus on economics and class, and to place instead a false emphasis on the abstract, which could only end in abandonment of the Marxist project altogether (Poster 1974, 399).

For Sève, unlike Garaudy, Marx was writing in deadly earnest when he asserted that the human essence lay in social relations. Whilst the early Marx saw the human essence as 'species man,' inherent in a still abstract individual, and therefore in pre-scientific form, Sève agreed that Marx subsequently upended this concept, initially in the *VI Thesis on Feuerbach* and then in the *German Ideology*, before the fully developed version of humanity is seen in *Das Kapital*. This is that the human essence is collective, and the form of human individuality is not an abstract human essence. It is therefore no longer possible to engage in the kind of philosophy with 'Man' as a subject, in which Garaudy delighted, as the concept has been superseded.

Indeed, Sève claimed that misrepresenting the crucial importance of the distinction between human essence and individuality, Garaudy continually revived the philosophico-humanist myth of 'Man' in general as the subject of history (Sève 1978,158). And this mattered: "All this, 'cast like a single block of steel,' in Lenin's words, gradually breaks up in Roger Garaudy's works" (Sève 1978, 159). So, Sève said, that whilst Garaudy was right to criticise theoretical anti-humanism as non-Marxist, he says his argument unfortunately rests on the even less acceptable view of Marxist humanism which is reduced to certain of its pre-scientific aspects of 1844 and which is, moreover, for him at least distorted in a spiritual direction (Sève 1978, 160). In Sève's view, "Marxism is firmly unwilling to accept this spiritualistic 'addition of soul' with which one claims to enrich it. Anyone wishing to 'save' the soul of Marxism destroys it" (Sève 1978, 160-161). Nothing less than the class basis of communist politics which is directly at stake in this reconversion of scientific socialism into philosophical humanism.

The route back is, perhaps, not quite so straightforward as Sève believed, but he was right in at least one important point: five years after his expulsion from the PCF, Garaudy did eventually declare himself a Christian (Garaudy 1975, 265). It was understandable that aside from Garaudy, Marxist humanists stayed firmly within the secular tradition of Marxism, finding it unnecessary to rely upon Christianity to develop a theory of the individual that they, at least, believed wholly compatible with Marxism. For Garaudy this demonstrated a hard truth: socialist humanists were not aiming to align Marxism with Christianity, let alone make them congruent. It may have been coveted

ground for all involved, but the socialist humanists believed they had no need of spiritual allies to help them occupy it. Marxist, even most socialist humanists, had therefore no need of Christianity.

Evaluating Garaudy's Attempt

Garaudy's Marxist humanism stood on the ground of universal human essence, and both serve the same purpose, demanding the existence of human beings as individual agents: shaped by their economic and social environment, certainly, but autonomous, creative and free.

His answer to Sartre, then, is largely to agree, but for many Marxists, his answer is too close to the traditional liberal view of the individual for comfort, and its source in religion utterly unacceptable. Even for those Marxists seeking a theory of personality, there is nothing to learn from Garaudy. For most, too, Garaudy's own dismal personal trajectory – into Islam, conviction for Holocaust denial, and complete loss of reputation in France – was a poor advertisement for his particular version of Marxism.

The Scientific Humanism of Lucien Sève (1926-2020)

Lucien Sève, junior to both Althusser and Garaudy in the Party hierarchy, proved the great survivor. He exerted influence within the PCF throughout many decades of membership, arguing throughout that both Althusser and Garaudy were misconceived in their opposing visions of a theory of individuality that would fill Sartre's gap: the one because it was no theory at all, and the other because it was a theory, but not a Marxist one.

Sève was convinced that neither structural Marxism nor Marxist humanism provided an adequate explanation of human personality. In his view it was quite possible to transcend the debate in order to develop a rational, reasoned Marxist theory of the personality which did not stand in need of God, but could nevertheless survive structuralist attacks against the integrity of the individual. Sève himself strenuously resisted both the charge that he was engaged in a mere political polemic, of importance only within a contemporary PCF context (O'Donnell, 1986:10) and that he was attempting to establish some kind of compromise (Forbes, 2015:50). Supporters have countered by arguing that he was the first to present a reasoned argument for human beings themselves as the commodity form, and that his work was in fact truly innovative (El-Hammoum 2012, 988).

If not a compromise, what did Sève himself argue? Sève's starting point is that the basis of human life is to be found in the biological constitution of humanity: "one acknowledges unreservedly that psychic life is material through and through or one forgoes all scientific rigour" (Sève 1978, 177). No doubt Althusser would agree, but it is scarcely a point on which he would wish to dwell. Sève even claims that consciousness is not a social formation but is a biological fact that remains constant throughout the human species (Sève 1978,143-4; 183). From there on, however, Sève parted company with the biologists, whose work, he claimed, was "haunted by an unthinkable concept: the general [i.e. idealistic] individual" (Sève 1978, 233) and therefore, along with the Marxist humanists such as Garaudy, in thrall to the notion of an abstract humanity that he believed Marx decried, denounced and despoiled.

What, then, is the human essence, which unlike Althusser, Sève insisted *was* a valid subject for consideration by Marxists? Marx did not ever mean to suggest that the human essence consisted in social relations between individuals, not least because such individuals did not, could not, and had never existed. Rather, it was in the technical and social division of labour, a distinction that Sève always regarded as fundamental: unlike Garaudy, Marx was not simply advancing a theory of social psychology, not simply agreeing with non-Marxist relational theorists such as Jennifer Nedelsky (2011) that individuals are what their interpersonal relationships make of them. For Sève, historical materialism demands a further step, that what we are is also to be found beyond our intersubjective relationships, "right up to the heavily objective social structures they imply, and which govern them – which is where a truly materialist anthropology is born" (Sève 2018, 11). Such a materialist anthropology represents a clear break with concepts of essence found in the old metaphysical tradition, a break which exactly parallels that in Marx's own work more broadly.

In Sève's view, traditional psychology does not address the contradiction between the individual and society, even at the theoretical level, where it

continued to haunt the relations between psychology, the biological and the social sciences (Sève 1978:37). Sève regarded this as directly caused by the absence of both a distinct, properly thought-out Marxist conception of the personality, and of an equally Marxist understanding of the trajectory of the personality through history and its determination, which he called 'biography.' Together, Sève believed, these would be the correct subject for psychology. This would at last give psychology what it had hitherto lacked: a dialectical "social individuality" (Sève 1978, 31) with a solid basis in society's evolution over time, and therefore ultimately in social labour. Psychology must therefore always be in a disadvantaged position until it admitted this and crosses its own Rubicon (Sève 1978, 446).

From Sève's perspective, this inevitably led to a characterisation of Althusser's view of the forms of historical individuality as "a very reductive formula" (Sève 2015, 30), substituting his own subtle but in his view decisive reversal of the formula, historical forms of individuality (Sève 2008). Yet Sève wrote throughout, as if we can identify capitalists as distinct individual agents, suggesting that we can thereby develop an understanding of some of the contradictions inherent in these categories of activities which will translate into personal dilemmas. So, his theoretical distance from Althusser might not, however, be as great as the early Sève would have wished: One example is his depiction of the alienated experience of the worker in capitalist society (Sève 1978, 164-166), a second the Faustian dilemma between accumulation and enjoyment, which Sève describes as "a contradiction characteristic of the form of individuality of the capitalist" (Sève 1978, 207), and a third, the family, which under current economic conditions could only be "a scaled-down model of a capitalist society" (Sève 1978, 205). It is however vitally important to recognise that in his later work, Sève rowed back from his previous insistence on the dominance of labour in the creation and development of the personality. Other factors, notably gender, enter the picture (Sève 2008, 30–31). 'Materialist anthropology' is diluted, and we may in fact see his eventual view as much closer to the relational theorists.

Readers may feel frustrated with Sève on both counts. Not only has he become a moving target to avoid charges of economic reductionism, but he has insisted that he is not out to compromise between Althusser and Garaudy. But how else are we to read the awkward argument that individuals are both supports for structural relations that dominate them and actors of social dynamics that make them move (Sève 2008, 121)? We cannot resist asking: *how*? Our frustration only grows when we realise that, as a philosopher rather than a psychologist, Sève never permitted himself to get further than rejecting a geographic model of the personality in favour of a temporal one, without explaining much about what the implications of the difference, however attractive it might be to Marxists, actually are for psychology, or indeed politics (Sève 1978, 333; 2008, 4). And to follow immediately an attack on Garaudy's Marxist humanism as "a tissue of dubious generalisation" (Sève 2015, 24) with criticism of inherited intelligence, the one practical point on which Sève always insisted (Sève 1964; 1978, 3; 2015, 24), as if Marxist humanists are in some sense obliged to accept such biologist arguments, does not seem entirely fair to Marxist humanists in general or Garaudy in particular. On the contrary, Marxist humanists were keen to point out the limitations that capitalism imposed on the development of the individual, for example through the education system (Garaudy 1974, 17). There is no reason for a Marxist humanist not to defend a significant degree of cultural, social and above all economic appropriation of psychological characteristics through individual life experiences, without letting go of the concept of individuality that Garaudy insisted was essential for Marxism. Garaudy indeed was the very last person not to understand the importance of biography, having retold his own so frequently and with such gusto.

Evaluating Sève's Attempt

What then is Sève's conclusion? First, that Sartre's existentialist approach was un-Marxist and unsatisfactory. Second, that a theory of personality and of biography must be developed that is specifically Marxist. A lifetime of engagement brought only lukewarm acceptance from Marxists of even the principle, and certainly not the entire project. With the absorption of influences upon the personality beyond labour, Sève's theory threatened eventually to melt into the very theory of the personality that he had originally set out to demolish and replace.

There is some hope of a way forward. There is no reason why most Marxists, humanist or otherwise, should not wish to support Sève in the importance, under certain yet-to-be-determined circumstances even the primacy, of labour as a determinant of personality. Most Marxists will want to recognise the importance of psychology and be keen to embrace a theory of personality and biography, yet one that is sited firmly in economics and history, rather located in a human essence that is imparted from religion. In that, Sève will probably always win more Marxist hearts than Garaudy's project. However, Sève's own work was not an immutable corpus any more than that of Althusser, Garaudy or even Marx. Sève's eventual position especially, when he has retreated to simply 'thinking with Marx' and can talk about the soul, is perhaps not as far from that of Garaudy's project he himself always continued to insist.

Conclusion: Who Best Filled the Gap?

In the course of intense prolonged debate within the PCF, artificial distinctions and exaggerations of position became commonplace. That upon which all agreed – the uniqueness of humanity, the distortion of the personality under capitalism and the abiding need to overcome it, as well as "ontological priority to chance, to historical conditions, to the event, and especially to contingency" (De Ípola 2018, 63)– was subsumed in a quasi-theological argument over the meaning of texts. The one thing both sides agreed upon was that they fundamentally disagreed, and that their disagreement mattered enormously. In hindsight, although they were at least partially right about the former, they were wrong about the latter – unless as at Argenteuil, different political positions are inextricably entangled with the difference, which they no longer are.

The crucial distinction within Marxism is not between humanists and others, as structural Marxists would have us believe, or even between those who believe that personality is a gift from God and those who do not. Rather, it is between those like Sève, Schaff and Garaudy, who all agreed with Sartre that Marx had unfortunately left a yawning theoretical gap where real, living individuals needed to be, albeit that each of them tried to fill it in very different ways, and those like Althusser who rejected Sartre's contention, and on occasion went so far as to deny the need for any Marxist concept of personality, scorning the entire discipline of psychology. For bereft of any immutable, let alone common, core, and enmeshed by ideology, Althusserian individuals are strangely lonely: each one of them a nexus of complex empire of causes and effects but incapable of acting to form any relationship themselves.

Unfortunately, although neither Sève nor any Marxist humanist would ever wish to deny the fact of individual human progress or change, what we find in Sève's own writings is an almost rigorous refusal to engage in any application of his own theory (Legrand 1992, 503), whilst Garaudy appeared only interested in personality in conjunction with an unsuccessful political programme entirely of his own making. So, despite the passage of over a half a century, it "remains to be seen in full what the psychology of personality will be like when informed by this type of Marxian theory" (Burkitt 1991, 120).

If the historical arguments are no longer to stand in the way of the development of a Marxist theory of personality, it will be necessary to proceed beyond the quasi-theological debate about human essence to the kind of concrete research into personality and biography for which Sève always called, but which philosophical debate frankly occluded. Marxists, including Marxist humanists, should welcome more practical contributions, including by critical psychologists responding to the growing body of scientific evidence demonstrating that individual personality changes over time (e.g. Srivastava *et al*. 2003; Boyce, Wood and Powdthavee 2013). The important question should not be – and arguably should never have been – what is the essence of 'Man,' but rather, what are the constituent elements of personality, and to what extent economic versus other forces drive the creation and development of the individual personality?

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Marx on Distributive Justice, "From Each According to His Ability, to Each According to His Needs"

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Karl Marx's distributive justice principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875). It argues that Marx advocates for "unequal equality," since the end result of his principle is unequal contribution (due to the contributors' different abilities) and unequal distribution (due to recipients' different needs); that Marx's principle avoids many pitfalls of contemporary desert theories; that while Marx is critical of abstract right (*Recht*), he maintains that right will be enhanced in the future communist society; that Marx's attitude toward work is contradictory, since work is for him both "life's prime want" and a hindrance to the intellectual and social flourishing possible only in leisure time; that the widespread interpretation of the communist society as one of abundance where all needs can be satisfied has scant textual basis; and that Marx's principle continues to inspire theories of distributive justice, efforts to expand social services and endeavours to establish a cooperative, classless society.

KEYWORDS: distributive justice; equity; desert.

This article examines the distributive justice principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (henceforth "the Principle"), stated by Karl Marx in his last major work, the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (henceforth *Critique*), of 1875. It argues the following points:

1. In his Principle, Marx advocates for "unequal equality"; the end result of his Principle is unequal contribution, owing to the different abilities of the contributors, and unequal distribution, owing to the different needs of the recipients.
2. Marx's Principle avoids many pitfalls of contemporary desert theories, which often end up concentrating on details and missing the larger picture.
3. While Marx is critical of formal, abstract right, for him right will not disappear in the future communist society but rather will become real and concrete.
4. Marx's attitude toward work is contradictory: on the one hand work is "life's prime want," while on the other only leisure time can ensure "the free intellectual and social activity of the individual."
5. While some interpreters have posited that in the communist society there will be unlimited abundance and that therefore it will be possible to satisfy all needs, this interpretation has scant textual basis.
6. The Principle continues to promote the goal of a classless, cooperative society, to provide a regulative idea for a just world, and to stimulate efforts to reduce inequalities through measures such as universal welfare and social services.

It may be useful to recall the paragraph that culminates in the Principle:

> In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (Marx 1978c, 531)

Marx's Argument for Unequal Distribution

In the *Critique*, Marx advocates for "unequal equality." His Principle implies a kind of equality among persons: each is to contribute equally, according or in proportion to individual ability, and each is to receive equally, according or in proportion to individual needs. Contributing less than another person of equal ability, or receiving less than another person of equal need, would be unfair. However, Marx's account is not one of strict egalitarianism, if strict egalitarianism means allocating equal goods to all members of society. Marx's solution avoids the problems that have bedevilled contemporary accounts of distributive justice.

For strict egalitarianism, ensuring that all people have an equal quantity of goods and services is the best way to affirm the moral equality and dignity of all. However, critics (Lamont and Favor 2017, 8) have pointed out that there are problems in applying strict egalitarianism, the two main ones being devising appropriate indices for measurement (the index problem) and specifying appropriate time frames (the time frame problem).

The index problem arises because goods and services need to be measured if they are to be distributed equally. The best solution is to try to specify the bundle of goods and services that each person should have. However, being that people value things differently, they will probably start trading the goods in their bundle, immediately annulling the distribution principle of perfect equality. Moreover, there may be a better, more efficient kind of distribution that makes everyone better off and no one worse off. That is why some index for measuring the total value of the bundle is required.

Money is one such index, but it is imperfect, approximate and narrow, such that John Rawls, in his index of primary goods (Rawls 2001, 58-59), adds to "income and wealth" a whole range of less material goods, such as basic rights and liberties; freedom of movement; free choice among a wide range of occupations; the powers of offices and positions of responsibility; and the social bases of self-respect. However, while broader, Rawls's index does not really allow the precise determination of the bundle to be distributed.

The time frame problem arises because distribution takes place at a particular time. One version of strict egalitarianism (the "starting gate theory") requires that all people have the same bundle at some initial point, after which they are free to use their allocation in whatever way they choose. However, unequal distribution will soon arise, nullifying the principle. As David Hume said (Hume 1998, 20), "render possessions ever so equal, men's different degrees of art, care, and industry will immediately break that equality."

Another version of strict egalitarianism specifies that income should be equal in each time frame, though this, too, may lead to inequality since again people will spend, save, invest, and exchange differently. These problems could be addressed by having a periodic re-equalization of resources: when the difference in resources becomes too wide, there would be a return to the starting gate, where people would be given the same bundle again. But this, too, is problematic . How wide should the resource differential be before the bundle is re-equalized? Wouldn't this re-equalization reward the idle and punish the industrious? Wouldn't it violate individual freedom?

Marx's Principle is not affected by any of those problems. For Marx, people are to receive goods and services solely according to their needs, thus receiving different kinds and amounts of goods, in violation of strict egalitarianism. Still, an egalitarian criterion remains, since all people will receive exactly what is due to them on the basis of and in proportion to their needs (the same is true concerning their con-

tribution). But Marx's Principle is not egalitarian in that its point of departure is the intrinsic difference among people – including with respect to their ability and their needs.

Marx rejects the egalitarian direct-proportional approach, according to which individual workers receive back exactly what they contribute to the total social product. His point of departure is the inherent inequality among people,

> But one man is superior to another physically or mentally, and supplies more labour in the same time, or can labour for a longer time. … Further, one worker is married, another is not; one has more children than another, and so on and so forth. (Marx 1978c, 530-31)

On the basis of the constitutive natural inequality of individuals, Marx proceeds to justify the right to unequal contribution (from the able) and distribution (to the needy). To avoid the inequalities that would result from a distribution proportional to the contribution, Marx advocates for "unequal right" or the justice of unequal distribution (Marx 1978c, 531), "to avoid all these defects, right instead of being equal would have to be unequal." Distributing according to needs instead of according to the labour performed implies overcoming strict equality of right.

At the same time, the Principle takes into account the ineliminable difference among people by seeking to receive from each according to their different and specific ability and to give to each according to their different and specific needs, achieving (or at least aiming at) an equalization of sorts. While not simply egalitarian, the Principle aims to equalize the conditions of those it covers – namely, of all people. Moreover, while acknowledging the ineliminable inequality among people, the Principle recognizes the equal right of all to receive according to their needs. It is egalitarian in that it recognizes this equality of rights.

Concurrently, the Principle expresses a right of (formal) inequality in its two parts: people must contribute according to their (unequal) ability and receive according to their (unequal) needs. Thus, depending on their ability and needs, people might contribute a lot and receive little; contribute little and receive a lot; or contribute and receive in such a way that there is a correlation between giving and receiving.

The Principle can be seen as establishing a right of equality if we consider the concept of equality in a broad sense: as something that could remedy blatant inequality. In this sense the Principle, while not egalitarian, is equality-promoting. Arguably, the application of the Principle would lead to a reduction in inequalities. Stated in another way, it is exactly because the Principle is based on a criterion of inverse proportionality that people – who are for Marx inherently "unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal)" (Marx 1978c, 530) – are treated equally on the basis of their unequal needs.

Contemporary theories of equality can be classified according to whether they argue for giving everyone a fair and equal opportunity to compete and succeed (the "starting gate" theories) or for ensuring equality of life outcomes. Both have provoked numerous objections – for instance how to ensure a degree of equality after people have left the starting gate. Marx provides a third, possibly less controversial, alternative, by positing neither an equal playing field nor an equal outcome.

As Norman Geras points out (Geras 1985, 81), while the needs principle is a principle of equality, it does permit unequal treatment from other points of view. The means of consumption will not be divided into exactly equivalent individual shares; equal labour contributions will not invariably be matched by shares of the same size; and only those who need them will have access to expensive goods (such as costly health care). Marx comes down in favour of need, and against "individual endowment" (Marx 1978c, 530), as the decisive criterion, Geras says. In doing so, Marx himself emphasizes how adopting this criterion – responding to the specific needs of each individual – leads in some sense to unequal treatment.

At the foundation of the Principle is the idea (shared by Rawls) that natural and social inequalities are inherently unfair. People are not responsible for, and do not deserve, the natural endowments with which they are born, the social setting in which they are born, the opportunities they have to develop their talents, and so on. Society should address the inequalities that randomly and irrationally separate human beings.

Unlike in the case of universal basic income (a precept of strict equality), the Principle calibrates

contribution to need and ensures appropriate contribution, precluding a situation in which the self-sufficient receive superfluous goods while the needy go with their needs unmet.

The Principle opens the way to wide differences in distribution. Those who do not or cannot contribute – such as children and persons with severe disabilities – are nevertheless entitled to receive. The severely ill and the abjectly poor, among others, will receive a much larger share of goods. Yet this difference is justifiable from a moral viewpoint simply on the basis of need.

Bypassing the Dead End of Desert

Many contemporary theories of distributive justice link receiving benefits with desert – a move that solves some problems while opening up others. The various desert-based principles of distribution differ primarily according to the basis identified for desert. Some follow Aristotle in maintaining that merit, variously defined, is the best basis for distributive justice. However, most theorists follow John Locke in this respect: Locke famously argues that people deserve to have those items produced exclusively through their toil and industry, the product itself being a reward for their effort. Desert theorists also stress the responsibility of people in choosing to engage in more or less productive activities.

Most contemporary desert-based principles fit into one of three broad categories:

1. Contribution: people should be rewarded for their work according to the value of their contribution to the social product (Miller 1989; Riley 1989).
2. Effort: people should be rewarded according to the effort they expend in their work (Sadurski 1985; Milne 1986).
3. Cost: people should be rewarded according to the cost they incur in their work (Dick 1975; Lamont 1997).

According to desert theorists, distributive systems are just insofar as they distribute goods according to individual contribution, effort, or cost. However, one can object that this scheme is too narrow: it covers only working adults, leaving out everybody else, however needy. Moreover, it is difficult to identify what counts as a contribution, an effort, or a cost and to exactly measure those in a complex modern economy. But the main moral objection to desert-based principles, forcefully advanced by Rawls, is that they make distribution dependent on such factors as talent and productivity over which people have little or no control.

Some desert theorists bring in the issue of personal responsibility. For instance Ronald Dworkin (Dworkin 2000, 73) distinguishes between "brute luck" (which is beyond one's control) and "option luck" (which one can reasonably avoid by voluntary choice). For Dworkin and other "luck egalitarians" (such as Gerald Cohen), while inequalities due to brute luck should be addressed, those due to personal choice should not. People should be responsible for their decisions. This implies, strictly speaking, that people have no justified demands for assistance if they get into a miserable situation through their own doing. Thus society should intervene only to address inequalities due to brute luck.

Others, for instance Elizabeth Anderson (Anderson 1999, 326), have replied that society should help people no matter whether they caused their own misfortune or not: they are human beings and should be given help if they got on the wrong track. In addition, they might have made bad decisions for reasons of brute luck, such as inadequate parenting or education, for which they cannot be held responsible. From this perspective, society should intervene to rebalance what is objectively a damaging situation.

If we relate those views to Marx's Principle, we see that it bypasses issues of desert altogether. The Principle does not prescribe that people must contribute and/or receive according to some measure of desert. "From each according to his ability" is a prescription for the criteria to be followed for obtaining resources from members of society. "To each according to his needs" does not take into account desert, but simply personal necessity. The Principle privileges claim over desert: even those who cannot contribute are owed something. People are not to receive according to the amount of goods they produce, the effort they expend, the costs they incur or other criteria of desert: they are to receive simply on the basis of need. Thus the Principle ignores the role of desert: people are to receive solely because of their needs, irrespective of their work, contribution, effort and cost.

The Principle also avoids problems connected with "luck egalitarianism": people will receive goods irrespec-

tive of their sense of responsibility and the choice they have made to engage in more or less productive activities. They might be needy because they consciously made bad choices, and the Principle does not address this possibility. The Principle avoids moral judgments about wise and unwise personal choices – and the possible social roots of such choices – by considering objectively only actual needs. It ensures fairness of distribution without looking at the reasons for the receiver's plight.

Right Will Not Disappear

Another issue related to distributive justice is Marx's take on *Recht* – which can mean "right," "law," or "jurisprudence." Marx says that the present-day distribution is fair given the existing bourgeois mode of production, and is indeed the only "fair" distribution model under that system, since legal conceptions rise from economic relations (Marx 1978c, 528). The developing communist society, as it emerges from capitalist society, is still at first marked by the features of that society (Marx 1978c, 529), including in respect to right. In that developing phase,

> the individual producer receives back from society … exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labour. … The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another. (Marx 1978c, 530).

We are still in the domain of equal "bourgeois right" (Marx 1978c, 530), according to which a given amount of labour in one form (work, production) gives the producer the right to receive back the equivalent amount in another form (means of consumption) (Marx 1978c, 529-30). Under equal right, "the right of the producers is *proportional* to the labour they supply" (Marx 1978c, 530) and Marx sees this as an advance as well as a limitation in comparison with capitalist society. Arguably, it is an advance because (unlike in capitalism) workers receive compensation corresponding to their labour, without the deduction going to surplus value (i.e. to the capitalist); it is a limitation because Marx considers this compensation unfair.

Marx says that this proportional right is unfair because a worker may be physically or mentally stronger than another, more productive, have dependents and so on. By tacitly recognizing unequal individual endowment, this equal right "is therefore a right of inequality in its content" (Marx 1978c, 530) as it guarantees that the better performer receives more means of consumption (Marx appears to make the Rawlsian point that people do not deserve the natural advantages they are born with). Those "defects" are inevitable in the developing communist society: "Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby" (Marx 1978c, 531). This does not mean that a higher level of rights cannot be envisioned, but that first the economic structure of society has to change.

Bourgeois proportional right will be overcome in a higher phase of communist society, where distribution of the means of consumption will no longer be commensurate to what one has produced. Does this mean that right in general has been abolished? Rather, it can be argued that right has been maintained, but since "the economic structure of society and its cultural development" has reached a higher level, the previous right has been replaced by a higher, fairer right. Since "legal relations arise from economic ones" (Marx 1978c, 528), in the communist society right will not disappear but instead will be improved. A different socioeconomic structure will result in a different legal culture.

For Marx, a flaw of bourgeois right – and right in the context of a still developing communist society – is that it sees individuals only as workers and producers, ignoring all other aspects. "Individuals … are regarded only *as workers*, and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored" (Marx 1978c, 531). Bourgeois right uses abstract standards (such as labour) instead of considering the specific conditions of individuals (including their ability and needs). Marx had earlier remarked (Marx 1992, 288) that political economy looks at the proletarian "only as a *worker* … It does not consider him when he is not working, as a human being." In a higher phase of communist society, individuals will be considered as a whole, including in the area of right.

Specifically, by regarding individuals only as workers and providing for their needs only in proportion to the work they have carried out, bourgeois right and the lower phase of the communist society ignore the actual needs of workers. Moreover, there is no common measure between the labour the workers have supplied

and their individual needs: labour and needs belong to different, incomparable categories. Only in the communist society can the individual differences among people properly be taken into account, by replacing distribution according to labour with distribution according to needs. Distribution according to needs treats individuals as concrete human beings, not as one-dimensional abstractions.

However, some commentators have argued that for Marx right will disappear in the new society. George Brenkert says (Brenkert 1983, 153) that for Marx it is impossible to come up with a principle of right that will take into account the inequalities of individuals. According to Marx, principles of justice cannot, by their own nature, treat people with regard to their individual complexities, capacities and needs; they are incapable of treating people concretely. Brenkert concludes that because of this inherent flaw in the concept of right, "When Marx says that only in communism can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety, he means quite literally that principles of justice will be left behind."

Similarly, for Steven Lukes (Lukes 1982, 200), when Marx talks about "the narrow horizon of bourgeois right" being crossed, he means that considerations of right and justice are transcended and left behind: "I take this to mean, not merely that there will be no more *bourgeois* right, but there will be no more *Recht*, no more legal and moral rules." This is because of the progressive disappearance, in the new society, of the conditions that create the need for codes of right and norms. For his part, Enrico Pattaro says (Pattaro 2007, 117) that for Marx "the dross of bourgeois law would be overcome only if the law became 'unequal.' For Marx the end of equal law signals the end of law entirely."

In addition to the points already made, a refutation comes from several authors. Commenting on the sentence, "Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby," Gerald Cohen says (Cohen 2012, 15) that "the sentence presupposes … an antirelativist contrast between lower and higher forms of right or justice." Thus Cohen agrees that for Marx right will not disappear; instead, a higher form of right or justice will characterize the communist society.

According to Jeffrey Edwards (Edwards 2017, 314), Marx should not be opposed to equal right per se. For Edwards, Marx seeks to demonstrate the normative inadequacy of "equal right" when such right results in a distribution of quantitative equivalents ("to each according to their contribution"), but he does not provide an argument against equal right as such. Even when Marx characterizes equal right as being "in principle bourgeois right" (Marx 1978c, 530), he refers only to the proportionality principle, which leads to distributive inequalities that are "defects" (Marx 1978c, 531). Moreover, when he maintains that "right would have to be unequal instead of being equal" (Marx 1978c, 531) in order to provide a basis for overcoming distributive inequalities, he refers only to the equal right that conforms to the proportionality principle. He is not arguing that equal right leads to defective distributive inequalities when such right does not involve the proportionality principle (Edwards 2017, 314-15). In other words, Marx criticizes the proportionality principle, not equal right per se.

Pablo Gilabert (Gilabert 2015, 221, note 6) offers a similar interpretation: "We can interpret Marx's criticism of talk of 'equal rights' for not tracking the specific needs of different individuals as a rejection of certain accounts of equality that do not address what ultimately matters (each person's access to need satisfaction), rather than as a rejection of the idea that people have equal rights." Marx criticizes an abstract view of equality, not the idea of equal right.

Furthermore, Marx's criticism of "bourgeois right" can be seen as targeting such right for ensuring only formal, not real, equality. Only in the communist society, Marx says, "can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety" (Marx 1978c, 531) with the establishment of a broader horizon of right where individuals are considered as a whole and where concrete right is implemented. In this sense, the Principle is an affirmation, not an overcoming, of right.

Even when Marx seems to disparage equal right and fair distribution, he is in fact criticizing the use made of such concepts by the Lassalleans:

> I have dealt more at length with … 'equal right' and 'fair distribution' … in order to show what a crime it is to attempt … to force on our Party again, as

> dogmas, ideas which … have now become obsolete verbal rubbish, … again perverting … the realistic outlook, which it cost so much effort to instill into the Party but which has now taken root in it, by means of ideological nonsense about right and other trash so common among the democrats and French socialists. (Marx 1978c, 531)

Interpreting these polemical passages otherwise cannot explain why Marx would have taken the time to outline his own concept of fair distribution – thus providing a theory of distribution for the ages.

Support for the thesis that right will not disappear but become "higher" is already discernible in *On the Jewish Question* (1844), where Marx says (Marx 1978a, 42) that "the so-called rights of man … are simply the rights of a member of civil society, that is, of egoistic man, of man separated from other men and from the community. … It is the right of such separation; the right of the circumscribed individual, withdrawn into himself." Right, exemplified by the right to private property and its security, is the right of the private, egoistic individual, who focuses only on his interests (Marx 1978a, 43). This is the "bourgeois right" denounced in the *Critique* – the right that regulates capitalist society. In *On the Jewish Question*, too, Marx does not oppose right per se, but rather the right of the *homo economicus* disconnected from his community.

Work – A Blessing Or a Curse?

Isn't thinking that labour will become "life's prime want" (Marx 1978c, 531) a sign of naïve utopianism – the utopianism that Marx spent his whole life combating? How can work, a biblical curse ("the sweat of your brow," *Genesis* 3, 19), become the main human need?

Marx's view of work, at least since the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, is that it is an essential means by which to realize human nature or essence. In the *Grundrisse*, labour is the instrument for self-realization:

> In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou labour! was Jehovah's curse on Adam. And this is labour for [Adam] Smith, a curse. … It seems quite far from Smith's mind that the individual … also needs a normal portion of work. … Certainly, labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it. But … the overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity – and … the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits – hence as self-realization, externalization of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour. (Marx 1993, 611)

Far from being a biblical curse, labour is a human need and the conduit to freedom.

When the appropriate subjective and objective conditions are created, Marx continues,

> labour becomes attractive work, the individual's self-realization, which in no way means that it becomes mere fun, mere amusement. … Really free working … is at the same time precisely the most damned seriousness, the most intensive exertion. The work of material production can achieve this character only (1) when its social character is posited, (2) when it is … not merely human exertion, as a specifically harnessed natural force, but exertion as subject, which appears in the production process not in a merely natural, spontaneous form, but as an activity regulating all the forces of nature." (Marx 1993, 611)

The "social character" of work is apparent in cooperative and collaborative efforts in which people find satisfaction in work that meets the needs of others and in that way binds them to the community. Through "exertion as subjects," individuals express their creativity and humanity.

However, there is a tension in Marx between labour as the highest means for realizing human nature and the requirement to reduce labour time so that people can realize their nature through other enriching activities. In the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1993, 706), Marx also says that the development of machinery and technology will bring about "the free development of individualities, and hence … the general reduction of the necessary labor of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them." Reducing the labour day will permit self-realization in one's leisure time.

The same tension is present in *Capital*. In the first volume (Marx 1978b, 413-414), Marx's ideal is "the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs, are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers." Also in *Capital I* (Marx 1978b, 344), Marx characterizes work as that "in which man of his own accord starts, regulates and controls the material reactions between himself and Nature," or simply as purposeful "personal activity." In work, the working individual "realizes a purpose of his own" and "gives play to his bodily and mental powers" (Marx 1978b, 344).

However, in the first volume of *Capital* Marx also stresses the value of leisure time for self-realization. He says,

> the intensity and productivity of labour being given, the part of the social working day necessarily taken up with material production is shorter and, as a consequence, the time at society's disposal for the free intellectual and social activity of the individual is greater, in proportion as work is more and more evenly divided among all the able-bodied members of society. … The absolute minimum limit to the shortening of the working day is, from this point of view, the universality of labour. (Marx 1990, 667)

Spreading out labour as widely as possible would free up time for the intellectual and social development of all.

Returning to the value of leisure time in the third volume of *Capital*, Marx similarly says that,

> the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus … it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production…. With [man's] development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production that satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control…. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite. (Marx 1978b, 441)

Marx oscillates between work as freedom and freedom from work.

The two views are perhaps not contradictory: the self-realization brought about by labour is different from the self-realization brought about by "artistic, scientific etc. development" and "free intellectual and social activity," including relationships with the community. In the future society, individuals will find different kinds of self-realization in labour *and* in creative and social activities. The two kinds of self-realization complement, rather than exclude, each other.

Against Extreme Interpretations

The paragraph that culminates in the Principle has generated two related misunderstandings: that there will be unlimited abundance and that therefore it will be possible to satisfy all needs. Marx talks only about an increase in wealth (due to the more efficient cooperative mode of production and use-directed, rather than exchange-directed, production) and an increase in the productive forces (due to the full self-realization of individuals through work). There is no mention of the full satisfaction of all human needs – a hyperbole that would be uncharacteristic of Marx. He never says "abundance," only "more abundantly." Yet this passage has led some commentators to argue that abundance is essential for realizing the Principle.

Taken literally, "to each according to his needs" may be interpreted as saying that all people will see their needs fully met, no matter how large, numerous or varied. But as a principle of fair distribution, the Principle simply prescribes the allocation of resources on the basis of needs; it does not promise that all needs will be satisfied, or that there will be an unlimited amount of resources. The Principle can be applied in situations of scarcity. Promising abundance and the full satisfaction of needs would be an expression of the naïve utopianism that Marx opposed his whole life.

As Robert Ware notes (Ware 2018, 215), all that Marx says is that distributing according to needs can come only "after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the

individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly" (Marx 1978c, 531). Marx says only that the productive forces must increase and that wealth must be more abundant, and this is only for distribution in a higher phase. He does not say what level of production he thinks is required for which phase and why. Yet, from this passage, Marx has been interpreted as thinking that in a higher phase of communism wealth will be so abundant that people will have everything they want.

Ware suspects (Ware 2018, 211) that many just do what Allen Wood has done (Wood 1981, 210), which is simply to remove an adverb. After quoting Marx correctly about when the springs of "wealth flow more abundantly," Wood quotes that phrase as when the springs of "wealth flow abundantly." There is a difference in meaning, of course. Wood concludes that there will be no scarcity. Gerald Cohen does likewise: he quotes the same passage and concludes that "everyone could have everything they might want to have."(Cohen 1995, 7).[1] Kai Nielsen paraphrases the passage as saying that "the springs of social wealth flow freely" and concludes that society will be one of "full abundance" (Nielsen 1986, 41-44). Lenin's influence emerges here, Ware says. According to Lenin (Lenin 1970, 115),[2] in the higher phase of communism "each will take freely 'according to his needs'"– something that Marx never said.

Moreover, as Ware points out (Ware 2018, 68), productive forces can increase and wealth can flow more abundantly even when there is little or even no abundance. That passage does not suppose that there is overabundance or even abundance. Nowhere does Marx suppose any kind of great communist abundance.

Deducing that every needy person should have all of their needs satisfied would be a literal, extreme interpretation of the Principle. Instead, the satisfaction of needs will depend on the total amount of the social product available. Even if the wellsprings of wealth were to flow more freely, as Marx says, there is no guarantee that the total product available would be enough to satisfy each and every need of every member of society. The Principle must be interpreted realistically rather than literally. The important thing is that all persons receive a fair share of the available social product, avoiding a situation in which some receive more than others even if their needs are the same.

As Ware points out (Ware 2018, 214), contrary to what many commentators claim, the Principle does not propose that people will get everything they need. The Principle's second part is parallel to contribution according to ability, where it is obvious that people do not have to contribute all that they are able to. As in the case of the principle of distribution in the first phase of communism, this "higher" principle can be a complex function that is qualified by more specific characterizations of needs. For example, basic needs can be given priority over less important needs. Even in this case there will be variations; as Marx notes in *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Marx 1976, 117), "natural needs themselves are continually changing", and their satisfaction should change accordingly.

The Continuing Relevance of the Principle

The Principle continues to stimulate discussion about distributive and social justice.[3] Its vitality is apparent in the numerous references and commentaries in contemporary philosophical literature. Leading contemporary theorists of distributive justice, such as John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Gerald Cohen and Amartya Sen, often

1 Cohen repeats this weakly grounded interpretation (Cohen 1995, 10), "The achievement of Marxist equality ('from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs') is premised on a conviction that industrial progress brings society to a condition of such fluent abundance that it is possible to supply what everyone needs for a richly fulfilling life."

2 Lenin says (Lenin 1970, 115) that in the higher phase of communism "there will then be no need for society, in distributing the products, to regulate the quantity to be received by each; each will take freely 'according to his needs'." For Lenin, however, people will realize the advantages of the new organization of work, will develop new social habits and will become socially responsible, taking from the common social fund freely but responsibly.

3 Joseph Carens makes a detailed proposal for putting the Principle into practice. He says (Carens 2003, 147) that the best way to approximate distribution according to needs would be to distribute income equally, through an equal after-tax allotment, letting each person decide their needs and the best way to satisfy them. In addition, there are certain basic needs that are different for each person, such as medical care and education. People vary greatly in respect of these "differentially incurred basic needs," and society should provide for them through direct funding. "The principle of distribution according to needs could most closely be approximated in practice by combining an egalitarian distribution of income with societal provisions for differently incurred basic needs" (Carens 2003, 147, 148). As for the first part of the Principle, Carens says that people who accept the norm "from each according to their ability" will feel that they have a duty to work and contribute, making good use of their talents (Carens 2003, 150). People are motivated to work by many different factors, and a sense of doing their job well and fulfilling their social responsibilities is a powerful one.

refer to the Principle. Foremost conservative thinkers from Ludwig von Mises to Robert Nozick have made the Principle a favourite target. Various theorists have recently dedicated an article or a book chapter to it.[4]

The Principle is also alive and well in contemporary literature. It is utilized ironically in Ayn Rand's philosophical novel *Atlas Shrugged*. The novel describes a factory which puts into practice "that noble historical precept: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Rand 1957, 523). Everybody from the apprentice to the president receives the same salary – the barest minimum necessary. Twice a year there is a meeting where all submit a claim for what they believe to be their needs. All vote on each claim, and the will of the majority establishes each person's needs and ability. The income of the factory is distributed accordingly, with rewards based on needs and penalties on ability (the penalties on under-used ability are one of Rand's imaginative additions). Those who have not produced as much as the vote said they could have must work overtime without pay to compensate. Within four years the plan ends badly, "in the sordid mess of policemen, lawyers and bankruptcy proceedings" (Rand 1957, 324).

The Principle is mischievously misquoted in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) with a feminist slant (Atwood 1986, 117): "From each according to her ability, to each according to his needs." For novelist Sally Rooney, the Principle was "the household catechism" recited by her socialist parents.[5] According to *The Atlantic*, the Principle influenced her prize-winning novel *Normal People* (2018).

The Principle continues to inspire action and stimulate discussion because of its power, concision and cogency. It captures powerful moral intuitions that everyone can endorse. It brings together two independent but related concepts, which are more forceful together than in isolation. That people, as members of society, are expected to contribute to the common welfare according to their ability guarantees the best use of their skills and the amplest provision toward the wealth of society. That people, as human beings, must receive according to their needs rather than according to any other criterion satisfies our intrinsic benevolence, altruism, and fellow feeling. Taken together, the two parts of the Principle are in line with recent evolutionary explanations of human cooperation.[6] In this sense, the Principle is closely connected to Marx's view of cooperation as a deeply human characteristic, exemplified in his description of the future cooperative society of producers.

The two parts of the Principle are grounded in strong moral intuitions. The first is more intuitive: that all are expected to contribute according to their skills ensures the best use of individual capacities for the common good. The second part requires some reflection as well as a comparison with other distribution criteria, such as labour, merit, and desert. But after the comparison is made we intuitively see the strength of the need criterion.

That all should contribute according to their ability, rather than according to other criteria – such as personal choice or good will – is an egalitarian, "democratic" view: we are all born with certain talents, and we all should put them at the service of the community. This is the egalitarian, democratic element: we are all equal in respect of our unequal gifts, and equally responsible to use them for the common good – while at the same time benefiting from the gifts of others. Some people are naturally more gifted or had the good fortune of

4 Notable contributions include, F. E. Manuel, "In Memoriam, *Critique of the Gotha Program*," *Daedalus*, 1976, Vol. 105, No. 1, 59; S. W. Moore, "Appeal to Hegel, the *Critique of the Gotha Program*," in *Marx on the Choice between Socialism and Communism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980, 32-51; K. Nielsen, "Marx, Engels and Lenin on Justice," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 32, 1986; R. Ware, "Marx on Some Phases of Communism," in *On the Track of Reason*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1992, 135-153; D. Miller, "To Each according to His Needs," in *Principles of Social Justice*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1999, 203-229; P. Gilabert, "The Socialist Principle 'From Each According to Their Abilities, to Each According to Their Needs," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 46 (2), 197-225 (2015); M. A. Lebowitz, "Understanding the *Critique of the Gotha Program*," in *The Socialist Imperative, From Gotha to Now*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2015, 42-88; G. McCarthy, "Distributive Justice, Justice of Consumption, Economic Redistribution, and Social Reciprocity," in *Marx and Social Justice, Ethics and Natural Law in the Critique of Political Economy*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2017, 235-271; R. Ware, "Marx on Some Phases of Communism" (updated), in *Marx on Emancipation and Socialist Goals, Retrieving Marx for the Future*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 203-222; P. Linebaugh, "Afterword" to K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Oakland, PM Press (forthcoming).

5 *The New Yorker*, December 31, 2018; see also *The New York Times*, August 31, 2018 and *The Atlantic*, April 12, 2019.

6 On the evolution of cooperation, see for instance R. L. Trivers, "The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism," *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 46 (1):35-57; R. Axelrod and W. D. Hamilton, "The Evolution of Cooperation," *Science* 211 (4489):1390-1396.

being able to develop their gifts. No matter the degree of natural or developed skills, we all have the social responsibility to put those skills at the service of society. This contributes to our sense of self-worth and well-being by reassuring us that we are useful members of society.

The second part of the Principle is grounded in equally strong moral intuitions. Need has an advantage over other distribution criteria, such as labour, merit, legal entitlement and social rank. It is another equalizing, "democratic" criterion in that, no matter our circumstances, we all have needs, humans being needful creatures. Even if we feel that all our needs are being fully met, we know that this may not be true in the future, and we certainly know that too many people have their needs unmet.

Need is the best criterion for distribution. We all can identify and empathize with the feeling of need and can agree that reasonable needs should be met as far as possible. Needfulness is a universal sentiment that naturally elicits feelings of sympathy. Denying available resources to people in need seems inhuman.

The Principle is both a theory and a call to action. As a theory, it has been discussed by the leading contemporary thinkers on distributive justice, and it continues to stimulate debate. As a call to action, it has been espoused by political leaders and activists, and it continues to inspire efforts to expand social welfare.

The application of the Principle depends on the specific conditions of a society. Implementation will differ widely, say, between a fairly egalitarian society and a highly unequal one, in an advanced industrial country and in a least developed one. Yet the flexibility of the Principle permits it to guide policies targeted at specific situations.

The same can be said of the implementation of the Principle in contemporary society. The *Critique*, and all of Marx's works, are inevitably a reflection of their time. They focus on the condition of male industrial workers in the 19th century, and women are left on the margins. In this world centred on able-bodied men, how do women figure? What about the Principle and family roles? How should childbearing and childrearing be addressed? Since these are responsibilities of the society at large, how can they best be allocated? How does the Principle affect the position of men and women in the workplace and in society? The fact that the Principle does not specifically address such questions does not mean that it cannot provide guidance. Applied to 21st century conditions, the equality-promoting spirit of the Principle can foster equitable relations among the sexes, especially because ability and needs have no gender. Women and men should contribute according to their individual ability, in a context very different from that of the 19th century, since ability encompasses many factors. And the Principle suggests that women's specific needs should be at the centre of attention.

The Principle, by its own nature, is flexible and adaptable, and can be applied to manifold situations, including situations that Marx could not have envisaged.

Can the Principle be Realized?

Discussions about the Principle are somewhat idle absent an examination of its practical influence and the possibility of realizing it. The Principle is not only a philosophical maxim, a theory of distribution, or a moral duty, but also a practical goal that society should strive to achieve. Yet when it comes to realization there is a tension between the full achievement of the Principle, as outlined by Marx, and its partial, incremental fulfillment, which arguably has been taking place. This raises the problem of the relationship between the principle as a philosophical maxim and its practical, historical implementation – the passage from principle to policy.

From Marx's viewpoint, the Principle cannot be applied in isolation. It presupposes the socioeconomic overhaul described in the paragraph that culminates in the Principle: the end of the division of labour, the increase in the productive forces, the creation of wealth by cooperative producers – "a higher phase of communist society," where the means of production have been socialized and private property has been abolished. The Principle can be fully realized only when a series of requirements have been met.

The Principle can best be understood in the context of the complex web consisting of the organization of production, human self-realization and communal living that culminates in the *Critique* but is a constant in Marx's thought. The Principle can reach its full fruition only in a society of free and autonomous producers, where there is no longer division of labour,

where labour leads to self-realization and where people are free to satisfy their deep needs for self-fulfillment, cooperation, and community.

Moving from the level of principles to the historical realm, it can be maintained that the Principle has not been realized, even in the most enlightened of societies. However, the fact that it has not been realized does not mean that it cannot be.

The full realization of the Principle remains a goal worth pursuing; in the meantime, the Principle serves as a catalyst. It maintains its force as a regulative idea: people should strive to achieve it even if a communist society has not yet come about. The Principle provides a goal to which all societies should aspire and to which all individuals should conform. Moreover, unlike a Kantian regulative idea, the Principle guides not only thought but also action.

The vitality of the Principle as a guide for political action is undeniable. Historically, the Principle has steered progress in providing health care, education, poverty relief and so on, and it continues to do so. The current debate on addressing inequality often refers to the Principle.[7]

Only in a society in which the means of production are socially owned can the resulting social product be distributed according to the Principle. In a non-communist society, the Principle can at most guide government efforts to redistribute resources through tax legislation, the provision of social services and the strengthening of the safety net.

However, pursuing the loftier goal should not hamper the pursuit of incremental socioeconomic progress – a task for which the Principle has proved indispensable. This is a version of the long-standing debate on reform versus revolution, but one goal does not preclude the other. One can accept incremental progress while still pursuing the loftier goal.

The Principle stands as both a reminder and a warning. In a world in which inequality, among and within countries, has reached alarming and harmful levels, the Principle continues to remind us that another way is possible, and serves as a signpost on how to get there.

7 See for instance "Notes from the Editors," *Monthly Review* 66 (3).

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Fish and Peace: How the Cold War Thawed in Corner Brook, Newfoundland

Dennis Alan Bartels

ABSTRACT: During the 1980s, Soviet fishing vessels from Murmansk regularly visited Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Project Ploughshares, a peace group in Corner Brook, organized visits of members of Soviet fishing crews to schools and homes in Corner Brook. Students and residents in Corner Brook were, in turn, invited aboard Soviet fishing vessels. Corner Brook Project Ploughshares was perhaps the most active, community-based peace group in Canada in the final years of the Cold War.

KEY WORDS: Cold War; Newfoundland; Project Ploughshares; peace movement; nuclear-weapons-free zone

In the 1980s, the Canadian federal government allowed Soviet fishing vessels from Murmansk, USSR, to re-supply in ports in Atlantic Canada, including Corner Brook, Newfoundland, at the head of the Bay of Islands on Newfoundland's west coast (https://cornerbrook.com/about-corner-brook/). Fish caught by Soviet vessels were processed in a Corner Brook plant owned by Bill Barry and his brother (http://barrygroupinc.com/about/). The frozen fish were then transported to Murmansk (Helin 1964).

Visits of Soviet fishing vessels to Newfoundland came in the context of Cold War tensions (Fleming 1961). The Cold War (1945–1991) can be characterized as a contest between the former Soviet Bloc, led by the USSR, and the West, led by the U.S., which stopped short of direct U.S.–Soviet armed conflict largely because of the threat of mutual assured destruction posed by nuclear war. This contest involved, among other things, comparisons between various aspects of life in the West and life in the Soviet Bloc in an effort to marshal political support for capitalism or for socialism (Bartels and Bartels 2013; 2016).

Cold War tensions included a proliferation of nuclear weaponry. The destructive power of nuclear weapons was demonstrated by the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

In response to the threat of nuclear war, popular movements favouring nuclear disarmament arose in some Western countries – for example, the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in Britain, the Women's Strike for Peace in the U.S., and the Voice of Women in Canada (https://vowpeace.org/vow-history/).

In 1979, the U.S. and USSR negotiated a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty – SALT II – aimed at reducing the numbers of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and nuclear warheads possessed by each

superpower. After the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, the treaty was not ratified by the U.S. Nor was it ratified by the USSR. The unratified treaty expired in 1985.

During the years of the Reagan Administration, from 1981 to 1989, and the Thatcher government in Britain, from 1979 to 1990, Cold War conflicts intensified. There were large demonstrations in West Germany against U.S. deployment of Pershing II Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) there (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) 1987).

A 1981 decision by the U.S. and British governments to deploy U.S. cruise missiles (SIPRI 1987) at the Royal Air Force base at Greenham Common, England, led to the establishment of Women's Peace Camps there. Despite attempts by British authorities to forcibly remove the camps, women returned to the campsites. In April and December,1984, the camps were the focal points of large demonstrations against cruise missile deployment.

U.S. submarines equipped with SLBMs (SIPRI 1987) began regular patrols in the Barents Sea, directly north of the western USSR. The Soviets deployed SS-20 ICBMs which did not need to be launched from fixed locations (SIPRI 1987).

The Soviets may have constructed a 'doomsday machine' which could launch ICBMs even if major Soviet command-and-control systems were destroyed by a U.S. first strike (Rosenbaum 2007). Such a system was satirized in Peter Sellars' classic film, *Dr. Strangelove*, released in 1964. It is unclear whether the U.S. constructed a similar doomsday machine.

In the 1980s, scientists, including Carl Sagan (b. 1934 – d. 1996), suggested that a minor nuclear exchange would propel enough debris, soot, smoke, and ash into the atmosphere to start a 'nuclear winter,' comparable to the 'Years Without Spring' that followed the volcanic eruption of Tambora in 1815 in what is now Indonesia (Turco and Sagan 1989). In the Years Without Spring, crops failed and many people committed suicide. The Years Without Spring inspired Lord Byron's 1816 poem, *Darkness* (https://englishhistory.net/byron/poems/darkness/).

The Reagan and Thatcher governments attempted to discredit the nuclear winter hypothesis, but it was supported by Britain's Royal Society, the U.S. National

Figure 1. Souvenir banner of the Soviet Northern Fishing Fleet, Murmansk

Academy of Sciences, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and the Royal Society of Canada (Ehrlich *et al.* 1985; Turco and Sagan 1989; Francis 2017).

The Reagan Administration allocated significant resources for development of a 'missile shield' of space-based laser weapons capable of intercepting Soviet ICBMs aimed at the U.S. This initiative was satirically characterized as 'Star Wars' after the 1977 George Lucas film of the same name. Critics of Star Wars, including many prominent scientists, argued that plans for space-based laser weapons were unworkable. A few prominent scientists, notably, Edward Teller (b. 1908 – d. 2003), 'father' of the U.S. hydrogen bomb, championed Star Wars (Jogalekar 2014).

Despite the heightening of Cold War tensions, growing numbers of people in the West became concerned about the danger of nuclear war. In Corner Brook, Newfoundland, with a population of about 20,000, a peace group was formed in 1984-85. This group included employees of Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, a campus of Memorial University of

Newfoundland, established at Corner Brook in 1975 (https://www.grenfell.mun.ca/), and other residents of Corner Brook and the surrounding area. The primary focus of this group was nuclear disarmament. In 1984-85, the peace group successfully urged the Corner Brook City Council to declare Corner Brook a Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zone. Nuclear-armed warships and aircraft were to be excluded from Corner Brook.

One of the first nuclear-weapons-free zones was established by New Zealand's government in 1984. New Zealand remains a nuclear-weapons-free zone.

In 1984-85, the Corner Brook peace group became affiliated with Waterloo University-based Project Ploughshares, an ecumenical peace organization sponsored by the Canadian Council of Churches (https://ploughshares.ca/about-us/history/). This initiative may have been suggested by Dr. Michael Newton who taught Religious Studies at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, now the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and Evie Newton, a school counsellor. They were active members of the peace group.

The name, "Project Ploughshares," was based on a passage in the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, Chapter 2, Verse 4, which refers to beating swords into ploughshares as symbolic of peace.

Corner Brook Ploughshares was a diverse group. Active members included an architect, a security consultant, a teacher at the Seventh Day Adventist school, a mathematician at Grenfell College, a librarian, a geographer at Grenfell College, a Corner Brook shop owner, a retired ballet dancer, a carpenter, a student at Grenfell College, a physician, a children's author, a nurse supervisor, an Employment Councillor for the federal government, and a labourer at Corner Brook Pulp and Paper who was also a member of Big Brothers.

At least half of Corner Brook Ploughshares members were women.

Several members of Corner Brook Ploughshares were from families who had lived in Western Newfoundland for many generations.

On a cold winter day in 1984-1985, Sister Sylvia Staples, a Roman Catholic nun, teacher, and principal at a Catholic school near the harbour, made her way, in her habit, up the steep, icy gangplank of a Soviet fishing vessel that was re-supplying in Corner Brook. She invited the Soviet sailors to play basketball with students at her school. They accepted the invitation. A school administrator asked Dr. Michael Newton to provide English-Russian interpreting. He accepted. The school administrator also attempted, without success, to locate a recording of the Soviet National Anthem which was to be played at the basketball game.

The basketball game was a great success. It's not clear who won, but everyone had a good time. The sailors invited the students from Sr. Staples' school to visit their ship. Tea and pastries were served on white linen tablecloths. This was probably a new experience for students from poor families. From then on, Soviet sailors from visiting ships were invited to several schools in Corner Brook, and to the homes of Corner Brook families. In turn, teachers, students, and members of Corner Brook households were invited to visit Soviet fishing vessels.

The crews of the Soviet ships included women, some of whom were officers.

It should be mentioned that Sister Staples was not a member of Corner Brook Ploughshares (http://thetelegram.com/lifestyles/cnib-celebrates-a-century-of-change-212499/). But many of the subsequent exchanges between Corner Brook schools and households, and Soviet fishing vessels were organized by Corner Brook Ploughshares.

News of Corner Brook hospitality spread among the crews of Murmansk-based fishing vessels. Crews could participate in choosing ports of call, and Corner Brook became the most popular stop in Atlantic Canada. This was very good for the Barry brothers' fish plant.

Ploughshares started organizing annual walks for peace in downtown Corner Brook on New Year's day (*Western Star*, Corner Brook, NL, 2 Jan., 1988). Participants would stop at various homes, collecting signatures on a peace petition urging nuclear disarmament. Sometimes, the wife of the Anglican Bishop would don her winter coat and join the walk, along with the wife of the former Mayor.

Corner Brook Ploughshares and the Canadian Institute for Peace and Security presented an Ecumenical Peace Symposium which ran from the 30th of October to the first of November, 1987 (Osborne, Zelig, and Ferens 1986-87). The Symposium brought together church leaders and others with expertise on Atlantic

Figure 2. Ploughshares entered 'peace floats' in Corner Brook's winter carnival, held every February

Canada and the nuclear arms race to speak and participate in panel discussions. Some billeting was available, daycare was provided, as were meals. The Symposium included a Concert for Peace at Corner Brook's Arts and Culture Centre. The registration fee for the symposium was $10. The registration fee for students and pensioners was $5. There was no registration fee for the unemployed and for students under 19 years of age. Admission to the Concert for Peace was $5 per person.

Speakers at the Peace Symposium included Geoffrey Pearson, former Canadian Ambassador to the USSR; the Very Reverend Lois Wilson, Moderator of the United Church of Canada; Ted Scott, an Anglican Bishop; Ted Schmidt, a columnist for *Catholic New Times*; fish plant owner Bill Barry; Gwynne Dyer, a widely-syndicated commentator on international affairs; a representative of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa; representatives of the Innu First Nation who opposed NATO low-level flying over Labrador (LaDuke 1990); two Canadian Forces officers; and, 'Giff' Gifford, a decorated World War Two Royal Canadian Air Force navigator who had flown on the Dresden Raid. 'Giff' Gifford was a founding member of Veterans Against Nuclear Arms – VANA (Antoft 1993).

Ernie Regher, the national head of Project Ploughshares, had agreed to attend the Symposium, but was invited to a last-minute meeting with a government Minister. This meeting, we were told, could only be scheduled on the precise date of the Symposium.

Other peace activists who attended the Symposium also received the same last-minute invitation to meet the government Minister as Ernie Regher.

Dr. Ian Simpson, Sheila Simpson (b. 1933 – d. 2018), John Peddle (b. 1945 – d. 2019), and Joan Peddle, played a major role in organizing the Symposium. Joan Peddle was one of the organizers of the Newfoundland Nurses' Union. Her husband, John, was a leading member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada in Corner Brook (Simpson 2018; Peddle and Peddle 2020; Jackman 1987).

At the Symposium, the Corner Brook fish plant owner, Bill Barry, emphasized the positive benefits of business relationships between Atlantic Canada and the Murmansk fishing fleet. Church leaders emphasized the relationship between peace and nuclear disarmament. One of the Canadian Forces officers claimed that wars occur because of cultural differences. He went on to say that it was necessary for NATO and Canada to maintain military preparedness because the Soviets had introduced a new fighter aircraft, the Mig 29.

After the Symposium, Bill Barry hosted a memorable dinner at his residence for some Ploughshares members and a high-ranking Soviet fishing fleet officer.

In December 1987, the choir from the high school, Herdman Collegiate, presented a concert on a visiting Soviet vessel. The concert was broadcast on the local Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio station. The Soviet crew was presented with a Christmas tree.

Figure 3. Sheila Simpson carrying banner, centre

The annual Ploughshares Walk for Peace in January, 1988, attracted more than 70 people. Around that time, crew members from a visiting Soviet vessel were hosted at schools and homes in Corner Brook, including the home of Ploughshares members, Bob and Mary Diamond.

In February, 1988, Ploughshares and Ten Days for World Development sponsored a visit by an American photo-journalist, Jim Harney, who spoke at local radio and TV stations and in many schools, about ongoing wars in Central America – for example, the attempt by U.S.-supported 'contras' to overthrow the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua (*Western Star*, 4 Feb. 1988). John Peddle, a prominent Ploughshares member (see above), organized Harney's speaking engagements.

After the Armenian earthquake on 7 December 1988, Corner Brook Ploughshares collected clothing and other types of goods for earthquake victims (White 1988a; 1988b).

Later in December, every crew member of a visiting Soviet vessel, the *Vasily Surikov*, was invited to a Corner Brook home for dinner (Hunt 1988). It seemed that there were periods that night when no crew members were aboard their ship.

Donations for Armenian earthquake victims were transported from Corner Book aboard the *Vasily Surikov* which arrived in Murmansk in January. The donated goods were flown to Armenia, arriving on 25 January, 1989.

The annual Ploughshares walk for peace in January, 1989, attracted more than 50 people.

Some crew members of Soviet vessels sought assistance from Ploughshares members to locate and buy used cars. Presumably, these cars were purchased with hard currency allotted to Soviet crew members who were visiting Canada. (The Soviet ruble was a 'soft' currency which could only be legally exchanged at a rate regulated by the Soviet state). The cars would be loaded on visiting ships and reconditioned in the ships' well-equipped machine shops on the way back to Murmansk.

On a cold winter day, John Peddle drove a Soviet crew member around Corner Brook to look at used cars. When John and the crew member returned to the wharf, the Soviet ship was gone. John was very worried, and feared that the crew member had been marooned. The crewman wasn't worried at all. John took him to the Peddle residence on Fern Street for tea. After a while, they drove back to the wharf. The ship had returned. It had briefly left in order clear a channel to open water through the ice which covered the Bay of Islands around Corner Brook.

On another night, John Peddle and the Captain of a Soviet vessel were aboard a launch travelling in the Bay of Islands toward a wharf at York Harbour where the Peddle family had a cabin. The launch did not have electronic navigation aids, and John realized that they were heading toward a rocky shore. John used

dead reckoning to direct the launch to the wharf. The Captain was very impressed by the accuracy of John's dead reckoning. It may have saved the Captain's life, not to mention John's.

The crew of every Soviet fishing vessel included a political officer who liased between the ship's officers, Communist Party members, and the trade union which represented non-commissioned crew members. Political officers usually knew some English and were helpful in organizing crew visits to schools and social events, including parties at the homes of Ploughshares members. Political officers also helped to arrange Ploughshares visits to Soviet ships.

Political officers seemed to be anxious to insure the good behaviour of crew members. Even when alcohol flowed freely at parties where Ploughshares members hosted Soviet sailors, heated political arguments and aggressive behaviour were absent.

In March 1989, John and Joan Peddle hosted Labrador Innu who were speaking at various venues regarding the negative effects on caribou herds of NATO low-flying aircraft (LaDuke 1990). The Royal Air Force chose to practice low-flying in Labrador because of the terrain's similarity to the tundra and taiga of Soviet Siberia.

In early 1989, there was a proposal from the Canadian Forces to use Corner Brook as a base for nuclear-powered submarines which were to be acquired by the Canadian Navy. The Brian Mulroney government was, no doubt, aware that the Corner Brook region suffered from high levels of unemployment, and that a major Canadian Forces naval base would bring many jobs. This presented Corner Brook Ploughshares with a dilemma: opposition to the proposed base might alienate the unemployed. But support for the base was inconsistent with Ploughshares' opposition to Cold War weaponry. Was the Mulroney government's proposal aimed at crippling Corner Brook Ploughshares, arguably the most active, community-based peace group in Canada?

Also, in early 1989, the Mulroney government, with the support of some Corner Brook residents, arranged a visit to Corner Brook by a U.S. Navy frigate, the *Thomas C. Hart*, which was normally armed with nuclear weapons. This led the Corner Brook City Council to reverse its designation of Corner Brook as a nuclear-weapons-free zone.

After John Peddle spoke to the Corner Brook Ministerial Association on May 1st, 1989, the Ministerial Association voted to support continuation of designation of Corner Brook as a nuclear-weapons-free zone.

In April, 1989, Ploughshares members collected signatures in support of the national Ploughshares On Track Campaign against nuclear weapons modernization.

The *Thomas C. Hart* visited Corner Brook for 3 days in July, 1989 (Mayo 1989).

Perhaps because of opposition to the *Hart* visit, the next City Council election included a plebiscite on whether or not Corner Brook should be a nuclear-weapons-free zone. Voters narrowly supported removal of Corner Brook's designation as a nuclear-weapons-free zone. But the unexpected scale of opposition to nuclear weapons was actually a victory for Corner Brook Ploughshares. The possibility of Corner Brook as a base for nuclear-powered submarines faded away.

With the end of the USSR in 1991, Corner Brook Ploughshares unofficially dissolved. After that, there were no exchanges between Corner Brook schools and the crews of visiting Russian fishing vessels.

In 2003, former members of Corner Brook Ploughshares formed People Against War With Iraq, and organized a march against Canadian participation in the Bush/Blair invasion.

On 19 November 2014, a letter written by 'MsTiddle,' a daughter of Corner Brook Ploughshares members, was published in England's *Guardian* newspaper:

> I remember getting bottles of perfume from the Russian fishing fleet when they came to my home town in Newfoundland in the 1980s. I was probably 11 at the time. We had bottles of Red Moscow and Natasha [perfume] stored in their boxes on our dressers for years. Seeing the labels takes me back, and if I close my eyes I can still smell the perfume and hear the clatter of dishes as we had tea and biscuits – nostalgic for sure.

Some former members of Corner Brook Ploughshares are members of the Qalipu First Nation, established in 2011 (Bartels and Bartels 2005).

The legacy of Corner Brook Ploughshares is still timely in light of the threat of nuclear war (Klare 2020).

This threat is reflected in the awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN; https://www.icanw.org/).

Along with the Pentagon Papers which Daniel Ellsberg used to expose the futility of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, he sequestered secret U.S. government estimates of casualties in a nuclear war. These documents are now lost, but Ellsberg says that the estimates were in the range of 600 million (CBC TV news, 28 Feb., 2018). Ellsberg sees the possibility of a nuclear winter resulting from nuclear war, as an omnipresent doomsday machine.

NOTES

This paper is based on a lecture, delivered in fall, 2018, for the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, University Lecture Series. All photos are by the author.

Sadly, few surviving members of Corner Brook Ploughshares kept documents pertaining to the activities of Corner Brook Ploughshares during the 1980s. However, the Project Ploughshares national office in Waterloo, Ontario, kept copies of the reports that they received during the 1980s from Corner Brook Ploughshares. Thanks to Project Ploughshares for kindly providing electronic copies of these reports.

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The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto kindly provided access to issues of the Bulletin of the Voice of Women, Ontario, from the Cold War period.

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