

## 150 Years of "Capital" and its Bourgeois Reviewers

For some time now, in the ranks of German economists and social scientists, Marx and the reading of his main work has become en vogue again. There is nothing wrong with dealing with Marx if the way in which he is dealt with would not be somewhat peculiar. "Was Marx right after all?", asks 'Die Zeit'<sup>1</sup> on the 150th anniversary of the publication of his critique of capitalism, and about *what* he might have been right, representatives of science and contemporary spirit may then expand: In view of the many scourges raging today - from the greed of bankers to the injustice in the distribution of wealth to the digitisation that abolishes work - has he not hit the nail on the head with the evils he ascribes to the system and with the prophecies of its disastrous development that are to be found in 'Capital'? The people who are speaking up in the face of the many problems raised by capitalism seem to have very constructive concerns about its further progress. Some may want to take something useful from Marx to deal with the unsightly phenomena with which the system maltreats humanity. Others are already content to be morally edified in their modern problem awareness by reading relevant chapters of 'Capital', and so this modern Marx reception in its varieties is entirely in the tradition of the bourgeois scientific enterprise, which from the beginning did not hesitate to examine Marx from the point of view of his *usefulness* for theory and practice of the capitalist enterprise. We document their highlights in the following, because even if for free science today the militant impetus to fight their way through to the opposition to the communist system ad personam Marx has settled itself: Firstly, the *scientific arguments* with which one has sorted out his theory from the field of what is appropriate for responsible scientific thinking are still the standard of economic and social scientific thinking as taught at universities. And secondly, nothing has changed in the *interested standpoint* from which one tinkers with Marx in this way, when scientists of our day for a change look for interesting ways of improving the capitalist world in 'Capital'.

### Marxism - Interpreted to Death, Appropriated, Fought against

The way bourgeois science deals with Marx is a chapter in itself. Here researchers from almost all social science disciplines come out to pay tribute to a man about whom at least this much is clear: His 'critique of political economy' criticizes the economic mode of capitalism as a class society, which they so highly appreciate because of its unattained efficiency, and leads to the call to the harmed class to abolish it. He considered the system of wage labour to be a scandal and advised the proletarians of all countries to join forces to eliminate it. And also about the philosophers, economists and social scientists with whom he was confronted at the time, the inventor of scientific socialism knew little good to say. He criticized economics lock, stock and barrel and gave it the attribute 'bourgeois' because of its partisan thinking. And in the emerging sociology of Comte, he was particularly struck by its interest in recipes for the cook-shops of the future, in other words: a lot of apology and zero science.

Today's bourgeois thinkers can hardly overlook the fact that they are dealing with a man who is working a little differently than they are; that they have an *enemy* of their hustle and bustle in front of them. This does not mean, however, that they would feel in any way compelled to take his theory as criticism of themselves. Even where Marx makes every argumentative effort to destroy thoughts which they consider to be part of the tradition of their discipline and which they keep on course, they never feel compelled to deal with objections to their science. They give Marx the dubious honour of accepting him as one of their own - at least for the time being and in principle. Economists, sociologists, theorists of science, etc. do not miss the opportunity to pay tribute to the critic of the bourgeois system and his

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<sup>1</sup> A liberal German national weekly newspaper.

scientific translators as *scientific colleagues* so to speak, and to visit his theory sine ira et studio: they measure Marx' critique of political economy by their standards and their set of rules for scientificity. In all conscience and with a great deal of philological meticulousness, his work is examined to see what the methodological approach, the empirical basis, the terminology and other things are like - and thus an attempt is made in a constructive spirit to understand Marx's theories as a *contribution* to *their* science. Where they fail to do *this*, or manage to do this only poorly, the verdict is, of course, already due for them: here a phony is at work. The procedure practiced by bourgeois thinkers to rethink every theory they have to deal with according to their own science here definitely turns into absurd theatre; its application degenerates into *shadow-boxing* when dealing with a *politically undesirable theorist*.

#### I. The "Value Theory": A totally useless approach for the correct scientific understanding of capitalism!

The economist Joseph A. Schumpeter gives a fine example of how modern economics conducts this debate. At the beginning of his treatise on the economic theorist Marx, he assures us that he is anxious to do justice to the arguments of Marx:

*"Now for a desperately abbreviated outline of the Marxian argument" (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 22)*

If that's what he wants to do, however, the question arises why he doesn't take the theory and arguments that Marx has put forward. In his account one gets the impression that there are no arguments to be seen in the theory he presents. As is quite customary for critics of the Marxian 'labour theory of value' in the context of modern economics, his presentation starts out:

*"Both Ricardo and Marx say that the value of every commodity is (in perfect equilibrium and perfect competition) proportional to the quantity of labor contained in the commodity, provided this labor is in accordance with the existing standard of efficiency of production (the "socially necessary quantity of labor"). Both measure this quantity in hours of work and use the same method in order to reduce different qualities of work to a single standard." (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 23)*

The theory is presented from the outset as if Marx and Ricardo had been modern methodologists who decided on a perspective and assumed a determinate fundamental assumption - the fact that Marx criticized Ricardo's theory doesn't even matter then! This eliminates dealing with the question of whether what they claim to be true about the value of commodities is true at all, and an examination of the reasons they cite for their claim. But not only that: The procedure of treating the statements of the value theorists like a methodological prejudice is at odds with even a halfway honest presentation of their theory. As soon as Schumpeter talks about the value of commodities, he quite casually puts in brackets the premises with which modern economics practices its equilibrium and macroeconomic cycle theories - quite regardless of the fact that Ricardo and Marx have never been equilibrium theorists, therefore did not raise the question of the *proportionality* of any 'quantities' in their economic theories and therefore did not circulate the bold hypothesis that the value of each commodity can be presented as a dependent variable of the amount of labour contained in the commodities. This kind of idea can only come from people who are perfectly at home in the functionalism of modern model building; people for whom value - like all other economic phenomena from the world of capital - is a *quantity* that raises the question of which other economic factors determine it and how the determining factors in question can be *measured*. Schumpeter simply ignores the fact that he is confronted with a theory of a different kind, which wants to comment on the *quality* of this economic 'quantity', from which his science abstracts so professionally through its pseudo-mathematical treatment of the matter. For this reason, he imputes a procedure of the kind he knows from his science to the old economists: because of their theoretical approach, they would have had

aimed at reducing "different qualities of work to a single standard" and devised a "method" for this. This is how the modern economist translates Marx's idea that this 'reduction' is practically carried out in the exchange of commodities - that in the exchange of commodities for commodities and commodities for money, regardless of the particular usefulness of the respective product and irrespective of the particularity of the labour that has created it, it is always only about one thing, namely how much the junk produced is *worth*: this is the economic fact that his value theory tries to *explain*. It aims to clarify the question of *what it means* when everything in an economy revolves around value.

Because Schumpeter makes Marx's theory comprehensible to himself in such a way that he interprets it according to the considerations and procedures familiar to him from his science, he doesn't even realize that it is another matter altogether. And thus, in his judgement of Marx's theory, he knows himself to be fully at the level of Marx's argument, although he measures it only by the requirements customary of a theory in his science:

*"Everybody knows that this theory of value is unsatisfactory... The essential point is not whether labor is the true "source" or "cause" of economic value. This question may be of primary interest to social philosophers who want to deduce from it ethical claims to the product, and Marx himself was of course not indifferent to this aspect of the problem. For economics as a positive science, however, which has to describe or explain actual processes, it is much more important to ask how the labor theory of value works as a tool of analysis, and the real trouble with it is that it does so very badly." (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 23 f.)*

The question of whether what he has identified as the basic assertion of this value theory is true is not that important to the modern economist. For him, this question is one of moral-ideological interest only. He is quite sure: one only insists on the validity of the 'basic assumption' of labour as the true source of all value, if one thereby aims at a different distribution of the labour product; and of course Marx was such a person: A do-gooder, eager for a new, more just distribution of 'goods'. This for him all too understandable dullness remains of Marx with Schumpeter. Conversely, it is equally clear to him that colleagues of his who want to *disprove* the 'labour theory of value' outright are also only concerned with dismissing not at all objectively scientifically, but at best socio-philosophically justifiable claims. He is also suspicious of their zeal and teaches them that it is also incorrect to call labour theory of value 'wrong'. For the positive science for which he stands is wisely staying out of this dispute. On the question: 'What basic assumption do we want to take', he is a man of science, as it were, dispassionate and calls on his colleagues to follow him. True and false are no criteria there. That is why he has no objection in principle to a theory that is preparing to present the value of commodities as a dependent variable of labour time - it is only important that it works.

He thus specifies the requirements that he places on a *model*. Such a model should describe the actual processes, but if not the explanation of the actual processes, but their model-like description should provide knowledge, one wonders why the Marxian 'model' called 'labour theory of value' should not also be able to function there. But Schumpeter enlightens us:

*"To begin with, it does not work at all outside of the case of perfect competition. Second, even with perfect competition it never works smoothly except if labor is the only factor of production and, moreover, if labor is all of one kind. If either of these two conditions is not fulfilled, additional assumptions must be introduced and analytical difficulties increase to an extent that soon becomes unmanageable." (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 24)*

At home in the world of economic model building like a fish in water, Schumpeter has scrupulously examined Marx's labour time model to see *under what conditions* it would work, and on that occasion he once again reveals everything that he is familiar with from the world of his science: He does not only consider it perfectly normal that in a science laws are established which have no objective validity. He also thinks it is good science to consider on this basis - counterfactual! - how the world would need to be constituted so that such an assumption of law could nevertheless pass as an adequate description of the actual processes. Characteristically, according to this ingenious modeller, it would not even necessarily speak against the Marxian theory if it only worked under conditions that can be found neither in capitalism nor anywhere else: If under such - unreal - conditions then at least in theory everything would work out, then that would be something! And if what works in theory still doesn't really work in reality, then one apparently makes do with additional assumptions in his science, which are supposed to heal the contrast between theory and reality. In the case of Marx, however, one learns that the difficulties should get out of hand.

The difficulties Schumpeter subsequently reports on are those that *he* sees approaching a theorist who dedicates himself to the thesis of labour as the source of all value. However, he presents these difficulties as if they were the ones on which the old value theorists had been working. Schumpeter indeed *reads* the whole of 'Capital' like this, chapter by chapter - as a large-scale attempt to overcome all the problems in which, in his opinion, one inevitably gets involved when one wants to reduce the value of each commodity, as he understands Marx's project, to the amount of labour contained in the commodities:

*"Though neither Ricardo nor Marx seems to have been fully aware of all the weaknesses of the position in which they had placed themselves by adopting this starting point, they perceived some of them quite clearly. In particular, they both grappled with the problem of eliminating the element of Services of Natural Agents which of course are deprived of their proper place in the process of production and distribution by a theory of value that rests upon quantity of labor alone." (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 25)*

Even if the two value theorists were not as aware of the weaknesses of their theory as he was, they themselves would have seen some - namely the fact that by choosing their starting point they have blocked the way to adequately appreciate the ground as a factor of production. Their theory must therefore be seen as an attempt to iron out this weakness of their approach:

*"The familiar Ricardian theory of the rent of land is essentially an attempt to accomplish that elimination and the Marxian theory is another." (ibid.)*

If Marx and Ricardo had explained to themselves the fact that in capitalism the pure *property* in land, i.e. precisely not the productive use of an area of land, but the exclusive disposal of land that others need, functions as a *source of income*, as the gathered bourgeois expertise does, with the services of natural forces inherent in soil, they would have been rid of their problems! But unfortunately, they have lost this opportunity by the unfortunate choice of their starting point! Thus, Schumpeter recommends to Marx, of all things, as a solution to his problems, precisely what he has criticized as the epitome of the *irrational conceptions* with which the bourgeois mind in general and the bourgeois economists in particular make the capitalist relation to production understandable as a just cause. After all, Marx has put some effort into pointing out the theoretical crimes of a science that presents the tautological inference of the incomes that ground rent recipients, capitalists and wage workers make on a corresponding *contribution* they have each made for the creation of monetary wealth - the interested *fallacy* by which these three sources of capitalist revenue become *factors of production* - as an explanation of this relation of production and whose social determinations of form are obscured into natural necessities of all forms of production. This Marx must be taught by a 20th century

bourgeois economist that the phenomenon that in capitalism a class of landowners can acquire a not insignificant part of social wealth in the form of ground rent does not depend on the social conditions in which private property prevails, but to the forces of nature inherent in soil!

The labour value theorists have also made their lives unnecessarily difficult with the 'production factor capital'. There "*we are still left with the difficulty arising out of the presence of capital in the sense of a stock of means of production that are themselves produced.*" (ibid.)

Particularly for the author of 'Capital' it is said to have been a major problem how he accommodates the "*presence of capital*" in his theory at all - for where does the "*net return of capital*" come from, if not from the fact that a "*stock of means of production that are themselves produced*" naturally has the characteristic of a sum of money that bears interest? Here, too, recourse to the tried and tested bourgeois 'explanation' would have prevented many problems from arising in the first place. But Marx has blocked this with his starting point, which is why for the explanation of the "*net return of capital*" he had to resort to his exploitation theory which is very disconcerting for the modern economist.

In the eyes of the Marx interpreter, Marx's theory thus becomes an auxiliary construction for solving many problems in which the labour value theorist has unnecessarily entangled himself. They disappear if one chooses another starting point:

*"The theory which replaced it - in its earliest and now outmoded form, known as the theory of marginal utility - may claim superiority on many counts but the real argument for it is that it is much more general and applies equally well, on the one hand, to the cases of monopoly and imperfect competition and, on the other hand, to the presence of other factors and of labor of many different kinds and qualities." (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 24)*

Hence his advice: Science best adheres to the "*plain facts of economic reality*" in what it claims. In his view this is done in a pleasingly clear manner by the theory of marginal utility, which assumes the "*presence*" of at least three factors of production - land, capital and labour - and accepts it as the "*plain facts of economic reality*", which are not to be further explained, that land has the inherent legal claim of its owner to tribute payments, that labour takes the form of wage labour, i.e. of labour carried out in foreign services and to accumulate foreign property, and that those who dispose of a "*stock of means of production that are themselves produced*" thereby also dispose of capital, which commands social labour. This is the solution: a science that intellectually arranges itself with the forms in which capitalism appears; that "*plainly*" no longer wants to know anything about the theoretical needs that the old value theorists have been pursuing; in short: a science that treats capitalism roughly like the vulgar science that Marx has criticized lock, stock and barrel<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> In the third volume of 'Capital', in the seventh section on 'Revenues and their Sources', under the heading 'The Trinity Formula' and even more extensively in the 'Theories of Surplus Value', under the heading 'Vulgar Political Economy', Marx addresses the irrationalism of these forms. There, in 'Capital', there is also a summarizing critique: in fact, vulgar political economy does nothing more than doctrinally interpret, systematize and apologetise the ideas of the agents of production entangled in bourgeois relations of production. It should therefore come as no surprise to us that it is precisely in the estranged form of appearance of the economic conditions in which these are prima facie insipid and perfect contradictions... when this is the very place where vulgar political economy feels completely at home.

The bourgeois economic theorists still do not even think of dealing with the *objections* raised there against the basic dogmas of their science!

II. "Class Society": Viewed sociologically, a much too simple scheme, moreover empirically not verifiable at all!

The same brutally subsuming procedure that we have just been able to study at a modern economist is also something that *modern social scientists*, sociologists, engage in when they deal with Marx 'class theory' - with which they have, of course, almost completed the first transformation of the theory on which they want to comment: From Marx's comments on bourgeois class society, they conclude that there is a theory of society here that deals in a special way with the concept of 'class', so that the question of what kind of finding is made about bourgeois society with its designation as a class society and whether this finding is objectively correct is not even up for discussion. Instead, for the methodologically miseducated scientific mind that is at work here, there is a completely different question up for discussion: namely, whether the concept of 'class' is at all suitable or appropriate as an instrument for the creation of a social theory. Since Max Weber, it has been common practice among sociologists to use Marx's theory, first of all independently of it and of the social reality that it is about, to expound what we want to understand by a 'class'. It can then be concluded that this concept emphasises that possession and lack of possessions are undoubtedly of paramount importance for the distribution of power within a community:

*"It is the most elemental economic fact that the way in which the disposition over material property is distributed among a plurality of people, meeting competitively in the market for the purpose of exchange, in itself creates specific life chances." (Max Weber, Economy and Society, Berkeley 1978, p. 927)*

And as far as Marx with his class theory did not want to express anything else, one agrees with him gladly. One agrees with him on the level of a general reasoning, not even specifically related to the existing bourgeois society, that the life chances among people, who are blessed to different degrees with material riches, are distributed quite differently. For a modern social scientist, the only question is whether an entire theory of society can be founded (solely) on this 'fact'. From the point of view from which he views society - what creates society, what holds it together? - such a "class situation" is above all one thing: not very productive:

*"The class situation may be restricted in its efforts to the generation of essentially similar reactions, that is to say, within our terminology, of "mass behavior." However, it may not even have this result." (Max Weber, Economy and Society, Berkeley 1978, p. 929)*

So much interested in the cohesion of society and the integrating effect of social collectives that collectives for him consist of nothing more than people attributing themselves to them, the sociologist can at best find in classes a limited effect that could be of sociological relevance. As if Marx had shared the enthusiasm of modern sociologists for everything that has a community-building effect and contributes to the socialization of the individual, and praised the classes of bourgeois society for the fact that their members always pull in the same direction, the critic confronts him with his own sociologically well-founded experiences:

*"The class situation and other circumstances remaining the same, the direction in which the individual worker, for instance, is likely to pursue his interests may vary widely..." (ibid.)*

and doubts with this 'argument' that the term 'class interest' is at all an empirical term, as he knows from his science. It would probably have been better if Marx had investigated in an empirical study, using surveys and statistics, what the interests - family, sport, reading... - of the workers then are!

Furthermore, where the sociologist Marx is appreciated, the concern regularly arises whether the economic fact of unequal distribution of possessions, which nobody really wants to deny, can be adequately described by the very concept of 'class'. For in circles of bourgeois social science one usually

associates this with the idea of a pre-bourgeois corporative or caste system, and this does not at all fit into the image that one has of modern society:

*"The water-tight division between people who (together with their descendants) are supposed to be capitalists once for all and others who (together with their descendants) are supposed to be proletarians once for all is not only, as has often been pointed out, utterly unrealistic but it misses the salient point about social classes - the incessant rise and fall of individual families into and out of the upper strata." (Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy, New York 1942, p. 18)*

What Marx has reported about the classes of bourgeois society does not matter at all here. He is considered to be one who, for whatever (dishonest?) reasons, desperately wanted to proclaim the dogma 'once wage worker, always wage worker', and this dogma, which one conjures up according to one's own ideas, is subsequently embarrassed by the fact that it is so unrealistic. What can be 'observed' in reality is the rise and fall of proletarians into the capitalist camp and vice versa, which individual families, according to the observations of the scientific empiricist, are even supposed to make incessantly. You learn something new every day in empiricism! And that is the key point in terms of realism. Where the proverbial dishwasher can become a millionaire, it would be better not to think that such rises impute a class society, but rather to rejoice with science about a successful refutation of class theory and henceforth speak rather like today's sociology of *strata*, because they are above all one thing: permeable.

Similarly sophisticated is the way in which modern social scientists approach Marx as a classic... of the theory of social inequality; a theory that has meanwhile led to the proud thesis of the multi-dimensionality of vertical inequality. As this 'classic', he is now being hailed for the third time for bringing to mind with his theory the *fact* of unequal distribution of wealth and emphasising its importance. But this time he is accused of neglecting other dimensions of social inequality. In the following, a modern representative of this 'multi-dimensionality thesis' reports what he sees when he visits Marx through the glasses of his science:

*"Even a superficial glance at Marx's class theory shows that the multi-dimensionality thesis does not play a major role in it." (Reinhard Kreckel, Political Sociology of Social Inequality, Frankfurt a. M. 1997, p. 53)*

A closer look reveals even more:

*"In capitalist society, landowners and capital owners are confronted by the large class of wage earners. The resulting class antagonisms are objectively given, irrespective of whether the persons concerned are aware of them or not." (Reinhard Kreckel, Political Sociology of Social Inequality, Frankfurt a. M. 1997, p. 54)*

But he does not even think of asking himself whether the interest of entrepreneurs in obtaining access to as much labour as possible for as little money as possible does not really conflict with the interest of those who perform the required labour, live off the price of their labour and then also have to pay their pension to landowners from it in the form of a rent, among other things. And he also does not ask himself whether these are not actually facts that have practical validity regardless of the consciousness of those affected. Well, he's got his glasses on, so he continues:

*"Translated into the language of contemporary stratification sociology, this means that Marx's theory is based only on one - namely the economic - dimension of social inequality. If this were not the case and Marx would acknowledge other dimensions - such as education or social*

*prestige - as being equal to the economic dimension, then he would not be able to clearly determine class fronts." (ibid.)*

With a class theory, as Marx has conceived it, one thus only obstructs one's way to a more elaborate theory of social inequality, which, in addition to the different distribution of property, just as conceptlessly lists other moments of this social 'phenomenon'. If the keyword 'equal' is used in this context, it shows in passing how natural it is for a modern social scientist that the question of the *recognition* of facts in his empirical science is a question of *interest* that demands to be served by the image of the society one draws.

Where Schumpeter for the economists can finally state with satisfaction that the labour theory of value has landed on the dunghill of history: "*In any case, it is dead and buried*", the most recently quoted theorist of social inequality can only agree with him. For his discipline he states that with Marx's class theory there is no way to get anywhere - and he is very confident that by this everything is definitely told about this theory. But does it not make things any better if bourgeois scientists come to the conclusion that Marx can be taken up and that there are indeed insights and findings of the old class theorist that need to be preserved. They work out their understanding of the Marxian theory by means of the same subsumption procedure and therefore go to work no less thoroughly in terms of destroying the knowledge that would be available from Marx than those who deny his explanation of capitalism the TÜV<sup>3</sup> and recommend that it be thrown away.

### III. The "Necessarily False Consciousness": Neither necessary nor false, because simply functional for society!

A prominent example of the fact that bourgeois theorists know something to do with Marx is the *sociology of knowledge*. Marx's discovery that the members of bourgeois class society, in their practical prejudice against their living conditions, carry out their economic and other activities with a *necessarily false* consciousness<sup>4</sup> is highly interesting to the representatives of this sociological special discipline. In this they unerringly recognize a peculiar sociological task for which they know to be responsible:

*"So, first there is the question and the task of proving whether there is a correlation, a correspondence between the immanently worked out locations of thought and the social currents (social locations). Only in this putting-into-relation of the mentally-systematic locations to the social locations, the peculiar task of sociology of thought arises... But it is precisely here that all naturalism and all those moments that originate from a primordial combat position of sociological knowledge must be eliminated, and as much as this question has arisen in the line of Marxist philosophy of history, one must adhere to the interpretation of this theory, which on the one hand eradicates the remains of materialistic metaphysics and on the other erases the merely propagandistic motives respectively reduces them to the right core contained in them." (Karl Mannheim, *The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge*, Berlin 1964, p. 376)*

Karl Mannheim, who is quoted here as the founder of the sociology of knowledge, is obviously fascinated by the question of *whether* there *could* possibly be a relationship between social being and consciousness. The decided judgement that Marx arrives at in this regard in his investigations and explanations of the scientific and other thinking to be found in the bourgeois world and that he

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<sup>3</sup> Short for Technischer Überwachungsverein. German businesses that provide inspection and product certification services.

<sup>4</sup> This is the rational content of the famous passage from the preface of 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', with which, in addition to Mannheim, many other Marx exegetes knew a great deal of wrong stuff to do with: It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

summarizes in the abstract formula of being, which determines consciousness, would thus already be transformed into a research mandate to one's own discipline; into a thesis, a methodical prejudice on which an investigation of social actuality can be based - with the aim of finding out whether there is something to be found out for the understanding of it. The aim is a view that pursues the following three steps in the empirical manner typical of this discipline: Firstly, it should examine social actuality to see whether it is possible to identify determined locations of thought. This may be understood as something like recurring, fixed patterns of interpretation, stereotypes that are expressed in the views circulating in society and which themselves first of all want to be defined by external characteristics of their presence. The task of the study is then to examine the defined characteristics to see whether they can be used to work out locations for thinking, so that they can be changed if necessary and replaced by more useful characteristics. Secondly, the same procedure should be used to identify social locations for which a catalogue of criteria must also be drawn up, the suitability of which for empirical research would then be determined by the same. Thirdly, finally, the crowning glory of science lies in putting-into-relation the two sides. The aim is to find out whether there are statistically significant correspondences in the applicability of the characteristics which could be used to verify the existence of a correlation between the two sides and which could possibly even be interpreted in one direction or another as indications of the existence of a causal relationship.

Thus interpreted without metaphysics and propaganda, the right core of the Marxian theory of being and consciousness is revealed. For the rest, it must be said, of course, that this theory is extremely inadequate compared to the differentiated conceptual instruments and the mathematical accuracy with which modern science underpins its hypotheses. One only has to read Marx with his materialistic metaphysics, and already one comes across a naturalism, according to which thoughts are determined by social being in principle - when from a scientific point of view it is clear that it is not so simple:

*"First of all, there can be no question (this is also shown by a fleeting glance into historical contexts) that one could easily equate any location of thought with a social stratum or class, to bring it into line." (ibid.)*

This is shown not only by a fleeting glance at history, but also by the finding, substantiated by sociology of knowledge, that there are many more locations of thought than classes:

*"The differentiations within the spiritual world are far too rich to assign a corresponding class in the above defined sense to each direction, each location." (Karl Mannheim, *The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge*, Berlin 1964, p. 381 f.)*

Whatever Marx meant by social being which determines consciousness, whatever his reasons for talking about a *necessarily* false consciousness in the bourgeois world - in the theoretical enterprise, for which he may serve as a keyword giver, nothing of all this occurs any more. It speaks neither of a necessity nor of mistakes, and also social practice, to which reference is made in thinking, and a consciousness that thinks in accordance with this practice, is simply not envisaged in it. What has been completely forgotten is that Marx's findings expressed a *criticism* of an unfree, subservient position to the world; where he thought he was identifying a scandal by referring to the sad, conformist performance of consciousness to acquire *false* reasons for participating, modern sociologists of knowledge see a functional connection of which they are extremely impressed. Concerned about the functioning of society, as special sociologists they turn to the functional achievements which society accomplishes on the one hand by reproducing itself in the thinking of its members, and on the other hand by reproducing 'social being'. The investigation of the functional relationship of ideas and thoughts to social being is the specialty of sociology of knowledge - and Marx's critique of ideology has become a contribution to the sweeping appreciation of every thought as a useful contribution to the success of society.

#### IV. "Marxism": A method of thinking to deliberately undermine the progress of science and humanity as such!

The dubious honour paid to Marx when bourgeois scientists take him seriously in their own way as a scientist also befalls him on the part of the *methodologists of science*. They also have mastered the art of presenting his theory in the light of their science. They discuss it from the point of view of their theories as an enormously deficient, one-dimensional and unrealistic theory; they argue about its obvious shortcomings and difficulties and prove that Marx could only hold on to it with the help of a simply irrational construction. For them, too, this approach is the process of exposing Marx as a *deviant thinker*, denouncing him as a man who may have been a gifted writer, but who has developed his theories less for scientific than for propagandistic motives, in order then to *excommunicate* him as such from science. Nowhere else, of course, does the shadow-boxing in the engagement of bourgeois science with Marx appear so clearly as in the enterprises in which theorists of science deal with Marxism. Because they already know from their profession that they are responsible for the question of what deserves to be recognized as science and what does not, it is in a special way also again and again people from their ranks who see themselves called upon to *save science* and expressly make the *fight against Marxism* their concern.

When people like Popper and his student Werner Becker, who have distinguished themselves in a special way here, get to work, one thing is not even up for discussion from the outset: the content of any theory. According to one's own statements mainly interested in methodological questions, one starts from the dogma (which Popper promptly imputes again to the Marxists as their view) that Marxism is primarily not so much a doctrine as a method, and already it is clear how to deal with it:

*"The position is, simply, that whoever wishes to judge Marxism has to probe it and to criticize it as a method, that is to say, he must measure it by methodological standards." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 285)*

Of course, the theoretical legacies of Marx must first be processed into a methodology. Unfortunately, Marx has not set out the principles of his "historicist method of thinking" in the clarity with which his modern critic sees them. One thing is crystal clear to him:

*"Marxism is a purely historical theory, a theory which aims at predicting the future course of economic and power-political developments and especially of revolutions." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 284)*

In accordance with the dogma of his theory of science, which he recited mechanically a thousand times, according to which a theory is an instrument of prediction, Popper recognizes in the Marxian theory with somnambulistic certainty the attempt to make a prognosis:

*"Marx's historical prophecy can be described as a closely knit argument." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 334)*

The difficulty of such a 'description', however, lies in the following:

*"But Capital elaborates only what I shall call the 'first step' of this argument, the analysis of the fundamental economic forces of capitalism and their influence upon the relations between the classes. The 'second step', which leads to the conclusion that a social revolution is inevitable, and the 'third step', which leads to the prediction of the emergence of a classless, i.e. socialist, society, are only sketched." (ibid.)*

Untouched, the master of critical rationalism reports that in the writings of Marx - although he has scanned them for nothing else! - he has hardly found anything to support his interpretation. These, as he readily admits, essentially contain an analysis of the capitalist economy, which does not cause the

critical rationalist, who wants to commit everyone else to the virtue of skepticism in thinking, to the slightest doubt about his own interpretation - and even less to consider it falsifying and throw it away. For him rather follows the judgement that Marx has left gaps in his argument, which he, Popper, must now close. Because what is written in 'Capital' gives little support to his concern to present Marx as a " prophet of the course of history ", Popper takes liberties to declare that which does not interest him in Marx for the unimportant in Marx:

*"Marx's theory of value, usually considered by Marxists as well as by anti-Marxists as a cornerstone of the Marxist creed, is in my opinion one of its rather unimportant parts..." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 367)*

but only to work out the really important part of the Marxist building, historicism, which in Marxist theory is not quite tangible:

*"In order to make as strong a case for Marx's theory as I can, I have altered it slightly..." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 376)*

*"I have tried to present historicism as a well-considered and close-knit philosophy. And I have not hesitated to construct arguments in its support which have never, to my knowledge, been brought forward by historicists themselves. I hope that, in this way, I have succeeded in building up a position really worth attacking." (Karl R. Popper, The Poverty of Historicism, Boston 1957, p. 3)*

Thus prepared, the theory is then ready for takedown. First, it is with deep satisfaction that Marx's attempt to do the same as the Prophet Muhammad can be regarded as a grandiose failure:

*"He was a prophet of the course of history, and his prophecies did not come true." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 283 f.)*

But Popper is by no means content to savour the cheap triumph that the good reasons given by Marx for a revolution did not catch on in the subject and to proudly present this as a refutation of the Marxian theory. A much more fundamental objection to this theory arises when one confronts it with the question of methodology of the social sciences, which is as follows:

*"Is it within the power of any social science to make such sweeping historical prophecies?" (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume I, p. 12)*

Here the critical rationalist knows himself more competent than anyone else: Of course not, the answer must be. According to his theory of science, the task of science is to formulate laws that make predictions possible, while always remaining aware of the limits of what can be proven. And Marx is said to have violated this. His critic claims to have found in him something like a very bold assumption about the course of history - but misses the declaration of readiness for due self-doubt, which, according to his scientific doctrine, turns a bold assumption into science. And the non-recognition of this demand from the house of Popper justifies accusations much harsher than merely that Marx had failed with his prophecies. Because Marx did not constantly keep in mind the principles of theory of science, the possibility of error and the falsifiability of any theory, Popper sees a man at work who tried to evade the *rules of science*. In order to immunize his historicist doctrines from criticism and falsification he is said to have acquired a real devil's tool from Hegel in the form of a dialectical method:

*"This is a Hegelian doctrine which must destroy all argument and all progress. For if contradictions are unavoidable and desirable, there is no need to eliminate them, and so all progress must come to an end." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 242)*

In this way, Marx would already be successfully exposed as an *enemy of science*. Identified as such, it is absolutely clear that the harmful consequences attributed to his method also make up the entire content and motive of his 'doctrine' - already his teacher should have been inspired by nothing else than killing science:

*"And the reason why he [Hegel] wishes to admit contradictions is that he wants to stop rational argument, and with it scientific and intellectual progress." (ibid.)*

But that's still not the main accusation Popper makes against Marx:

*"It is much more important that he misled scores of intelligent people into believing that historical prophecy is the scientific way of approaching social problems. Marx is responsible for the devastating influence of the historicist method of thought within the ranks of those who wish to advance the cause of the open society." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 284)*

And you have to let this accusation sink in: The man of *science* is suddenly challenged here to speak out of *moral responsibility* towards the community, to which he gives the honorary title 'open society' - whereby he elevates *his* respect for this community to its essential characteristic without the slightest scientific scruples! In his capacity as the spokesman of a science that understands the right way of dealing with social problems, he also declares himself the spokesman of the circle of friends 'Open Society' and announces hostility to a thinker who, with his unscience subscribed to historical prophecies, is said to have sinned against the socially useful mission to which Popper knows science is committed:

*"I should like to characterize the point here reached as the most central point in our analysis. It is only here that we can begin to realize the significance of the clash between historicism and social engineering, and its effect upon the policy of the friends of the open society." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 324)*

He happily moves on to assert undesirable practical consequences as reasons for rejecting a theory:

*"For if there was to be [...] historical prophecy, the main course of history must be predetermined, and neither good-will nor reason had power to alter it." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 287)*

For him, the unforgivable crime of Marxism is that it denounces as a vain undertaking what Popper spells out for the social sciences as their higher mission: that with their findings, within the framework of a reasonable social planning, they are to render nothing but useful services to the community. For Marx is said to have had the view:

*"Social engineering is impossible, and a social technology therefore useless. We cannot impose our interests upon the social system; instead, the system forces upon us what we are led to believe to be our interests... It is vain ... to hope that circumstances may be improved by improving men." (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 313)*

Popper certainly did not grasp the necessities of an objective nature that Marx identified in private property and the capitalist mode of production, in the law and the rule of the bourgeois state – after all, as a scientific methodologist he does not even engage with the content of a theory. That here someone wants to have recognized objective necessities decided upon in these bodies and institutions, which first want to be undermined before thinking about a reasonable arrangement of social concerns, he has somehow already noticed. True to the motto: 'We do not let singing be forbidden for us'<sup>5</sup>, he

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<sup>5</sup> Reference to the 1974 Schlager music song "Wir lassen uns das Singen nicht verbieten" by Tina York.

insists that what 'we' consider desirable must be possible, and thereby makes clear how much ignorance his idea of the useful function of science for society is based on. And he reproaches Marx, conversely, for not taking up the same programmatic ignorance:

*"Instead of making his demands or proposals concerning the functions which he wants the state, the legal institutions or the government to perform, he asks, 'What is the state?'" (Karl R. Popper: The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II, p. 317)*

What a monstrosity to inquire as a scientist about the reason and purpose of political rule, instead of approaching it with proposals on how it could do everything better!