KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS

from Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was born in Treves, in the German Rhineland, to a Jewish family that had converted to Lutheranism. He earned his doctorate at Jena in 1841 and edited a newspaper in Cologne. Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), born in Barmen, also in the Rhineland, was the son of a textile manufacturer. He worked for his father in a cotton mill in Manchester, England, as a clerk, manager, and part owner. He met Marx in Cologne in 1842 and again in Paris in 1844. In 1848, a year that brought revolution to Paris as well as to Berlin, Vienna, Venice, Milan, and Parma, they collaborated to write The Communist Manifesto. Although a vision of justice lies behind much of their work, Marx and Engels wrote little about it. The Communist Manifesto contains some of their most explicit comments about distributive justice and details the theory of class struggle. (Source: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, New York: International Publishers, 1932.)

Bourgeois and Proletarians *

Class Struggle

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. . . .

. . . Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. . . .

The Bourgeoisie

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable

*By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labor. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live.
freedom—Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation. . . .

The Proletariat

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed—a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

II Proletarians and Communists

Private Property

The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property. . . .

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the nonexistence of any property for the immense majority of society. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

Individuality
From the moment when labor can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolised, *i.e.*, from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes. You must, therefore, confess that by “individual” you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation.

**Incentives**

It has been objected that upon the abolition of private property all work will cease, and universal laziness will overtake us.

According to this, bourgeois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those of its members who work, acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything, do not work. The whole of this objection is but another expression of the tautology: that there can no longer be any wage labor when there is no longer any capital.

**Culture**

But don’t wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class. . . . Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man’s ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man’s consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?

What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. . . .

**IV. Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties**

. . . In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.

Finally, they labor everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries. The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the
ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

**WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!**

**KARL MARX**

from *Critique of the Gotha Program*


... What is “a fair distribution”?....

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-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!

**Karl Marx**

from *The German Ideology* (1845)

**Part I: Feuerbach.**

**Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook**

**A. Idealism and Materialism**

**The Illusions of German Ideology**

**1. Ideology in General, and Especially German Philosophy**

... *First Premises of Materialist Method*

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself – geological, hydrographical, climatic and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.
Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.

This production only makes its appearance with the increase of population. In its turn this presupposes the intercourse [Verkehr] of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production….

4. The Essence of the Materialist Conception of History Social Being and Social Consciousness

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people’s imagination, but as they really are; i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the
development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in
the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimes of their material life-process, which is
empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the
rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the
semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their
material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their
thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but
consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as
the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living
individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness....

Private Property and Communism

With the division of labour, in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is
based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual
families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the distribution, and indeed the unequal
distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property: the
nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the
husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at
this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the
power of disposing of the labour-power of others. Division of labour and private property are,
moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity
as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity.

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate
individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have
intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the
imagination, as the “general interest,” but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of
the individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us
the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage
exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not
voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man’s own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him,
which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour
comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon
him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical
critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in
communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become
accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes
it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the
afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever
becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation
of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control,
thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in
historical development up till now.