

Citizen Marx

The Relationship between Karl Marx and Republicanism



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Abstract

Karl Marx's relationship to republicanism proceeds in three stages: he began his political career as a republican, he subsequently transitioned to communism, and then he finally reconciled his republicanism and communism.

Marx's early political writings reveal his commitment to central republican ideas, including popular sovereignty, widespread political participation and universal suffrage. These commitments led him to reject absolute and constitutional monarchy. But they also led to a critique of the modern republic, which Marx argued gave insufficient space for citizens to participate publicly for the common good. He thus gives a republican critique of the republic.

Marx's disillusionment with the ability of a modern republic to deliver human emancipation eventually led him to transition to communism. He now argued that the republic would be a bourgeois republic, which would subject the proletariat to the capitalist. He attacked republicans for neglecting social deprecation in favour of political reform. However, his transition to communism also carried with it several republican commitments. Unlike the many apolitical versions of communism at the time, Marx insisted that the workers had to establish the republic before communism could emerge. He also extended key republican political ideas, including the objection to arbitrary power, to the social sphere. But what was absent was an account of a more participatory and accountable political alternative to the modern republic.

However, the experience of ordinary workers carrying out the legislative and public administration of Paris during the Commune, led Marx to return to many of those early republican themes. He celebrated ordinary citizens' capacity for self-government and advocated popular control over the state and transforming representative democracy into popular delegacy. He came to realise that these political structures were essential to achieving the social goals of communism. He thus came to a synthesis of his early republicanism and later communism.

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Die Namen Republick und Constitution
So schön sie sind, genügen nicht allein;
Das arme Volk hat nichts im Magen,
Nichts auf dem Leib, und muß sich immer plagen;
Drum muß die nächste Revolution
Soll sie verbessern, eine sociale sein

The names republic and constitution
As nice as they are, are by themselves not enough;
The poor people have nothing in their bellies,
Nothing on their bones, and must always toil;
Thus, the next revolution must,
In order to improve them, be a social one

Epigraph to Wilhelm Weitling's *Die Menschheit,
wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* (1838/39)

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Introduction

the old world writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the Red Flag, the symbol of the Republic of Labour, floating over the Hôtel de Ville.

Marx, 1871¹

In November 1850, the first English translation of the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* was serialised in the radical Chartist newspaper the *Red Republican*. Published under the less internationalist title ‘German Communism: Manifesto of the German Communist Party’, the introduction named ‘Citizens Charles Marx and Frederic Engels’ for the first time as the authors of the revolutionary document that had appeared on the eve of the 1848 Revolutions that had spread across Europe two-and-a-half years earlier.² The translation captures much of the original power of the *Manifest*, but its unfamiliar formulations and terms can be a disorientating experience for modern readers. It speaks of ‘wage-slaves’ for workers, the ‘Mob’ for the lumpenproletariat, and ‘shopocrats’ for the petty bourgeoisie. Most peculiarly, the familiar version of the manifesto’s striking opening line, ‘A spectre is haunting Europe’, is instead rendered as ‘A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe.’³

The title *Red Republican* was a bold choice by the editor George Julian Harney. He mused that adding the ‘new fangled “Red”’ to the already dangerous ‘Republican’, could mean that a jury, ‘on being informed of the title of your publication, would at once convict you’.⁴ The title was indeed dangerous; it embodied the infusion of an emerging socialist consciousness into traditional republican demands. As Harney’s opening editorial made clear, ‘representative

¹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 143/336/343-44.

² Referring to each other as ‘Citizen’ was standard practice amongst nineteenth century radicals. It dated from the French Revolution as a way to replace hierarchical aristocratic titles. It was only replaced by ‘comrade’ amongst socialists towards the end of the century. See, for example, the minutes of the International Working Men’s Association, where members, including Marx, all refer to each other as ‘Citizen’, in *MEGA*² I.22, pp. 519-639. See also Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013), 535.

³ *Red Republican*, no. 21, 9 November 1850, p. 161. The translation was the work of Helen Macfarlane, a Scottish socialist and early feminist, see David Black, *Helen Macfarlane: A Feminist, Revolutionary Journalist, and Philosopher in Mid-Nineteenth Century England* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004). Marx judged Macfarlane to be the ‘only collaborator’ on the *Red Republican* ‘who really had any ideas’, which he said was a ‘*rara avis* (rare bird)’ in that paper, Marx to Engels, 23 February 1851, *MEGA*² III.4, p. 47; *MEW* 27, p. 196; *MECW* 48, p. 296. The standard English translation is by Samuel Moore and dates from 1888.

⁴ Harney, ‘Our Name and Principles’, 4.

institutions, universal suffrage, freedom of the press, trial by jury' were all 'utterly valueless', unless they were accompanied by a social revolution, for 'Political freedom is incompatible with social slavery'.⁵ The coming together of these traditions meant that Harney published articles in the *Red Republican* from across the spectrum of London's radical exile community, who had gathered there after the failure of the 1848 Revolutions. It was this ideological over-inclusiveness that increasingly infuriated Marx and Engels, eventually leading to them to breaking off political relations with Harney (although Engels continued his personal correspondence with him for the rest of his life).

The choice of title did indeed prove too bold. Booksellers refused to stock it and Harney was worried enough about official prosecution that he changed the name to the less confrontational *Friend of the People* (inspired by Jean-Paul Marat's French revolutionary paper, *L'Ami du peuple*), which ran until July 1851. The final issue of the *Red Republican* appeared on 30 November 1850. Its closing article was the last section of the *Manifest*, and so the *Red Republican's* final words were 'Let the Proletarians of all countries unite!', a slightly less captivating version of the more well-known translation: 'WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!'⁶ But this was not the only appeal to the working class made in the final issue of the *Red Republican*. Serialised alongside the *Manifest* was a set of articles, titled 'Republican Principles', which just a few pages before Marx and Engels's more famous appeal, had concluded with the words 'WORKING-MEN! I appeal to you...[to] join me to begin the foundation of our English Republic!'⁷

The author of 'Republican Principles' was William James Linton, a republican engraver, who had become known in London's radical circles through his friendship and political association with Giuseppe Mazzini, at the time Europe's most prominent republican. It was Linton who designed and engraved the striking masthead of the *Red Republican*, which depicted the republican symbols of the liberty cap, the spear, and the fasces, sitting on top of the revolutionary motto 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' (Figure 1). Linton's intellectual contribution to the *Red Republican* was intended as an extended explication of the principles articulated in the European Central Democratic Committee's manifesto (also published in the *Red Republican*), an organisation set up by Mazzini to coordinate the activities of the European republicans stranded in London.⁸ Linton argued that his articles would provide the 'countrymen of Milton and Cromwell' with a 'plain and easy of comprehension' exposition of republicanism, in order to

⁵ Harney, 'The Charter and Something More!', 1.

⁶ The original German reads 'Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!'

⁷ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 187/34.

⁸ ECDC, 'Aux Peuples! Organisation de la démocratie'.

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‘establish the basis of a really republican party’.⁹ Marx and Engels had similarly opened their manifesto declaring that ‘It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the Spectre of Communism with a Manifesto of the party itself.’¹⁰

Linton’s ‘Republican Principles’ and Marx and Engels’s *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (hereafter *Manifest*) thus provide us with a rare, literally side-by-side attempt to set out the principles of republicanism and communism. Reading their two manifestos together showcases several key differences between the two traditions. Linton opened with an explication of the meaning of the republican trinity of values, liberty, equality and fraternity; Marx and Engels’s manifesto began with the celebrated portrayal of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the unrelenting forward drive of capitalism.¹¹ ‘Republican Principles’ condemned any political system where ‘a caste rules’ as that meant ‘tyrants on one side, and slaves upon the other’; the *Manifest* declared workers to be the ‘slaves of the bourgeois class’, who were subjected to a ‘despotism’ that became only ‘more petty’ as the drive for profits grew.¹² ‘Republican Principles’ argued that emancipation would only be achieved through ‘the regular association of all classes, the organized association of the people’; the *Manifest* claimed that capitalism would be overthrown by the new class of proletarians, as they were the ‘only really revolutionary class’.¹³ ‘Republican Principles’ defended a system of ‘free Nations’ united in a ‘universal FEDERATION OF REPUBLICS’; the *Manifest* declared that the ‘working men have no country’ and predicted the disappearance of ‘national differences and antagonisms’.¹⁴

Yet these seemingly stark differences can distract us from some of the manifestos’ commonalities. As much as Marx and Engels are focused on the social dependency of the workers, they also argue that the workers are ‘slaves...of the bourgeois state’, and defend the necessity of workers ‘win[ning] the battle of democracy’.¹⁵ Linton does not restrict himself to political criticism, but also condemns the situation of the ‘wages slave’ and the ‘factory slave’, and maintains that it is the ‘business of Government’ to end their dependency.¹⁶ Their respective social programmes are also not as far apart as we might assume. Linton defends three core social policies in ‘Republican Principles’: free access to the land through

⁹ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 110/X.

¹⁰ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 461/481.

¹¹ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 110-11/10-12; Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 462-74/482-96.

¹² Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 172/25; Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 469/491.

¹³ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 125/14; Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 472/494.

¹⁴ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 187-88/32-33; Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 479/502-503.

¹⁵ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 469/491, 481/504.

¹⁶ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 156/21.

nationalisation, free state education, and the provision of free credit.¹⁷ The *Manifest*'s ten-point list of demands similarly called for the 'Abolition of property in land', 'Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State', and 'Free education for all children in public schools.'¹⁸

However, these social programmes did come apart when it came to the defining issue of private property. The *Manifest* declared unapologetically that 'the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.'¹⁹ Linton, on the other hand, wrote that 'we do not believe that "the institution" of private property is inevitably a nuisance'.²⁰ Linton argued that the goal of republicans was not to abolish private property but to give everyone access to it. The problem was therefore 'not that the few have, but that many have not'.²¹ Republicanism and communism were thus fundamentally divided as to whether private property should be abolished or universalised.

Linton and his fellow republicans believed that people had a right to the private property they had worked to create. Linton argued that it was the state's duty to be 'the Nation's Banker, to furnish each individual with the material means – the capital – for work'.²² Providing free credit would mean that workers could acquire the means to work, and be independent from the 'mischievous middle-men called capitalists'.²³ For Marx and Engels, such measures were necessary but insufficient for the emancipation of the workers, who would have 'to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State'.²⁴ Only this would adequately address the social dependency of the worker, and destroy the power of capital and the capitalist.

These competing social and political visions entered into repeated bitter conflict over the course of the nineteenth century. The *Manifest* and 'Republican Principles' represent just one instance in the broader struggle between republicans and communists over the soul of the radical movement and the support of the working classes.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 156/20-22, 164/22-23.

¹⁸ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 505/481-2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 475/498.

²⁰ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147/18.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 156/21-2.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 481/504. Marx would later emphasize collectivisation of the means of production through co-operatives rather than just state control, see 'Instructions for the Delegates', 232/195/190.



German Communist.

MANIFESTO OF THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY.

(Published in February, 1848.)

THE following Manifesto, which has since been adopted by all fractions of German Communists, was drawn up in the German language, in January 1848, by Citizens Charles Marx and Frederic Engels. It was immediately printed in London, in the German language, and published a few days before the outbreak of the Revolution of February. The turmoil consequent upon that great event made it impossible to carry out, at that time, the intention of translating it into all the languages of civilized Europe. There exist two different French versions of it in manuscript, but under the present oppressive laws of France, the publication of either of them has been found impracticable. The English reader will be enabled, by the following excellent translation of this important document, to judge of the plans and principles of the most advanced party of the German Revolutionists.

It must not be forgotten, that the whole of this Manifesto was written and printed before the Revolution of February.

A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe. We are haunted by a ghost, the ghost of Communism. All the Powers of the Past have joined in a holy crusade to lay this ghost to rest,—the Pope and the Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police agents. Where is the opposition which has not been accused of Communism by its enemies in Power? And where the opposition that has not hurled this blighting accusation at the heads of the more advanced oppositionists, as well as at those of its official enemies?

EQUALITY, LIBERTY, FRATERNITY.
EDITED BY G. JULIAN HARNET.

No. 21.—Vol. I.]

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1850.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

Two things appear on considering these facts. I. The ruling Powers of Europe acknowledge Communism to be also a Power. II. It is time for the Communists to lay before the world an account of their aims and tendencies, and to oppose these silly fables about the bugbear of Communism, by a manifesto of the Communist Party.

CHAPTER I.

BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIANS.

HITHERTO the history of Society has been the history of the battles between the classes composing it. Freemen and Slaves, Patricians and Plebeians, Nobles and Serfs, Members of Guilds and journeymen,—in a word, the oppressors and the oppressed, have always stood in direct opposition to each other. The battle between them has sometimes been open, sometimes concealed, but always continuous. A never-ceasing battle, which has invariably ended, either in a revolutionary alteration of the social system, or in the common destruction of the hostile classes.

In the earlier historical epochs we find almost everywhere a minute division of Society into classes or ranks, a variety of grades in social position. In ancient Rome we find Patricians, Knights, Plebeians, Slaves; in mediæval Europe, Feudal Lords, Vassals, Burglers, Journeymen, Serfs; and in each of these classes there were again grades and distinctions. Modern Bourgeois Society, proceeded from the ruins of the feudal system, but the Bourgeois régime has not abolished the antagonism of classes.

New classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms and modes of carrying on the struggle, have been substituted for the old ones. The characteristic of our Epoch, the Era of the Middle-class, or Bourgeoisie, is that the struggle between the various Social Classes, has been reduced to its simplest form. Society incessantly tends to be divided into two great camps, into two great hostile armies, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

The bourgeois of the early Communes sprang from the Serfs of the Middle Ages, and from this Municipal class were developed the primitive ele-

ments of the modern Bourgeoisie. The discovery of the New World, the circumnavigation of Africa, gave the Middleclass—then coming into being—new fields of action. The colonization of America, the opening up of the East Indian and Chinese Markets, the Colonial Trade, the increase of commodities generally and of the means of exchange, gave an impetus, hitherto unknown, to Commerce, Shipping, and Manufactures; and aided the rapid evolution of the revolutionary element in the old decaying, feudal form of Society. The old feudal way of managing the industrial interest by means of guilds and monopolies was not found sufficient for the increased demand caused by the opening up of these new markets. It was replaced by the manufacturing system. Guilds vanished before the industrial Middle-class, and the division of labour between the different corporations was succeeded by the division of labour between the workmen of one and the same great workshop.

But the demand always increased, new markets came into play. The manufacturing system, in its turn, was found to be inadequate. At this point industrial Production was revolutionised by machinery and steam. The modern industrial system was developed in all its gigantic proportions; instead of the industrial Middle-class we find industrial millionaires, chiefs of whole industrial armies, the modern Bourgeois, or Middle-class Capitalists. The discovery of America was the first step towards the formation of a colossal market, embracing the whole world; whereby an immense development was given to Commerce, and to the means of communication by sea and land. This again reacted upon the industrial system, and the development of the Bourgeoisie, the increase of their Capital, the superseding of all classes handed down to modern times from the Middle Ages, kept pace with the development of Production, Trade, and Steam communication.

We find, therefore, that the modern Bourgeoisie are themselves the result of a long process of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of Production and Exchange. Each of the degrees of industrial evolution, passed through by the modern Middle-class, was accompanied by a corresponding

Figure 1. Manifesto of the German Communist Party, Red Republican, 9 November 1850.

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I. Argument

This thesis sets out to answer the question what is the relationship between Marx and republicanism. Under that remit we can distinguish a number of related paths of inquiry. Foremost amongst them is getting to the bottom of what Marx thought of republicanism; what did he praise and what did he criticise about the tradition. It includes identifying how and to what extent Marx's ideas were shaped by his interactions with republicans and his study of the tradition. It further includes general comparisons between republican ideas and concepts and Marx's social and political thought, even where there is no evidence of a direct influence or rejection on Marx's part. Finally, it involves an assessment of how any of the above aspects of the relationship might have changed across Marx's lifetime.

Marx's personal intellectual and political development in relation to republicanism progressed over three periods; a development that can be usefully understood as having a dialectical rhythm to it. Marx began his public political career as a republican, he subsequently transitioned to communism, and then, finally, he came to a synthesis of his early republicanism and later communism. Marx's position in each of these periods is epitomised by his three great political texts, written in the respective period: the *Zur Kritik des Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (1843), *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (1852), and the *Civil War in France* (1871).

Marx's early republicanism covers the period roughly up until late 1843 before he moved to Paris. As a university student, he came into contact with the Young Hegelians, a disparate group of intellectuals engaged in radicalising Hegel's religious, political and philosophical system. Against the backdrop of an increasingly authoritarian Prussian regime, many of the Young Hegelians, including Marx, became increasingly disillusioned with liberal reformism and came to more revolutionary republican positions. Particularly important for Marx's development in this regard were the philosopher and lecturer Bruno Bauer and Arnold Ruge, the editor of the Young Hegelians' main journal, the *Hallische Jahrbücher* (later the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*). Marx twice became a personal victim of the Prussian crackdown on political dissent when he was denied an academic career and then, in March of 1843, when the regime censored the liberal Cologne newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*, which he edited and had over the previous months driven in an increasingly radical direction.

The most important statement of Marx's republicanism from this period is his unpublished manuscript, the *Zur Kritik des Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (hereafter *Kritik*), a protracted critique of Hegel's theory of the state. In the *Kritik*, Marx defends popular sovereignty and the value of political participation, and attacks the exclusion of the people from public administration by an elitist

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Prussian bureaucracy. Marx's *Kritik* thus shares many of the republican attacks on Hegel's theory by his Young Hegelian contemporaries. But what stands out in the *Kritik* is that Marx distances himself from the central demand of his fellow republicans: the republic. Instead he contrasts this with a 'democracy', a political regime that he suggests would allow for greater political participation, give citizens control over the state bureaucracy, replace representative government with a form of popular delegacy and overcome the alienating division between civil society and the state. These criticisms would eventually transform into his later communism, but at the time of writing the *Kritik* he was still not willing to commit to communism, labelling it in September 1843 a 'dogmatic abstraction'.²⁵ Marx's attack on the republic was thus still, broadly, within the republican camp.

While we can certainly discern many of the seeds of Marx's later socialism in his 1843 writings, it was in Paris that he made the decisive transition from republicanism to communism. Here he was confronted for the first time by organised communists and workers. The proletariat now crystallised in his thought as the agent that could bring about the truly human revolution. The proletariat were, he now argued, 'soldiers of socialism' and not 'soldiers of the republic'.²⁶

The republic, in Engels's words, had since 1789 been the 'ideal of enthusiastic freedom fighters' across Europe.²⁷ On barricade after barricade radicals had fought and died for a new political order that would guarantee liberty, equality and fraternity for all citizens. For republicans, the republic exercised a powerful hold on their political imagination. It promised a polity where the people, freed from the oppressive shackles of absolutism, would unite to exercise their new political and civil rights for the common good. The reality, Marx argued, would be very different. Overthrowing the rule of the king and his aristocratic order, would not usher in a new age of freedom for every citizen, but set the stage for the rule of the bourgeoisie. Marx argued that the republic was the completion of the bourgeoisie's rise to political power; maintaining that the 'bourgeoisie has no king; the true form of its rule is the republic'.²⁸ He argued that the republican political revolution opened the doors to a capitalist society, arguing that 'Throwing off the political yoke meant at the same time throwing off the bonds which restrained the egoistic spirit of civil society'.²⁹

Marx consequently repeatedly stressed that the republic would actually be a *bourgeois* republic: a republic ruled by and for the bourgeoisie. It was a form of

²⁵ Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 487/344/142.

²⁶ Marx, 'Kritische Randglossen', 461/407/204.

²⁷ Engels, 'Die Republik in Spanien', 130/417.

²⁸ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 146/40/73.

²⁹ Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 161/369/166.

the republic Marx held in contempt, charging that the '*bourgeois republic* signifies the unlimited despotism of one class over other classes' and the 'state whose admitted object it is to perpetuate the rule of capital, the slavery of labour'.³⁰ No event proved the bourgeois nature of the republic for Marx better than the bloody June Days of 1848, when the new French republic sent in the army to ruthlessly crush the insurgent workers who had naively believed that the republic would be theirs. It would henceforth be more honest, Marx noted, for the republic to replace its motto '*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, by the unambiguous words: Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery!'³¹

The republic had been so central to the republican tradition because it had long argued that to enjoy the status of a *free person* one had to live in a *free state*.³² A free state, where sovereignty lay with the people and where political power was properly constrained by a constitution and the rule of law, ensured that no ruler could arbitrarily interfere in one's life. A citizen's freedom was thus guaranteed by a specific kind of political regime, a free republic, and could never be realised by absolutist ones. But for Marx establishing a free republic was not enough to ensure freedom. The French and American republics may have proclaimed themselves to be free following the overthrow of their absolutist and colonial predecessors, but what they had actually done was banished unfreedom into the private sphere. These free states had declared all men to be politically and legally equal, but celebrated social inequality. They had abolished property qualifications on suffrage, but not private property itself. They had made every person free and equal in front of a court of law but left them unfree in their everyday life and in their workplace. They had, as Marx so famously argued, achieved political emancipation but not human emancipation. He thus writes 'the state can be a *free state* (*Freistaat*) without man being a *free man*'.³³ For Marx, to be a free person means that one has to live in a *free society*.

This was an indictment of those republicans who limited themselves to purely political reform. But as we saw in the opening discussion, more radical republicans did extend their ideas beyond the political realm and proposed a range of social measures to combat the dependency of the worker in capitalism. Marx also criticised these radical or democratic republicans (as they were called), for their prioritisation of politics and political reform, but he additionally developed a critique of their social ideas. Although communists and democratic republicans shared many planned social measures, Marx argued that their continued defence of private property was a reflection of their petty bourgeois sympathies. He argued

³⁰ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 105–6/122/111; 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 139/33/69.

³¹ *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 131/148/137.

³² Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 60.

³³ Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 147/353/152. *Freistaat* is a German alternative term for republic.

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that it showed that they were committed to maintaining a mode of production based on independent peasants and small artisans. Marx maintained that this form of production was becoming increasingly irrelevant, as ‘the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it everyday’.³⁴ Marx argued that the democratic republican failed to comprehend the tremendous productive forces unleashed by capitalism, and that they could not simply be undone, with proletarians being transformed again into individual independent producers. The only alternative to capitalism, Marx stressed, was communism. To the extent that democratic republicans replied to this attack (Marx was much less prominent than them), they rejected the underlying historical materialist premises, and argued that politics gave much greater scope for directing social change.

Marx’s critique of the insufficiency of the bourgeois republic was widespread in communist and socialist circles. Wilhelm Weitling had opened his *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte* (1838/39), one of the most important early contributions to German communism, with the declaration that a ‘republic and constitution’ would not help those with ‘nothing in their bellies’.³⁵ A common consequence drawn out from this belief was that the republic was therefore an unnecessary goal and that purely political reform or revolution was futile. That tendency can be traced from the early utopian socialists, who ‘were deeply distrustful of “politics”’, and to Marx’s contemporary True Socialists, who ‘championed an anti-state, anti-constitutionalist approach’.³⁶

In contrast, Marx made the commitment to achieving the bourgeois republic and the necessity of political action a cornerstone of his communism. Marx maintained that the bourgeois republic was a historical precondition for communism, because as the political accompaniment of bourgeois society, it would drive forwards the economic forces that would eventually make communism possible. He further argued that the bourgeois republic would create political conditions more favorable to communist organisation, as workers would have the right to organise freely and openly, making the conspiratorial communist societies a thing of the past. Most importantly, the introduction of universal suffrage would force the ‘political rule of the bourgeoisie into democratic conditions’, ultimately undermining its power through the combined electoral

³⁴ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 475/498.

³⁵ Wilhelm Weitling, *Die Menschheit, wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte*, 142.

³⁶ Respectively G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1953), 3; and Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 210. The anti-political strains in socialism are also discussed in see Axel Honneth, *Die Idee des Sozialismus: Versuch einer Aktualisierung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015), 57–64; and Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1–14.

might of the subordinate classes.³⁷ This position distinguished Marx's communism from much of the existing socialist and communist alternatives, which had abandoned the republican insistence on the necessity of achieving the republic.³⁸ Marx's transition to communism from republicanism thus carried with it a core republican commitment, thereby forging a new kind of communism.

That was also the case with Marx's critique of political economy, which extended the republican concern with freedom and arbitrary power from its primarily political origins to the social sphere. Republicans had long argued that being subjected to the arbitrary will of a monarch made his subjects unfree and turned them into political slaves. Marx used the same language to criticise the personal domination of the capitalist over the worker, arguing that wage-labour was, in effect, wage-slavery. According to Marx, the worker was performing 'unfree' labour whenever it was 'performed in the service, under the domination, the coercion, and the yoke of another man'.³⁹ That argument had, in fact, already been made by many nineteenth century republicans. In *De l'esclavage moderne* (1839) Felicité de Lamennais argued that 'Between the capitalist and the proletarian, then, the same actual relations subsist as were between the master and the slave of old.'⁴⁰ Republicans had thus already developed a critique of wage-labour before Marx had begun his critique of political economy. Where Marx's originality lay, was in his analysis of the impersonal domination of markets. He argued that markets subjected people to arbitrary social forces beyond their control. The worker was thus not just personally dominated by the capitalist, but impersonally dominated by the market imperatives of capitalism.⁴¹

Marx's transition to communism was thus not an abandonment of republicanism, as it extended key republican principles into both the political and economic realm. However, his transition did mean that aspects of his early republicanism receded from view. His writings placed less distinctive emphasis on the centrality of political participation, and there were few signs of his critique of representation or the importance of transforming the bureaucracy and placing it under popular control. His emphasis was primarily on communists coming to power within the bourgeois republic, and turning it to social ends, rather than also transforming its political structures.

But in March 1871 that position was dramatically challenged when the Parisian proletariat took control of their city and demanded that the republic

³⁷ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 148/43/79.

³⁸ Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 85–86.

³⁹ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 372/519/278–9.

⁴⁰ Lamennais, *De l'esclavage moderne*, 34–5/10.

⁴¹ William Clare Roberts, *Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), chapter 3.

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should be a *social* republic. The Paris Commune was a tragically short-lived experiment (the Versailles government brutally crushed it in May of that year), but it made a deep impact on Marx. Inspired by the sight of ordinary workers seizing control of Paris and running it along radical democratic principles, Marx returned to many of the republican ideas of his youth.⁴² For instance, he repeatedly praised the Parisian workers for showing that government and administration was not the preserve of a ‘trained caste’, but should and could be carried out by ordinary citizens.⁴³ He also praised the Commune for making representatives subject to recall, imperative mandates and short terms of office, and for placing public administration in the hands of the people by making all public officials ‘elective, responsible, and revocable’.⁴⁴ The Commune had thereby ‘supplied the Republic with the basis of really democratic institutions’, and shown that it was ‘a government of the people by the people’.⁴⁵

Marx now realised that communists could not simply seize control of bourgeois republic and expect that it would be a suitable vehicle for delivering communism. The political structures of the state would in fact have to be radically refashioned if it was to bring about a transformation of the economic sphere. Only by placing the state, including its legislative and bureaucratic branches, squarely under popular control would communists have any hope of maintaining the revolutionary struggle. As he said in the *Civil War in France* (his main text dealing with the Commune), ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes’.⁴⁶ He now argued that the workers could not use the same ‘political instrument of their enslavement’ as the ‘political instrument of their emancipation’.⁴⁷ That Marx saw this as an important revision of his views is demonstrated in the preface to the 1872 edition of the *Manifest*. Here, Marx and Engels repeated the above quote from the *Civil War in France*, and added that the experience of the Commune had ‘proved’ that their original 1848 programme had in ‘some details become antiquated’.⁴⁸ This was a rare recognition that they had neglected the question of what specific political structures are needed to bring about communism. Communists could, in summary, not simply seize the state, they would have re-make it from the ground up: radically democratic and under popular control.

⁴² A point made in Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*, 84–8; Lucio Colletti, ‘Introduction’, in *Early Writings*, by Karl Marx (London: Penguin, 1975), 42–4.

⁴³ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 58/544–45/490.

⁴⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 140/339/332.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 142/342/334, 146/347/339.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 137/336/328.

⁴⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 100/529/533.

⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, ‘1872 Vorwort zum *Manifest*’, 96/175.

Communists thus needed their own republic to achieve communism, ‘a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class-rule, but class-rule itself’, in other words a ‘Social Republic’.⁴⁹ The institutions of this republic bear great resemblance to the political regime Marx first outlined in his *Kritik*, written nearly forty years before. The *social republic*, is in essence, a return to the *democracy* of his youth. A regime where citizens have far greater opportunity for political participation, where public administration is carried out by the people and not by an elite class of civil servants, and where representatives are transformed into delegates of the people. His later communism has thus been infused by his early republican enthusiasm for political participation and popular control.

II. Republicanism

In order to compare Marx with republicanism, we need to consider what that political tradition consists of. To do so, it is helpful to outline some of the tradition’s core concepts, their ordering and relative weighting.⁵⁰ Perhaps republicanism’s most foundational element is the republic. When considering what the republic meant, Thomas Jefferson noted that ‘it must be acknowledged, that the term *republic* is of very vague application in every language’.⁵¹ But that did not deter him from trying to give a more ‘precise’ meaning to the term, as ‘a government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to rules established by the majority’.⁵² Jefferson’s definition is far from indisputable, but it does get to the ineliminable core of the concept, that a republic is a political regime where the people rule themselves.⁵³ What this entails is heavily contested, and one way to understand the various strains within the republican tradition is how they interpret the requirements of self-government. The more aristocratic parts of the tradition have believed that self-government is compatible with concentrating power in a narrow elite, while democratic republicans have tried to broaden this to the citizenry as a whole. Montesquieu thus categorized republics into democratic and aristocratic depending on whether the ‘*people as a body, or only a part of the people, have sovereign power*’.⁵⁴ But all republicanism share a

⁴⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139/338/330–31.

⁵⁰ The theoretical grounding for this approach is set out in Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁵¹ Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, 28 May 1816, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, volume 11, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York & London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905), 529.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ On the ineliminable core of concepts see Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 61–62.

⁵⁴ Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois*, II.1.

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commitment to the idea that the governing of the republic is rightly the concern of its citizens.⁵⁵ As Richard Dagger summarises,

republicanism rests on the conviction that government is not the domain of some ruler or small set of rulers, but is instead a public matter – the *res publica* – to be directed by self-governing citizens.⁵⁶

For nineteenth century republicans, this conviction was expressed in terms of their most central value: popular sovereignty. The opening editorial of *La Réforme*, the organ of the French radical republicans, declared in 1843 that ‘Our goal is...the full and genuine implementation of the principle of the Sovereignty of the People.’⁵⁷ Similarly, the opening 1848 editorial of the English journal *The Republican* (subtitled *A Magazine Advocating the Sovereignty of the People*), declared ‘That the voice of the People is the only legitimate source of supreme authority: in a word, we desire to see acknowledged everywhere, the Sovereignty of the People.’⁵⁸

Next to popular sovereignty, the core concepts of nineteenth-century republicanism were the French revolutionary trinity of liberty, equality and fraternity. These were the ‘battle-cry of the Republican – the formula of his faith’.⁵⁹ Liberty had been a central concept of republicanism for most of its history, but the addition of equality and fraternity was an innovation of nineteenth century republicanism.⁶⁰ Conflicts between different republicans throughout the nineteenth century can, to some extent, be understood as arguments about the definitions of these three concepts as well as their relative importance.⁶¹ For example, liberal or bourgeois republicans constricted equality to purely legal equality, while the more radical republicans assigned it social content as well. The centrality of this trinity of concepts reflects the huge power that the legacy of the French Revolution exercised over European republicans. The revolution had, however briefly, spectacularly overthrown the continent’s most established absolute monarchy, abolished its feudal institutions, and replaced it with a republic that promised universal rights and political participation for all (male) citizens. The attempt to fulfil this promise ‘lay at the heart of the republican movements’ struggle to re-establish Republican institutions in France.’⁶²

⁵⁵ Who counts as a ‘citizen’ of the republic is, of course, a source of deep division in the tradition.

⁵⁶ Richard Dagger, ‘Republicanism’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 701.

⁵⁷ *La Réforme*, 29 July 1843, no. 1, p. 1. Cited in Peter McPhee, ‘The Crisis of Radical Republicanism in the French Revolution of 1848’, *Historical Studies* 16, no. 62 (1974): 74–75.

⁵⁸ Harding, ‘The Republican: Introductory’, 1.

⁵⁹ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 110/10.

⁶⁰ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Republican Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19–20.

⁶¹ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 80.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 69.

Understanding what republicanism was in the nineteenth century is aided by comparing it with its political competitors: liberalism and conservatism. A convenient shorthand in differentiating these ideologies is to look at which of the three main nineteenth century political regimes they aimed at. Conservatives wanted to maintain (or re-establish) absolute monarchies, while liberals supported a constitutional monarchy and republicans fought for a republic.⁶³ Absolute monarchies were characterised by individual rule unconstrained by a constitution or an effective legislature, as well as the nearly complete exclusion of the people from political power. A republic meant a constitution that guaranteed universal rights and equality, and direct elections to a single representative chamber with universal male suffrage. Constitutional monarchy was a compromise between these regimes, with the king's power constrained by a constitution that guaranteed the separation of powers and a limited set of civil rights, and where the legislature was divided between a lower house, elected indirectly and with a property franchise, and an unelected upper house of nobles.⁶⁴

Nineteenth century republicans were closely associated with the demand to remove Europe's monarchical regimes. Indeed, the danger of openly advocating this position meant that many republicans publicly described themselves using less confrontational terms, such as 'democrat' and 'radical', labels which were used interchangeably with 'republican' in the period.⁶⁵ However, republicans were keen to emphasise, for strategic and principled reasons, that republicanism was not reducible to opposing a monarch. Strategic, because when they were threatened with censorship and imprisonment, they could claim that they were not necessarily opposed to a monarch. Principled, because what really mattered to most republicans, was not who happened to be the figurehead of the state, but how the state was structured. Representative government and universal suffrage were what republicans actually cared about, even if they usually assumed that achieving these institutional goals would almost certainly involve removing the monarch. The point is aptly illustrated by Richard Carlile, the crusading fighter for suffrage and the free press, who in 1819 argued in his *The Republican* magazine that,

satisfying ourselves of the etymology and meaning of the word
Republican, we find that it really means nothing more when applied to

⁶³ David Blackbourn, *The Fontana History of Germany 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 130-34; David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 7-13; Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*, 56-57.

⁶⁴ The meaning of constitutional monarchy thus differed from its contemporary usage, where it (usually) refers to representative governments that have kept a hereditary monarch in a ceremonial role.

⁶⁵ Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1850*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 14; Stephan Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx. Die politische Philosophie Arnold Ruges. Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Demokratie in Deutschland* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1995), 51-52.

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government, than a government which consults the public interest – the interest of the whole people. Although in almost all instances where governments have been denominated Republican, monarchy has been practically abolished; yet it does not argue the necessity of abolishing monarchy to establish a Republican government.⁶⁶

Republicanism also needs to be distinguished from socialism and communism. These were, to an extent, an outgrowth of republicanism. Both conceptually, in that they can be understood as an extension of traditional republican political concerns into the economic sphere, and politically, in that many socialists and communists started their political careers as republicans.⁶⁷ The differentiation between these ideologies became increasingly obvious throughout the 1840s and the latter half of the nineteenth century saw republicanism increasingly losing ground to socialism and communism amongst the working classes. The easiest shorthand for differentiating these ideologies, is that republicanism was primarily aimed at political change, while socialism and communism aimed at social change. But it is better to think in terms of how central these aims, and the associated concepts, were to the respective ideology. Communism and socialism placed the overcoming of capitalism at their definitional centre, with their political ideas usually pushed to the periphery (which spanned everything from abstention in the political process to revolutionary participation), while republicanism placed the struggle for popular sovereignty in the political realm at its very core, with social reform a more or less important secondary aim. However, republicans did endorse a wide selection of radical social reforms, which their liberal contemporaries refused to contemplate. They proposed everything from land nationalisation, to free credit and education, to the abolition of inheritance and progressive taxation. (For this reason, more radical republicans were sometimes willing to call themselves socialist, a label which was always more flexible than communism).⁶⁸ But the step they were almost always unwilling to make was the abolition of private property and the collectivisation of the means of production. Those radicals who insisted on remaining under the republican umbrella did so because they would not let go of private property. For republicans, abolishing private property was tantamount to abolishing liberty and would lead to an unacceptably powerful and arbitrary state.

⁶⁶ Carlile, 'To the Readers of the Republican', ix. The association of 'republic' with only any non-monarchical political regimes is a modern phenomenon, which originates in the Italian renaissance, James Hankins, 'Exclusivist Republicanism and the Non-Monarchical Republic', *Political Theory* 38, no. 4 (2010): 453. Previously, and for quite some time subsequently, it was applied to any law-abiding regime. Thus even constitutional monarchies, where the power of the monarch was constrained by law and citizens were given a say in government were frequently identified as republics. As Montesquieu famously observed, England was a 'nation where the republic hides under the form of monarchy', *De l'esprit des lois*, V.19.

⁶⁷ Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 83.

⁶⁸ Many socialists and communists also called themselves republican, especially in France, but they usually did so in addition to their profession to socialism and communism.

A final set of republican concepts revolves around domination, servitude and slavery, and their connection to freedom. The importance of this dimension of republicanism has been pushed to the fore by the influential work of Quentin Skinner and Philipp Pettit.⁶⁹ The driving force behind their work has been the attempt to unearth and defend what they claim is a distinct republican conception of freedom.⁷⁰ They argue that in the republican conception of freedom a person is unfree if they are subject to the arbitrary power of someone else. An unfree person is someone who is dependent on the goodwill of a master, who lives at their mercy and discretion. By contrast, to be free is to be able to exercise choice without having to look over one's shoulder, worrying about whether a power-holder will intervene whenever they feel like it. This understanding of freedom enabled early modern republicans to criticise the arbitrary power of the absolute monarch, as inherently undermining the liberty of their subjects and reducing them to political slaves. Pettit refers to this conception of freedom as freedom as non-domination, while Skinner prefers freedom as independence.

These investigations have opened up fruitful avenues for historical and contemporary research, which have shed new light on several aspects of republicanism. There has however been a tendency to exaggerate its centrality (Pettit has claimed that freedom as non-domination is the 'most important unifier of the tradition').⁷¹ Reducing any political tradition or ideology to a single concept is generally misguided, as they are better understood as a cluster of concepts.⁷² Reducing republicanism to freedom as non-domination faces the problem that it casts the net too wide, by including thinkers that do not share a broader set of republican political commitments.⁷³ It also excludes republican thinkers who have espoused a more positive conception of freedom, such as Rousseau and Hannah Arendt, and artificially imposes a contemporary categorisation of freedom that

⁶⁹ Some of the key contributions include, Quentin Skinner, 'Machiavelli on the Maintenance of Liberty', *Politics* 18, no. 2 (1983): 3–15; Quentin Skinner, 'The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty', in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 293–309; Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Philip Pettit, *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2014).

⁷⁰ Skinner prefers 'neo-roman' to 'republican', because the theory of liberty was sometimes defended by theorists who were not republican in the sense of being opposed to monarchy, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 22–23 & 55–77. Skinner has however conceded that Pettit's usage of 'republican' has become standard in the literature, Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), ix.

⁷¹ Pettit, *Republicanism*, 20. Skinner is more careful in his historical characterization of the tradition.

⁷² Freedman, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 84. For approaches to republicanism that see it as a group of concepts, see Richard Dagger, 'Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy', *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 5, no. 2 (2006): 154; and Stuart White, 'The Republican Critique of Capitalism', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 14, no. 5 (2011): 562–64.

⁷³ Alex Gourevitch, 'Republican Political Thought', in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. Michael T. Gibbons, vol. VII (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 3233.

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many historical republicans would not have recognised.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the overemphasis on the centrality of the normative value of freedom, has downplayed the extent to which the tradition is distinguished by its institutional discussions.⁷⁵ We should therefore see freedom as non-domination and the associated language of independence, servitude and slavery as part of the wider set of republican concepts, but making it the central or defining idea is likely to mislead our historical investigation.⁷⁶

The continued relevance of this dimension of republicanism in the nineteenth century has not been adequately explored. This has recently begun to be rectified by Alex Gourevitch's impressive work on the 'labour' republican tradition in late nineteenth century America.⁷⁷ He has shown how a group of labour republican thinkers and trade unionists, centred on the Knights of Labor (at one point the largest trade union in America), appropriated the language and ideas of republicanism and used them to criticize the dependency created by wage-labour. But much historical work remains to be done.

This state of affairs reflects the general neglect, even dismissal, of nineteenth century republicanism. Narratives of the tradition frequently follow a well-established historical pattern. Accounts usually begin with either the ancient Greek republics or the Roman Republic; they then skip over nearly a thousand years to the Italian city-states of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, then turn to the English commonwealth of the seventeenth century, and finally conclude with the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century.⁷⁸ This standard narrative is usually supplemented by the claim that republicanism then disappears from view in the nineteenth century, having, supposedly, 'been largely overtaken by liberalism'.⁷⁹ This narrative is common to both the 'civic humanist'

⁷⁴ For an intriguing discussion of the connection between Rousseau's views on freedom as non-domination and positive freedom as democratic self-rule, see Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Critique of Inequality: Reconstructing the Second Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 125n19, 133n35.

⁷⁵ Patricia Springborg, 'Republicanism, Freedom from Domination, and the Cambridge Contextual Historians', *Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2001): 853.

⁷⁶ For scepticism about whether some of the central figures in republicanism, the Italian renaissance humanists, were actually committed to freedom as non-domination, see James Hankins, 'Modern Republicanism and the History of Republics', in *Nuovi Maestri E Antichi Testi: Umanesimo E Rinascimento Alle Origini Del Pensiero Moderno*, ed. Stefano Caroti and Vittoria Perrone Compagni (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2012), 109–26.

⁷⁷ Alex Gourevitch, 'Labor and Republican Liberty', *Constellations* 18, no. 3 (2011): 431–454; Alex Gourevitch, 'Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work', *Political Theory* 41, no. 4 (2013): 591–617; Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁷⁸ For a typical example see the opening description in Frank Lovett and Philip Pettit, 'Neorepublicanism: A Normative and Institutional Research Program', *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 12.

⁷⁹ Eric MacGilvray, 'Republicanism', in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. Michael T. Gibbons, vol. VII (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 3235.

interpretations of republicanism, exemplified by J. G. A. Pocock's work, and the more recent contributions by Skinner and Pettit.⁸⁰

This narrative is deficient in a number of respects, not least because it does not cover the French Revolution, a moment one would think to be pivotal in any history of the tradition. The connection between the modern tradition of republicanism that developed after the revolution, and its early modern and classical forebears is not linear, but it is discernible.⁸¹ We find important continuations from the centrality of political participation and political liberty, the emphasis on constitutionalism and even the self-conscious modelling of the names and practices of the First French Republic on those of the Roman Republic. Arbitrarily cutting off the history of republicanism at the end of the eighteenth century means losing this rich tradition and impoverishes our understanding of republicanism. Consequently, a subsidiary aim of this thesis is to shed light on this tradition and to bring it to greater prominence.

III. Literature

Given the vast literature on Marx's thought and the increasing popularity of studies on republicanism, it is perhaps surprising to discover how little scholarship there is connecting the two. A frequent pattern in the literature is for an interesting affinity between the two to be noted, but then to be quickly passed over without proper exploration. This characteristic is evident in two of the foundational texts in the revival of republicanism. In Pocock's seminal *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), he wrote that 'we have been studying the historical beginnings of the sort of thought found in Marx'.⁸² But he then goes on to say, that this 'story, however, is not to be told here'.⁸³ Quentin Skinner's similarly foundational *Liberty before Liberalism* (1998), also notes in passing that the 'vocabulary of Roman legal and moral philosophy is strikingly prominent, for example, in Marx's analysis of capitalism, especially in his discussions of wage-

⁸⁰ It is also the approach taken by Eric Nelson, in his attempt to set out a distinct third 'Greek' tradition of republicanism, Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸¹ Studies that link the French republican tradition to its predecessors include Jonathan K. Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Dale Van Kley, ed., *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1798* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); and Keith M. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For the link between nineteenth century German republicanism and the pre-modern tradition, see Paul Nolte, 'Bürgerideal, Gemeinde Und Republik: "Klassischer Republikanismus" Im Frühen Deutschen Liberalismus', *Historische Zeitschrift* 254, no. 3 (1992): 609–56; and Daniel Nagel, *Von republikanischen Deutschen zu deutsch-amerikanischen Republikanern: ein Beitrag zum Identitätswandel der deutschen Achtundvierziger in den Vereinigten Staaten 1850–1861* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2012), 9–23.

⁸² J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 461.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 505.

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slavery, alienation and dictatorship'.⁸⁴ But that link is not explored beyond a footnote.⁸⁵ Similarly passing references can be found in the contemporary republican political theory literature.⁸⁶

Greater critical interest has been shown by some Marx scholars. This is especially the case with scholarship on the early Marx, where there is an increasing consensus around describing Marx's early thought and political position as republican.⁸⁷ Miguel Abensour and David Leopold have, for example, both argued for the interpretive importance of republicanism to understanding Marx's *Kritik*.⁸⁸ Scholarship looking at the relationship to republicanism in some of Marx's later work is harder to come by. One exception is William Clare Roberts's recent study, which discusses how Marx's *Kapital* recast traditional republican ideas by extending them to capitalism and the market.⁸⁹ Norman Arthur Fischer discusses republicanism in relation to both Marx's early period and his later writings on the Paris Commune, but does so in conjunction with extensive comparisons to liberalism and communitarianism as well.⁹⁰ His account of republicanism is also predominantly focused on its classical and pre-modern incarnations, with little discussion of the republicanism of Marx's contemporaries. Perhaps the only piece of scholarship to focus exclusively on Marx's relationship to republicanism across much of his life is an article by Jeffrey C. Isaac.⁹¹ Isaac makes a number of insightful points, but his study is inherently limited by how much ground can be covered in a single article (for instance, he does not examine

⁸⁴ Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, xn3.

⁸⁵ In a 2013 interview, Skinner gave a similar response to the question of Marx's connection to the neo-Roman republican account of liberty, saying 'That is a question which would bear a great deal more investigation than it has received. I am very stuck by the extent to which Marx deploys, in his own way, a neo-Roman political vocabulary. He talks about wage slaves, and he talks about the dictatorship of the proletariat. He insists that, if you are free only to sell your labour, then you are not free at all. He stigmatises capitalism as a form of servitude. These are all recognizably neo-Roman moral commitments.' Quentin Skinner, 'Liberty before Liberalism and All That', 18 February 2013, <http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/liberty-before-liberalism-all-that/>.

⁸⁶ Richard Bellamy, 'Being Liberal with Republicanism's Radical Heritage: Review of Philip Pettit's Republicanism', *Res Publica* 8, no. 3 (2002): 272; Cécile Laborde and John Maynor, 'The Republican Contribution to Contemporary Political Theory', in *Republicanism and Political Theory*, ed. Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 19; Pettit, *Republicanism*, 141.

⁸⁷ Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 248–97; Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Introduction', in *The Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (London: Penguin, 2002), 99–119; Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 570–75.

⁸⁸ Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*; David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸⁹ Roberts, *Marx's Inferno*.

⁹⁰ Norman Arthur Fischer, *Marxist Ethics within Western Political Theory: A Dialogue with Republicanism, Communitarianism, and Liberalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁹¹ Jeffrey C. Isaac, 'The Lion's Skin of Politics: Marx on Republicanism', *Polity* 23, no. 3 (1990): 461–488.

the Paris Commune), and having been written before many important developments in our understanding of republicanism.

Given the dearth of the literature, this thesis aims to provide a thorough examination of Marx's relationship to republicanism. That means examining the full spread of Marx's relevant writings and political activity, comparing them to an understanding of republicanism that takes into account the diversity of the tradition, and providing an in-depth account of the social and political thought of his republican contemporaries.

Before continuing, it is worth considering why there has been such a lack of critical engagement with this question. Part of the explanation lies with Marx's writings. He wrote several dedicated critiques of his socialist contemporaries,⁹² and committed whole volumes to refuting the work of bourgeois political economists, but there are only a few texts where he exclusively engaged with republicanism and his theoretical engagement with the tradition is instead mostly spread out over many (often less well-known) texts.⁹³ This means that if we want to reconstruct Marx's views on republicanism and his republican contemporaries, we do not have an easy single text to turn to, but instead have to analyse a large variety of writings and letters across his life for often isolated engagements with those ideas and figures.

Further explanation for this neglect can be found in examining the two primary scholarly communities that are addressed in this thesis: scholars of Marx and Marxism and scholars of republicanism. One explanation for the neglect by Marxists and Marx scholars is that there has been often been a tendency to subsume republicanism under liberalism. That is a tendency that is of course not limited to Marxists and Marx scholars and was a widespread assumption before the appearance of the first studies on republicanism from the middle of the twentieth century onwards. But the specifically orthodox Marxist character of this tendency is to treat republicanism as entirely reducible to petit bourgeois ideology that undermines the working-class struggle, and is hence unworthy of serious study.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the scholarly work on Marx has also often been more interested in reconstructing Marx's ideas for present political purposes (an entirely

⁹² Including Marx's attack on Proudhon in *Misère de la philosophie* (1847) and on German social democrats in 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms' (1873).

⁹³ Marx's most extensive exclusive engagements with republicanism are his attack on Arnold Ruge in 'Kritische Randglossen' (1844), and on Karl Heinzen in 'Die moralisierende Kritik' (1847). Marx and Engels's *Die großen Männer des Exils* (1852) is an extended denunciation of the democratic-republican exiles in London. But it is primarily a personal broadside, and not an engagement with their political or social ideas.

⁹⁴ Characteristic examples of this include the commentary in the *MECW* (a series primarily funded by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow) on the democratic-republicans, which declares that Marx and Engels had rightly shown up the 'primitiveness' and 'ludicrousness' of these 'mere petty-bourgeois windbags', *MECW*, 11, pp. xxi.

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defensible undertaking) rather than engaging in the kind of historical investigation that is necessary to unearth his relationship to republicanism.

The neglect by scholars of republicanism can in part be explained by the fact that the study of republicanism, as we have seen, has overwhelmingly focused on its pre-nineteenth century incarnations. Both Skinner and Pocock are primarily early modern scholars whose specialism ends long before Marx enters the historical stage. Investigations into republicanism have, following their lead, neglected precisely the period in which comparisons with Marx might be made. Marx also presents a peculiar problem for republican scholars because his ideas are so centrally about the social sphere, as opposed to than the familiar ground of politics. Rather than the recognizable discussions of kings, magistrates, courts and virtue, the vocabulary is instead a disorientating combination of workers, capitalists, factories and solidarity. Discussing Marx's relation to republicanism requires shifting onto terrain not usually associated with that tradition.

IV. Method

This thesis is primarily a work in the history of political thought. As such, its foremost aim is to produce a historically sensitive account of Marx's thought in comparison to his republican contemporaries and the republican tradition as a whole. Through that historical investigation, it hopes in addition to indirectly contribute to debates in contemporary socialism and republicanism. To that end, the thesis utilises a number of methods, including some of the contextualist methods associated with the Cambridge School, the ideological morphology approach developed by Michael Freeden, as well as some of the forms of argumentation found in analytic political theory.

In accord with my methodological commitment to studying the historical context of Marx's writings I discuss the actions and writings of several nineteenth century European republicans including George Julian Harney, Paul Harro-Harring, Félicité de Lamennais, Giuseppe Mazzini, Félix Pyat and with especial attention paid to Karl Heinzen, William James Linton and Arnold Ruge. These three were chosen for more in-depth comparisons. In Heinzen's case, this was because of his repeated polemical disputes with Marx; in Ruge's, because of his close personal and political collaboration with Marx before their falling out over Marx's developing communism; and in Linton's, because of his contemporaneous attempt to set out a comprehensive vision of republicanism. This contextual approach was critical to developing the conception of republicanism used in this thesis, and to avoid being guided solely by the presumptions of contemporary articulations of republicanism or being overly reliant on the picture of republicanism painted by Marx's criticisms. It also sheds explanatory light on

several aspects of Marx's thought, which would not otherwise be immediately obvious, such as his defence of legislative supremacy over the executive (in chapter two) and his comments on universal suffrage and the Paris Commune (in chapter three).

However, though I value these contextualist methods, I am resistant to the trend in some recent historical studies of Marx that try to thereby undermine his contemporary importance. I do not share the conviction of one recent biographer, that historicising Marx shows that he is a 'figure of a past historical epoch, one increasingly distant from our own'.⁹⁵ We of course live in changed circumstances from the ones that Marx faced in the nineteenth century, changes that must be properly appreciated and digested when studying his thought. But it is also 'easy to be seduced by historical distance'.⁹⁶ The social and political problems generated by the rise of capitalism are still our problems. Our modern societies are not as different as we might pretend or hope from those of the nineteenth century. Marx's attempt to understand and theorize these problems are still worth grappling with, and I am sympathetic to the idea that placing Marx in his historical context can aid that task. Some contextualist studies of Marx seem, however, to have forgotten that 'to historicize a subject is not to bury it'.⁹⁷ Moreover, I reject the idea that exercises in making Marx's ideas relevant to the modern world through contemporary ideas, are 'singularly useless pastimes'.⁹⁸ I maintain that concepts and forms of theorisation developed in contemporary political theory can, with suitable care, be effectively utilised to understand and clarify both Marx's thought and historical debates more widely.

That said, I do not generally believe that we should mine the history of political thought with the expectation that it will straightforwardly present us with contemporary political prescriptions. Such an expectation is likely to lead to frustration. It also discourages us from engaging with the history of political thought in a way in which I believe it can contribute to our current political convictions and practices. That is, by uncovering forgotten or neglected concepts and theories. In Skinner's words, the historian of political thought is a 'kind of archaeologist, bringing buried intellectual treasure back to the surface, dusting it down and enabling us to reconsider what we think of it'.⁹⁹ Such an intellectual archaeology allows us to see that our current set of assumptions are not the only possible ones, but one amongst several possible paths that were not taken.¹⁰⁰ What

⁹⁵ Sperber, *Karl Marx*, xiii. A similar attitude is displayed in Gareth Stedman Jones's major recent Marx biography, *Karl Marx*.

⁹⁶ Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, 174.

⁹⁷ Peter Ghosh, 'Constructing Marx in the History of Ideas', *Global Intellectual History* 2, no. 2 (2017): 150.

⁹⁸ Sperber, *Karl Marx*, xviii.

⁹⁹ Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 112.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 116–17.

we decide do with that intellectual treasure and whether it should inspire us to strike out on a new path, is a further, and necessary, step. But by showing us that those alternatives existed behind us, the history of political thought can challenge us to see that they might also lie ahead.

V. Outline

This thesis is made up of three core chapters and two excursus. Chapters one, two and three follow a chronological approach that parallel Marx's dialectical relationship to republicanism. Sandwiched between the main chapters are two excursus that discuss Marx's use of the republican concepts of freedom and domination in his critique of political economy.

In chapter one, 'The Democratic Republic, 1843-44', I discuss the period in which Marx goes from republicanism to communism. I first discuss the republican dimensions of Marx's writings in the spring and summer of 1843, arguing that Marx deploys a range of republican ideas and values, but does so to undermine the core political commitment of his contemporary republicans: the republic. I then discuss several transitional texts which Marx writes several months later in Paris, where we see a tussle between Marx's republican and emerging socialist sympathies. Finally, I examine Marx's rejection of republicanism, analysing his public renunciation of that position in his 'Kritische Randglossen'. This requires an extensive discussion of the thought of Arnold Ruge, the target of the 'Kritische Randglossen'.

The first excursus, 'Lords of Labour', deals primarily with the personal domination experienced by the worker. I first set out Marx's critique of wage-labour and why it amounts to wage-slavery. I then discuss the link Marx makes between alienation and domination in his early economic writings.

Chapter two, 'The Bourgeois Republic, 1848-1851', is centred on the European Revolutions of 1848 and the subsequent period of exile in London. I here set out Marx's critique of the bourgeois republic as an insufficient goal for the emancipation of the proletariat. I however also discuss how Marx still believed the bourgeois republic to be a necessary goal, and compare it with contemporary socialists who rejected this republican inheritance. I then discuss Marx's criticism of the ideas and the role played by the democratic republicans in the revolution. This involves a comparison of the relative importance that Marx and the democratic republicans placed on the social versus the political sphere, the diverging emphasis on the revolutionary agency of the proletariat versus the people, the similarities and differences between the social measures they advocated, and finally how Marx advocated the abolition of private property while

the democratic republicans advocated its universalization. This includes extensive discussion of the social and political thought of Linton and Heinzen.

Excursus two, 'Chains and Invisible Threads', deals with how Marx extended republican accounts of domination in capitalism by looking at impersonal domination. I first discuss how republicans also criticised wage-labour as wage-slavery. I then discuss Marx's account of how the market subjects people to arbitrary forces that amount to impersonal domination.

The central moment of chapter three, 'The Social Republic, 1871', is the Paris Commune. I here discuss how the example of the Paris Commune forced Marx to reconsider his political ideas, and that in doing so he returned to many of the republican themes that he exhibited in his early writings. I explore how Marx defends the popular wisdom of ordinary citizens, his endorsement of mechanisms to make representatives more accountable to their citizens (such as imperative mandates, the right to recall, and short periods of office), and how the bureaucratic and repressive functions of the state should be placed under popular control. I also compare and contrast Marx's defence of the Paris Commune with some of the divided republican commentary on the events. Finally, I explore whether Marx believed that the political structures of the Commune, and politics more broadly, would eventually disappear in communism. I argue that Marx's position is more accurately characterised as a lack of interest in the question of whether politics disappears and an opposition to sustained reflection on what the details of the political institutions of communism might look like.

Finally, in the conclusion I offer suggestions for future research and some tentative thoughts about how the historical discussion of Marx's relationship to republicanism might shed light on some contemporary issues in both the socialist and republican traditions.

1

The Democratic Republic, 1843-1844

As for human beings, that would imply thinking beings, free men, republicans.

Marx, May 1843¹

The Lyons workers believed that they were pursuing only political aims, that they were only soldiers of the republic, whereas actually they were soldiers of socialism.

Marx, August 1844²

In an early essay, Marx responds to the question ‘Does the Reign of Augustus Deserve to Be Counted Among the Happier Periods of the Roman State?’ by comparing it with two contrasting periods of Roman history: the early republic and the reign of Nero. Marx dismisses the latter period out of hand, since Nero’s many crimes, including that the ‘best citizens were killed, shameful arbitrary rule prevailed, laws were violated, [and] the city burnt down’, make it obviously a less happy period than the reign of Augustus.³ The more suitable comparison is thus the early republic. Marx writes that this period was generally a happy one because of its ‘simple morals, the striving for virtue and the unselfishness of the magistrates and common people’.⁴ However, he argues that these characteristics also hindered the development of the arts and letters, and their happiness was limited by the conflict between plebeians and patricians. Augustus, on the other hand, managed not only to put an end to this strife, but under his rule the arts and letters flourished and only men of ‘outstanding worth and wisdom’ were promoted to office.⁵ Marx admits that under Augustus all the major public offices were united in one person and that ‘freedom, even all appearance of freedom, had disappeared’, but he maintains that his rule was so mild that the Roman people did not believe that they had been deprived of their freedom.⁶ Marx then argues that the different regimes were, in fact, the most appropriate to the particular

¹ Marx, ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, 475/338/134.

² Marx, ‘Kritische Randglossen’, 461/407/204.

³ Marx, ‘An Principatus Augusti’, 466/596/640.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 465/595/640.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 466/596/641.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 466/596-7/640-41.

historical circumstances they faced. Consequently, Marx concludes that in times when ‘people have grown soft’ and the ‘simplicity of morals has disappeared’ – as they had by the time of Augustus – then ‘a ruler is more capable than a free republic of giving freedom to the people’.⁷

If the topic matter of Marx’s essay seems surprising, even ‘unMarxian’ in its focus on virtue and the simplicity of morals, then perhaps we should bear in mind that it was written in 1835 when Marx was just seventeen years old. The essay is, in fact, the Latin component of his *Abitur* (the German school leaving exam). It would therefore be more than a little unfair to give his opinions here much weight when considering what the young Marx’s thought of republicanism, though we could perhaps say that this is his *earliest* view of republicanism. The essay is also a reminder of just how extensive and influential Marx’s classical education was, a biographical fact not always properly appreciated.

The period I am interested in, however, in this chapter, comes some eight to nine years after Marx wrote that essay, from the spring of 1843 to the summer of 1844, when he was a young man in his mid-twenties. This is the period in which Marx transitions from a republican position to being a self-declared communist. The two epigraphs to this chapter exemplify this shift. They are the closest we have to explicit statements of Marx’s endorsement and rejection of republicanism. I am interested in exploring what happened between these statements. This chapter therefore explores both Marx’s early republicanism and why he transitioned to communism.⁸

The period under investigation is one of the most important for Marx’s intellectual formation. Isaiah Berlin writes (referring to a slightly elongated period), that the ‘years 1843–5 are the most decisive in his life’.⁹ After completing his university studies in Berlin in 1841 and denied an academic career by the Prussian suppression of dissent in the universities, Marx turned to journalism, working for the liberal Cologne newspaper the *Rheinische Zeitung*, and eventually becoming its editor in October 1842. Under his watch, the newspaper became increasingly hostile to the Prussian government and it was eventually shut down in March 1843. Freed from the daily burdens of running a newspaper, (he ironically noted that ‘the government has given me back my freedom’), Marx now had the opportunity to philosophically reflect on the political and social conditions of Germany.¹⁰ He retreated to the spa town of Kreuznach for an

⁷ *Ibid.*, 469/597/642.

⁸ I use ‘socialism’ and ‘communism’ interchangeably throughout this chapter. Both terms were still in flux in the early 1840s, and Marx used them without distinction in this early period. For an alternative view see David Gregory, ‘Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’ Knowledge of French Socialism in 1842–43’, *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 10, no. 1 (1983): 144–45.

⁹ Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 80.

¹⁰ Marx to Arnold Ruge, 25 January 1843, *MEGA*® III.1: 43; *MEW*27: 415; *MECW*1: 397.

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extended honeymoon with his new wife Jenny von Westphalen. He spent the summer of 1843 there, occupied with a critique of Hegel and the modern state, which resulted in a long manuscript, the *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (hereafter *Kritik*).

Marx came increasingly to the realization that it was impossible to work in Prussia. Together with Arnold Ruge he formulated a plan to set up a journal of leading French and German critics, titled the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher*, to be published in Paris. To this end, he moved there in October 1843. The first (and only) issue of the journal was eventually published in February 1844. It included contributions by several leading voices from German radical circles, including Moses Hess, Heinrich Heine, Georg Herwegh, and Friedrich Engels, who contributed an important critique of political economy. For his part, Marx contributed two articles, 'Zur Judenfrage' and 'Zur Kritik des Hegel'schen Rechtsphilosophie: Einleitung' (hereafter 'Kritik: Einleitung'), as well as several letters to the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. Financial difficulties and the increasing political divergence between Marx and Ruge, which ultimately led to their break in March 1844, made the publication of further issues impossible. By August 1844, Marx had publicly allied himself with communism, attacking Ruge's republicanism in the main German paper in Paris, *Vorwärts!*

Characterising Marx's intellectual and political evolution in this period as a shift from republicanism to communism is close to the consensus position in the literature,¹¹ (though there is some disagreement as to when precisely this shift occurred).¹² Describing Marx as a republican is justified by a number of factors.

¹¹ See the similarly titled sections on Marx's intellectual formation in this period in Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 248–97; Stedman Jones, 'Introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*', 99–119; Stedman Jones, 'The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels', 570–75; as well as the discussion in Isaac, 'The Lion's Skin of Politics: Marx on Republicanism', 465–73. Earlier scholarship variously refers to him as a 'humanist', 'radical' or 'revolutionary' democrat, terms that were (as discussed in the introduction) used interchangeably with 'republican' in the period, see respectively Michael Löwy, *La Théorie de la révolution chez le jeune Marx* (Paris: François Maspero, 1970), 53; George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 38; Georg Mende, *Karl Marx' Entwicklung vom revolutionären Demokraten zum Kommunisten*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Dietz, 1960). Others characterise him as a 'radical-democratic' or 'left-wing' liberal, which is potentially misleading, since it does not capture the extent to which Marx and other German republicans had differentiated themselves from liberalism, see respectively Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 1 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 31; Gregory, 'Marx's and Engels' Knowledge of French Socialism', 173.

¹² The main disagreement is whether Marx becomes a communist during the summer in Kreuznach (May–September 1843) or only after he moves to Paris (October 1843). The former position is defended by Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 33–34; Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 281–84; Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, vol. 1 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 49–50. The latter position is defended by Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*, 167. The relative paucity of the surviving textual evidence (for example, there are no extant letters written by Marx between late November 1843 to early August 1844), makes it difficult to come to a definitive judgment. I generally side with the latter position and will defend it in this chapter, though it is important to emphasize that there is no sharp break in his transition from republicanism to communism. There is instead, a steady progression

An initial consideration is that Marx seems to self-identify as a republican when he writes that a society of ‘human beings’ would ‘imply...free men, republicans’ (though, as will be discussed below, there is a question about Marx’s authorship of the letter from which this originates).¹³ But the more decisive evidence is provided by Marx’s intellectual and political context, the substantive positions taken in his writings and the judgment of his contemporaries.

Marx’s early republicanism should be understood in the context of the intransigence of the Prussian regime to instituting political reform in the early 1840s, which pushed many German liberals to a more radical, republican position, including Marx’s closest collaborators and allies in this period: the Young Hegelians.¹⁴ The republican dimensions of their political and philosophical thought has been the subject of increasing academic interest. Ruge, who played a key role in guiding the Young Hegelian shift towards republicanism through his editorship of some of their key journals, has been described as a ‘example of the continuing influence in the nineteenth century of the classic republican tradition’ because of his adherence to a ‘vision of free citizens, each his own self-determining master yet each participating fully in the political life of the community’.¹⁵ Another prominent member, Bruno Bauer, it has been argued, developed a Hegelian vision of republican liberty, where the state enables individuals to become universal by transcending the particularity of civil society.¹⁶ Gareth Stedman Jones summarises this literature by arguing that ‘The Young Hegelians were republicans rather than liberals....Their republican ideal was of a state governed by laws rather than men, of citizens inspired by the civic ideals of the ancient *polis* rather than *bourgeois* attention to private interests.’¹⁷

The effect on Marx of this intellectual and political climate, is evident throughout his writings at the time. His early newspaper articles and his editorship of the *Rheinische Zeitung* (which we have to remember were under the constant threat of censorship) both hint at a republican position.¹⁸ For example,

whereby the communist themes become more and more visible in his writings, at the expense of the republican ones.

¹³ Marx, ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, 475/338/134. Megill implausibly argues that these authorship questions mean that ‘a “republican” commitment on Marx’s part at any point in his career is highly questionable’, Allan Megill, *Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason (Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market)* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 100.

¹⁴ David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 22–31.

¹⁵ Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 221–22, 226, 241.

¹⁶ Douglas Moggach, ‘Republican Rigorism and the Emancipation of Bruno Bauer’, in *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School*, ed. Douglas Moggach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 120.

¹⁷ Stedman Jones, ‘The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels’, 565.

¹⁸ Andrew Chitty, ‘The Basis of the State in the Marx of 1842’, in *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School*, ed. Douglas Moggach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 227, 232.

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one of his articles talks of ‘transforming the mysterious, priestly nature of the state into a clear-cut, secular nature accessible to all and belonging to all, and of making the state part of the flesh and blood of its citizens’.¹⁹ His private correspondence also reveals that he had gone beyond the position of most liberals, concluding that a ‘*constitutional monarchy* [is] a hybrid which from beginning to end contradicts and abolishes itself. *Res publica* is quite untranslatable into German.’²⁰ Moreover, in the texts that will be the main focus of the first part of this chapter, the *Kritik* and the ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, Marx defends several key republican ideas including popular sovereignty and the value of political participation and public life, as well as attacking the arbitrary and despotic nature of the Prussian regime. However, as I will show below, where Marx distinguishes himself from his Young Hegelian allies, is that he deploys these republican ideas to attack the modern republic and instead embraces what he labels a ‘democracy’. The precise institutional contours of his ‘democracy’ are not specified, but from what we can draw out from his criticism of the modern republic, it would seem to be a political regime that offers citizens far greater possibilities for political participation and public administration, and the replacement of representative government with popular delegacy. At the time of writing, Marx had, however, not yet embraced communism. Marx can thus be seen to provide a republican critique of the modern republic.

Finally, describing Marx’s thought in this period as a transition from republicanism to communism is supported by the contemporaneous judgement of Engels. In an article for the Owenite newspaper *The New Moral World* in November 1843, Engels set out for his English audience how German communism had emerged from the philosophy of the Young Hegelians and their attempt to respond to ‘the social question’.²¹ He argues that all of the Young Hegelians had originally been committed to ‘republican agitation’, but by ‘developing farther and farther the consequences of their philosophy became

Sperber believes that it is ‘certainly possible that in private Marx was already a republican and democrat’ when he edited the liberal *Rheinische Zeitung*, Jonathan Sperber, ‘Karl Marx the German’, *German History* 31, no. 3 (2013): 391.

¹⁹ Marx, ‘Replik auf den Angriff eines “gemäßigten” Blattes’, 333/158/318.

²⁰ Marx to Arnold Ruge, 5 March 1842, *MEGA*² III.1: 22; *MEW* 27: 397; *MECW* 1: 382–83. Marx’s remark that *res publica* is untranslatable into German is a little opaque. He obviously does not mean it literally (since German does have an accepted translation for *res publica*), so we can suppose that he means that Germany is so politically retrograde that it cannot even imagine a republic.

²¹ Engels, ‘Progress of Social Reform on the Continent’, 505/490/401. The ‘social question’ referred to the ‘steadily worsening problem of mass impoverishment and homelessness’ of the German lower classes from the early 1830s onwards, which inspired widespread political commentary, Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 149–50.

Communists'.²² He further notes that in 1842 they had come to realise the 'insufficiency of political change', but were not willing to take the 'decided step' towards communism.²³ However, in the 'course of the present year [1843] the originators of it [communism] had the satisfaction of seeing one republican after the other join their ranks'.²⁴ He lists several Young Hegelians, including 'Dr. Marx', as recent converts to communism, and expresses his hope that 'the remainder of the republican party will, by-and-by, come over too'.²⁵ Engels was writing from Manchester and his information was not perfect (for example, he wrongly lists Ruge as a convert to communism).²⁶ But Engels had correctly perceived that several Young Hegelians, including Marx, had become increasingly dissatisfied with their already radical republican position, and were, in this period, in the process of transitioning to communism.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I discuss the republican dimensions of the texts that Marx wrote in the summer of 1843, the *Kritik* and the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. Second, I turn to Marx's first few months in Paris, and look at 'Zur Judenfrage' and the 'Kritik: Einleitung', which I interpret as transitional texts in the journey between republicanism and socialism. Finally, I discuss Marx's break with Ruge, by setting out Ruge's political thought and then Marx's socialist attack on that position.

I. Republicanism Against the Republic

Marx's republican sympathies are most clearly demonstrated in the *Kritik* and his contributions to the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. Both were written between March and September 1843, after the *Rheinische Zeitung* had been censored and before Marx moved to Paris in October. At the same time as writing these texts Marx read and extracted notes from Machiavelli's *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (1531) (hereafter *Discorsi*), Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) and Rousseau's *Du contrat social* (1762).²⁷ Together these texts and readings show Marx grappling with some of the fundamental questions about the nature of the modern state. I first outline both texts and then discuss their (i) critique of Prussian despotism, (ii) support for popular sovereignty and political participation

²² Engels, 'Progress of Social Reform on the Continent', 509/494/405.

²³ *Ibid.*, 509/494/406.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ It is worth remembering that by this point Marx and Engels had only met once (in Cologne in November 1842), a meeting Engels later recalled as 'distinctly chilly', Engels to Franz Mehring, end of April 1895, *MEW* 39, p. 473; *MECW* 50, p. 503.

²⁷ The notes can be found in *MEGA*® IV.2, pp. 91-101, 106-15, 276-78. The notes on Machiavelli have been translated in E. A. Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin: Revolutionary Machiavellism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 33-37.

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(iii), defence of democracy as the best form of constitution and (iv) critique of socialism and communism.

The *Kritik* is a paragraph by paragraph commentary on the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1820) (hereafter *Philosophie des Rechts*), the primary exposition of Hegel's political philosophy. The section Marx comments on (§261-313), deals with the state's internal constitutional arrangement.²⁸ Marx copied out each paragraph in this section and subjected them to, often lengthy, criticism. He claimed that he would thus translate Hegel into 'prose'.²⁹ But the format, combined with its assumed knowledge of Hegelian language, its occasional diversion into criticism of Hegel's philosophical method,³⁰ and the fact that Marx was writing only for his own self-clarification rather than public consumption (it was only published in 1927) make it notoriously difficult to understand. The *Kritik* thus has a credible claim to being Marx's most difficult text. Yet a careful excavation of the *Kritik* is essential, because it reveals his deep commitment to popular sovereignty, that politics is rightly something that should be controlled and participated in by all citizens, and the failure of modern states to live up to that standard.

The republican nature of the *Kritik* has been the subject of several recent academic investigations. Miguel Abensour dedicates an entire monograph to showing that the text is, in a nod to Pocock's famous study of republicanism, Marx's 'Machiavellian Moment', and that interpreting it in this light shows a 'neglected relationship between Marx and the civic humanism of Italy'.³¹ A more restrained position is taken by David Leopold, who sees in the *Kritik* 'faint echoes of the tradition of civic republicanism'.³² He sees Marx's republicanism in the text exhibited in three 'quasi-institutional' threads, namely, Marx's support for greater political participation for ordinary citizens than is currently provided for in modern states, the appropriation of public tasks by citizens rather than a separate elite bureaucracy, and the replacement of representative institutions with a form of popular delegacy.³³

In comparison to the *Kritik*, the 'Briefwechsel von 1843' has been relatively neglected. It is an edited letter-exchange, published in the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher*, between Ruge on the one hand, and Mikhail Bakunin,

²⁸ The first page of the original manuscript is missing and it is probable that this contained Marx's comments on §257-260, which open the relevant section in Hegel's text.

²⁹ Marx, *Kritik*, 7/205/9.

³⁰ Colletti notes that the 'most immediately striking thing about the essay is that the first part of it...is much more a criticism of Hegel's dialectical logic than a direct criticism of his ideas on the state', Colletti, 'Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*', 19.

³¹ Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*, 46.

³² Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 260.

³³ *Ibid.*, 245-54.

Ludwig Feuerbach and Marx, on the other. The original letters were written between March and September 1843. Ruge edited these various pieces of correspondence into a more coherent body, so that it could function as an opening programmatic statement for the journal. To do this, he combined and edited several different letters, occasionally inserting passages and phrases of his own and most likely cutting and rearranging others. Consequently, there are questions about the extent to which the published letters in the ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’ reflect the original letters. These have, unfortunately, not been preserved, so we are unable to attribute the text in the letters with complete confidence to the original authors.³⁴

This means that the letters cannot be wholly and straightforwardly assumed to be what Marx originally wrote or believed. But nor should we dismiss them as simply reflecting Ruge’s ideas, rather than Marx’s.³⁵ First, there is significant overlap between the positions taken by Marx in the ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’ and his other writings at the time, especially in the *Kritik*. Second, it seems unlikely that Ruge would have risked his personal and professional relationships with these men by seriously misrepresenting their views. Third, though the letters were edited by Ruge, the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher* was co-edited by the two of them (and Marx took on more responsibility towards the end when Ruge fell ill).³⁶ We do not know much about the editorial process of the journal. While it is possible that Marx had little direct oversight over the editing of the ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, it seems unlikely that Marx would have allowed the edited letters to be published if he had serious reservations about their content. These factors mean that while we can treat the ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’ as a probable account of Marx’s views at the time, we cannot always take it to be the precise wording he would have originally used.

³⁴ Ruge himself claimed that with the exception of two of the letters (the one by Feuerbach and the final one by Marx), they all had ‘one author and are all edited with the aim of bringing forth a democratic movement’, Ruge to Jakob Veneday, 7 March 1844, *Redaktionsbriefwechsel*, p. 1339. It is not clear how much editorial intervention is implied here, it might mean that he simply heavily re-worked the originals or that he went so far as to write them entirely from scratch and then affixed Marx and Bakunin’s initials to them. Detailed further discussion can be found in *MEGA*² vol. I.2, pp. 939-41 and Inge Taubert, ‘Ein Briefwechsel von 1843. In: Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. Zur Authentizität des Textes’, *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung* 1 (1977): 29–45. Taubert argues that the views in the letters attributed to Marx correspond to Marx’s other position at the time, though the changes made by Ruge limit the extent to which it is an authentic text by Marx. Engels later claimed that ‘Marx told me more than once that his part of it had been tinkered with by Ruge who had inserted all manner of nonsense’, Engels to Wilhelm Liebknecht, 18 December 1890, *MEW* 37: 527; *MECW* 49: 93-4. However, we should bear in mind that this was forty-seven years after the events in question, that Engels was generally dismissive of the value of Marx’s early writings, and that even if Marx did express those views later on, that does not mean that he thought they were nonsense at the time they were published. His political and social views were after all undergoing significant changes in this period.

³⁵ One approach that veers in this direction is Megill, *Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason*, 99–100.

³⁶ Ruge to Catharina Sophia Ruge, 28 March 1844, *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter*, 341. See also McLellan, *Karl Marx*, 99.

(i) Prussian Despotism

Friedrich Wilhelm IV had come to the Prussian throne in 1840 and quickly disappointed the liberals and radicals who had hoped for a softening of the authoritarian rule of his father. The regime's growing illiberalism had, by the spring of 1843, already twice thwarted Marx's career plans, first in his attempt to start an academic career and then when he turned to journalism. It is then no surprise that in both the *Kritik* and the 'Briefwechsel von 1843', Marx expresses repeated scorn for the despotic and arbitrary character of the Prussian monarchy. Writing to Ruge just a few days after the Prussian regime had censored the *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx says that the regime's 'glorious mantle of liberalism' had now been exposed for the sham it was, and now its 'disgusting despotism in all its nakedness is disclosed to the eyes of the whole world'.³⁷ The national embarrassment of German political backwardness was even more obvious from Holland (Marx briefly visited it in March), where even the 'most insignificant Dutchman is still a citizen compared with the greatest German'.³⁸ Marx ominously concludes that the Prussian King's 'comedy of despotism' must end the same way that it did for the Stuarts and the Bourbons.³⁹

This frustration with Germany's political backwardness, exemplified by Prussian despotism and the failure of what Bakunin calls a 'German 1789', is the primary theme of all the letters in the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'.⁴⁰ Republican language is thus, unsurprisingly, evident throughout. For example, Ruge says that though he is more sceptical than Marx about whether the Germans are ready for revolution, he still embraces revolution because it would mean the,

transformation of all hearts and the raising of hands in the name of the honour of free men, for the free state, that belongs to no lord, but to the public spirit (*öffentliche Wesen*), which only belongs to itself.⁴¹

Bakunin in turn, gently chides Ruge for giving up on the Germans too easily, even if he accepts that a political revolution is not imminent. Writing from the Ile de St-Pierre in Switzerland, where Rousseau had briefly sought refuge in 1765 before being expelled, Bakunin writes 'my belief in the victory of humanity over priests and tyrants, is the same belief that the great exile [Rousseau] poured into millions of hearts'.⁴² After comparing the Germans to the ancient Greeks, Bakunin ends his letter from 'Rousseau's Island', with the orientalist call for Germans to once more fight for the 'downfall of the Persians'.⁴³

³⁷ Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 471/337/133.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 471-2-5.

⁴⁰ Bakunin, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 480.

⁴¹ Ruge, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 473.

⁴² Bakunin, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 480-81.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 482.

We can draw out three objections Marx makes to despotism in the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. First, the way in which a ruler treats and views his subjects. Marx recalls the story of Napoleon viewing his soldiers drowning during battle and observing '*Voyez ces crapauds!*' ('Look at those toads!').⁴⁴ Marx argues that this episode is symptomatic of all despots. He says that a despot's 'sole idea is contempt for man, the dehumanised man', that a 'despot always sees people as degraded', and that they 'drown before his eyes and for his sake in the mud of ordinary life'.⁴⁵ Second, despotic rule corrupts society because the despotic monarch infects every part of the body politic. In a colourful comparison, Marx says that the Prussian King is 'lord of the world, of course, only because he fills it with his society as maggots do a corpse'.⁴⁶ The King maintains a society of masters and servants, where the former know that the 'world belongs to them' and the latter have learnt that their 'function is to be "obedient, devoted and attentive" to their master'.⁴⁷ This means that the people are not human beings, instead they are just the 'property of their masters like a breed of slaves or horses'.⁴⁸ Marx similarly notes that a monarchical society creates a society of 'philistines', whereas the French Revolution 'restored human beings'.⁴⁹ Marx also denies that this can be addressed within a monarchical system; a king can never turn 'his subjects into free, real human beings' because the 'monarch is always only the king of the philistines'.⁵⁰

Third, Marx attacks the arbitrary nature of despotic rule. Marx notes that it should be entirely unsurprising that when a king is guided 'exclusively by his whims' it results in 'ridiculous and embarrassing situations'.⁵¹ He laments the fact that this is however, all that is required in a country where the 'people have never known any other law but the arbitrary will of its kings'.⁵² Indeed, we can expect nothing more than 'fickle, headless and contemptible' decisions, so 'long as whim retains its place', and 'his personality determines the system'.⁵³ Marx twice compares the ludicrousness of the King's arbitrary leadership of the state to a 'ship of fools' (*Narrenschiff*).⁵⁴ The ship of fools is an old anti-democratic trope, originating in Plato's *Republic* and famously used in Sebastian Brant's in *Das*

⁴⁴ Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 476/339/138.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 477/340/139.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 475/338/134.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 476/339/137.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 478/341/139.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 477/340/138.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 477/340/138-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 472/338/134 & 479/340/139.

Narrenschiff (1494).⁵⁵ In Plato's account, the mob of bickering sailors is presented as unable to steer the ship, which makes the firm guidance of a captain necessary. In contrast, Marx deliberately reverses this trope, arguing that it is in fact the despot, and not the people, that guides the ship of state like a fool.

Furthermore, in his critique of Hegel, Marx ridicules Hegel's tendency to treat the arbitrariness associated with monarchy as a metaphysical axiom. He gives the examples of Hegel's defence of the birth right of Kings (which 'can no more be made a metaphysical truth than can the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary'), the King's right to pardon criminals ('*Mercy* is the highest expression of *haphazard arbitrariness*'), and the King's 'unrestricted choice' in appointing and dismissing ministers ('In the same way the "unrestricted choice" of the monarch's *valet* can be derived from the absolute idea.').⁵⁶

(ii) Popular Sovereignty and Political Participation

In the *Philosophie des Rechts* Hegel argues that sovereignty rests in 'one individual, the *monarch*'.⁵⁷ He grants that the term popular sovereignty can legitimately be used to refer to the external sovereignty of a people that is independent of foreign powers or when saying that internal sovereignty lies with the whole people in the sense that it lies with the state as a whole and not just one of its parts. However,

the usual sense in which the term 'popular sovereignty' has begun to be used in recent times is to denote *the opposite of that sovereignty which exists in the monarchy*. In this oppositional sense, popular sovereignty is one of those confused thoughts which are based on a *garbled* notion of the *people*.⁵⁸

Marx rejects this outright. He retorts that the only thoughts that are 'confused' or '*garbled*' are 'exclusively Hegel's'.⁵⁹ Marx first dismisses the two limited usages Hegel allows for popular sovereignty. If, as Hegel claims, sovereignty really does rest with the monarch, then there should be no need to refer to a people when discussing external sovereignty – for that would suggest that the monarch's external sovereignty is in fact derived from representing those people. Marx also thinks it is typical of Hegel to be prepared to grant sovereignty to an 'abstract' thing like the state when he denies it to a 'concrete...living' thing, like the people.⁶⁰ He then disputes Hegel's suggestion (though it is unclear if this is Hegel's actual reasoning) that popular sovereignty is confused because it posits the people's sovereignty against the monarch's sovereignty, when in fact

⁵⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 488a-e.

⁵⁶ Marx, *Kritik*, 34/235/33 & 37-8/237-8/35-6.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, §279.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §279A.

⁵⁹ Marx, *Kritik*, 29/229/28.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

sovereignty, by definition, can only have one ultimate power. Marx agrees that this is of course true, but the point is that saying that the sovereignty of the people is the opposite of the monarch's sovereignty does not mean that they are two opposed aspects of one sovereign, but that they are 'two *entirely contradictory concepts of sovereignty*'.⁶¹ The choice then is over which of these is the correct idea of sovereignty. As Marx puts it (switching to English at the end to emphasize the allusion to Hamlet) 'Sovereignty of the monarch or sovereignty of the people, that is the question.'⁶²

Marx does not provide an extensive defence of why popular sovereignty is to be preferred to the 'illusion' that is monarchical sovereignty.⁶³ He does say that the consequence of Hegel placing complete sovereignty in the monarch is that 'all other people are excluded from this sovereignty, from personality and from political consciousness'.⁶⁴ Marx's commitment to popular sovereignty is also clearly demonstrated in his defence of the idea that a people always holds the ultimate right to renew their constitution. In an argument that would not be out of place in the American Declaration of Independence, Marx says:

Has the people the right to give itself a new constitution? The answer must be an unqualified 'Yes', because once it has ceased to be an actual expression of the will of the people the constitution has become a practical illusion.⁶⁵

Hegel's rejection of popular sovereignty is matched by his general distrust of citizens having a role in politics. Despite sharing some similarities with the republican tradition (including the emphasis on the common good and similar ideas of freedom) perhaps the most important difference is that he is 'considerably less enthusiastic about *active* political participation for ordinary citizens'.⁶⁶ Thus, though Hegel was not (despite frequent misrepresentations) a defender of the absolutist Prussian monarchy, neither did he fully embrace all the normal channels of participation we now associate with the modern representative state.⁶⁷ For example, Hegel divided the legislature into an Upper and Lower House, and reserved the former for members of the landed aristocracy, who were entitled to their position as a matter of birthright (and not through the 'contingency of an election').⁶⁸ Hegel also specified that the Lower House, which represented the rest of civil society, should not be elected by direct universal suffrage, but instead

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 30/229-30/28.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 29/230/28.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 27/227/26.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 61/260/57.

⁶⁶ Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 40.

⁶⁷ For further discussion see Daniel Lee, 'The Legacy of Medieval Constitutionalism in the Philosophy of Right: Hegel and the Prussian Reform Movement', *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 4 (2008): 601-34.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, §307.

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representatives should be elected indirectly through corporations with an accompanying property qualification.⁶⁹

Though Marx was critical of the limited nature of political participation provided for in modern representative states (discussed in greater depth in the next section), he also condemns Hegel for failing to live up to even this low standard. He argues that, in this regard, Hegel has failed to correctly delineate the characteristics of the modern state and instead ‘completely sunk back to the medieval standpoint’.⁷⁰ The privileged position of the landed aristocracy in the legislature is a case in point. Marx bristles at the hypocrisy in making their participation in the legislature an ‘*innate human right*’.⁷¹ These are the same people who have ‘mocked *innate human rights*’ but have no problem with the ‘right of a particular race of men to be entrusted with the highest dignity of the legislature.’⁷² Marx also points to the inconsistency in opposing elections on the basis that they are ‘contingent’, when one is also happy to place so much emphasis on the ‘physical accident of birth’.⁷³ Marx argues that elections are, in contrast, the ‘conscious product of civil confidence’.⁷⁴ Marx also opposes Hegel’s limits on suffrage and makes it clear that he supports the ‘extension and the greatest possible *universalization* of the vote’.⁷⁵

At several points, Marx’s defence of popular participation has an Aristotelian character to it. Aristotle argued that man was by nature a political animal, that he could only flourish in a political community in pursuit of the common good.⁷⁶ Marx similarly suggests that denying citizens a role in politics is to deny them the opportunity to realise and develop an important aspect of their human nature. For example, he compares being denied the political knowledge needed to participate in the running of the state, to being ‘cut off from himself, from the air’.⁷⁷ And he argues that the peoples’ desire to directly participate in the legislature is the desire ‘of *all* to be real (active) *members of the state*, or to give themselves a *political being*, or to demonstrate and give effect to their being as something *political*’.⁷⁸ Marx further notes that in the modern state the people are denied the opportunity to act towards the common good. In a ‘true state’ however

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, §308, §310A. Hegel’s emphasis on corporate representation might reflect his desire to limit individualism rather than his unease about popular participation (though the property qualification is undoubtedly motivated by the latter concern).

⁷⁰ Marx, *Kritik*, 123/319/114.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 114/310/105.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 130/326/120/.

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, I.1253a.

⁷⁷ Marx, *Kritik*, 55/253/51.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 128/324/118.

each citizen would have the opportunity to act in this way.⁷⁹ He says that it is perfectly natural for members of a state to expect to be able to take part in the deliberations and decisions of that state. That reflects a desire to ‘consciously acquire part of [the state], to take a conscious interest in it’.⁸⁰ Because without that political consciousness the ‘member of state would be an *animal*’.⁸¹ This characterisation of political participation is also found in his description of the current political system of Prussia. Marx remarks that the ‘only political person’ is the King, and the rest of Prussian society is so depoliticized that,

the German Aristotle who wished to derive his Politics from our conditions, would write at the top of it: ‘Man is a social, but wholly apolitical, animal.’⁸²

Marx’s enthusiasm for citizen participation also finds expression in his critique of bureaucracy. Hegel’s political theory gave the civil service a central role as the ‘universal class’ that acts for the common good. Marx disputes this presentation of the civil service. He argues that the bureaucracy actually represents its own particular interests and not the interests of society as a whole and that Hegel’s state excludes the mass of citizens from having a role in the administration of common interests. Marx argues that bureaucrats are motivated by their own internal administrative concerns and their desire for career advancement, so that ‘state reasons’ become ‘private reasons’.⁸³ The state consequently becomes the bureaucracy’s ‘possession, its *private property*’.⁸⁴ This procedural exclusion of the people from general administration means that the supposed ‘*matters of general concern*’, decided upon by the bureaucracy, fail to match the ‘actual concerns of the people’.⁸⁵

Marx also makes fun of Hegel’s argument that each citizen still has the opportunity to participate in general affairs because each citizen has the opportunity of becoming a civil servant. He points out that this is no different to the supposed opportunity every Catholic has to become a priest, in other words, they cannot all take advantage of this opportunity.⁸⁶ Marx argues, that it also inadvertently proves that the average citizen cannot act for the common good in

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 54/253/50.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 127/323/117.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Marx, ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, 477/339/137.

⁸³ Marx, *Kritik*, 51/249/47.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 66/265/62.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 54/253/50. For the related idea, that under capitalism, the individual proletarian is free to leave the proletariat, but that the collective proletariat class does not have this freedom, see G. A. Cohen, ‘The Structure of Proletarian Unfreedom’, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 12, no. 1 (1983): 9–11.

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their own sphere in civil society, because if they wished to do so they must leave that sphere and join the bureaucracy.⁸⁷

Marx is especially critical of how the bureaucracy deliberately isolates itself from public scrutiny. Any sign of political consciousness on the behalf of the people is seen as a threat to its role and authority. He says that,

The general spirit of the bureaucracy is the *secret*, the mystery, preserved within itself by the hierarchy and against the outside world by being a closed corporation. Avowed political spirit, as also political mindedness, therefore appear to the bureaucracy as *treason* against its mystery.⁸⁸

The image Marx develops here is of the bureaucracy as a class of people that are thoroughly isolated and see themselves as superior to everybody else. He calls them ‘state-Jesuits’ and ‘state-theologians’ who form ‘la république prêtre’ (the republic of priests), implying that the bureaucracy, like the clergy, live a separate existence untouched by the concerns of everyday people.⁸⁹ The suggestion here is that like the common trope that the Jesuits form a church within the church, the bureaucrats form a state within the state.

For these reasons, Marx declares his support for the ‘supersession (*Aufhebung*) of the bureaucracy’.⁹⁰ One interpretation of this might be that Marx wants the abolition of all administrative tasks (especially if *Aufhebung* is translated as ‘abolition’ – as it often misleadingly is). But careful reading of the text shows that Marx does not believe that these tasks will disappear, but that they need to be brought under popular control.⁹¹ Marx believes that the people have a far greater ability to act for the common good through public administration than a supposedly neutral – but in fact elite and isolated – class of bureaucrats.

(iii) Democracy as the Best Constitution

I here want to discuss what Marx means when he says in the *Kritik* that ‘Democracy is the solved *riddle* of all constitutions.’⁹² I will argue that understanding this remark is aided by seeing the *Kritik* in the context of the republican tradition of discussing the relative merits of various constitutions, and usually advocating a mixed constitution that combines elements from the three main types: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Variants of this kind of discussion are found in ancient texts, such as Aristotle’s *Politics*, Polybius’s *Histories*, Cicero’s *De re publica*, as well as more modern ones such as Machiavelli’s

⁸⁷ Marx, *Kritik*, 54/253/50.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 51/249/47.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 50/248/46.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 52/250/48.

⁹¹ Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 251.

⁹² Marx, *Kritik*, 31/231/29.

Discorsi (1531), Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698), Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) and Rousseau's *Du contrat social* (1762).⁹³

In contrast to many (though not all) of the contributions to this tradition, Marx defends a democracy, unchecked by the aristocratic or monarchical element. The precise constitutional framework of what he means by 'democracy' is vague, but it is clear that it involves far greater political participation by citizens than is provided for in modern states and significant popular control over the bureaucracy. Harking back to the model of the ancient Greek city-states, Marx also suggests that a democratic constitution would overcome the alienating dual divide between citizens and the state, and between the private and public sphere, which he argues is characteristic of modern states. However, his democracy is not a simple return to the classical world. He endorses the equality and freedoms provided for in modern states and recognizes that the size of modern states makes direct democracy impossible, instead advocates a form of popular delegacy.

Placing Marx's *Kritik* in this context is justified by several considerations. First, it helps make sense of several remarks Marx makes regarding democracy. Second, both the relevant sections of Hegel's *Philosophies des Rechts* and Marx's commentary on them in the *Kritik*, explicitly mention the constitutional trinity of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Third, in the same summer that he writes the *Kritik* he reads the above mentioned canonical works of Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rousseau and extracts the sections (in Montesquieu and Rousseau) dealing with the discussion and definition of constitutions. Fourth, Marx displays a related interest in Montesquieu's discussion of constitutions in the contemporaneous 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. A positive outcome of placing Marx in this context is that it allows us to provide some structure to Marx's fragmentary early constitutional thought, which is presented at the end of this section.

A clear example of how interpreting the *Kritik* in the light of the republican discussion of constitutional forms can clarify initially confusing statements that Marx makes regarding democracy, is when he writes 'Democracy is the genus constitution. Monarchy is one species, and a poor one at that.'⁹⁴ He also similarly writes that 'Democracy stands to the other constitutions as the genus stands to its species; except that here the genus itself appears as an existent, and therefore as one *particular* species.'⁹⁵ Marx illustrates this point with an offensive

⁹³ Respectively in Aristotle, *Politics*, III.1279a-1279b; Polybius, *Histories*, VI.3-10; Cicero, *De Re Publica*, I.42-69; Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I.2; Harrington, *Commonwealth of Oceana*, 10; Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, II.16; Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, II.1-2; Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, III.3.

⁹⁴ Marx, *Kritik*, 30/230-31/29.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31/231/30.

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religious comparison; arguing that in the same way that Christianity is the ‘κατ’ ἐξοχήν’ (*par excellence*) or ‘essence’ of all other religions, democracy is the ‘essence of all constitutions’.⁹⁶ The point Marx is trying to make here, by describing democracy as *both* a particular form of constitution and the *genus* of all constitutions, is not explained in the text of the *Kritik* itself.

To understand what he is doing, we instead need to turn to Aristotle’s classification of constitutions in Book III of the *Politics*. Aristotle famously classified constitutions based on two criteria: who ruled (either the one, the few or the many) and to what end they ruled (either for the common good or only the particular good of one class). This produced six different constitutions, three ‘correct’ constitutions that rule for the common good, and three corresponding ‘perverse’ constitutions which rule in the sectional interest (Figure 2). Thus, for the rule by the one, we have *kingship* (correct) and *tyranny* (perverse), and for rule of the few, we have *aristocracy* (correct) and *oligarchy* (perverse). For the rule by the many, Aristotle labels the perverse constitution, *democracy*. But when it comes to labelling the correct constitution where the many rule, Aristotle does something odd; he calls it by the same word, ‘constitution’, that he has been using for the discussion as a whole (in Greek πολιτεία – *politeia*).⁹⁷

	Correct	Perverse
One	Kingship	Tyranny
Few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many	‘Constitution’	Democracy

Figure 2. Aristotle's typology of constitutions

Aristotle thus uses the same term to describe constitutions as such and a particular example of a constitution. This presents ‘what may be called a “genus-species” ambiguity, where the same word is used to mean now a genus and now one of the species of that genus’.⁹⁸ To avoid this ambiguity some (especially older) translations of Aristotle’s *Politics* distinguish the species from the genus by calling the species of correct constitution ruled by the many a *polity*. But this conceals that Aristotle intentionally used the same word for both genus and species.⁹⁹

Aristotle’s purpose in doing this (and this is not the only example of him conflating the genus and species in his works), was to highlight what was ‘the

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, III.1279a-b.

⁹⁸ Richard Robinson, *Aristotle Politics Books III and IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

most fully developed species within the genus'.¹⁰⁰ Thus a '*constitution*' is, as Aristotle's later discussion makes clear, his all-things-considered favoured constitution. Aristotle thought that kingship and aristocracy were in some regards the best constitutions, but the problem is that they too easily devolved into their corrupt counterparts, tyranny and oligarchy, which are the worst forms of constitution.¹⁰¹ The truly best constitution, which Aristotle says is one we can achieve and not the most ideal, is the '*constitution*' because it is the most stable.¹⁰² It is the most stable, because as a mixture of rule by the few and the many, it concentrates power in the hands of the middle citizens, and can thus minimize factional strife.¹⁰³

Marx's use of the genus-species ambiguity serves the same purpose as in Aristotle: to emphasise which constitution is the most fully developed or best form of all constitutions. But in contrast to Aristotle, Marx makes democracy the best constitution rather than the mixed constitution. As the genus, democracy becomes for Marx the standard against which all other constitutions should be measured. Thus, he says, 'all forms of state have democracy *for* their truth and that they are therefore untrue insofar as they are not democracy'.¹⁰⁴ All other constitutions are merely particular species of constitution ('All other *state forms* are definite, distinct, *particular forms of state.*')¹⁰⁵

Democracy is thus for Marx the best form of constitution. To investigate why he thinks it is better than the alternative constitutions, we need to introduce and explain a central category that Marx uses in the *Kritik* to characterise constitutions – what he calls 'abstract' (or sometimes 'political') states. By this he means two things: first, where the state has become detached or alienated from the people and second, states where the political sphere and civil society have become separated.¹⁰⁶ Marx argues that it is this abstract character that distinguishes modern from pre-modern states ('The abstraction of the *political state* is a modern product').¹⁰⁷ Democracy in contrast, is a constitution where these

¹⁰⁰ Kevin M. Cherry, 'The Problem of Polity: Political Participation and Aristotle's Best Regime', *The Journal of Politics* 71, no. 4 (2009): 1407.

¹⁰¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.1289a.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, IV.1295a and IV.1296a.

¹⁰³ In Book IV Aristotle sometimes refers to this constitution as the 'middle constitution'. For the reasons why the 'middle constitution' from Book IV should be treated as the same constitutional form as the 'constitution' in Book III see Robinson, *Aristotle Politics Books III and IV*, 100–101.

¹⁰⁴ Marx, *Kritik*, 32/231/30.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 32/232/31.

¹⁰⁶ Colletti, 'Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*', 33–34; Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 66–67. Marx's usage does not distinguish between these meanings and he often uses them in combination.

¹⁰⁷ Marx, *Kritik*, 33/233/31.

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alienating divisions has been overcome, a type of constitution we might refer to as 'concrete'.¹⁰⁸

Marx credits Hegel with being the 'only' philosopher to have recognised that the cleavage between the political sphere and civil society is the defining characteristic of the modern state.¹⁰⁹ In medieval states a person's status as a serf, merchant or lord determined their political rights and privileges.¹¹⁰ Marx argues that there was thus an 'identity' between the '*estates of civil society*' and the '*estates in the political sense*'.¹¹¹ Similarly, in ancient societies, being a slave meant that one had no 'political existence'.¹¹² There was therefore nothing like the clear division that exists in modern states, where one's political status is formally independent of one's economic position. The key historical moment that 'completed' the emergence of the modern state, for Marx, was the French Revolution, because it transformed legal and political divisions between people into merely social divisions.¹¹³

In relation to ancient states, Hegel had argued that the 'old classification of constitutions into *monarchy*, *aristocracy*, and *democracy* presupposes a *still undivided and substantial unity*'.¹¹⁴ Hegel argues that this classification is therefore the 'true and correct one' for the ancient world where states lack '*depth and concrete rationality*', but does not apply when discussing modern states, which do exhibit those characteristics.¹¹⁵ Marx does not diverge from Hegel's assessment that the classification belongs to the ancient world. Marx comments,

In unmediated (*unmittelbaren*) monarchy, democracy and aristocracy there is as yet no political constitution as distinct from the actual, material state or the other content of the life of the people. The political state does not yet appear as the *form* of the material state. Either, as in Greece, the *res publica* is the real private affair of the citizens, their real content, and the private individual is a slave; the political state, as political state, being the true and only content of the life and will of the citizens; or, as in an Asiatic despotism, the political state is nothing but the personal caprice of a single individual'.¹¹⁶

Marx thus agrees with Hegel that these ancient constitutions are characterised by 'substantial unity between the state and people'.¹¹⁷ This unity, he

¹⁰⁸ Using 'concrete' as the converse of abstract (or political) constitutions is linguistically appropriate and suggested at several points by Marx's own usage. For example he says that 'The state is an abstraction. The people alone is what is concrete' and 'The *political* state is the *mirror of truth* for the various elements of the *concrete state*.' *Ibid.*, 29/229/28 and 117/312/107.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 78/275/72.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33/233/32 and 78/275/72.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 78/275/72.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 120/315/110.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 89/284/80.

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, §273.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Hegel repeats the same point at §279A.

¹¹⁶ Marx, *Kritik*, 33–4/234/32.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 34/234/32.

says, refers to the absence of a political constitution that is ‘alongside the actual life of the people’.¹¹⁸ For example, Marx says that in the Greek polis people treat public affairs as their private affairs, without distinction, and the private sphere (civil society) is reduced to being a ‘slave’ of the political. His characterisation of the despotic Asiatic regimes is a little more obscure, but he seems to be suggesting that there is unity between people and state in these constitutions, because the state and people are one and the same thing as the ‘people’ here is just one individual.¹¹⁹

Medieval states are similarly characterised by not having ‘private spheres that have achieved an independent existence’.¹²⁰ In these states ‘trade and landed property’ are not yet free and independent. Instead civil society is divided into ‘serfs, feudal estates, merchant and trade guilds, corporations of scholars, etc.’ which determine each person’s political status.¹²¹ These states therefore achieve a kind of unity, between man and state. But Marx says that it is a unity of state and ‘unfree man’.¹²² Unfree man, because medieval societies limit people’s political rights on the basis of their economic and social position. Marx consequently (twice) refers to the medieval period as the ‘*democracy of unfreedom*’,¹²³ by which he means that they exhibited substantial unity between the political sphere and civil society (hence ‘*democracy*’) but did not exhibit the freedoms associated with the modern state (hence ‘*unfreedom*’).

Thus, modern *abstract* states are characterised by a clear division between the political realm and civil society and the remoteness of the state from the people. *Concrete* states or constitutions, in contrast, are ones that do not exhibit these characteristics. Marx characterises all three of the main competing forms of contemporary nineteenth century constitutions – absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, and a republic – as abstract.¹²⁴ I now deal with Marx’s critique of each of these three constitutions in turn.

We have already discussed Marx’s contempt for the despotic and arbitrary character of Prussia’s absolute monarchy. Marx extends this critique of monarchy in the *Kritik*. Spurred by Hegel’s comment that sovereignty rightly rests in the

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34/234/32-3.

¹¹⁹ Bernard Manin similarly argues that both ‘popular self-government and ‘absolute representation’ abolish the ‘gap between those who govern and those who are governed’, (because in the former the people rule themselves and in the latter they are completely substituted by an absolute ruler), whereas representative government ‘preserves that gap’, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 174–75.

¹²⁰ Marx, *Kritik*, 33/233/32-3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ In an earlier article, from July 1842, Marx writes that ‘Christians live in states with different political constitutions, some in a republic, others in an absolute monarchy, and others again in a constitutional monarchy’, ‘Der leitende Artikel’, 187–8/102/200.

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monarch and that there can be ‘no further discussion of popular sovereignty realised in a democracy,’¹²⁵ Marx launches into a furious series of contrasts between monarchy and democracy. He writes,

Democracy is the truth of monarchy; monarchy is not the truth of democracy... Monarchy cannot, democracy can, be understood in its own terms... In monarchy we have the people of the constitution; in democracy the constitution of the people... [monarchy] starts from the state and makes man the subjectified state; democracy starts from man and makes the state objectified man.¹²⁶

The Hegelian nature of these contrasts means that they are not all immediately clear. But Marx does suggest that a key difference is that in monarchy the constitution is something external to the people whereas in democracy it is the product of the people. He says, for example, that in democracy it is ‘the self-determination of the people’, the ‘people’s *own* work’ and the ‘free product of man’.¹²⁷

Marx further maintains that a constitutional monarchy is at best a minor improvement on its absolutist variant. He argues, that while ‘some might say’ that in a constitutional monarchy the constitution is also the product of the people, there is still in fact a substantial difference to democracy, because in democracy ‘the *constitution* as such forms only *one* element in the life of the people—that it is not the *political constitution* by itself which forms the state’.¹²⁸ By this, Marx means that in a constitutional monarchy the state is still *political* in the sense outlined above, of being divided from civil society and distant from the lives of the people (if less so than in an absolute monarchy). He later says that the ‘the constitutional monarch is compatible only with the *people en miniature*’.¹²⁹

Marx’s rejection of all monarchical regimes, whether absolutist or constitutional, is further exemplified by his comments on Montesquieu’s division of constitutions.¹³⁰ Montesquieu distinguished three main types of government: (1) republican, (2) monarchical and (3) despotic. Monarchical and despotic government are both governments by one person, but are differentiated by whether they govern in accordance with fixed and established laws.¹³¹ Republican

¹²⁵ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, §279.

¹²⁶ Marx, *Kritik*, 30–1/230–1/29.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31/231/29.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 93/288/84.

¹³⁰ Marx’s comments on Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des lois* are based on the extensive notes he took that summer. His extracts from Montesquieu’s imposing book follow a pattern familiar to generations of students in that they are overwhelmingly focused on the first eleven books (about a fifth of the total). These contain the sections usually considered to be of most interest, including the discussions of the principles of government and the separation of powers. Marx is a little more unusual in that he clearly reads past this point and extracts quite a few isolated quotes from the final twenty books, showing particular interest in Montesquieu’s later discussion of commerce and history. The extracts are in *MEGA*® IV.2, pp. 106–15.

¹³¹ Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois*, II.1.

forms of government are further divided into (a) democratic and (b) aristocratic types, depending on whether the people as a whole or only part of the people holds sovereign power (Figure 3).¹³² Each of these forms of government has an associated ‘principle’, which is the underlying human passion which drives that particular form of government. For despotic governments it is *fear*, for monarchical – *honour*, for aristocratic – *moderation*, and for democratic – *virtue*.¹³³

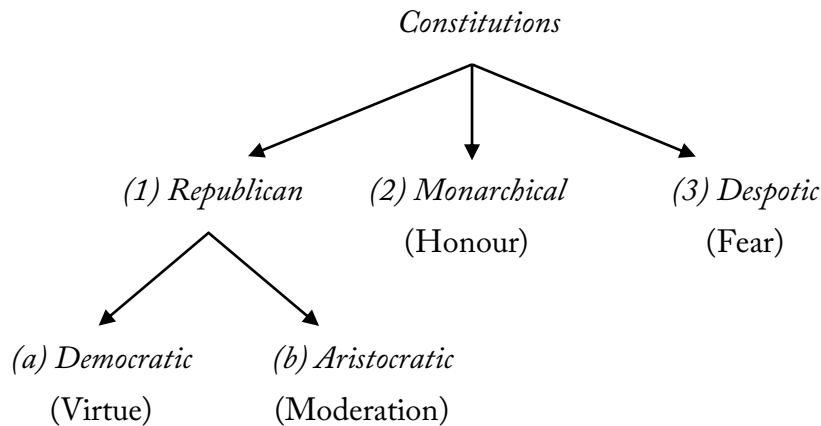


Figure 3. Montesquieu's typology of constitutions

Marx disputes Montesquieu's claim that the principle of monarchy is honour. Marx argues that the principle of monarchy is actually 'the despised, the despicable, *the dehumanised man*'.¹³⁴ He further objects to Montesquieu's attempt to differentiate between monarchy and despotism. He says that these are really 'names for a *single* concept', or at best varying types that exhibit the same underlying principle.¹³⁵ This is because wherever the 'monarchical principle has a majority behind it, human beings constitute the minority' and where it is not even questioned 'there are no human beings at all'.¹³⁶ Marx thus denies that Montesquieu's distinction between monarchical and despotic constitutions, is a particularly salient one.

Having dispensed with both forms of monarchical constitutions, Marx turns his attention to the third type of modern constitution: the republic. He writes:

In democracy the *abstract* state has ceased to be the dominant factor. The struggle between monarchy and republic is [however] itself still a struggle within the abstract state. The *political* republic is democracy

¹³² *Ibid.*, II.2.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, III.1-8.

¹³⁴ Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 477/340/138.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

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within the abstract state form. The abstract state form of democracy is therefore the republic; but here it ceases to be the *merely political* constitution.¹³⁷

Two points bear emphasising about this passage. First, Marx argues that a republic is, along with monarchy, an abstract or political state form. Second, of all the abstract states, a republic comes closest to democracy ('the *political* republic is democracy within the abstract state form'). These points are repeated several times in the *Kritik*. Marx argues that while all modern states are alienated from the people, 'Monarchy is the perfect expression of this alienation', whereas the 'republic is the negation of this estrangement within its own sphere'.¹³⁸ Marx later groups the republic and constitutional monarchy under the category of constitutional states and argues that in both of them political participation is merely '*formal*' and reduced to a '*ceremony*',¹³⁹ but he also says that constitutional monarchy is the 'constitutional state in its sharpest abstraction'.¹⁴⁰

By republic, Marx primarily has in mind the American Republic. Marx drew his analysis of the American Republic from several sources, including Alexis de Tocqueville's celebrated *De La Démocratie en Amérique* (1835), but especially from Thomas Hamilton's much less well-known travelogue *Men and Manners in America* (1833).¹⁴¹ He read this in Kreuznach in a German translation and extracted a copious set of notes.¹⁴² On the basis of these readings Marx concluded that,

Property, etc., in short, the entire content of the law and the state, is the same in North America as in Prussia, with few modifications. The *republic* there is thus a mere state *form*, as is the monarchy here.¹⁴³

The American Republic is thus 'with few modifications' as abstract as the Prussian monarchy. An improvement for sure, but still within the realm of abstractness that only a democracy escapes.

Marx's criticism of monarchical regimes is not particularly surprising or original. It is his dismissal of the republic that stands out. By rejecting the republic Marx moves beyond the central demand of his contemporary republicans. But he does so for largely republican reasons, criticising the republic for failing to

¹³⁷ Marx, *Kritik*, 32/232/31.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33/233/31.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 69/268/65.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33/233/31 and 119/314/109.

¹⁴¹ Marx references both in his more well-known discussion of the American republic in Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 146/352/151.

¹⁴² Marx's extensive extracts from the book are reproduced in *MEGA*® IV.2, 266-75. For the influence of reading Hamilton on Marx see Lewis S. Feuer, 'The North American Origin of Marx's Socialism', *The Western Political Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1963): 53-67; and Maximilien Rubel, 'Notes on Marx's Conception of Democracy', *New Politics* Winter (1962): 83-85.

¹⁴³ Marx, *Kritik*, 32/232/31. Compare with Hamilton's observation that despite their different constitutional forms, 'There is quite as much practical equality in Liverpool as New York.' *Men and Manners in America*, I. 109.

properly include citizens in the life of the state. We can thus characterise it as a republican attack on the modern republic.

The democracy Marx instead defends as the best constitution in the *Kritik* is, of course, not what we call democracy today. What we mean by democracy today is instead referred to by Marx as a republic, a representative government based on universal suffrage. The conflation of these terms was already well under way by the time of Marx's writing of the *Kritik* in 1843 (his usage might be seen as swimming against this tide). Instead, its inspiration is, in many respects, a return to the classical democracy of the ancient world, which Marx admires for the unity it exhibited between political and private life.¹⁴⁴ For example, he writes that,

The self-confidence of the human being, freedom, has first of all to be aroused again in the hearts of these people. Only this feeling, which vanished from the world with the Greeks...can again transform society into a community of human beings united for their highest aims, into a democratic state.¹⁴⁵

Yet despite this, and other endorsements, his democracy cannot be entirely reduced to its classical forebear. Marx clearly values some of the freedoms associated with modern states. He says, for example, that the modern representative state is a 'great advance' and an 'advance in history' over constitutions where people are divided into estates.¹⁴⁶ Marx thus clearly values the political and economic freedoms that are achieved in republics in comparison to medieval states and modern absolute monarchies. Neither does he embrace the ancient world's unfreedom in the form of slavery. He recognises, for example, that being a slave meant one's 'political existence was destroyed'.¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, a clear institutional difference that distinguishes Marx's democracy from both classical democracy and what is now called democracy is his embrace of popular delegacy. Marx accepts the point that the size of modern states rules out the kind of direct political participation in ancient democracy. But he does not embrace the standard response that representative democracy is the only alternative. Reducing political participation to electing only representatives, means reducing participation to a 'single and temporary' event, to a 'sensational act, [that] it is political society at a moment of *ecstasy*'.¹⁴⁸ This is of course a similar argument to the one made more famously by Rousseau, that electing

¹⁴⁴ Colletti, 'Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*', 41.

¹⁴⁵ Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 475–6/338–9/137.

¹⁴⁶ Marx, *Kritik*, 89/279/75 and 85/283/79.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 120/315/110.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 121/317/112.

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representatives reduces a people to a single moment of liberty, which is potentially a reflection of the influence of his concurrent reading of *Du contrat social*.¹⁴⁹

Marx's alternative solution is a form of popular delegacy. Hegel had argued that representatives should not be 'commissioned or mandated agents', because this would limit their ability to come together in 'live exchanges and collective deliberations' with other representatives, who all had a 'better understanding' of the common good than the citizens who elected them.¹⁵⁰ Marx rejects this argument. Rather than deliberating for the common good, representatives 'in reality represent *particular* interests'.¹⁵¹ This is because they are free to disregard the wishes of those they represent ('Formally they are commissioned, but once they are *actually* commissioned they are *no* longer *mandatories*. They are supposed to *be delegates*, and they are *not*.')¹⁵² Instead, Marx supports a system whereby delegates are bound by the instructions given to them by their constituents.¹⁵³ An institution of this kind, would, Marx believes ensure that delegates work for the common good, and would be a significant divergence from the representative institutions of today's 'democracies'.

From the above discussion of modern and pre-modern constitutions we can construct Marx's typology of constitutions, which provides some structure for his fragmentary early constitutional thought:

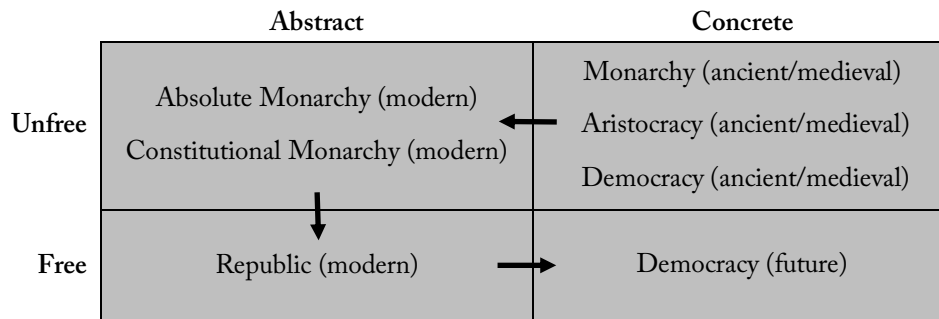


Figure 4. Marx's typology of constitutions

The typology captures the straightforward distinction Marx makes between *abstract* and *concrete* constitution. But it also captures a further distinction, what I have labelled *free* and *unfree* constitutions, a distinction not explicitly made by

¹⁴⁹ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, III.15. For Marx's extracts on this chapter see *MEGA*®, IV.2, pp. 100-101.

¹⁵⁰ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, §309.

¹⁵¹ Marx, *Kritik*, 133/329/122.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Despite Rousseau's critique of representation in *Du contrat social*, he also embraces delegate mandates in his *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, 978-80/200-2. On this point see Christopher Bertram, *Rousseau and the Social Contract* (London: Routledge, 2004), 171-72. Rousseau's *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne* is mentioned (dismissively) by Marx in his 1847 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 353/334. Though we cannot be sure if he had read at the time of writing the *Kritik* in 1843. This is discussed further in section on 'Popular Delegacy and Representative Government' in chapter three.

Marx, but one that makes sense of his constitutional thought. Most obviously the distinction between *free* and *unfree*, is suggested by his characterisation of pre-modern medieval states as the ‘*democracy of unfreedom*’ because of the limitations they place on people’s economic choices and also by his rejection of the unfreedom of ancient slavery.

The typology is also supposed to capture that Marx sees a historical, and somewhat dialectical, progression in constitutions. Ancient and medieval states were praiseworthy in that they were *concrete* (the political sphere and civil society, as well as the people and the state, are unified), but they combined this with also being *unfree* (in that they deny various political and economic freedoms). As the modern state comes into formation the state becomes *abstract* (in that civil society becomes split from the public sphere and increasingly distant from the lives of the people). In the most advanced form of the modern state – the republic – however, the state becomes *free* (in the sense of providing political freedom and equality to all). But it is only in a future democracy that we achieve a constitution that is both *concrete and free*. It maintains the modern freedoms achieved by the republic but returns to the ancient world in overcoming the alienating separation that characterises the modern state.

(iv) The Critique of Socialism and Communism

Describing the *Kritik* as a republican text is not uncontested. Several commentators have argued that the *Kritik* actually represents Marx’s conversion to socialism and communism. Shlomo Avineri provocatively argues that,

The *Critique* contains ample material to show that Marx envisages in 1843 a society based on the abolition of private property and on the disappearance of the state. Briefly, the *Communist Manifesto* is immanent in the *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*.¹⁵⁴

On this basis of Marx’s supposed rejection of the state and private property in the *Kritik*, Avineri argues that it is ‘impossible to construe his *Critique* as a radical democratic or republican tract’.¹⁵⁵

But the textual evidence for this claim is, in fact, remarkably thin.¹⁵⁶ For example, the basis for Marx’s apparent belief in the abolition of the state in the

¹⁵⁴ Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 34.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38. Avineri’s position is endorsed by both Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1974, 1:50; and Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 283–84. This is a widespread assumption in the secondary literature. We are told for example that ‘the conclusion of Marx’s argument in the *Critique*: [is] the suppression of politics and the extinction of the state’ and that ‘republicanism is not adequate to this new form of society, which involves the disappearance of the state’. Respectively in, Colletti, ‘Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*’, 44; and David McLellan, *Marx before Marxism* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 115.

¹⁵⁶ A separate potential piece of evidence in favour of Marx’s supposed conversion to communism in the *Kritik* is his reference to the ‘communistic entity (*kommunistische Wesen*)’ that is isolated from the political state, *Kritik*, 88/283/79. But Jeffrey Isaac rightly notes that this term does not refer to the ‘same communism

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Kritik rests on just two isolated remarks.¹⁵⁷ In the first remark, Marx writes that ‘in a true democracy the *political state disappears (untergebe)*’.¹⁵⁸ Prima facie that might seem to support the claim that the state disappears. But what Marx actually says is that the ‘*political*’ state disappears, which we have seen is not same as the state as such – since it refers to the subset of abstract states. Moreover, Marx prefaces the remark by saying that this is only what the ‘latest French’ writers have claimed, and that it is only ‘correct insofar’ as we understand state ‘qua political state’.¹⁵⁹

In the second remark, he says that ‘*Electoral reform* within the *abstract political state* is therefore the demand (*Forderung*) for its *dissolution (Auflösung)*, but also for the *dissolution of civil society*’.¹⁶⁰ The suggestion seems to be that achieving universal suffrage would mean the end of the state. But again, note that Marx only refers to the ‘*abstract political state*’ and not the state as such. Furthermore, Marx does not actually say that the achievement of universal suffrage is what brings the political state to an end, but that the ‘demand (*Forderung*)’ for it does.¹⁶¹ That can reasonably be interpreted to mean that the demand for greater political participation, which underlies the demand for universal suffrage, is what reveals the limitation of the abstract state – because the representative institutions of an abstract state cannot accommodate that demand. Finally, Marx seems happy to refer to the future political community he defends as a state, referring, for example, to the ‘true state (*wahren Staat*)’, the ‘rational state (*vernünftigen Staat*)’ and the ‘democratic state’.¹⁶² In conclusion, as Leopold notes, Marx’s point in the *Kritik* is ‘not that the state as such ceases to exist, but only that the political community no longer takes an “abstract” form’.¹⁶³

The evidence for Marx’s belief in the abolition of property is even more tenuous. There is no explicit statement in the *Kritik* where Marx says he supports this demand.¹⁶⁴ What the *Kritik* does contain is a critique of the role of private

that Marx advocates in his later writings’, but is a ‘general synonym for the universal equality and “species-being” of men’, Isaac, ‘The Lion’s Skin of Politics: Marx on Republicanism’, 472.

¹⁵⁷ The following argument is heavily indebted to the analysis in Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 254–62.

¹⁵⁸ Marx, *Kritik*, 32/232/30. The *MECW* dramatically, and implausibly, translates *untergebe* as ‘annihilated’.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 131/327/121.

¹⁶¹ Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 259.

¹⁶² Marx, *Kritik*, 54-5-1; ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, 476/339/137.

¹⁶³ Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 260. The question of the disappearance of the state is also discussed in the section ‘An End to Politics?’ in chapter three, which (in relation to Marx’s later writings) sets out two meanings of the disappearance of the state. First, as a body of professionals separated from the people, and second, as a coercive force. In the *Kritik*, Marx can be thought of as endorsing the first meaning of the disappearance of the state (even if he does not refer to it as a disappearance of the state as such), but there is no indication of him endorsing the second meaning.

¹⁶⁴ Avineri does not in fact provide such textual support but only an unconvincing roundabout argument, whereby Marx’s belief in the ‘*dissolution of civil society*’ is interpreted to mean the dissolution of different

property in political states. In this regard he says that the ‘political constitution at its highest point is therefore the *constitution of private property*’.¹⁶⁵ But Marx’s target here is not private property as such, but *landed* private property, which he says is private property ‘κατ’ ἐξοχήν’ (*par excellence*) and private property ‘*proper*’.¹⁶⁶ His critique of landed private property is in response to Hegel’s specification that the members of the Upper House should consist of landowners because landed property gives them independence. For this reason, Hegel gives qualified support to primogeniture in order to support the continuation of these landed estates. Hegel further specifies that those property owners whose property consists in ‘trade and industry’ do not have the requisite independence, since they are reliant on the ‘uncertainties of trade, [and] the quest for profit.’¹⁶⁷

By justifying primogeniture in this way, Marx charges Hegel with having made primogeniture the ‘highest synthesis of the political state’.¹⁶⁸ Reserving a part of the legislature for those with landed property, means that private property has been placed at the heart of the constitution structure of the political state. That is what Marx means when he says that ‘political constitution at its highest point is therefore the *constitution of private property*’.¹⁶⁹ Marx finds this so objectionable because it not only excludes non-landowners from the constitution but also reverses the proper relationship of the state to private property, because the latter should be subordinated to the former. Thus, he says that ‘Hegel makes citizenship, political existence and political conviction attributes of private property, instead of making private property an attribute of citizenship.’¹⁷⁰ The proper relationship between property and state was far more evident, Marx says, in ancient Rome where ‘private property as a whole, as with the classical peoples generally, asserts itself as *public property*’.¹⁷¹ That Marx expresses positive sympathies about classical Roman conceptions of property suggests that he wanted private property to be geared towards public ends, not that he endorsed its complete abolition.

But the most decisive evidence against the view that by the time of the *Kritik* Marx is a communist and socialist, is his explicit unwillingness to fully embrace it. This is made clear in the third letter to Ruge in the ‘Briefwechsel von

classes, and since differentiated classes rely on differential property ownership, Marx must thus believe in the abolition of private property, Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 37.

¹⁶⁵ Marx, *Kritik*, 108/303/98, see also 114/309/104.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 107/303/98.

¹⁶⁷ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, §306 and §306A.

¹⁶⁸ Marx, *Kritik*, 110/306/101.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 108/303/98.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 120/316/111.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 120/315/110.

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1843' dated September 1843, and written in Kreuznach a few weeks before his move to Paris. He here expresses a certain sympathy with communism's aims but also declares it to be a 'dogmatic abstraction', and that the task of critics, like Ruge and himself, is to clarify its dogmatic propositions to its proponents.¹⁷²

We can discern four reasons for Marx's hesitation in embracing communism. First, he argues that socialists have mistakenly identified socialism with the 'supersession (*Aufhebung*) of property', when in fact its own principles do not necessitate this.¹⁷³ Second, Marx argues that communism has a tendency towards utopian system-building, rather than an immanent critique of existing society. He singles out Étienne Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie* (1840) as a mistaken attempt to confront people with a ready-made system rather than work from their present condition.¹⁷⁴ Third, he says that communism's narrow focus means that it is unable to build a broad political coalition. The task of the critic, he says, is to 'influence our contemporaries' and build up a 'large party'.¹⁷⁵ This means focusing on the issues that they care about, which in Germany is in the 'first place religion, and next to it, politics'.¹⁷⁶ Fourth, Marx says that 'crass' socialists have deemed 'political questions' to be 'unworthy of attention'.¹⁷⁷ In contrast, Marx claims that by studying the 'conflict of the political state' we can discern the underlying 'social truth'.¹⁷⁸ He says that the conflicts of the political state are, in fact, expressions of 'all social struggles, needs and truths'.¹⁷⁹ For example, Marx argues that the political choice between a system of representation and a system of social-estates (the question of the French Revolution), is in effect the same question as the choice between rule of the people or the rule of private property. He concludes that it is therefore entirely legitimate to engage in 'criticism of politics, participation in politics' and that 'the critic not only can, but must deal with these political questions'.¹⁸⁰

As we will see in chapter two, these are entirely standard criticisms of communism made by republicans at the time. Republicans condemned communists for their exclusive focus on the social question and thereby ignoring

¹⁷² Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 487/344/142. This is incidentally the letter for which we can have the most confidence for Marx's authorship, as Ruge claimed that this final letter from Marx was not one of the letters for which he was the actual 'author', Ruge to Jakob Veneday, 7 March 1844, *Redaktionsbriefwechsel*, 1339. Ruge also did not include it when he later reprinted all the other contributions to the 'Briefwechsel von 1843' in his *Sämtliche Werke*, 9: 113–42. He also wrote that Marx had shown his opposition to socialism in this letter, *Zwei Jahre in Paris*, 139–40. It is therefore very unlikely that these criticisms of communism come from Ruge rather than Marx.

¹⁷³ Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 487/344/143.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 488/345/144.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 487/344/143.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 488/345/144.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 488/345/143.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 488/345/144.

the necessity for political action. They also advocated building a wide alliance of classes, and rejected the communists' call to abolish private property. They were also often suspicious of imposing detailed social utopias on the people, which they thought would violate their right to decide these themselves. Marx was therefore (at the same time as writing the *Kritik*) giving a republican critique of communism, before he had converted to communism.

That does not, however, mean that we cannot detect the beginnings of his socialism in the *Kritik* and in the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. In the *Kritik*, Marx is searching for an alternative to the modern representative state that will overcome the alienating division of civil society and the political sphere. At the time of writing the *Kritik* he is not yet willing to think of socialism as the answer to that search, and instead calls it 'democracy'. Marx gives us very little indication how that democracy would overcome that cleavage, and one way to present his conversion to socialism is that he came to realise that only socialism could.¹⁸¹

Similarly, the 'Briefwechsel von 1843' also contains embryonic elements of his later communism and materialism. Though Marx primarily attributes the coming German revolution to a growth in political consciousness, but he also says that it is the consequence of the development of the 'system of industry and trade, of ownership and exploitation of people', which produces a 'rupture within present-day society'.¹⁸² This brief focus on material economic factors is quite out of character for the 'Briefwechsel von 1843', which is otherwise nearly exclusively devoted to political matters. We also find one of the earliest examples of Marx's characteristic use of the obstetric metaphor to describe this revolution; the new world is said to be the 'product that the present time bears in its womb'.¹⁸³ Additionally, his dismissive attitude towards the 'ready-made systems' of Cabet and instead advocating immanent critique ('we do not dogmatically anticipate the world, but only want to find the new world through criticism of the old one'), match his later criticism of utopian socialism.¹⁸⁴ In these ways, the 'Briefwechsel von 1843', despite predating Marx's explicit commitment to communism, already bears some of the seeds of his later commitments.

¹⁸¹ Thus Colletti's conclusion that Marx was not a communist when he started the *Kritik* but that he 'arrived at this goal *in the course of writing it*' is closer to the mark, Colletti, 'Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*', 45.

¹⁸² Marx, 'Briefwechsel von 1843', 479/342-3/141.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 480/343/141.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 486-7-3.

II. Human and Political Emancipation

Marx arrived in Paris in October 1843, the city he described as ‘the old university of philosophy...and the new capital of the new world!’¹⁸⁵ Ruge had been there since August, but was travelling in Germany when Marx arrived, and did not return to Paris until December. Marx was therefore alone in this period and was tasked with attracting French radicals as contributors to their *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. He threw himself into this mission, likely meeting with, amongst others, Louis Blanc, Victor Considerant, and Pierre Leroux.¹⁸⁶ Through them, it is likely that he came into contact with the editorial staff of some of the major opposition presses, *La Démocratie Pacifique*, *La Réforme*, and *Revue Indépendante*. It is also possible that in this period Marx made his first contact with members of the *Bund der Gerechten* (or League of the Just), an underground communist society, which eventually became the *Bund der Kommunisten* (or Communist League).¹⁸⁷ Despite these efforts, neither Ruge nor Marx were able to find any French contributors and the publication of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* was forced to go ahead without them (the language barrier combined with the French opposition to the atheism of German philosophy, seems to have been to blame). But the meetings with these socialists, and reading their work, and his interactions with Parisian workers and artisans had a striking impact on Marx. He had left Kreuznach a radical republican, but a radical republican interested in socialism and eager to learn more. Paris gave him that opportunity and his ideas underwent a rapid transition in these first few months.

This is demonstrated in two articles, ‘Zur Judenfrage’ and the ‘Kritik: Einleitung’ which are the focus of this section. Both were published in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* in February 1844, but were written between, in his first two months in Paris, between mid-October and mid-December 1843.¹⁸⁸ ‘Zur Judenfrage’ is formally a response to Bruno Bauer’s *Die Judenfrage* (1843) and ‘Die Fähigkeit des heutigen Juden und Christen frei zu werden’ (1843), where Bauer had argued against Jewish emancipation. The ‘Kritik: Einleitung’ is, despite its title, not the introduction to the *Kritik* he wrote in Kreuznach that summer, but was supposed to be an introduction to a new work critiquing Hegel, that would appear in future issues of the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher* (which Marx,

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 486/343/142.

¹⁸⁶ Jacques Grandjonc, ‘Zu Marx’ Aufenthalt in Paris: 12. Oktober 1843 - 1. Februar 1845’, in *Studien zu Marx’ erstem Paris-Aufenthalt und zur Entstehung der Deutschen Ideologie* (Trier: Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx Haus, 1990), 180–81; Gregory, ‘Marx’s and Engels’ Knowledge of French Socialism’, 167–69. Other options considered by Ruge and Marx included, Alphonse de Lamartine, Félicité de Lamennais, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, George Sand and Flora Tristan.

¹⁸⁷ See the editorial notes in *MEGA*² I.2, p. 542–3.

¹⁸⁸ For the justification of these dates of composition see the editorial notes in *MEGA*² I.2: 650–1 and 669.

however, never wrote). Together these texts can be seen as an intensification of Marx's attack on the modern representative state and the egoism of civil society, with an evermore apparent socialist undertone.

(i) Republican Socialist

Despite the title, 'Zur Judenfrage' is only engaged with Bauer's question of Jewish emancipation insofar as it relates to the broader question of political and human emancipation. Bauer had argued that in order for Jews to be fully incorporated as citizens they would have to give up their particular identity as Jews.¹⁸⁹ Political emancipation in the modern state, Bauer claims, requires the renunciation of religion.¹⁹⁰ Marx roundly rejects Bauer's view, arguing that the modern state is in fact perfectly compatible with religion, as demonstrated by the most developed modern state, the United States of America. The real problem is that political emancipation in the modern state does not result in the emancipation of people from religion (in fact, in the USA, religion not only exists but displays a '*fresh and vigorous vitality*').¹⁹¹ Consequently, the true problem – and the actual focus of 'Zur Judenfrage' – is that *political* emancipation does not result in *human* emancipation.

'Zur Judenfrage' continues several themes from the *Kritik* and the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'. Most obviously, the entire discussion is framed around the cleavage between the political state and civil society, which he says is the hallmark of modern states.¹⁹² We also find a similar set of constitutional categories used to approach the Jewish question, which Marx says takes a different form in each kind of state. In the semi-feudal constitutions of Germany, where 'there is no political state', Marx argues that the Jewish question is a purely theological matter within the Christian state.¹⁹³ In more advanced constitutional states, such as the July Monarchy of France, Marx maintains the question is still mostly a constitutional matter, since the '*semblence*' of a state religion is maintained and political emancipation is still a '*half-measure*'.¹⁹⁴ Only in the 'free states (*Freistaaten*)' i.e. republics, of North America, does the Jewish question become a purely secular one, because it is the political state at its 'most completely

¹⁸⁹ Bauer also endorses the anti-Semitic position that Judaism is an especially particularistic religion in comparison to the more universalistic Christianity, see David Leopold, 'The Hegelian Antisemitism of Bruno Bauer', *History of European Ideas* 25, no. 4 (1999): 182, 185.

¹⁹⁰ Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 145–49.

¹⁹¹ Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 146/352/151.

¹⁹² As in the *Kritik*, Marx confusingly refers to the 'political state' to mean both the political sphere in opposition to civil society, and also as the umbrella term for the whole political and social entity marked by this division.

¹⁹³ Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 145/351/150.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

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developed'.¹⁹⁵ The republic is thus once again portrayed as being the most advanced of the political states.

But in an important departure from the *Kritik*, Marx no longer identifies 'democracy' with his preferred alternative. To emphasise his point regarding the failure of modern states to emancipate people from religion, he repeatedly draws a contrast between the 'Christian state' and the 'democratic state'. In the Christian state, the state adopts a particular religion and excludes other religions from politics. It is therefore still a 'non-state' (in the sense of not being a properly modern state).¹⁹⁶ Marx says that in the democratic state, on the other hand, the state is officially 'atheistic' and 'secular', and 'relegates religion to a place among the other elements in civil society'.¹⁹⁷ In a 'political democracy' or 'perfect democracy', there is consequently a 'dualism between individual life and species-life', where people live a secular political life and a religious private life.¹⁹⁸ That is an important shift in terminology. Marx is here equating the democratic state with the modern political state. Just a few months before in the *Kritik*, Marx used democracy in precisely the opposite way, as the kind of future state where the dualism of the modern state would be overcome. 'Democracy' in 'Zur Judenfrage' has thus become identical with what Marx preferred to call 'republic' in the *Kritik*.

That terminological shift away from democracy as his preferred alternative can accurately be seen as a reflection of his growing socialist sensibilities. This growing awareness is most clearly demonstrated in the intensified attack on civil society in 'Zur Judenfrage'. For example, Marx criticises how the modern state splits people into a 'twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life'.¹⁹⁹ In their public life, in the political sphere, they are able, in a partial and limited way, to express their nature as a 'communal being'.²⁰⁰ But in their private life, their life in civil society, they are reduced to an egoistic individual, who 'regards other men as a means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers'.²⁰¹ They are therefore divided, within their own lives, between 'citoyen' and 'bourgeois'; citizens on the one hand and 'merchant', 'day-labourer', and 'landowner' on the other.²⁰²

Moreover, returning to the same question of electoral property qualifications that he discussed in the *Kritik*, Marx expresses the same sentiment

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* The discussion differs in that in the *Kritik*, Marx classed both republics and constitutional monarchies under constitutional states.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 151/357/156.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 154/360-1/159.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 148-9/355/154.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 149/355/154.

that this is an unacceptable recognition of private property in the constitution. But going beyond that criticism, Marx says that what abolishing these property qualifications does not do, is ‘abolish private property’ (which is first time that Marx commits himself to this goal).²⁰³ Marx continues, that the political state in fact ‘presupposes’ that it does not abolish private property. The political state only abolishes the distinctions of ‘*birth, social rank, education, occupation*’ as formally recognised political distinctions, it does not abolish them as such.²⁰⁴ It instead relegates them to distinctions in civil society. The breakdown of the link between private property and political rights and representation is a precondition for the modern state, where ‘every member of the people is an *equal* participant in popular sovereignty’.²⁰⁵ It therefore makes people politically and legally equal, but does so without making them equal participants in civil society. The political state therefore does not free people from an obstacle to their freedom, it only relegates that obstacle to civil society:

Hence man was not freed from religion, he received religious freedom.
He was not freed from property, he received freedom to own property.
He was not freed from the egoism of business, he received freedom to engage in business.²⁰⁶

This is the central failure of the modern political state. As Marx says:

The limits of political emancipation are evident at once from the fact that the *state* can free itself from a restriction without man being *really* free from this restriction, that the state can be a *free state* without man being a *free man*.²⁰⁷

That final remark is central importance to understanding Marx’s drift away from republicanism. It is a rejection – perhaps even a deliberate one – of the republican view, articulated by all the early modern civic humanists, that it is ‘only possible to be free in a free state’.²⁰⁸ That view was based on the idea that in absolutist states, the people are not free because the ruler can interfere at will. People can only be free in a state where political power is properly constrained, through a constitution that guarantees their rights and the rule of law. But Marx’s response is that this is not enough to make one free. A free state, like the American republic, may have freed its people from absolutist political rule, but that is not the only kind of freedom that matters. A person is only free if they are also free in civil society.

The article thus provides a sharpening of Marx’s attack on the liberal representative state, from an increasingly socialist, rather than republican,

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 148/354/153.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 161/369/167.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 147/353/152.

²⁰⁸ Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 60.

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perspective. But that does not mean that the republican elements disappear entirely from 'Zur Judenfrage'. For all the criticism of political emancipation as insufficient for human emancipation, he still defends it as a 'big step forward.'²⁰⁹ He says that it is the 'final form of human emancipation *within* the hitherto existing world order'.²¹⁰ He praises the French Revolution for having 'raised state affairs to become affairs of the people', that it has made the state a 'matter of *general concern*', and that it has 'set free the political spirit'.²¹¹ Marx has thus not suddenly lost his concern for political participation. But instead, it is now tempered by the realisation that 'Throwing off the political yoke meant at the same time throwing off the bonds which restrained the egoistic spirit of civil society.'²¹²

Marx's continuing republican concerns are also demonstrated by his nuanced discussion of human rights. Contrary, to frequent misinterpretation, Marx does not attack rights *tout court* in 'Zur Judenfrage', but a subset of rights.²¹³ Through a study of the French and American republican constitutions, he distinguishes between the *droits de l'homme* (rights of man) and the *droits du citoyen* (rights of the citizen). The former are the rights of civil society, such as the right to religious liberty and the right to private property. It is these rights that he objects as the 'rights of egoistic man, of man separated from the other men and from the community', of an 'individual withdrawn into himself into the confines of his private interests and private caprice'.²¹⁴ The *droits du citoyen* are, on the other hand, political rights, such as the rights to vote and stand in election. Marx characterises these rights very differently from the *droits de l'homme*. He says that they are 'rights that can only be exercised in a community with others,' and that their 'content is *participation* in the *community*, and specifically in the *political community*, in the *life of the state*'.²¹⁵ Marx's critical fire is therefore not geared at the rights that guarantee political participation, but those *droits de l'homme* that are only a reflection of man as an egoistic being. Marx also attacks the *droits de l'homme* for undermining the integrity and importance of the *droits du citoyen*, by turning the latter into a mere means for the protection of the former. Thus,

the political emancipators go so far as to reduce citizenship, and the *political community*, to a mere means for maintaining these so-called rights of man, that therefore the *citoyen* is declared to be the servant of egoistic *homme*, that the sphere in which man acts as a communal being is degraded to a level below the sphere in which he acts as a partial

²⁰⁹ Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 150/356/155.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 160-1/368-9/166.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 150-63.

²¹⁴ Marx, 'Zur Judenfrage', 157/364/162 and 158-9/366/164.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 156/362/160-1.

being, and that, finally, it is not man as *citoyen*, but man as *bourgeois* who is considered to be the *essential* and *true* man.²¹⁶

Marx thus decries that citizenship is no longer an end in and of itself, but has been reduced to a mere means for the bourgeois rights of civil society. Political rights are not valued for allowing citizens to express their concern for the common good, but instead as a way to safeguard their private interests.

In conclusion, 'Zur Judenfrage' contains strains of both a republican critique of liberalism (that bourgeois civil society undermines the political sphere), and also a socialist critique of republicanism (that freedom in the political sphere is not enough without freedom in civil society).

(ii) The 'Discovery' of the Proletariat in Paris

We have seen that there is critical disagreement over whether Marx should be considered to be already a socialist in the *Kritik* or only when he moves to Paris and writes 'Zur Judenfrage'. But there is near complete consensus that he is 'unquestionably' one, when he writes the 'Kritik: Einleitung'.²¹⁷ The primary basis for this judgement, is what is often referred to as Marx's 'discovery' of the proletariat.²¹⁸ The text is the first time that he presents the proletariat as the agent of the next revolution. Revolutions, Marx claims, are not simply the consequence of an advance of philosophy or theory, but have to be driven forward by a material class of people that has an interest in revolution.²¹⁹ Marx says that in the French Revolution this role was played by the bourgeoisie. They saw themselves as the '*general representative*' of the nation, and led the masses in the attack on the nobility and the clergy.²²⁰ But the contemporary German bourgeoisie does not have the 'consistency, the severity, the courage or the ruthlessness' to play the same role in the impending German Revolution (here Marx probably the failure of the Rhenish bourgeoisie to defend the *Rheinische Zeitung* against its censoring at the back of his mind).²²¹ There is therefore no 'particular' class of civil society that can answer the titular question of Emmanuel Sieyès's famous pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?* (1789) with the words '*I am nothing and I should be everything*.'²²² Instead, Marx argues that the fate of revolution rests with the

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 159/366/164.

²¹⁷ Gregory, 'Marx's and Engels' Knowledge of French Socialism', 190.

²¹⁸ For the description of this as a 'discovery', see Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1974, 1:74–75; Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. I: The Founders (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 127; Löwy, *La Théorie de la révolution chez le jeune Marx*, 64.

²¹⁹ Marx, 'Kritik: Einleitung', 177–78/385–86/182–83.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 180/388/184.

²²¹ Marx, 'Kritik: Einleitung', 180/389/185.

²²² *Ibid.*, 180/388–9/184–5. Sieyès had opened his pamphlet with the lines: '1. What is the Third Estate? – *Everything*. 2. What, until now, has it been in the existing political order? – *Nothing*. 3. What does it want to be? – *Something*.'

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‘universal class’, a class that is both ‘a class of civil society, [and] not a class of civil society’: that is the proletariat.

One dissenting voice to this consensus, is George Lichtheim, who argues that in the ‘Kritik: Einleitung’ Marx was still a ‘German Jacobin for whom the proletariat existed primarily as the instrument of revolution’.²²³ That description is a misleading description of Marx’s position up to this point,²²⁴ and only a superficial reading of the text could lead one to the conclusion that Marx is still only a republican ‘German Jacobin’ and not a socialist. For Marx has clearly gone beyond the Jacobin position, explicitly saying that Germany needs more than the ‘partial, the *merely* political revolution’.²²⁵ In a political revolution, Marx says that a particular class of civil society, the bourgeoisie, emancipates only itself and raises itself to ‘*general* domination’ of society.²²⁶ He says that Germany instead needs a ‘*radical* revolution’ where a universal class, the proletariat, emancipates all of society, resulting in ‘*general human* emancipation’.²²⁷ The fact that Marx still prefers to contrast political emancipation with human emancipation, rather than explicitly referring to socialism or communism (which the ‘Kritik: Einleitung’ does not mention), might be used to support the idea that Marx is not yet a socialist. But we only need to look at how Marx describes human emancipation to see that for all substantive purposes he is a socialist. He says that it would be the ‘*dissolution of the hitherto existing world order*’, the ‘*breaking of every form of bondage*’, and, most importantly, the ‘*negation of private property*’.²²⁸ At most we could say that in spite of this substantive position, for the reasons he gave in the ‘Briefwechsel von 1843’, Marx was quite ready to call himself a socialist, privately or publicly. If that was indeed the case, then, to borrow an idea from the discussions of Marx and justice, Marx was a socialist even if he did not think he was.²²⁹

The introduction of the proletariat into Marx’s writing is a striking development, and marks an important milestone in his journey from republicanism to socialism. Marx has not only identified the shortcomings of the kind of republic brought about by a political revolution, but now also found an agent capable of bringing about a drastically different kind of society. That shift was most likely a consequence of his new Parisian environment, which in 1843-44

²²³ Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*, 38n1.

²²⁴ The *Kritik* had after all attacked the modern republic, the state form defended by the Jacobins, and in Marx, ‘Zur Judenfrage’, 157/364/162, he includes even the supposedly ‘most radical’ 1793 Jacobin constitution, in his criticism.

²²⁵ Marx, ‘Kritik: Einleitung’, 179/388/184.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Marx, ‘Kritik: Einleitung’, 182/391/187.

²²⁹ G. A. Cohen, ‘Review of Allen Wood’s Karl Marx’, *Mind* 92, no. 367 (1983): 443; Norman Geras, ‘The Controversy about Marx and Justice’, *New Left Review*, no. 150 (1985): 70.

was home to some 40,000 Germans, the majority of whom were artisans and workers.²³⁰ He describes his impressions of the Parisian workers in quite moving terms, writing that ‘the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies’.²³¹ We should bear in mind that these descriptions date from the summer of 1844, thus postdating the ‘Kritik: Einleitung’, and we therefore can only tentatively conclude that Marx might already have come into contact with the Parisian workers and artisans at the end of 1843.²³²

III. The Soldier of Socialism

Marx’s contributions to the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher* signified an unmistakable, if perhaps still not explicit, new found commitment to socialism. That development put Marx on a collision course with his co-editor Ruge, whose move to Paris had not resulted in a transition to communism. Ruge’s opening ‘Plan’ of the journal could, with only some exaggeration, be characterised as a preface to a different journal. His claim that the journal would drive forward a humanist ‘alliance of freedom’ between France and Germany in order to complete the political promise of the French Revolution, contrasted strongly with the actual contents of the journal.²³³ Marx’s articles, along with the contributions by Engels, Hess and Herwegh, signalled a much more socially radical direction. After the publication of the journal at the end of February 1844, the publisher informed Marx and Ruge that he could no longer support the venture. Further bad news came when the police confiscated most of the issues that had been sent to Germany.²³⁴ Marx and Ruge fell out soon afterwards. The immediate cause was Ruge’s angry disapproval of Herwegh’s libertine lifestyle in Paris,²³⁵ and disagreements over the journal’s finances. But as much as there were financial and personal dimensions to this breakdown, the political differences played a central

²³⁰ Jacques Grandjonc, *Marx et les communistes allemands à Paris, Vorwärts, 1844*. (Paris: F. Maspero, 1974), 12–13.

²³¹ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 425/553/313. See also his description in Marx to Ludwig Feuerbach, 11 August 1844, *MEGA*² III.1: 63-4; *MEW* 27: 426; *MECW* 3: 355.

²³² Michael Löwy argues that the earliest date for this contact was in April 1844, Löwy, *La Théorie de la révolution chez le jeune Marx*, 64n99.

²³³ Ruge, ‘Plan’, 12. Marx and Engels would later write that their articles ‘contained views running directly counter to those [Ruge] had himself announced in the Preface’, *Die großen Männer des Exiles*, 260/277/269. This discrepancy was also noted by contemporaries such as Moses Hess, see ‘Ueber sozialistische Bewegungen in Deutschland’, 219.

²³⁴ One estimate says 800 of the total 1,000 copies printed were confiscated Hal Draper, *The Marx-Engels Cyclopedia. Vol. 1 The Marx-Engels Chronicle* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), 16. However, Ruge says that they had sent 2,300 copies to Germany, and had kept the remainder for sale in Paris, Arnold Ruge to Zacharias Löwenthal, 29th February 1844, *Redaktionsbriefwechsel*, 1337. He later mentions 3,000 copies printed in total, Ruge to Herman Köchly, 24 March 1844, *Ibid.*, 1347.

²³⁵ Ruge to Catharina Sophia Ruge, 28 March and 19 May 1844, *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter*, 341, 350.

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role. As Ruge later recalled, Marx had told him that they could no longer work together because 'while I was only interested in politics, he was a communist'.²³⁶

The break remained largely confined to their immediate circle in the following months.²³⁷ But it became public knowledge, when Marx published a lengthy and highly critical response to an article Ruge had written on the topic of the Silesian Weavers Revolt, which had broken out in early June 1844. The article laid bare just how large a gulf had opened up between Ruge's republicanism and Marx's new-found communism. Ruge thus provides a useful yardstick for measuring the distance Marx's communism had travelled from the republicanism that he left behind. Consequently, this section first explores Ruge's republicanism, and then looks at Marx's criticism of that position, which emerged in their differing responses to the Silesian Weavers Revolt.

(i) Arnold Ruge's Republicanism

Ruge was born on the island of Rügen in 1802, making him sixteen years Marx's senior and by the time they met he was already an established and well-known journalist. Ruge's school years were strongly marked by the experience of the *Freiheitskriege* (1813-15) against Napoleon, which resulted in the incorporation of Rügen into Prussia (Marx's native Rhineland was similarly also a recent Prussian acquisition). While studying philosophy in Halle and Jena, Ruge joined the underground *Jünglingsbund*, which was part of the the *Burschenschaften*, the liberal and radical student movement that had been outlawed by the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819. He was arrested for this in 1824 by the Prussian authorities and sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but was pardoned in 1830. In prison, he engaged in an extensive study of the ancient Greek classics. The model of democratic Athens become a lifelong inspiration to him, providing him with a political model of self-rule, freedom, and an active citizenry.²³⁸ In later life, he wrote that he believed that 'We owe everything which is still good and human in the world to the Athenian Republic.'²³⁹ After being released he became a *Privatdozent* (unsalaried lecturer) in Halle, and became increasingly interested in both Hegel and journalism. In 1838, he set up the *Hallische Jahrbücher* which became the foremost literary and philosophical journal of the Young Hegelians. In this role, he became one of the most 'brilliant political commentators of the time',²⁴⁰ and played a key

²³⁶ Ruge, *Zwei Jahre in Paris*, 140. For further discussion see Grandjonec, 'Zu Marx' Aufenthalt in Paris', 177-78.

²³⁷ As late as May, Ruge hoped that they would still be reconciled, Ruge to Moritz Fleischer, 20 May 1844, *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter*, 354.

²³⁸ Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 75-77.

²³⁹ Ruge, *Aus früherer Zeit*, III.161; Cited in James Willard Moore, *Arnold Ruge: A Study in Democratic Caesarism* (PhD Thesis: University of California, Berkeley, 1977), 427.

²⁴⁰ Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 13.

part in driving the Young Hegelians from liberalism towards a more radical republican position.²⁴¹

The journal's increasingly radical political direction, however, led to its censoring by the Prussian government in 1841, whereupon, Ruge shifted publication to Dresden, and renamed it the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*. That proved only a brief respite, as it too was suppressed by the Saxon government (under Prussian pressure) in January 1843, just two months before Marx's own *Rheinische Zeitung* suffered the same fate. That set the stage for their collaboration in Paris on the *Deutsche-Französische Jahrbücher*. Ruge also subsequently shared Marx's path in being expelled from Paris in January 1845, and he then settled in Zurich for a few years.²⁴² When the revolution broke out in 1848 he threw himself into the political struggle, and was elected to the Frankfurt Parliament and sat with the far left *Donnersberg Fraktion*. When the revolution failed, he, like so many others, sought refuge in London. There he continued his democratic engagement, working with Mazzini and other European exiles, before eventually retiring to Brighton. His commitment to political advocacy throughout his life, was a reflection, in the words of one commentator, of his nature as a 'zoon politikon' who restlessly 'pushed for participation, movement and change'.²⁴³

Ruge was generally not in the habit of writing systematic theoretical works, and his thought has to be drawn out from his letters and his journalistic and biographical output.²⁴⁴ These reveal a passionate republican devoted to the cause of overthrowing the absolutist order and establishing popular sovereignty and widespread political participation.²⁴⁵ Ruge's radicalisation away from liberalism was already evident in 1842 to his friend and important Hegelian, Karl Rosenkranz, who regretted that Ruge had 'left the theory of constitutional monarchy and gone over to *republicanism*'.²⁴⁶ Ruge in response declared himself to be an uncompromising defender of the democratic republic. According to him the 'constitution of the state is, if it is an real one, always a republic, and the republic is never a real one, when it is not a democracy'.²⁴⁷ Determining what 'particular form of the republican political spirit (*Gemeinsinns*)' the republic should take, was

²⁴¹ Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 221–22.

²⁴² Despite their falling out Marx warned Ruge of this impending expulsion order from Paris, Marx to Arnold Ruge, 15 January 1845, *MEGA*² III.1: 258; *MEW* 27: 433; *MECW* 38: 15.

²⁴³ Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 70.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴⁵ Earlier literature sometimes casts Ruge as a liberal. For a refutation of this view see Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 221–22; and Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 19.

²⁴⁶ Karl Rosenkranz to Arnold Ruge, 8 April 1842, *Redaktionsbriefwechsel*, 1027.

²⁴⁷ Arnold Ruge to Karl Rosenkranz, mid-April 1842, *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter*, 271–72.

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one of the ‘most important point of controversies’, which he said would require ‘writing several books’ (a project he did not carry out).²⁴⁸

An indicative statement of his republicanism is found in his April 1843 response to the suppression of the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*. In a long article, he responded point by point to the official censorship charges. Of interest to us, is his nuanced response to the charge that the journal supposedly ‘dismissed all and every monarchical, even constitutional-monarchical, government power’.²⁴⁹ Ruge replied that this showed that the authorities did not understand what the journal meant by the ‘concept of the free state, the republic’.²⁵⁰ Their confusion rested on the ‘old rough trisection’ of constitutions into ‘monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy or republic’, based on whether the highest government power was in the ‘hands of the one, or the few, or – what is of course presented as a chimera – the many’.²⁵¹ Under such a flawed conception, Ruge argued that a republic is, of course, opposed to a monarchy. But, he argues, that this confuses the comparatively trivial question of whether the highest government office is held by a ‘hereditary king or a term-limited *elected* president’, with the far more important one of ‘from whom that power emanates, how it is transmitted, [and] by what principle it is administered’.²⁵² What matters, in effect, is not who is the figurehead at the top of the state, but whether the people has the actual control. Ruge is thereby resurrecting the old meaning of republic, as not simply a state without a monarch, but as a *res publica*, a state ruled for the common good. As he says, by the ‘free state’ and ‘republic’, the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* meant ‘the state as *political community* (*gemeines Wesen*) (*res publica*), *as common property and as the living continually-growing organism product of all those, that want and know to be state members*’.²⁵³

Ruge’s democratic conception of the republic is also exemplified, in that article, by his specification that the citizenry includes the ‘as yet spiritually uneducated and materially neglected proletarians (*the rabble*)’.²⁵⁴ They would be raised up by a ‘general national education (*Volkserziehung*)’, that would give every member of the state the ability to take part ‘indirectly as well directly’ in the ‘highest interest of the state, of law-making, justice and administration’.²⁵⁵ This education would ensure, Ruge argues, that the state is prevented from splitting into ‘two unequal, abruptly and hostilely opposed to each other, halves of *rulers*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Ruge, ‘Rechtfertigung’, 1196.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1196–97.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1197.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

and *ruled*, where ‘the court, officials, and military’ are on one side, and the ‘people’ on the other.²⁵⁶ Instead, Ruge maintains, in a transparent reference to Aristotle, that in a republic ‘all are, at the same time, rulers and ruled’.²⁵⁷

Ruge’s republicanism thus mirrors Marx’s own admiration of Greek democracy, but he never followed Marx over to communism. In an aggrieved letter to Feuerbach, written a few weeks after their break, Ruge reflects on the communism of Marx and his allies. He informs Feuerbach, that he has been studying the Fourierists and communists, and he agrees that their ideas have a ‘partial legitimacy’, and that their ‘critical [aspect] has a lot of foundation’.²⁵⁸ He even agrees with the aim of ‘spiritually and physically liberating’ the proletariat from ‘need’ and ‘neglect’, if needs be ‘at all costs’, even if this means that the ‘privileged have to suffer’.²⁵⁹ But the concrete alternatives of the Fourierists and communists are ‘confused’, and always lead to ‘police or slave state’.²⁶⁰ Ruge concludes that freedom and humanity cannot be achieved by the ‘equal division of need and affluence by the state’.²⁶¹

Ruge did however become more increasingly aware of social issues as the 1840s progressed. His *Die Gründung der Demokratie in Deutschland oder der Volkstaat und der Social-Demokratische Freistaat* (hereafter *Gründung der Demokratie*) (1849), which set out his vision for post-revolutionary Germany, included a long section on how this new society would abolish wage-labour.²⁶² Many years later he even read *Kapital* and described it in glowing terms as an ‘epoch-making work’ that showed ‘broad erudition and a brilliant dialectical talent’.²⁶³ But he was never willing to call himself or associate with communism, baulking at the idea of supporting the complete abolition of property. Instead, as Stephan Walter argues, he always ‘stayed true to his conception that private property was a precondition for personal freedom’.²⁶⁴

(ii) The Silesian Weavers Revolt

From 4–6 June 1844 more than a thousand Silesian weavers attacked the houses, warehouses and factories of the local textile merchants. Prussian military reinforcements eventually crushed the revolt, leaving eleven dead and arresting over a hundred weavers. The primary complaint of the weavers had been the

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter*, 345–46.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 43–66. For further discussion of see Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 257–64.

²⁶³ Arnold Ruge to H. Steinthal, 25 January 1869, *MEW* 32: 696; *MECW* 43: 542.

²⁶⁴ Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 286 and 263.

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miserably low prices paid by the textile merchants for their products, as well as their arrogant treatment of the weavers and flaunting of their luxurious lifestyles.²⁶⁵ The revolt and its implications were widely discussed and debated across German society and in the exile community in Paris, including in the pages of *Vorwärts!*, which published Heinrich Heine's famous poem on the uprising, *Die schlesischen Weber*. The events were immediately subjected to a swath of competing interpretations, acting as a 'foil' for participants' wider political commitments.²⁶⁶

Ruge, in his 'Der König von Preußen und die Socialreform' (1844), took the position that the importance of the events had been exaggerated. He chastised the overexcited commentators that saw in the events the beginnings of social reform or even revolution, saying the 'event has the same character for Germans, as some local flood or famine'.²⁶⁷ The Prussian King and the authorities had shown no 'alarm' at the revolt, since it had required only a few soldiers to defeat the 'feeble weavers'.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, because the revolt was only the expression of the 'partial distress' of the weavers, it had little chance of being perceived as a 'general affair'.²⁶⁹ The German workers, he complained, only saw their struggle in terms of 'their hearth, their factory, their district', rather than as part of a general political struggle.²⁷⁰ He warned that all revolts would be 'smothered in blood and incomprehension' until it was realised that a 'social revolution without a political soul (i.e. without the organising insight from the universal standpoint) is impossible'.²⁷¹ Ruge's main target in the article was instead the King of Prussia. He ridiculed him for believing that the social situation could be addressed through administrative tinkering and the efforts of 'Christian charitable hearts'.²⁷² The King did not see that the problem lay more fundamentally with the structure of the 'state and the organisation of society'.²⁷³

Marx took Ruge's article as an opportunity for a thoroughgoing critique of Ruge's politics. His response article, the 'Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel "Der König von Preussen und die Sozialreform: Von einem Preußen"' (hereafter 'Kritische Randglossen'), is a point by point rebuttal of Ruge's arguments that is several times longer than Ruge's original article. We should understand the purpose of the article as an attempt to discredit Ruge and his republican politics

²⁶⁵ Christina von Hodenberg, *Aufstand der Weber: Die Revolte von 1844 und ihr Aufstieg zum Mythos* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997), 39–41.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶⁷ Ruge, 'Der König von Preußen und die Socialreform', 4.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

amongst the German radical émigré community, and cement the socialist control over *Vorwärts!*.

Marx first defended the weavers against Ruge's charge that they were 'feeble'. He says, that it had in fact taken a reinforced military regiment to defeat the workers after the worker's initial success. In comparison, '*not a single soldier*' had been required to force the liberal bourgeoisie to retreat from their demands for a constitution and press freedom.²⁷⁴ Moreover, Marx argued that Ruge was wrong to focus on the absence of 'alarm' in the King, because the revolt was not directed 'against the King of Prussia, but against the bourgeoisie'.²⁷⁵ Marx also defends the workers against the charge that they were merely concerned with local matters. On Marx's account the weavers were not '*poor Germans*' (as Ruge had called them), but '*German workers*'; class-conscious proletarians, fully aware that their enemy was not just the individual bourgeois in front of them, but the 'society of private property' as such.²⁷⁶ He praised the '*theoretical and conscious character*' of the revolt, and the 'courage, thought and endurance' shown by the weavers.²⁷⁷ Their battle song (the 'Blutgericht') showed that, contra Ruge, the weavers were not concerned with 'hearth, home, factory or district', but was in fact a 'striking, sharp, unrestrained and powerful' display of their opposition to private property.²⁷⁸ Marx maintained that the German workers were thus much more advanced than the English and French workers had been at a similar level of industrial development.²⁷⁹

Second, Marx says that the relevant community is not the political community but the community of human nature and labour. Ruge had argued that all revolutions would be smothered that broke out in the 'disastrous isolation of people from the community (*Gemeinwesen*)'.²⁸⁰ Marx replies that this point does not exclusively apply to the Silesian weavers, since the French Revolution was also the result of the 'disastrous isolation of French citizens from the community'.²⁸¹ But more importantly, for Marx, was that what Ruge really meant by 'community' here, was the '*political community, the state*'.²⁸² Marx argued that this was not the

²⁷⁴ Marx, 'Kritische Randglossen', 446/393/190.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 458-59/404/200-201.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 458-9/404/200-1.

²⁷⁹ Modern scholarship on the Silesian revolt is not favourable to this interpretation. The proletarian class conscious of the weavers was limited; the weavers praised those merchants who paid a fair price and avoided attacking their factories; they were respectful towards the local representatives of authority; and they attacked the use of non-local workers. The Silesian Weavers Revolt is therefore more accurately seen as a 'typical early industrial labour unrest with a local horizon – spontaneous, without political motivation and mainly aimed at punishing individual, wage-cutting merchants', Hodenberg, *Aufstand der Weber*, 42–46.

²⁸⁰ Ruge, 'Der König von Preußen und die Socialreform', 4.

²⁸¹ Marx, 'Kritische Randglossen', 461/407/204.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

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kind of community that really mattered. The kind of community that did matter was that which the worker was isolated from. The worker was, by '*his own labour*' isolated from '*life* itself, physical and mental life, human morality, human activity, human enjoyment, *human nature*'.²⁸³ '*Human nature*' is in fact, Marx says 'the *true community* of men'.²⁸⁴ This is the kind of isolation that matters, because it is 'incomparably more universal, more intolerable, more dreadful, and more contradictory, than isolation from the political community'.²⁸⁵

The democratic dimension of Marx's point bears emphasising. A prominent strain in republican thought celebrates a political way of life predicated on being freed from the demand of having to work, and hence one that was reserved for aristocrats and those with landed property. Those that had to work for a living were excluded from citizenship and denied the basis to realise their human nature. Marx instead locates the realisation of human nature in labour itself. It is the labour of the '*industrial workers*' that 'contains within itself a *universal* soul'.²⁸⁶ Marx is also rejecting the idea that being excluded from politics excludes us from our human nature. It is a denial of *zoon politikon*. As he says '*man* is more infinite than the *citizen*, and *human life* more infinite than *political life*'.²⁸⁷

Third, Marx charges Ruge with failing to appreciate the circumscribed scope of action available to modern states. Ruge was right, according to Marx, to attack the King of Prussia for failing to see that the social problem cannot not be addressed through charity and administrative tinkering, and could only be done by changing (in Ruge's words) the 'state and the organisation of society'.²⁸⁸ However, Marx argues that Ruge's mistake lay in thinking that the modern state could ever come to this realisation, let alone act on it. The state is unable to grasp that that fundamental change is required because it interprets every social problem in terms of administration, 'Precisely because *administration* is the *organising* activity of the state'.²⁸⁹ This narrow perspective is not limited to the King and his bureaucrats, for 'Even radical and revolutionary politicians', fail to see that the 'root of the evil' rests in the '*essential nature* of the state', and instead think that they might address social problems by instituting a '*different* state form'.²⁹⁰ Marx that the more a state and its politicians approach the advanced 'political understanding' associated with

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 462/408/204-205.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 462/408/205. The alienation that Marx discusses here covers some of the same ground as the themes explored in Marx's more well-known (unpublished) discussion of the alienation of labour in the *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (1844), which Marx was writing at the same time as the 'Kritische Randglossen'.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 455/401/197.

²⁸⁹ Marx, 'Kritische Randglossen', 455/401/197.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

a modern political state, the less they are ‘inclined to grasp’ the fact that social problems result from the ‘*present organisation of society*’.²⁹¹ As Marx says, the ‘*political* mind is a *political* mind precisely because it thinks within the framework of politics.’²⁹² This was most obviously the case, Marx believes, with the French Revolution, where,

Far from seeing the source of social shortcomings in the principle of the state, the heroes of the French Revolution instead saw in social defects the source of political evils. Thus *Robespierre* saw in great poverty and great wealth only an obstacle to *pure democracy*. Therefore he wished to establish a universal Spartan frugality.²⁹³

This is why Ruge is, according to Marx, fundamentally naïve, because the ‘*state* – contrary to what the Prussian [Ruge] demands of his King – will *never* see in “the state and *organisation of society*” the source of *social maladies*’.²⁹⁴

Marx argues that even if the state were somehow made to realise this dynamic, it is structurally unable to do address it. This is because, returning to a theme from the *Kritik* and ‘Zur Judenfrage’, the splitting of the state into two opposed spheres of ‘*public* and *private life*’, has left the former nearly entirely impotent over the latter. Consequently, the state’s actions are confined to merely ‘*formal* and *negative* activity’ i.e. administrative tinkering, because ‘where civil life and its labour begin, there the power of administration ends’.²⁹⁵ The modern state has effectively withdrawn from the battlefield and left civil society it to its own devices. It is therefore powerless to stop the ‘plundering’ that results from a system of private ownership, industry and trade.²⁹⁶ The only way the modern state could undo the ‘*impotence* of its administration’ would be if it abolished civil society itself.²⁹⁷ But that is impossible for the state, because the modern state relies on the existence of a separate sphere of civil society, and if it were to abolish it, it ‘would have to abolish itself’.²⁹⁸ Even the radical Convention of the French Revolution, which had at its back the ‘*maximum of political energy, political power* and *political understanding*’ was stymied by these structural constraints.²⁹⁹

Fourth, Marx argues that the failure to appreciate this insight means that Ruge falsely believes that the workers need to think of their struggle in terms of politics. Marx argues that when the proletarians are infected by purely political understanding they are misled into thinking that their dire social situation might

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 457/402/199.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 455/400-1/197.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 456/401-2/198.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 455/400/197.

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be alleviated with a change in the political form of the state. Marx believes that this had been the failure of proletarian unrest up to this point. He cites the example of the Lyons uprisings of 1831 and 1834, where the workers, led by republican ideals, had been brutally suppressed. Marx's comments here, are worth quoting in full, because they capture why he thought pure republicanism was insufficient,

The more developed and universal the *political* understanding of a people, the more does the *proletariat*—at any rate at the beginning of the movement—squander its forces in senseless, useless revolts, which are drowned in blood. Because it thinks in the framework of politics, the proletariat sees the cause of all evils in the *will*, and all means of remedy in *violence* and in the overthrow of a *particular form of state*. The proof: the first uprisings of the *French* proletariat. The Lyons workers believed that they were pursuing only political aims, that they were only soldiers of the republic, whereas actually they were soldiers of socialism. Thus their political understanding concealed from them the roots of social distress, thus it falsified their insight into their real aim, thus their *political understanding deceived their social instinct*.³⁰⁰

This was the advance Marx purported to see in the Silesian weavers (however accurately that may have actually reflected their actual consciousness). For Marx, the Silesian weavers revolt was the first stirrings of proletarian recognition that the struggle was not over the republic or monarchy, but over capitalism or communism.

* * *

In certain respects, the transition Marx undergoes in this period is really quite striking, especially when we consider that it occurs in just a few months. From the celebration of political participation and the denunciation of the exclusion of citizens from public life in Prussia, that we find in the *Kritik* and the 'Briefwechsel von 1843'; we go to Marx declaring that being excluded from the political community is of much less consequence than the alienation of the worker from their labour, in the 'Kritische Randglossen'. While the 'Briefwechsel von 1843' expresses deep hostility and anger towards the Prussian King, the 'Kritische Randglossen' instead argues that the struggle against the King is a side-show to the real struggle against the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the transition is not an abrupt one. His critique of capitalism, rather than appearing out of nowhere, is instead an intensification of his attack on the egoism and partiality of civil society. Marx's central analytic device of the divide between the political sphere and civil society in modern state, is one he deploys across the entire period. His suspicion towards the utopian

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 461/407/204.

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nature of socialism during his republican phase, is not lost when he becomes a socialist, but instead eventually leads him to formulate his own form of communism. Moreover, joining the communist camp does not mean that he now rejects his earlier positions on popular sovereignty and opposition to despotism, but only that he now believes that they are not enough on their own and have to be supplemented by something else. In these ways, Marx's socialism grows out of his republican commitments, rather than simply being a rejection of them.

Excursus One

Lords of Labour

unfree activity...[is] an activity in the service, under the domination, the coercion, and the yoke of another man.

Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*¹

One of the lasting contributions of E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) was how powerfully it captured the workers' experience of the industrial revolution as a 'catastrophic change'.² He cites the example of a cotton spinner, who in an 1818 address catalogued the changes wrought by the new cotton-mills, the prime example of modern factory production. In emphatically republican language, the anonymous cotton spinner branded the new manufacturers 'petty monarchs, absolute and despotic', who ruled over the 'English Spinner slave'.³ The cotton spinner argued that the formal freedom to sell their labour did not stop the workers from still being 'bondmen and bondwomen to their cruel taskmasters', for they could not escape working for a master:

It is vain to insult our common understandings with the observation that such men are free; that the law protects the rich and poor alike, and that a spinner can leave his master if he does not like the wages. True; so he can; but where must he go? why to another to be sure.⁴

Thompson argued that what was at stake here, for the cotton spinner and the working-class in general, was not reducible solely to whether their wages and their level of material well-being had declined or increased in these years (the focus of scholars who limited their investigations to bare statistics). What mattered to workers was how the conditions of their work had changed; that their work was now characterised by overwork, monotony, discipline, 'the loss of status and above all of independence for the worker'.⁵ Thompson noted that 'People may consume more goods and become less happy or less free at the same time.'⁶

¹ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 372/519/278-79.

² E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), 191.

³ *Ibid.*, 199, 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

The changes to work that Thompson describes were widely noted by Marx's predecessors and contemporaries. His university lecturer, Eduard Gans, argued that a visit to the English factories was enough to show you that 'slavery is not yet over, that it has been formerly abolished, but materially is completely in existence', that society was in danger of turning 'the domination of the [guild] masters into the domination of the factory owner', and that '[j]ust as once the master and the slave, later the patrician and plebeian, then the feudal lord and vassal, stood against each other, so now the idle man and the worker' (words Marx would later echo in the opening to the *Manifesto*).⁷

Marx inherited these attacks on wage-labour, and a central component of his critique of political economy was dedicated to showing that it amounted to, in the entirely standard terminology of the day, 'wage-slavery'.⁸ Marx argued that beneath the promise of free labour, where capitalist and worker contracted 'only by their own free will', lay a disguised relation, where the worker was in fact subjected to the domination of a capitalist.⁹ He maintained that in capitalism the worker was forced to 'carry out slave-labour, completely giving up their freedom, in the service of greed'.¹⁰ Moreover, Marx's account of the wrongness of work under capitalism, similarly to Thompson's above point, was not confined to its effect on the material welfare of the worker (vitaly important as that was), but tied to a broader objection to how it inhibited the workers' freedom by denying them control over their lives; that their position, in other words, still amounted to something akin to slavery.¹¹ Marx's critique of capitalism and his conception of communism thus invoke some of the central categories and principles of republicanism.

This first excursus primarily deals with how this domination played out in the personal relationship between the capitalist and the worker, while the second will deal with its impersonal dimensions (though as these are not always straightforwardly distinguishable there will be a degree of overlap). It first sets out Marx's account of wage-slavery, and second, the link Marx makes between alienation and domination.

⁷ Gans, *Rückblicke auf Personen und Zustände*, 99–101. See Myriam Bienenstock, 'Die "soziale Frage" im französisch-deutschen Kulturaustausch: Gans, Marx und die deutsche Saint-Simon-Rezeption', in *Eduard Gans (1797–1839): Politischer Professor zwischen Restauration und Vormärz*, ed. Reinhard Blänkner, Gerhard Göhler, and Norbert Waszek (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), 169; Sperber, *Karl Marx*, 208–9.

⁸ The phrase appears, for example, in Marx, *Civil War in France*, 142/342/335.

⁹ Marx, *Kapital*, 191/189–90/186.

¹⁰ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 329/473/237.

¹¹ For instance, Marx claims that an 'increase in wages' for the worker would 'be nothing better than *payment for the slave*', *Ibid.*, 373/520–21/280.

I. Wage Slavery

Marx's account of how wage-labour amounts to wage-slavery can be usefully divided into three levels: (1) structural domination resulting from ownership of the means of production, (2) domination in the setting of the wage contract, and (3) domination in the workplace.¹²

Marx argues that a central prerequisite for capitalism is the emergence of a class of persons who (a) own their own labour power and thus have the freedom to sell it, and (b) own no means of production and are thus forced to sell their labour power.¹³ Marx stresses that this is not a universal feature of human society.¹⁴ In societies based on slavery and serfdom, the producing classes do not own their own labour power and it is therefore not something that a capitalist can buy on the market. Even in a society where slavery and serfdom have been abolished, capitalism cannot emerge while people retain independent access to the means of production, most importantly by owning or having access to land. In the celebrated final section of *Kapital* on primitive accumulation, Marx sets out the long and brutal historical process of expropriation, land clearance and the enclosure of common land, that led to the formerly independent peasant to lose their access to the land, and hence lose their ability to produce their own means of sustenance. That meant that "The peasant, expropriated and cast adrift, must buy their value in the form of wages, from his new master, the industrial capitalist."¹⁵

What is striking about this account of the history of primitive accumulation, as William Clare Roberts point out, is its similarity to 'a popular republican historiography that valorized the ancient constitution and the lost independence of the peasant producer'.¹⁶ For example, Marx slams the greed of the 'English oligarchy' who turned the 'independent yeoman' into a 'servile rabble dependent on the arbitrary will of the landlords'.¹⁷ In a draft of *Kapital*, Marx even bemoaned (switching from German to English) the 'difference between the proud yeomanry of England, of whom Shakespeare speaks, and the English agricultural day labourers!'¹⁸

¹² This three tiered approach is taken from the invaluable discussion in Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, 106–16.

¹³ Marx, *Kapital*, 183-85/181-83/178-79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 185/183/179.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 670/773/734.

¹⁶ Roberts, *Marx's Inferno*, 197.

¹⁷ Marx, *Kapital*, 652-53/752-53/714-15.

¹⁸ Marx, 'Sechstes Kapitel', 103/437. This is from the only surviving chapter of the third draft of *Kapital*, written in 1863-64. See Patrick Murray, 'The Place of "The Results of the Immediate Production Process" in *Capital*', in *The Mismeasure of Wealth: Essays on Marx and Social Form* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 325–40. In a similar vein, Engels argued that the position of the 'free Englishman of 1845' was (marginally) worse than the 'Saxon serf under the lash of the Norman barons of 1145', *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, 404/473.

Marx argues that this historical process does not result in a situation where the worker ‘freely’ sells her labour, but in fact in a novel form of unfreedom and domination. The development of a property structure where workers are excluded from the means of production, means that if they want to survive they have to sell their labour to those that do own the means of production, the capitalists. What is novel is that the serf and the slave are tied to an individual lord or slave-owner, while the worker is not tied to an individual capitalist but to the capitalist class as a whole. As Marx puts it, the ‘slave belongs to a particular *master*’, while the worker ‘must sell himself to capital, but not to a particular capitalist’, which gives them some choice over which capitalist to sell themselves to as well as the ability to ‘change *masters*’.¹⁹ But what the worker cannot choose is to have *no master* whatsoever. That is because the worker cannot choose to ‘leave the *whole class of purchasers, that is, the capitalist class*’.²⁰ In Engels’s neat phrase the worker is ‘so to speak, the slave of the entire bourgeois *class*, not of one master’.²¹

The domination that thus arises comes from the fact that though a worker does not have a particular master they must have *a* master. It is structural because it arises from the background distribution of property.²² Against this background structure the worker and the capitalist meet to set the terms of the wage-contract. Rather than meeting as equals, the structural domination that lies in the background converts into unequal power in the setting of these terms.

One of the ways this manifests itself is in the determination of wages. In Marx’s discussion of this process in the *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, he presents three contrasting structural factors that advantage the capitalist over the worker. The capitalist can (1) live off the rent and interest generated by his capital, (2) always has the option of transferring his capital to another industry, and (3) faces few obstacles to combining with other capitalists for mutual support.²³ The worker on the other hand has (1) no independent income or means of subsistence, (2) because of the division of labour her skills are more specialised and she cannot easily move from one industry to another, and (3) attempts at collective action by workers (through strikes and trade unions) are often illegal and painful for the worker.²⁴ Consequently the ‘capitalist can live longer without the worker than can the worker without the capitalist’.²⁵ These factors mean that

¹⁹ Marx, ‘Sechstes Kapitel’, 103/437.

²⁰ Marx, ‘Lohnarbeit und Kapital’, 401/203.

²¹ Engels, *Entwurf des Kommunistischen Glaubensbekenntnisses*, 55/100.

²² Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, 109; Gourevitch, ‘Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work’, 602.

²³ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 327/471/235.

²⁴ Marx emphasizes at three separate points that the greater the division of labour the more the worker is dependent on the capitalist. *Ibid.*, 328/472/236, 329/473-4/237-8, 332/476/240.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 327/471/235.

the worker has less bargaining power at both the individual and collective level. They stand in an asymmetric position of power and dependency where the worker needs the capitalist much more than the capitalist needs the worker. The capitalist can therefore force the worker to accept wages consistent with a 'cattle-like existence'.²⁶

Marx concludes the discussion by noting,

And it is just the capacity of the capitalist to direct his capital into other channels which either render the worker, who is restricted to some particular branch of labour, destitute, or forces him to submit to every demand of this capitalist.²⁷

The dependency of the worker therefore gives the capitalist an arbitrary 'capacity' to make demands. The fact that Marx writes 'every demand' suggests that the power of the capitalist over the worker is not limited to just setting wages. Indeed, the capitalist's dominatory power over the wage-contract is also evident in Marx's analysis of the length of the working day in *Kapital*. Marx argues that the possible length of the working day lies between a minimum level (the period of necessary labour that the working-class requires to sustain itself) and a maximum level (set by the absolute physical limits of the worker and what is socially acceptable).²⁸ But where the actual length of the working day ends up is the result of class-struggle between the capitalists and the workers, with victory determined by their relative power.²⁹ The greater the power of the capitalists, the more the length of the working day is extended. Marx says that if the worker is 'isolated' then she 'succumbs without resistance' to the demands of the capitalist.³⁰ But if the workers 'put their heads together' and act 'as a class', they can use their power to force the enactment of government legislation, a 'modest Magna Charta', which legally limits the length of the working day.³¹ The domination of the capitalist over the wage contract can thus be curtailed through concerted action by the working class.

Once the conditions of the wage contract have been set, the worker is then exposed to the domination of the individual capitalist in the workplace. One of Marx's most sustained condemnations of the arbitrary power of the capitalist comes in the section on the factory in *Kapital*. Marx here argues that factory work 'confiscates all free bodily and intellectual activity'.³² It subjects the worker to 'barrack-like discipline', where the military hierarchy of soldiers and officers is

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 328/472/236.

²⁸ Marx, *Kapital*, 238-39/246-47/240-41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 241/249/243.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 300/316/303.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 302/320/306-307.

³² *Ibid.*, 410/445/426. The 1887 English edition of *Kapital* (reproduced in *MECW*) gives the more evocative phrasing that factory work 'confiscates every atom of freedom'.

mirrored by the hierarchy between workers and supervisors.³³ To enforce this discipline, the capitalist develops a factory code that they arbitrarily apply to the worker. Marx argues that,

In the factory code, the capitalist formulates his autocracy over his workers, like a private legislator (*privatgesetzlich*) and as an emanation of his own will (*eigenherrlich*), unaccompanied by either the separation of powers otherwise so much approved of by the bourgeoisie, or the still more approved representative system...³⁴

Marx thus compares the capitalist's economic rule over the worker, to an autocrat's political rule over their subjects. (A comparison highlighted by Marx's branding of the capitalist as a 'factory-Lycurgus', the legendary creator of Sparta's oligarchical constitution).³⁵ What is particularly notable about this comparison is how Marx draws attention to the fact that this kind of arbitrary power is unacceptable to the bourgeoisie in the public realm (where political power has to be constrained by the separation of powers and representative government), but is considered entirely acceptable by them when it occurs in the private realm of employment.³⁶

In support of this damning account of the factory, Marx cites a long passage from Engels's *Die Lage der Arbeitenden Klasse in England* (1845), where Engels had used his first-hand experience of conditions in Manchester to portray the factory experience,

the slavery in which the bourgeoisie holds the proletariat chained, is nowhere more conspicuously brought into daylight than in the factory system. Here ends all freedom in law and in fact. The operative must be in the mill at half-past five in the morning; if he comes a couple of minutes too late, he is fined; if he comes ten minutes too late, he is not let in until breakfast is over, and a quarter of the day's wages is withheld, though he loses only two and one-half hours' work out of twelve. He must eat, drink, and sleep at command...The despotic bell calls him from his bed, his breakfast, his dinner...[I]nside the factory...the employer is absolute law-giver; he makes regulations at will, changes and adds to his codex at pleasure,³⁷

Again, we have the same comparison of the capitalist's arbitrary power over the worker to the power exercised by an 'absolute law-giver' in the political realm. Engels also ties being subjected to this arbitrary power to the end of 'all freedom in law and in fact', highlighting the fact that the law (wrongly) recognises no inhibitions of freedom once the worker has 'freely' contracted with the capitalist.

³³ *Ibid.*, 411/447/426-427.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 411/447/427.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 412/447/427.

³⁶ A contradiction recently explored in Elizabeth Anderson, *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

³⁷ Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, 398-99/467. Cited in Marx, *Kapital*, 412n190/447n190/427n2.

The passage also draws attention to the arbitrary application of fines to control the worker.³⁸ This is a repeated target of Marx's ire. He argues that in the factory, 'In place of the slave-driver's whip steps the overseer's book of penalties.'³⁹ What particularly upsets Marx about this practice is that the capitalist and their overseers are able to impose these fines without any method of contestation or redress by the workers. The factory falls under '*the private jurisdiction*' of the capitalist, with a '*penal code of their own*', and where the 'employer combines in his own person the parts of legislator, judge and executor'.⁴⁰ Marx's complaint, once again, is that the bourgeois principles of the right to redress and impartiality, do not extend past the factory gate. Once the worker crosses that threshold they are subjected to power that that would be unthinkable outside of it.

A further dimension of the individual capitalist's domination over the worker is how it can be used for sexual exploitation. Marx is not particularly alert to this dimension of the worker's domination, though Engels is. He argues that the 'threat of discharge' makes the employer the 'master over the body and the charms of his female workers'.⁴¹ Engels notes that in the case where the 'manufacturer is mean' then his 'factory is also his harem'.⁴² But he crucially stresses that the fact that 'not all manufacturers make use' of this power, 'does not in the least change the position of the girls'.⁴³ A suggestion that what matters is not just that some manufacturers exercise this power, but that all have this power.

In summary, wage-labour amounts to wage-slavery because of the structural domination of the capitalist class over workers, the domination over the wage-contract, and finally the domination in the workplace.

II. Alienation and Domination

One of the foremost examples of Marx's analysis being permeated with republican language is the discussion of alienation in his early economic writings, particularly the *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* and the *Exzerpte aus James Mill*. At its most general level, alienation refers to the inappropriate separation or relation between entities.⁴⁴ It was a concept in wide circulation in German philosophy, and Ludwig Feuerbach had recently and influentially applied it to religion in *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841). He had argued that Christianity had harmfully

³⁸ On the use of fines in early factories, see Sidney Pollard, 'Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution', *The Economic History Review* 16, no. 2 (1963): 257, 261.

³⁹ Marx, *Kapital*, 411–12/447/427. See also Marx, *Discours sur la question du libre échange*, 448/456.

⁴⁰ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 45/528/472; *Civil War in France*, 146/347/339.

⁴¹ Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, 373/441–42.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 373/442.

⁴³ *Ibid.* See also Engels's discussion of employers demanding sexual favours from the wives and daughters of workers *Ibid.*, 401/470.

⁴⁴ Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 67–68; Allen Wood, *Karl Marx*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

separated humanity from its human essence. Marx's innovation was to apply the concept to labour (though as we shall see Marx constantly refers back to its religious roots). In a celebrated discussion in the *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* Marx argued that alienated labour consisted of four aspects: (1) alienation from the product, (2) alienation from the act of production, (3) alienation from species-being, and (4) alienation from other people. Of these, the first two aspects of alienated labour are particularly relevant to our discussion.

Let us begin with alienation from the act of production. The context of the rest of the *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, suggests that the act of production that Marx has in mind is the modern factory, where the division of labour and the introduction of machinery has turned work into a series of highly repetitive and unskilled tasks. Marx argues that this kind of production has an 'external (*äusserlich*)' character, which consists of three aspects.⁴⁵ First, it is unfulfilling. Marx argues that this kind of work means that the worker 'does not freely develop his physical and mental energy' and 'does not feel content but unhappy'.⁴⁶ Second, it is carried out under compulsion. Marx argues that it is 'forced labour', demonstrated by the fact that when the worker is not required to do it, it is 'shunned like the plague'.⁴⁷ Third, it belongs to another. Marx argues that work is alienating for the worker because 'it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another'.⁴⁸ Similarly, Marx writes that the worker experiences production as an 'alien activity not belonging to him', and an 'activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him'.⁴⁹ Marx thus repeatedly associates alienation in the act of production with work that belongs to another. In a gesture towards the religious association of alienation, Marx compares the fact that the 'worker's activity [is] not his self-directed activity (*Selbsthätigkeit*)' to how religion makes human thoughts and desires seem to originate from an external source, so that they operate as an 'alien, divine or diabolical activity' on the individual, rather than being something that has originated in themselves.⁵⁰

Alienation in the act of production thus consists of three aspects: that it is unfulfilling, done under compulsion, and does not belong to the worker. The fact that Marx believes that factory work is alienating because it is dull and done out of necessity is frequently commented upon, but it is noteworthy how much stress Marx also places on worker's not having control over their work. The fact that a

⁴⁵ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 367/514/274.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 368/515/275.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 367/514/274.

worker has to carry out their labour activity for and under the direction of someone else makes the act of production an alienating one for the worker. Dominated work is thus, on Marx's account, alienated work.⁵¹

Turning to alienation from the product. Marx does not give a precise definition of what he means by this, but it is broadly used to refer to the fact that the worker does not control the product that they produce and that the product is instead a commodity produced for exchange. Marx argues that this results in the worker being *dominated by objects*. For example, he says that the worker 'falls under the domination of his product, capital', that he 'becomes a servant of his object', and speaks of the 'domination of the *thing* over the *person*, of the product over the producer'.⁵² Marx also repeatedly argues that being alienated from the product means that the product is experienced as '*something alien*, as a power *independent* of the producer' and, similarly, that for the worker the product 'exists *outside him*, independently of him and alien to him, and begins to confront him as an autonomous power'.⁵³ Marx goes so far as to portray the product as a creature that has, like Frankenstein, been brought to life and now dominates the creator. He talks of the 'life which he [the worker] has bestowed on the object' and that 'our own product has risen up on its hind legs against us'.⁵⁴

The image of the worker being dominated by the objects that they have brought to life is evocative, but not immediately transparent. Marx obviously does not literally mean that a worker's product, like the sorcerer's broom, has sprouted arms and legs and escapes their control. We can tentatively extract two aspects of what Marx seems to mean by the idea, though we should be wary of attributing a level of coherency and clarity to this idea that is lacking in the original texts (an unsurprising ambiguity since these are unpublished manuscripts written at a time when his thoughts were still developing).

First, Marx argues that alienation from the product creates dependency upon it. In making this point he seems to expand alienation from the product to include also being alienated from the objects needed to create other products, i.e. the raw materials provided by nature. Marx acknowledges that the worker 'can create nothing without *nature*', since he requires the physical materials provided by nature in order to labour, both in the sense that the nature provides raw

⁵¹ However, alienated work might not necessarily be dominated work. If the work in question fulfils one of the other two conditions, by being unfulfilling or compelled, but is not controlled by another, then it would, it seems, be alienating but not dominating. It is, however, not clear whether Marx intends for these aspects to be individually sufficient or jointly necessary, in order to constitute alienation in the act of production.

⁵² Respectively, Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 365/512/272, 366/513/273; *Exzerpte aus James Mill*, 456/455/221.

⁵³ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 364-65/511-12/272.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 365/512/272; *Exzerpte aus James Mill*, 464/461/226-27.

materials and in the ‘direct sense’ that it provides sustenance.⁵⁵ But the worker has been ‘robbed of the objects’ of raw materials and sustenance, and they have ‘more and more cease[d] to be an object belonging to his labour’.⁵⁶ A worker is consequently only able to access raw materials and sustenance if he ‘receives’ them, and he is only able to receive them, if he produces a product that somebody else controls.⁵⁷ The worker is thus dependent on his product (‘a servant of his object’),⁵⁸ because he needs to be able to produce a product to survive. The necessity of making products to survive is also true of other producing classes, such as peasants and artisans. But what is specific to the situation of the worker is that the ‘height of this servitude is that it is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject*’,⁵⁹ by which Marx seems to mean that the necessity to produce for the worker necessarily puts them in a position of producing for and under another. Peasants and artisans, on the other hand, are also dependent on producing products to survive, but can do so without giving themselves a master.

Second, Marx associates alienation from the product with how objects, and especially money, can be imbued with powers that they independently lack.⁶⁰ This aspect of domination by the object arises from the fact that in capitalism, Marx argues, people do not directly produce objects for their own personal need but produce objects for exchange.⁶¹ That means that people relate to each other through the objects they exchange, or more often, through their ‘equivalent in *money*’, which is the ‘*medium* of exchange’.⁶² Marx repeatedly connects this production for exchange and mediation through money with domination by the object. For example, he says that the ‘complete domination of the estranged thing *over* man has become evident in *money*’, and that because of this ‘*alien mediator*...man regards his will, his activity and his relation to other men as a power independent of him and them. His slavery, therefore reaches its peak.’⁶³ Marx argues that when money acts as a mediator in this way, it comes to be imbued with its own power. For instance, he writes that when money takes on a mediating role between people ‘this *mediator* now becomes a *real God*’ and a ‘*real*

⁵⁵ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 365/512/273.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 365/512/272, 366/513/273.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 366/513/273.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ The discussion of alienation from the product thus foreshadows Marx’s later discussion of commodity fetishism in *Kapital*, where commodities take on social powers that they do not have in themselves, Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 230. The link between alienation from the product and money is suggested in the *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Marx says ‘this whole estrangement [is]connected with the *money* system’ *Ibid.*, 364/511/271) but it is only in the *Exzerpte aus James Mill* that we get a clearer idea of this.

⁶¹ Marx, *Exzerpte aus James Mill*, 456/455/221. See G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2000), 119–20.

⁶² Marx, *Exzerpte aus James Mill*, 456/455/221.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 456/455/221, 448/446/212.

power over what it mediates'.⁶⁴ That power is, importantly, one that the money object lacks in and of itself. It is instead conferred on it by its place in social relations. Outside of social relations the money object is just an object. That is the point Marx is making with the metaphor that the object has had 'life...bestowed' on it, and that it now exercises power over the producer.

In summary, on Marx's account, alienation from the product results in domination by objects because, firstly, it makes the worker dependent on the product they produce, and secondly, these products are then imbued with power over them by social relations. Setting out Marx's argumentation behind these claims requires a significant degree of reconstruction from an ambiguous and opaque discussion, and its original theoretical coherence should therefore not be overstated. Its primary interest for this study is the extent to which the analysis is suffused with republican ideas and language.

* * *

In the closing section of Marx's discussion of the alienation of labour Marx turns to explain what underpins this alienation. He argues that if the product and the act of production are alien powers over the worker then it has to be because they belong to 'a being *other* than myself'.⁶⁵ Marx rhetorically asks whether that other being might be the 'gods'.⁶⁶ However, Marx answers that though temples might have been built under the supposed orders of the gods 'they were never the true lords of labour (*Arbeitsheerrn*)'.⁶⁷ Instead, 'only man himself can be this alien power over man'.⁶⁸ This point is vividly made in the subsequent passage, where Marx clearly connects unfree labour with dominated labour,

Thus, if the product of his labour, his labour objectified, is for him an *alien*, hostile, powerful object independent of him, then he relates to it such that another man, alien, hostile, powerful and independent of him, is its master. If he relates to his own activity as an unfree activity, then he relates to it as an activity in the service, under the domination, the coercion, and the yoke of another man.⁶⁹

The domination by objects and domination in the process of production is thus ultimately underlined by the domination of another person. That person is the 'capitalist, or whatever one chooses to call the lord of labour'.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 449/448/214, 448/446/212.

⁶⁵ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 371/518/278.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 371-72/519/278-79. Note that Marx also mentions other dimension of freedom in production, for example that a person 'only truly produces in freedom' when they produce 'free from physical need', *Ibid.*, 368/517/276. See David James, 'The Compatibility of Freedom and Necessity in Marx's Idea of Communist Society', *European Journal of Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2017): 270-93.

⁷⁰ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 372/520/279.

2

The Bourgeois Republic, 1848-1851

The Republic is declared! We shall be happy now! ... No more kings,
do you understand? The whole world is free! The whole world free!

Gustave Flaubert, *L'Éducation sentimentale*¹

On the afternoon of 25 February 1848, a scene played out in front of Paris's Hôtel de Ville that captured one of the most fundamental tensions of the revolutions that swept across Europe that year. A large angry crowd had gathered and demanded that the French Republic, proclaimed the night before, abandon the tricolour and in its place, adopt the red flag, the newly emergent emblem of social revolution. Facing them was Alphonse de Lamartine, the poet, historian and freshly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs (Figure 5). He climbed on top of an old broken chair and delivered a speech that saved the tricolour as the symbol of the Republic,

the red flag which you offer us was only paraded around the Champ de Mars, dragged through the blood of the people...whereas the tricolour flag has been paraded right round the world, with the name, the glory and liberty of the country!²

In those early innocent days of the revolution, Lamartine embodied the outpouring of fraternity and cross-class unity that accompanied the foundation of the republic. He sincerely believed that the 'republic [would be] a humane and magnanimous emancipation of all the classes, without oppression for any'.³ It was this atmosphere of hope and intense optimism that Flaubert ironically chronicled in his romantic novel of the period, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, where the ecstatic citizens of Paris are portrayed running through the street, shouting that the 'People have triumphed! The workers and bourgeoisie are embracing.'⁴ But that fraternal spirit between classes could not last.

¹ Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 271.

² Lamartine, *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, vol. 1, 395/214. Lamartine is referencing the infamous massacres in the Champ des Mars in 1791.

³ *Ibid.*, 1:365/198.

⁴ Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, 271.

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Figure 5. 'Lamartine, before the Hôtel de Ville, Paris, rejects the Red Flag' by Henri Felix Emmanuel Philippoteaux
© Petit Palais / Roger-Viollet

Just four months later, the workers of Paris were raising barricades across the city in response to the provisional government's decision to shut down the National Workshops, which had provided a meagre but vital lifeline for the poor and unemployed. For four days, the workers fought the regime's troops before succumbing to their superior numbers and arms. Maurice Agulhon, the foremost historian of the French 1848 Revolutions, writes that the June Days (as the events became known) 'more than any other period before or since in French history, remain a class battle pure and simple'.⁵ Precise figures are hard to establish, but it is likely that the spontaneous uprising saw between 3,000 and 4,000 insurgents killed, with enraged troops carrying out an unknown number of summary executions.⁶ In response to this appalling bloodbath, Marx declared that 'Only after being dipped in the blood of the *June insurgents* did the tricolour become the flag of the European revolution—the *red flag*!'⁷

The outbreak of the revolution found Marx in Brussels, where he had spent the previous three years after being exiled from Paris in 1845. He and Engels had just completed the *Manifest*, and as the first shots were being fired in Paris it was rolling off the presses in London (where the Communist League, who had commissioned it, was based). For all of his devastating criticisms of the revolution, Marx's initial reaction is likely to have been as excited as Engels, who reported to the Chartist press that, 'At half-past twelve at night, the train arrived, with the glorious news of Thursday's revolution, and the whole mass of people shouted, in one sudden outburst of enthusiasm: *Vive la République!*'⁸ Marx did not have long to celebrate, as the Belgium government, worried about the revolution spreading across the border, ordered him to leave the country in twenty-four hours. The change of regime meant he was once again welcome in Paris, and he embraced the opportunity to witness the revolution up front. He spent a month there, waiting for the revolution to make its way to the German states. When street protests duly erupted in Vienna and Berlin in the middle of March he began preparations for his return to Cologne.

Together with some of his closest associates from the Communist League, he there set up, in a tribute to his first newspaper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in June 1848. Under his editorship it became the leading radical paper in the Rhineland, with a readership that extended across Germany. The paper was an opportunity to put into practice the political strategy that Marx and Engels had been honing over the previous years. Following from their belief that the

⁵ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 57.

⁶ Christopher Guyver, *The Second French Republic 1848–1852: A Political Reinterpretation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 127; Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 212.

⁷ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 140/34/70.

⁸ Engels, 'To the Editor of the Northern Star', 6/531/559.

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proletarian revolution would necessarily be preceded by a bourgeois one, they argued that communists and workers would first have to join forces with republican and liberal political factions, the popular social classes, as well as the progressive elements of the bourgeoisie, in order to defeat the forces of reaction. Only once the semi-feudal absolutist or constitutional monarchies had been swept aside and a republic established would the next battle begin for the proletarian revolution. That strategy meant that during the revolution communists effectively had to be republicans before they could again be communists. As Engels set out a few months before the February revolution, ‘in the present circumstances, the Communists for the time being rather take the field as democrats themselves in all practical party matters’.⁹

Consequently, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (which prominently carried the subtitle ‘Organ of Democracy’) focused nearly all of its energy on pushing the newly constituted Frankfurt National Assembly (tasked with writing a constitution for a united Germany) to be as radical as possible and to declare Germany a single, indivisible republic. Social issues, criticisms of capitalists and coverage of the emerging labour movement were in contrast largely marginalised in the paper.¹⁰ Marx also downplayed his association with the Communist League, allowing it to go mostly dormant in this period, and instead took a prominent role in Cologne’s Democratic Society. But that opened up political space for communists who had no interest in political agitation and achieving the republic. Andreas Gottschalk, a doctor who founded the Cologne Workers’ Association in Cologne in April 1848, came into repeated conflict with over Marx over this issue.

The difficulties of consistently carrying out this strategy was demonstrated by how to respond to the June Days. In Marx’s analysis, they were ‘the most colossal event in the history of European civil wars’, and with the proletarians outnumbered and opposed by the ‘finance aristocracy, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class, the petty bourgeois, the army, the lumpenproletariat organised as the Mobile Guard, the intellectuals, the clergy and the rural population’, Marx did not hesitate to take the workers side.¹¹ His editorial in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*

⁹ Engels, ‘Die Kommunisten und Karl Heizen’, 317/299.

¹⁰ Sperber, *Karl Marx*, 226.

¹¹ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 105/121/110. Marx’s account of the June Days has come under extensive critical scrutiny, as investigations have shown that the workers consisted mostly of artisans, and there was little difference in the class backgrounds of those manning the barricades and the Mobile Guards which suppressed them, see Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 69–77. This casts serious doubt on the traditional Marxian thesis that the Mobile Guard were composed of a distinguishable class of *lumpenproletariat*. It has rightly led to historical sociologists of the period emphasising the necessity of a non-reductionist class analysis, see Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades: Class Formation and Republican Politics in France, 1830–1871* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4–11. Less convincingly, the

unequivocally condemned the slaughter and boldly stated that it was the ‘*right of the democratic press* to place laurels on the brows of the martyred workers’.¹² That put Marx and the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* seriously out of step with the rest of the radical press (to say nothing, of course, of the liberal and conservative press). Republicans almost universally condemned the June Days as an illegitimate uprising against a Republic elected by universal suffrage. Marx, sensing the danger of isolation, may have used a subsequent speech to the Cologne Democratic Society to row back on his unequivocal support for the workers.¹³ After the revolution, Marx re-evaluated this strategy, arguing that while the workers should still fight for the republic, they should organise themselves independently of the radical democrats and republicans.

The course of the revolution across Europe swung sharply towards reaction in the second half of 1848. In Cologne, the Prussian authorities used an unsuccessful insurrection in the city at the end of September to briefly ban the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and to shut down the Democratic Society and the Cologne Worker’s Association. The paper was able to continue to operate until May 1849, when the Prussian authorities finally expelled Marx. He made his way once again to Paris, finding the city in a markedly more reactionary mood. In a familiar story, he was soon made unwelcome by the French authorities and decided that his only option was, like so many of the radical participants of 1848, to go into (what he thought would be temporary) exile in London.

In London, he threw himself back into the politics of the Communist League and, together with Engels, set up a new journal version of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, now sub-titled *Politsche-ökonomische Revue*, which folded in

episode is used by Gareth Stedman Jones to provide further evidence of his thesis that we should abandon Marx’s materialist account of class and instead embrace his linguistic alternative, *Karl Marx*, 309–13. Yet it is not clear why the discovery that the class background of the armed forces used to suppress a subordinate class is similar or even identical to that subordinate class, should give us reason for extensive theoretical reconsideration. The suggestion often seems to be that the Marxist account of class and class-struggle should be embarrassed by the fact that there were ‘workers on both sides of the barricades’ T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848–1851*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 13. Or that the June Days cannot be ‘a “workers” uprising against capitalism, if workers were doing the fighting against the insurgents’, Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 214. This betrays a confused understanding of what class-struggle entails. Numerically inferior ruling classes *must* always mobilise part of the numerically superior subordinate classes to fight on their behalf. Furthermore, it is unsurprising that the Mobile Guards, who were after all a well-paid militia deliberately recruited to fight popular insurrection, should see their new material interests align more closely with the regime than the social class from which it was recruited. Indeed, just because they were recruited *from* the working classes does not mean that we should straightforwardly categorize them as still being *part* of the working class. Thus, while the evidence suggests that we should abandon the *lumpenproletariat* explanation, it gives us no reason for a wholesale re-evaluation of Marxist class analysis. That might be justified on other grounds, but not on the evidence presented here.

¹² Marx, ‘Die Junirevolution’, 211/137/149.

¹³ Sperber, *Karl Marx*, 227; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 271–72. We have only the minutes of the meeting, so cannot be sure what Marx precisely said.

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November 1850. It did however give Marx the opportunity to begin to reflect seriously on the events of the preceding two years. The product was a brilliant three-part series, originally blandly titled '1848 bis 1849', but later republished by Engels in 1895 as 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich'.¹⁴ In it Marx began to analyse the experience of the French Republic, making the case for why it was and could only be a bourgeois republic. When Louis-Napoleon, the elected president of France since December 1848, overthrew the Second Republic in his coup d'état on 2 December 1851 (and effectively brought the 1848 Revolutions to a close), Marx took the opportunity to have another crack at explaining the course of the revolution. The result was *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (hereafter *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*). It first appeared in May 1852 as a special pamphlet edition of Joseph Weydemeyer's New York journal *Die Revolution*. Only a few copies made their way to the continent and efforts to republish it in Germany or in an English or French translation came to nothing. Marx was however able to later republish it in a second (amended) version in 1869.¹⁵

The following chapter is divided into three parts. First, I discuss Marx's account of the insufficiency of the bourgeois republic. This involves a discussion of Marx's categorisations of republics and of Marx's account of the social and constitutional failings of the bourgeois republic. Second, I discuss why Marx also believes in the necessity of the bourgeois republic. I contrast his position with socialists that did not accept this necessity, and then explore the economic, political and ideological factors behind Marx's argument, as well several tensions with this argument. Both of these sections devote particular attention to Marx's constitutional thought, an aspect of *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* that has been neglected.¹⁶ Third, I discuss the social and political thought of the democratic republicans, the radical faction of republicanism, and contrasts it with Marx and Engels's communism.¹⁷

¹⁴ Engels added a fourth section taken from their jointly written 'Revue. Mai bis Oktober 1850', which also appeared in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung: Politische-ökonomische Revue*. I have consequently chosen to reference the 'Revue. Mai bis Oktober 1850' instead of 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich' for this fourth section.

¹⁵ The differences between the two versions are not hugely significant, but there are a few passages missing in the 1869 edition, which will be referred to below. Since the *MEW* only reproduces the 1869 text, these passages will be reflected in the relevant reference by an 'X'.

¹⁶ For an insightful recent attempt to show that *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* is 'a classic, and thus still current, text for constitutional theory and the theory of parliamentary democracy', see Hauke Brunkhorst, 'Kommentar', in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, by Karl Marx (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 141–42, 228–68.

¹⁷ This chapter, more than others in this thesis, quite extensively uses Engels's writings to illuminate Marx's views. I do so because the period in question was one of close collaboration between the two. However, I also explore where their views diverge.

I. The Insufficiency of the Bourgeois Republic

In the discussion of 'Zur Judenfrage' in the first chapter, we saw how Marx criticized the social insufficiency of the republic. Marx argued that the modern republic would institute freedom and equality in the political sphere, but would allow and even encourage unfreedom and inequality in the social sphere of civil society. That critique of the social insufficiency of the republic is repeated in Marx's account of the bourgeois republic in the 1848 Revolutions, and this will be explored below. But I will also pay particular attention to the political and constitutional shortcomings of the bourgeois republic that Marx identifies. That first requires a discussion of how Marx identifies the bourgeois republic and how he distinguishes it from competing conceptions of the republic in 1848.

(i) Categorisation of Republics

One of the prominent, though not often remarked upon, features of Marx's analysis of French revolutionary events from 1848 to 1851 is the categorisation of different kinds of republic. Alongside the more familiar actors that populate Marx's revolutionary stage,¹⁸ he refers to everything from *social* republics, *democratic* republics, *social-democratic* republics and *red* republics, to *bourgeois* republics, *tricolour* republics, *pure* republics, *respectable* republics, *constitutional* republics and *parliamentary* republics. These republics generally share the common institutional features of the modern republic, including universal suffrage, representative government and the guarantee of civic freedoms.¹⁹ The qualifiers refer to three dimensions along which the republics can vary:

- (a) *Class*: the class that holds political power in the republic,
- (b) *Economy*: the economic institutions that underlines the republic,
- (c) *Constitution*: the particular political institutions of the republic that are best suited to maintaining (a) and (b).

Marx does not explicitly distinguish these dimensions. His usage suggests that he primarily has the first two dimensions of the republic in mind. But there are cases of him referring to the third, and it comes to play a greater role in his later discussion of the Paris Commune. Separating out these dimensions has the advantage of alerting us to the possibility that how a republic is distinguished in one of these dimensions might not necessarily correspond to how it is in another. A class might hold political power in a republic, but the constitutional structure of

¹⁸ On the recurrent theatrical metaphors in Marx's account of the 1848 Revolution, see S. S. Praver, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 167–68, 178–80.

¹⁹ An exception is the constitutional or parliamentary republic after universal male suffrage was abolished on 31 May 1850.

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the republic might not be one that best promotes its political rule. Or a republic might have its economy organised such that it benefits a particular class, but that might not correspond to that same class holding political power. These theoretical possibilities highlight an actual tension in Marx's account over whether the constitutional structure of the supposedly 'bourgeois' republic is actually best suited to defend bourgeois economic and political rule, as I will discuss in the second part of this chapter.

When the republic triumphed in February 1848, Marx argues that it was still to be decided what kind of republic it would be, and consequently 'Every party construed it in its own way.'²⁰ The workers, who 'secured it arms in hand', believed that they had founded a '*social republic*'.²¹ For the brief period between February and June they were strong enough to force the social concession that the republic would guarantee the right to work through the National Workshops, which maintained a façade of a '*republic surrounded by social institutions*'.²² But Marx argues that the underdevelopment of the proletariat meant that the call for the social republic could at this point in history appear only 'as a phrase, as a prophecy', and its destruction in the June Days meant that it 'haunts the subsequent acts of the drama like a ghost'.²³ The petty bourgeoisie in turn fought for a '*democratic republic*'.²⁴ Marx argues that, in line with their class interests, their vision of the republic would entail 'democratic-republican institutions' which do not 'supersede two extremes, capital and wage labour' but instead meant 'weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony'.²⁵ Thus, the workers had their social republic and the petty bourgeoisie their democratic republic, in which they would have exercised political rule and would have instituted their favoured economic institutions. (There are no examples in this period of Marx referring to the democratic or social republic in terms of the constitutional dimension of the republic).

But both of these republics were pushed aside by the real protagonist of Marx's story: the *bourgeois republic*. It was this republic that takes 'possession of the entire stage' for the predominant part of the revolution.²⁶ Marx uses the term to refer to all three dimensions outlined above. He associates it with both the bourgeois class holding political power: '[in] a *bourgeois republic*...the whole of the

²⁰ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 103/120/109.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 103-4/120/109.

²² Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 125/18-19/55, 136/30/66.

²³ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 104/120/109, 174/194/181.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 174/194/181. Note that in Marx and Engels's later usage the term democratic republic is equated with the bourgeois republic. See for example, Marx, 'Kritik der Gothaer Programms', 22-23/29/96; Engels, 'Réponse à l'honorable Giovanni Bovio', 102/280/271 and Engels to August Bebel, 18 August 1886, *MEW* 36: 509; *MECW* 47: 470.

²⁵ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 124/141/130

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 174/194/182.

bourgeoisie will now rule on behalf of the people²⁷ and as the political counterpart to the capitalist economy: ‘the political reconsolidation of bourgeois society, [is] in a word, a *bourgeois republic*’.²⁸ The third dimension is less commonly referred to, but we also find it mixed in with the others. In a contemporaneous discussion of the English bourgeoisie, Marx refers to all three dimensions: he writes that the bourgeoisie ‘demand...the rule of those men who are the directors of that [bourgeois] production [dimension (a)]’, and that they desire a ‘*Bourgeois Republic*, in which free competition rules supreme in all spheres of life [dimension (b)]; in which there remains altogether that *minimum* only of government which is indispensable for the administration, internally and externally, of the common class interest and business of the Bourgeoisie [dimension (c)]’.²⁹ In this final sentence, we see an example of the bourgeois republic being associated with the idea that the bourgeoisie tries to design the constitution and political structures of the republic in such a way that it favours its class rule and economic interests. In summary, Marx usage of term ‘bourgeois republic’ can refer to a republic where (a) the bourgeoisie holds political power, (b) the republic is accompanied by a capitalist economy, and/or (c) a republic’s constitution is organised so as to protect (a) and (b).

Marx further sub-divides the bourgeois republic, with specific relation to French conditions, into the (i) *pure* republic and the (ii) *parliamentary* or *constitutional* republic (Figure 6). This is based on which faction of the bourgeois class holds political power: in the former, the republican bourgeoisie, in the latter, the combined royalist bourgeoisie.³⁰ According to Marx, the republican bourgeoisie ruled exclusively from the June Days (when they pushed out the left-wing republicans from the provisional government) until Louis Bonaparte won the presidential election in December 1848.³¹ Marx characterises these ‘constitution-making pure republicans’ as desperately trying to rig the constitution – ‘their great legislative work of art’ – in their favour, since casting ‘a glance from the lofty heaven of their ideal republic at the profane world’ showed them that they were steadily losing support to the ‘royalists, the Bonapartists, the democrats, the communists’.³² The problem the bourgeois republicans faced was that, on the one hand, they refused to countenance any alliance with the popular classes (and in the case of the proletariat had actively crushed them), and on the other, their

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 104/121/110.

²⁸ Marx, ‘Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich’, 135/29/66.

²⁹ Marx, ‘The Chartists’, 323-4/342-43/333-34.

³⁰ ‘[T]he parliamentary republic, the republic of the royalist bourgeoisie...the pure republic, the republic of the bourgeois-republicans’, Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 175/X/182.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 108/126/114.

³² *Ibid.*, 111/129/117.

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appeal to the bourgeoisie was hamstrung by the great majority of that class being instinctively and stubbornly royalist.

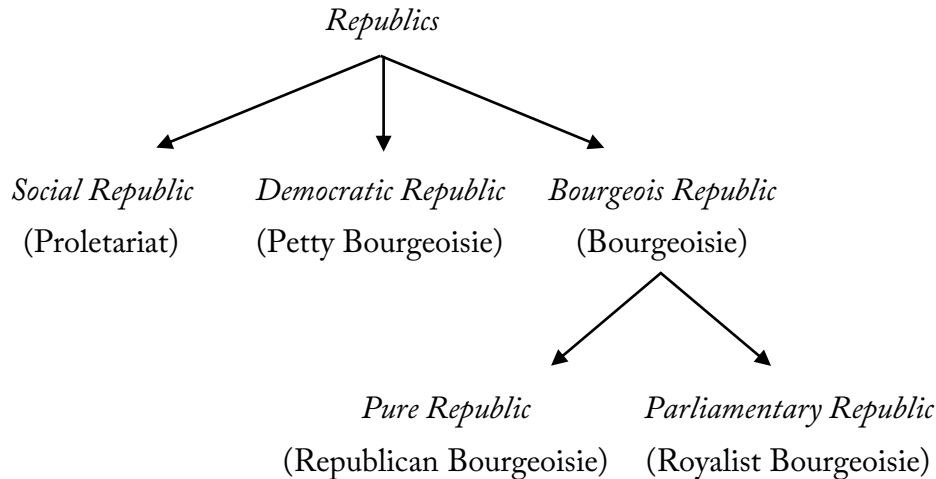


Figure 6. Marx's categorisation of republics during the 1848 Revolutions

The royalist bourgeoisie is consequently able to push the republican bourgeoisie aside, takes sole political power and 'impounds this republic as *its property*'.³³ This republic, which Marx calls the parliamentary republic (and sometimes the constitutional republic),³⁴ dispensed with the remaining niceties of the bourgeois republicans. Marx argues that while the bourgeois republic was in the 'hands of the bourgeois republicans' it was just a 'hollow ideological formula', but it 'become[s] a form full of content and life in the hands of the royalists'.³⁵ Marx portrays the situation of republic under the control of the royalist bourgeoisie as a faintly paradoxical one. The contradiction of having royalists in charge of a republic would suggest a serious problem, and yet the parliamentary republic emerges, against their own expectations, as the best form of their rule. Marx explains this apparent paradox by referring to the underlying fact that the royalist bourgeoisie were themselves divided into two rival factions, the *Legitimists* and the *Orléanists*, and that the bourgeois parliamentary republic was the first political form that allowed them to rule together.

Orléanists supported the House of Orléans, which had ruled France during the July Monarchy of 1830-1848, while the Legitimists supported the restoration of the House of Bourbon, which had ruled during the *ancien régime* and again from 1814-1830. Marx is at pains to emphasize that this superficial

³³ *Ibid.*, 113-14/131/119.

³⁴ The two terms are equated in *Ibid.*, 117/135/123.

³⁵ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 180/76/114.

division over royal claimants is actually reflective of a deeper social fissure, namely the division between the landowning bourgeoisie on the one side and the industrial and financial bourgeoisie on the other.³⁶ The former had its interests protected by the House of Bourbon, while the House of Orléans privileged the interests of the latter. Supporters of each branch subsequently struggled to keep or restore their respective claimant to power in order to further their class interests. But they faced the inherent monarchical problem that the ‘crown could only descend to one head’.³⁷ That left each faction constantly jockeying and scheming to have its particular royal individual on the throne, without ever securely establishing its form of the monarchy. As Marx puts it (and taking a simultaneous swipe at the republican tradition),

Just as Kant makes the republic, as the only rational form of state, a postulate of practical reason, whose realisation is never attained, but whose attainment must always be striven for and mentally adhered to as the goal, so these royalists [do the same with] *the monarchy*.³⁸

The solution: the *bourgeois parliamentary republic*, which through its depersonalised system of rule allows the two royalist factions to rule together. Marx writes ‘in the bourgeois republic, which bore neither the name *Bourbon* nor the name *Orléans*, but the name *Capital*, they had found the form of state in which they could rule *conjointly*’.³⁹ It is in this ‘*nameless realm of the republic*’ that the two great factions of the bourgeoisie are for the first time able to work together for their common bourgeois interest, without being distracted by petty dynastic squabbles.⁴⁰ Marx emphasises this insight over a dozen times in ‘Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich’ and *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire*, suggesting that he thought it was one of the most crucial historical breakthroughs of the revolution.⁴¹ Even the more reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie were slowly realising that the republic could be bent to their bourgeois interests and be a vehicle for their class rule. He quotes the prophetic words of the Orléanist representative Adolphe Thiers (who would go on to play a foundational and bloody role in the Third Republic), that ‘We, the royalists, are the true pillars of the constitutional republic’.⁴² Marx says that Thiers was one of the first to come to the realisation

³⁶ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 121-22/127-28/138-39. Marx, here also explains that the formerly aristocratic landowning class is rightly referred to as bourgeois since ‘large landed property, despite its feudal coquetry and pride of race, has been rendered thoroughly bourgeois by the development of modern society.’

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 160/178/166.

³⁸ Marx, ‘Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich’, 180/76/114.

³⁹ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 114/131/120.

⁴⁰ Marx, ‘Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich’, 163/59/95.

⁴¹ In addition to the previous references, see for instance, *Ibid.*, 168/64/101, 179-80/76/114; *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 118/136/125, 122/140/129, 155/172/160, 159-60/178/165-66, 176/X/183.

⁴² Marx, ‘Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich’, 180/76/114.

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that of the available political forms the 'republic divides them [the monarchists] least'.⁴³ Agulhon confirms the importance of this historical breakthrough writing,

The involuntary experience of the fact that a Republic could be bourgeois and that such a Republic indeed made it possible for rival partisans of monarchy to work together for the aims they shared, despite the differences that divided them was surely a discovery that must also be rated as part of this period's historical legacy.⁴⁴

(ii) Failings of the Bourgeois Republic

Marx's overall verdict on the bourgeois republic, whether pure or parliamentary, is damning. Characteristic judgements include, that the '*bourgeois republic* signifies the unlimited despotism of one class over other classes' and that the '*bourgeois republic...[is]* the state whose admitted purpose is to perpetuate the rule of capital, the slavery of labour'.⁴⁵ His central charge is that the bourgeois republic, for all its supposed revolutionary and idealistic connotations, does nothing to address bourgeois society. The bourgeois republic changes the political '*form*' of the state, but leaves its social '*content*' untouched.⁴⁶ Marx makes this point via a quip about the First French Republic's ill-fated attempt to rationalise the traditional calendar,

The re-christening of the Christian calendar into a republican one, the saintly Bartholomew into the saintly Robespierre, made no more change in the wind and weather than this constitution made or was supposed to make in bourgeois society.⁴⁷

So closely does Marx associate the republic with bourgeois society that he often uses 'republic' and 'bourgeois republic' interchangeably. He says that 'the *republic is in general only the revolutionary destructive form of bourgeois society*',⁴⁸ and that 'the sole legitimate republic, is a republic which is no revolutionary weapon against the bourgeois order...in a word, *a bourgeois republic*'.⁴⁹ Conflating the republic with the bourgeois republic served the additional political purpose of highlighting the emancipatory insufficiency of republicanism. Achieving the republic would, Marx stressed, not solve the social question, as the more radical of his republican contemporaries promised, but would instead cement the bourgeois transformation of society.

⁴³ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 123/140/129.

⁴⁴ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 191.

⁴⁵ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 105/122/111; 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 139/33/69.

⁴⁶ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 142/36/72, 146/40-41/77.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 146/40-41/77. For more information on this fascinating and unjustly forgotten aspect of the French Revolution, see for instance Eviatar Zerubavel, 'The French Republican Calendar: A Case Study in the Sociology of Time', *American Sociological Review* 42, no. 6 (1977): 868-77.

⁴⁸ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 106/122/111. Marx intriguingly amended '*revolutionary destructive form (revolutionäre Zerstörungsform)*' in the 1869 edition, so that it read 'the *republic is in general only the political revolutionary form (politische Umwälzungsform) of bourgeois society*'. See the discussion in *MEGA*® I.11: 698.

⁴⁹ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 135/29/66.

No event captured the true bourgeois nature of the republic for Marx more than the June Days. He thought it was decisive evidence that the republic would, when it really came down to it, defend the bourgeoisie and crush the workers. The only positive outcome of the whole sorry episode was that the ‘veil that shrouded the republic was torn asunder’ and its true nature was revealed.⁵⁰ Marx proclaimed that from now on it would be clear where the real struggle lay. As he notes,

The defeat of the June insurgents, to be sure, had indeed prepared and levelled the ground on which the bourgeois republic could be founded and built up, but it had shown at the same time that in Europe the questions at issue are other than that of ‘republic or monarchy’.⁵¹

The reference to the ‘question’ of ‘republic or monarchy’ should be seen as a deliberate rebuke to contemporary European republican discourse. The opening months of the revolution in Germany had seen a proliferation of pamphlets where the choice facing the Frankfurt National Assembly between republic or monarchy was the central and titular focus. In *Volksthümliche Belehrung über das Wesen der Monarchie und Republik* (1848), ‘The question: *whether monarchy? whether republic?*’, was declared to be a ‘vital question in our great German fatherland’.⁵² In ‘Deutschland, eine constitutionelle Monarchie oder Republik?’ (1848) it was the ‘most important question of the present day’.⁵³ Julius Fröbel, the publisher of Marx and Ruge’s *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* and prominent left-wing member of the Frankfurt National Assembly, also joined the fray with his *Monarchie oder Republik?* (1848). He maintained that ‘The question: “whether republic or monarchy?” is firstly a general question of foundational politics.’⁵⁴ For these republicans, (as well as the constitutional liberals who defended the opposite answer),⁵⁵ the question of monarchy or republic was clearly the central and burning issue of contemporary political and social life. Marx’s dismissal of the question should be seen in this politically charged context.⁵⁶ His point here was not that the question of monarchy or republic was irrelevant, but that it was being eclipsed by what he took to be the far more consequential question of capitalism or communism.

Marx’s critique of the social insufficiency of the bourgeois republic is accompanied by a critique of its political structures. In particular, Marx takes aim

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 137/31/67.

⁵¹ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 105/122/111.

⁵² Schilbach, *Volksthümliche Belehrung über das Wesen der Monarchie und Republik*, 11.

⁵³ Wulff, ‘Deutschland, eine constitutionelle Monarchie oder Republik?’, 3.

⁵⁴ Fröbel, *Monarchie oder Republik?*, 5.

⁵⁵ For liberal pamphlets defending constitutional monarchy see von Blum, *Monarchie und Republik*; Ghillany, *Republik oder Monarchie?* (which must rank as one of the most concise summations of liberal objections to republicanism); and Heimbach, *Deutsche Monarchie oder Republik?*

⁵⁶ Marx’s intervention is thus a good example of how the illocutionary force of an utterance can be uncovered by studying its textual context, Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 45–48.

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at the extent to which the bourgeois republic concentrated power in the executive at the expense of the legislature. Marx argued that this was the central and foundational flaw in the republic's new constitution, which was enacted in November 1848.⁵⁷ Marx accused the bourgeois authors of the constitution with having replaced the 'hereditary monarchy' of Louis-Philippe, with an 'elective monarchy' in the office of the President.⁵⁸ In effect, it was a constitution with the 'royalist labels torn off and republican labels stuck on'.⁵⁹ Marx argues that it endowed the President with 'all the attributes of royal power', by giving him the right to appoint and dismiss ministers (without consulting the National Assembly), to pardon criminals, to dismiss local and municipal councils, to initiate foreign treaties, and it additionally placed 'all the resources of the executive power in his hands' by putting him in charge of the armed forces and giving him control over the executive bureaucracy.⁶⁰ This latter feature meant that the president was given the outsized power of directly 'bestowing all posts' of 500,000 public officials, and indirectly 'disposing' of the 'livelihoods' of 'at least a million and half people', when their dependents were included.⁶¹

Throughout *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, Marx makes clear his intense dislike of this bloated executive power, in words that are (strongly) reminiscent of his criticisms of Prussian bureaucracy in the *Kritik*. Marx argues that the 'executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation' is an 'appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores'.⁶² This bureaucratic machine had been inherited from the previous monarchical regimes, but Marx argues that it was expanded and perfected in the bourgeois republic. The bourgeoisie's '*material*' and '*political interests*' are 'interwoven in the closest fashion' with the expansion of this state machinery because they fill it with their 'surplus population' to exploit further the population through 'state salaries', and more importantly to expand the repressive apparatus of the state to maintain its rule.⁶³ In this way the bourgeois republic further entrenches its economic and political rule through the constitution and political

⁵⁷ The most extensive discussion in English of the 1848 French Constitution is Eugene Newton Curtis, *The French Assembly of 1848 and American Constitutional Doctrines* (New York: Columbia University, 1918).

⁵⁸ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 146/41/77.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 110/127/116.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 178/196/185.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 132/150/139. Marx's claim that that the 'parliamentary republic found itself compelled to strengthen...the resources and centralisation of governmental power', *Ibid.*, 179/197/186, would seem to be at odds with the above quoted claim that in the '*Bourgeois Republic*...there remains altogether that *minimum* only of government which is indispensable' for bourgeois rule, 'The Chartists', 324/343/334.) These ideas could perhaps be reconciled by the idea that there is a difference between how the bourgeoisie would ideally like to structure its republic (as little government as possible to keep state interference with their business to a minimum), with how it is forced to structure its republic if it wants to maintain bourgeois rule (much larger government to ensure repressive measures).

structures of the state. The consequence of this process is that (again similarly to the *Kritik*), the ‘common interest’ is ‘severed from society’, and instead the bureaucratic state machine fails to represent the ‘higher, *general*, interest’.⁶⁴ Management of everything from ‘a bridge, a schoolhouse and the communal property of a village community’ to the ‘railways, the national wealth and the national university of France’ is ‘snatched from the self-activity of society’s members’ and instead ‘made an object of government activity’.⁶⁵ And it is at the very top of this heaving executive behemoth that the new constitution had sat an all-too powerful president.

A specific danger that Marx detects in the office of the president is that its power is amplified by its personal nature. The single figure that towers at the top of the state is a recognisable and identifiable representative of the nation as a whole, in a way that a multi-member legislature cannot compete with. Marx illustrates this with a series of comparisons between the two.⁶⁶ In legislative elections, the votes of the nation are ‘split up’ among the 750 National Assembly members, but with the presidential election they are ‘concentrated on one individual’.⁶⁷ The electorate often participates in legislative elections out of the ‘mere necessity’ of choosing somebody, where ‘neither the cause nor the man is closely examined’, whereas for the president ‘the act of his election is the trump that the sovereign people plays once every four years’.⁶⁸ The National Assembly deputies represent only ‘this or that town’, while the president is the ‘elect of the nation’.⁶⁹ Through its hundreds of deputies the National Assembly manages to express the ‘manifold aspects of the national spirit’, but with the single individual president that national spirit is ‘incarnated’.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the National Assembly stands only in a ‘metaphysical relation’ to the people’, while the president has a ‘personal relation’ to them.⁷¹ The consequence is that the president comes to ‘possesses...a sort of divine right’, enjoying their power by ‘grace of the people’.⁷² These final royal comparisons serve to emphasize that the personal nature of the modern president’s authority maintains an element of the pre-modern veneration of a king.

In contrast to the overbearing power of the president, Marx bemoans the relative weakness of the legislature. He complains that by giving the president

⁶⁴ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 178/197/186.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 178–79/197/186.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 111/128/117.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

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control over the state apparatus and the armed forces ‘the Constitution assigns actual power’ to the president, while the National Assembly is assigned only ‘moral power’.⁷³ Any conflict between the two is thus of ‘*force without words over the force of words*’.⁷⁴ He argues that the National Assembly ‘forfeits all real influence’ over the gargantuan executive when it does not have the power to appoint ministers.⁷⁵ He further recommends that it should try to reign in the executive’s power by ‘simpl[ifying] the administration of the state’, ‘reduc[ing] the number of public officials’, and balancing it through allowing ‘civil society and public opinion to create organs of their own, independent of the government power’.⁷⁶ Marx explicitly associates the legislature with self-rule, while the executive is associated with rule by an alien will. For example, he says that the ‘executive power, in contrast to the legislative, expresses the heteronomy of the nation, in contrast to its autonomy’.⁷⁷ Marx’s preference for legislative supremacy over the executive is thus grounded in a worry that executive power has a tendency towards independence that escapes the people’s control.

Marx argues that the end result of setting up these two rival powers was necessarily going to lead to destructive conflict. He argues that it reproduced the ‘division of powers’ of the Charter of 1830, except that this time it was ‘widen[ed] into an intolerable contradiction’.⁷⁸ The previous ‘*game of constitutional powers*’ in the July Monarchy, where the Chamber of Deputies were repeatedly at odds with the King, now becomes a much deadlier one played ‘*va banque*’ (staking one’s all).⁷⁹ That is because the president, by being limited to a single four-year term, could only continue his rule past its legal limit by ‘setting aside the Constitution itself’.⁸⁰ It had thereby ‘challenged its forcible destruction’ by giving an ambitious individual, like Louis-Napoleon, both the means and the motivation to overthrow the republic.⁸¹ This was the central weakness of the constitution. It meant that the republic was, Marx concludes, ‘like Achilles, vulnerable in one point, not in the heel, but in the head, or rather in the two heads in which it wound up—the *Legislative Assembly*, on the one hand, the *President*, on the other’.⁸²

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 111/128/116.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 177/196/185.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 132/150/139.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* In this case ‘civil society’ is a more appropriate translation of ‘bürgerliche Gesellschaft’ than ‘bourgeois society’.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 177/196/185. Marx does not, however, have much praise for the actual composition of the Second Republic’s legislature, which he argued had raised the ‘the law of the ruling class to its general will’, *Ibid.*, 176/196/185..

⁷⁸ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 110/127/115-16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 110/127/115.

Marx's analysis of the 1848 Constitution shares several features in common with that of Félix Pyat. Pyat was a journalist, playwright and radical republican member of the National Assembly. During the constitutional debates in the Assembly, he took the rostrum to deliver a vigorous denunciation of the proposed power of the president, arguing that he would be an 'elective king' more dangerous than the 'hereditary king' he replaced.⁸³ He predicted that the July Monarchy's 'complicated see-saw game' between the Chamber of Deputies and the King would be sharpened into an 'inevitable duel' between the two constitutional powers.⁸⁴ He concluded that,

The legislative power must therefore completely dominate the executive power, on pain of the Republic also [like the constitutional monarchy] having two heads, that is to say all the struggles, all the conflicts, all the battles of the constitutional monarchies, with even more risks and perils for liberty.⁸⁵

Both Pyat and Marx (perhaps under Pyat's influence) thus saw the Constitution as setting up a dangerous system of 'two heads', with the executive having an improperly powerful position relative to the legislature.⁸⁶ Pyat also argues that the personal nature of the president's power means that he is likely to be perceived as a better incarnation of the people's will. A president, he says, 'would tend to condense, to concentrate, to absorb all powers, to represent, to personify, to incarnate the people'.⁸⁷ He further expresses serious concern about the split-up nature of representation in a multi-member assembly in comparison to a single individual president, predicting that the future president would turn to

⁸³ Pyat, Speech to the National Assembly, 5 October 1848, 652. Pyat was immediately followed by Alexis de Tocqueville, who defended the same aspects of the draft constitution, an action he later regretted, see *Souvenirs*, 189/127. See also Curtis, *The French Assembly of 1848 and American Constitutional Doctrines*, 187–88.

⁸⁴ Pyat, Speech to the National Assembly, 5 October 1848, 651, 652.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 651.

⁸⁶ Pyat's potential influence on Marx is difficult to prove decisively. Marx cites the speeches of several other deputies in the National Assembly but there is no direct evidence that he read Pyat's. We can be fairly confident that he was at least made aware of it, since the speech was summarised and praised the next day in the lead item of *La Réforme* (6 October 1848, no. 277, p. 1), a newspaper Marx followed closely from Cologne, writing two articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, in October and November 1848, that criticised its coverage (see 'Die "Réforme" über die Juniinsurrektion'; and 'Die Pariser "Réforme" über die französischen Zustände'). The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* also regularly carried detailed reports from the proceedings of the constituent National Assembly, and it would likely have reported Pyat's speech if it was not for the fact that the paper was briefly banned during the relevant period because of the state of siege in Cologne (with no issues appearing between 27 September and 12 October 1848). A later speech by Pyat was, for instance, praised as 'excellent' (*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 7 November 1848, no. 136, p. 4 and 12 November, no. 141, p. 4). In his later interactions with Pyat, Marx generally did not hold him in high regard. He thought that he was an irresponsible adventurer for his calls to assassinate Napoleon III in 1868 and moved for the General Council of the International to censure him. When asked about Pyat's supposed membership of the organisation, Marx later replied that 'the association could hardly have found room for such a wild man', see Interview published in *The World*, 456/X/605. Marx did, however, devote the entirety of one of his regular articles for the *New York Tribune* in 1858 to quoting from a pamphlet by Pyat that he thought 'remarkable', see 'A New French Revolutionary Manifesto', 41.

⁸⁷ Pyat, Speech to the National Assembly, 5 October 1848, 652.

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the legislature and say 'Each of you was elected only by a department, not by France'; and 'you are in fact only nine hundredths of the people, I by myself am the whole people'.⁸⁸

Marx's constitutional analysis of the bourgeois republic in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* was based on his earlier analysis of the 1848 Constitution in a piece commissioned by Ernest Jones for his Chartist journal *Notes to the People* in June 1851. In this article, Marx goes through the constitution, article by article, interspersing it with his critical comments and displaying greater interest in constitutional affairs than someone who is often presented as believing such matters to be purely epiphenomenal. In the article, Marx criticises the fact that while an early draft of the constitution enshrined the right to free education, the right to work, and the right to state support for orphans, the sick and the old, these were struck from the final version by an emboldened bourgeoisie.⁸⁹ If these rights had actually been enacted, the constitution would have had social content. Marx argues that, of the rights that the constitution did in the end protect, these were all suitably circumscribed so that it 'takes away the enjoyment of the right altogether'.⁹⁰ For instance, the right of association and of free speech were restricted by the requirement to maintain 'public safety'. That loophole meant that subsequent legislation could be passed that 'crushed the working-man's press' and denied workers the right to form trade unions ('So much for the right to association and of public meeting' – Marx adds).⁹¹ The constitutional set up of the bourgeois republic thus opened the door to the subsequent entrenchment of the bourgeoisie's economic interests. This analysis shows, in the words of a recent constitutionalist theorist, how 'politically inclusive constitutional law becomes a socially exclusive instrument of bourgeois class rule'.⁹² Because of this feature of the bourgeois republic's 'Constitution of Humbug', Marx characterises it as 'a mass of fine words, hiding a most treacherous design' and 'show[s] plainly enough, that the middle-class can be democratic in *words*, but will not be so in deeds'.⁹³

A further aspect of the article that deserves mention is Marx's comment on Article 19 of the constitution, which specified that the separation of powers is the 'primary condition of free government'. Marx's comment on this article of the constitution reads,

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* The 900 refers to the number of deputies in the Constituent National Assembly, whereas the 750, referenced by Marx, refers to the number of representatives in the National Assembly.

⁸⁹ Marx, 'The Constitution of the French Republic', 535/494/567.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 536/496/569. The same point is made in Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 109-10/126-27/114-15.

⁹¹ Marx, 'The Constitution of the French Republic', 539/496-97/569.

⁹² Brunkhorst, 'Kommentar', 252n92.

⁹³ Marx, 'The Constitution of the French Republic', 545-46/50-4/577-78.

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Here we have the old constitutional folly. The condition of a 'free government' is not the *division*, but the UNITY of power. The machinery of government cannot be too simple. It is always the craft of knaves to make it complicated and mysterious.⁹⁴

Read in isolation, this paragraph can have an alarmingly authoritarian quality, especially its emphasis on the 'UNITY of power'. But the rest of the article and Marx's wider constitutional commitments make it clear that what he objects to in the doctrine of the separation of powers is that when the executive is strictly separated from the legislature it gains an independent will that escapes popular democratic control. Instead, the executive should be subordinated to the legislative by placing it largely within the legislature. Pyat similarly advocated the 'unity of government' where the legislative assembly 'appoints' the executive, who is a 'simple chairman of the council' rather than an independent and powerful president.⁹⁵

Marx and Pyat's concern with the anti-democratic elements of the separation of powers can be traced back to its foundational justification, which (in the words of one of its foremost investigators) was explicitly designed to respond to the assumption that the 'legislature will, or may, be taken over entirely by the democratic element' and that power therefore needed to be dispersed to 'branches of the government largely or wholly outside the legislature'.⁹⁶ Marx and Pyat are instead inheritors of the radical tradition of assembly government (*gouvernement d'assemblée*), which traces its history to the Convention of the French Revolution where the 'legislative assembly, popularly elected, holds undisputed supremacy over all other state organs' and 'the executive is strictly subordinated, the servant or agent of the assembly and dismissed at the assembly's discretion'.⁹⁷

In addition, the above passage by Marx should be read in the context of the common Chartist belief in simple and transparent government. Marx's phrasing was likely inspired by an article by Ernest Jones on Florence's renaissance history, also published in *Notes to the People* just three weeks before Marx's.⁹⁸ Jones here made the strikingly similar point that,

they [the Florentines] sought safety in a complicated machinery of government, in the famous system of 'check and countercheck'; now the fact is government cannot be too simple. If government is *good*, the fewer checks it has in its progress the better; if it is bad, the more

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 540/498/570.

⁹⁵ Pyat, Speech to the National Assembly, 5 October 1848, 652.

⁹⁶ M. J. C. Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 33.

⁹⁷ Karl Loewenstein, *Political Power and the Governmental Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 81. See also, Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers*, 191, 208.

⁹⁸ Jones's history interestingly hits a number of republican notes. He says of Florence that '*wherever she was free, she was always found constant in the road of virtue*', and that the city's interspersed periods of republican and Medici rule 'contrast the greatness of liberty with the effects of servitude', 'History of Florence', 60, 196.

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complicated its machinery is, the greater is the difficulty in removing or amending it.⁹⁹

Comparing the two passages, we find the same claim that the ‘machinery of government’ ‘cannot be too simple’ and the same worry with attempts to make it ‘complicated’. Jones also adds to Marx’s worry about the separation of powers, a concern with the often conflated, but distinct, constitutional theory of checks and balances (a distinction that Marx may not have been fully cognisant of).¹⁰⁰ Jones objects to these checks and balances because of the way they frustrate the popular will by placing complicated constitutional barriers in its path. Jones believed that the democratic will should not be blocked by anti-democratic machinations. By way of contemporary comparison, Alexis de Tocqueville had argued for two legislative chambers in the 1848 Constitution because he preferred, in his words, a ‘somewhat complicated system of checks and balances...that would consequently be used with prudence and deliberation’ to a ‘simpler theory, bestowing undivided power on a homogenous authority...[with] no barriers to its actions’.¹⁰¹ Jones was instead drawing an old radical republican tradition, which was suspicious towards the complexity and obfuscation introduced by checks and balances and instead embraced a simple and transparent government machine. A proper account of this popular republican constitutional tradition has yet to be written, and I can give only a fragmentary picture here.¹⁰²

We can find similar concerns to those of Marx and Jones in Anti-Federalist thought during the American constitutional debates. They advocated an ideal of ‘simple government’ that would be easily understood by everyone, against the Federalist’s complicated system of checks and balances, which the Anti-Federalists suspected would limit democratic accountability.¹⁰³ The Anti-

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80. Marx’s article was published on 14 June 1851 in issue no. 7 of *Notes of the People*, while the relevant section of Jones’s article appeared in issue no. 4 on 24 May. This was one day after Jones had first written to Marx asking him for an article on the French constitution (Ernest Jones to Marx, 23 May 1851, *MEGA*² III.4: 382) and Jones did not receive the article until at least 30 May (Ernest Jones to Marx, 30 May 1851 *MEGA*² III.4: 390). It therefore seems likely that it was Jones who inspired Marx and not vice versa. (It is possible that it was Jones who translated Marx’s article into English and is hence responsible for the language, but the *MEGA*² editors think that Engels was the more likely candidate, see *MEGA*² I.10: 1054).

¹⁰⁰ The ‘pure doctrine’ of the separation of powers holds that government should be split into three branches, legislative, executive and judicial, with each branch having a single corresponding function and a complete separation of persons between branches. The theory of checks and balances adds to this that each branch should also have a limited power to intervene in the other branch’s functions. See Vile, *Constitutionalism and the Separation of Powers*, 13, 18.

¹⁰¹ Tocqueville, *Souvenirs*, 184–85/123.

¹⁰² An invaluable overview of the machinery metaphor and its links to the theory of checks and balances (but clearly written by a partisan of the theory) is David Wootton, ‘Liberty, Metaphor, and Mechanism: “Checks and Balances” and the Origins of Modern Constitutionalism’, in *Liberty and American Experience in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. David Womersley (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 209–74.

¹⁰³ Bernard Manin, ‘Checks, Balances and Boundaries: The Separation of Powers in the Constitutional Debate of 1787’, in *The Invention of the Modern Republic*, ed. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge: Cambridge

Federalists were in favour of a clearly delineated and transparent constitution, where (similarly to Marx) the legislature was superior to the other branches because they believed it to be 'more representative of the people in their diversity than the President, and more accountable to them than the judges'.¹⁰⁴

The Federalists, on the other hand, specifically designed their constitutional system of checks and balances with the aim of delaying and cooling the expression of the popular will through the legislature.¹⁰⁵ They believed that the 'greatest danger' to representative government was that the 'legislature will acquire the defects of a popular assembly', and that power must therefore not only be dispersed to other branches but those branches must also have the power to intervene in its operation.¹⁰⁶ Presidential veto power, judicial review by the Supreme Court, and the balancing power of the aristocratic Senate, were thus all incorporated into the Constitution in order to limit the power of what was taken to be the more democratic element of the Constitution: the House of Representatives. Alexander Hamilton, one of the foremost Federalists, bragged that this system of checks and balances 'is so complex, so skilfully contrived, that it is next to impossible that an impolitic or wicked measure should pass the scrutiny with success'.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, one of the many anonymous Anti-Federalists, argued that like the 'mechanic' who 'understands the machinery' he works with because he can see through its entire operation, so the 'constitution of a wise and free people, ought to be as evident to simple reason, as the letters of our alphabet'.¹⁰⁸ Marx's own objection to 'complicated and mysterious' government can thus be seen as an echo of this older radical constitutionalism.

University Press, 1994), 45; Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 51–63.

¹⁰⁴ Manin, 'Checks, Balances and Boundaries', 40–41. Where Marx's thought does differ from the Anti-Federalist position (but not French radical republican thought) is his preference for the legislature to exercise both legislative and executive functions, which the Anti-Federalists would have opposed because of their 'one branch, one function' doctrine.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 59–61.

¹⁰⁶ Wootton, 'Liberty, Metaphor, and Mechanism', 264.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*, 54.

¹⁰⁸ 'Address by Denatus', *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, vol. 5 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 262. Partially cited in Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*, 42.

II. The Necessity of the Bourgeois Republic

Marx's criticism of the bourgeois republic was, as we have seen, extremely hostile but it was not *all*-encompassing. That is, the emancipatory limitations of the bourgeois republic did not lead him to reject it outright as an unworthy or irrelevant political goal. While the bourgeois republic was *insufficient* for real emancipation, it was however, in his analysis, a *necessary* step towards it. In other words, in order to achieve communism, the proletariat first had to establish the republic. Marx says that the bourgeois republic was 'the terrain for the fight for revolutionary emancipation' even if it was 'by no means this emancipation itself'.¹⁰⁹ Once that 'terrain' had been gained, the next battle could then be fought over communism and capitalism.

(i) Non-Republican Socialisms

Marx's position was by no means the default one in socialist and communist circles in the pre-revolutionary period. From Owenists in Britain to the True Socialists in Germany and the Icarians in France, a range of socialist currents had an ambivalent relationship to politics, political reform and political revolution. Some instead advocated peaceful advocacy and persuasion of the ruling class, others, the formation of voluntary worker associations and cooperatives, and others further believed that socialism could only be built through intentional communities and utopian experiments separated from society.^{110, 111} Each of these strategies entailed a rejection of the radical Jacobin republican heritage that saw a revolution and the republic as a necessary step for the emancipation of the people.¹¹²

That abdication from the political struggle came under blistering criticism from republicans before the revolution. They feared that it would weaken and divide the party of movement, and they launched an offensive against it. One of the most aggressive of these assaults was made by Karl Heinzen in a series of broadsides in the years before 1848 (including a critical exchange with Marx and Engels which will be more fully discussed later in the chapter). Heinzen accused some communists of having 'taken their sublime indifference to "politics" so far

¹⁰⁹ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 125/18/54.

¹¹⁰ All of these strategies might also be thought of as 'political' in a sense, and I do not mean to endorse the suggestion that only action directed towards the state deserves to be called political. But for ease of comparison with the opposing strategy, and in line with the language socialists and republicans themselves used to describe their strategies, I will continue to describe these as *anti* or *apolitical* strategies.

¹¹¹ The early Engels was however much more enthusiastic about the transformative potential of experimental communist communities than Marx, a position he later dropped (possibly under the influence of Marx), see David Leopold, "'Socialist Turnips': The Young Friedrich Engels and the Feasibility of Communism", *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (2012): 347–78.

¹¹² Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 83–84.

that it is of no consequence to them if they live in a republic or under the rule of the sabre'.¹¹³ On Heinzen's account, socialists and communists were abstract idealists who failed to see the necessity of engaging in the gritty world of politics. He quipped that they 'threw politics completely overboard, in order to rise with the communist balloon towards the happiness-raining dream-clouds (*glückregnenden Wolken der Träume*)'.¹¹⁴ What they failed to understand was that all of their social ideas would be impossible to achieve outside of a republic, for 'the striving to generalise material happiness cannot bypass the effort for political freedom'.¹¹⁵ Worse, their indifference to the fight for a republic made the socialists, in Heinzen's eyes, effectively the handmaidens of absolutism. He thus made the inflammatory charge that they 'directly or indirectly play into the hands of the reaction', by being so 'eager to paralyse the political struggle' that they 'eventually allied themselves, in effect...almost with the reaction'.¹¹⁶

After the collapse of the revolution, dismayed republicans repeated these charges, blaming the revolution's failure on the political indifference of socialists and communists and their premature calls for social revolution. According to William James Linton, socialists and communists were responsible for the 'dissension and weakness brought into the popular camp' through their 'preaching of the uselessness of mere political reforms, of the insufficiency of Republicanism and the Republic'.¹¹⁷ He too chastised socialists and communists for failing to understand that it was impossible to try 'climbing to the "higher matters of social reform" without the help of the lower steps of political revolution'.¹¹⁸ Those socialists who tell 'men to form happy villages, comfortable coöperative corners, wherein they may shut themselves up in shabby enjoyments and escape the tumult of political action', were, Linton emphatically stated, 'not republicans'.¹¹⁹

Marx and Engels recognised both the strength of this republican argument and its potential to damage the communist cause, and were eager to neutralise it by distancing their conception of communism from it. Heinzen's broadside provided one such useful opportunity. Contrary to Heinzen's characterization of communists being indifferent to political forms, Engels claimed that all communists were firmly committed to fighting for the republic. Republicans and communists were actually allies, for 'As long as democracy has not been achieved, thus long do communists and democrats fight side by side'.¹²⁰ Those 'communists'

¹¹³ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 63.

¹¹⁴ Heinzen, *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus*, 1.

¹¹⁵ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 63.

¹¹⁶ Heinzen, 'Karl Heinzen und die Kommunisten', 4.

¹¹⁷ Linton, 'Mazzini and His Socialist Opponents', 123.

¹¹⁸ Linton, 'Republican Socialism: An Explanation', 338.

¹¹⁹ Linton, 'Are the Socialists Republicans?', 70.

¹²⁰ Engels, 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen', 317/299.

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who did not accept this strategy and the necessity of establishing the republic were, Engels simply replied, not real communists.¹²¹

This project to forge a new distinct form of communism by incorporating the republican insistence on political struggle and revolution (and pushing aside those socialisms and communisms that did not) subsequently reached its clearest articulation in the *Manifest*. It boldly announced that the ‘first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy’.¹²² Other forms of socialism that failed to follow this political strategy were dismissed. For instance, the utopian socialists were attacked for ‘reject[ing] all political, and especially all revolutionary, action’.¹²³ To present just one indicative piece of evidence of the kind of thing Marx and Engels objected to in utopian socialism, Robert Owen believed that ‘It is not Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, and Annual Parliaments that can affect that which is now required for the people of all countries’, and he instead advocated for socialists to focus on addressing the ‘ignorance of their rulers and instructors’.¹²⁴ However, the main target of this criticism in the *Manifest* were the True Socialists, to whom Marx and Engels devoted part of the section on ‘Socialist and Communist Literature’, categorizing them as one of the three types of ‘Reactionary Socialism’ (along with ‘Feudal Socialism’ and ‘Petty-Bourgeois Socialism’).¹²⁵

The True Socialists were a group of German intellectuals clustered around Karl Grün, along with Hermann Kriege, Herman Semmig, Ernst Dronke and others. In the run-up to the 1848 Revolution they were the most prominent form of socialism in Germany. They were characterised by their adoption of French socialist writings and combining them with elements of German philosophy, in addition to adhering to a decidedly apolitical strategy. Grün, for example, ‘championed an anti-state, anti-constitutionalist approach’, believing that worker associations could form the foundation of a new socialist society.¹²⁶ Marx and Engels devoted a significant chunk of their 1845 *Die deutsche Ideologie* manuscripts to a critique of the True Socialist’s superficial grasp of philosophy,¹²⁷ but it was

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 318/300.

¹²² Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 481/504.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 490/515. On the utopian socialist rejection of politics see Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 1:3.

¹²⁴ Owen, Letter to *The Poor Man’s Guardian*, 14 March 1835. Cited in David Leopold, ‘Scientific Socialism: The Case of Robert Owen’, in *Scientific Statesmanship, Governance, and the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Kyriakos N. Demetriou and Antis Loizidis (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 197. However, Leopold cautions against the traditional characterisation of Owen as straightforwardly endorsing undemocratic political institutions.

¹²⁵ For a useful overview of this section of the *Manifest* see David Leopold, ‘Marx, Engels and Other Socialisms’, in *The Cambridge Companion to The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Terrell Carver and James Farr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 32–49.

¹²⁶ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion*, 210.

¹²⁷ Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, 439–530/453–539.

their apolitical strategy that was the principal subject of their critical ire in the *Manifest*.

The basis for this criticism in the *Manifest* had been laid the previous year in a long unpublished draft article by Engels on the True Socialists. That article included an attack on a recently published book by Semmig on the liberal reform efforts in Saxony, which Semmig argued were unworthy of the workers' support. Semmig noted that French workers were moving from the 'political question to the social one' because the answer to the questions 'Will the republic pay our debts? Will it redeem our pawned goods? Will it clothe and feed us?' was 'no'.¹²⁸ This was because the 'causes of our social hardships and evils lie deeper than defective state institutions' and thus 'no political institutions are capable of abolishing them'.¹²⁹ The political strategy he however drew out of this social analysis was the direct opposite of that of Marx and Engels. Semmig counselled that German workers, who had 'previously allowed themselves to be set in motion by these liberal bourgeois and to be misguided into tumults', should now 'not support them in their efforts and struggles' but instead 'let them fight it out alone', and he urged workers to 'above all do not at any time take part in *political revolutions*'.¹³⁰

Engels responded that this was clear evidence of True Socialism's 'reactionary political tendency'.¹³¹ It was reactionary because abandoning the joint struggle with the progressive bourgeoisie played right into the hands of the reactionary forces. Following that strategy would mean that the 'feudalistic, petty-bourgeois, peasant, bureaucratic model state of Saxony' would not be defeated.¹³² Engels argued that the mistake the True Socialists made was to translate directly French social criticism into German circumstances. Criticism that made sense in countries where the 'bourgeoisie [already] *rules*', becomes reactionary in countries where it is 'still far from ruling'.¹³³

This criticism was incorporated into the *Manifest*. True Socialists were there accused of 'hurling the traditional anathemas against liberalism, against representative government, against bourgeois competition, bourgeois freedom of the press, bourgeois justice, bourgeois liberty and equality', and instead 'preaching to the masses that they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by this bourgeois movement'.¹³⁴ Marx and Engels maintained that this misguided True Socialist criticism was the result of translating 'French criticism' into German

¹²⁸ Semmig, *Sächsische Zustände*, 9.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 63–64.

¹³¹ Engels, 'Die wahren Sozialisten', 265/556.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 265/557.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 487/511.

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circumstances without realising that this criticism ‘presupposed the existence of modern bourgeois society’, which was however still ‘the object of the pending struggle in Germany’.¹³⁵ Criticising the emancipatory limits of these institutions was a laudable goal in countries that had already achieved them, but to do so in countries where they were still far from being realised, was to play in the hands of those seeking to block their very emergence. Marx and Engels argued that True Socialism thereby served the ‘German absolute governments’ as a ‘welcome scarecrow’ and ‘weapon for fighting the German bourgeoisie’.¹³⁶

Marx and Engels’s attack on True Socialism thus incorporated the same criticism Heinzen and other republicans had been making of communism. Marx and Engels thereby deflected Heinzen’s general criticism of communism as a handmaiden of reactionary absolutism onto the True Socialists and in the process clarified their own distinctive form of communism. Their communism was thus, in part, forged by their critical encounters with republicanism. As Sperber rightly notes, this is a clear example of Marx and Engels ‘appropriat[ing] anti-communist themes to attack other versions of communism’.¹³⁷ They were thus, Sperber writes, at the forefront of a new emerging political movement of ‘merged communist-democrats’.¹³⁸ That position shared with other communists and socialists a critique of the emancipatory limits of a republic. But it did not take the commonly associated step of thereby rejecting the importance of political action as such. Their communism thus fused the communist fixation on the centrality of the social question to the republican belief that it could only be addressed through political means. In doing so, they defanged one of the most convincing republican criticisms of existing communism.

(ii) Arguments for the Necessity of the Bourgeois Republic

Having set out the context and background to Marx and Engels’s belief that the bourgeois republic was a necessary condition for the achievement of communism, we can now turn to explaining exactly why they believed that to be the case. Without too much simplification we can divide their reasons for this position into economic, political and ideological considerations.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 487/512.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Sperber, *Karl Marx*, 213. Sperber notes that this criticism was ‘profoundly unfair’ because the True Socialists did not end up siding with the reaction during the subsequent revolution and instead fought for a democratic Germany. That is largely true, however the actions of Gottschalk, discussed below, do provide some evidence of the (unwitting) support True Socialism could give to reactionary forces.

¹³⁸ Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 85–86.

¹³⁹ Note that ‘ideological’ is here being used in its non-Marxian sense. For the difference, see David Leopold, ‘Marxism and Ideology: From Marx to Althusser’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. Michael Freeden and Marc Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20–37.

Marx and Engels believed that the institution of a bourgeois republic would have the consequence of completing the *economic* rule of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie would use their new-found hold over the state to drive forward the development of capitalism by sweeping away the last feudal fetters on the economy. That in turn would have the unintended consequence of also driving forward the development of the working-class. As the development of the working-class is a necessary condition for the institution of communism the bourgeois republic becomes a necessary condition in that larger process. This is the argument set out by Marx in 'Die moralisierende Kritik' in response to the question why the workers should 'prefer' the '*direct bourgeois rule*' to that of the '*absolute monarchy*', which he answers by arguing that the bourgeoisie 'in the service of their trade and industry, will call forth, against their will, the conditions for the uniting of the working class, and the uniting of the workers is the first requirement for their victory'.¹⁴⁰ Marx argues that assisting the bourgeoisie in the creation of a bourgeois republic against the feudal forces of the absolute monarchy thus 'accelerates' the eventual achievement of the workers' 'own revolutionary movement'.¹⁴¹ This is the classic historical materialist reason for communists supporting a bourgeois republic: the bourgeois republic is the necessary political accompaniment to the economic development of capitalism and the economic development of capitalism eventually leads to the conditions for communism.

Aside from this material consideration, Marx and Engels also outline several political changes that take place in a bourgeois republic that ease the path to communism. The introduction of political equality means, first of all, that the focus of struggle can now shift to the social question, the importance of which is masked when political inequalities predominate. Marx says that the social question therefore comes to the forefront in 'constitutional monarchy more glaringly than in an absolute monarchy, in a republic more glaringly than in a constitutional monarchy' and nowhere 'does *social* inequality obtrude itself more harshly than in the eastern states of North America, because nowhere is it less disguised by political inequality'.¹⁴²

But Marx also believed that the political institutions of a bourgeois republic, especially the introduction of civic freedoms and universal suffrage, were in themselves critical weapons in the struggle for communism. Civic freedoms, including freedom of the press and freedom of association, mean that communists no longer have to organize in clandestine conspiratorial societies and can instead openly form parties and publish their own newspapers, which are more effective

¹⁴⁰ Marx, 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 352/332.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 342/323.

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ways to organize and propagandize. Marx positively compares countries where the bourgeoisie rules or is in the process of coming to rule (America, England and France) to those where it is still excluded (Germany), arguing that in the former the proletariat is able to reach 'the status of a recognised party' by 'utilising the freedom of the press and the freedom of association', and he picks out the 'English and French working men's newspapers' and 'Chartist meeting[s]' for particular praise.¹⁴³ Since these political rights had originally been championed by the bourgeoisie in their fight against feudalism and absolutism, there is a certain pleasing irony, Marx notes, that they are eventually used by the proletariat against them. He writes that the bourgeoisie finds 'that all the weapons which it had forged against feudalism turned their points against itself' as the 'civil freedoms and organs of progress attacked and menaced its *class rule*'.¹⁴⁴

Marx believed that the achievement of universal suffrage was perhaps the most distinctive political change in the bourgeois republic, calling it the 'foundation of the constitution'.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, to his views on civic freedoms, Marx believed that universal suffrage, having once been a bourgeois goal, ends up being a weapon that eventually undermines their power. He believed that giving the classes who had previously been excluded through property qualifications and who formed the majority of the population the right to vote opened the door to the political rule of the bourgeoisie being frustrated or even ended. At the same time, Marx claimed that he was free from the supposedly delusional optimism of republicans who believed that universal suffrage would automatically lead to a harmonization of interests across all classes. He chides the 'republicans of the old school' for thinking it was a 'miracle-working divining rod' with 'magic power'.¹⁴⁶ Yet despite Marx's claim to be free from this supposedly delusional optimism, his own view was in fact optimistic about the long-term role of universal suffrage in bringing about communism. Take this revealing passage from 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', where he argues that the central tension of the bourgeois republic is that it tries to reconcile representative democracy in the political sphere with capitalism in the economic,

The fundamental contradiction of this constitution [the bourgeois republic], however, consists in the following: the classes whose social slavery the constitution is to perpetuate, proletariat, peasantry, petty

¹⁴³ Marx, 'Der Kommunismus des "Rheinischen Beobachters"' 193-94/222-25.

¹⁴⁴ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 135/153/142. The irony of the bourgeoisie's political weapons being turned against itself interestingly echoes the much more famous economic irony highlighted in the *Manifest*, where Marx and Engels argue that the restless internal drive of capital to expand itself results in crises that will eventually destroy it, so that the 'weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself' Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 468/490.

¹⁴⁵ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 195/93/130. Here and elsewhere Marx wrongly calls the adult male suffrage instituted by the Second French Republic 'universal suffrage'.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 135/29/65.

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bourgeoisie, it puts in possession of the political power through universal suffrage. And from the class whose old social power it sanctions, the bourgeoisie, it withdraws the political guarantees of this power. It forces the political rule of the bourgeoisie into democratic conditions, which at every moment help the hostile classes to victory and jeopardise the very foundations of bourgeois society. From the ones it demands that they should not go forward from political to social emancipation; from the others that they should not go back from social to political restoration.¹⁴⁷

Notice that in this passage Marx expresses remarkable, perhaps even surprising, confidence in the power of universal suffrage. He claims that it does not just put the subordinate classes 'in possession of political power' but that it puts them 'in possession of *the* political power' (my emphasis).¹⁴⁸ He further claims that universal suffrage forces the bourgeoisie into 'democratic conditions', which 'at every moment help' the subordinate classes on the path to 'victory' and even 'jeopardise the very foundations of bourgeois society'. The first claim is made more plausible by Marx's specification that the subordinate classes include not just the proletariat, but also the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie (which were undoubtedly the vast majority of French society at the time). It does however reveal an assumption that giving the entire people the power to elect representatives transfers decisive political decision-making power to them - decisive enough that it can potentially threaten capitalism itself. The second claim suggests that universal suffrage allows leftist forces to build their strength by constantly expanding their parliamentary representation until they are eventually in a position to take power.¹⁴⁹

This positive verdict on the power and future prospects of universal suffrage is not limited to Marx's analysis of French conditions, but is also evident in his contemporaneous discussion of the Chartists. He here again makes a strong claim about how much political power universal suffrage confers on the people, saying that it is 'the equivalent for political power for the working classes' (a slight modification from the above claim about France since in England 'the proletariat forms the large majority of the population').¹⁵⁰ He says that achieving it would 'be a far more socialistic measure than anything which has been honoured with that name on the Continent'.¹⁵¹ And he again suggests that universal suffrage provides

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 148/43/79.

¹⁴⁸ If Marx had wished to refer to the latter idea he would have written 'im Besitz von politischen Macht' rather than, as he did, 'im Besitz der politischen Macht', a subtle difference missed in the *MECW* translation.

¹⁴⁹ I here want to avoid the thorny topic of whether Marx thought that the eventual taking of political power would be a peaceful process. His statement that 'Behind the ballots lie the paving stones' (used for building barricades), however suggests little faith in the process remaining entirely peaceful and within strictly constitutional means, Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 194/92/129.

¹⁵⁰ Marx, 'The Chartists', 327/344/335. Note that within this proletariat class Marx includes rural 'hired labourers' which makes the claim about the majority of the English population more plausible.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

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the ground for a continual building of parliamentary strength saying that 'Its inevitable result, here, is *the political supremacy of the working class*.¹⁵² Engels took a similar position on the English working classes, arguing that the best '*guarantee for bettering their social position*' was '*Universal Suffrage*, which would enable them to seat a *Majority of Working Men* in the House of Commons'.¹⁵³

Marx and Engels's belief in the role that universal suffrage can have in terms of expanding the political power of the left is also in evidence in their celebration of the French by-elections of 10 March 1850, which saw several important victories for the left-wing *Montagnard* faction candidates despite repressive efforts against them. Engels argued that it showed how universal suffrage meant 'the vast mass of the people every day organising themselves stronger and stronger into an invincible phalanx'.¹⁵⁴ For Marx, it was concrete evidence of universal suffrage's power to disrupt and threaten bourgeois interests. He says,

Universal suffrage, by constantly putting an end to the existing state power and creating it anew out of itself, does it not put an end to all stability, does it not at every moment question all the powers that be, does it not annihilate authority, does it not threaten to elevate anarchy itself to the position of authority? After 10 March 1850, who would still doubt it?¹⁵⁵

So dangerous had universal suffrage proved itself that the French party of order, shocked by the by-election results, decided that universal suffrage had to end. It introduced a number of technical measures on 31 May 1850 (including a requirement of paying personal tax) that effectively excluded much of the proletariat and limited the franchise to two thirds of its previous size.¹⁵⁶ Marx saw in this further confirmation of the threat universal suffrage posed to the bourgeoisie, commenting that on 'March 10 universal suffrage declared itself directly against the rule of the bourgeoisie; the bourgeoisie answered by outlawing universal suffrage'.¹⁵⁷

Marx thought that this helped explain the curious fact that though the bourgeois republic is 'the most powerful and most complete form of their *class rule*', when faced with actually implementing it, the bourgeoisie 'retreat' to 'the subordinate, incomplete and weaker form of the *monarchy*'.¹⁵⁸ Marx argues that this is because their commitment to their own democratic institutions crumbles as

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 327/344/336.

¹⁵³ Engels, 'The Ten Hours' Question', 229/230/275.

¹⁵⁴ Engels, 'Letter from France IV', 252/28.

¹⁵⁵ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 195/93/131.

¹⁵⁶ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 125–26.

¹⁵⁷ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 139/158/146.

¹⁵⁸ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 196/94/131.

soon as they are faced with their actual consequence of empowering the subordinate classes. As he says,

Bourgeois rule as the outcome and result of universal suffrage, as the express act of the sovereign will of the people—that is the meaning of the bourgeois constitution. But has the constitution any further meaning from the moment that the content of this suffrage, of this sovereign will, is no longer bourgeois rule?¹⁵⁹

The bourgeois reluctance to complete their own rule is also a factor in the third and final reason Marx and Engels give for why the bourgeois republic provides fertile ground for the class struggle that leads to communism. This is the intriguing ideological consideration that the bourgeois republic demystifies political and social relations and thereby lays them open for critique and challenge. Marx suggests at several points that absolutist and constitutionalist monarchical regimes were better at hiding the underlying social oppression of capitalism, whereas ‘the republic has bared the head of the monster by knocking off the crown which shielded and concealed it’.¹⁶⁰ Marx writes that the monarch provides a ‘crowned scapegoat’ and ‘lightning-conductor’, which directs attention away from bourgeoisie.¹⁶¹ A monarchy thus, through its protective smokescreen of feudal and aristocratic hangovers, shields the bourgeoisie from direct criticism, but in a ‘republic...they must now confront the subjugated classes and contend without mediation, without the concealment afforded by the crown’.¹⁶² Marx here again makes the point that having to confront the subordinate classes head on, helps to partly explain why even though ‘the republic, true enough, makes their political rule complete’ the bourgeoisie actually ‘yearn for the former more incomplete, more undeveloped and precisely on that account less dangerous forms of rule’.¹⁶³ According to Marx, the bourgeois republic is dangerous because it opens up political space for ideological contestation, and once that space has been opened it is very difficult to shut down again. For instance, on a passage celebrating the virtue of democratic deliberation, Marx argues that the bourgeois republic ‘lives by discussion; how shall it [now] forbid discussion?’, that the ‘debating club in parliament is necessarily supplemented by debating clubs in the salons and ale houses’, and since it ‘leaves everything to the decision of majorities; how shall the great majorities outside parliament not want to decide?’.¹⁶⁴ In this new liberating democratic atmosphere ‘Every interest, every social institution is

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 195/93/131.

¹⁶⁰ Marx, ‘Die Junirevolution’, 209/134/147. He similarly writes ‘Under Louis Philippe the privileged part of the crown concealed its rule under the crown; in the parliamentary republic the rule of the bourgeoisie showed...its naked head.’ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 176/X/183.

¹⁶¹ Marx, ‘Die Pariser “Reforme” über die französischen Zustände’, 449/494.

¹⁶² Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 123/140/129.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 135/153-54/142.

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here transformed into general ideas, debated as ideas', and once every aspect of political and social life is open to critique and must justify itself, Marx asks, 'how shall any interest, any institution, sustain itself above thought and impose itself as an article of faith?'¹⁶⁵

This reasoning is developed even more extensively in a much later 1873 article by Engels (that Marx may have collaborated on), which discusses the newly founded (and ultimately short-lived) Spanish Republic.¹⁶⁶ Engels begins with the familiar point that though the republic is the 'final, most complete form of bourgeois rule', it is introduced by the bourgeoisie only with the 'utmost reluctance' and is even 'forced upon them'.¹⁶⁷ He accounts for this discrepancy by arguing that the 'republic means breaking with the entire political tradition; because in it every political institution is faced with the demand to prove its right to existence, because therefore all the traditional influences that support the powers that be under the monarchy fall away'.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, once the 'ground of the monarchy is whipped away from under its feet' the bourgeoisie loses the protective 'conservative power' provided by the 'superstitious belief of the uneducated masses' in the 'traditional supremacy of the royal houses', whether this is based on 'God's grace' – as in Prussia, or on the power of the 'legendary peasant-emperor' in France.¹⁶⁹ Thus, on Engels's account, the republic brings political life into modern rational conditions, where the old superstitious beliefs in authority and tradition have disappeared, and institutions cannot therefore simply continue but must instead justify their own existence. The implication of these considerations (though Engels does not spell this out) is that the bourgeoisie will find it much harder to justify its own rule in these new conditions. Faced with the necessity of justifying itself, bourgeois rule is exposed to continual challenge by those it rules over. On this basis, Engels concludes that the bourgeois republic 'frees the class struggle from its last fetters' and that, therefore, the 'modern republic is nothing but the stage cleared for the last great class struggle in world history—and this is what gives it its tremendous significance'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ The *MECW* attributes authorship of 'Die Republik in Spanien' to Engels, while the *MEGA*² believes it to be by Marx and Engels. The latter editorial decision is based on the reasoning in Waldtraut Opitz, 'Wer schrieb den Aufsatz "Die Republik in Spanien"?', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 2 (1977): 233–42. In personal communication, Jürgen Herres, a current editor of the *MEGA*², informs me that he finds this argumentation unpersuasive, and he believes that the article should instead have been classified as an article by Engels where the possibility of Marx's collaboration cannot be ruled out. In any case, there is little to suggest that Marx would have disagreed with the article's contents.

¹⁶⁷ Engels, 'Die Republik in Spanien', 131/419.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 132/419.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

(iii) Tensions with the Necessity of the Bourgeois Republic

Having set out the economic, political and ideological considerations for why Marx and Engels believed that the bourgeois republic is a necessary precondition for communism, I now want to flag a few potential problems with this view. These are not decisive reasons against their position, but potential tensions arising from it, which Marx and Engels themselves sometimes recognised.

Perhaps the biggest *strategic* problem Marx and Engels's position faced was that it was in danger of engendering the hostility of both the bourgeoisie and the workers. The idea that the bourgeois republic would simply prepare the ground for the battle against the bourgeoisie, culminating in their destruction and the victory of communism, was, to say the least, not one that was likely to play well with the bourgeoisie themselves. Marx and Engels were therefore keen to avoid any overly communistic association to their republican and democratic activities. That was not always easy, especially when the bourgeoisie saw through their professions to purely political reform. Engels was confronted by this problem when he tried unsuccessfully to raise funds for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* amongst the bourgeoisie in his home town of Barmen. Writing to Marx, he noted that the 'fact is, *au fond*, that even these radical bourgeoisie here see in us their future main enemies, and have no intention of putting any weapons in our hands which we would very shortly turn against themselves'.¹⁷¹

Trying to keep the bourgeoisie largely on side in the struggle against absolutism meant continually playing down the danger of communism and limiting communist agitation. (In the same letter Engels notes that if a 'single copy' of their recently published *Forderungen des Kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland* made it into the Barmen bourgeoisie's hands, 'everything would be lost for us').¹⁷² But trying to accommodate the bourgeoisie carried the concurrent danger of losing the support of workers. In particular, there was a real danger that with Marx and Engels having, in a sense, vacated the field of communist agitation space was left open for those communist views that questioned the necessity of the bourgeois republic.

This problem emerged most clearly during their time in Cologne, where their influence amongst the workers was seriously challenged by Gottschalk. Gottschalk had founded the Cologne Workers' Association in April 1848, and it quickly expanded to several thousand members. Gottschalk was heavily influenced by True Socialism and his leadership of the Workers' Association showed it. Under his direction the Worker's Association, in Sperber's analysis, 'acted like an ultra-leftist, spurning any cooperation with the democrats, boycotting

¹⁷¹ Engels to Marx, 25 April 1848, *MEGA*® III.2: 152-53; *MEW* 27: 125-26; *MECW* 38: 172-73.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

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parliamentary elections and refusing to recognise the parliaments that resulted from them' and Gottschalk instead advocated raising the workers' social and class consciousness which, he believed, would see a peaceful transition to a new social order.¹⁷³ This was, of course, entirely anathema to Marx. It seriously threatened his strategy of backing democratic forces and when Marx eventually managed to gain greater control over the Workers' Association (while Gottschalk was in prison) he steered it in this direction. However, that meant tempering the workers' more radical rhetoric and directing the struggle into political rather than social ends. It required 'verbal moderation and political activism rather than verbal militancy and political passivity', a strategy that was much less popular and led to a serious decline in membership of the Workers' Association.¹⁷⁴ If the bourgeois republic really meant a 'state whose admitted purpose is to perpetuate the rule of capital, the slavery of labour', then it is not hard to see why it would be difficult to convince workers to fight for it.¹⁷⁵ Marx did try to justify the logic of the strategy in the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in January 1849, writing,

But we say to the workers and the petty bourgeois: it is better to suffer in modern bourgeois society, which through its industry creates the material means for the foundation of a new society that will liberate you all, than to revert to a bygone form of society, which, on the pretext of saving your classes, thrusts the entire nation back into medieval barbarism!¹⁷⁶

This in turn led Gottschalk to launch a vicious attack on Marx in the pages of the workers' newspaper, *Freiheit, Arbeit*, arguing:

Why a revolution? Why should we, men of the proletariat, spill our blood? Must we really, as you, Mr Preacher, proclaim to us, escape the hell of the Middle Ages by throwing ourselves into the purgatory of a decrepit capitalist rule, in order to from there reach the cloudy heaven of your 'communist credo'?¹⁷⁷

Thus, Marx and Engels's attempt to keep the workers focused on the goal of achieving a bourgeois republic, while simultaneously keeping the bourgeoisie on side easily fell into the trap of achieving neither. Recent biographers have been harsh in this regard. Sperber argues that 'Either prong of Marx's strategy of a double recurrence of the French Revolution – a democratic against Prussia, or a worker's revolution against the bourgeoisie – had its possibilities. Combining the two proved impossible.'¹⁷⁸ Gareth Stedman Jones similarly maintains that Marx's

¹⁷³ Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848-1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 227.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁷⁵ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 139/33/69.

¹⁷⁶ Marx, 'Montesquieu LXI', 195/266.

¹⁷⁷ Gottschalk, 'An Herrn Karl Marx', 2.

¹⁷⁸ Sperber, *Karl Marx*, 228. This judgement sits oddly with Sperber's earlier careful analysis of the limitations of Gottschalk's strategy.

‘political writings had suffered from a certain incoherence as a result of his attempt simultaneously to ride two horses – the democratic and the proletarian-socialist, the actual revolution and the next revolution but one’.¹⁷⁹ While those are not entirely unfair judgments, Marx and Engels’s position fares better than the True Socialist alternative, which looks hopeless in comparison. Gottschalk’s abdication from political action helped undermine the progressive struggle against Prussian absolutism and made no discernible progress to communism. Nor was the strategy of entirely subsuming themselves under the democratic and republican banner an attractive option, when that would have meant throwing workers under the bus during the June Days. Marx and Engels were trying to chart a course with more complicated goals than those held by the factions in either strategic camp. That they did not always succeed, was a reflection of the difficulty of following a more difficult strategy in a complex revolutionary situation.

Aside from the strategic problems Marx and Engels’s position faced in achieving the bourgeois republic, there are also structural problems once the bourgeois republic is established which limit how well it actually lays the ground for communism. These give us some grounds for scepticism about Marx and Engels’s optimism in this regard. We have the benefit of being able to analyse the long-term functioning of bourgeois republics in diverse contexts (which Marx and Engels did not have), and they have proven themselves to be a far more stable form of regime than Marx and Engels predicted. The reasons for this are heavily contested and far too many to discuss in any definitive manner here. It is also a question that is not easily separated from the continued stability of capitalism itself. Two factors that I want to discuss are Marx and Engels’s overconfidence in the power of universal suffrage and the way in which the republic is itself mystificatory.

It is a familiar refrain of anti-communists that Marx and Engels were insufficiently committed to democracy. Marx and Engels’s repeated praise of the power of universal suffrage is an important counter to this charge. However, the irony is that they were in fact overconfident in what democracy – or more accurately a particular conception of democracy – could achieve. Engels’s optimistic statement that ‘democracy has as its necessary consequence the political rule of the proletariat’ is hard to square with the actual history of socialism in democracy.¹⁸⁰ For a while the rise of Germany’s SPD in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, seemed like a perfect instantiation of the idea that the growth of the size and organisation of the working class would go in tandem with

¹⁷⁹ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 271.

¹⁸⁰ Engels, ‘Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen’, 317/299.

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a steady and inevitable improvement of the socialist share of the vote, and that this would culminate in eventually winning a majority and hence political power. However, that project spectacularly failed with the party instead descending into nationalism (with the approval of war-credits in 1914) and social democracy (with the suppression of the Spartacist uprising in November 1919).

Marx and Engels had little sense of how the structures and procedures of representative government could capture and blunt the radical force of a leftist party and they had far too much confidence in the disruptive ability of universal suffrage. Marx's statements that universal suffrage 'put[s] an end to all stability', 'at every moment question[s] all the powers that be', and 'annihilate[s] authority' is far removed from the actual electoral experience in bourgeois republics since Marx's day.¹⁸¹ No doubt some electoral results have been like this, but the overwhelming tendency has for them to be peaceful endorsements of the existing order.

Their position on universal suffrage in this period lacks any serious critical analysis of representative institutions. Marx's equation of the 'result of universal suffrage' with the 'sovereign will of the people',¹⁸² is a quite remarkable equation of popular sovereignty with representation. That is not only a rejection of Rousseau but also the position of the young Marx in the *Kritik* of 1843. While his early analysis of representative government, as we saw in chapter one, argued that representatives had to be effectively constrained if universal suffrage was not to be a mirage, there is nearly no mention of this in his analysis during this period.¹⁸³ His article by article commentary on the 1848 French Constitution notes that Article 35 specifies that representatives 'are not be bound by any fixed instruction', but, unlike his very critical remarks on the other constitutional provisions, this specification goes uncommented upon.¹⁸⁴ It would not be until Marx was confronted by a more radical understanding of democracy in the Paris Commune that he returned to these ideas.

Marx's analysis of the centrality of universal suffrage to the bourgeois republic (remember he calls it the 'foundation of the constitution') also reveals a further tension in his account. Namely, if universal suffrage puts the popular classes in 'possession of the political power', then to what extent does the bourgeois republic deserve the title bourgeois?¹⁸⁵ Firstly, that would seem to

¹⁸¹ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 195/93/131.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ The one exception that I could find is when Marx briefly notes that the Chartist demands for a secret ballot, payment of representatives and annual general elections are 'the conditions without which Universal Suffrage would be illusory' 'The Chartists', 327/344/335.

¹⁸⁴ Marx, 'The Constitution of the French Republic', 541/499/571. The original Article 35 reads 'Ils ne peuvent recevoir de mandat impératif' (They [representatives] cannot receive an imperative mandate).

¹⁸⁵ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 148/43/79.

conflict with Marx's specification that the '*bourgeois republic* signifies the unlimited despotism of one class [the bourgeoisie] over other classes'.¹⁸⁶ These ideas might be reconciled, if we clarify the above thesis to state that universal suffrage puts the popular classes in possession of *potential* political power, in that if appropriately organised it can lead to a radical party coming to power. But secondly, if universal suffrage is as dangerous to bourgeois interests as Marx and Engels suggest it is, then why should we associate it so closely with being a bourgeois constitution?

Marx suggests an answer to this challenge when he notes that the 'narrow electoral qualification' of the July Monarchy (where out of a population of more than 30 million, roughly 200,000 men could vote), was 'incompatible with the existence of a bourgeois republic', because that 'excluded even a large part of the bourgeoisie from political rule'.¹⁸⁷ That is an answer to why the bourgeoisie wanted to widen the July Monarchy's franchise so that it included most of the bourgeoisie. But it does not answer the question why they would want to widen it further than that. Surely, a regime that has a franchise wider than the July Monarchy but narrower than universal suffrage (thereby excluding a large part of the popular classes), would be more aptly suited to defending their class rule and their economic interests. That was the kind of republic that was brought about after the limitations on suffrage were introduced on 31 May 1849, reducing the voting population from 9.6 million to 6.8 million.¹⁸⁸ That form of the republic would be much better at promoting bourgeois class rule and bourgeois economic interests than one with universal suffrage.

Returning to the three dimensions of the republic outlined in the previous section, it seems that the 'bourgeois' republic is perhaps rightly called bourgeois, in the *economic* sense that it is underlined by a bourgeois economy. But the institution of universal suffrage compromises whether it should be thought of as bourgeois in the *class rule* and *constitutional* sense. Universal suffrage limits the extent to which the bourgeois class rules holds political power and its incorporation into a republic means that that its constitution is also not the most conducive form to guaranteeing its political rule and economic interests.

The point of this discussion is to suggest that universal suffrage should be seen as a victory *against* the bourgeoisie and not simply the realisation of their rule. The bourgeoisie would much prefer a republic that did not allow the great majority of citizens to vote. That would be a true *bourgeois* republic. But the working classes force the bourgeoisie into this compromise republic. That republic might not be the best constitutional form for guaranteeing the working-class's

¹⁸⁶ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 105/122/111.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 108/126/114.

¹⁸⁸ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 126.

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political rule and their economic interests (in comparison to the social republic explored in chapter three), but nor is it the kind of ‘unlimited despotism’ that the bourgeoisie would institute if they could get away with it. Marx and Engels grasped at this idea whenever they discussed how ambivalent the bourgeoisie can be in setting up institutions that would supposedly, in their words, ‘complete’ bourgeois rule. But they did not consistently draw out the conclusion that we should therefore not see these institutions as a bourgeois victory.¹⁸⁹

Finally, there is a great deal of truth to Marx and Engels’s claim that one of the reasons the bourgeois republic sets the stage for communism is that it demystifies political and social relations and lays them open to challenge. The bourgeois republic does indeed, to transplant a later Marx metaphor, act like a ‘gigantic broom’ which ‘swe[eps] away all these relics of bygone times’.¹⁹⁰ Old patriarchal and authoritarian institutions and their associated modes of thought are swept away and replaced by more rational and egalitarian ones. But a bourgeois republic comes with its own kind of mystification. That is certainly the case in its associated social and cultural sphere, with generations of later Marxists, from Gramsci to the Frankfurt School, consequently placing much greater emphasis on ideology as a stabilizing force in bourgeois society. It is also true of its political institutions, a point adeptly made by Agulhon,

This idealism was the factor that Karl Marx failed to foresee and that caused him to make his first mistake in his diagnosis of the situation. He appears to have believed that only monarchies could be ‘mystificatory’ while in contrast the Republic, which was a depersonalised system of political relations, would, on that account, be perfectly transparent in the matter of class relations. His view was that the rationalisation of political struggles in accordance with purely sociological divisions should thus make for rapid progress once the Republic was established: the class struggle of June 1848 was the normal corollary to February. However, that was not at all the case in reality and for many different reasons, one of which was, perhaps, that the Republic was not nearly as drily abstract as it appeared. Whether or not it was ‘mystificatory’, it certainly did not deal a death-blow to political idealism but, on the contrary, was well and truly an idealism itself.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ A thought inspired by E. P. Thompson’s insistence that the fight for a free press was the outcome of working-class and not bourgeois struggle, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 732.

¹⁹⁰ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 137/336/328.

¹⁹¹ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 191.

III. The Democratic Republicans

There is no straightforward modern equivalent of the democratic republicans (who can also be referred to as radical republicans).¹⁹² Their self-conscious political and social radicalism and fervent commitment to popular sovereignty and revolution, would clearly put them on the left of today's political spectrum. But their rejection of socialism and endorsement of private property would sit oddly with most of the contemporary left. They could be seen as forerunners to modern social democrats, but that would overlook their revolutionary lineage and the radicalism of their social ideas, which cannot be reduced to simple advocacy of a welfare-state capitalism. Ultimately, they are a political formation that no longer exists and are not easily captured by our contemporary political designations.

If we were to try and get a better understanding of them purely through their portrayal in Marx and Engels's writings, the verdict would look something like a set of naïve, bumbling, self-important, petty bourgeois betrayers of the working-class. As is the case with many of Marx and Engels's targets, their criticism is not always the best guide to what their opponents actually thought. This chapter therefore dives into an extensive exploration of the democratic republicans' political and social thought expressed in their pamphlets, articles and books written in the period around the 1848 Revolutions. The picture that I hope emerges is a sympathetic, but not uncritical, account of a radical alternative to Marx and Engels's communism. While I think many of Marx and Engels's criticisms of the democratic republicans hit their target, they deserve better than the dismissive label of petty bourgeois ideologues. Indeed, part of the vehemence of Marx and Engels's criticism of them, should be seen in the light of the fact that they were competing over working-class support, and that republicanism in fact exercised a powerful hold over the working class, especially in France. As Ronald Aminzade in his excellent study of party formation notes, 'the working-class remained at the center of the republican project in France throughout the mid-nineteenth century'.¹⁹³

However, over the course of the nineteenth century the democratic republican alternative did increasingly lose ground to socialism and communism. These more thorough-going anti-capitalist ideologies ended up having greater mass appeal amongst the working-class across Europe. The ideas of the democratic republicans did have a certain level of impact with the *solidarist* programme enacted by left-republicans like Léon Bourgeois in late nineteenth

¹⁹² As in Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades*, 47–52; and McPhee, 'The Crisis of Radical Republicanism in the French Revolution of 1848'.

¹⁹³ Aminzade, *Ballots and Barricades*, 35.

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and early twentieth century France.¹⁹⁴ But their more radical social reforms – like the abolition of inheritance, and the nationalisation of land – remained elusive, and they disappeared from the political stage as a discernible faction.¹⁹⁵

The democratic republicans that I will focus on in this section will primarily be the newly introduced characters of Karl Heinzen and William James Linton, as well as a reappearance of Arnold Ruge, whose *Die Gründung der Demokratie*, published in the dying months of the German revolution, is his most thorough discussion of what the republic should look like. Alongside these primary characters I also discuss, Julius Fröbel, Félicité de Lamennais, Giuseppe Mazzini and Paul Harro-Harring. In order to understand these democratic republicans, we need to be clear that the bourgeois republic that was created in France in 1848-51, and which we devoted the first section of this chapter to, was *not* their republic; that was a republic that had been ‘stripped of all populist mystique and all aspirations towards social reform’.¹⁹⁶ Their republic would have taken the importance of addressing the social question to heart. That would have involved a variety of social measures that would have seriously challenged the capitalist organisation of the economy. They were thus sometimes open to calling themselves ‘socialists’ if that was (somewhat vaguely) defined as, in Lamennais’s words, supporting a ‘principle of association’; but if it meant ‘the negation, explicit or implied, of property and of family’ then, Lamennais continued, ‘no...we are not *Socialist*’.¹⁹⁷ What they would never countenance was communism, which was always in their minds associated with the abolition of private property. This is one of the principle dividing lines between the two traditions.

The battles between Marx, Engels and the communists on the one side, and the republican democrats on the other, were particularly pronounced in the initial years of exile in London.¹⁹⁸ In this frustrating and isolating exile atmosphere, republicans and communists jockeyed internally and with each other, while they awaited what they believed would be an immanent renewal of the revolution on the continent. The republican democrats organised themselves into the European Central Democratic Committee (ECDC), which was set up in June 1850 by Mazzini, with other European nations represented on the committee by Alexandre Ledru-Rollin for France, Albert Darasz for Poland, and Ruge for

¹⁹⁴ J. E. S. Hayward, ‘The Official Social Philosophy of the French Third Republic: Léon Bourgeois and Solidarism’, *International Review of Social History* 6, no. 1 (1961): 19–48; Margaret Kohn, ‘The Critique of Possessive Individualism: Solidarism and the City’, *Political Theory* 44, no. 5 (2016): 603–628.

¹⁹⁵ Intriguingly, their social programme has several features in common with the ideas of pre-distribution and a property-owning democracy, ideas that have recently been the subject of renewed academic and political interest. I explore this link further in the conclusion of the thesis.

¹⁹⁶ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 191–92.

¹⁹⁷ Lamennais, *Question du travail*, 8–9/286.

¹⁹⁸ We are fortunate that an excellent study exists of this milieu in, Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840-1860* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Germany. They released a manifesto, that Linton translated into English for the *Red Republican* in September 1850 (and which Marx and Engels dismissed as ‘pompous nonsense’).¹⁹⁹ The ECDC had however largely dissolved by early 1853, with one of its key problems being its unwillingness to ‘clarify its social programme’, which Christine Lattek argues was an increasingly untenable position in the post-1848 world and ‘reflected an ossification of the democratic and republican internationalism’.²⁰⁰ The communists, at least the German exile communists, were organised in the Communist League, and Marx and Engels had returned to their previous organisational involvement in the League when they arrived back in London. They now argued that it had been a mistake to allow the workers to come ‘completely under the domination and leadership of the petty-bourgeois democrats’ and they should instead re-establish the ‘independence of the workers’ (which represented a measure of self-criticism of their pre-revolutionary position).²⁰¹ It is important that we bear in mind that though the democratic republicans are an obscure group today, at the time they were far more well-known than Marx and the communists.²⁰² That in part helps explain why Marx and Engels thought it necessary to devote so much critical attention to them.

One example of this was their *Die Großen Manner des Exils*, an eighty-page manuscript from 1852 that was never published in their lifetimes (as the agent who had promised to publish it turned out to be a police spy).²⁰³ This was their most sustained critical engagement with the democratic republicans in this period. Sadly, it was a waste of their enormous intellectual talents. Rather than engaging with any of the ideas of the democratic republicans, *Die Großen Manner des Exils* purports to be a satirical exposé of their character, but descends into a tiresome string of personal insults. Leading democratic republican exiles, including Gottfried Kinkel, Heinzen, Gustav Struve, Ruge and Harro-Harring, are all

¹⁹⁹ Marx and Engels, ‘Revue. Mai bis Oktober 1850’, 485/460/549.

²⁰⁰ Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, 92–94. This may have been because Mazzini, unlike other more radical republicans, was more committed to maintaining bourgeois support and thus less willing to focus on the social demands of republicanism.

²⁰¹ Marx and Engels, ‘Ansprache der Zentralbehörde’, 254/244/277. See Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, 65–58.

²⁰² Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, 83–84.

²⁰³ It is possible that Marx and Engels’s choice of title for *Die großen Männer des Exils* was inspired by Heinzen’s *Die großen Männer der Paulskirche* a pamphlet that is mentioned in bibliographies of Heinzen’s writings, and listed as being published in London in 1850 (see, for example, Karl Schmemmann, ed., *Gedenkbuch: Erinnerung an Karl Heinzen und an die Enthüllungsfeyer des Heinzen-Denkmal am 12. Juni in Boston, Massachusetts* (Milwaukee: Freidenker, 1887), 102). I have however been unable to locate a copy of this pamphlet, not even in his papers held in the Labadie Collection of the University of Michigan Library. The section of Heinzen’s 1874 memoirs dealing with the events of the Paulskirche is also titled ‘Die großen Manner der Paulskirche’, which might suggest that he was re-using the title or that it was never a separate pamphlet, see Heinzen, *Erlebtes*, 336–55. The Paulskirche was where the representatives of the Frankfurt Parliament met in 1848 and if the pamphlet did in fact exist, it was likely a critique of their actions.

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subjected to vicious personal portraits, the intellectual level of which can be gauged by the descriptions of Ruge's 'ferret-face' and Heinzen's 'huge masses of flesh'.²⁰⁴ Marx and Engels were lucky that it never saw the light of day, since it would have only further damaged their public reputation. Their earlier attack on the hugely popular Kinkel, in the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung: Politische-ökonomische Revue* in April 1850, while he was on trial for high treason in Prussia, was widely seen by fellow exiles as 'gratuitous...unfair and unwarranted'.²⁰⁵

When comparing Marx and the democratic republicans we should avoid falling into the trap of assuming that Marx is automatically more radical than these republicans. This is particularly the case with women's emancipation, a topic that Marx had notoriously little (if not nothing) to say about.²⁰⁶ While Marx blithely referred to the institution of male suffrage in the Second French Republic as 'universal suffrage', Linton argued that it had never been a real republic because the 'woman half of the population was left unenfranchised'.²⁰⁷ Linton also analysed, at some length, why the 'equality of man and woman in a society is but a logical deduction from our republican principles'.²⁰⁸ Heinzen dedicated a section of his draft programme for the republican exiles in London, to specifying that in order to 'tear [women] out of that condition of slavery and prostitution' they must be made 'independent' in 'economic relations', that their political rights should be guaranteed through 'special representation', and that the 'privileges of the male sex, especially in marriage, will be abolished'.²⁰⁹ In comparison, Marx and Engels's programmatic demands from the period do not mention women at all,²¹⁰ and in their snide comments on Heinzen's programme, they responded to his call to abolish male privilege with a lewd joke.²¹¹ That sexist reaction aside, Marx's sins in this regard are more of omission than actively expressed misogyny, but it bears keeping in mind that there were radical republican contemporaries of Marx that gave the question of women's emancipation much greater prominence than he did.

The democratic republicans also need to be differentiated from the liberal or *bourgeois* republicans. In France, these two camps of republicanism were, in this period, respectively represented by the two main republican newspapers *Le*

²⁰⁴ Marx and Engels, *Die großen Männer des Exiles*, 256/272/265, 268/283/275.

²⁰⁵ Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, 58–59. See Marx and Engels, 'Gottfried Kinkel'.

²⁰⁶ For a recent overview, see Heather Brown, *Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

²⁰⁷ Linton, 'Democracy and Republicanism', 65.

²⁰⁸ Linton, 'Woman', 311.

²⁰⁹ Heinzen, *Programm der deutschen Revolutionspartei*, II.4, II.5. Heinzen also published *Ueber die Rechte und Stellung der Weiber* (1852), which defended women's emancipation and went through multiple editions. Marx however thought it was derivative, Marx to Adolf Cluß, 8 October 1852, *MEGA*² III.6: 39; *MEW* 28: 555; *MECW* 39: 208–9.

²¹⁰ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 481–82/505; *Forderungen der Kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland*, 3–5/3–6.

²¹¹ Marx and Engels, *Die großen Männer des Exiles*, 271/287/279. See Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, 221n16.

National and *La Réforme*.²¹² The provisional government set up in February 1848, had been a blend of these different factions.²¹³ The choice to focus on the democratic republicans for this section is based on two considerations: first, the bourgeois wing of republicanism comes closer to liberalism and thus loses some of its distinctiveness from republicanism, and second, the social and political version offered by republican democrats provides a more interesting and less studied contrast to Marx's communist one.

Marx did recognize the difference between these republican camps, always distinguishing between the 'petty bourgeois or democratic republicans...[and] the bourgeois republicans'.²¹⁴ He blasted the second for being 'tricolour republicans, pure republicans, political republicans, formalistic republicans' because their republicanism extended solely to the political sphere, while their social ideas remained indistinguishable from the royalist bourgeoisie.²¹⁵ Thus, for the 'bourgeois republicans of the *National*' the 'republic was only a new ball dress for the old bourgeois society'.²¹⁶ Interestingly, Marx holds that the bourgeois republicans do not form an economically distinct part of the bourgeois class but only a 'clique of republican-minded bourgeois, writers, lawyers, officers and officials' (in comparison to the *Orléanist/Legitimist* split in the royalist bourgeoisie, which respectively represented the industrial/financial bourgeoisie and the landowning bourgeoisie).²¹⁷ He does not explain why they, unlike the rest of the bourgeoisie, supported a republic, but it is a reminder that Marx does not always see class as straightforwardly explaining political formations.²¹⁸ While Marx does distinguish the bourgeois republicans from the democratic (or his preferred term, petty bourgeois) republicans, he does however often paint them as being the dupes of the former. For instance, he argues that the bourgeois republicans used the votes of the democratic republicans to maintain the political 'form of the bourgeois republic', but then allied with the royalist bourgeoisie to ensure that bourgeois 'class rule and class exploitation...form the content of the bourgeois republic'.²¹⁹

The most serious charge Marx lays at the feet of the democratic republicans in this regard, is that they sided with the bourgeois republicans in the June Days. Marx argued that this moment revealed the hopelessly confused

²¹² Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 17; Guyver, *The Second French Republic 1848–1852*, 27–28; McPhee, 'The Crisis of Radical Republicanism in the French Revolution of 1848', 71–72.

²¹³ Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 26, 32–33. However, it would be a mistake to draw a strict line of separation between these two camps; Lamartine, for example, occupied the centre-ground between them.

²¹⁴ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 108/125–26/113–14.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 107/124/112.

²¹⁶ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 128/22/58.

²¹⁷ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 107/124/112–13. See also 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 163/59/95.

²¹⁸ Gareth Stedman Jones thinks Marx here only offers a 'tautology' rather than an explanation, *Karl Marx*, 338. Yet this is an example of Marx giving exactly the kind of non-reductive account of political formations that Stedman Jones normally approves of.

²¹⁹ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 142/36/72.

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position of the ‘official representatives of French democracy steeped in republican ideology’ when confronted by the sight of workers rising up against their legally constituted republic.²²⁰ Marx claimed that they were left on the wrong side of the struggle and history itself as they stood on the side-lines, ‘stupefied by the gunpowder smoke in which their fantastic republic dissolved’.²²¹ Not all of the radical republicans supported the suppression of the workers, and others later regretted their actions, but the June Days did confront the democratic republicans with a ‘profound ideological dilemma’ between their belief in popular sovereignty and majority rule and their traditional sympathy with the workers.²²² This was a dilemma they ‘never solved’, with democratic republicans ending up on both sides of the Paris Commune twenty years later.²²³

The following section begins with an overview of Heinzen’s and Linton’s lives and political thought. I then discuss the differences between Marx and Heinzen when it comes to prioritising the political or the social. This is followed by a discussion on how the democratic republicans focused on the people, whereas Marx and Engels emphasized the role of the proletariat. I then set out at some length what social measures the democratic republicans advocated, and compare these with the very similar set of communist ones. I then show that the dividing line in this regard was what to do about private property, with Marx and Engels advocating its abolition and the democratic republicans its universalisation. Finally, I discuss how these contrasting social visions in the light of contrasting understandings of historical possibilities.

(i) The Republicanism of Karl Heinzen and William James Linton

Karl Heinzen was born Charles Pierre Heinzen in 1809 in Grevenbroich, a town outside Düsseldorf, when the Rhineland was still under the temporary control of France, and it was only when it became part of Prussia that his name was Germanised.²²⁴ A rebellious child, Heinzen joined the University of Bonn to study medicine in 1827, only to be expelled two years later for his rowdy student lifestyle and his failure to work.²²⁵ The financial necessity of taking care of a young

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 138/31/68.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² McPhee, ‘The Crisis of Radical Republicanism in the French Revolution of 1848’, 72, 82. See also Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 57–60.

²²³ McPhee, ‘The Crisis of Radical Republicanism in the French Revolution of 1848’, 88.

²²⁴ This biographical overview is taken from Paul Otto Schinnerer, ‘Karl Heinzen, Reformer, Poet and Literary Critic’, *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter* 15 (1915): 84–144; Hans Huber, *Karl Heinzen (1809–1880): Seine politische Entwicklung und publizistische Wirksamkeit* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1932); and Carl Wittke, *Against the Current: The Life of Karl Heinzen (1809–80)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945). A useful bibliography of Heinzen’s writings can be found in Schmemmann, *Gedenkbuch: Erinnerung an Karl Heinzen und an die Enthüllungsfest des Heinzen-Denkmal am 12. Juni in Boston, Massachusetts*, 101–5.

²²⁵ Heinzen’s claim that he was actually expelled in response to a speech about academic freedom is, his biographer notes, ‘unconvincing’, Wittke, *Against the Current*, 9–10.

family meant that he spent an unhappy seven and half year career as a Prussian tax official. Eventually, overcome with bureaucratic frustration, he resigned in anger and published *Die preussische Bureaokratie* (1844). The book was a provocative broadside against the Prussian administration and the absolutist regime and it was immediately confiscated on publication and resulted in a charge of lèse majesté for Heinzen, for which he went into exile, first in Brussels and then Zurich. In Zurich, he encountered Ruge who was to play an important role in shaping his thought, and the two collaborated on a republican quarterly, *Die Opposition*.

During the revolution, he ran unsuccessfully for a Hamburg seat in the Frankfurt National Assembly, joined Friedrich Hecker's uprising in Baden, and propagandised tirelessly for a revolutionary dictatorship and a German republic. For instance, he collaborated with the revolutionary leader Gustav Struve on two programmatic and strategic 1848 pamphlets *Die Schilderhebung der Deutschen Republikaner im April 1848* und *Plan zur Revolutionierung und Republikanisierung Deutschlands*, which argued that parliamentary methods had failed and instead called on the German people to rise up and 'through the means of violence create a German republic'.²²⁶ Also of note in this period are the articles on 'Der Mord', which he wrote in early 1849 and were republished as *Mord und Freiheit* the following year, where he defended the right of tyrannicide through new explosive technologies (which has recently resulted in some scholarly interest in him as an early theorist of terrorism).²²⁷

After the failure of the revolutions, he found refuge in London. He joined the revolutionary exile circles there, and spent time with Mazzini, Louis Blanc, Ruge and others. But he found the city miserable and he did not help his public reputation by publishing 'Die Lehren der Revolution', which made bloody predictions about how many millions of heads would be necessary for the next revolution to succeed. The bloodthirsty piece alienated him from other radicals and even resulted in the *Times* calling for his expulsion.²²⁸ Consequently, he moved to America in late 1850. He spent the rest of his remaining thirty years there, becoming one of the many radical German-American 'forty-eighters'. He engaged in number of journalistic ventures – most importantly *Der Pionier*, which ran for a quarter century – and he threw himself into American radical political struggles, from abolitionism to women's emancipation. He died on 1880 in Boston and for several years afterwards memorial events were held on his birthday

²²⁶ Heinzen and Struve, *Plan zur Revolutionierung und Republikanisierung Deutschlands*, 1.

²²⁷ See for example Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, 'From the Dagger to the Bomb: Karl Heinzen and the Evolution of Political Terror', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 1 (2004): 97–115; and Daniel Bessner and Michael Stauch, 'Karl Heinzen and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Terror', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 2 (2010): 143–176.

²²⁸ Wittke, *Against the Current*, 79.

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by supporters in several cities, culminating in a monument erected in 1882 which still stands in Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston.

Though he is a nearly forgotten figure today, Heinzen was a tenacious and committed revolutionary. Veit Valentin, in his classic study of the 1848 Revolutions, called Heinzen ‘the most determined and most active German republican of the forties’,²²⁹ and his biographer, Carl Wittke, summarised his life as ‘an uncompromising, unbending, militant, radical republican, a crusader against censorship, bureaucracy, militarism, and reaction in his native Germany, and a champion of equal rights for women and many other political, economic and social reforms in the United States’.²³⁰ But alongside his ardent and committed republicanism, his ‘rabid anti-communism was notorious’.²³¹ Nowhere is this more demonstrated than by his attitude to Marx.

The Heinzen–Marx connection has received surprisingly little attention in Marx scholarship. Surprising, because Heinzen and Marx’s life intersected several times, they penned angry polemics against each other, and continued to mention each other in their work and correspondence late into their lives (each of them seems to have taken great enjoyment – bordering on obsession – with insulting each other).²³² Though Heinzen was nearly ten years older than Marx, they both share a certain biographical similarity in that they were both Rhinelanders and attended the University of Bonn for a brief stint marked by their *unstudiousness*. Heinzen first got to know Marx through his editorship of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, to which Heinzen contributed several articles, and they knew each other well enough to go drinking with one another in Cologne.²³³ Heinzen later offered Marx a piece for inclusion in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* in 1844, which came to nothing when the journal failed after the first issue.²³⁴ They overlapped again in Brussels in 1845, but by this point they were on opposing sides of the republican-communist fence. Despite their diverging politics they met and debated with each other without falling out, and Heinzen noted that their parting

²²⁹ Veit Valentin, *Geschichte der deutschen Revolution von 1849–49*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930), 286. Cited in Wittke, *Against the Current*, 77.

²³⁰ Wittke, *Against the Current*, v.

²³¹ Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees*, 84.

²³² Wittke notes that ‘there was also something peculiarly personal about Heinzen’s quarrel with communism. He had come to hate the founder of communism [Marx] as he hated few other men.’ Wittke, *Against the Current*, 236. As late as 1870s he still devoted extensive space to attacking him in his *Ueber Kommunismus und Sozialismus*, vi–xii/2–5; and *Erlebtes*, 414–44. For his part, Marx later referred to Heinzen as a ‘democratic numbskull’, Marx to Friedrich Adolphe Sorge, 23 May 1872, *MEW* 33: 469; *MECW* 44: 378.

²³³ In his memoirs, Heinzen narrates a colourful anecdote from this time. Marx and him went to the pub for ‘several bottles of wine’, after which Heinzen had to help Marx, ‘who could not stand much [alcohol]’ and was in a ‘dishevelled state’, back home. Once there Marx suddenly ‘locked the door, hid the key, and comically mocked me that I was now his prisoner’ and ‘began to attack me with threats and cuffs’. Only Heinzen’s threat to break down the door, eventually secured his release. Heinzen, *Erlebtes*, 426–27.

²³⁴ Heinzen to Marx, 16 February 1844, *MEGA*® III.1: 424–25.

was ‘not hostile’.²³⁵ Their relationship however became irreconcilable after a series of exchanges in late 1847 in the *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung*.²³⁶

The row began when Heinzen objected to an editorial note in the paper’s 12 September issue, which reported that Heinzen had declared ‘war on the communists’. However, his reply, published by the editors under the title ‘Karl Heinzen und die Kommunisten’, did exactly that, managing in the space of a single paragraph to launch eight separate accusations against the communists, including that they had played into the hands of reactionary forces by ‘paralys[ing] the political struggle’.²³⁷ Engels saw an opportunity here to both rubbish Heinzen and show why his and Marx’s form of communism was not susceptible to the typical republican criticisms of communism. Engels’s scathing two-part ‘Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen’ from 3 and 7 October declared that Heinzen was ‘one of the most ignorant men of this century’ and should henceforth ‘maintain absolute silence and wait quietly’ for the revolution.²³⁸ Unsurprisingly incensed, Heinzen wrote an equally aggressive response ‘Ein “Repräsentant” der Kommunisten’ which took up most of the 21 October issue, where he claimed that Engels had ‘never had an original thought’ and his ideas consisted only of what he had ‘snapped up and pocketed from the French or English table’.²³⁹ The editors of the *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung* tried in vain to warn both sides that they should not split the radical movement and that the newspaper could not sustain such long polemics.

Engels could not bring himself to respond to Heinzen’s reply – ‘save perhaps with a box on the ear’ – and instead left the task to Marx, writing to him that it was good that Marx had promised to write only a ‘very *brief*’ reply.²⁴⁰ Marx (characteristically) did not stick to this plan, and the *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung* editors had to spread out his answer over five issues from 28 October to 25 November. The resulting article, ‘Die moralisierende Kritik und die Kritische Moral. Beitrag zur deutschen Kulturgeschichte. Gegen Karl Heinzen’ (hereafter ‘Die Moralisierende Kritik’), took the unusual step of mockingly framing Heinzen’s polemics as a nineteenth-century version of German Reformation era ‘*grobianische*’ literature (‘booby’ or ‘boor’ literature). Marx characterised this as

²³⁵ Heinzen again provides an amusing anecdote from Brussels (which like the previous one should be taken with the usual qualifications about stories written by adversaries long after the event in question). Heinzen relates how Marx could not bear to have others be better than him, and so on hearing of Heinzen’s physical strength, he claimed he could ‘throw him to the ground’ and subsequently tried to wrestle him in a coffee house. Heinzen says that the attack ended with an elbow through a glass-door and Marx blaming Heinzen’s ‘elephant-bones’, Heinzen, *Erlebtes*, 433–34.

²³⁶ The conflict is dealt with in Huber, *Karl Heinzen*, 54–65.

²³⁷ Heinzen, ‘Karl Heinzen und die Kommunisten’, 4.

²³⁸ Engels, ‘Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen’, 314/296, 316/298.

²³⁹ Heinzen, ‘Ein “Repräsentant” der Kommunisten’, 3.

²⁴⁰ Engels to Marx, 25/26 October 1847, *MEGA*®III.2: 115; *MEW* 27: 98; *MECW* 38: 139.

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‘Flat, bombastic, bragging, thrasonical, putting on a great show of rude vigour in attack, yet hysterically sensitive to the same quality in others’.²⁴¹ The editors, finally exasperated by the participants, denied Heinzen the space for a reply, so that he resorted to publishing (after some delay) a hundred-page pamphlet *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus: Denn Herrn Karl Marx gewidmet* in the summer of 1848, a work which has a claim to being the earliest book-length response to Marx’s views.²⁴²

The entire exchange is characterised by personal mud-slinging, childish insults, and slanderous accusations and counter-accusations. But behind these often tiresome *ad hominem* attacks, the articles also contain serious and important engagements with each other’s ideas. Heinzen developed his critique of the communist neglect of politics, Engels clarified the strategic imperatives of communists working with republicans and Marx explored the economic (as opposed to political) foundations of revolution. ‘Die moralisierende Kritik’ also represents Marx’s most sustained theoretical engagement with democratic republicanism. The exchange, written less than six months before the outbreak of the 1848 Revolutions, should be seen as part of a wider process of differentiation between republicans and communists in the pre-revolutionary years. It also foreshadowed their uneasy alliances and occasional hostility that haunted the subsequent effectiveness of the party of movement. Finally, the articles are also noteworthy because they were written in the immediate build-up to Marx and Engels’s composition of the *Manifest* (a task they were assigned by the Communist League at its congress in late November/early December 1847 and which appeared in February 1848). Though the democratic republicans are barely explicitly mentioned in the text, the arguments Marx and Engels honed against Heinzen do appear, as I show later in the chapter.²⁴³

In comparison to Heinzen, William James Linton played only a very peripheral role in Marx’s life. His inclusion in this study is instead justified by his nearly unparalleled attempt to set out a comprehensive republican political theory that is contemporaneous to Marx. As we saw in the introduction, the contrast between Marx’s communism and Linton’s republicanism is notably shown in the

²⁴¹ Marx, ‘Die moralisierende Kritik’, 331/312. Marx was so pleased with this comparison that he continued to refer to Heinzen as ‘Heineke’ – a character from a parody of grobian literature – in his personal correspondence into the 1870s, see Marx to Engels, 18 May 1870, *MEW* 32: 516; *MECW* 43: 522. For a literary discussion of Marx’s grobian comparison see Praver, *Karl Marx and World Literature*, 126–30.

²⁴² Marx and Engels, busy with their participation in the 1848 revolution, declined to respond to Heinzen’s final ‘old trashy piece (*Schund*)’, Marx to Engels, 29 November 1848, *MEGA*® III.2: 171; *MEW* 27: 131; *MECW* 38: 181.

²⁴³ The opening lines of the *Manifest* mention ‘French Radicals’ and the closing section urges communists to work together with the ‘social-democratic party’ in France and the ‘Radicals’ in Switzerland, Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 461/481 and 492/518.

side-by-side publication of his 'Republican Principles' next to the *Manifest* in the pages of the *Red Republican* in September to November 1850.

Linton was born in Mile End, London in 1812 to lower-middle class parents.²⁴⁴ He showed an early artistic talent and later began a successful career as an engraver. He became increasingly interested in politics, and set up his first weekly paper, the *National*, in 1839, which ran for just a few short months, but gave him a lifelong taste for journalism. Around this time he read Lamennais and was entranced by his mix of republicanism and spiritualism, and translated his *De l'esclavage moderne* (1839) as *Modern Slavery* (1840).²⁴⁵ He also met Mazzini in 1841 and the Italian patriot made a similarly powerful impression on Linton, and he became a devoted follower.²⁴⁶ The association with Mazzini gave Linton his first taste of national politics when he played a significant role in assisting Mazzini in the letter-opening scandal of 1844 (Linton helped uncover the fact that Mazzini's mail was being intercepted on the order of the Home Secretary and the contents passed on to Prince Metternich). The scandal 'promoted Linton into a leading English contact-man for the exiles,' and he became increasingly involved in radical exile organisations.²⁴⁷ This meant that when the revolution broke out in France, he was part of the delegation of the People's International League (one of Mazzini's many organisations) that was sent to Paris to congratulate the new Provisional Government.

Linton became tired of London and having fallen in love with the Lake District moved his family there in April 1849. This isolated him from London's refugee politics, but he continued to contribute articles to radical papers and began editing his most important contribution to republican thought: the *English Republic*. This appeared variously weekly and monthly from January 1851 to April 1855, which together with a few disciples he personally printed for its final two years.

The final chapter in his life came when he decided to move to America in 1866. His American life was marked by increasing success in the literary and cultural scene and widespread recognition for his engraving work. Though his artistic pursuits became the focus of his later life, he never abandoned his political beliefs. He attended meetings of the Anti-Slavery Society and the Reform League

²⁴⁴ Scholars of Linton are fortunate in that there is an excellent biography by F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-97* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), from which the following overview is drawn.

²⁴⁵ For Linton's role in disseminating Lamennais's ideas in England see W. G. Roe, *Lamennais and England: The Reception of Lamennais's Religious Ideas in England in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 166-71.

²⁴⁶ For an extended discussion of their relationship see Salvo Mastellone, *Mazzini e Linton: Una Democrazia Europea (1845-1855)* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2007).

²⁴⁷ Smith, *Radical Artisan*, 59.

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and was one of the few public supporters of the Paris Commune in America.²⁴⁸ He died in 1897 at the age of 85, leaving his papers to the Yale University library.

In his biography, F. B. Smith notes that Linton ‘stands at the edge of the remembered nineteenth-century world’ and ‘deserves better’.²⁴⁹ While Linton’s poetry, engraving and literary output has received some attention in recent years,²⁵⁰ his political contribution to republicanism has been relatively overlooked.²⁵¹ That neglect deserves to be rectified because Linton is one of the clearest examples of self-consciously attempting to apply the ideas and language of a pre-modern republican tradition to the political and social condition of the nineteenth century. Nowhere is this in greater evidence than in his *English Republic*, a magnificent project that deserves a more prominent place in the history of republicanism.

Linton’s reverence for his English republican inheritance was proudly proclaimed in the *English Republic’s* opening editorial. He addressed the ‘men in England...who respect the worth of Cromwell’, ‘men who honour the memory of Milton’, the ‘few who hold sacred the grave of Pym and Eliot and Hampden’, and who held that neither ‘Sydney nor Russell’ gave their lives to ‘procure the advent of a Dutch king or to establish the miserable finality of Whiggism’.²⁵² These men had fought and died trying to create, maintain, and then re-establish the Commonwealth – ‘the grandest period of English history’.²⁵³ Linton argued that they were models for ‘we Republicans of the nineteenth century’, even if modern republicans must now ‘advance beyond them’.²⁵⁴

Alongside Linton’s theoretical articles, the journal printed news from the continent, political poems and biographical sketches of republican heroes and martyrs as geographically and historically varied as Robert Blum, Henry Ireton, Tadeusz Kościuszko, Toussaint L’Ouverture, Jean-Paul Marat, John Milton, Algernon Sidney, and Mary Wollstonecraft.²⁵⁵ It also carried translations of contemporary articles by Alexander Herzen, Victor Hugo, Mazzini, Ledru-Rollin, Lamennais and Ruge, making it the ‘fullest and most venturesome

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 174–76.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁵⁰ Alastair Philip Lovett, *Creative Aspiration and Public Discourse: The Prose, Verse and Graphic Images of William James Linton (1812–1897)* (PhD Thesis: Durham University, 2003); and Stephanie Weiner, *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789–1874* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), chap. 3.

²⁵¹ See however the discussion of Linton in Gregory Claeys, ‘Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848–1854’, *The Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 3 (1989): 238–44; and White, ‘The Republican Critique of Capitalism’, 566–67.

²⁵² Linton, ‘The English Republic’, 3–4.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ See *English Republic* I: 317–19, 339–45; III: 4–18, 242–47, 361–66, 418–24; IV: 48–52. The biography of Haitian hero Toussaint L’Ouverture appeared in Linton’s earlier publication, the *National*, in which Linton argued that L’ouvertue must be included on the ‘scroll of the Apostles of Patriotism’, for he had ensured that ‘a Black Nation took its place among its white brethren.’ Linton, ‘Life of Toussaint L’Ouverture’, 158–59.

transposition of European republicanism into English'.²⁵⁶ The cover of the *English Republic* was adorned with a proposal for an English tricolour (Figure 7), the symbolism of which Linton explained in the poem 'Our Tricolour':

LET our Tricolour be wove, our true English Flag unfurl'd!-
Heirs of them who foremost strove when our Cromwell led the world,
Lift again in Freedom's van England's Flag republican!

Choose for *hope* the sky serene, *freedom* Albion's cliffs so white,
And the eternal ocean's green choose we for our native *right*:
Blue and *white* and *green* shall span England's Flag republican.²⁵⁷

Linton set out the central elements of his political thought in the *English Republic*, in three programmatic articles: 'Republican Principles' (republished from the *Red Republican*), 'Republican Organisation', and 'Republican Measures', which respectively set out his political philosophy, the method of political organisation and the social and political measures that would bring about those principles. They covered everything from the administration of justice, to tax reform and the organisation of local government. Importantly, for our purposes, it also included an extensive attempt to work out a solution to the 'organisation of labour' on land and industry, a programme discussed in detail below.

Across these works, and a host of further articles in the *English Republic*, Linton attempted to set out a comprehensive republican vision. He was not one of the most original republican thinkers, even amongst his contemporaries, and he often had a frustrating romantic tendency. But his passion and commitment to the republican ideals of liberty, equality and humanity (as he preferred to call fraternity) was sincere, and his attempt to apply them to all areas of social and political life make him a worthy and interesting subject for this study.

²⁵⁶ Smith, *Radical Artisan*, 105. Smith also makes the intriguing claim that Alexander Herzen 'tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx to write on Germany' for the *English Republic*, see Smith, *Radical Artisan*, 106. However, the letter he cites (Alexander Herzen to W. J. Linton, 6 December 1853, *Feltrinelli*, b.2, fasc. 63/2) in support of this claim contains no mention of Marx or Ruge. The confusion perhaps springs from an earlier letter (Alexander Herzen to W. J. Linton, 7 September 1853, *Feltrinelli*, b.2, fasc. 63/11) where Herzen does mention Ruge and Marx, but only in relation to a public spat they were involved in at the time regarding accusations that Bakunin was a Tsarist spy. Given the political orientation of the *English Republic*, it seems very unlikely that Marx would have had any interest in taking up such an offer. The letters are republished in Alexander Herzen, *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), 112, 133–35.

²⁵⁷ Linton, 'Our Tricolour', 35.

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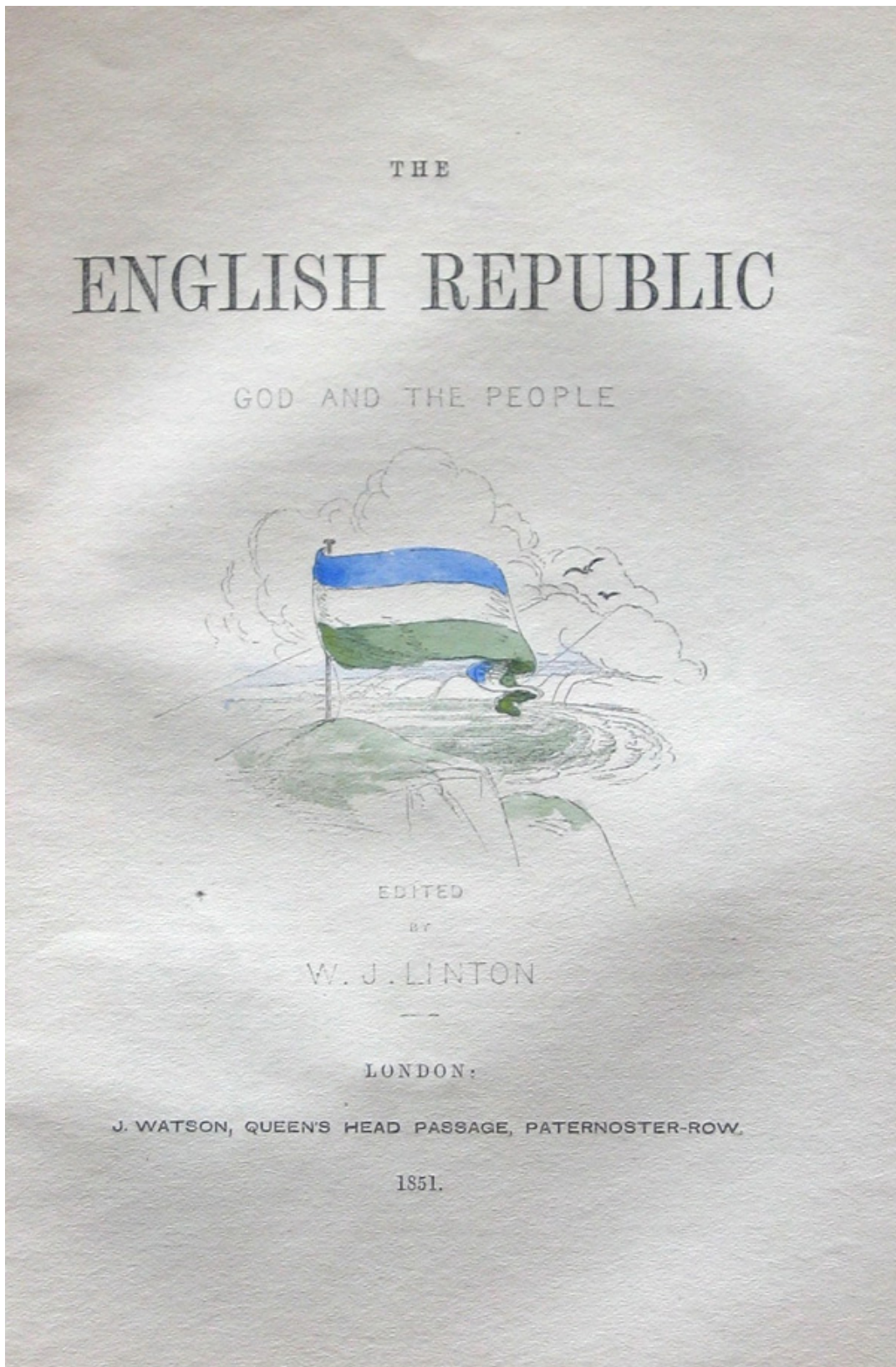


Figure 7. Frontispiece of Linton's The English Republic with the proposed tricolour
© Melton Prior Institute

(ii) The Political vs. the Social

Marx's materialist conception of history (often shortened to 'historical materialism' – though never by Marx himself) places great, sometimes even determinative, weight on productive forces and class relations in explaining the workings of society and historical events. Though there is considerable disagreement in the literature on how to characterise Marx's historical materialism, he broadly held that the way in which humans produce had a central or primary role in explaining the shape and functioning of society's non-economic institutions, such as its legal, political and religious architecture. This understanding of society and history is frequently criticised for giving insufficient weight and independent space to politics. This criticism of Marx's historical materialism has a long history: ranging from Bernstein's revisionist criticisms of Marxism at the turn of the twentieth century,²⁵⁸ to the debates around 'post-Marxism' in the 1980s,²⁵⁹ to some of the most recent biographical scholarship on Marx, where the 'most prominent feature' of his conception of history is said to be 'his refusal to accord independent space to the people's political concerns'.²⁶⁰ One point I hope to bring to light in this section is that reading the democratic republicans, and especially Heinzen, shows us that this criticism of Marx's historical materialism stretches back to the very beginnings of its formulation.

The charge of vulgar materialism was a frequent one in republican criticisms of communism in the 1840s. In Mazzini's influential and controversial 'Thoughts Upon Democracy in Europe' (1847) he hammered socialists and communists for reducing everything to Benthamite utility, where 'Man is there, as in the cold, dry, imperfect theory of the economists, nothing more than a producing machine'.²⁶¹ When outraged readers disagreed, Mazzini doubled-down calling them 'worshippers of *utility*, you have no other moral than that of interests, your religion is that of matter'.²⁶² Similar sentiments were later expressed by Paul Harro-Harring in his anti-communist pamphlet *Historisches Fragment über die Entstehung der Arbeiter-Vereine und ihren Verfall in Communistische Speculationen* (1852), a text that Marx and Engels lampooned in *Die großen Männer des Exils* for its grandiloquence.²⁶³ Harro-Harring argued that the communist 'theory is: slavery

²⁵⁸ Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12–22.

²⁵⁹ For post-Marxism see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985). For responses see Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism* (London: Verso, 1986); and Norman Geras, 'Post-Marxism?', *New Left Review*, no. 163 (1987): 40–82.

²⁶⁰ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 341–42.

²⁶¹ Mazzini, 'Thoughts Upon Democracy in Europe', III: 221.

²⁶² Mazzini, 'A Last Word Upon Fourierism and Communism', 347. This is quoted in the helpful discussion of the controversy in Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848–1854', 231–33.

²⁶³ Marx and Engels, *Die großen Männer des Exiles*, 275–80/292–98/284–90.

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under the yoke of matter; humanity a machine, which is only moved by material interest'.²⁶⁴

This criticism of communism was thus well-established in republican circles at the time, and unsurprisingly Heinzen repeated it in his general anti-communist attacks and honed it further in his critical exchange with Marx and Engels, arguing 'that humanity is not always determined by "class" or the size of their wallet'.²⁶⁵ He instead developed an extended critique of the idea that material interests were the driving forces in society, and argued that politics has much greater weight than Marx and Engels's historical materialism allows. This critique can be broadly broken down into three claims: that political oppression is worse than social oppression, that the political sphere controls and has power over the social sphere, and that social concerns and development are insufficient to explain political revolution.

Heinzen claimed that the communist emphasis on the social oppression of the worker gave the impression that 'the fight against Mammon was a higher task, than the fight against despotism'.²⁶⁶ This was unacceptable for Heinzen because he believed that the latter was much worse than the former. He claimed that amongst the 'men of the money-bags' there were at least some who recognised the rights of those without money, but there were no 'men of power', who recognized the rights of those without power.²⁶⁷ The man of money was prepared to interact with others without forcing them to 'bow beneath his money', whereas the man of power was 'only content' with forcing others to 'subordinate' themselves to their power. Both kinds of men were 'thirsty for power (*herrschaftsüchtig*)', but men of power also combine this with 'jealousy', which makes them 'even thirstier for revenge'.²⁶⁸ Heinzen further argued that he 'could not help being less outraged' by the 'bourgeois' or 'manufacturer' than the 'king' or 'despot', because the former had 'at least acquired his riches' justly, while the latter was a much 'greater money wolf (*Geldwolf*)' because he 'daily robbed' the people through the 'law'.²⁶⁹ Moreover, the former could not be the 'greater blackmailer' since he 'at least does not use the worker for free', while the latter forces the people to 'pay for their blackmailer'.²⁷⁰

According to Heinzen, communists had also placed so much emphasis on the social question that they had forgotten that power in fact lay with the political

²⁶⁴ Harro-Harring, *Historisches Fragment*, 12.

²⁶⁵ Heinzen, 'Ein "Repräsentant" der Kommunisten', 3.

²⁶⁶ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 58.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 87–88. Here as elsewhere Heinzen uses 'power (*Gewalt*)' by itself, to refer specifically to the political power of the forces of despotism.

²⁶⁸ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 88.

²⁶⁹ Heinzen, 'Ein "Repräsentant" der Kommunisten', 3.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

sphere. He accused Engels of having ‘like all communists, become incapable of recognizing the connection between politics and social conditions’ because he was ‘only engaged with enemies that possess money, rather than those that apart from money also possess power’.²⁷¹ He argued that this was a problem because power actually lay with the forces of despotism rather than with the capitalists. It was the princes who had the ‘naked power’ to ‘hold back all material development, economically ruin millions of people, rob millions of thalers for their extravagances, and [to appropriate] the enormous state property...as [their] private property’.²⁷² Heinzen even claimed, with perhaps some exaggeration, that if King Louis-Philipp ‘suddenly became revolutionary and republican’ he could ‘destroy the “ruling bourgeoisie” in fourteen days’.²⁷³ He complained that when communists did recognise the importance of political power it was only when it related to social concerns or when the bourgeoisie had obtained some political power as well. Thus, he accused Marx and Engels of ‘only recognising politics, where it reaches into the factory, or when it crawls out of the factory’, and that the only kind of political power that interested them was that ‘power which the “bourgeois” exercises though the mediation of the chamber of deputies’.²⁷⁴ According to Heinzen, Marx, Engels and communists in general, had thus failed to see that power emanated from the political sphere and controlled the social sphere. They were ‘too blind to see that power rules property’ and not the other way around.²⁷⁵ Once this societal truth had been recognised, Heinzen believed it showed why ‘there was no important *social* question, than that of monarchy or republic’.²⁷⁶

Marx and Engels hit back against Heinzen’s account of the relative importance of the political sphere in comparison to the social. Engels argued that the German princes were in fact ‘impotent and feeble-minded puppets’ and Heinzen was wrong to imbue them with a ‘fantastic, supernatural, demonic omnipotence’.²⁷⁷ Not just wrong, but ‘exceedingly dangerous’, because by trying to convince the people that their exploitation was the fault of the princes rather than the landowners and the capitalist, he was in effect ‘working in the interests’ of those two classes.²⁷⁸ Marx in turn decided to use his article in the *Deutsch-*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Heinzen, *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus*, 20–21.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁷⁵ Heinzen, ‘Ein “Repräsentant” der Kommunisten’, 3.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Engels, ‘Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen’, 311-12/294-95.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 311-12/294-95.

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Brusseler-Zeitung to give Heinzen, in the words of Hans Huber, a ‘small lesson in historical materialism’.²⁷⁹

Marx first reminded Heinzen that social power was also ‘a kind of power’, namely the ‘power over the labour of others’.²⁸⁰ He then freely admitted that in Germany the bourgeoisie was indeed currently ‘harassed’ by the state through arbitrary taxes, privileges and bureaucratic intrusion. But this was not because of some ‘eternal truth’ that the state had control over the bourgeoisie but because of the ‘transient’ fact that the bourgeoisie had ‘not yet politically constituted itself as a class’, and so the ‘state power was not yet their own power’.²⁸¹ The material forces that were driving the emergence of the bourgeoisie in Germany would eventually and necessarily have the concurrent consequence of handing them political power. Crucially, Marx argues, it is because of developments in the social sphere of production that there is a change in political power and not the other way around. As he put it, the bourgeois mode of production ‘by no means arises from the political rule of the bourgeois class, but vice versa, the political rule of the bourgeois class from these modern relations of production’.²⁸²

Marx took this opportunity to explain to Heinzen and the readers of the *Deutsch-Brusseler-Zeitung* what this understanding of the relationship between politics and the social meant for revolution, setting out some of the ideas with which he is now so intimately associated with. Marx argued that since gaining political power was the consequence of developments in social production then attempts to gain that political power when the ‘material conditions have not yet been created’, were destined to failure.²⁸³ Thus if the bourgeoisie attempted to overthrow ‘absolute monarchy’ before the economic preconditions for bourgeois rule had ‘become ripe’, then their rule would be ‘merely temporary’.²⁸⁴ Similarly, if the proletariat tried to overthrow bourgeois rule before the conditions for its rule were in place their ‘victory will only be temporary’.²⁸⁵ Marx insisted, that the central point of this was that humanity ‘first’ had to ‘produce the *material conditions* of a new society’ before it could liberate itself, and ‘no exertion (*Kraftanstrengung*) of mind or will can free them from this fate’.²⁸⁶

The emancipation of the proletariat thus had to wait until the bourgeoisie had become sufficiently economically developed and conquered political power through a republic. Heinzen was therefore ‘accidentally’ correct when he claimed

²⁷⁹ Huber, *Karl Heinzen*, 60.

²⁸⁰ Marx, ‘Die moralisierende Kritik’, 337/318.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 337–38/318.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 338/319.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 338–39/319.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 339/320.

that the social question meant settling the question of monarchy or republic, but only because the social question ‘increase[s] in importance in proportion as we leave behind us the realm of absolute monarchy’.²⁸⁷ In a rare acknowledgement by Marx of communism’s republican inheritance, he credited the most radical elements of republicanism in previous bourgeois revolutions for also coming to this conclusion,

The first manifestation of a truly active communist party is contained within the bourgeois revolution, at the moment when the constitutional monarchy is eliminated. The most consistent *republicans*, in England the *Levellers*, in France *Babeuf*, *Buonarroti*, etc, were the first to proclaim these ‘social questions’...[and] these republicans derived from the ‘movement’ of history the realisation that the disposal of the social question of *rule by princes* and *republic* did not mean that even a single ‘social question’ has been solved in the interests of the proletariat.²⁸⁸

Heinzen was, unsurprisingly, not enamoured of this account of revolution. In *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus* he quoted repeatedly from Marx’s ‘Die moralisierende Kritik’ to argue against its materialism and determinism. He accurately summarised Marx’s view as ‘no revolution is necessary or possible, where there is no bourgeoisie; the bourgeoisie must first rule and through its rule produce a factory proletariat, which [then] revolutionises, to rule in turn’.²⁸⁹ Heinzen thought that was a false and objectionable view of revolution. It was false because revolution was not simply the outcome of whether or not a ‘steam engine or some other factory instrument had been invented’.²⁹⁰ He argued that Marx’s dismissal of the ‘exertion (*Kraftanstrengung*) of mind or will’ in producing a revolution, failed to see the importance of ‘exertion’ in the French Revolution and revealed, on Marx’s part, a conception of the people who had ‘neither mind or will’.²⁹¹ It was objectionable because the consequence of Marx’s view was that the proletariat had ‘neither reason nor right to revolution’ until the material conditions were in place, and until then they ‘must patiently go hungry and starve, until an England has been made out of Germany’.²⁹² Heinzen was prepared to admit the ‘importance of industrial conditions’ and the role of ‘material interests at the outbreak of revolution’ to a certain degree, but he said was simply ‘narrow-

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 340–41/321.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 341/321–22. From the context, it seems likely that by ‘*Levellers*’, Marx probably had in mind the Diggers or ‘True Levellers’, since it was they who demanded not just adult male suffrage (as the Levellers did) but also a community of goods. It is not clear how aware Marx was, at this point, of the differences between the various radical factions in the English Revolution. The terms denoting these were also not always neatly distinguished.

²⁸⁹ Heinzen, *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus*, 21.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 21.

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mindedness', to think that revolution 'only emerges from the *factory*'.²⁹³ Heinzen believed that doing so failed to see the importance of political ideals in motivating people's revolutionary participation. As he noted elsewhere, the revolution might 'begin with the stomach', but the 'proletarian has sacrificed himself for the idea and forgotten his stomach'.²⁹⁴

Heinzen's criticisms of Marx's materialist conception of society and history did not end with their exchange in the *Deutsch-Brusseler-Zeitung*. Some twelve years later, when Marx published his *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* in June 1859, Heinzen swiftly reviewed it in his German-American paper *Der Pionier* the following month under the title 'Herr Karl Marx'.²⁹⁵ His review zeroed in on what is often taken to be the most interesting section of that book, a long passage in the preface in which Marx says he sets out the 'general conclusion' and 'guiding principle of my studies'.²⁹⁶ It is one of the densest and richest passages of social and political thought, which contains some of the most central insights of his materialist conception of history. Marx says that,

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure...The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production...Then begins an era of social revolution.²⁹⁷

So important has this passage been in the subsequent understanding of Marx's conception of history and society that it is often referred to as simply the '1859 Preface' rather than by the largely forgotten book that it precedes.²⁹⁸ The passage is frequently seen as the clearest expression of what is sometimes called the

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 22–23.

²⁹⁴ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 58. This was a common trope in republicanism. Linton, for example, argued that communists and socialists failed to see the importance of inspiring political ideals, arguing that in 'one night the French Monarchy is overthrown by the very name of the Republic. And that charmed word Country, how men gave their blood for it in Hungary and Italy. Who follows to your shabby cry of personal gain?' Linton, 'Socialism and Communism', 270.

²⁹⁵ The review does not name the author, but Heinzen's editorship of *Der Pionier* and the similarity of its tone and message to previous critiques make its ascription to Heinzen likely. Heinzen was probably made aware of Marx's book after *Das Volk* (the paper of the London German Workers' Educational Association) republished the preface on 4 June 1859, which was then circulated and republished in various German-American circles and papers, see *MEGA*² II.2: 23* and 370–71.

²⁹⁶ Marx, *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, 100/8/262.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 100–1/8–9/263.

²⁹⁸ Roberts, *Marx's Inferno*, 41.

technological determinist understanding of Marx's historical materialism. It played a foundational role in G. A. Cohen's analytic reconstruction of this version of historical materialism in his definitive *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978), where Cohen used the passage as the epigraph to the book. The canonical status of the passage has, on the other hand, been questioned by those who prefer an interpretation of Marx's historical materialism that gives greater weight to class-struggle.²⁹⁹

Heinzen's review reprinted the entire passage in full, because he said this was where Marx 'defines his standpoint'.³⁰⁰ The review begins with Heinzen's customary Marx-denigration, noting that 'the unbearable language in which this preface is written, will already form a great barrier to the propagandizing of the Marxian theories'.³⁰¹ He then argues that the whole theory of the preface is based on the 'platitude' that people and their development are determined only by their 'Hosentasche u. Maultasche', a clever rhyming phrase that is not easily translated, but roughly means the 'trouser-pocket' (i.e. where people keep their money) and a type of German filled pasta that literally means 'mouth-pocket' or 'mouth-bag'. In other words, the only determining factors in people's actions are money and food, or more broadly the means of subsistence. Heinzen claims, that Marx thereby reduces all history and society to the 'doctrine of the two pockets', where all 'other motives and motors' are unknown.³⁰² Consequently even when,

a women's whim (*Weiberlaune*) overthrows a realm, a prince's whim (*Fürstenlaune*) devastates a continent, a Reformer's idea (*Reformator-Idee*) brings the whole world to its knees, and all 'economy' and all 'relations of production' are thrown aside – he will insist, that everything was brought about by the two pockets.³⁰³

The review annoyed Marx enough that eight years later he took the time to respond to it in a lengthy footnote in *Kapital*.³⁰⁴ He here (somewhat

²⁹⁹ See, for instance, G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 46–47. Supporters of this interpretation point to the fact that the preface and the book were written under the threat of censorship, and that in order to get it published in Berlin, Marx had to be careful to avoid any mention of class-struggle, see Arthur M. Prinz, 'Background and Ulterior Motive of Marx's "Preface" of 1859', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30, no. 3 (1969): 437–450. Other proponents of the importance of class struggle do not deny the textual status of the 1859 Preface, but argue that we should be wary about putting an 'enormous theoretical burden upon Marx's shorthand aphorisms' and should instead place greater weight on the analysis deployed across 'his whole life's work', Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 129.

³⁰⁰ Heinzen, 'Herr Karl Marx', 2. The review excludes the line 'Then begins an era of social revolution', but this is most likely an editorial oversight.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁰² *Ibid.* Heinzen, probably aware of Marx's perennial money problems, here adds that Marx 'could better look after both his pockets through other means, than by his critiques'.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Marx does not precisely specify which review he has in mind. The *MEGA*² and *MECW* editors identify Heinzen's 'Herr Karl Marx' as the likely candidate (see *MEGA*² II.8: 1005–6, *MEGA*² II.9: 797–98, *MEGA*² II.10: 823, and *MECW* 35: 772n78). Several considerations make this probable. Marx says in the

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stylistically) takes Heinzen to be saying that Marx's account might be true 'for our own times, in which material interests, predominate', but not for the 'Middle Ages, dominated by Catholicism, nor for Athens and Rome, dominated by politics'.³⁰⁵ Marx responds to this argument by saying that the 'Middle Ages could not live on Catholicism, nor could the ancient world on politics'.³⁰⁶ In other words, every society – no matter how much it might seem to be preoccupied by other concerns, such as religion and politics – still has to organise production. It is, in fact, the 'manner in which they gained their livelihood', Marx continues, 'which explains why in one case politics, in the other case Catholicism, played the chief part'.³⁰⁷ Thus in cases where it might seem that certain interests are driving history, Marx argues that proper investigation reveals that the actual driver is the underlying social requirement to organise production. How people gain 'their livelihood' is thus the proper focus for historical explanation.

Marx gives the example of the Roman Republic to illustrate this point, arguing that the Republic's 'secret history' is in fact the 'history of landed property'. Marx's reference seems to be to the conflicts between plebeians and patricians which dominated the final period of the republic. The conflict had several dimensions but centred on the control of the Roman public lands (the *ager publicus*), which had overtime increasingly fallen into the hands of the patricians. The attempts by the Gracchus brothers, Tiberius and Gaius, to restore a more equal distribution of the land are frequently blamed for the eventual downfall of the republic.³⁰⁸ Thus, while this conflict might have seemed to be merely a political dispute between different orders, actual investigation shows it to have been founded on the one of the most basic social questions: control of land. Marx wryly notes that Heinzen is thus as misguided as Don Quixote who 'wrongly imagin[ed] that knight errantry was compatible with all forms of society'.³⁰⁹

footnote that he is responding to an 'objection' to his *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* made in a 'German-American paper', which would match Heinzen's *Der Pionier*. Marx then quotes several lines from the preface which he says the review had objected to, and these are the same ones that Heinzen had reproduced. Marx also makes a comparison with Don Quixote in the footnote, a character Marx had previously compared Heinzen to in 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 332/313. Finally, we know that Marx sometimes read *Der Pionier* in this period and referred to Heinzen's writings in them, see for instance, Marx to Engels, 7 January 1858, *MEGA*® III.9: 14, *MEW* 29: 254-55, *MECW* 40: 243-44.

³⁰⁵ Marx, *Kapital*, 112/96/93.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Compare with Marx and Engels's earlier objection to historians who accept at face value how an 'epoch imagines itself to be determined by purely "political" or "religious" motives', when in fact "'religion" and "politics" are only forms of its true motives', *Die deutsche Ideologie*, 39/55.

³⁰⁷ Marx, *Kapital*, 112/96/93.

³⁰⁸ Marx discusses the *ager publicus* and its role in the Roman history and society at length in the section on 'Forms Preceding Capitalist Production' in *Grundrisse*, 378-415/313-421/399-438.

³⁰⁹ Marx, *Kapital*, 112/96/93.

(iii) The People vs. the Proletariat

Every revolutionary needs an agent and republican and communist revolutionaries disagreed intensely about whether this should be the *people* or the *proletariat*. The democratic republicans, in their ECDC manifesto of 1850, called on ‘the great realizer – the People’ to come together in ‘one common accord’, while the *Manifest*, repeating the new slogan of the Communist League, made it very clear that it was the ‘*proletarians of all countries*’ that should ‘*unite*’.³¹⁰ The democratic republicans opposed this emerging socialist and communist rhetoric that prioritised the proletariat. They considered it a threat to their attempts to build a united front composed of several classes against the forces of reaction. Heinzen accused the communists of ‘throwing themselves one-sidedly and exclusively on the proletariat’ while at the same time ‘ignoring the rest of humanity’.³¹¹ Instead, they advocated, in Linton’s words, ‘the regular association of all classes, the organized association of the people’.³¹²

But who were the *people* for the democratic republicans and who did they think were fighting against? Broadly, the former meant not simply the entire citizen body, but the popular or non-elite sub-section of it.³¹³ Thus Lamennais writes that ‘The [few] compose, under different names, the superior – the upper classes; - of the [many] consists the PEOPLE.’³¹⁴ The latter included the old enemies: the king, his court, his bureaucrats and the aristocracy – all those who opposed popular sovereignty, universal suffrage and the rights of the people. But the republican democrats were also increasingly aware of a new emerging enemy. Take for example Julius Fröbel’s 1848 list of the three ‘opponents of the republic’: (1) the ‘birth-aristocracy (*Geburtsadel*)’, (2) the ‘bureaucratic-aristocracy (*Beamtenadels*)’, and (3) the ‘money-aristocracy (*Geldadels*)’ or ‘competition-aristocracy (*Concurrenz-Adel*)’.³¹⁵ He argued that it was this last class that were the ‘only opponents’ worth discussing now, partly because the other aristocracies were either without much power or quickly losing it, and partly because the ‘money-

³¹⁰ ECDC, ‘Aux Peuples! Organisation de la démocratie’, 8–9/95; Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 493/519. It is a testament to the resilience of the rhetoric around the ‘people’ that the first ever translation of the *Manifest*, into Swedish in December 1848, deleted the famous communist slogan from the cover and the final page, and replaced it on the cover with the Swedish version of the Latin motto *Vox populi vox Dei* (*The voice of the people is the voice of God*). See Hans Haste, ‘Per Göttek och manifestet’, in *Kommunismens röst. Förklaring af det Kommunistiska Partiet, offentliggjord i Februari 1848* (Stockholm: Pogo Press, 1976), xii; and Hal Draper, *The Adventures of the Communist Manifesto* (Alameda: Center for Socialist History, 2004), 25.

³¹¹ Heinzen noted that the communists seemed to think that one was only ‘entitled to human rights when one wears ripped trousers or goes hungry’, ‘Gegen die Kommunisten’, 57.

³¹² Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 125/14.

³¹³ For this difference see John P. McCormick, ‘People and Elites in Republican Constitutions, Traditional and Modern’, in *The Paradox of Constitutionalism*, ed. Martin Loughlin and Neil Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107–25.

³¹⁴ Lamennais, *Le livre du peuple*, 19/9.

³¹⁵ Fröbel, *Monarchie oder Republik?*, 10.

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aristocracy' was prepared only to support a 'constitutional monarchy' or at most a 'capitalist's-republic (*Capitalisten-Republik*)'.³¹⁶

The extent to which the capitalist class (or its various early identifies such as the 'money-aristocracy') were seen as enemies of the people varied. We have already seen how Heinzen thought that the 'men of power' were the primary enemies rather than the 'men of the money-bags'.³¹⁷ Linton on the one hand thought that 'society ought not to depend upon the will of a few capitalists', but he also blamed socialists and communists for the failure of the Second Republic because of the 'very hatred of the bourgeoisie directly fermented by them, by their incessant attacks upon competition and property'.³¹⁸ Ruge wanted a society where there would be 'neither a *bourgeois* nor a *proletarian*', but he also thought that getting to that society would require bourgeois allies.³¹⁹ Echoing Sieyès famous slogan from the French Revolution, he argued that the workers were 'not prepared in one stroke to become Everything, those who had until now been Nothing' and thus the 'property-owners' had an 'outstanding role' to play as the '*tribunus plebis sociali potestate* (*tribune of the people for the social power*)'.³²⁰ (This may well have been a deliberate rebuke of Marx's own invocation of Sieyès to defend the primary revolutionary role of the proletariat in the 'Kritik: Einleitung', which if we remember was published in Ruge and Marx's co-edited *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*).³²¹ The republican democrats were thus both sometimes conscious of the danger of the bourgeoisie to the people but also willing to ally with them against other enemies of the people.

The extent to which radicals should hope for support beyond the popular classes was a frequent source of division between republicans and communists. In a May 1852 article in George Julian Harney's paper the *Star of Freedom*, Linton criticised Chartism for having become a 'Class Movement' when 'we must have more than a Class Movement to obtain a national object'.³²² He advocated that Chartists should instead look to 'what allies also we can obtain, from no matter what class', if they could be convinced to support the Chartist aims.³²³ In general, he thought that the Chartists should avoid 'confining the movement...to one class', because he was "inexplicably" opposed to the people's movement, being only a class movement'.³²⁴ Harney's advocacy of Chartist collaboration with the

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

³¹⁷ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 87.

³¹⁸ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 155; Linton, 'Mazzini and His Socialist Opponents', 123.

³¹⁹ Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 5.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65–66.

³²¹ Marx, 'Kritik: Einleitung', 180/388-9/184-5.

³²² Linton, 'The Sense of the Country', 4.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

middle-classes was one of the reasons for why Marx and Engels distanced themselves from him, and Marx singled out his publishing of Linton's article as evidence that Harney was 'rapidly getting into bad ways'.³²⁵ Marx briefly summarized Linton's argument as attacking 'Chartism for being only a Class movement which ought to be replaced by general and national movement', and then summarily dismissed it as 'Genuine Mazzinian hot air (*Echtmazzinische Phrase*), etc., etc., etc.'³²⁶

Marx's dismissive response to Linton was emblematic of his general antipathy to the republican rhetoric around the people. 'The people' was a 'broad and vague expression', and it was high time, he argued, to 'replace' it with 'a definite one, the proletariat'.³²⁷ Marx's objections to the people as a rhetorical appeal and as sociological category were that (1) the people actually consisted of several different classes with divergent and sometimes conflicting interests, (2) understanding these diverging and conflicting interests is central to political strategy, and (3) the language of the 'people' and the associated idea of *fraternité* serve the ideological function of obscuring these class differences.³²⁸

Marx criticised what he saw as the republican-democrats' simplistic sociological division of an elite versus the people. Marx acknowledges that 'The democrat concedes that a privileged class confronts them', but also criticises them for believing that 'they, along with all the rest of the nation, form the *people*'.³²⁹ Marx notes that the republican democrats brand those who 'split the *indivisible* people into different hostile camps' as 'pernicious sophists', but he argues that all that does is deny the sociological reality of a class-divided society.³³⁰ Marx thus argues that though the democratic republicans' conception of the people rightly excluded a 'privileged class', it failed to acknowledge that this sub-set of the population was further divided into different classes, such as the workers, artisans, peasants and petty bourgeoisie.

That denial allowed them to think that they represented 'the *people's rights*', the *people's interests*', and that society consisted of a 'majority...[of] *citoyens* with the same interests, the same understanding, etc.'³³¹ But Marx argued that this '*cult of the people (Volkskultus)*' gave them an entirely skewed understanding of political realities.³³² For Marx, this was exemplified by the first elections to the

³²⁵ Marx to Adolf Cluß, between 10 and 14 May 1852, *MEGA*² III.5: 121, *MEW* 28: 521; *MECW* 39: 107.

³²⁶ *Ibid.* This is the only direct reference to Linton by Marx.

³²⁷ Marx, 'Der Kommunismus des "Rheinischen Beobachters"', 193/223.

³²⁸ Note that here, and in the ensuing discussion, I use 'ideological' in the Marxist sense as referring to a set of 'false and misleading ideas', Leopold, 'Marxism and Ideology', 21.

³²⁹ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 127/144/133.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127/145/133.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 127/144/133; Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 135/29/65.

³³² Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 135/29/65.

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French Constituent National Assembly in April 1848, which despite being held under universal male suffrage returned an anti-republican majority. Marx argued that this upset rudely replaced their ‘*imaginary* people’ with the ‘*real* people...that is, representatives of the different classes into which it falls’.³³³ Their failure to appreciate class differences and their differing class interests had left them unprepared for the possibility that the peasants and petty bourgeoisie could vote for the representatives of the bourgeoisie and landowners.³³⁴ Furthermore, Marx maintained that the failure to ‘examine the interests and positions of the different classes’ made them naively and dangerously overconfident in revolutionary situations.³³⁵ They thought that they ‘have merely to give the signal and the *people*, with all its inexhaustible resources, will fall upon the *oppressors*’.³³⁶ For Marx, that naivety was show-cased when the republicans called on out the people onto the streets in June 1849 to oppose the government’s violation of the constitution, only to find that the workers would not come to their support after they had stood-by during the June Day massacres the year before.³³⁷

Nothing captured the perniciousness of the democratic republican emphasis of a united (rather than class-divided) people, for Marx, more than their invocation of *fraternité*. Marx repeatedly argued that this idea functioned as an ideological smokescreen, which disguised violently opposed class interests behind the language of universal brotherhood.³³⁸ In February, right at the start of the revolution, it had perfectly captured the ecstatic and celebratory mood of the population. The ‘phrase’ signified the ‘imaginary abolition of class relations’, the ‘sentimental reconciliation of contradictory class interests’ and the ‘visionary elevation above the class struggle’.³³⁹ But at that moment *fraternité* merely disguised the deeper class differences that were waiting to return to the surface. The ‘brotherhood’ it celebrated would only last ‘as long as there was a fraternity of interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat’, and that came to a brutal

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 127/145/133.

³³⁶ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 127/144-45/133.

³³⁷ *Ibid.* 125-26/142-43/131-32. The crisis was sparked by the government’s attack on Mazzini’s Roman Republic in late April 1849, which breached the constitutional stipulation that the French Republic would not undermine another people’s liberty. Marx may have participated in the attempted uprising, Sperber, *Karl Marx*, 240. In contrast to Marx’s explanation for the workers’ inaction, Agulhon argues that a more important factor that undermined the republican democrats was that it ‘always been more difficult to mobilise the masses to fight for a foreign people or for a violated principle than for their own survival’, Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, 79.

³³⁸ It was for similar reasons that Marx had apparently objected to the League of the Just’s (the precursor to the Communist League) earlier slogan: ‘All Men are Brothers’ because there were many men who were definitively not his brothers, Boris Nicolaievsky and Otto Maenchen-Helfen, *Karl Marx: Man and Fighter* (London: Methuen, 1936), 125; McLellan, *Karl Marx*, 172. The anecdote however has the whiff of being apocryphal and I have been unable to find it mentioned in a primary source.

³³⁹ Marx, ‘Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich’, 128/21/57.

halt in the June Days.³⁴⁰ There, *fraternité* found its true, unadulterated and prosaic expression in *civil war*, civil war in its most terrible aspect, the war of labour against capital'.³⁴¹

These criticisms were a perennial feature of Marx and Engels's polemical feuds with the republican democrats. In their pre-revolutionary clash with Heinzen they charged him with a class-blind conception of society, which they argued not only concealed his petty bourgeois (and even bourgeois) class bias but also hamstrung his calls for revolution. Engels accused Heinzen of having 'never examined the position of the classes and parties' when it came to the possibility for revolution, and had only wildly and irresponsibly called to 'Fight'em, fight'em, fight'em!'³⁴² Marx in turn argued that though Heinzen '*differentiate[d]*' society into '*princes* and *subjects*', he refused to recognise that there were 'privileged and unprivileged subjects'.³⁴³ In contrast, Marx insisted that as much as the '*political difference* between *prince* and *subject*' was a salient one, one 'also' had to take into account the '*social difference* between *classes*'.³⁴⁴ (This was a little unfair to Heinzen as his article had noted that there were bourgeois and proletarian subjects; though on the other hand his article had also called it a 'communist narrow-mindedness to only address people class by class' and had mockingly suggested that Engels should set up a communist experiment 'with "small peasants", "petty bourgeoisie", "proletarians" and miscellaneous classes in the primeval forests beyond the Mississippi').³⁴⁵ Marx further argued that Heinzen's refusal to engage in class analysis and instead insist that 'all classes melt always before the solemn concept of "humanity"', had an ideological function.³⁴⁶ Namely, by invoking 'humanity' as a 'quality...which attaches to all men' he distracted from the brute fact that classes 'are based on *economic* conditions independent of their own will', and that they cannot simply 'shed their real relationships' in virtue of a supposed shared humanity.³⁴⁷ It additionally served the ideological purpose of presenting "'bourgeois" interests in the guise of "human" ends'.³⁴⁸

The same charges were repeated by Marx and Engels in their critique of the ECDC manifesto. They argued that the manifesto's seemingly benign invocation of the 'people', 'fraternity', 'association' and 'common ground', on closer inspection revealed that the 'authors of the manifesto deny the existence of the

³⁴⁰ Marx, 'Die Junirevolution', 209/134/147.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.* Marx also quoted at length from this article, 'Die Junirevolution', in 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 138/32/68.

³⁴² Engels, 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen', 313/295.

³⁴³ Marx, 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 350/330-31.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 350/331.

³⁴⁵ Heinzen, 'Ein "Repräsentant" der Kommunisten', 3, 4.

³⁴⁶ Marx, 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 349/330.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 350/330.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 353/334.

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class struggles'.³⁴⁹ Their strategy was in fact to 'forbid the individual classes to formulate their interests and demands vis-à-vis the other classes' and 'to forget their conflicting interests and to become reconciled under the flag of a vagueness as shallow as it is unblushing'.³⁵⁰ Marx and Engels argued that 'conceal[ed] beneath the apparent reconciliation' of different class interests, was the fact that they in reality served the interests of 'one party – the bourgeois party'.³⁵¹

It is important to be clear here that Marx's attack on the category of the 'people' and his advocacy of the proletariat did not mean that he wanted the proletariat to go at it on its own, without the support of any other classes. The role that the proletariat was supposed to play in the revolution depended on: which revolution was being pursued (bourgeois or proletarian), the material and political circumstances of the country in question (especially the size and development of the different popular classes), and indeed at which point in Marx's intellectual evolution we are looking at (his pre- and post-revolutionary opinion on the matter). In general, we can say that Marx wanted the proletariat to lead the other popular classes that made up the 'people' in a communist revolution. That meant primarily the peasants and elements of the petty bourgeoisie.³⁵² The peasants were, for various structural reasons, unable to lead the revolution, and thus it was up to the communists to show them that a '*constitutional republic* is the dictatorship of his united exploiters', whereas '*the social-democratic, the Red republic, is the dictatorship of his allies*'.³⁵³

We should also bear in mind that it is not surprising that the republican democrats and the communists would have different revolutionary agents because they were trying to achieve different revolutionary ends. The communists were aiming at a communist society which abolished private property. With that aim in mind it makes sense to rely primarily on a class whose material interests aligned with that end. The republican democrats, on the other hand, were aiming for a society that would radically alter social and economic conditions, but without abolishing private property. As such, they saw themselves as appealing to a wider constituency whose material interests would have been threatened by communism. The next section sets out in greater detail precisely what that alternative society was supposed to look like.

³⁴⁹ Marx and Engels, 'Revue. Mai bis Oktober 1850', 486/460-61/530.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 486/461/530.

³⁵² Engels, for instance, notes that 'the people, i.e. the proletarians, small peasants and petty bourgeoisie', and also that these classes 'constitute...the "people"', 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinen', 312-13/294-95.

³⁵³ Marx, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 187/84/122.

(iv) Republican vs. Communist Social Measures

The social changes wrought by capitalism were not lost on the democratic republicans. Nor was the threat posed by the emerging communist movement. The social promises of the communists threatened to undermine their traditional working-class support. The republican democrats were accustomed to representing the extreme left and the party of movement and were initially disconcerted by the emergence of communism. They responded by developing their own social programme that would, they believed, fundamentally transform capitalism *without* instituting communism. Some of these social measures may today strike us as hardly radical ones (such as progressive taxation and free education), but we should remember that these were non-existent in the mid-nineteenth century and advocating them put one on the far-left of the political spectrum. Furthermore, many of the proposed social measures go beyond what has been achieved today and remain a radical alternative to contemporary capitalism. I will here outline the main institutional and policy ideas they proposed and defended.³⁵⁴

The first social measure that the democratic republicans emphasised was to give the rural population free access to the land through a process of land nationalisation. The democratic republicans believed that the land was rightly the common property of the people. They argued that while people had a right to the proceeds from working the land, they had no right to own the land itself. Land was instead to be communally owned by the state.³⁵⁵ Republicans thus held to the principle that '*the Nation is the sole proprietor of the of the Land and none hold rightfully except as tenants of the Nation*'.³⁵⁶ Heinzen suggested that the state would become the sole landowner over time through a system of compensated expropriation and the abolition of inheritance.³⁵⁷ Linton proposed a detailed plan for land reform where a uniform tax should be levied on every acre of land. Those with large land holdings would thereby be forced by financial necessity to give up their excess lands (Linton added that if not enough land was made available in this way a maximum limit on acres per person could also be instituted). These lands would thereby pass into state ownership. The state would then open these lands to settlement by agricultural labourers. These agricultural colonies would be supervised by a government officer and be provided with sufficient capital to farm the land. The proceeds would, after the deduction of the officer's salary, the per

³⁵⁴ By discussing the measures proposed by various republicans together I do not mean to give the impression that they defended a single united social programme, only that these measures crop up frequently in their disparate articles, pamphlets and manifestos.

³⁵⁵ Heinzen, 'Kommunistisches', 372; Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147/20.

³⁵⁶ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 122.

³⁵⁷ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 81–82.

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acre tax, and the (interest-free) repayment of the capital, be divided up between the labourers. Once they had paid back the capital they would control the land in perpetual tenure.³⁵⁸

Linton believed that these measures would remove the dependency of the landless rural population on the landowning class. The average labourer would no longer be at the 'mercy of the farmer', because the option of working on state lands would give them the bargaining power to 'force the master to terms'.³⁵⁹ Those working on state lands would eventually control (but not own) their own land and thus be 'their own masters, subject to no supervision'.³⁶⁰ In this way, Linton hoped to create a 'new race of independent peasant freeholders'.³⁶¹

However, these land reform measures would as the democratic republicans recognised, only indirectly help the urban labouring population, by reducing the pressure on wages from rural migration to the cities. More direct measures were necessary if the republicans were to appeal to the urban working class. They thus proposed that the state had to provide every worker with access to (1) free credit and (2) free education. Linton once again provided a detailed plan of how the republican state should provide these goods.

In order for the monopoly over capital exercised by the capitalist class to be broken, Linton argued that 'the State must be the capitalist, the banker and the money-lender'.³⁶² Expropriating the capitalist or forcing them to lend their capital was out of the question ('an infringement of individual right, a kind of spoliation'), but the state should set up a National Bank with branches throughout the country that would give interest-free loans to labourers in order for them to buy tools and to cover them and their family's living costs while they had fallen ill or been thrown out of work because of market fluctuations.³⁶³ Importantly, these loans were interest-free but they were not grants, a labourer who refused or was unable to repay the credit would be put before a jury and potentially imprisoned.³⁶⁴ The primary emphasis in this programme was on individual labourers being able to apply for the means for them to work – a policy geared towards artisans. However, Linton did note in passing that worker associations should be allowed to apply for credit as well, and he accurately diagnosed that worker cooperatives would be able to successfully 'contend or compete with the

³⁵⁸ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147–48/20; Linton, 'Republican Measures', 124–25.

³⁵⁹ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 124.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² Linton, 'Republican Principles', 156/21.

³⁶³ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 155.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 155–56.

masters' only if the state provided them with sufficient capital.³⁶⁵ According to Linton, the provision of free credit was supposed to ensure the 'independence of the workers', who would now 'no longer be dependent upon the will of the monied classes'.³⁶⁶ Moreover, it would mean that 'Capital [would] cease to be an engine in the hands of the few for the oppression of the many'.³⁶⁷

The provision of free credit would be accompanied by giving workers the opportunity for education. For adults, this meant that the state would 'provide every citizen, without discrimination based on the type of work or on sex, the opportunity to learn their chosen vocation in an educational institution'.³⁶⁸ For children, this meant that the state would create public schools that were free and obligatory. Linton even advocated that all children – boys and girls – should attend state boarding schools so that they could be 'subjected to that perfect equality which is the first lesson to be taught by the Republic'.³⁶⁹ Once they reached eighteen both sexes would – like 'the young Athenian [who] swore in the temple to make his Country greater and more glorious' – swear an oath that 'henceforth their lives [were] to be devoted to their Country and to Humanity'.³⁷⁰ Republican education was therefore not only a tool to address social inequality, but also one used to inculcate the virtues necessary for republican citizenship. Giving each citizen the spiritual conditions for independence would mean that they would not become the 'slave of the intelligent',³⁷¹ and would also have the political advantage of protecting the republic from the dangers of demagogues and would-be despots. As Ruge observed 'the democrat knows that an uneducated people always falls into the hands of charlatans, clerics and seducers'.³⁷²

In industry and production, the democratic republicans advocated extensive state involvement, but deliberately stopped short of advocating complete state control of the economy. Linton opposed the state setting up its own industrial workshops but proposed that the state run public store-houses and bazaars where workers and peasants could at all times sell and buy produce at a

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 156; Linton, 'Working-Men's Combinations. Strikes and Co-Operative Associations', 18. Heinzen also made 'working associations to be promoted with free credit from the state bank' one of the key social measures in his proposed republican programme *Programm der deutschen Revolutionspartei*, II.3.c.

³⁶⁶ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 156.

³⁶⁷ Linton, 'Republican Catechism', 148.

³⁶⁸ Heinzen, *Programm der deutschen Revolutionspartei*, II.3.d.

³⁶⁹ In Linton's proposal, boys and girls would start school at age seven (or nine if the parents wished) and board until they were fourteen. Girls would then have the option to live at home again, but would have to continue their studies in school until they were eighteen. Boys would from age eighteen to twenty carry out an apprenticeship, and then be sent to travel for a further year. On their return they would be 'solemnly acknowledged a citizen, a free man, the uncontrolled master of his own actions, accountable only to the laws, and entitled to share in the common wealth.' Linton, 'Republican Measures', 181–83.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁷² Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 38.

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'fair price'.³⁷³ For Heinzen, the state's proper role in the economy was as a 'third person who represents the common interest'.³⁷⁴ He thus advocated that for those industries which 'can only be made profitable for the general public (*Allgemeinheit*) through the means of the general public' the state should take complete control of them.³⁷⁵ He here singles out the railways as one such industry (roads and canals were also frequently included in democratic republican proposals). For those industries where it was better that they were run by individuals and associations, Heinzen argued that the state should additionally set up competing state firms so that consumers are not cheated by firms making a higher than 'normal profit'.³⁷⁶

Ruge went perhaps the furthest in his recommendations, setting out a vision of production organised into a network of *Sozietäten* (partnerships).³⁷⁷ Each *Sozietät* would generally be made of up of several families who would produce together and as individuals. Instead of receiving a wage, each member of the *Sozietät* would receive a share of the total surplus according to their labour contribution. This would ensure that no surplus went to a distinct landlord or a capitalist. Members would have the option of leaving the *Societät* with their share of the partnership that they had earned, but when a member died all of their shares would be inherited by the united members to avoid shares becoming concentrated in a single individual. According to Ruge, the *Societät* system would mean the abolition of wage-labour, since the members would no longer rely on master paying them wages. This was crucial to Ruge, as 'wage-labour and *service* are incompatible with self-determination', and he added that 'who works for a foreign interest, is determined by a foreign will (*fremden Willen*)' and that 'through wages a person becomes a tool of another person'.³⁷⁸ In a democracy however, the 'highest principle is that everyone is their own master'.³⁷⁹

Supplementing these large-scale social measures the democratic republicans also endorsed a number of further measures to ensure the social basis of the republic. These included progressive taxation, state provision for the sick and elderly, centralisation and regulation of the banking system, free access to justice, and – perhaps most radically – the restriction or even abolition of inheritance.³⁸⁰ This last requirement was a 'core demand of radical democrats

³⁷³ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 157.

³⁷⁴ Heinzen, 'Kommunistisches', 374.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 376.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 43–52. See also the useful summary provided in Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 257–63. Ruge's programme was also worked out in explicit debt to Proudhon's ideas.

³⁷⁸ Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 47.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 88; Heinzen, *Programm der deutschen Revolutionspartei*, II.3.a,b, and e.

during the Vormärz and Revolution'.³⁸¹ As Heinzen argued, the '*right of inheritance* cannot be sustained in the face of reason', and in any case, inheritance would lose its common justification in a republic which provided its citizens with all of the social necessities listed above.³⁸² He maintained that while a person could dispose of their property as they wished while they were alive, 'what he leaves behind at his death, becomes property of the general public (the state)'.³⁸³

Heinzen believed that the combination of progressive taxation and abolishing inheritance would indirectly set a '*maximum*' for how much property each person could own (which he notes could also be supplemented by a direct maximum). The revenue collected through this maximum would in turn be used to fund a '*minimum*' for each citizen, which would consist in giving each 'citizen who comes of age the basis and the means' for subsistence, which might mean a piece of land, free housing for a certain period, and the 'material or certain sum' of money necessary to begin their chosen profession.³⁸⁴ Heinzen does not explore this idea of a '*minimum*' further, but it has intriguing similarities with the idea of basic stake holding or basic capital, where every citizen receives a lump sum from the state at age eighteen.³⁸⁵ Support for a basic income, where every citizen receives an unconditional and regular income, which one might think would crop up in the list of republican social measures, is not evident in democratic republican discussions at the time.³⁸⁶ This may be because – though this speculative – giving each citizen an income regardless of whether or not they worked would have conflicted with the importance republicans placed on work and self-reliance (a value discussed in greater detail in the next section).

In sum, the republican social measures taken together represent a significant and far-reaching programme of social reform. The democratic republicans believed that they would ensure the social relations of domination and servitude that marked their societies would be replaced by each citizen having the material and spiritual conditions for independence. The peasant would no longer be reliant on the landlord, but would be able to farm their own land. Access to

³⁸¹ Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 258.

³⁸² Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 82–83.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; Heinzen, 'Kommunistisches', 372–73.

³⁸⁵ For the modern discussion of this idea see Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Keith Dowding, Jurgen De Wispelaere, and Stuart White, eds., *The Ethics of Stakeholding* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Stuart White, *The Civic Minimum: On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chap. 8.

³⁸⁶ Basic income was however discussed at the time by Joseph Charlier, a Belgian writer influenced by Fourier and Fourierism. In his *Solution du problème social ou constitution humanitaire* (1848) he advocated a universal and unconditional basic income for each citizen paid for by the socialisation of land rents. His proposal however had little influence at the time. See John Cunliffe and Guido Erreygers, 'The Enigmatic Legacy of Charles Fourier: Joseph Charlier and Basic Income', *History of Political Economy* 33, no. 3 (2001): 459–84; and John Cunliffe and Guido Erreygers, 'The Archaeology of Stakeholding and Social Justice: The Foundations in Mid-19th-Century Belgium', *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 2 (2008): 189–90.

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credit would free the worker from the control of the capitalist and the indignities of wage-labour. The opportunities for worker co-operatives and economic partnerships would be greatly expanded. Universal education would create a new generation of self-reliant republican citizens. The state would take an active regulatory and interventionist role in the economy. Concentrations of wealth would be severely restricted by the abolition of inheritance, the introduction of progressive taxes and maximum limits placed on land and property ownership. The world they would have created would thus not only have been an enormous step forward by the standards of the mid-nineteenth century, but would, in several respects, go beyond what modern social-democratic states have achieved. It is a vision nicely characterised by Ruge who saw the mission of the republican as energetically searching out all relations of domination and dependency in society, and subjecting them to a 'cleansing process (*Reinigungsproceß*)', through the 'implementation of the democratic principle to the economic, the political, and the free, community'.³⁸⁷ He argued that this would be '*the solution of the social question*', through the '*foundation of the social-democratic free-state*'.³⁸⁸

The democratic republicans quite clearly saw this as offering an alternative to capitalism. Giving the state the responsibility to provide credit to the people would, in Linton's words, 'rid us of all those mischievous middle-men called capitalists' and the 'tyranny of capital would be at an end'.³⁸⁹ Heinzen, declared that he would be 'satisfied' if the end-result of all these measures was that the 'capitalist left their institutions to the state or that the workers became Associés'.³⁹⁰ Their vision was thus supposed to be and was self-consciously understood as a radical alternative to capitalism. Yet their alternative was not communist, as both they and their communist adversaries repeatedly and vociferously insisted.

A striking feature about this mutual desire to distinguish themselves from each other is how closely their programmes for social reform in fact mirror each other. For instance, take the following extract from the ten communist demands listed by Marx and Engels in the *Manifest*:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance...
5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

³⁸⁷ Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 35.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 156/22; Linton, 'Republican Measures', 157.

³⁹⁰ Heinzen, *Programm der deutschen Revolutionspartei*, II.8.note.

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6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State...
10. Free education for all children in public schools...³⁹¹

Or a similar selection from their seventeen-point program *Forderungen der Kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland*, released a month after the *Manifest*:

5. Legal services to be free of charge...
10. A state bank, whose paper issues are legal tender, shall replace all private banks...
11. All the means of transport, railways, canals, steamships, roads, the posts etc. shall be taken over by the state...
14. The right of inheritance to be curtailed.
15. The introduction of steeply graduated taxes...
17. Universal and free education of the people.³⁹²

The similarity of these sets of social demands was not lost on either side. Engels said of Heinen's proposed reforms that '[t]hey are such as the *Communists* themselves suggest'; while Heinen responded to the *Forderungen der Kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland*, by arguing that 'just like the demand for light and water, every reasonable person must share them, [but] without thereby belonging to the communist "party"'.³⁹³

The line between the two camps thus cannot be drawn by these social reforms. Republicans could endorse them without becoming communists and communists could advocate them without being straightforward republicans. The difference instead lies in whether these social measures were supposed to be a goal in and of themselves or as a step towards a further end. For republicans, the social measures were sufficient to ensure that the republic realised its social promise. But for communists, they formed only an initial package of revolutionary measures on the path to the final goal of communism. As Engels neatly summarized, these measures were for communists,

preparatory steps, temporary transitional stages, towards the abolition of private property...Herr Heinen however wants all these measures as permanent, final measures. They are not to be a preparation for anything, they are to be definitive. They are for him not a means but an end. They are not designed for a revolutionary but for a peaceful, bourgeois condition.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 481–82/505.

³⁹² Marx and Engels, *Forderungen der Kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland*, 3-4/3-4.

³⁹³ Engels, 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinen', 313/295; Heinen, *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus*, 97.

³⁹⁴ Engels, 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinen', 313-14/295-96, emphasis added. Engels was repeating the point made by Karl Schapper in the Communist League's first (and only) issue of their *Kommunistische*

(v) Universalisation vs. Abolition of Private Property

The key social difference between the democratic republicans and Marx and Engels's communism was what to do about private property. While Marx and Engels boldly declared that 'the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property', the democratic republicans countered that 'To assure the life, and, at the same time, the freedom of each, we must not abolish property, but, on the contrary, multiply it and render it accessible to all.'³⁹⁵ The question of whether private property should be abolished or universalised thus forms one of the most important dividing lines (perhaps even *the* most important), between republicanism and communism.

The three most prominent justifications for private property given by the democratic republicans were that (1) people had the right to the fruits of labour, (2) it was the basis of individuality, and (3) it was a condition for freedom and independence.³⁹⁶

The centrality of work and its link to private property was enshrined in the ECDC's founding manifesto, which declared that 'We believe in the holiness of work, in its inviolability, in the property which proceeds from it as its sign and its fruit.'³⁹⁷ Linton took it upon himself to flesh out and defend the ECDC's position. He gives the example of clearing and working a piece of land, growing and tending to a rose-tree, raising a dog from a puppy, and decorating and improving your house. Linton argues that in all of these cases the property 'is the result of the sign and the fruit of my toil' and is therefore 'inviolable, sacred as individual right'.³⁹⁸ Consequently, 'No government, state, or commonweal has any right here, to trench upon my personal, private, individual right, to rob me for even the world's benefit.'³⁹⁹

Zeitung in September 1847, where Schapper argued that Heinzen 'demands nearly the same thing as the communists demand. The only difference between us, is that Citizen Carl Heinzen sees his [program] as the basis of a new society; whereas we [see] it as the basis of a transition period, that will lead us to complete community.' Schapper, 'Proletariat!', 5.

³⁹⁵ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 475/498; Lamennais, *Question du travail*, 13/286. Similarly, Linton says 'Our complaint is not that there is too much individual property, but that there is too little; not that the few have, but that many have not.' Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147/18.

³⁹⁶ The democratic republicans can be seen as making a mix of Lockean and Hegelian arguments for private property, see Jeremy Waldron, *The Right to Private Property* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), chapter 6 and 8.

³⁹⁷ ECDC, 'Aux Peuples! Organisation de la démocratie', 10/95. Marx and Engels, in their response to the ECDC manifesto, drily noted that the actual extent to which 'bourgeois property is "the fruit and sign of labour"' had already been shown by Adam Smith 'eighty years' before these 'revolutionary initiators', 'Revue. Mai bis Oktober 1850', 487/462/531. The implication being that modern bourgeois property was the result of the division of labour and modern production techniques and not the work of the property owner.

³⁹⁸ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147/18.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Similar defences were made by Heinzen who argued that the 'produce of my hands and my spirit, i.e. my work, is *mine* and *no one else's*', Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 80.

An underlying justification given by the democratic republicans for the right to private property derived from work was that the property derived from it formed an essential element in the development and expression of a person's individuality. Linton stressed that each of the above examples created 'a sacred thing to me', which were 'a radiance from my own light of life, an emanation from myself'.⁴⁰⁰ Whereas for communists, he argued, the 'denial of individualism is consistent with the denial of property'.⁴⁰¹ Mazzini argued that property was the 'representation of human individuality in the material world', and the 'sentiments which naturally grow with its cultivation' mean that it deserved protection.⁴⁰² Heinzen similarly maintained that the 'free unfolding of [a person's] natural abilities and instincts' requires 'the means, the possibility, to create his individual world'.⁴⁰³ In order to flourish as individuals, the republican democrats thus believed that you had to have the ability to enjoy the property you create through labour without the interference of others.

The third republican justification for private property was that property formed an essential condition for freedom. This idea had two dimensions. First, a propertyless person was a dependent person. They were reliant on others for work and for the necessities of life. That dependency on another meant that one was unfree. As Lamennais summarised 'To be independent, master of one's-self, completely free, – one must have possession of that which is necessary for the life of the body. Property is the material condition of freedom.'⁴⁰⁴ Ruge similarly argued that property had to be made into 'that which it is meant to be, the basis of freedom of the individual in the whole'.⁴⁰⁵ On the flip side, republicans believed that replacing private property with the (supposedly) communist idea of state ownership of property would abolish freedom. It would mean '[f]orced labour, rewarded according to the pleasure of the State' and thus 'universal servitude'.⁴⁰⁶ Thus for democratic republicans the abolition of private property meant the end of freedom, and they instead advocated the 'extension of personal property [which] assures the life of each in the universal liberty'.⁴⁰⁷

Insisting on a right to private property meant that republicans were willing to tolerate a greater degree of economic inequality than most communists. For if people are allowed to keep the property earned through work, then differing levels

⁴⁰⁰ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147/18.

⁴⁰¹ Linton, 'Socialism and Communism', 268.

⁴⁰² Mazzini, 'Thoughts Upon Democracy in Europe', III: 222.

⁴⁰³ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 74.

⁴⁰⁴ Lamennais, *Question du travail*, 12/286.

⁴⁰⁵ Ruge, 'Drei Briefe über den Communismus', 402. Cited in Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 263.

⁴⁰⁶ Lamennais, *Question du travail*, 11-13/286-87.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-13/286-87.

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of talent and effort inevitably produce economic inequality over time. Ruge was unembarrassed by this aspect of his system of *Sozietäten*. Maintaining 'economic equality is...impossible', for it could only be upheld if the members were banned from having more than they consumed or if the *Sozietät's* surplus was shared communally.⁴⁰⁸ The tolerance for economic inequality was exhibited in, and was a consequence of, how the democratic republicans defined 'equality' in the trinity of liberty and fraternity. Linton assures his readers that 'By *Equality* is not meant the equal of condition of all men – as dreamed of by some socialists.'⁴⁰⁹ Instead, the 'equality we desire is at the starting point'.⁴¹⁰ Thus rather than endorsing the stronger conception of equality as equality of outcome, the democratic republicans defended 'only the equality of opportunity'.⁴¹¹

The commitment to private property also meant that they were more hesitant to implement social measures that involved the forced transfer of property. This is demonstrated by the processes they chose to implement some of the social measures discussed earlier. Linton preferred having rich landlords be indirectly forced to give up their land through the per acre tax, rather than being forcefully expropriated, and Heinzen seems to have had a slight preference for having the '*maximum*' property level regulated by the removal of inheritance and introduction of progressive taxes, rather than a directly fixed upper level. Heinzen also emphasised that the state becomes the 'sole landowner...gradually', through the abolition of inheritance and compensated expropriation.⁴¹² Linton provided a principled defence of this reticence. A 'rich man' might be 'dull, brutish, [and] selfish' for refusing to give up their property, but the correct response was to 'educate me, enlighten me, better me' to share with others.⁴¹³ Linton insisted that what no-one had a right to do was 'to cross my threshold, to touch the veriest trifle that I have honestly earned or obtained, to profane my household gods, to violate my individual right, which stands sovereignly, however savagely, defying the world'.⁴¹⁴

After the radicalism of the republican social measures the unabashed defence of private property can come as a surprise – especially for modern readers used to radical politics being automatically tied to opposing private property. Indeed, in the passages cited above the democratic republicans often sound more

⁴⁰⁸ Ruge, *Gründung der Demokratie*, 44–45.

⁴⁰⁹ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 110/10–11.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ Linton, 'Republican Catechism', 146.

⁴¹² Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 81.

⁴¹³ Linton, 'Republican Principles', 147/19.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.* Marx and Engels in comparison urged that wherever the democratic republicans demanded the 'purchase of the railways and factories' the communists should instead demand that they are 'simply confiscated without compensation', 'Ansprache der Zentralbehörde', 263/253/286.

like reactionary opponents of communism than radical social critics. However, an important qualifier must be added here: the republican democrats did not endorse the unlimited or even extensive right to accumulate private property. They made it very clear that the right to private property had to be limited by the state. For instance, Linton was keen to stress that the flipside of having a right to property fairly gained through work, was that there was no right to the property gained otherwise. A landlord had no right to land that their distant ancestor – ‘some duke (thieves’ leader) of by-gone days’ – had stolen.⁴¹⁵ Or if an ‘usurer’ or ‘*capitalist*’ takes advantage of his ‘fellow’s need to over-reach the common ground of human brotherhood’, then his ‘profit is not his *property*’.⁴¹⁶ He also specified that the accumulation of property had to be limited to ‘prevent another from producing to the utmost of his capacity’.⁴¹⁷ Heinzen’s ‘*maximum*’ was similarly intended to ensure that no ‘corrupting inequalities’ between citizens could develop and that that ‘inequality...is not allowed to go so far, that one person through the other loses his means of subsistence and his existence’.⁴¹⁸ He also emphasised that the social measures taken by the republic would ensure ‘the inequality of possession cannot lead to any other social or political differences which violate free humanity’.⁴¹⁹ Broadly, the democratic republicans thus believed that no citizen should be allowed to accumulate so much property that it threatened the political equality of all citizens or if it meant that others were no longer able to provide for themselves and would thus fall into dependency on another.

This was the republican case for the extension of private property to everyone. I now turn to the arguments put forward by Marx and Engels for its abolition and replacement by communal property. It should come as little surprise that Marx and Engels’s *direct* response to the democratic republican defence of private property did not involve a moral refutation of the underlying principles.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁵ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 147/19.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 148/20.

⁴¹⁸ Heinzen, ‘Kommunistisches’, 372; ‘Gegen die Kommunisten’, 81.

⁴¹⁹ Heinzen, ‘Gegen die Kommunisten’, 83.

⁴²⁰ On the surface, Engels’s contemporaneous ‘Entwurf des Kommunistischen Glaubensbekenntnisses’ (Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith) reads like he was more open to grounding the communist opposition to private property in moral principles. This draft document was a precursor to the *Manifest* – still written in the catechistic format – that was put forward by Engels at the first congress of the Communist League in June 1847, and was only discovered in 1968. Here Engels answered the question ‘*On what do you base your community of property (Gütergemeinschaft)?*’ with the reply: ‘on the fact that in the consciousness or feeling of every individual there exist certain irrefutable basic principles (*unumstößliche Grundsätze*) which, being the result of the whole historical development, require no proof, and in reply to the follow up question ‘*What are such principles?*’, he wrote: ‘For example, every individual strives to be happy. The happiness of the individual is inseparable from the happiness of all, etc.’ Engels, ‘Entwurf des Kommunistischen Glaubensbekenntnisses’ 53/96. Basing communism on the ‘irrefutable basic principles’ that everyone wants to be happy and that individual happiness can only be achieved through the happiness of all, is alien to Marx’s strictures against moralism, and it may at first glance seem to reflect some divergence on Engels’s part from Marx’s position. But we should be cautious about placing too much weight on these statements, because though the document

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They were not interested in questioning the justice of allowing people to keep property derived from work, when each person's ability to work can be seen as the consequence of morally arbitrary social backgrounds and natural talents.⁴²¹ An extended argument against the desirability of private property can of course be drawn out from some their ethical writings and ideas. But that was not the kind of answer that they were interested in giving in their direct political confrontation with the democratic republicans. 'The *property question*' was, as Marx explained, not about 'simplistic questions of conscience and clichés about justice', but in fact a question about 'the stage of development of industry'.⁴²²

Their direct response to the democratic republican defence of the extension of private property and the accompanying set of social measures, was thus to associate it with an outdated petty bourgeois form of production. They argued that the democratic republicans were effectively defending a vision of production based on artisanal and small-scale craft production, and that this vision was being steadily swept aside by the relentless forward march of capitalist mass production. Only their version of communism, which they argued understood the direction of history and foresaw a future alternative to capitalism that would harness the same forces of mass industrial production as capitalism, but use them to liberate humanity from the drudgery of labour, was worthy of consideration. The democratic republicans were thus, according to Marx and Engels, not so much morally misguided but mistaken on a historically epochal scale, because they were trying to defend a mode of production that was becoming increasingly and inevitably out of date.

This was the response they gave in the *Manifest* when discussing the right to acquire private property. While democratic republicans are not explicitly targeted in the *Manifest* (unlike various competing socialisms), they are clearly the critics in question when Marx and Engels write,

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquitting property as the fruit of a man's own

is in Engels's handwriting, he wrote these lines together with other members of the Communist League who were still under the influence of competing communist ideas. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Engels cut these (and four other) questions from the subsequent 'Grundsätze des Kommunismus' (Principles of Communism), which he wrote alone in October 1847. See Bert Andréas, 'Einleitung', in *Gründungsdokumente des Bundes der Kommunisten (Juni bis September 1847)*, ed. Bert Andréas (Hamburg: Ernst Hauswedell, 1969), 22. For a discussion of some of the divergences between Engels's preparatory writings and the final version of the *Manifest*, including his greater enthusiasm for experimental socialist communities, see Stedman Jones, 'Introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*', 65–69.

⁴²¹ The classic modern formulation of this idea is, of course, John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Revised Edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 61–64.

⁴²² Marx, 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 341/322.

labour, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.⁴²³

In their mocking reply to this charge, they noted that this kind of ‘Hard won, self-acquired, self-earned property!’, was simply the property created by the ‘petty artisan’ and the ‘small peasant’ which ‘preceded the bourgeois form’.⁴²⁴ They argued that his kind of private property did not need to be abolished, since ‘the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it everyday’.⁴²⁵ Those who attempted to maintain the form of production of the ‘lower middle class, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant’ were reactionary because ‘they try to roll back the wheel of history’.⁴²⁶

This was same argument they made in their dispute with Heinzen in the *Deutsche-Brusseler-Zeitung* just a few months before. Marx argued that Heinzen’s proposal for a minimum and maximum level of property would fail because of ‘the “economic laws” on whose cold-blooded inevitability all well-meaning “measures” will necessary founder’.⁴²⁷ Engels’s similarly argued that the ‘economists of the bourgeoisie are quite right in respect of Herr Heinzen when they present these measures as reactionary compared to free competition’.⁴²⁸ They were reactionary because they tried to ‘restore more primitive stages in the development of property’, and this would inevitably be ‘defeated once more by competition’ with a result of a ‘restoration of the present situation’.⁴²⁹ That is the fate of all measures that stay within ‘the basis of private property’ rather than going beyond it by completely abolishing it.⁴³⁰

Engels here alludes to an interesting twist of the argument, namely that the measures Heinzen and the republican democrats propose work only as revolutionary transitional measures and not as a social system that is in-itself a stable one. Engels argues that the bourgeois political economists are right to argue that the various social measures to limit private property are beset by ‘difficulties and disadvantages’.⁴³¹ He says that they can thus be seen only as measures that ‘compel the proletariat to go further and further until private property has been

⁴²³ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 475/498. Salvo Mastellone significantly overstates the case when he argues that there are ‘precise references’ in the *Manifest*, including the above passage, to Mazzini’s ‘Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe’, Salvo Mastellone, *Mazzini and Marx: Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 143, 144–46. The relevant sections of the *Manifest* are better seen as general responses to the typical republican objections raised at the time. For example, Heinzen had a few months before written that by ‘stripping away all private property...communism destroys individuality, it destroys independence, it destroys freedom’, ‘Karl Heinzen und die Kommunisten’, 4.

⁴²⁴ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 475/498.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 472/494.

⁴²⁷ Marx, ‘Die moralisierende Kritik’, 356/336.

⁴²⁸ Engels, ‘Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen’, 314/296.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 313/295.

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completely abolished'.⁴³² That would seem to imply that the social measures contribute to developing a revolutionary dynamic that drives the struggle forward by its own momentum. Engels then claims that if they are stopped mid-journey, the result is not the new stable social order envisaged by the democratic republicans, but the 'restoration of the present situation' – i.e. a reversion to capitalism.⁴³³ Metaphorically, we can compare it to a boulder that must be rolled to the very top of the hill in order to stay put, otherwise it will always roll back to its starting point. Going only half-way up the hill means 'los[ing] what [the proletariat] has already won'.⁴³⁴ Thus, according to Engels, the social order envisaged by the democratic republicans was not a stable one: it must either progress forward to communism or revert back to capitalism.⁴³⁵

Engels and Marx charged that Heinzen had failed to properly understand the forces of history and the insight that could be gleaned by a proper study of political economy. Engels argued that Heinzen did not understand one of the foundational principles of their materialist conception of history, that the 'property relations of any given era are the necessary result of the mode of production and exchange of the era'.⁴³⁶ He argued that without an understanding of this central insight Heinzen was unable to grasp that transforming 'large-scale landownership' into 'small-scale' (as his land reform measures intended) would affect the 'whole pattern of agriculture[al]' production.⁴³⁷ Proposals for social reform had to be based on a proper understanding of the underlying material forces and their historical progression otherwise they were, in Engels's German compound formulation, just '*Weltverbesserungsschwärmereien*' (roughly 'world-saving rapturous fantasies').⁴³⁸ Thus what Heinzen did not understand about communism was that it was not a 'certain *doctrine*' that 'proceeds from a definite theoretical principle' (the principle of the abolition of private property) in order to then analyse and judge the world.⁴³⁹ It was precisely the reverse: it began with an analysis of the 'course of previous history' and the 'actual results in the civilised

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 314/296.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 313/295.

⁴³⁵ A similar argument was made by Stephan Born (a typesetter and friend of Marx and Engels who went on to found the largest organisation of German workers during the 1848 Revolutions) in his *Der Heinzen'sche Staat*, 13–14. He argued that the Heinzen's proposals would either ruin the state or necessarily lead to communism. Engels praised the pamphlet as the 'first written by a worker which does not adopt a moral attitude but attempts to trace the political struggles of the present back to the struggle of the various classes of society with one another' 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen', 315/297. Marx also recommended it in 'Die moralisierende Kritik', 359/339–40.

⁴³⁶ Engels, 'Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen', 314/296.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 315/297.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 321–22/303.

countries at the present time', from which proceeded a prediction about the necessity of communism and the abolition of private property.⁴⁴⁰

Heinzen's reaction to this argument was a mixture of bafflement and outrage. He thought that Engels's reference to one the foundational principles of history was about as insightful as saying that an 'apple is the "necessary result" of an apple tree'.⁴⁴¹ (We should remember here that Marx and Engels were citing an understanding of history and society that at that moment barely existed in print).⁴⁴² Heinzen thought that that the refusal to defend the abolition of private property on the level of moral principle was a cowardly way to avoid spelling out what it would in fact entail. Arguing that private property would abolish itself 'through the "development", "the facts", "the movement"', was just a 'childish ridiculousness'.⁴⁴³ They could attempt to deny that they proceeded from the abolition of private property all they wanted, but at some point the 'disowned principle will keep calling' and they would have to think about what that society looked like.⁴⁴⁴ If Engels was really as 'far-sighted' and 'omniscient' as he claimed about the 'preconditions' for the abolition of private property, then surely, Heinzen challenged, he could also 'kindly cast his gaze at the conditions of things' once it was in fact abolished.⁴⁴⁵

(vi) Paths of History

On its own terms, Marx and Engels's argument that the democratic republicans were defending a petty bourgeois form of production that failed to grasp the rise of capitalism, was largely accurate. As a whole, the republican democrats were generally unaware of the enormous productive power unleashed by industrial capitalism and only dimly aware of its transformative effect it was having on all social and political relations. The ever-intensifying division of labour, the development of the world market, the vast increase of the urban population, the restless drive for greater profits and unlimited accumulation, in short the unrelenting forward drive of capitalism, which Marx and Engels so famously captured in the first chapter of the *Manifest*, are themes nearly entirely absent from the writings of the democratic republicans. In so far as they were able to conceive of the economy as a whole, their planned social measures instead reveal a

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ Heinzen, 'Ein "Repräsentant" der Kommunisten', 3.

⁴⁴² Marx's *Misère de la philosophie* (1847) had only appeared a few months before (and Heinzen said he had not read it 'Ein "Repräsentant" der Kommunisten', 4), *Die deutsche Ideologie* was and would remain unpublished in Marx and Engels's lifetime, and the programmatic statements in the *Manifest* and the preface to *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* had yet to be written.

⁴⁴³ Heinzen, *Die Helden des deutschen Kommunismus*, 19.

⁴⁴⁴ Heinzen, 'Ein "Repräsentant" der Kommunisten', 4.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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vision of production focused nearly entirely on artisans, small-scale producers and independent peasants.

This can be observed in their ideas on industrial organisation, land reform, inheritance, and free credit. Ruge's system of *sozietäten*, for instance, vague as they were, reflected a largely 'pre-industrial social ideal' where each member of the *sozietät* produces nearly everything they need for themselves.⁴⁴⁶ No consideration was given here about the inter-connectedness of modern production methods or the efficiency gains of the division of labour. Nor was there any thought given to whether competitive pressures – both national and international – from competing capitalist firms and their lower prices would undermine and destroy this small-scale independent form of production. The proposal to abolish inheritance as a sufficient safeguard against corrupting levels of inequalities reflects the fact that the democratic republicans 'could not yet imagine the dynamic of industrial capitalism', where huge fortunes could be amassed within one generation.⁴⁴⁷

The democratic republican policy of providing free credit would have been of special benefit to those petit-bourgeois small-scale producers who lacked the capital to expand their business. But as a solution to the problems faced by industrial and urban labourers, it reveals the extent to which republican democrats understood this class of primarily consisting of artisans and semi-skilled workers.⁴⁴⁸ While free credit gives artisans the necessary capital to set up their own workshops, fully proletarianised workers do not have the necessary skills to take advantage of this opportunity. The democratic republicans might have argued that making all education (including vocational education) free would give them the necessary skills, but that raises the issue of whether the entire emerging proletariat class could realistically be converted into artisans and whether that was a feasible mode of production. The provision of credit to worker co-operatives, which does recognise the necessity of large-scale production, was however nearly always an afterthought for the democratic republicans and little thought was given to whether the capitalist class would have allowed this challenge to their position. For instance, when Linton says that 'a sound system of national credit...would rid us of all those mischievous middle-men called capitalists', and even calls for people to 'Let the capitalist pass! At worst they will tease you with a financial crisis', he reveals not only a questionable faith in the idea that state credit might

⁴⁴⁶ Walter, *Demokratisches Denken zwischen Hegel und Marx*, 261.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 258n196.

⁴⁴⁸ Here, the class background of some democratic republicans probably played a role in the formulation of their ideas. For instance, as a skilled engraver Linton was often aloof from the concerns of less-skilled workers, and shared the concerns and ideas 'typical of...the uneasy class of artisan and *petit bourgeois* reformers', Smith, *Radical Artisan*, 34–35.

naturally crowd out capitalists but also a failure to appreciate the political and economic power exercised by the capitalist class and whether they would simply stand idly by.⁴⁴⁹

The emphasis and importance placed on land reform (Linton calls it the ‘necessary preliminary to any real Organization of Labour’)⁴⁵⁰ might also strike us as an example of the democratic republicans’ failure to grasp the nature of the emerging industrial society. But we should remember that the Europe of the 1840s was still a ‘continent of peasants’, where even the most industrialised and urbanised regions still had roughly half their workforce employed in agriculture,⁴⁵¹ and thus no serious social reformer could neglect the plight of the rural population. However, Linton’s hope that land reform could create a ‘new race of independent peasant freeholders’ fails to engage with any of structural forces that were driving land consolidation and rural population flight.⁴⁵²

The republican democrats can thus be seen as defenders of a petit-bourgeois mode of production, but the question is to what extent this condemns their ideas. With the benefit of hindsight, it might seem that Marx and Engels were clearly correct. Capitalist mass production has to a great degree swept aside much of the productive world that the republican democrats idealised. Marx and Engels can in this light be seen to have correctly understood the course of history (even if there is of course disagreement over whether they were right to believe that communist production would eventually replace capitalist production). But though this is the course that history did take, there is some question if history *had* to take this path.

It has long been a standard assumption in economic history – shared by both capitalist enthusiasts and Marxist critics – that the rise of mass-production was inevitable. A number of political economists, labour historians and social theorists have however questioned this assumption. Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel have argued that the victory of mass production (where unskilled workers and automated processes carry out fixed and simple tasks, producing uniform products) over craft production (where skilled workers engage in flexible production of varied goods) was not a historical inevitability but the outcome of specific social struggles and political choices.⁴⁵³ They argue that Marx wrongly inherited the classical political economy assumption from Adam Smith, which equated mass production with modernity. Despite their differences, Marx and

⁴⁴⁹ Linton, ‘Republican Principles’, 156/22; Linton, ‘The French Republic’, 103.

⁴⁵⁰ Linton, ‘Republican Measures’, 123.

⁴⁵¹ Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851*, 5.

⁴⁵² Linton, ‘Republican Measures’, 124.

⁴⁵³ Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

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Smith believed that increases in productivity relied on ever greater specialisation (through the division of labour and subsequent automation of those tasks), and that these processes were on an unstoppable march forwards.⁴⁵⁴ Piore and Sabel instead try to show that craft production was not the regressive and inefficient system so often assumed. As supporting evidence, they point to the continued existence of successful craft based production alongside mass production (such as specialty steel production in Saint-Étienne, Solingen, and Sheffield) until much later in the nineteenth and early twentieth century than the assumptions of classical political economy would predict, and how specific policy choices undermined other-wise efficient examples of craft production industries (such as the French state's policies in the 1960s of mergers and restructuring in the Lyon silk industry). More broadly they argue for reconceptualising technological progress from the 'narrow track of Smith and Marx', to a 'branching tree', where political and social struggle determines which technological branch is settled on.⁴⁵⁵ Roberto Mangabeira Unger has in turn developed these investigations into an encompassing 'anti-necessitarian' social theory, which foregrounds the role of politics in historical explanation and the future possibilities for leftist politics. He explicitly endorses the 'tradition of petty bourgeois radicalism' as a guiding ideal which he argues never received the 'impartial economic examination' it deserved.⁴⁵⁶

The point of introducing this discussion is not to settle whether craft production was in fact a feasible alternative historical path to the one that history did in fact take (a question far beyond the scope of this thesis). But to instead show that the vision of production shared by the democratic republicans, was perhaps not quite as straightforwardly impracticable and historically doomed as we are likely to, and as Marx and Engels certainly did, assume. The question is more open than that. Ultimately, this question raises a host of further ones about the role of politics and class struggles in the course of history and economic progress. The interpretation of historical materialism that Marx and Engels deployed against the democratic republicans held that the triumph of capitalist mass production was determined to an extent that made consideration of the petty bourgeois alternative pointless. Less determinist and more class-based versions of historical materialism developed by subsequent Marxist analysis (and indeed

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 21–26.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 and 38–43. See also Charles Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin, 'Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets and Technology in Nineteenth-Century Industrialization', *Past & Present*, no. 108 (1985): 133–76.

⁴⁵⁶ Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 28–29. Unger also notes that the petty bourgeois radical ideal must be significantly reconstructed so that it no longer relies on 'absolute property rights' and is instead embedded in a significantly altered set of political and economic institutions *Ibid.*, 30.

sometimes displayed by Marx himself) would perhaps be more open to seeing the choice between craft and mass production as an example of how class-struggle explains the choice between multiple competing modes of production.⁴⁵⁷ Such a reconfiguration of historical materialism, might then also require a more sustained reflection on the desirability and internal feasibility of the democratic republican alternative to communism.

* * *

In closing this chapter, I want to turn to one of Marx's lesser known predictions, which serves as a bridge between our discussion here and the events explored in chapter three. In the final line of *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, Marx analyses the future prospects of Napoleon III's empire, arguing that the internal contradictions will eventually shatter the regime, and that the 'bronze statue of Napoleon will crash from the top of the Vendôme Column'.⁴⁵⁸ This monument had been built by the original Napoleon as a celebration of his imperial conquests in 1810, and it represented for radicals the worst excesses of national chauvinism and militarism. Consequently, on 16 May 1871, almost exactly nineteen years after the publication of *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* in the middle of May 1852, the Paris Commune tore down the column and renamed the eponymous Place Vendôme the Place Internationale.⁴⁵⁹ In a similar vein, Marx notes that in 1848 the '*social republic*' was, and could only be, a 'prophecy' of things to come.⁴⁶⁰ The Paris Commune was to be the brutal and inspiring realisation of that prophecy.

⁴⁵⁷ For an excellent summary of (as well as intervention into) the contemporary Marxist debates around this question see Vivek Chibber, 'What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Marxist Theory of History', *Historical Materialism* 19, no. 2 (2011): 60–91. For an argument that the later Marx displays a more flexible interpretation of historical materialism see Robert Brenner, 'Bourgeois Revolution and Transition to Capitalism', in *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 271–304. For an overview of 'political Marxism', which is less determinist and places greater emphasis on class-struggle, see Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*.

⁴⁵⁸ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 189/207/197.

⁴⁵⁹ Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London and New York: Verso, 2015), 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 174/194/181.

Excursus Two

Chains and Invisible Threads

The Roman slave was held by chains; the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads.

Marx, *Kapital*¹

In an early chapter of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) we are shown the eviction of Oklahoma tenant farmers and their families, by the bank that owns the land. The bank has decided that large farms will be more profitable than sharecropping, and so the tenants and their homes have to go. The tenants try to reason with the bank's representatives, but they explain that there is nothing they can do,

We're sorry. It's not us. It's the monster. The bank isn't like a man.

Yes, but the bank is only made of men.

No, you're wrong there – quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.

One of the tenants threatens to shoot the man hired by the bank to bulldoze their homes. The man protests that he has to make a living as well,

'That's so,' the tenant said. 'Who gave you orders? I'll go after him. He's the one to kill.'

'You're wrong. He got his orders from the bank. The bank told him, "Clear those people out or it's your job."'

'Well, there's a president of the bank. There's a board of directors. I'll fill up the magazine of the rifle and go into the bank.'

The driver said, 'Fellow was telling me the bank gets orders from the East. The orders were, "Make the land show profit or we'll close you up."'

'But where does it stop? Who can we shoot? I don't aim to starve to death before I kill the man that's starving me.'

'I don't know. Maybe there's nobody to shoot. Maybe the thing isn't men at all. Maybe like you said, the property's doing it.'²

¹ Marx, *Kapital*, 529–30/599/573.

² John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), 35–41.

What Steinbeck so powerfully captures in this episode is the experience of utter frustration and desperation when faced with forces far beyond one's control. The tenants' way of life, based on their intimate and personal relations with their land and with each other, comes into brutal contact with the abstract and impersonal imperatives of the market. The desperate tenant who vainly tries to find someone to blame, is forced to accept that there is no easily discernible individual who is to blame for their predicament. It was this impersonal character, of the forces that control people, which Marx thought was truly distinctive about capitalism. In a discussion of how European peasants are driven from the land that could just as easily describe the situation of the Oklahoma farmers a hundred years later, Marx writes that in pre-capitalist societies, the 'executioners are themselves tangible and hangable beings', but in capitalist ones it is an 'invisible, intangible and silent despot' that drives 'in its noiseless, every day working, whole races and whole classes of men from the soil of their forefathers'.³

This excursus explores Marx's account of the impersonal side of the domination. I will argue that this is where Marx's real distinctiveness lies when it comes to understanding domination in capitalism. As I show in the first section of this excursus, Marx's account of the personal domination that the capitalist exercises over the worker in the workplace, was one that nineteenth century republicans had already extensively developed. To show this, I focus on the writings of Felicité de Lamennais and William James Linton. With this republican account of wage-slavery set out, I then turn to Marx's account of the impersonal domination of markets.

I. Republicans on Wage-Slavery

One of the most important nineteenth century republican discussions of wage-slavery is Lamennais's *De l'esclavage moderne* (1839). This was an influential and widely translated pamphlet, with editions swiftly appearing across Europe and as far away as Chile and Uruguay.⁴ Its central gripping argument was that the 'ancient slavery' of the chattel slave was far from over, and was in fact replicated in the 'modern slavery' of the proletariat.⁵ Lamennais's definition of proletarians as 'those who possess nothing, who live only by their labour', was also one of the earliest examples of the term being used in its modern sense, as a class of people

³ Marx, 'Parliamentary Debates-The Clergy Against Socialism-Starvation', 54/540/527.

⁴ The original went into five editions within a year. I have traced translations into English (1840), German (1840), three separate Spanish editions published in Spain (1840), Portuguese (1845), Italian (1862) and Dutch (1885), as well as French editions printed in Belgium (1839, 1840) and Switzerland (1840), and the Spanish editions printed in Chile (1843) and Uruguay (1847). It was also bundled with popular collections of Lamennais's work throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

⁵ Nowhere in Lamennais's pamphlet does he make what would seem to be the obvious point that 'ancient chattel slavery was, in 1839, still very much in existence outside of Europe, including in the French colonies.

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who have no property and have to work for their living (as opposed to the older sense of the merely impoverished section of society).⁶ Moreover, Lamennais presented the proletarians' interests as directly opposed to those of the capitalists, making it, in G. D. H. Cole's words, 'one of the great documents in the history of the idea of the class-struggle'.⁷

In *De l'esclavage moderne*, Lamennais provides a historical sketch of the development of the modern proletarian's situation (aspects of which, anticipate Marx's own account). Lamennais portrays history as a 'slow progression of liberation (*affranchissement*)'.⁸ In the beginning, there is the ancient slave, who is 'the property of his master; dependent solely upon his caprices'.⁹ The 'first step' beyond this was a 'slight' one, with the change from the ancient slave into a serf, whose 'personal dependence was somewhat less absolute' than the slave.¹⁰ Serfdom in turn, slowly disappeared, partly due to the effect of the Christian belief in equality, and partly due to the struggles of the urban populations freeing themselves from feudal control and establishing independent communes, which Lamennais notes allowed the 'birth of the bourgeoisie'.¹¹ Finally, all feudal privileges were abolished and formal equality was established, which Lamennais suggests gives the impression of a society freed from slavery. Yet, he maintains that 'the slavery of the ancients, [is] only attenuated and disguised under new names and new forms'.¹²

Lamennais argues that the modern proletariat does have a 'vast advantage over the ancient slave', as they have rights and can dispose of themselves as they see fit.¹³ That is a 'great improvement', which must be acknowledged.¹⁴ However, the proletarian does have to labour in order to live, and that means receiving wages from a 'capitalist in exchange for his labour'.¹⁵ If the capitalist stops paying wages the proletarian must die. That puts the proletarian in a state of dependence

⁶ Lamennais, *De l'esclavage moderne*, 30/9. For this point see Robert L. Bussard, 'The "Dangerous Class" of Marx and Engels: The Rise of the Idea of the Lumpenproletariat', *History of European Ideas* 8, no. 6 (1987): 678. The modern meaning is often traced to Jean Charles Simonde de Sismondi, and especially his *Etude sur l'économie politique*, published in 1837 (two years before Lamennais's pamphlet), see Goetz A. Briefs, *The Proletariat: A Challenge to Western Civilization* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1937), 58–60.

⁷ Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 1:199–200. See also the editorial discussion in the recent reissue, Michael Löwy, 'Peuple réveille-toi! Lamennais, critique de l'esclavage capitaliste', in *De l'esclavage moderne*, by Félicité Robert de Lamennais (Paris: Passager clandestin, 2009), 11–22.

⁸ Lamennais, *De l'esclavage moderne*, 14/5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7/3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8–9/4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10–14/4–5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 27/8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 31/9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 36–37/10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32/9.

on the capitalist, (makes him ‘irremediably his subject’), because the capitalist has the ‘absolute power of dispensing life and death’.¹⁶

The modern proletarian is thus controlled by a different imperative to the ancient slave. In ancient times, ‘chains and rods were the sanction’ used to keep the slave under control, but now the ‘chain, the rod of the modern slave is hunger’.¹⁷ Driving the point home, Lamennais argues that ‘hunger place[s] the proletarian in a state of absolute dependence upon the capitalist’.¹⁸ This imperative also extends to the level of setting the wage-contract, as the capitalist can afford to ‘bide his time’, while the proletarian has no other means to survive, the capitalist can thus ‘dictate the conditions of their mutual contract’.¹⁹ Thus the proletarian being ‘legally free’, still means being in a state of dependence and their ‘liberty is a fiction’.²⁰ On this basis, Lamennais concludes his investigation into modern slavery by arguing that,

Between the capitalist and the proletarian, then, the same actual relations subsist as were between the master and the slave of old. The very name remains: we say, *the master* and the worker; we speak but too exactly.²¹

The republican dimensions of Lamennais’s discussion should be clear, the worker’s situation is repeatedly cast in terms of dependency on a master, and the Lamennais argues that the worker is unfree because of being placed in this slave-like position. Two final points, which further highlight the republican dimension of Lamennais’s account, deserve emphasising. First, though much of the *De l’esclavage moderne* deals with the social dependency of the proletariat, Lamennais also stresses the political dimension of modern slavery. He argues that when the people ‘has no share in the government of the commonwealth...then it is a political slave’.²² Lamennais thus repeats the classical republican argument that the people’s exclusion from government makes them slaves. Second, in a later discussion of work, Lamennais notes that the ‘question of Labour...is intimately connected with the question of Freedom’, and that ‘if [man] ceases to be free, he

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32–33/9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35–36/10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55/15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 32–33/10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36/10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 34–35/10. It is hard for modern readers of Lamennais’s pamphlet not to be heavily reminded of Marx. It has been claimed that the ‘language [is] strikingly similar to that of the *Communist Manifesto*’ and that Lamennais ‘influenced Marx a good deal more than Marx himself ever realised’, respectively Bussard, ‘The “Dangerous Class” of Marx and Engels: The Rise of the Idea of the Lumpenproletariat’, 678; and Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 1:199. Marx does, at one point reference the phrase ‘the modern slavery (*l’esclavage moderne*) of the worker’ in *Misère de la philosophie*, 84/125. But there is no direct evidence that Marx read Lamennais’s pamphlet, and he had little time for someone he believed to be a ‘catholicizing, political dreamer’, Marx and Engels, ‘Zirkular gegen Kriege’, 7/41.

²² Lamennais, *De l’esclavage moderne*, 60/16.

ceases to be man; he comes what the Roman law very justly called *res*, a thing.²³ Lamennais is here (a little inexactly) referencing the idea, set out in the famous Roman *Digests*, that the fundamental distinction between persons is between free men and slaves. This Roman idea, as Quentin Skinner has shown, was central to the development of the republican idea of freedom.²⁴

The English translation of *De l'esclavage moderne*, under the title *Modern Slavery*, was carried out by Linton the following year, in 1840. Linton would later write that 'though but a pamphlet, [it] should command the attention of whoever cares to understand the struggle between Capital and Labour'.²⁵ Linton's translation added an appendix, where he expanded on Lamennais's thesis, by arguing that 'ancient slavery subsists' not just in the modern wage-slave, but also in the 'woman-slave', as women are denied 'natural liberty and self-sovereignty'.²⁶

Apart from his translation, Linton's discussion of wage-labour deserves attention in its own right. We have already discussed, in chapter two, how Linton believed that providing credit to the 'wage-slaves' would free them from the 'tyranny of Capital'.²⁷ Of further interest is his article 'Slavery and Freedom', published in the *English Republic* in 1853. The guiding idea of the article is that freedom can only be understood in relation to slavery. Freedom is partly defined as the absence of arbitrary power. Linton says that freedom means having 'no capricious tyrant', that '[e]very one controuleth his own life under no authority', and that 'FREEDOM implies self-controul'.²⁸ Though Linton also seamlessly moves between this negative definition and a more positive conception, arguing that '*Freedom is the opportunity of healthily developing one's nature, - the opportunity of growth, the condition of excellence.*'²⁹ (A reminder that negative and positive conceptions of freedom in the republican tradition are not nearly as distinct as some historians and theorists have suggested). Slavery is in turn defined as the opposite of this negative and positive conception of freedom, as the 'prevention of growth and development: the prevention of that self-controul and free conduct'.³⁰ Associating freedom with being under one's own power and slavery with being under the power of another is a recurrent theme in Linton; he elsewhere argues the 'slave is he whose will is overruled by another. The freeman is he whose life has no other master but God'.³¹

²³ Lamennais, *Question du travail*, 10/286.

²⁴ Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 38–41.

²⁵ Linton, *European Republicans*, 217.

²⁶ Linton, 'Appendix to *Modern Slavery*', 28, 32.

²⁷ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 125.

²⁸ Linton, 'Slavery and Freedom', 81–82.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

³¹ Linton, 'Voluntary Slavery', 359.

Citizen Marx

Price Fourpence.



MODERN SLAVERY :

BY THE

ABBE DE LAMENNAIS,

Author of "Words of a Believer," "Book of the People," &c.

WITH A FEW NOTES.

LONDON:

J. WATSON, 15, CITY ROAD, FINSBURY ;

Sold by Hetherington, 126, Strand ;

**Cleave, 1, Shoe Lane, Fleet Street—Purkess, Old Compton
Street—Clements, Little Pultney Street—Heywood, Manchester
—Guest, Birmingham—Smith, Nottingham—Smith, Liverpool
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Abbey Street, Dublin—and all Booksellers.**

1840.

*Figure 8. Linton's translation of Lamennais's De l'esclavage moderne (1839)
(Public Domain, Google Books)*

Linton argues that people commonly think that slavery exists only in the ‘negro-slavery’ of America and the ‘women in the slave-markets and seraglios of the East’.³² Yet slavery also exists, Linton maintains, in ‘what are politely called free countries’.³³ He argues that the ‘Working men of England’ are political slaves because they have no say in the making of laws, and that they are socially enslaved as ‘their persons, their industry, their property (so much or so little indeed as they can possess), are not in their own hand, but under the power of another class of men who dispose of them as they think fit’.³⁴ So far, this covers much of the same ground and argumentative structure as Lamennais. But what is most remarkable about Linton’s discussion is the authority he cites to define slavery:

Hear what that truest freeman and noble servant of his country even unto death,— hear what Algernon Sidney said of Slavery: ‘The weight of chains, number of stripes, hardness of labour, and other effects of a master’s cruelty, may make one servitude more miserable than another; but he is a slave who serves the best and gentlest man in the world, as well as he who serves the worst, if he *must* obey his commands and depend upon his will.’³⁵

This definition by Sidney, which comes from his *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698), is one of the quintessential republican definitions of what constitutes slavery, as it so succinctly captures the idea that however benign and kindly a master may be, they still have the power to interfere. It has consequently become a central example in contemporary republican theory of the idea of domination and its historical pedigree.³⁶

What is striking is to find Sidney being utilised far removed from his early modern context. An idea originally meant to criticise the absolute power of kings like Charles II over their subjects has been transplanted to the middle of nineteenth century to criticise the arbitrary power of the capitalist over his workers. Intriguingly, this is not the only example of Sidney being used to criticise wage-labour in the nineteenth century. Alex Gourevitch has unearthed that the Knights of Labour (an American trade union heavily influenced by republican ideas), used the same Sidney quotation in 1882 in their *Journal of United Labour* to

³² Linton, ‘Slavery and Freedom’, 89–90.

³³ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* Linton’s citation very slightly alters the final line, (probably due to a printing error), which in the original reads ‘...and he does serve him if he must obey his commands and depend upon his will’, Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, III.21. Linton also cites Sidney’s quote as the epigraph to ‘Republican Measures’, 121, and as a standalone quote defining ‘Slavery’ in the *National*, 214. Linton’s use of Sidney is also noted in White, ‘The Republican Critique of Capitalism’, 566.

³⁶ It is cited in Pettit, *Republicanism*, 34; Philip Pettit, ‘Republican Freedom and Contestatory Democratization’, in *Democracy’s Value*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 167; Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 28; and Frank Lovett, *A General Theory of Domination and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 153.

justify wage-labour as a form of slavery.³⁷ We are thus confronted by the unusual sight of an early modern aristocrat being utilised by an English radical and American trade unionists to attack wage-labour.³⁸

Linton takes this to be an entirely natural progression. He sees no problem in applying Sidney's definition to not only the political exclusion of the working-class but also their social dependency. This is in spite of the fact that Sidney, as Gourevitch notes, believed in property qualifications on voting, and had no problem with the kind of private domination objected to by Linton and the Knights of Labour.³⁹ Sidney believed that 'the difference between *civis* and *servus* is irreconcilable; and no man, whilst he is a servant, can be a member of a commonwealth; for he that is not in his own power, cannot have a part in the government of others', and that if he hired servants he could 'put them away at my pleasure', and that no-one had the right to interfere with what 'passes between me and them'.⁴⁰ For Sidney, the labouring classes were rightly excluded from politics, and domination did not, could not, exist in the private sphere of labour. Linton and the Knights of Labour thus represent a considerable radicalisation of the republican tradition in the intervening two hundred years.

II. Impersonal Domination

The preceding discussion shows that Marx was hardly the only person to apply republican concepts to criticise wage-labour. Lamennais and Linton both condemn the institution as one that takes away the workers' freedom and subjects them to the arbitrary power of the capitalist. Nineteenth century republicans had thus already provided a trenchant critique of wage-labour before Marx had even begun his critique of political economy.⁴¹ Marx certainly improved on aspects of this account. His historical investigation, in *Kapital*, of how a class emerged that was dispossessed of the means of production and thus forced into wage-labour is superior to the brief and moralised accounts that pre-dated him. Marx's account of exploitation, also provides a firmer grounding for why domination is central to capitalism, as the greater the domination the capitalist exercises over the worker,

³⁷ Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, 14, 103.

³⁸ There is some evidence that it was a reasonably popular definition of slavery at the time. See for example, [Anon], *Materials for Thinking: Extracted from the Works of Ancient and Modern Authors*, (London: J.H. Storie 1837), 225; *McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal*, 7 August 1841, no. 19, p. 148, and *The Movement and Anti-Persecution Gazette*, 2 March 1844, p. 96. It is possible that Linton, through his move to America, was responsible for the Knights of Labour use of Sidney, but I have not been able to verify this.

³⁹ Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, 15–16.

⁴⁰ Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, II.5, III.41.

⁴¹ Their discussion of wage-slavery also makes more explicit reference to the republican tradition, such as Lamennais's reference to roman law and Linton's invocation of Sidney, than Marx was ever inclined to do.

the greater the profits they can extract from them.⁴² But where Marx's discussion of domination in capitalism most extends the republican account is his stress on the impersonal domination of markets.

Linton does exhibit occasional awareness of this aspect of domination in capitalism. For example, he references protecting workers from the 'fluctuations of Trade', and even notes that the 'monied classes, are themselves at the mercy of every chance and change of trade'.⁴³ But beyond these passing remarks, there is no systematic analysis of the centrality of markets to capitalism or an account of how they exercise a form of impersonal domination. Marx, on the other hand, makes it a centrepiece of his critique of political economy. He aims to show how the domination of the worker is not limited to the workplace, but also extends to the way that the capitalist mode of production subjects them, and indeed all of society, to market forces beyond their control. That means a shift from simply analysing personal domination to impersonal domination. As he says in *Kapital*,

The contrast between the power of landed property, based on personal relations of domination and servitude, and the impersonal power of money, is clearly expressed by the two French proverbs, 'Nulle terre sans seigneur', and 'L'argent n'a pas de maître'.⁴⁴

Broadly, personal domination refers to an agent being subjected to the arbitrary will of another agent. That agent is usually a single individual but can be expanded to multiple agents who act with a coordinated will. Impersonal domination is when people are subjected to the uncoordinated wills of multiple agents.⁴⁵ This is what underlies Marx's idea of how markets dominate people. The uncoordinated actions of thousands upon millions of individuals culminate in market forces, which (outside of monopoly and monopsony situations) no identifiable individual controls. Marx believed that these impersonal market forces amounted to domination.⁴⁶ In a memorable phrase from 'Zur Judenfrage' he

⁴² I do not have the space to explore this link further, but see the useful discussion in Nicholas Vrousalis, 'Exploitation, Vulnerability, and Social Domination', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 41, no. 2 (2013): 131–57.

⁴³ Linton, 'Republican Measures', 125, 156.

⁴⁴ Respectively, 'No land without its lord' and 'Money has no master'. Marx, *Kapital*, 165n1/161n1/157n1. Marx also contrasts these proverbs in *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 360/507/267. Interestingly, Marx elsewhere argues that the political equivalent of 'Money has no master' is the idea that '[t]he bourgeoisie has no king; the true form of its rule is the republic', suggesting that the impersonal domination that characterises the modern economy is mirrored in the impersonal rule that characterises modern states, 'Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich', 146/40/76.

⁴⁵ The conceptual work underlying the idea of impersonal domination has yet to be properly explored in the contemporary republican literature. For important preliminary discussion see Roberts, *Marx's Inferno*, chapter 3.

⁴⁶ For competing accounts in the contemporary republican literature on whether markets dominate, see Philip Pettit, 'Freedom in the Market', *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 5, no. 2 (2006): 131–49; and Steven Klein, 'Fictitious Freedom: A Polanyian Critique of the Republican Revival', *American Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming.

argued that they made people the ‘plaything of alien forces’.⁴⁷ These alien forces are however not like weather patterns, which also exercise arbitrary interference in people’s lives, because they are created and sustained by human action. That means that the impersonal domination of markets is simultaneously the product of humans and something that has escaped their control. As Marx and Engels put in the *Manifest*,

Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like a sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up his spells.⁴⁸

The impersonal domination of the worker by market forces extends to both the workers’ position as consumers and producers. As they have no direct access to the means of subsistence, they are therefore forced to buy all their basic necessities through the market and they have to sell their labour-power on the market. Changes in demand and supply can thus condemn workers to no longer being able to feed themselves, or to having their wages cut or even being let go entirely. As Marx and Engels write in the *Manifest*, workers ‘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’.⁴⁹ This reliance on the market is a novel feature of the proletariat in comparison to other producing classes. Peasants may engage in some market activity, but their direct access to the means of sustenance means they do not have the same imperative to do so.⁵⁰ Serfs have to give over some of their labour or produce to their lords but their access to the land gives them a ‘guaranteed subsistence’, and thus the ‘serf stands outside competition’.⁵¹ Slaves do not have access to the means of production, but they receive their subsistence from a master without having to sell their labour power on the market, and are therefore more insulated from market forces. Engels thus notes that while the ‘slave stands outside competition, the proletarian stands within it and feels all its fluctuations’.⁵²

However, it is not just workers who are subjected to the impersonal domination of markets, as the capitalist is also exposed to the market imperative of profit-maximisation. Even if the capitalist wants to treat his workers well, by

⁴⁷ Marx, ‘Zur Judenfrage’, 149/355/154. See Jonathan Wolff, ‘Playthings of Alien Forces: Karl Marx and the Rejection of the Market Economy’, *Cogito* 6, no. 1 (1992): 35–41.

⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 467/489.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 468/490.

⁵⁰ On the difference between market opportunities and market imperatives, and the centrality of the latter to capitalism, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origins of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

⁵¹ Engels, *Grundsätze des Kommunismus*, 366/344.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Chains and Invisible Threads

paying them higher than market wages or reducing their working hours, competition from other capitalists makes this hard, or even impossible, to sustain. If they do not produce their goods at the lowest possible price they risk being driven out of business. Marx argues that ‘competition’ thus results in the ‘domination over both the working class and the proprietors themselves’ as they are ‘ruined or raised by the laws governing the motion of capital’.⁵³ Marx also recognises this imperative in his discussion of the working-day in *Kapital*. He notes that as much as this is a struggle between the worker and capitalist, the struggle between capitalists means that each individual capitalist has only limited field of manoeuvre,

But looking at these things as a whole, it is evident that this does not depend on the will, either good or bad, of the individual capitalist. Free competition makes the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him.⁵⁴

The capitalist is thus subjected to the same forces of impersonal domination as the worker. In William Clare Roberts’s concise phrase, that makes the worker a ‘slave of a slave’.⁵⁵ Ralph Miliband similarly argues that a manager of a firm, ‘however bright and shiny, must also submit to the imperative demands inherent in the system of which he is both master and servant’.⁵⁶

Of course, the effect of impersonal domination on capitalists is not nearly as grave as it is for workers. When a business fails a capitalist loses some, maybe even all, of his capital and perhaps his reputation. A worker, however, loses her job and thus her source of income, and if she cannot find another source of employment (and if there is no social safety net) she will starve. That seems to be the point Marx is stressing, when he notes that market imperatives ‘makes the capitalist appear as just as much under the servitude of the capital-relation as is the worker at the opposite pole, even if from a different angle’.⁵⁷ The divergence in experience is also especially pronounced during economic crises. Marx argues that in these times, ‘capital does not *live* only on labour’ it also kills it; he says that like a ‘lord, at once aristocratic and barbarous, it drags with it into the grave the corpses of its slaves, whole hecatombs of workers who perish in the crises’.⁵⁸

* * *

Marx was theoretically opposed to discussing the details of a future communist society, but he does give us some glimpses of what overcoming the domination of

⁵³ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, 360/507/267.

⁵⁴ Marx, *Kapital*, 273/286/276.

⁵⁵ Roberts, *Marx’s Inferno*, 103.

⁵⁶ Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 34.

⁵⁷ Marx, ‘Sechstes Kapitel’, 65/399.

⁵⁸ Marx, ‘Lohnarbeit und Kapital’, 423/228.

capitalism might look like. In response to the personal domination exercised over the worker by the capitalist, Marx endorsed co-operatives. This is particularly clear in his work for the International Working-Men's Association. The organisation's 1864 inaugural address, written by Marx, argued that co-operatives would ensure that production was carried out without 'a class of masters' who exercised 'dominion over' the worker.⁵⁹ In his instructions to the British delegates to the Geneva Congress in 1866, Marx argued (in a rare use of explicitly republican language), that the existing co-operative movement had already shown that the 'despotic system of the *subordination of labour* to capital can be superseded by the republican and beneficent system of *the association of free and equal producers*'.⁶⁰

But Marx was also clear that co-operative production would, by itself, not be enough to end the domination of capitalism. An economy composed of co-operatives would still be dominated by the arbitrary forces of the market. They would therefore need to be supplemented by the conscious and democratic planning of the economy. For example, Marx argues that 'If co-operative production is not to remain a sham and snare' then 'united co-operative societies' must 'regulate national production upon a common plan, thus taking it under their own control'.⁶¹ Marx also explicitly links overcoming arbitrary market forces to realising freedom. He argues that 'Freedom in this sphere [of production] can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being dominated by it as a blind power'.⁶²

Through these two mechanisms, giving workers control over their workplace through co-operative production, and the democratic planning of the economy overall, Marx thought that the personal and impersonal domination of the worker – the 'invisible threads' that undermined their freedom – would be severed.

⁵⁹ Marx, 'Inaugural Address', 10/11/11.

⁶⁰ Marx, 'Instructions for the Delegates', 232/195/190. This document was written with the need for compromise with other factions in mind. That may explain Marx's description of co-operative production as 'republican'. See Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 271–77.

⁶¹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 143/343/335.

⁶² Marx, *Kapital*, III, 795/828/807.

3

The Social Republic, 1871

Long live the Universal and Social Republic! Down with the cowards!

Last words of three executed Communards¹

In William Morris's epic poem, 'The Pilgrims of Hope' (1885), three English communists travel to Paris to fight for the Commune, the working-class insurrection that held the city for seventy-two days from 18 March to 28 May 1871. Two of them die fighting on the barricades, and the third only narrowly escapes back to England, after the Versailles government brutally crushes the Commune. But in the most moving and most often quoted stanza of the poem, the hero describes what it was like to see Paris in that fleeting moment when it 'was free';

And that day at last of all days I knew what life was worth;
For I saw what few have beheld, a folk with all hearts gay.
Then at last I knew indeed that our world of the coming day,
That so oft in grief and in sorrow I had preached, and scarcely knew
If it was but despair of the present or the hope of the day was due,
I say that I saw it now, real solid and at hand.²

That experience was comparable to the affect that the Commune had on Marx's political thought. The example of a radical democratic experiment 'real solid and at hand' forced Marx to reconsider and clarify what political structures were necessary for achieving and maintaining communism. Those political structures were, I argue, inherited from the radical republican tradition, and a return to Marx's own early republican thought.

Marx's initial scepticism about the prospects of the uprising was soon eclipsed by intense excitement, as he began to learn more of the nature of the revolution unfolding across the Channel. His correspondence from the period, heaps praise on ordinary Parisians for their 'resilience' 'historical initiative' and 'capacity for sacrifice', for which 'History has no like example of a like greatness.'³

¹ Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune de 1871*, 491/439.

² Morris, 'The Pilgrims of Hope', 45–46.

³ Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 12 April 1871, *MEW* 33: 205; *MECW* 44: 131.

They had moreover carried out the ‘most glorious deed of our party’ since the June Days in 1848, by ‘storming the heavens’.⁴ And, in perhaps the highest compliment a one-time Hegelian could give, Marx argued that regardless of the Commune’s success or failure, a ‘new point of departure of world-historical importance has been gained’.⁵

This nearly unparalleled enthusiasm in Marx’s life was partly fuelled by the press reports of events in Paris, but primarily by contacts in Paris feeding him first-hand information. This included Léo Frankel, an Austro-Hungarian member of the International, who was elected to the Commune and took an active part in the labour commission. Frankel informed Marx that ‘I have seen in the local proletariat the avant-garde of the social-republican army’, and solicited Marx’s advice for the labour commission, writing ‘Your opinion regarding the social reforms that are to be brought into being, would be of the highest value for our commission...for we must before all else lay the foundation stone of the social republic.’⁶ We do not know whether Marx responded to Frankel’s request (Marx’s extant correspondence to Frankel dates from the latter period of the Commune); if he did, then it might have been an intriguing insight into what social measures Marx thought the social republic should try to implement.

However, it was not the social dimension of the Commune that really excited Marx. What electrified him was that he believed that Commune was ‘the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour’.⁷ He now recognised that the political form of bourgeois society, the bourgeois republic, was an inappropriate political form for bringing about communism. Communism needed its own political form. It needed a *social republic*.⁸

Whereas the bourgeois republic played the starring role in Marx’s account of the 1848 Revolutions, in 1871 its place was taken by the social republic.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *MEW* 33: 206; *MECW* 44: 132.

⁵ Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 17 April 1871, *MEW* 33: 209; *MECW* 44: 137. Marx would later row back some of this enthusiasm saying that the Commune was merely an uprising of one city in exceptional circumstances, the majority of the Commune was in no sense socialist, nor could it have been.’ Marx to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 22 February 1881, *MEW* 35: 160; *MECW* 46: 66. It is possible that some of his later disagreements with exiled Communards in London coloured his assessment, see Robert Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 199.

⁶ Léo Frankel to Marx, 30 March 1871, reprinted in Magda Aranyossi, *Leo Frankel* (Berlin: Dietz, 1957), 260–61. Extracts translated in Eugene Schulkind, ed., *The Paris Commune of 1871: The View from the Left* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 117–18.

⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 142/342/334.

⁸ I have chosen to refer to this political form as the ‘social republic’ rather than the much more famous ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. This is because it matches Marx’s predominant chosen vocabulary when discussing the Paris Commune. It also has the advantage of avoiding some of the baggage that has accrued to the term ‘dictatorship’ since Marx’s usage of it, see the exhaustive analysis in Hal Draper, ‘Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat’, *New Politics* 1, no. 4 (1961): 91–104; and Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, vol. 3 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), part IV.

The Social Republic

Repeating a theme from *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, Marx argued that ‘The cry of “Social Republic,” in 1848 could only express a ‘vague aspiration after a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class-rule, but class-rule itself.’⁹ But Marx argues that this time things were different, by taking power the Commune had brought into existence the ‘positive form of that Republic’.¹⁰ If we return to the three dimensions of the republic set out chapter two (namely, the *class* that holds political power, the underlying *economic* institutions and its specific *constitutional* structure), it is interesting that Marx explicitly denies that the Paris Commune was a social republic in the economic dimension. He says that the brief existence of Commune and the necessity of focusing on military matters, meant that ‘the actual “social” character of their Republic consists only in this, that workmen govern the Paris Commune!’¹¹ The republic is therefore a social one because the working class has taken political power and not because it has instituted any recognizably socialist reforms. Marx also hints at an understanding of the social republic in its constitutional sense, when he argues that,

a Republic is only in France and Europe possible as a ‘Social Republic’, that is a Republic which disowns the capital and landowner class of the State machinery to supersede it by the Commune, that frankly avows ‘social emancipation’ as the great goal of the Republic and guarantees thus that social transformation by the Communal organisation.¹²

The republic is here described as a social one because the capital and landowning class are removed from political power, but also because the ‘State machinery’ has been ‘supersede[d]’ by the Commune. The social republic thus represents a new constitutional form separate from the bourgeois one. This idea crops up again and again in Marx’s discussion of the Commune. For example, Marx argues that the ‘new feature’ of the Commune is that the people have found ‘the means to hold it [the revolution] in the hands of the People itself’, namely, by ‘displacing the governmental machinery of the ruling classes by a governmental machinery of their own’.¹³

The background context for the Commune was the Franco-Prussian War, which had led to the downfall of Napoleon III, the establishment of the Third Republic in September 1870, and the subsequent siege of Paris by Prussian troops. During the siege, ordinary Parisians became increasingly radicalised and came into possession of their own arms through the expansion of the National Guard (the city’s civic militia). After a ceasefire had been brokered with Prussia,

⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139/338/330-31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 66/566/499.

¹² *Ibid.*, 64/554/497. The title of this section of the draft is ‘Republic only possible as avowedly Social Republic’.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 66/556/498.

the provisional government of the republic, led by Adolphe Thiers, decided that Paris needed to be brought back under control. An infamous attempt to take back the Guard's cannons on the 18 March spectacularly backfired, and Thiers responded by evacuating the city's government and administration to Versailles. Finding itself accidentally in charge of Paris, the Central Committee of the National Guard called for elections to an assembly, the Commune. This was a ninety-seat body, elected from the arrondissements of Paris, of which eighty or so members actually took up their seats. Party affiliations did not exist in the modern sense, but the Commune included some thirty-seven members who had connections to socialist groups (eleven Blanquists and twenty-six who were affiliates of the French section of the International – such as Frankel), and thirty-four republican democrats, sometimes referred to in this period as neo-Jacobins.¹⁴ Though none of the Commune members were unskilled labourers, nearly half of them were skilled workers or artisans, an 'unprecedented share of the political leadership', which has 'probably never been equalled in any European revolutionary government'.¹⁵ That social make up was also reflected in the ordinary Communards who fought in the National Guard, with research suggesting that they were heavily working class, though again primarily artisans and skilled workers and rather than unskilled ones.¹⁶

The Commune lasted for just over two months and during that time Paris witnessed a flowering of democratic engagement and cultural liberation for the city's downtrodden population. For example, women set up the *Union des femmes* to push for women's emancipation and to organise defence of the Commune.¹⁷ But this 'working laboratory of political institutions',¹⁸ was forcibly put down before it had the opportunity to properly establish itself. Thiers and the provisional government of the Third Republic opted for war over conciliation and sent the regular army to take Paris. Heavy fighting ensued with the last barricade falling on the 28 May. From the day the army troops entered Paris they began a campaign of summary executions of Communard prisoners and suspected sympathisers. Exact figures for how many died, in what came to be known as *la semaine sanglante* (the Bloody Week), is, like the June Days, hard to establish. The traditional figure (which is probably overstated) is some 20,000 deaths.¹⁹ It was

¹⁴ Roger L. Williams, *The French Revolution of 1870-1871* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 132.

¹⁵ Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 114–16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 111–13; David A. Shafer, *The Paris Commune: French Politics, Culture, and Society at the Crossroads of the Revolutionary Tradition and Revolutionary Socialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 115.

¹⁷ Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 27–28.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹ One recent investigation has suggested that this figure should be revised significantly downwards, to between 5,700 and 7,400, see Robert Tombs, 'How Bloody Was *La Semaine Sanglante* of 1871? A Revision', *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 691.

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largely because of this bloody and cruel end – this ‘extraordinary attempt to eliminate, one by one and en bloc, one’s class enemy’²⁰ – that the Commune came to play such a central role in subsequent left-wing thought and popular memory.

Marx’s primary account of the events and ideas of the Paris Commune is his *Civil War in France*. This was a pamphlet published as an address of the General Council of the International, that appeared just two weeks after the defeat of the Commune. It was meant as a public defence of the Commune in the light of nearly universal international condemnation. It proved to be a spectacular success, selling thousands, with a third edition being necessary by August 1871. Translations swiftly followed into Danish, German, Flemish, French, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croat and Spanish.²¹ It catapulted Marx into public notoriety when his authorship became known, and it played a significant role in raising his political and personal profile.²²

Two features of the *Civil War in France* make it relatively unusual in comparison to the texts we have so far explored. First, Marx wrote it entirely in English. The impressive grasp of the language and its idiom reveals the influence of more than twenty years of exile in London, as well as a desire to write ‘not only in English, but for the English’, and is consequently rightly seen as his ‘most impressive effort to express himself in colloquial terms’.²³ Second, we have two preceding drafts of the text that Marx wrote in quick succession in the middle of May before the Commune had been defeated, and which were not published until 1934. These partly cover the same material as the final text, but also provide significant supplementary discussion (the first draft is close to twice as long as the final text).²⁴

In the *Civil War in France* and its drafts, Marx returns to many of the republican themes of his early writings.²⁵ That includes his enthusiasm for political participation, popular delegacy and citizen control of the bureaucracy and the repressive bodies of the state. A rhetorical dimension of this resurgent republicanism, is Marx’s renewed usage of republican language, including deploying the term ‘the people’ alongside the proletariat. To take just a few representative examples, he calls the Commune ‘the people’s own government’

²⁰ Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 36.

²¹ For the publishing history of the *Civil War in France* see *MEGA*® I.22, pp. 798–804.

²² Marx gleefully reported that ‘I have the honour to be at this moment the best calumniated and the most menaced man of London’, Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 18 June 1871, *MEW* 33: 238; *MECW* 44: 159.

²³ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 503. Though it also should be noted that Marx wrote more in English than is often assumed, see David Leopold, ‘Karl Marx and British Socialism’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. W. J. Mander (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 402–22.

²⁴ It seems the primary reason for the material’s exclusion is that Marx needed to keep the pamphlet as short as possible; Marx notes that Material for four to five sheets has been compressed into two’, Marx to Edward Spencer Beesly, 12 June 1871, *MEW* 33: 229–30; *MECW* 44: 151

²⁵ A point made in Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*, 84–88; and Colletti, ‘Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*’, 42–44.

and ‘a government of the people by the people’, he speaks of how the factions of the ruling class ‘conspired together to crush the people’, as well as referring to how Napoleon III’s regime ‘annihilated all popular liberties’ and how Thiers also tried to ‘extirpate the last remnants of Republican liberty in France’.²⁶ That rhetorical shift is also mirrored by what seems to be a greater willingness on Marx’s part to appeal to a wider spectrum of classes. In the first draft, he argues that Commune is ‘the Representative of all classes of society not living upon foreign labour’, under which he seems to include the ‘the working class, the petty middleclass, in fact, all the middleclass with the exception of the bourgeoisie (the wealthy capitalist) (the rich landowners, and their stateparasites)’.²⁷ He further enthusiastically welcomes the idea that ‘For the first time in history the petty and moyenne middleclass has openly rallied round the workmen’s Revolution’.²⁸ (The final text preserves this welcoming attitude, but adds that ‘Whether the gratitude of the great body of the middle class will stand the present severe trial, time must show.’)²⁹

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I explore Marx’s discussion of the political institutions of the social republic. This is separated into discussions of Marx’s embrace of the wisdom of the people, his critique of representation and advocacy of popular delegacy; and the popular control of the bureaucracy. I then reflect on the extent to which these political ideas and institutions are really a ‘discovery’ (as Marx presents them), compared to a revival of earlier ideas. Finally, I end this section with a comparison of Marx’s writings on the Commune with the divergent republican reactions to it.

The second section of the chapter changes focus by exploring whether Marx believed that the political institutions of the social republic, and politics more broadly, eventually comes to an end once communism has become sufficiently established. I explore this topic because though the evidence presented in the first section gives us good grounds for thinking that Marx returned to some republican ideas, a belief in the end of politics would remain a significant point of divergence. I argue that Marx’s divergence from the republican tradition is, in this regard, not that he believes in the end of politics and political institutions, but that he displays a lack of interest in the question and an opposition to sustained reflection on what the details of these political institutions might look like.

²⁶ Respectively in Marx, *Civil War in France*, 155/357/350, 146/347/339, 127/324/316; *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 54/540/484; *Civil War in France*, 151/352/345.

²⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 63/553/495, 60/549/492.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 63/552/495.

²⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 144/344/337.

I. The Commune

Marx praises a number of the political institutions he associates with the Commune, not all of which were actually realised during its existence. His account is thus, to a degree, more accurately seen as ‘not an account of what the *Commune* was, but of what it might have become’.³⁰ Part of the explanation lies in the fact that Marx was writing not just in the immediate aftermath of the Commune, but while it was still ongoing. It is therefore not surprising to find some mistakes emerging from the fog of civil war. However, a more important factor is that Marx was making a political intervention into how the Commune should be interpreted. With anarchists, Blanquists and radical republicans all vying to appropriate the Commune for themselves, Marx wanted to make sure that the right lessons were learnt from it. That meant highlighting those aspects that he endorsed and seizing on tendencies that he believed should be developed in future revolutionary iterations.³¹

Before I begin discussing these political institutions in detail, it might be useful to have a better sense of the Marx’s overall idea of what the political institutions of the social republic should look like. To that end, the following categorised list brings together the political institutions that Marx endorses in his writing on the Commune (Figure 9).³²

One characteristic of this list is that it is a fragmentary picture of a society’s political institutions. It is not a blueprint from which we could straightforwardly derive the constitution of a communist polity. For example, Marx does not describe the precise mechanisms by which public officials are to be subject to recall, which functions are left to the central government and which to the regional communal organisations, or how the various levels of the national structure fit together. Indeed, he admits that the latter is just a ‘rough sketch’.³³ As is well-known, Marx was opposed to setting out detailed future plans of this kind, and he explicitly praises the Commune for having no ‘ready-made Utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple*’.³⁴ Marx’s description of the political structures of the social republic is thus suggestive rather than comprehensive.

³⁰ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 502.

³¹ Maximilien Rubel writes of this dimension of Marx’s interventions, ‘Of course, Marx is exaggerating: he is creating in literary imagination those events which he expects and hopes for as consequences of a creative revolutionary act.’ ‘Socialism and the Commune’, in *Paradigm for Revolution? The Paris Commune 1871-1971*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972), 46.

³² For similar, less detailed, lists, see Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution. Vol. 3*, 3:273; and Richard J. Arneson, ‘Democratic Rights at the National and Workplace Levels’, in *The Idea of Democracy*, ed. David Copp, Jean Hampton, and John E. Roemer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 130.

³³ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 140/339-40/332. Note that Marx’s seeming endorsement of indirect elections for national representation is not found in any of his other political writings, Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, vol. 2 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 146.

³⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 143/343/335.

Figure 9. The Political Structures of the Social Republic

<p>Commune</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Combined executive and legislative body – Members elected by universal suffrage – Members subject to recall – Members elected for short terms – Members paid workmen’s wages – Members majority working class/representatives of the working class – Commune’s workings publicly available <p>Public administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Subordinate to the Commune – Public officials elected and subject to recall – Public officials paid workmen’s wages – High dignitaries of state, and their privileges, removed <p>Established Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Separation of church and state – Clergy removed from public roles – Education made free and independent of the church 	<p>National structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Every city, town and village to have its own commune – Rural communes send delegates to a district assembly in a central town – District assemblies send delegates to a National Delegation in Paris – Every delegate bound by imperative mandates and subject to recall – Central government exercises remaining functions not carried out by local and regional communes <p>Forces of physical repression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Standing army replaced by a people’s militia – Police depoliticized and placed under control of the Commune – Police subject to recall <p>Judiciary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Judges elected and subject to recall
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(i) Real Democracy and the ‘Vile Multitude’

A recurrent theme of Marx’s writings on the Commune is that he contrasts the actions behaviour and political visions of the two opposing sides of Paris and Versailles, in order to vindicate the former. Marx says that ‘fighting, working, thinking, Paris’ is the ‘new society in its throes’, while ‘opposed at Versailles [is] the old society, a world of antiquated shams and accumulated lies’.³⁵ Perhaps the most vital contrast that Marx makes is between what he argues is the *real*

³⁵ Marx, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 106/597/538.

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democracy of the Commune compared with *sham* democracy of the Versailles government. Marx argues that the Commune ‘supplied the Republic with the basis of really democratic institutions’.³⁶ The ‘Republic’ in question here is the Third Republic being constituted in Versailles, and the ‘really’ emphasises that only the Commune’s political institutions have a claim to being truly democratic. We similarly find Marx dismissing the ‘pretensions of selfgovernment’ of Versailles in comparison to the ‘real selfgovernment’ achieved by the Commune.³⁷ Marx also contrasts the real democracy of the Commune with other bourgeois states, such as Britain. Marx parodies the British press’s position that the Commune’s understanding of self-government is not ‘what *we* use to understand by selfgovernment’.³⁸ In an amusing passage, he argues that the British conception of self-government amounts to being locally administered by ‘turtle-soup guttling aldermen, jobbing vestries, and ferocious workhouse guardians’, and nationally ruled by ‘an oligarchic club and the reading of the *Times* newspaper’.³⁹ In contrast, Marx says that the Commune’s conception of self-government meant ‘the people acting for itself by itself’.⁴⁰

Marx repeats variations of this slogan several times, arguing that the Commune was ‘a government of the people by the people’ and the ‘resumption by the people for the people, of its own social life’.⁴¹ To modern ears, these naturally sound like deliberate echoes of Lincoln’s famous speech delivered in Gettysburg eight years earlier in 1863, where Lincoln expressed his resolve that ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth’. That is certainly possible, Marx held Lincoln in very high regard (for instance he authored the International’s address to Lincoln congratulating him on his re-election in November 1864) and both drafts of the *Civil War in France* defend Lincoln against Thiers’s (rather absurd) attempt to tar the Parisians as secessionists from France, akin to the secession of the southern states from the Union.⁴² Indeed, the title of Marx’s pamphlet is itself likely a partial reference to the recently concluded American Civil War, with Marx repeatedly denouncing the Versailles government’s march on Paris as a ‘slaveholder’s rebellion’, suggesting that Versailles was fighting to maintain wage-slavery in the same way that the slaveholder’s rebellion of the Confederacy fought to maintain chattel

³⁶ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 142/342/334.

³⁷ Respectively Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 56/542/486; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 105/595/536.

³⁸ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 39/520/463–64.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 39/520/464.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 146/347/339; *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 54/541/486.

⁴² Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 34/514/458; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 109/601/542. Thiers had declared that ‘any attempted secession...will be energetically repressed in France as in America’, cited in Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 2.

slavery.⁴³ These factors give us some reason to think Marx may have wanted to invoke the authority of Lincoln for his defence of the Commune.

But we need to bear in mind that the phrase (in its various forms) was actually in common usage in republican discourse for much of the nineteenth century. As early as 1833, Mazzini had noted that his Young Italy organization wanted revolution ‘in the name of the people, for the people, and by the people’.⁴⁴ Under his influence, the ECDC had declared itself in favour of a ‘republic of the people, by the people, and for the people’.⁴⁵ Similarly, amongst those republicans explored in this thesis, we find George Julian Harney writing that ‘DEMOCRACY, or, in other words a government of the people, for, and by, the people’;⁴⁶ as well as Linton arguing that ‘government of all, by all, for the good of all – is the Republic’.⁴⁷ The phrase was thus not exclusive to Lincoln, but one that ‘permeated the international republican discourse’.⁴⁸ Marx can thus be seen as claiming one of republicanism’s most popular slogans and reserving it for the Commune rather than the bourgeois republic in Versailles.

A further dimension of this contrast is Marx’s repeated comparison of the corrupt Paris of Thiers with the ‘real Paris of the “vile multitude”’.⁴⁹ The reference to the ‘vile multitude’ would not have been lost on the text’s contemporary audience. The phrase has its modern origins in an infamous speech by Thiers in the National Assembly debate that led to the abolition of universal male suffrage on 31 May 1850. Thiers was one of the law’s foremost backers and made the provocative statement that ‘the vile multitude has been the downfall of all republics’.⁵⁰ (This was a rather cynical profession of republican sympathies, since

⁴³ For example in *Civil War in France*, 130/327/319, 136/335/328; *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 59/546/491; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 98/589/531. For further discussion, see Robin Blackburn, *Marx and Lincoln: An Unfinished Revolution* (London: Verso, 2011).

⁴⁴ Mazzini, ‘Lettera al Redattore del *Précurseur*’, 341. This has led to some speculation over whether Lincoln might have been influenced by Mazzini, see Timothy Roberts, ‘The Relevance of Giuseppe Mazzini’s Ideas of Insurgency to the American Slavery Crisis of the 1850s’, in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920*, ed. C. A. Bayly and E. F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 322. See however the alternative source given in Jared Peatman, *The Long Shadow of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 28.

⁴⁵ ECDC, ‘Aux Italiens’, 104. Cited in Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 84.

⁴⁶ Harney, ‘Monarchy’, 70.

⁴⁷ Linton, ‘Democracy and Republicanism’, 66. Linton elsewhere cites Charles Delescluze as having said ‘the Republic, we cannot too often repeat, is the government of all by all and for all’, in ‘Republican Measures’, 154.

⁴⁸ Don H. Doyle, ‘Widely Noted and Long Remembered: The Gettysburg Address Around the World’, in *The Gettysburg Address: Perspectives on Lincoln’s Greatest Speech*, ed. Sean Conant (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 277.

⁴⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 149/350/342. He elsewhere notes ‘This is the Paris of M. Thiers. The real Paris, working, thinking, fighting Paris, the Paris of the people, the Paris of the Commune is a “vile multitude”’. *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 33/513/457. See also, *Civil War in France*, 138/337/329; *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 30/509/453; and *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 110/602/543, 115/609/549. Marx also objected to the phrase in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 181/200/189.

⁵⁰ Thiers, Speech to the National Assembly, 24 May 1850, 156.

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Thiers was a staunch liberal monarchist, who only grudgingly supported the republic when it became clear that no monarchy could unite the sparring dynastic factions). Making his way through some of the most famous episodes in the history of republics, Thiers claimed that ‘it is this multitude that gave Caesar the liberty of Rome [in exchange] for bread and circuses’; ‘this vile multitude that gave the Medici the liberty of Florence; that has in Holland, in the wise Holland, cut the throat of the de Witts’; and finally, ‘this vile multitude that...applauded the execution, which was nothing but an abominable assassination, of the Girondins, [and] that then applauded the deserved execution of Robespierre’.⁵¹ Thiers’s historical overview touches on most of the standard tropes in anti-democratic thought for why the people is supposedly incapable of self-rule, from their penchant for despots, to their inconsistent and violent judgements, and especially that they are ‘prone to arbitrary displays of aggression towards prominent citizens’.⁵² His view of the lower classes’ incapacity for self-rule is succinctly summarised, when he notes that that ‘it is necessary to do everything for them [the poor], except to let them decide the great questions upon which depends the future of the country. Yes, to everything for the poor, but not government!’⁵³

Thier’s ‘vile multitude’ had in the intervening years come to symbolize for radicals, the unabashedly elitist view of the people held by their enemies. By ironically reclaiming the epithet, Marx was turning Thier’s argument on its head – making it the common people that should be trusted with government. Indeed, his comments on the Commune exhibit a sustained confidence in the capacity of the people to rule themselves. He brands it ‘The Delusion as if administration and political governing were mysteries, transcendent functions only to be trusted to the hands of a trained caste’.⁵⁴ Similarly, the Commune is praised for making ‘public functions,—military, administrative, political—*real workmen’s functions*, instead of the hidden attributes of a trained caste’.⁵⁵ Marx thus claims that the ability for political decision-making and administration are not capacities reserved for a select elitist few – the ‘trained caste’ – but shared by the people as a whole. Marx writes that by successfully demonstrating the common people’s capacities for self-rule, the Commune had enraged the ruling classes of Europe. The ‘plain working men’ of Paris, Marx notes, ‘dared to infringe upon the Governmental privilege of their “natural superiors”’ and shown that they could govern ‘modestly,

⁵¹ *Ibid.* Johan and Cornelius de Witt were leading Dutch republican politicians, who were brutally lynched by a mob in the prelude to the establishment of the monarchy.

⁵² John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66.

⁵³ Thiers, Speech to the National Assembly, 24 May 1850, 156.

⁵⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 57/544/488.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 58/544-45/490.

conscientiously, and efficiently'.⁵⁶ In his defence of the people's ability to self-rule, Marx also makes a tongue-in-cheek comparison to the business world. He argues that the people selecting its representatives through universal suffrage is comparable to the 'individual suffrage' of the 'employer' who selects 'workmen and managers in his business'.⁵⁷ That is because 'it is well known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place'.⁵⁸ The ironic comparison is supposed to send-up the attitude of the bourgeois elites who firmly believe in the superiority of their own judgment but deny that same ability in the common person.

Marx's defence of the derided multitude's capacity to come to wise political judgements has important precursors in the radical end of the republican tradition. A classic in this regard, is Machiavelli's chapter in the *Discorsi* on why 'The Multitude is Wiser and More Constant than a Prince' (a chapter that incidentally seems to have caught Marx's eye when he first read the *Discorsi* in 1843).⁵⁹ In this chapter Machiavelli seeks to defend the view that 'all writers attack', namely that 'a people is more prudent, more stable, and of better judgment than a prince'.⁶⁰ Similar to Marx's trust in the people's ability to 'put the right man in the right place', Machiavelli argues that 'in the selection of magistrates the people make far better choices than a prince'.⁶¹ The extent of Machiavelli's confidence in the people's capacity for wise political judgements distinguishes him from most other thinkers in the canon of the history of political thought.⁶² Marx's own recommendation that government should be placed in the hands of the 'vile multitude', means that he joins Machiavelli in a historically isolated camp of 'great' thinkers who believe that it is ordinary citizens and not the rich elite who make the best rulers.

(ii) Popular Delegacy and Representative Government

In his classic study on representative government, Bernard Manin identifies one of the core principles of that form of government as the idea that representatives retain partial independence from the will of the people who elected them.⁶³ That is, once representatives are elected they are not required to vote in accordance with the preferences of their constituents. Instead, they can decide on legislation based

⁵⁶ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 143/343/336. Marx also refers to 'Workmen infringing upon the governmental privilege of the upper 10,000', *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 66/556/489.

⁵⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 141/340/333.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Marx extracted more parts from this chapter than from any other in the *Discorsi*. Though we should not exaggerate this point too much as this still only amounts to three extracts, see *MEGA*® IV.2 pp. 277-78.

⁶⁰ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I.58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Marx also specifically extracted this quote in his notes, see *MEGA*® IV.2 p. 278.

⁶² McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, 66-67.

⁶³ Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, 6.

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on their own judgement. At the same time, representatives are not entirely independent of their constituents, as they are subject to both citizen pressure during their mandate and the threat of not being re-elected at the end of their mandate.⁶⁴ This means that representatives have an incentive to carry out their constituents' preferences, but they are not legally required to do so, giving them a certain degree of discretion. Manin argues that several constitutional mechanisms can reduce the degree of this discretion, foremost among them: imperative mandates and the right to recall representatives.⁶⁵ Imperative mandates (often referred to by their French name, *mandat impératif*), legally require representatives to carry out the instructions given to them by their constituents. The right to recall allows constituents to sanction representatives immediately rather than at the end of their mandate. Both measures thereby constrain the discretion of representatives. They have however been almost universally absent from or even explicitly banned by the constitutions of representative governments. Manin writes, 'None of the representative governments established since the end of the eighteenth century has authorized imperative mandates...Neither has any of them durably applied permanent revocability of representatives.'⁶⁶ In France, the imperative mandate has been expressly prohibited in every one of the five Republics's constitutions, and similar provisions can be found in the modern constitutions of countries as diverse as Germany, Korea, Senegal and Spain.⁶⁷

There was however a long radical republican tradition, from the French Revolution to the Paris Commune, which, inspired by Rousseau, contested this ultimately victorious model of largely unconstrained representation.⁶⁸ Across the various republican constitutional moments we find the more radical elements of the tradition voicing a different, more accountable and delegative, understanding of representation. This frequently invoked the idea of the imperative mandate and the right to recall as a way to ensure that representatives did not escape the control of the people. Jean-Paul Marat, even before the French Revolution had broken out, advised the English people that 'representatives of the people ought ever to act according to the instructions of their constituents' otherwise 'What then are

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 163–67.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Marc Van der Hulst, *The Parliamentary Mandate: A Global Comparative Study* (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000), 8.

⁶⁸ Pierre-Henri Zaidman, *Le mandat impératif: De la Révolution française à la Commune de Paris* (Paris: Les Editions Libertaires, 2008); Marco Goldoni, 'Rousseau's Radical Constitutionalism and Its Legacy', in *Constitutionalism beyond Liberalism*, ed. Michael W. Dowdle and Michael A. Wilkinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 227–53.

our representatives, but our masters?’⁶⁹ Imperative mandates were however banned in one of the first acts of the Revolution, though the never-implemented 1793 Jacobin constitution did include a provision for representative recall.⁷⁰ These more radical ideas on representation re-emerged with the Commune, with Commune members regularly citing their duty to act in accordance with their *mandat impératif*. Even after the Commune’s failure, radical republicans waged an unsuccessful campaign for imperative mandates to be included in the Third Republic,⁷¹ believing that ‘*imperative mandate or carte blanche to our mandatories, masters or slaves, this is the alternative; nothing in between, you must choose.*’⁷²

Marx inherited this tradition of radical constitutionalism, and we find its influence expressed in his endorsement of both imperative mandates and the right to recall representatives in his defence of the Commune. The Commune is praised for having its members ‘chosen by universal suffrage...responsible and revocable at short terms’, as well as its plans for a National Delegation where ‘each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandate impératif* (formal instructions) of his constituents’.⁷³ With these mechanisms in place, Marx believed that representation would be transformed from a system where unaccountable representatives ruled over the people to one where they become its servants. He does not dedicate much space to considering exactly how these mechanisms ensure this. But he does make an intriguing comparison, mentioned above, between voters choosing representatives and employers choosing which workers or managers to employ. Both are said to ‘know how to put the right man in the right place’, but if they do ‘make a mistake’, Marx argues that they can ‘address it promptly’.⁷⁴ The ironic suggestion being that just as employers can fire their employees as they please, so the people will be able to recall its representatives as it pleases. The implication being that similarly to how workers are tied to the wills of their employers, so representatives become tied to the wills of their electors. For if a representative diverges from the preferences of the constituents they can ‘promptly’ rectify their mistake, rather than having to wait for the end of their mandate to vote them out office. The representative can thus be expected to tailor their behaviour, just as a worker does, to ensuring that the constituents do not try to recall them.

⁶⁹ Marat, *The Chains of Slavery*, 203. See Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 142.

⁷⁰ Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, 164.

⁷¹ Daniel Mollenhauer, *Auf der Suche nach der ‘wahren Republik’: Die französischen ‘radicaux’ in der frühen Dritten Republik (1870–1890)* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1997), chapter 4.

⁷² Gambon and Pyat, *Le mandat impératif*, 21.

⁷³ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139–40/339–40/331–32.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 141/340/333.

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A further mechanism that Marx seems to endorse is that representatives should also only be elected for short terms. He notes that Commune members were ‘responsible and revocable at short terms’ (and similarly in the second draft he writes that they should be ‘responsible, and revocable in short terms’).⁷⁵ There is ambiguity here however if ‘short terms’ is supposed to refer to the length of mandate or how quickly the electorate can recall their representatives. The more natural way to express the former idea would have been for Marx to write ‘responsible, revocable, and *for* short terms’. Additionally, when Engels translated the *Civil War in France* into German (which is sometimes wrongly assumed to be the original version of the text),⁷⁶ he rendered the phrase as ‘antwortlich und jederzeit absetzbar’ (responsible and revocable at any time), which supports the latter interpretation. On the other hand, Engels may have misunderstood Marx’s meaning and there may have been little opportunity for precise corrections as the translation was carried out in great haste.⁷⁷ Moreover, Marx’s distaste for representatives having ‘three or six years’ to ‘misrepresent the people’, and only being able to replace them ‘once in many years’, also suggests a preference for shorter terms.⁷⁸ In an earlier article, Marx also expressed his support for the Chartist proposal for ‘annual general elections’, arguing that it was one ‘of the conditions without which Universal Suffrage would be illusory for the working class’.⁷⁹ Thus, despite the above ambiguity it seems safe to say that in addition to imperative mandates and the right to recall, Marx also endorsed short terms as a way to keep representatives accountable.

Marx argues that when accompanied by these accountability mechanisms ‘universal suffrage...[will] serve the people’.⁸⁰ But he is eager for this argument not to be misunderstood as a wholesale disparagement of universal suffrage. His discussion of these mechanisms includes an oblique statement that ‘On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supersede universal suffrage by hierarchic investiture.’⁸¹ This was most almost certainly a reference to Comtism. The first draft of the *Civil War in France* had two sections reserved for attacking the Comtist movement, accusing it of supporting ‘personal *Dictatorship*’ and ‘hierarchy in all spheres of human action’.⁸² These were however cut from the final version, perhaps in deference to the role

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 139/339/331; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 105/596/537.

⁷⁶ As in Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, 165n10, 165n11.

⁷⁷ See the overview of the German translation process in *MEGA*® I.22: pp. 1023-27. In the 1872 French translation, supervised by Marx, the phrase is as ambiguous as it is in English: ‘responsables et révocables à court terme’ (responsible and revocable at short term), see *MEGA*® I.22: p. 499.

⁷⁸ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 141/340/333; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 57/544/488.

⁷⁹ Marx, ‘The Chartists’, 327/344/335.

⁸⁰ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 141/340/333.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 56/555/498.

that English Comtists, such as Marx's friend E. S. Beesly, had played in publicly defending the Commune.⁸³ In comparison to Marx, the English Comtists idiosyncratically combined defending the Commune with a rejection of universal suffrage. In the words of one Comtist, Frederic Harrison, 'the principle which the Commune involves in [sic] the repudiating of the dogma of universal suffrage', and he continued 'it has long been a cardinal doctrine of the Positivist system that government by the suffrage – the election of the superior by the inferior – the basing of authority on the nomination of a majority – is inherently vicious'.⁸⁴ Marx thus wanted to make it as clear as he diplomatically could, that his critique of the limits to universal suffrage without the above accountability mechanisms was not to be confused with the Comtist's complete rejection of universal suffrage. He thought that the latter position made the Comtists a nefarious influence on the working-class, and when speaking in a more personal capacity (in an interview a few months after the Commune), he made it very clear that the Comtist participation in the International did not entail influence over its programme, as they 'will have nothing do with popular government as we understand it'.⁸⁵

The outcome of the accountability mechanisms that Marx endorses would mean the transformation of representative government into a system of popular delegacy.⁸⁶ In the former, representation is understood as the ceding of decision-making power by the people to representatives, and the people's role is reduced to deciding whether or not to renew or decline their mandate at the next election. In

⁸³ Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 4 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), 195–96. See the collection of Beesly's articles in Royden Harrison, ed., *The English Defence of the Paris Commune (1871)* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), 37–117. See also F.B. Smith, 'Some British Reactions to the Commune', in *Paradigm for Revolution? The Paris Commune 1871-1971*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972), 81–83.

⁸⁴ Harrison, 'The Revolution of the Commune', 570–71. However, other aspects of Harrison's defence (which was published before Marx's *Civil War in France*), particularly his endorsement of worker self-administration, are closer to Marx's analysis. Harrison writes, that 'Placed in a position of unparalleled difficulty...the work men who, for the first time in the history of modern Europe, assumed the functions of government, have shown extraordinary energy and singular skill' *Ibid.*, 573. That bears a strong resemblance to Marx's statement that 'When the Paris Commune took the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the Governmental privilege of their "natural superiors," and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed their work modestly, conscientiously, and efficiently', *Civil War in France*, 143/343/336. Similarly, Harrison wrote 'The idea...that the whole system of administration from top to bottom is a peculiar mystery, in which they [the wealthy] alone have been initiated, is a dogma', 'The Revolution of the Commune', 573. Marx in turn wrote 'The Delusion as if administration and political governing were mysteries, transcendent functions only to be trusted to the hands of a trained caste', *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 57/544/488. Marx's defence of the Commune should thus also be seen as having some elements in common with the Comtist one.

⁸⁵ Marx, Interview published in *The World*, 457/643/605.

⁸⁶ There is a question whether popular delegacy should be seen as an alternative to representative government (as I have preferred to present it) or as a more accountable version of it. As with many such categories, it might be better to think of these alternatives as existing on opposite ends on a scale of how much discretion representatives or delegates enjoy in relation to the wishes of their constituents. Variations in the above accountability measures (such as quadrennial or annual elections, or how many constituents are needed to trigger a recall) would then place a particular political system closer or further to either pole.

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between elections, representatives exercise their mandate with a large degree of discretion and without the formal involvement of the people. In a system of popular delegacy, representation is instead understood as a form of commission, where representatives (or perhaps better delegates) are primarily seen as passing on the wishes of their constituents. The people also retain the continuous power to intervene in the decision-making of their representatives by giving them formal instructions or recalling them entirely. Through the institutions of popular delegacy, Marx thought that universal suffrage would be turned from what he saw as the weak (but by no means insignificant) tool to choose between elite representatives, to one where the people remains firmly in possession of political power. That point is made in an important passage of the *Civil War in France*, from which we have already quoted, where Marx argues,

Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business.⁸⁷

The same point is made even more vividly in the first draft:

The general suffrage, till now abused either for the parliamentary sanction of the Holy State Power, or a play in the hands of the ruling classes, only employed by the people to choose the instruments of parliamentary class rule once in many years, adapted to its real purposes, to choose by the communes their own functionaries of administration and initiation.⁸⁸

As several commentators have noticed, this critique of reducing the people's involvement in politics to merely choosing who is to lead them every few years, and instead endorsing a system of popular delegacy, bears a quite striking resemblance to Rousseau.⁸⁹ Rousseau famously argued in *Du contrat social* (1762) that representative government amounted to slavery punctuated by momentary freedom during elections. The English people were thus 'free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as they are elected, it is enslaved, it is nothing'.⁹⁰ Rousseau's criticism of representation has often given rise to the interpretation that he thinks freedom is only realisable in small city-states where every citizen can participate directly and representation is unnecessary. But in his

⁸⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 141/340/333.

⁸⁸ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 57/544/488.

⁸⁹ See for example, Colletti, 'Introduction to Marx *Early Writings*', 46; Fischer, *Marxist Ethics within Western Political Theory: A Dialogue with Republicanism, Communitarianism, and Liberalism*, 63–65; Goldoni, 'Rousseau's Radical Constitutionalism and Its Legacy', 250; and Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, 165. David Leopold shares this assessment, but cautions against exaggerating both the broader similarity between Rousseau and Marx's political thought and the extent of Rousseau's influence on Marx, Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 262–71.

⁹⁰ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, III.15.

Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne (1771/72) Rousseau suggests that liberty and large modern states can in fact be reconciled. He argues that the inevitable corruption of legislators in a representative system can be avoided by two mechanisms: holding frequent elections and requiring legislators to ‘adhere exactly to their instructions’.⁹¹ But without these preventative measures the legislature becomes the ‘instrument of servitude’.⁹² He thus observes of the unencumbered English system of representation,

I can only marvel at the negligence, the carelessness, and I dare say the stupidity of the English Nation, which after arming its deputies with the supreme power, adds not a single restraint to regulate the use they might make of it during the entire seven years of their mandate.⁹³

Marx and Rousseau thus both share a commitment to imperative mandates and frequent elections as constitutional mechanisms to keeping representatives accountable to the people who elected them. Both of them turn to popular delegacy as a way to realise the principles of democracy, citizen participation, and popular sovereignty in a large modern polity, but without resorting to the largely unconstrained form of representative government that has become exclusively identified with ‘democracy’. Defenders of representative government have always argued that the only alternative to their system is Athenian-style direct democracy, where every citizen participates directly in the polity’s decision-making assembly, a situation they scorn as simply impossible in modern states with large populations. Since (they maintain) we cannot go back to these ancient small city-states, representative government wins by default. Marx and Rousseau’s advocacy of popular delegacy shows that these poles do not exhaust the democratic possibilities.

(iii) Popular Control of the State

Marx’s account of the transformation of the state begins with a critique of the existing one. In a vivid metaphor, he brands it a ‘huge governmental parasite’ which entoids ‘like a boa constrictor the real social body in the ubiquitous meshes of a standing army, a hierarchical bureaucracy, an obedient police, clergy and a servile magistrature’.⁹⁴ Marx thus presents the state, through its constitutive organs (the civil service, the army, the police, the established church and the judiciary), as tightly wrapping itself around society and living off it like a parasite.

⁹¹ Rousseau, *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, 979/201.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.* The maximum parliamentary term was not reduced from seven to five years until the 1911 Parliament Act.

⁹⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 100-103/591-92/533-34. The evocative comparison of the state to a boa constrictor appears several times in the drafts, but sadly not in the final version. Perhaps Marx realised that it was an imperfect metaphor, as boa constrictors are not parasites but predators that kill (rather than live off) their prey.

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He additionally depicts it as a professional, hierarchical and centralised body that hovers over society, having increasingly escaped the control of its citizens. For example, Marx criticises the state's 'systematic and hierarchic division of labour', its 'trained caste' of bureaucrats, its 'centralized statemachinery', and attacks it for being 'separate of and independent from society', and a 'usurpatory dictatorship of the governmental body over society itself, rising alike above...all classes'.⁹⁵ The state is thus metaphorically presented as both surrounding and resting above society. Marx also argues that these characteristics (hierarchical, centralised, professionalised, and unaccountable) have become increasingly pronounced as the state has developed. He notes that the state tends to 'expand the circumference and the attributes of state power, the number of its tools, its independence of, and its supernaturalist sway of real society'.⁹⁶ Consequently, the state has become the 'master instead of the servant of society'.⁹⁷

Given these characteristics, Marx argues that the existing state is an inappropriate vehicle for a working-class revolution. In perhaps the *Civil War in France's* most cited line, he says that the 'working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'.⁹⁸ Marx seems to have taken some care in crafting this line,⁹⁹ and in the second draft it was accompanied by the similarly pregnant statement that the 'political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation'.¹⁰⁰ Simply taking hold of the existing state machinery and using it to bring about communism is thus ruled out. Instead, Marx argues that the working class has to 'break down this horrid machinery', or (less belligerently) 'transform the traditional working machinery' of the state into a polity that lacks the objectionable features of the existing state.¹⁰¹

This new polity is distinguished from the existing state by being decentralised and non-hierarchical, as well as deprofessionalised and accountable to its citizens. To understand what this looks like concretely, we turn to Marx's discussion of the changes made to two of the state's organs: the bureaucracy and the standing army.¹⁰² The bureaucracy is transformed by making public officials

⁹⁵ Respectively Marx, *Civil War in France*, 137/336/328; *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 57/544/328, 53/538/483, 56/542/486; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 100/592/534.

⁹⁶ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 53/539/484.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56/542/487.

⁹⁸ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 137/336/328.

⁹⁹ The phrase appears in three different variations in *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 100/591-92/533, 114/607/548.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 100/592/533.

¹⁰¹ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 55/541/486; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 100/591/533. I use the term 'polity' as it is a less loaded term than 'state', and which Marx at several points dissociates from the Commune.

¹⁰² For reasons of space, I do not discuss Marx's account of the transformation of the other state organs: the judiciary, the police and the established church. Nor do I discuss how the new polity is to be both

elected and subject to recall. A repeated refrain in the *Civil War in France* and the drafts, is the specification that ‘public servants...were to be elective, responsible, and revocable’.¹⁰³ Marx thereby transfers the same system of accountability that he applied to political representation to public administration as a whole. Just how many of the total positions in the public administration are to be chosen by election is not entirely clear (we could imagine it being limited to just the most senior administrative posts or perhaps literally extending to every public official). Some of Marx’s rhetoric certainly suggests that it would indeed apply very extensively. For instance, he says it applies to the ‘officials of all other branches of the Administration’.¹⁰⁴ The extent of this transformation can also be seen in Marx’s specification that even rural public officials, like the ‘notary, advocate, [and] executor’ (who were currently ‘judicial vampires’ and ‘blood-suckers’ of the peasants), would be transformed ‘into salaried communal agents, elected by, and responsible to, himself [the peasant]’.¹⁰⁵ The outcome of making the bureaucracy elected in this way would be a considerable deprofessionalization of public administration.¹⁰⁶ Public officials would no longer be a ‘trained caste’ and the ‘army of stateparasites [would be] removed’.¹⁰⁷ Marx believed that the outcome of making public officials revocable would be to make the bureaucracy properly accountable. He notes that it would do ‘away with the state hierarchy altogether’ and replace ‘the haughteous masters of the people into its always removable servants, a mock responsibility by a real responsibility, as they act continuously under public supervision’.¹⁰⁸

Marx likely drew these ideas from the Commune’s 19 April *Déclaration au peuple français*, which was ‘the closest to a summary of its programme’.¹⁰⁹ This declaration called for the ‘permanent intervention of the citizens in communal affairs’, and gave a glimpse of its administrative ideal, by proclaiming ‘The choice by election or competitive examination, with accountability (*responsabilité*) and permanent right of supervision (*contrôle*) and dismissal (*révocation*), of magistrates

decentralised in comparison to the existing state, while at the same time (Marx insists) maintaining some kind of central structure. For a clarifying discussion of the latter and how it relates to Marx’s earlier centralising impulses, see Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1984, 2:147–61.

¹⁰³ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 140/339/332. Marx also includes the police and the judiciary in the list of officials to be elected and revocable.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 139/339/331. However, in the drafts, Marx says that instead of being elected, public officials are to be ‘appointed and always revocable by the Commune’, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 105/596/537 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁵ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 144/345/337.

¹⁰⁶ Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1984, 2:132–34.

¹⁰⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 58/545/490.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 57/544/488.

¹⁰⁹ Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 78. Marx references the declaration in *Civil War in France*, 140/339-40/332; and *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 70/560-61/503.

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and communal officials of every grade.¹¹⁰ Marx's repeated call for all public officials to be 'elective, responsible, and revocable' can be seen as a pithy formulation of this demand.¹¹¹

A tangible financial dimension of the democratisation of the bureaucracy is Marx's specification that 'From the members of the Commune downwards' all public officials were to be paid '*workmen's wages*'.¹¹² In the context of the pay structure of nineteenth century France's bureaucracy that was an especially revolutionary demand. From the time of Napoleon I to World War I the French state had a small number of extremely well paid civil servants, who received fifty to hundred times the average income (so that they could lead a similarly 'dignified' life to those living off inherited capital).¹¹³ In Balzac's *Cousin Bette* (1846), for example, the irresponsible and philandering Baron Hulot d'Ervy earns 25,000 francs per year from his high-ranking post in the War Ministry, when day-wages for workmen were, at the time, just 1 to 1.5 francs, giving them in the region of 300-450 francs a year.¹¹⁴ Radically cutting the salaries for these top posts would have been a powerful symbol of how public administration had been taken out of the hands of aristocratic dignitaries and placed into the hands of ordinary workers. Elite functionaries like Baron Hulot – 'state parasites' as Marx called them – would no longer suck the financial resources out of the country for their own personal gain.¹¹⁵ Limiting wages to the level of workers would thus be an important part of the process whereby 'the high dignitaries of State disappeared'.¹¹⁶ Now, the actual measure taken by the Commune was to set the maximum salary for public officials at 6,000 francs, when workers earned (by that point) about 5 francs a day, giving them roughly 1,500 a year.¹¹⁷ Marx was therefore deliberately exaggerating what the Commune had in fact achieved (an

¹¹⁰ A translation of the declaration is available in Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 217–19.

¹¹¹ Marx however differs from the declaration in that he makes no mention of posts being filled by elections or 'competitive examinations'.

¹¹² Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139/339/331.

¹¹³ Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 416–17.

¹¹⁴ See the financial appendix in Honoré de Balzac, *Cousin Bette*, ed. David Bellos, trans. Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 463–65. Balzac was one of Marx's favourite contemporary authors and he references *Cousin Bette* in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 188/206/196.

¹¹⁵ Marx discusses how the bourgeois state combines both the 'direct economic exploitation' of the worker by the capitalist, with a 'second exploitation of the people' by the families' of capitalists taking all the 'rich places of the State household', *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 54/540/484.

¹¹⁶ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139/339/331.

¹¹⁷ Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 86; Shafer, *The Paris Commune*, 138. The pay figures for workers (1-1.5 francs and later 5 francs) are taken from the respective sources and may reflect different methods of accounting rather than rising wages or inflation.

already radical step), in the direction of what he hoped future communist regimes would do.¹¹⁸

Turning to the second state organ, Marx argues that the standing army should be turned into a civic militia. (Broadly, a civic militia differs from a standing army in that it consists of part-time citizen-soldiers rather than full-time professional soldiers). Marx praises the Commune for having made its first act the ‘suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people’.¹¹⁹ He credits the National Guard, Paris’s civic militia, with making the Commune possible in the first place. He argues that it was only because the working class was armed and organised in a militia that it could resist the Versailles government’s troops and set up their own administration.¹²⁰ Indeed, the National Guard was a quite unique institution that played a central role in the events leading up to and during the Commune. It had traditionally been a bourgeois militia but its ranks had become increasingly composed of the working classes, and by 1871 was ‘widely understood to be a democratic body of citizen soldiers’ far removed from the ‘army’s authoritarian and militaristic traditions’.¹²¹ For instance, in contrast to the army, it elected its own non-commissioned officers and junior officers, and units were recruited and organised locally. The siege of Paris had meant that the National Guard had grown spectacularly to 340,000 men, and it became the epicentre of local social and political life, providing working class neighbourhoods with everything from a ‘substitute workplace’, to a ‘provider of family income’, to a ‘political club’, and a ‘recreation organization’.¹²² The immediate context for the outbreak of the Commune was thus a situation of ‘local, democratic, armed organizations on an unprecedented scale’.¹²³

Marx comments on the National Guard suggest four advantages that he sees in a civic militia over standing army. First, it is cheaper. Marx says that removing the standing army discards ‘the most fertile source of all state taxation and state debts’ and is the ‘first economical *condition sine qua [non]* for all social improvements’.¹²⁴ Second, a civic militia makes for a better army. Marx argues that the National Guard were the ‘safest guarantee against Foreign aggression’.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ We know that it was deliberate since Marx copied out a press report of the maximum salary announcement, see Karl Marx, *Notebook on the Paris Commune: Press Excerpts and Notes*, ed. Hal Draper (Berkeley: Independent Socialist Press, 1971), 36.

¹¹⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139/338/331.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 105/595/536-37.

¹²¹ Shafer, *The Paris Commune*, 137.

¹²² Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 50.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 57/544/488. We should remember that military spending comprised a much larger proportion of public spending in nineteenth-century European states.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* There is a possibility that by ‘Foreign aggression’ Marx is referring to the obverse characteristic of a civic militia: that it is less likely to engage in foreign wars. However, the context of the Prussian siege suggests that he means that the civic militia is better at defending the nation from foreign attack.

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He suggests that if the Commune been formed at the start of the Franco-Prussian War, it would have ‘taken the defence [of Paris] out of the hands of traitors’ and ‘imprinted its enthusiasm’ on the armed forces and turned the struggle into a real ‘war of republican France’.¹²⁶ Third, a civic militia improves the character of its soldiers relative to professional soldiers. Marx argues that professional soldiers acquire ‘inveterate habits...under the training of the enemies of the working class’ (such as shooting prisoners without trial), which will be remedied (though not immediately) when they join the workers in a civic militia.¹²⁷ Fourth, (and most importantly), a civic militia is less prone to siding with reactionary forces against popular movements. Marx brands the standing army a ‘constant danger to government usurpation of class rule’.¹²⁸ He notes that this usurpation can take the form of re-establishing the ‘regular class rule’ of the bourgeoisie or of ‘an adventurer pretending to save all classes’ (a reference to Napoleon III’s *coup d’état* in 1851).¹²⁹ A standing army is a continual source of potential reaction, providing the ruling class or a leader with Caesarist ambitions with the means by which they can put an end to the turmoil of a revolution. Marx suggests (though does not explain why) that a civic militia is less likely to be used in this manner. His specification that the militia should have an ‘extremely short term of service’ might be seen as a concern with ensuring that they do not develop a separate existence to the people.¹³⁰ His description of army troops as ‘French soldatesca’, as ‘mercenary vindicators’ of bourgeois society, and as the ‘iron hand of mercenary soldiery’ further presents them as a force external to society, paid by the government to crush the people.¹³¹ In summary, Marx believes that the standing army ‘defend[s] the government against the people’, while a civic militia is ‘the people armed against governmental usurpation’.¹³²

In this defence of the civic militia we can detect some traces of the republican ‘citizen-soldier’ tradition in Marx’s thought.¹³³ From Machiavelli to Rousseau, republican thinkers in this tradition have warned of the danger of professional soldiers to the republic, either as mercenaries or as a standing army.¹³⁴ They argue that professional armies stand apart from the people and can hence be used by the elites to crush them. They emphasize that arming the people allows

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 51/546/481.

¹²⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 133/331/323; *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 95/585/526-27.

¹²⁸ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 57/543/488.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 140/340/332.

¹³¹ Respectively, Marx, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 95/585/526; *Civil War in France*, 153/356/348, 158/361/354.

¹³² Marx, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 105/595-96/537.

¹³³ R. Claire Snyder, ‘The Citizen-Soldier and the Tragedy of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*’, *Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture & Politics* 16, no. 1 (2003): 23–37.

¹³⁴ Claire R. Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republican Tradition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 199–211.

them to defend themselves against this threat to their domestic liberty, as well as acting as a bulwark against foreign domination. Rousseau argued that a standing army is ‘good for only two purposes: to attack and conquer neighbours, or to shackle and enslave citizens’.¹³⁵ Instead, he proposed that ‘Each citizen ought to be a soldier by duty, none by profession.’¹³⁶ He argues that a militia ‘costs the Republic little’, fights better than a professional army (since ‘one always defends one’s goods better than another’s’), and does not harass the local population as professional soldiers are wont to do.¹³⁷ Marx’s advocacy of the civic militia, as the above discussion shows, bears some similarity to these positions.¹³⁸ His defence of the National Guard as the ‘safest guarantee against Foreign aggression’ and his criticism of the generals who, he argued, failed to use properly them against the Prussian forces,¹³⁹ was also in line with the widely held belief amongst contemporary radicals (republican and communist) that Paris could have beaten the Prussians if they had unleashed popular enthusiasm by re-enacting the legendary republican *levee en masse* from the French Revolution.¹⁴⁰ His concern with ensuring that the armed forces do not form a separate body from society also reflects ‘one of the main principles of the citizen-soldier tradition: a military staffed by the people is less likely to fire on their own neighbors and comrades.’¹⁴¹ Largely absent from Marx’s defence of the civic militia, however, is the connection republicanism makes between service in the militia and developing the virtues necessary for citizenship.¹⁴² Marx’s concern with the civic militia is primarily with the role it plays in protecting the communist revolution from reactionary forces and not how service in the militia might itself promote useful civic virtues.¹⁴³

In conclusion, the transformation of the bureaucracy and the standing army highlight some of the characteristics of the polity that is to replace the

¹³⁵ Rousseau, *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, 1013/233-34 .

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1014/234.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* The financial benefits is a recurrent theme of Rousseau’s advocacy of the civic militia.

¹³⁸ Additionally, Marx at one point refers to the National Guard as the ‘armed manhood’ of Paris, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 52/537/482. We can here detect a faint echo of an objectionable element of the citizen-soldier tradition that associates the civic militia with the promotion of manly virtue or ‘armed masculinity’, see Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors*, 24–31, 55–59. Marx does, however, also defend the role women played in fighting on the barricades, *Civil War in France*, 154/350/357.

¹³⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 133/331/323.

¹⁴⁰ Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 47–48.

¹⁴¹ Snyder, ‘The Citizen-Soldier and the Tragedy of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*’, 33.

¹⁴² For the link between martial and civic virtue see Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors*, 22–24, 54–55.

¹⁴³ One exception to this is Marx’s discussion of the Prussian government’s attempt in 1848 to create a watered down civic militia. He condemns the government’s stipulation that a serving militia member ‘may neither think nor speak of public affairs’ and must ‘relinquish his primary political rights’. That would produce militia members that mirrored the ‘passive, will-less and disinterested obedience of the soldier’. Marx bitterly notes that the militia would thus fail ‘to bring up the republicans of the future!’ ‘Der Bürgerwehrgesetzentwurf’, 374-75/243-45/256-58.

existing state: deprofessionalised, non-hierarchical, and accountable to citizens. The necessity of transforming the state in this way is the central insight Marx credits the Commune with having uncovered. Previous revolutions, whether 'legitimate, constitutional, republican or Imperialist' had taken over and perfected the state, whereas the Commune was 'a Revolution against the *State* itself'.¹⁴⁴ The Commune had thereby not only taken the 'Revolution into their own hands' but crucially found 'the means to hold it in the hands of the People itself'.¹⁴⁵ Using the 'governmental machinery of the ruling classes' would mean the revolution slipping from the people's control, and they must therefore have a 'governmental machinery of their own'.¹⁴⁶

(iv) A Political Form Discovered?

Marx presents the insight that the communist revolution must involve a transformation of the state and a specific set of political institutions, as something fundamentally new. Most notably he describes the Commune as the 'the political form at last *discovered* under which to work out the economical emancipation of Labour'.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, when the *Manifest* was re-issued a year after the Commune, he and Engels made sure that the preface reflected this new insight:

in view of the practical experience gained, first in the February Revolution, and then, even more so, in the Paris Commune, where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months, this programme has in places become antiquated. Particularly, the Commune delivered the proof that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'. (See *The Civil War in France*...where this point is further developed.)¹⁴⁸

Marx clearly thought it was an important enough new insight that he felt the need to publicly revise his earlier views (a very rare example of Marx doing so). The question I want to explore below is to what extent were these political institutions 'discovered' in 1871.

The above passage indicates that the seeds of this insight had already been laid by the experience of the 1848 February Revolution. Indeed, Marx's *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* contained a significant critique of the state bureaucracy (as I set out in chapter two). That included a discussion of how the bureaucracy has its own particular interests, which it disguises as universal interests. That idea recurs

¹⁴⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 55/541/486. Note here the subtle exclusion of the Commune from the republican revolutionary tradition.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 66/556/498.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 142/342/334. (Emphasis added).

¹⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, '1872 Vorwort zum *Manifest*', 96/175. Marx seems to have come to this realisation during the Commune, writing in response to the request to reprint the *Manifest* that it 'cannot of course appear without a new preface.' Marx to Wilhelm Liebknecht, 13 April 1871, *MEW* 33: 207; *MECW* 44: 135.

in the drafts of the *Civil War in France*. Marx says that the bureaucracy takes ‘Every minor solitary interest’ in society, ‘separate[s] [it] from society itself’, and then makes it ‘independent of it and opposed to it in the form of stateinterest’.¹⁴⁹ The state bureaucracy thereby ‘pretend[s] to be its [society’s] ideal counterpart’.¹⁵⁰ The latter point is reminiscent of the early criticisms of Hegel’s idealisation of the bureaucracy in the *Kritik*. We saw in chapter one, how Marx was similarly critical of how the ‘*interest of the state* becomes a *particular* private purpose’ of the bureaucracy.¹⁵¹ Marx’s critical attitude to the bureaucracy is thus a consistent theme from the *Kritik* in 1843, to *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* in 1852, and the *Civil War in France* in 1871.

However, what is missing from *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* is a positive account of the desirability of the people taking over public administration. The text is full of insightful criticisms of the shortcomings of the bloated French bureaucracy and its historical development but there is only a limited sense of the necessity of fundamentally transforming it. In a letter written during the Commune Marx claimed that ‘If you look at the last chapter of my *achtzehnte Brumaire* you will find that I say that the next attempt of the French revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another, but to *break* it’.¹⁵² That was something of an exaggeration. The text in fact simply says, ‘All revolutions perfected this machine instead of breaking it.’¹⁵³ Marx never states the necessity of transforming the state in more positive terms than that, especially in comparison to his discussion in the *Kritik* and the *Civil War in France*. In the *Kritik*, Marx argues that the ability to participate in contribute to the common good through public administration should be something carried out by ‘every citizen’ and not an elite group of bureaucrats.¹⁵⁴ While the *Kritik* does not provide a very clear idea of what the ‘supersession (*Aufhebung*) of the bureaucracy’¹⁵⁵ might concretely look like, the *Civil War in France* adds significant (if not complete) detail, by specifying how public officials are to be paid workmen’s wages, elected and subject to recall.

The language with which Marx describes the changes brought about by the Commune also interestingly parallels that used in the *Kritik*. For example, Marx says that the Commune was ‘the reabsorption of the State power by society, as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it’, and that it ‘restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State

¹⁴⁹ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 53/539/484.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Marx, *Kritik*, 51/249/47.

¹⁵² Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 12 April 1871, *MEW* 33: 205; *MECW* 44: 131

¹⁵³ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, 179/197/185.

¹⁵⁴ Marx, *Kritik*, 54/253/50.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 52/250/48.

parasite'.¹⁵⁶ That recalls the recurrent theme of the *Kritik* (and other early writings) of the division between state and civil society in abstract states, and the suggestion that this division would be overcome in a 'democracy'. The Commune can thus be seen as a concrete example of the 'reabsorption' of the separated sphere and the creation of the unity between spheres that Marx envisioned in the *Kritik*.

While we can at least find criticism of the bureaucracy in Marx's writing from the 1848 period (though not a positive alternative), there is no similar critique of representation in these writings. One of the criticisms we raised in chapter two, was that Marx displayed an implausibly high degree of confidence in the idea that universal suffrage would bring the working class to power. There is nearly no discussion of how that might only be true if accompanied by the accountability mechanisms of popular delegacy discussed above. The closest he comes to this in the 1848 period is his specification (which we cited earlier in the chapter), that 'the conditions without which Universal Suffrage would be illusory', are the '[secret] ballot, payment of members, annual general elections'.¹⁵⁷ The necessity of frequent elections is thus mentioned once, but there is no discussion of the right to recall or imperative mandates (even in his analysis of the French constitutional articles that explicitly banned the latter). In the same discussion, he claims that 'Universal Suffrage is the equivalent for political power for the working class'.¹⁵⁸ The Marx of 1871 would not make that claim. He had by then come to understand that without the right to recall and imperative mandates the power of universal suffrage would, in part, be 'illusory'.

That critique of representation was however (as chapter one argued) also set out in the *Kritik*. He there objected to unconstrained representatives, arguing that 'Formally they are commissioned, but once they are *actually* commissioned they are *no longer mandatories*. They are supposed to *be delegates*, and they are *not*'.¹⁵⁹ Exactly how representatives can be made more accountable is not set out in concrete detail in the *Kritik*. It is, once again, in the *Civil War in France* that we get a more detailed portrayal of these mechanisms (though it is still not a comprehensive account of how it would work). The 'social republic' of 1871 can thus be seen as providing some of the institutional detail that the Marx first envisaged with his 'democracy' of 1843.

An important caveat to this argument is that some of the political institutions of the Paris Commune that Marx endorses were already features of his writings from the 1848 period. The civic militia was a longstanding aim, with one

¹⁵⁶ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 56/543/487; *Civil War in France*, 141/341/333.

¹⁵⁷ Marx, 'The Chartists', 327/344/335.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Marx, *Kritik*, 133/329/122.

of Marx and Engels's revolutionary demands in 1848 being the 'Universal arming of the people'.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Marx endorses the fact that the Commune was a 'working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time'.¹⁶¹ That was a continuation of Marx's constitutional analysis from the 1848 period, where he set out his preference for legislative superiority by having it exercise executive functions in addition to its legislative ones. Even going back to the *Kritik*, we find Marx praising the legislature as 'the representative of the people, of the will of the species (*Gattungswillens*)' crediting it with having driven the 'great, organic, general revolutions', while the executive was responsible for 'small revolutions, the retrograde revolutions, the reactions', because it was 'representative of the particular will, of subjective arbitrariness'.¹⁶²

In summary, there are aspects of Marx's political writings that are common to all three periods explored in the thesis, such as his critique of bureaucracy and his preference for the legislature over the executive. But there are others which we find only in his early writings and the late writings on the Paris Commune, and not in his writings from the intervening 1848 period, such as his positive vision of popular control over public administration and his advocacy of popular delegacy over representative government.

(v) Republicanism and the Commune

Republican responses to the Commune ran the full spectrum from enthusiastic participation to outright hostility, as well as those that attempted conciliation between the two sides. The first category includes the radical republican members of the Commune (sometimes called neo-Jacobins), who made up some thirty-four out of the total eighty-one members.¹⁶³ Some of their prominent leaders included Louis Charles Delescluze, who famously gave his life on the barricades, and Félix Pyat, who played a less successful part.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, recent historiography has tended to emphasize that the Communards, from the ordinary National Guard members upwards, saw themselves 'first and foremost republicans'.¹⁶⁵ Many of

¹⁶⁰ Marx and Engels, *Forderungen der Kommunistischen Partei in Deutschland*, 3/3.

¹⁶¹ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 139/339/331. The Commune set up ten commissions to cover various aspects of public administration (such as War, Finance, Education and Labour), each of which was headed by a member of the Commune, who was elected by the body as a whole, and was joined by another five to eight other members. In this way, some two thirds of the members had some kind of administrative role in addition to their legislative one. See Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1984, 2:144–45; and Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 80–81.

¹⁶² Marx, *Kritik*, 61/260/57.

¹⁶³ Williams, *The French Revolution of 1870–1871*, 132.

¹⁶⁴ For Pyat's role in the Commune see Lowell L. Blaisdell, 'Félix Pyat, The "Evil Genius" of the Commune of Paris', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 132, no. 4 (1988): 330–70.

¹⁶⁵ Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, 116.

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them believed that they were the legitimate heirs of France's republican tradition carrying out the promise of 1789.

On the other hand, the moderate or bourgeois wing of republicanism sided with the Versailles government. Reminiscent of the response to the June Days, they believed that the Commune was an illegitimate uprising against the legally constituted Assembly.¹⁶⁶ This moderate republican faction, including Assembly representatives like Edgar Quinet and Jules Ferry, aligned themselves with Thiers and supported his attack on the Commune. Finally, a third faction can be identified that unsuccessfully tried to conciliate between the two groups.¹⁶⁷ In reference to the final two factions, Philip Nord argues that the Commune 'split the republican middle class into two camps: a conservative and moderate camp aligned with the Party of Order; and a radical camp open to coalition with elements of the working-class left'.¹⁶⁸ The Paris Commune was thus just as much, if not more so, a conflict *within* republicanism as one *between* republicanism and emerging alternative ideologies of anarchism and communism.

For a sense of the similarly divided international republican responses we return to two republicans from our discussion 1848 Revolutions: William James Linton and Giuseppe Mazzini. Linton, by this time an immigrant to America, was one of only a small number of people there who publicly rallied to the Commune's defence.¹⁶⁹ Linton wrote articles for the influential anti-slavery *National Standard* and the *Radical*, and he reprinted the latter in a separate pamphlet, which tried to counter the slanders, inaccuracies and panicked exaggerations of Communard violence that dominated the American press. He took especial aim at the coverage of the *New York Tribune*, a traditionally progressive paper (Marx had been the European correspondent from 1852 to 1862), that had, however, emerged as a fervent critic of the Commune.¹⁷⁰ In his pamphlet, Linton carefully dissected the *Tribune's* reports, exposing where its observations were simply inaccurate or reflected its underlying bias.

To the charge that the Commune was communist, Linton (largely correctly) noted that communism (defined as 'having all things in common, abolition of property and family'), was not to be found in 'either in the words or acts, of *Communal (not Communistic) Paris*'.¹⁷¹ He noted that communists were

¹⁶⁶ Shafer, *The Paris Commune*, 80.

¹⁶⁷ Philip G. Nord, 'The Party of Conciliation and the Paris Commune', *French Historical Studies* 15, no. 1 (1987): 1–35.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Radical Artisan*, 174–76.

¹⁷⁰ Adam Tuchinsky, *Horace Greeley's New-York Tribune: Civil War-Era Socialism and the Crisis of Free Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 196–204.

¹⁷¹ Linton, *The Paris Commune*, 22.

involved, but they were neither the ‘instigator or abettor’.¹⁷² Despite his personal objections to communism, he struck a conciliatory tone, arguing that even if communism was misguided a ‘communist has the right to put his belief into action.’¹⁷³ He also played down the communist danger, presenting it as a passing fad of an older revolutionary generation that had had its day. He argued that these ‘old Communist theories’, which ‘have never moved the masses’, were now restricted to a ‘few individuals’.¹⁷⁴ And it was only ‘elder politicians, like Blanqui’ with whom ‘dreams of the old Communist utopias might yet linger’.¹⁷⁵ Linton thus combined a largely accurate judgement of the composition of the Commune, with a considerable misdiagnosis of the future trends of support for communism and republicanism.

Linton did also offer some measured criticism of the Commune. He interpreted the demand for a ‘commune’ as a backwards-looking longing for the medieval system of independent communes.¹⁷⁶ This failed to appreciate that the ‘days of isolation and separation are at an end’, where even the ‘walls of China are falling’.¹⁷⁷ He instead articulated a vision of what has been called ‘republican patriotism’, which combines a commitment to one’s particular national republic with a universal solidarity with other peoples.¹⁷⁸ Thus, he argued, that the ‘hermit must quit his cell for active citizenship’, and understand that the Commune existed ‘*for and with and under order of the nation*’, which was ‘itself a citizen of the world’.¹⁷⁹ In this multi-tiered patriotism every citizen was a ‘sworn soldier, or, if need be, martyr, of universal republicanism’.¹⁸⁰ This criticism aside, the overwhelming message of Linton’s pamphlet was that the Communards had put up a brave and commendable fight in the service of republicanism, which deserved respect and even reverence. He thus ended his pamphlet with a rousing defence of what the Communards had achieved,

these men of Paris have given to the world the ever-needed example of heroic daring and devotedness, [they] have laid one more broad stone (though it to be their own grave-stone) of that glorious causeway over

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 22–23. Marx countered the view that the Commune ‘was a reproduction of mediæval Communes’, noting that it was ‘generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct form of social life’, *Civil War in France*, 141/340/333.

¹⁷⁷ Linton, *The Paris Commune*, 24.

¹⁷⁸ For an explication of this view see Stuart White, ‘Republicanism, Patriotism, and Global Justice’, in *Forms of Justice: Critical Perspectives on David Miller’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 251–68.

¹⁷⁹ Linton, *The Paris Commune*, 25.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

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which Humanity, defeated or triumphant, marches firmly to the Republic.¹⁸¹

Linton's response differed markedly from the far more consequential reaction of his old associate, Mazzini. For forty years, Mazzini had been one of the most prominent republicans on the international stage, respected and admired across Europe and the Americas for his lifelong commitment to popular struggles, from founding the Young Europe societies in the 1830s, to his leading role in the Roman Republic of 1849 and his subsequent part in the Italian Risorgimento.¹⁸² His response to the Commune therefore mattered a great deal. His decision to condemn the Commune, harshly and repeatedly, dismayed and alienated a younger generation of Italian radicals who had enthusiastically followed the events in Paris. Less familiar with Mazzini's radical past, his attacks appeared to them out of touch, bordering on reactionary. His failure to take the side of the Commune thereby played an inadvertent role in pushing them away from republicanism and towards socialism and anarchism.¹⁸³

Mazzini believed that 'the Republic, as it is understood by the Commune, is not ours'.¹⁸⁴ He condemned the Commune as a violent class struggle, which ruined the possibility of national unity. He argued that the Commune 'sprang forth not from a superior *principle* of Country or Humanity, but from a narrow Parisian *interest*' and that the 'social question weakened the worker's love and worship of country'.¹⁸⁵ The Commune was thus an 'absurd, backward, politically immoral notion of the republic'.¹⁸⁶ The condemnation of the Commune did not however mean that Mazzini sided with the Versailles government. He equally condemned the violence against the Communards and argued that republicans should endorse neither party.

The tone of his articles suggest that Mazzini was genuinely aggrieved by the episode. He interpreted it as an outcome of a growing trend in society towards egoistic material interests over a proper attitude of duty towards others. He tried to reach out to the workers by arguing that republicans also had answers to their social despair. He noted, rather vaguely, that republicans 'want to peacefully and

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸² For this influence and legacy see C. A. Bayly and E. F. Biagini, eds., *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Nadia Urbinati and Stefano Recchia, 'Giuseppe Mazzini's International Political Thought', in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, ed. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1-30.

¹⁸³ Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 36-37; T. R. Ravindranathan, 'The Paris Commune and the First International in Italy: Republicanism versus Socialism, 1871-1872', *The International History Review* 3, no. 4 (1981): 482-516.

¹⁸⁴ Mazzini, 'Sul Manifesto del Comune Parigino', 208.

¹⁸⁵ Mazzini, 'Il Commune e l'Assemblea', 268/153, 282/158-59.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 275/156-57.

gradually substitute *associated* labor for the current system of *wage* labor'.¹⁸⁷ He also thought that the middle-classes had neglected their duty to improve the social conditions of the working-class. He claimed that this was the middle classes' 'most beautiful, grandest, and holiest mission'.¹⁸⁸ He thus stressed that the middle classes had a central role in the struggle for a republic that would serve all classes, noting that it was 'to the middle classes that we speak'.¹⁸⁹

Having dealt with the Commune, he then turned in the late summer of 1871 to criticising the International. That involved a direct critique of Marx who he called 'a man of acute intellect, but...of a dissolving character, and of domineering temper, who is jealous of other's influence, [with] no strong philosophical nor religious beliefs, and moved, I am afraid, more by – however legitimate – rage rather than love'.¹⁹⁰ Mazzini accused Marx and the International of promoting 'three Negations': no God, no Country and no Property.¹⁹¹ He also analysed the International's founding documents from 1864, which were written by Marx. These opened by declaring that the economic subjection of the worker by the capitalist 'lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms'.¹⁹² But Mazzini argued that while this was 'true in part, [it] is certainly exaggerated' and moreover showed that the association wrongly 'concentrate[d]...exclusively upon the economic problem', to the exclusion of political problems.¹⁹³ Combined with the International's narrow focus on appealing solely to the working class, this meant that it was an 'utter delusion' to think that 'republican institutions can ever be laid, or any great work of political emancipation achieved, by the *International*'.¹⁹⁴

Given this intense hostility to the Commune and the International we should not be surprised by Marx's response, in a July 1871 interview for a New York newspaper, to the question of Mazzini's involvement in the International,

R [interviewer]—And Mazzini, is he a member of your body?

Dr. Marx (laughing)—Ah, no. We should have made but little progress if we had not got beyond the range of his ideas.

R.—You surprise me. I should certainly have thought that he represented the most advanced views.

Dr. M.—He represents nothing better than the old idea of a middle-class republic.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 295/164.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 286/160.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 295/165.

¹⁹⁰ Mazzini, 'Agli operai italiani', 306/155.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 308-12/157-60.

¹⁹² Marx, 'Provisional Rules', 13/14/14.

¹⁹³ Mazzini, 'L'Internazionale - Cenno storico', 26-27/567.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30/570.

¹⁹⁵ Marx, Interview published in *The World*, 456-57/642/605.

II. An End to Politics?

To begin this section, I want to turn yet again to William Morris. In his 1890 utopian novel *News from Nowhere* the protagonist William Guest wakes up to find himself transported to the future socialist society of the twenty-second century. There he is taken on a tour of London to see the myriad ways in which society has been transformed. Private property has of course been abolished, and the police, prisons, and law courts have all disappeared along with it. The harsh divide between town and countryside has been overcome, with London's urban spaces now interspersed with woods and gardens. Children are not forced into schools but are left to play and learn as they see fit. People are no longer tied to repetitive and unfulfilling work, but instead engage in a flourishing variety of productive and artistic activities. The goods and services they produce are rendered freely, so that the socialist citizens of the future are left repeatedly puzzled when Guest tries to pay for them. When it comes to the chapter 'Concerning Politics', we find the following exchange between Guest and one of his guides, old Hammond,

Said I: 'How do you manage with politics?'

Said Hammond, smiling: 'I am glad that it is of *me* that you ask that question; I do believe that anybody else would make you explain yourself, or try to do so, till you were sickened of asking questions. Indeed, I believe I am the only man in England who would know what you mean; and since I know, I will answer your question briefly by saying that we are very well off as to politics, – because we have none. If ever you make a book out of this conversation, put this in a chapter by itself, of the model of old Horrebow's Snakes in Iceland.'¹⁹⁶

Hammond's reference is to Niels Horrebow's *The Natural History of Iceland* (1758), where the chapter 'Concerning Snakes' notably consists of a single sentence: 'No snakes of any kind are to be met with throughout the whole island.'¹⁹⁷ Thus, according to Hammond, just as *Iceland* has *no snakes*, *socialism* has *no politics*.

The question that I want to answer in this final section is to what extent did Marx share Morris's conception of the end of politics in socialism? The question is important to this study, because though I have shown that Marx's endorses political institutions drawn from the republican tradition, a lingering concern might be that he believes that these political institutions will eventually disappear and that this belief distances him from the tradition. Indeed, few things could be more alien to the republican sensibility than the idea of a society without politics.

¹⁹⁶ Morris, *News from Nowhere*, 73.

¹⁹⁷ Niels Horrebow, *The Natural History of Iceland* (London, 1758), 91. This well-known chapter is, however, the result of the English translation cutting short the paragraph-long entry in the original Danish edition, see Edwards Charlton, 'Snakes Conspicuous by the Absence', *Notes and Queries* 4, no. 3 (1870): 186–87.

Marx's apparent belief in the end of politics is a well-established position in the literature. We are told that Marx 'predict[ed] and hope[d] for the "withering away" of the whole public realm', that he believed that 'With the end of classes, the state and politics will end too', that he thought that 'political and legal institutions will cease to exist with the emergence and development of socialist society', and that he claimed that 'once things are set up aright, politics will no longer be needed'.¹⁹⁸ Even contemporary republicans who believe that the republican tradition has much to learn from Marx's ideas, have argued that Marx 'notoriously made the incorrect inference that collective ownership of the means of production would remove the need for politics'.¹⁹⁹

However, I will show that the evidence concerning Marx's supposed belief in the end of politics and political institutions is in fact remarkably thin. The evidence that we do have suggests that Marx probably did not believe that political institutions come to an end. His distance from the republican tradition thus does not lie here. Instead, I will argue that Marx's departure from the republican tradition is more accurately characterised by his *lack of interest* in the question of whether politics would be a permanent feature of a socialist society and his *opposition to sustained reflection* on the precise political institutions required in that society.

(i) Marx's Lack of Interest

Before we begin the discussion, we need to distinguish between the *end of politics and political institutions* and the *end of the state*, which are not differentiated as clearly as they should be in discussions of this topic. By the end of politics and political institutions, I mean to refer to the question whether communist society is characterized by and has structures in place for 'interpersonal deliberation, negotiation and authoritative decision-making in matters of public scope or concern' (the apt summation given by Norman Geras).²⁰⁰ To understand what the end of the state means, we need to further distinguish between two separate conceptions of the state in Marx's usage of the term.²⁰¹ First, as a political structure characterised by professionalization, hierarchy, centralisation and unaccountability. Second, as a political structure of organised coercion.

¹⁹⁸ Respectively, Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 60; Andrew Levine, *The End of the State* (London: Verso, 1987), 154; Christine Sypnowich, *The Concept of Socialist Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1; and Megill, *Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason*, 58.

¹⁹⁹ Bellamy, 'Being Liberal with Republicanism's Radical Heritage', 272.

²⁰⁰ Norman Geras, 'Seven Types of Obloquy: Travesties of Marxism', *Socialist Register* 26 (1990): 27. I will assume that believing in the end of politics is closely tied to believing in the end of political institutions, in that believing the former justifies the latter.

²⁰¹ See the illuminating discussion in Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 2: 231–46.

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As we saw in the previous section, Marx argues that the Commune had stopped being a state in the first sense.²⁰² That is the meaning Marx is employing when he says that the Commune was ‘a Revolution against the *State* itself.’²⁰³ The Commune was however still a state in the second sense, since the continued existence of the police, judiciary and armed forces (albeit all in a transformed way) means that it was still a political structure of organised coercion. The standard Marxist account is that these coercive bodies are necessary in the early stages of communism (in order to defeat communism’s enemies and to deal with the lingering effects of bourgeois society), but that the state as organised coercion eventually disappears as the communist society develops. That idea is drawn from a famous discussion by Engels in his immensely influential *Anti-Dübring* (1877), which was then republished in a separate pamphlet *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* (1880) – texts that played a greater role in the early development and understanding of ‘Marxism’ than any by Marx himself.²⁰⁴ In this discussion, Engels presents the state as an instrument used by a ruling class to repress coercively a subordinate class. He argues that the bourgeois state represses the workers on behalf of capitalists, the feudal state represses the serfs on behalf of the lords, and the slave state represses the slaves on behalf of the slaveowners. But because communist society is a society without classes it has no need for this repressive apparatus. The state, as organised coercion, therefore becomes progressively unnecessary as communism becomes more and more established. Engels thus famously writes,

State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The State is not ‘abolished’. *It dies out.*²⁰⁵

²⁰² It was for this reason that Engels would say that the Commune ‘had ceased to be a state in the true sense of the term’. It would therefore be better, Engels argued, for communists to refer to their desired political structure by either the French word ‘Commune’ or ‘*Gemeinwesen*...a good old German word’, Engels to August Bebel, 18-28 March 1875, *MEW* 34: 128-29; *MECW* 45: 63-64. *Gemeinwesen* can be variously rendered into English as ‘community’, ‘commonwealth’ or ‘polity’.

²⁰³ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 55/541/486.

²⁰⁴ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, 560.

²⁰⁵ Engels, *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique*, 576/224/321. This well-known passage in fact varies significantly between its first publication in *Anti-Dübring* in 1877, the subsequent second edition (1886) and third edition (1894) of *Anti-Dübring*, as well as the version published in *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* (1880), the German edition *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft* (1882) and the English edition, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1892) (see respectively *MEGA*[®] I.27: 445, 535, 527, 620; *MECW* 24: 321). For example, the first edition of *Anti-Dübring* and *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* did not include the famous phrase that the state is not abolished but dies out. This phrase was first included in *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft* and was incorporated in the second and third edition of *Anti-Dübring* and subsequent translations. *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* correctly translated the phrase ‘*er stirbt ab*’ as ‘*it dies out*’, but this was subsequently overshadowed by the more well-known but less accurate translation ‘*it withers away*’. Other interesting divergences are that the first edition of *Anti-Dübring* and *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique* in place of the line ‘The State is not ‘abolished’. *It dies out*’, read ‘A free society does not tolerate the existence of a state between it and its

The disappearance of the state as organised coercion is also explicitly set out by Engels in a letter addressing the ‘gradual dissolution and ultimate disappearance of that political organisation called *the State*’, where he argues that ‘With the disappearance of a wealthy minority the necessity for an armed repressive State-force disappears also.’²⁰⁶

Surprising as it may seem, Marx himself never actually committed himself for or against the idea of the disappearance of organised coercion.²⁰⁷ He simply never wrote about it. There is some legitimate basis for arguing that Marx likely agreed with Engels’s argument. He after all wrote the preface to *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique*. But that does not necessarily entail that he agreed with every aspect of the text. It is also not insignificant that Marx never took the time to write about it himself.²⁰⁸

If we assume that Marx agreed with Engels on this point, that would imply that the repressive parts of the political institutions that we outlined above (the civic militia and the transformed judiciary and police) at some point disappear. The further question is whether Marx believed that the non-repressive political institutions also disappear. Namely, does communist society still include a Commune like structure, with elected members that are subject to recall, and an administrative system where public servants are similarly elected and subject to recall. Do they continue to exist or are they too at some point become unnecessary and thus part of the process of the state disappearing? If Marx does believe that, then we could say he believes in the end of politics and political institutions.

With these clarifications out of the way, we can turn the textual locutions where Marx discusses the end of politics and political institutions in communism. The only example of Marx, by himself, explicitly referring to the end of politics, comes on the final page of *Misère de la philosophie*,

The working class, in the course of its development, will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so-

members’ (*MEGA*² I.27: 445, 527), and *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft* did not say that the state becomes ‘superfluous, and then dies out of itself’ (as the English translation put it) but that it becomes ‘superfluous, and then falls asleep by itself (*schläft dann von selbst ein*)’. The latter suggests a more gradual and peaceful process of the state’s disappearance.

²⁰⁶ Engels to Philipp von Patten, 18 April 1883, *MEW* 36: 11, *MECW* 47: 10.

²⁰⁷ In the above letter Engels claims that it is the view held by ‘Marx and I [Engels], ever since 1845’, *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ A potential exception might seem to be when Marx writes that the ‘the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated’ *Civil War in France*, 140–41/340/332–33. But that refers to the untransformed repressive organs of the existing state, which are ‘merely repressive’. It does not imply that Marx thought that repressive bodies which also have legitimate functions (like the civic militia) would also be ‘amputated’.

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called (*proprement dit*), since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society.²⁰⁹

In addition, in the *Manifest*, Marx and Engels write,

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, (*im eigentlichen Sinne*) is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another.²¹⁰

At face value, these statements seem like clear endorsements of the end of politics and political institutions. But closer inspection reveals that things are not so simple. As Geras perceptively notes, these passages do not say that politics comes to an end, but that ‘political power properly so-called’ comes to an end.²¹¹ That implies that Marx and Engels are using ‘political power’ in a stipulative sense. Specifically, as the ‘expression of antagonism in civil society’ and ‘the organised power of one class for oppressing another.’ That suggests that what they mean by the disappearance of politics, in these locutions, is the disappearance of politics based on class.²¹² Geras argues that commentators, however, frequently engage in ‘conceptual elision’ between Marx and Engels’s use of politics in this stipulative class sense and ‘politics *tout court*’, in the sense of deliberation and authoritative decision-making about issues of public concern.²¹³

With this further clarification, we can now explore what evidence there is for the claim that Marx believes that not just *class politics*, but *all* politics, ends in communism. Clear evidence or explicit statements are, once again, hard to come by. One significant and relevant area of evidence is where Marx and or Engels talk about decision-making in communism in the de-politicized language of

²⁰⁹ Marx, *Misère de la philosophie*, 182/212.

²¹⁰ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 482/505. The 1850 MacFarlane translation interestingly gives this key quote as ‘Political power in the exact sense of the word’, *Red Republican*, 23 November 1850, no. 23 p. 183

²¹¹ Norman Geras, ‘Seven Types of Obloquy: Travesties of Marxism’, *Socialist Register* 26 (1990): 27. Geras also points to several further examples where Marx and Engels qualify the end of the state in similar terms. For example, in an 1850 book review Marx and Engels write that the ‘abolition of the state has meaning with the communists, only as the necessary consequence of the abolition of classes’, ‘Rezension *Le Socialisme et l’impôt*’, 297/288/333. Similarly, in response to Bakunin’s anarchist objection to communists apparently wanting to transitionally maintain the state rather than immediately abolishing it, Marx argues that this ‘just means when class rule has disappeared there [will] be no state in the present political sense’ *Exzerpte aus Bakunin*, 635/519. Thus the aspects that are said to fall away from the state are its ‘political’ ones in the sense of organised class power. For a useful collection of the relevant textual locutions see Hal Draper, ‘The Death of the State in Marx and Engels’, *Socialist Register* 7 (1970): 281–307. See also the discussion in Roberts, *Marx’s Inferno*, 251–53.

²¹² An exception to Marx and Engels qualifying their claim about the end of politics and political institutions in this way, is when they write ‘the communist revolution, which removes the division of labour, ultimately abolishes political institutions’, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, 364/380. However, what they may have meant here was that communism overcomes the division of labour between the professional class that governs and administers and the ordinary citizens who are governed and administered. See Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1984, 2:223–24.

²¹³ Geras, ‘Seven Types of Obloquy’, 25, 27.

administration. Most notorious in this regard is Engels's statement, quoted earlier, that 'the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things'.²¹⁴ This phrase, which has its origins in Saint-Simonian thought, certainly gives the impression of a depoliticised society. It evokes an image of a society where there are no longer any serious matters for debate and deliberation but only tasks that require simple technocratic administration. We can find similar language in a couple of jointly authored texts. In the *Manifest*, Marx and Engels express support for the utopian socialist proposals for 'the conversion of the State into the mere superintendence of production'.²¹⁵ Similarly, in an 1872 pamphlet written in the name of the General Council of the International, they write that once the 'abolition of classes, is attained, the power of the State...disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions'.²¹⁶ These do give us some grounds for thinking that Marx believes in the end of politics.

But interestingly, we do not find this language in texts that Marx wrote by himself. In so far as Marx says anything about public administration in communism, his remarks are limited to specifying that functions that are purely repressive should be abolished, while legitimate functions should be placed under collective control. (For instance, he says that the 'governmental force of repression and authority over society was thus to be broken in its merely repressive organs, and where it had legitimate functions to fulfil, these functions were not to be exercised by a body superior to the society, but by the responsible agents of society itself').²¹⁷ The suspicion thereby arises that the language of government being transformed into simple technical administration might have its origins more in Engels than Marx. That contention is supported by the fact that contemporaneous to the above cited 1872 pamphlet of the International, Engels individually wrote that 'public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of society'.²¹⁸ Engels's path to communism came through utopian socialism to a greater degree than Marx's did, and he retained greater sympathy for some of their projections into the future (his draft on the *Manifest* for example talks of 'the erection of large palaces on national estates as common dwelling for communities of citizens').²¹⁹ That may well have included a more depoliticised

²¹⁴ Engels, *Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique*, 576/224/321. Engels similarly speaks of the 'future conversion of political rule over men into an administration of things and a direction of processes of production' *Ibid.*, 555/195/292.

²¹⁵ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, 491/516.

²¹⁶ Marx and Engels, *Les Prétendues Scissions dans L'Internationale*, 50/121.

²¹⁷ Marx, *Civil War in France (Second Draft)*, 106/597/538.

²¹⁸ Engels, 'Dell'Autorità', 86/308/425.

²¹⁹ Engels, *Grundsätze des Kommunismus*, 373/351. See the discussion of Engels's intellectual heritage in Stedman Jones, 'Introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*', 66–67. In Engels's early writings he routinely portrayed communism as the overcoming of democracy (for example, he says that 'democracy, as well as every

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understanding of the future society. We cannot however be certain whether this language is down to Engels, precise conclusions about responsibility in co-written pieces will usually remain elusive. We can however point to other jointly written pieces of evidence where Marx and Engels seem to reject this idea of technocratic administration. For example, they also make fun of those socialists who propose ‘in place of the state, a committee of administrators’.²²⁰

In light of the limited and inconclusive nature of the evidence presented so far, it can be a little surprising to read just how confidently some commentators express their interpretation of Marx supposedly believing in the end of politics and political institutions. In Bertell Ollman’s attempted reconstruction of Marx’s communist society, he states that there is *no legislature* (because ‘the people of communism are agreed on all the subjects which could possibly come before a parliament’), *no courts* (because the ‘judicial arm of government, too, is based on an assumption of necessary conflict between people’), *no laws* (because ‘where social norms are accepted and heeded by all, this function no longer exists’) and even *elections* are ‘probably uncontested’ (because ‘everyone agrees on matters of policy’).²²¹ The only thing that is left, on Ollman’s account, is the administration of production through the ‘general supervision of managers’.²²²

Similarly, Allan Megill maintains that Marx ‘had no commitment to the processes of political deliberation, negotiation, and compromise as modes by which human beings, in the future socialist (communist) order, will decide what arrangements they are going to support and what actions they are going to undertake in their lives together as human beings’.²²³ He also argues that Marx concluded that ‘science (natural and social) will tell us, unequivocally and without room for doubt or disagreement, what needs to be done. In other words, matters of state and administration can be so scientifically structured that deliberation will be unnecessary... Thus Marx concluded that politics is *unnecessary*’.²²⁴

There is little sense in either of these accounts of reticence or nuance regarding these conclusions. This is especially glaring since Marx never actually expresses an explicit opinion on any of the above. You cannot find a clear textual basis where Marx commits himself to the disappearance of the legislature, courts,

other form of government, must ultimately break to pieces...[in] Communism’, ‘Progress of Social Reform on the Continent’, 496/481/393.). That is not a characterisation we ever find in Marx’s early or later writings. Note that I raise this possibility, not in an attempt to shift blame to Engels but in the spirit of trying to identify the likelier intellectual lineage of the idea. We could, in fact, give Engels credit for at least addressing the question in greater depth than Marx.

²²⁰ Marx and Engels, ‘Rezension *Le Socialisme et l’impôt*’, 295/286/332.

²²¹ Bertell Ollman, ‘Marx’s Vision of Communism: a Reconstruction’, *Critique* 8, no. 1 (1977): 32–33.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Megill, *Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason*, 58.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

laws and elections or to the end of deliberation, negotiation, and compromise. In the absence of such evidence, one would think that a little restraint is in order.

These conclusions are instead the result of supposedly extrapolating from Marx's stated positions. But in that case, we can ask whether these are plausible extrapolations. Megill's argument that Marx thinks that science will be able to 'unequivocally and without room for doubt or disagreement' tell us what 'needs to be done', is not supported by the few suggestive remarks Marx makes about the role of science in communism. When Marx writes that 'Science can only play its genuine part in the Republic of Labour', he does not mean that science will determine all decisions in communism, he means that it will no longer be perverted as an 'instrument of class rule' by having to serve the interests and whims of the state and capital.²²⁵ Moreover, it is unclear what theoretical commitments of Marx justifies Ollman's argument that Marx's communism involves a nearly complete identity of interests and opinions ('the people of communism are agreed on all the subjects'), to the extent that political institutions are no longer necessary to mediate conflict between people. It also conflicts, Geras argues, with Marx's repeated suggestion that communism would in fact involve an 'unprecedented flourishing of human individuality'.²²⁶ It consequently seems unlikely that Marx believed that communist citizens would agree to such an extent about such a vast number of societal issues that they could simply do away with any and all deliberative and authoritative forums.

We see this in terms of the question of elections, where Marx makes one of his very rare statements on the political features of the future communist society, which comes in his notes on Bakunin's *Gosudarstvennost' i anarkhiia* (1873). In response to Bakunin's criticism that Marx's 'people's government' implies being supposedly ruled by a 'a small number of representatives chosen (elected) by the people', Marx replies that electing representatives can be found in even the 'tiniest Russian commune'.²²⁷ What matters, Marx says, is the economic conditions and relations in which elections occur. In a future communist society, where 'functions have ceased to be political' (presumably Marx is referring to representative functions), 'elections lose their present political character'.²²⁸ These are a rather cryptic set of remarks – perhaps unsurprising since they are just Marx's private notes.²²⁹ The reference to elections losing their 'present political

²²⁵ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 64/554/496.

²²⁶ Geras, 'Seven Types of Obloquy', 26.

²²⁷ Marx, *Exzerpte aus Bakunin*, 635/519.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Marx here also notes that 'as soon as the functions have ceased to be political, 1) government functions no longer exist; 2) the distribution of general functions has become a routine matter (*Geschäftssache*) which entails no domination', *Ibid.* The first consequence seems to support an end to political institutions, while the second suggests more that they simply lose their dominatory character.

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character' would again seem to refer to elections losing their basis in class divisions. Elections might thus still be contested on the basis of non-class cleavages and disagreements. It may also refer to elections no longer being run in the unaccountable way they are at 'present', and so allow a separate class of elite representative functionaries to separate themselves from the people. It might therefore be a reference to the necessity of elections being accompanied by recall and imperative mandates. In any case, these remarks hardly suggest elections will be 'uncontested'.

Thus, the profoundly apolitical interpretations of Marx's future communist society seem off the mark. Marx's few explicit comments on the matter, when properly explained, do not suggest that he thinks that there will be no more politics. Nor do his other well-established positions give us good enough grounds for coming to that conclusion. In the absence of any good reason to believe the contrary, our assumption should be that the political institutions that Marx endorses for the early period of communism continue to exist into its longer-term establishment (because we need a reason why he would stop believing in the need for them). That would suggest that collective decision making through elections to a legislature, with members subject to recall and imperative mandates, as well as a system of public administration subjected to the popular control of citizens, continues to be a feature of communist society. In the pointed summary of Richard Hunt, there is scant evidence for thinking that Marx thought it possible or even desirable for humans to 'live together like herds of animals without any conscious organization at all'.²³⁰

If Marx does agree with Engels's argument that the state as organised coercion dies out, then it would seem that the additional repressive institutions, such as the civic militia and the transformed judiciary and police do disappear.²³¹ It might be hard to imagine a society where politics is not accompanied by coercion, but it is surely not impossible to do so. It might involve something like people voluntarily submitting themselves to authoritative decision-making processes that they have democratically participated in. That is perhaps a 'a highly utopian expectation', but it is 'nonetheless a different expectation from that of an end of politics, in the broad sense'.²³²

However, it is essential to stress the uncertain nature of this judgment. The basis for tentatively concluding that Marx did not believe in the end of politics and political institutions is drawn from a set of scattered, occasionally

²³⁰ Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 2: 246.

²³¹ The above cited line that government and administration in communism 'entails no domination (*Herrschaft*)' might suggest that they are non-coercive. But *Herrschaft* should not be straightforwardly associated with coercion here, since Marx may also simply have meant anti-democratic rule.

²³² Geras, 'Seven Types of Obloquy', 28. See also Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels*, 1984, 2:248.

cryptic remarks, and from the *negative* evidence of what Marx did not say. Marx however provides few unambiguous *positive* endorsements of the continuation of politics and political institutions in communism. We are stuck with sifting through his private notes on other authors for potential clues, rather than being able to work off a proper and detailed discussion of the necessity, let alone the desirability, of politics and political institutions in communism (or even a discussion that comes that comes to the opposite conclusion). That is not to say that Marx needed to write a theoretical tract dedicated to every aspect of communism, but even a few dedicated paragraphs would have cleared up some confusion.

Instead, where Marx does raise the question he steadfastly refuses to answer it. In the paragraph preceding the well-known quote that the ‘political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*’, Marx writes,

The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present state functions? This question can only be answered scientifically...²³³

Marx then makes no attempt to address that question and changes the topic. The reticence and disinterest that Marx displays here, is symptomatic of his well-known objection to speculating about the precise nature of a future communist society. His reticence is thus not because he ‘simply forget to portray future developments in any detail’; it was ‘neither accidental nor a matter of regret for him’.²³⁴ It was a consequence of his theoretical opposition to such ‘utopian’ speculation.²³⁵ Discussing what the economic, legal, cultural and political institutions of communism might look like, held little interest or value for Marx. Beyond the fragmentary picture we can draw from his discussion Paris Commune, Marx declines to give us a more extensive understanding of what the political structures of communism should look like. For Marx, devising detailed institutional plans for a communist society was a distraction from the more important tasks of critiquing contemporary capitalism and would in any case be rendered superfluous by the actual revolutionary process. This is what, Marx and Engels believed, distinguished their *scientific* socialism from *utopian* socialism.

²³³ Marx, ‘Kritik der Gothaer Programms’, 21–22/28/95. This quote does not provide support for Megill’s above discussed thesis concerning science giving us the answers, since Marx’s point is that science (by which he would have meant something closer to *social* science, since the German word *Wissenschaft* refers to both natural and social science) shows us what political institutions are needed not that it takes the place of those institutions.

²³⁴ Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, 279–80.

²³⁵ See David Leopold, ‘On Marxian Utopophobia’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54, no. 1 (2016): 111–34.

It is this position, that sustained and detailed reflection about the political institutions of communism is unnecessary and a consequent lack of interest in discussing whether politics will be a permanent feature of communism, that is more accurately seen as the point at which Marx's divergence, in this regard, from republicanism.

(ii) The Permanence of Politics

Since Marx displays little interest in the question of the continuance of politics and political institutions in communism, I want to briefly explore what republican reasons there are for thinking that politics and political institutions would be a permanent feature of human society. Doing so is complicated by the fact that republicanism has not, in general, accepted the communist premise of a classless society. (This can be based on 'realistic' considerations about the feasibility of entirely removing classes, a view we might credit to Machiavelli, or the 'principled' considerations of the democratic republicans of supporting a circumscribed right to accumulate private property, and thus allowing differential property ownership with an associated class structure). Republicans thus already do not accept the premise of the process by which communists argue that the state (and perhaps even political institutions, as such) become unnecessary. But, there are arguments drawn from the republican tradition which we can use to analyse whether politics would be a permanent feature of a classless communist society.

First, there is the contention that not all political conflict can be reduced to class.²³⁶ Karl Heinzen took communists to task for believing the 'chimera, that man, when he is no longer spell-bound by the addiction to property, completely puts aside all hostile passions'.²³⁷ He thought that it was this misconception of the multitudinous cause of political conflict which led to the communist belief that once class was removed, there would be 'nothing left but a so-called *administration* (*Verwaltung*), an accounting system, a book-keeping system, etc.'.²³⁸ Reminiscent of his disagreements with Marx over non-material motivations in historical explanation, Heinzen argues that since communists started 'exclusively from material interests', they could only conceive of a 'state form' in terms of the administration of material interests.²³⁹ Though Heinzen does not elaborate the point further, potential non-class sources of conflict include religious differences, ethnic and racial discrimination, oppression based on gender and sexuality, differing mental and physical abilities, conflicting national, regional and local

²³⁶ I am not attributing this class-reductionist of political conflict to Marx, but exploring what contesting such a view might mean for the question of the end of politics.

²³⁷ Heinzen, 'Gegen die Kommunisten', 66.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

loyalties, and attitudes to the natural environment. Less familiar ones might also include the moral and political status of non-human animals and artificial intelligence, and beyond that, forms of social antagonism that we are not even aware of today. We might expect that taking class out of the equation might take some or even much of the sting out of some of these social cleavages and antagonisms. But the relevant question is whether it would affect them to the extent that recognizably political institutions are no longer required to address them.

Second, is the contention that even if communism manages to establish a classless society the drive to re-introduce class society is a permanent source of conflict. If that is the case, then the political institutions outlined in the first section, are not just required to *reach* communism but also to *maintain* it. Within the republican tradition, Machiavelli is a particularly useful example to discuss this point.²⁴⁰ Machiavelli did not of course believe in a classless society, but he did believe that large degrees of material inequality were corrosive to a republic. In typical style, he argued that noblemen ‘are pernicious in every republic’ and recommends that ‘anyone wishing to establish a republic where there are many noblemen cannot do so unless he first does away with them all’.²⁴¹ Establishing and maintaining a republic thus requires drastic measures including the forced removal or killing of its aristocratic enemies. But what is alien to Machiavelli’s political theory is the idea that greater material equality might at some point result in the republic no longer having to guard itself against its enemies who want to re-establish inequality.

The reason for this is grounded in Machiavelli’s view of human nature. Throughout his *Discorsi* (1531) Machiavelli repeatedly stresses the extent to which human nature is ambitious, insatiable, and prone to corruption.²⁴² Humans are thus constantly searching for greater property, status and honours for themselves. At the same time, Machiavelli argues that their ability to acquire these goods is limited by scarce resources and the fickleness of fortune. The tension between these facts means that conflict is the inevitable result. Machiavelli argues that,

whenever the necessity for fighting is taken away from them [men], they fight for the sake of ambition, which is so powerful a passion in the human breast that, no matter the rank to which a man may rise, he never abandons it. The reason is that nature has created men in such a way that they can desire everything but are unable to obtain everything, so that their desire is always greater than their power of acquisition,

²⁴⁰ The potential benefits for republican theory of combining Marx and Machiavelli’s social and political insights is suggested by Bellamy, ‘Being Liberal with Republicanism’s Radical Heritage’, 272–73.

²⁴¹ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I.55.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, I.29, I.42, II. Preface.

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and discontent with what they possess and lack of satisfaction are the result.²⁴³

Machiavelli's point here is not just that the absolute scarcity of resources that causes this conflict. His argument is that human ambition is relational, that humans desire to have *greater* property, status and honours than others enjoy. That implies that even in a society that achieves great material abundance, as Marx's communist society is supposed to do, people would still be motivated to have more than others, even when there is enough to go around.

Marx believed that human nature was not immutable and expected that communist society would have a significant effect on the motivations and desires of its citizens (for example, he speaks of the path to communism as 'a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men').²⁴⁴ But even if this ambitious and corruptible aspect of human nature can be significantly ameliorated, one insight we can take from Machiavelli is that it might not be possible to entirely remove it. If that is indeed the case, then it would mean that the danger posed by the human drive to re-establish vast inequalities in these goods is a permanent feature of human society. It was because Machiavelli believed that this was such an ingrained feature of human nature, that he believed that if a republic wants to maintain its liberty, it must be on constant guard against this threat. It must design its political institutions so that they either neutralise the threat or divert this ambitiousness into avenues that promote the public good. Machiavelli thus advises that,

it is necessary for anyone who organizes a republic and establishes laws in it to take for granted that all men are evil and that they will always act according to the wickedness of their nature whenever they have the opportunity...²⁴⁵

* * *

In closing, when thinking about the task of organising a *social* republic, Machiavelli's advice implies the necessity of grappling with how political institutions can contain the ambitious, insatiable and corruptible elements of human nature, to ensure that they do not lead to the re-establishment of class-society. Taking this thought seriously might lead to the conclusion that the political institutions of the social republic that Marx believes are necessary to reach communism, may also be vital to staying there.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, I.37.

²⁴⁴ Marx, *Civil War in France*, 143/343/335. It is frequently (and mistakenly) thought that Marx believed there was no such thing as human nature at all (understood as a set of human characteristics relatively constant across time and space). For a comprehensive refutation of this interpretation, see Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (Verso, 1983).

²⁴⁵ Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I.3.

Conclusion

A socialist republic is the application to agriculture and industry; to the farm, the field, the workshop, of the democratic principle of the republican ideal.

James Connolly, 1898¹

Lenin once argued that Marx inherited and synthesised three traditions: ‘German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism’.² One aim of this thesis has been to investigate the extent to which European republicanism should be added to this list.³ In doing so, I have tried to steer clear of two tendencies. On the one side, there is a republican narrative that completely excludes Marx from the tradition, which indicts him for his supposed ‘repugnance to the public realm’.⁴ On the other, an orthodox Marxist one, which portrays Marx as exposing republicanism as the ideology of ‘mere petty-bourgeois windbags’.⁵ Neither does justice to the complexity of the social and political thought of Marx or his republican contemporaries. Nor do they capture the fact that Marx’s communism developed both in opposition to and in debt to the republican tradition.⁶

The relationship between Marx and republicanism was presented in this thesis as following a structure with a dialectical rhythm to it. Chapter one set out the young Marx’s republicanism and his transition to communism. Chapter two looked at Marx’s communist critique of the bourgeois republic and the democratic republicans in the context of the 1848 Revolutions. Chapter three investigated Marx’s reincorporation of many early republican themes as a result of his experience of the Paris Commune. This dialectical structure is a useful, and I hope

¹ Connolly, ‘Labour Representation’, 4.

² Vladimir Lenin, ‘The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism’, in *Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), 23–24. A similar tripartite examination the origins of socialism is explored by Engels in ‘Progress of Social Reform on the Continent’, 495/480–81/392–93.

³ There is a sense in which republicanism is already included under French socialism. However, that fails to emphasise republicanism’s distinctive contribution, and the fact that there were non-republican French socialisms. Note that by specifying it as ‘European’, I am not suggesting that republicanism is exclusively or even mainly a European phenomenon (a persistent and occasionally orientalist trope), only that it is the republicanism most relevant to Marx.

⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 165.

⁵ ‘Preface’, *MECW* 11: xxi.

⁶ I am therefore tempted to describe the relationship between Marx and republicanism in terms suggested by one contemporary social network: *it’s complicated*.

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intellectually pleasing, way to present the nature and progression of Marx's relationship to republicanism.

I do not, however, mean to create the impression that we are dealing with 'three Marx's'. The difference between the three periods explored here, is often better characterised as a difference in degrees of emphasis on certain ideas rather than outright disagreements with earlier or later positions. That is most obviously the case with Marx's transition to communism, which I have tried to show was not an abandonment of republicanism, because it carried with it central ideas from the republican tradition. In the political sphere, as chapter two demonstrated, it meant a commitment to political action and popular sovereignty, where existing communisms had often abandoned those ideas. In the economic sphere, as the two excursus demonstrated, it meant an extension of republican political principles, by deploying the commitment to freedom and the opposition to arbitrary power to criticise the personal and impersonal domination of the capitalist and the market over the worker. In his desire to distance himself from his radical republican contemporaries, Marx rarely admitted to this legacy. But we should be clear that as much as it would be a mistake to simplistically 'claim' Marx for the republican tradition, so too would we fail to understand his communism if we failed to appreciate its republican inheritance.

The thesis has provided a thorough account of the multitudinous dimensions of Marx's relationship to republicanism. There are several avenues that might be explored in future research to extend the comprehensiveness of this study. First, the thesis's commitment to a contextual study of Marx's ideas involved an extensive discussion of his republican contemporaries and a comparatively subsidiary discussion of the existing socialist and communist alternatives to Marx. This could be addressed by looking at greater depth at socialisms beyond the True Socialists discussed in chapter two, including the various 'utopian' socialist schools and the more revolutionary currents exemplified by Philippe Buonarrotti and August Blanqui. The former might further highlight how much closer to republicanism Marx's communism was than other socialisms, especially communitarian ones, and the latter would provide an interesting comparison with communists who also heavily incorporated elements of the republican tradition. Second, the discussion of how Marx's analysis of political economy extended republican political principles into the economic sphere would benefit from greater explication. The thesis did not have the space to address fully this aspect of the relationship of Marx to republicanism, but I aim to have given an indicative account of it. Further historical work should and needs to be done on the discussion of wage-slavery in both republican and socialist thought in the

nineteenth century, as well as greater conceptual work to clarify the idea of impersonal domination.

Third, Marx and the democratic republicans were contrasted in terms of their differing views on the political and social, the people and the proletariat, and on private property, but a further contrast could be drawn on their international views. Marx believed in the abolition of national differences and a cross-cutting international alliance of workers, while democratic republicans wanted each national people to build their own republic, within an international federation of republics. Finally, the comparison of Marx with republicanism primarily focused on his modern republican contemporaries, such as Karl Heinzen, Felicité de Lamennais, William James Linton, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Arnold Ruge, with lesser emphasis on older figures in the tradition. The thesis did include discussion of Aristotle on constitutions, Machiavelli on the permanence of politics, Sidney on slavery and Rousseau on representation. But there are further comparisons to be made between Marx and the classical tradition. For example, there is an interesting and largely unexplored comparison to be made between Marx's historical materialism and the republican account of history derived from Polybius. While the former can be characterised as a progressive theory of history (with modes of production being replaced by more productive ones) and the latter a circular one (with political regimes rising and falling in an endless cycle), they also share a similar materialist foundation (especially as Machiavelli and Harrington developed it).

This thesis has primarily been a work in the history of political thought. Its main objective was to provide an account of Marx's social and political thought in relation to republicanism. While I have given some appraisal of Marx's ideas and those of his republican interlocutors, I have mostly refrained from drawing out straightforward consequences for contemporary political theory and political practice. Without diverging too much from this aim, I now want to outline a few tentative thoughts about what resources (which I think is a better term than 'lessons')⁷ the thesis offers in this regard.

Perhaps the central insight that Marx would have brought to the initial contemporary revival of republicanism is the necessity of looking beyond constitutional structures and political domination to the social domination exercised in the economic system and the organisation of the workplace. These aspects were heavily neglected in the early contributions to the revival, often reduced to a brief afterthought.⁸ This has, however, been significantly rectified in

⁷ An idea I take from Kristin Ross, 'The Meaning of the Paris Commune', *Jacobin*, 4 May 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/05/kristin-ross-communal-luxury-paris-commune/>.

⁸ The cursory nature of this discussion is exemplified in Pettit, *Republicanism*, 140–43, 163–65.

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subsequent discussions.⁹ We might still think, with some legitimacy, that the relative importance of social domination has still not been given its proper weight in contemporary republicanism,¹⁰ but we do now have to think about what Marx brings to the existing republican discussion of economic matters.

Here I think it is interesting to note the extent to which the contrast between the social vision of the democratic republicans and Marx's communism reflects the contemporary debate in political theory over property-owning democracy and liberal market socialism. The contrast between these two economic systems was introduced by John Rawls, who argued that these were the only economic systems that realised his principle of justice.¹¹ In liberal market socialism there is no private ownership of the means of production, with firms owned collectively and competing against each other in a market. In a property-owning democracy, there are markets and private ownership in the means of production but background institutions are set up in such a way that private property is widely distributed. The idea of a property-owning democracy has obvious parallels with the social ideas of the democratic republicans; Lamennais's insistence that we 'must not abolish property, but, on the contrary, multiply it and render it accessible to all', is not so different from Rawls's call, a hundred-and-fifty years later, to 'disperse the ownership of wealth and capital and thus to prevent a small part of society from controlling the economy and indirectly political life itself'.¹² Several contemporary republicans have taken up Rawls's categorisation and defended a property-owning democracy against liberal market socialism.¹³

Beyond providing further evidence that contemporary debates are rarely entirely new, the historical discussion of this thesis might inform the modern debate in two ways. First, there is Marx and Engels's insistence that the assessment of different economic systems cannot be reduced to a discussion of moral principles, but needs to be grounded in an assessment of historical

⁹ For some of this developing literature see, Nien-hê Hsieh, 'Rawlsian Justice and Workplace Republicanism', *Social Theory and Practice* 31, no. 1 (2005): 115–42; Dagger, 'Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy'; White, 'The Republican Critique of Capitalism'; Gourevitch, 'Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work'; Iñigo González-Ricoy, 'The Republican Case for Workplace Democracy', *Social Theory and Practice* 40, no. 2 (2014): 232–54; and Elizabeth Anderson, 'Equality and Freedom in the Workplace: Recovering Republican Insights', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 31, no. 2 (2015): 48–69.

¹⁰ Pettit's most recent book on republicanism still includes no extended discussion of economic domination, with only occasional gestures towards this dimension of unfreedom, Pettit, *Just Freedom*, 19–21, 89–90, 104–5. A slightly less recent programmatic statement also barely engages with the economic realm as an area of inquiry, Lovett and Pettit 'Neorepublicanism: A Normative and Institutional Research Program'.

¹¹ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, xiv–xvi; John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001), 135–40. For further discussion, see Martin O'Neill and Thad Williamson (eds.), *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

¹² Lamennais, *Question du travail*, 13/286; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, xiv–xv.

¹³ Dagger, 'Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy'; and especially Alan Thomas, *Republic of Equals: Predistribution and Property-Owning Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

trajectories, the mode of production that underlies it, and the political and social forces needed to reach and maintain it. While we might want to reject a hard economic determinism that sees no scope for political action to direct society, Marx is on to something when he insists that the democratic republicans of his day were oblivious to the constraints imposed by the interplay and development of productive forces and relations. The contemporary debate sometimes similarly gives the impression that the choice between liberal market socialism and property-owning democracy can be primarily reduced to how well they stack up against an independent set of moral and political principles, without any real engagement with the restrictions imposed by political economy, technological innovation or political strategy.¹⁴ As the discussion of the historical possibilities concerning craft and mass production showed, this consideration does not automatically play in favour of Marx's communism, but it should form a central part of the discussion.

Second, Marx's communism differs from both property-owning democracy and liberal market socialism, in that he rejected the market and supported some kind of economic planning. Because of the experience of Soviet central planning, this is, of course, a wildly unpopular position to take nowadays. But from the few glimpses Marx gives us, there is little basis for thinking that he believed in central planning. Instead he envisaged, however vaguely, a system whereby production choices were made through democratic and deliberative mechanisms.¹⁵ We may question whether it is possible to make such a system work, but we should not let that obscure us to the fact that there are republican reasons for being opposed to the market. A market society subjects workers and capitalists alike to imperatives that take economic control away from their lives, amounting to a form of impersonal domination. In some contemporary republican discussions of the market, there is a remarkable and, I believe unjustified, sanguinity about running a society along market imperatives.¹⁶ We might not yet know how we could move beyond the market, but that does not mean that the 'right conclusion is to give up'.¹⁷

A more surprising element of where I think Marx brings something to contemporary republicanism is his endorsement of radical democratic political structures. As John McCormick has convincingly catalogued, the political structures endorsed by Philip Pettit, contemporary republicanism's most

¹⁴ A tendency displayed in Thomas, *Republic of Equals*, chapter 8. Note that Rawls does not think that the choice between liberal socialism and property-owning democracy can be directly derived from political philosophy but must be made in reference to 'to society's historical circumstances, to its traditions of political thought and practice, and much else', Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 139.

¹⁵ Roberts, *Marx's Inferno*, 78n94, 246-55.

¹⁶ Especially in the overview provided by Pettit, 'Freedom in the Market', 142-44.

¹⁷ G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 82.

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prominent advocate, are in crucial respects a reformulation of the most aristocratic elements of the republican tradition.¹⁸ From his endorsement of the separation of powers, to his faith in traditional conceptions of representative institutions, Pettit's republicanism provides few effective political constraints on the power of social and economic elites.¹⁹ The extent of Pettit's contemporary influence has obscured the fact that there is another set of more radical political institutions within the republican tradition. Those include the accountability and participatory mechanisms that Marx celebrated in the Paris Commune, and which he believed would establish real popular sovereignty. These were, as we saw in chapter three, inherited from a radical republican tradition that contested the equation of the intuitions of liberal representative democracy with democracy as such. The discussion of Marx and republicanism thus not only highlights some of the economic shortfalls of republicanism, but also how its predominant contemporary incarnation has forgotten its radical political heritage.

That brings us to what the thesis has to offer for modern socialism and Marxism. The discussion of these radical democratic political structures is an important reminder that the subsequent social-democratic shibboleth that socialism can be attained through the bourgeois democratic state is a significant departure from Marx's thought.²⁰ For a period, Marx sometimes did seem to think that all that was necessary for communism was to take charge of the bourgeois democratic state. But perhaps the most insightful point made by Marx in the *Civil War in France*, was his realisation that 'the People' must have 'a governmental machinery of their own'.²¹ He believed that bourgeois democratic institutions allowed a separated professional elite to rule over the people. The institutions he endorsed to counter this tendency of representative government, imperative mandates, the right to recall and short periods of office, are ones that I believe modern socialists should still consider to be part of their constitutional arsenal. His ideas on the transformation of the bureaucratic functions of the state might seem more 'utopian'. Indeed, it is harder to see how we could organise the election of such a vast range of public offices. It would at the least require much more spare time than capitalist economies currently allow people. But it does remind us of the importance of finding ways to guard against an independent bureaucratic structure that escapes popular control and undermines the socialist aims of society.

¹⁸ John P. McCormick, 'Machiavelli Against Republicanism: On the Cambridge School's "Guicciardinian Moments"', *Political Theory* 31, no. 5 (2003): 615–643; McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*.

¹⁹ McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, chapter 6.

²⁰ It should go without saying, but the investigation has also provided further evidence that the equation of Marx with authoritarian politics (by bourgeois critics and Stalinist supporters), is even further from what Marx actually wrote.

²¹ Marx, *Civil War in France (First Draft)*, 66/556/498.

This is not to say that Marx tells us enough about what the political structures specific to socialism should look like. At its best, his discussion is a suggestive and inspiring vision of an alternative political system; at its worst, its woefully negligent on how it would function in practice. For instance, what functions should be carried out by a central governmental organ and which by federated regional and local bodies is a central matter that a socialist society would need to decide upon. It is not enough to say vaguely that these will be the ‘few but important functions’ not carried out by the local communes.²² Similarly, how we balance the constrictions imposed by imperative mandates and the necessity for representatives to be able to respond to immediate matters of concern is not a trivial matter, but a central question about how we can make popular delegacy functional. In general, the design of the details of socialism’s constitutional structure matters to how likely it is to succeed. That is something that Marx occasionally recognised. In his analysis of the 1848 French republican constitution, he urges: ‘People! Make up your minds as to DETAILS, as well as to principles, before you come to power.’²³ Marx is right to make that injunction, though its almost unMarxian quality reminds us of his inconsistent adherence to that guidance. If socialists do not carry out this constitutional theorising themselves, there is a serious danger that the enterprise will be left to those who do not share their socialist principles.

Some of this neglect might be seen as the result of the longstanding socialist belief that socialism would be a society beyond politics and political institutions. I have argued against seeing Marx as endorsing this position, since his position is more accurately characterised as a lack of interest in the question. But I think socialists should be interested in it. It might seem like a problem for a future society far, far away, and I do not claim that it is question that needs to be settled with urgency. But it does provide some explanation for why socialists often think of political and constitutional analysis as a secondary task. The socialist hope for a society beyond politics is perhaps a reflection of the belief that the political strife required to get through the ‘capitalist vale of tears’ will be worth it, because on the other side lies a world free from that conflict.²⁴ Socialists and workers will one day be able to lay down their weapons and focus on the things which they believe matter in and of themselves. It is revealing, in this regard, that William Morris’s alternative title for his *News from Nowhere* was *An Epoch of Rest*, which encapsulates the idea that once capitalism was overthrown we would enter a

²² Marx, *Civil War in France*, 140/340/332.

²³ Marx, ‘The Constitution of the French Republic’, 545–46/504/578.

²⁴ A phrase I borrow from G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 176. Marx at one point compares the criticism of bourgeois society to the ‘criticism of the vale of tears (*Jammerthales*)’, ‘Kritik: Einleitung’, 171/379/176.

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period of communist 'rest'. However inspiring and sustaining a myth that might have been, one idea socialists should take from the republican tradition is that it is probably a misguided hope. Politics is likely an enduring feature of society, and the ambition of some to re-establish a class society is one that a socialist society will have to constantly guard against. That means giving sustained thought to the kind of political structures that will prevent it.

A final aspect of the discussion of Marx and republicanism that might be of value to contemporary socialists is a reminder that the socialist complaint against capitalism is also rooted in the value of freedom.²⁵ The domination exercised over the worker by the capitalist and the capitalist class should be understood as an inhibition of the worker's liberty. Socialism has however sometimes allowed itself to be painted as solely concerned with material equality, and thus abandoned the terrain of freedom to conservatives and liberals. Marx's condemnation of the dependency of wage-slaves in terms of freedom, reminds us that socialists have a legacy waiting to be reclaimed.

* * *

The epigraph to this chapter was taken from James Connolly, the person most responsible for the introduction of Marxist socialism into Ireland.²⁶ He was the driving force behind the foundation of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP) in 1896, which combined the radical demand for Irish independence with an explicitly socialist platform. His execution by the British state for his role in the Easter Rising robbed the Irish people of a courageous leader and socialists everywhere of an original and passionate thinker. It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to look at the role of republican ideas in socialist movements after Marx's death, though that is a project eminently worthy of exploration; I am, however, struck by the ease and fluency with which Connolly managed to weave together his republican and communist principles. It is a characteristic that is aptly demonstrated by his choice of title for the ISRP's newspaper, *The Workers' Republic*, and in the language of the party's founding manifesto, which held,

That the agricultural and industrial system of a free people, like the political system, ought to be an accurate reflex of the democratic principle, by the people, for the people, solely in the interests of the people.²⁷

²⁵An idea that a number of contemporary thinkers have tried to stress, see Corey Robin, 'Reclaiming the Politics of Freedom', *The Nation*, 6 April 2011, <https://www.thenation.com/article/reclaiming-politics-freedom/>; and Alex Gourevitch, 'Wage-Slavery and Republican Liberty', *Jacobin*, 28 February 2013, <http://jacobinmag.com/2013/02/wage-slavery-and-republican-liberty/>.

²⁶Fintan Lane, *The Origins of Modern Irish Socialism, 1881-1896* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997), 214-23.

²⁷'Programme of the Irish Socialist Republican Party', *Workers' Republic*, no. 1, 13 August 1898, 8.

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While many of the primary sources I cite may at first sight seem hard to find, several digitization projects have made many of them readily available. These include the Bibliothèque nationale de France's (BNF) Gallica service (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/>), Google Books (<https://books.google.com/>), the Hathi Trust (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>) and the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>). These digitized versions are now often easier to access than subsequent reproductions, since the former involve a simple internet search rather than tracking down an often out of print hard-copy volume. I have thus generally preferred to cite the original documents, unless the relevant source has not yet been digitized.

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