

# СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ТЕОРИЯ

## MARX ON CLASS AND STATE: LEGACY AND CRITIQUE

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**Abstract.** Karl Marx is a significant figure in the development of modern social science, particularly in the areas of critique of capitalism and the study of class and state. However, his legacy also includes many misleading statements, and various forms of Marxism have oversimplified and distorted his ideas. In order to make Marx's legacy relevant to contemporary emancipatory social science, it is important to recognize its limitations and engage in dialogue with other sociological traditions and ground it in empirical research. While Marx's work on class and state is incomplete, it can still be useful in analyzing these issues today, but it is necessary to go beyond his ideas in order to do relevant social science. The article discusses the use of Marx's ideas in the analysis of class and state and argues for the importance of a structuration approach that takes into account the concrete levels of class situation and forms of organization and consciousness. It also discusses the limitations of Marx's ideas and the need to deconstruct simplifications within Marxist tradition in order to make his legacy relevant to contemporary sociology.

**Keywords:** class analysis, state, structuration approach, Marx, Lenin.

### Introduction

Having now 200 years from the birth of Karl Marx we seem to have better prospects than ever before to understand his legacy for the social sciences. Because of the ending of the Cold War, our approach to Marx could be more relaxed and intellectually more open than ever before. However, dealing with Marx is not an easy business, since we have to recognize both the fact that Marx has generated many research programs (Lakatos & Musgrave 1972) for social sciences as well as many different forms of critique against capitalist form of production, while at the same time acknowledging that his legacy comprises several theoretically or empirically implausible statements.

Today we also have to acknowledge the dark side of Marx's legacy. Various Marxisms have developed specific aspects of Marx research programs and critiques making many simplifications and creating many forms of alienating

ideology and even terrible repressions. I do not have to tell this to my Russian colleagues. Marx is an inevitable contributor in the development of modern social science and especially necessary for any ideas of “emancipatory science”. However, many of his critiques against capitalism are also misleading and irrelevant (c.f. Nove 1983: 10-60). Already before his major conceptual system for critique of political economy, he develops many formulations of repression, domination, alienation and reification. Some of them have given grounds for significant sociological development. For example, the concept of alienation (Marx 1844/1964) has been fruitful also in the critique of socialist form of production (c.f. Israel 1979), as well as in labour process research in capitalism (Braverman 1974; c.f. Burawoy 1985; Kivinen 2001). Some formulations are simply misleading, for example the idea in *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (Marx & Engels 1969) that the problem in modern society is division of labour in general. Within Marx’s major oeuvre the critical potential has been found in all major categories: value, surplus value, capital and commodity fetishism. The relationship between these critical perspectives and concrete historical explanations has always been a problem. This is also the case in the categories of class and state — as I will argue in this article.

When we try to reconstruct Marx’s legacy for contemporary emancipatory social science we also have to be brave enough to ask, why many ambitious efforts in this spirit have failed and ended up with conceptual dead ends without living sociological relevance. My argument is that Marx’s legacy is sociologically inevitable for analyzing modern forms of class structuration as well as for modern state. But this is the case only, when we also reflect upon limitations in Marx’s own theoretical work and try to deconstruct the previous simplifications within various Marxist theoretical traditions (see e.g. Gronow 1986). This implies that Marx legacy can be living within contemporary sociology only having a continuing dialog with other sociological traditions as well as with Marx-critique. At the same time, the contemporary Marxist approaches have to open to empirical research and generate falsifiable scientific hypothesis.

As is well known Marx manuscript of *Das Kapital* ends at the point where he is about to deal with classes (Marx 1973: 892–893). He also drafted a book on state, which he never was able to start. Of course, he wrote a lot on these issues in many contexts and serious efforts to reconstruct his theoretical legacy on both issues have been done. However, these reconstruction efforts also show that we have to go beyond Marx with regard to both issues in order to do relevant social science. We have to be able to proceed beyond Marxology and Marxisms towards contemporary social science, without losing Marx’s major epiphanies and key questions.

### Structuration approach to class analysis

In classical political economy, all fundamental social divisions were closely tied in with basic economic categories, with land ownership, capital and wage labour: these were the categories that formed the basis for the main social classes. Class analysis was an integral part of economic analysis. For Marx, social classes appeared as bearers of different economic categories, but of course in Marx's case this analysis unfolded into a critique of political economy (Marx 1974). In Marxist theory, the capitalist mode of production is based on an indirect form of societal labour and on the exploitation of the working class. Labour is indirectly social because social needs are always mediated by the markets. The working class is exploited because it generates surplus value that at once makes possible the production of capital and the reproduction of class relations. The working class shall be a new revolutionary class showing the way in the process of social change towards the abolition of the capital relation. From this point of view, economic classes were also key categories of political analysis: class interests determined the nature and dynamics of political processes.

As well as ruining the ideological appeal of Marxism in the eyes of Western intellectuals, the collapse of Soviet communism effectively undermined the ideological significance of the concept of class. Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters, for instance, suggested that the ideological interest on the political right has turned towards moral and ethical questions, while on the left the focus has shifted to questions of gender, ecology, citizenship and human rights (Pakulski & Waters 1996; Waters 1994; Clark & Lipset 1991). They argued that class analysis must now be thrown overboard and replaced by studies of status positions and their underlying cultural meanings. Postmodern society is a status bazaar where people can choose between a wide range of different identities based on cultures and consumption (*ibid.*, 114–131; see also: Pahl 1989; Marshall 1991; Goldthorpe & Marshall 1992; Crompton 1991; Holton & Turner 1994; Clement & Myles 1994; Therborn 2002; Kivinen 1997; 2016).

Traditional class research rhetoric revolves around different kinds of contrasts: Marx versus Weber, class differences in grade versus qualitative differentiation, class struggle versus co-operation between classes. Ending of the Cold War gives us a prospect of overcoming these oppositions. Such an approach is challenged in our theoretical approach. The main argument is that the traditional rhetoric of contrasts is misleading. It is mainly a distinction strategy within the field of class analysis itself. Paradoxically this counterposing leaves us in eternal ontological decisionism. From this perspective nothing appears definite and undisputed. Rather than starting from traditional contrasts, we want to show that there are many significant and solid empirical results on

which everyone can agree. Furthermore, the field of class analysis is open to conceptual innovations and new results from other sociological research programmes. This does not mean to say that there are no theoretical disagreements, unsolved problems or anomalies.

Class analysis consists not only of drawing maps of the class structure and of slotting people into different classes and of counting the proportions they represent. This is merely the first step and certainly not yet sufficient to establish, whether the classes only exist in the researcher's typology or whether they actually exist in social reality. If class analysis were this kind of statistical exercise, it really would not have any relevance whatsoever (for an example of shallow critique, see: Piirainen 1997).

Class analysis is a highly complex process involving many different conceptual levels and research strategies. A very basic distinction has to be made between class position and class situation (Kivinen 1989; Blom et al. 1992). This distinction is implicit in all class analysis, but we have tackled it explicitly in the studies of the Finnish Class Project (cf. Wright 1990). Class position has to do with the relations of ownership and domination within production. The concept of class situation, then, refers to more concrete phenomena: reproduction situation (income, education, labour market position) and working conditions. Studies of class organization and class consciousness cannot base their explanations on class structure without an analysis of class situation (see Figure 1).

Class interests cannot be identified without taking into account class situation. For example, in order to analyse the potential interests of the Russian middle class today, we have to start out from its concrete and historical living conditions. Class interests are not objectively given within the structure of capitalist or "socialist" societies. It is precisely the historicity and contextuality of interests that constitutes one of the biggest challenges to class analysis today.

Social classes have often been taken to represent not only their own specific interests but also the common, universal good. For Hegel, the bureaucracy that served the state was a universal class, for Marx the working class which bore the burden of universal suffering represented the future of the relations of production. The new middle class has been described as consisting of technocrats and bureaucrats, but also as the intelligentsia. Thus, this group of people may be seen as representing either "good" or "evil".

The Russian transition has intensified sociological studies on class structure in Russia. Especially the formation of the middle class has been in focus (see e.g.: Kryshatanovskaya 1992; Beljajeva 1993; Gorskov et al., 1999; Grigoriev and Maleva 2001; Gorshkov and Tihonovoj 2008; Golovlyanitsina 2009; Shkaratan

2008; Injasevskij et al. 2008). This approach has been significantly inspired by a rather essentialist approach to class identity, consciousness and habitus of classes (cf. especially: Grigoriev and Maleva 2001; for a more developed view see: V.V. Radaev 2003). The middle class is assumed to be in its essence legalistic, disciplined and full of entrepreneurial spirit. Theoretical discussions in Western sociology on particularistic and non-benign interests of the middle class have not been broadly discussed in Russia (Cf. Kivinen 1991; 1994a; 1994b; 2016). Studies of Russia's post-transition working class have emphasized its weak organization, lack of solidarity, and incapacity to struggle for collective interests (e.g. Robertson 2007). We challenge the limited scope of these studies by analysing the structuration process of classes in concrete terms, taking into account the concrete levels of class situation and forms of organization and consciousness. It is especially important to understand the neglected connection between the class structuration and formation of the welfare regime. At the same time, this should not imply that the other stake holders and agencies would be neglected, rather the opposite.

In general class processes tend to be the vulnerable point in class analysis because of simplified assumptions: proletarianization, polarisation or all-encompassing middle class formation. None of these processes is empirically plausible. Rather we need to go to a more concrete level. We also have to remember that relationship between positions and social action is not a conceptual but empirical, as John Lockwood noticed already in 1950's (Lockwood 1956).

Our view developed in the Finnish Class Project is that social classes do not seem to be particularly interesting if they are considered simply in terms of abstract social divisions. In a quantitative analysis the class structures of advanced capitalist countries seem to be almost identical, and any non-historical talk about interests does not seem to carry very much credibility (Kivinen 2001). It is only when we turn our attention to the specific causal mechanisms and cultural constructs related to social classes that they begin to seem more interesting; it is only on this kind of basis that we can begin to define class interests more concretely and historically.

### **Different traditions of class research**

Traditional class research rhetoric revolves around different kinds of contrasts: Marx versus Weber, class differences in grade versus qualitative differences, class struggle versus class cooperation. Class research is usually started by fixing one's own approach to a certain place within the field of these kinds of contrasts (for a representative example of the Weberian perspective, see: Parkin 1979). This provides a useful platform from which to address the

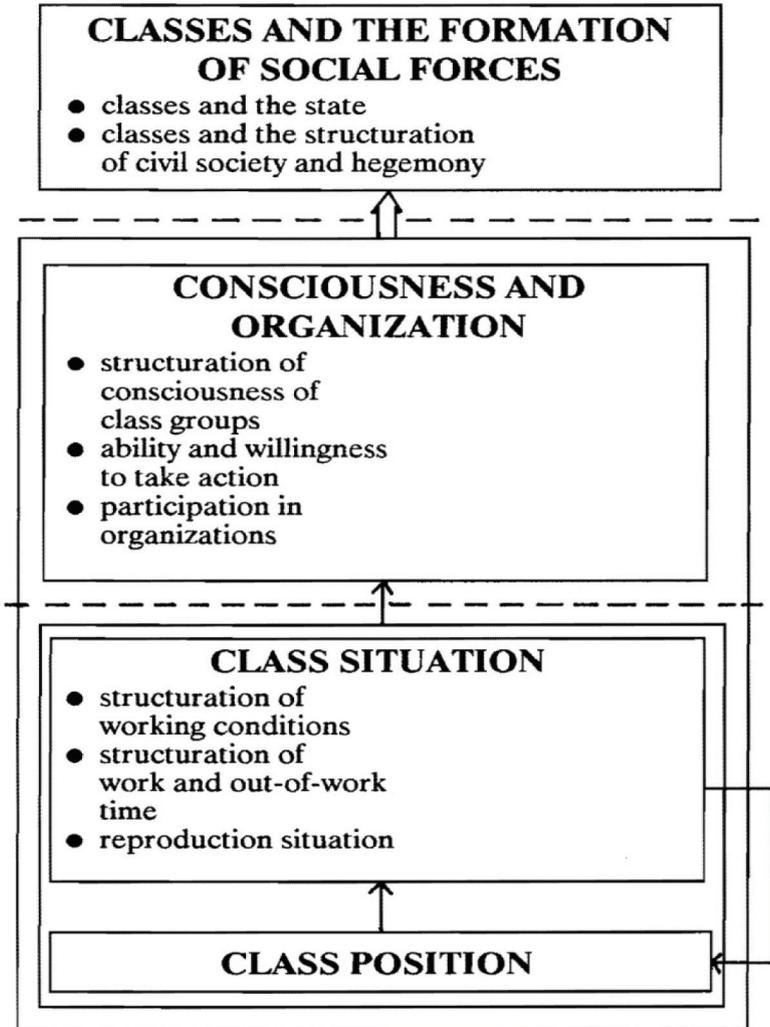


Figure 1. Levels and mediating syntheses of class analysis

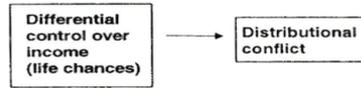
battles of classification taking place within the field of class analysis itself. However, this kind of rhetoric serves only to draw a picture in which nothing appears definite and undisputed, but every result has to be weighed against a specific theoretical perspective. It also creates the false impression that class analysis is an entirely independent conceptual world in the field of sociology, as if it shared no meaningful points of intersection with other lines of sociological inquiry. At worst, this kind of rhetoric leads to political reductionism of the sort where proper debate about concepts and empirical results is superseded by representations of political value commitments.

The position I want to defend in this article is that the impressions created by this rhetoric of contrasts give a misleading picture of class analysis as an intellectual project. Not everything is contested and disputed, but there are also good and solid empirical results on which everyone can agree. Furthermore, the field of class analysis is open to conceptual innovations and new results from other sociological research programmes. This does not mean to say there are no theoretical disagreements, but it is crucial to make clear in what kind of argumentation they become apparent. Nor do I want to suggest that there are no unresolved conceptual problems and anomalies in class research (Kivinen 1998; 2016; Chernysh 1998). However, it is important to recognise which of these problems arise from specific theoretical premises, and which concern the whole research programme.

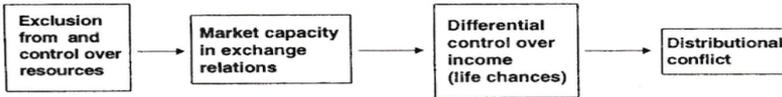
Erik Olin Wright has described the differences between the main traditions of class research as shown in Figure 2 (Wright 1997: 30–34). All trends in class research seem to share the same basic idea with regard to social differences in material welfare. Simple stratification analysis takes departure from income differences, which are taken to lead to conflicts regarding income distribution. Weberian class analysis is also focused on market position, but market capacities are distinguished on the basis of whether people possess capital, occupational skills and competencies or simply their physical labour power. The Weberian view on assets thus points at qualitative differences, which lead to fundamental differences in the living conditions of social classes. However, it is stressed in both the Marxist and Weberian school that interest conflicts have to do not only with income distribution, but also with more fundamental differences in assets.

According to Wright the main distinctive feature of the Marxist view lies in its concept of exploitation. The main focus of attention in this view is on conflicts occurring at the level of production. Social classes not only engage in a trade-off in different market positions, as buyers and sellers of labour power: the key thing is that in the labour process, the capitalist class can exploit the labour of the working class because (through hired managers) it is also in power at the level of the labour process. For Wright, class theory that is based on the

**I. Simple gradational class analysis**



**II. Weberian class analysis**



**III. Marxist class analysis**

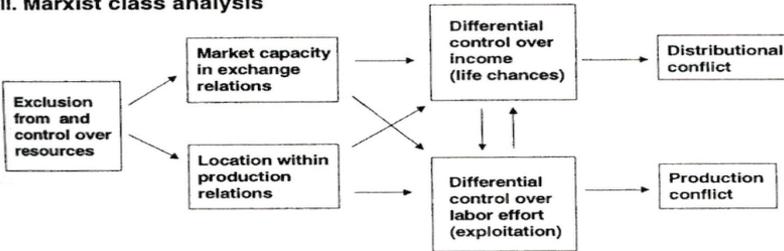


Figure 2. Mutual relations between theoretical traditions

concept of exploitation provides a more solid vantage-point for research than the theory grounded in market capacities and living conditions: this is because it demonstrates that class differences are not just differences in benefits and entitlements, but in power.

Secondly, the market capacities discourse completely ignores the resistance of the class that is being exploited. If the interests of those who are exploiting depend upon the actions of those who are exploited, then the possibility of resistance can never be discounted. Antagonistic conflicts will therefore in all probability translate into open conflicts between classes. This also leads to the creation of intermediary political and ideological institutions. In other words, the theory of exploitation also serves as the starting-point for political and ideological theory. Ultimately it also paves the way to far-reaching historical comparisons between the structuration of classes in different kinds of exploiting societies (feudalism, capitalism or state-bureaucratic socialism) and the corresponding process in other types of society.

Wright observes that there is no metatheoretical sociological rule which says that sociologists ought to choose between two such class theories; different

kinds of hybrids combining elements from Marxist and Weberian lines of thinking are quite legitimate. However Wright himself opts to pursue a kind of dual strategy. On the one hand he commits himself (ultimately on political grounds) to developing a 'purely' Marxist conceptual platform. On the other hand, he stresses that his empirical results are not really dependent on that theoretical platform (*ibid.*, 34–39). Even his operationalisation of the class structure is virtually identical with John Goldthorpe's Weberian structure (Goldthorpe 1980; Wright 1978; 1985).

The clarity of Wright's argumentation and his sense of proportion places him firmly at the forefront of the tradition he represents. Having said that, his position certainly is paradoxical. He starts out by noting that class theory which is based on exploitation can help us see things at a theoretical level, but then in the analysis it turns out that there really is nothing special to see after all. His argumentation is aimed at conceptual and scientific coherence, yet in the end he simply brings in a political position that requires no substantive justification. The whole argument could just as well be flipped over on its head and turned into the question as to how exploitation theory restricts political thinking, conceptual choices or the seeing of the relevance of empirical research results.

First of all, it can be argued that the tradition of 'simple stratification theory' has also produced some interesting research results with great political significance. A good example is provided by the model of status attainment suggested by Robert Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan in their classical study which highlights the 'vicious circles' in which Black Americans are trapped (Blau & Duncan 1967: 207–227). Black people have traditionally been underprivileged and seen their deprivation accumulate. This applies equally to parental social standing, to parental level of education and to employment prospects. However exploitation theory tends to skate over these kinds of results and discussions because 'hard political questions' have to do precisely with relations between places. At the same time exploitation theory becomes politically more and more detached. For instance, it does not necessarily have any point of contact with the calls for affirmative action by Black Americans.

Wright's theory of contradictory class positions reproduces the dualistic world-view of the left-wing movement and bypasses the debate on the specific interests of the middle classes (Kivinen 1998b; Lotman & Uspenski 1985). Wright defines the position and interests of the middle classes simply in terms of combinations of the positions and interests of the basic classes, i.e. the working class and the bourgeoisie. However, it is precisely the specific interests of the new middle classes that constitute the major historical issue that decides the fate of class analysis. Although the working class is still the biggest individual social class in all modern societies, no one in post-industrial society can deny

the growth of the middle classes. The trend is clearly visible even in Wright's own empirical results (Wright 1997: 56–67).

Another point on which both the critics and advocates of class analysis agree is that professionalization is a key social process with regard to the formation of the middle classes (Parsons 1939; Gouldner 1979; Pakulski & Waters 1996; Grusky and Weeden 2001). In choosing to narrow his focus on the basic dualism, Wright completely disregards the debate on the universality and specificity of the middle classes' interests. As Alwin Gouldner has shown, this is an absolutely crucial point of intersection between class theory and modernisation theory, and has been so ever since Hegel through Parsons and C. Wright Mills all the way to Bourdieu (Larson 1977; Gouldner 1979; Mills 1956; Bourdieu 1979; Lenski 2001; Melin 1996; c.f. Chomsky 1969).

The main strength of the Marxist tradition is indeed its analysis at the level of the labour process. However, the generalised concept of exploitation leads astray both the interpretation of research results and the political inferences. Marx lends no support at all to the view that there are relations of exploitation between wage earners (Kivinen 1989: 41–57; see also: Therborn 2002: 222). However rather than dwelling on Marxological debate it is more important to recognise that the concept of autonomy allows us to construct the theory of power relations in production from the vantage-point of alienation analysis, without a generalised concept of exploitation. The core issue in all conflicts at the level of the labour process is the struggle for autonomy (Kortteinen 1995). This opens up a more historical and more concrete angle on studying class interests. For instance, new managerial strategies related to flexible labour control emerge as key objects of class analysis.

Concrete and historical as they are, interests also brings actors into the theory. For Wright, classes are mainly concrete structures, beyond historical action. E.P. Thompson, on the other hand, stresses that classes should be seen as outcomes of coinciding historical events: '[C]lass happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.' (Thompson 1968: 9). In this context class analysis also comes to comprise non-cognitive elements of consciousness, cultural structures, habituses and historical agents. This means that there is no contrast after all between structural research and cultural analysis, but rather an important relationship of interaction. This is equally evident in studies of late socialism or the present welfare state. On the other hand, analysis of cultural understanding cannot be a substitute for the search for causal mechanisms, which of course is the vantage-point for Wright, working in the spirit of traditional structural research.

### Marx on state

Young Marx dwelled endlessly on Hegel's involved writings about the nature of the state and civil society. He is dubious about Hegel's idea that the state is the truth of civil society, or as Hegel goes on to argue, the reality of the idea of ethics (*Sittlichkeit*) (Hegel 1991: 135–186). Hegel inserts “the police, the Estates and corporations” as “mediating organs” in-between the state and civil society, but for Marx this is an archaic solution: the real mediation, he says, is provided by democracy.

This, however, was the young, radical student of law and philosophy. The mature Marx seems to abandon the demand of democracy. From the *German Ideology* onwards, the state is for Marx above all a class state, and the difference between the state and civil society has to be done away with (Marx & Engels 1976).

The working class has a special part to play in overthrowing the state. Marx postulates the decisive role of the working class in the socialist revolution (*ibid.*). The working class is a universal class because its existence is marred by “universal suffering”. Therefore it is a less integral part of civil society than others. For mature Marx, freedom is not the maximization of independence by self-determined subjects acting in political and legal institutions. Rather, Marx calls for the removal of obstacles between different spheres of social life. Rather than an organ over and above society, the state must be subordinated once and for all to civil society. The aim is to maximize unity and harmony. Even the concept of citizenship – the opportunity to work together with others to defend or to oppose certain political goals – would disappear in free society.

The idea of the state fading into civil society represents the Rousseauian side of Marxism. In the final analysis representation and the government of people is all in vain; people can look after themselves all by themselves. This, however, is only one of two main strands. The other one is the idea deriving from Saint-Simon concerning the scientific management of society (Cohen 1982). People must not be allowed to reign rampant like a natural form. Society must be brought under centralized, scientific control. These two diametrically opposed views co-exist side by side throughout the Marxist tradition. In the Soviet Union they are manifested, on the one hand, in the doctrine of the withering away of the state; and on the other hand in the idea of the scientific management and planning of society. Neither perspective contains democratic institutions or any concrete consideration of the limits to state activity.

Instead of a concrete analysis of the working class and democracy, Marx's formulation consists in a defense of the collective harmony myth:

It failed to recognize that the democratic potential of workers within any particular country depends upon such factors as historical traditions,

the structure of industrial relations, state strategies, and their ability to form bonds of solidarity with other groups within civil society, and not upon their ascribed role as a “universal class” or privileged subject of history (Keane 1988: 63).

Jean Cohen has shown how this position in Marx’s thinking is logically rather than sociologically derived. The working class is the negation of the negation (Cohen 1982: 60–61). It denies society, which causes universal suffering to it. The working class only needs to recognize itself and act to liberate humanity.

This gives rise to the following problems:

- In as much as the working class is not analyzed sociologically, the relationship between the working class and the civil society is fixed once and for all. This causes the real, historical working class to disappear from the picture: the working class that through its own struggles is integrated in civil society, achieving political and social rights by setting up its own strong organizations to pursue its own specific interests.
- Nor is the distinctiveness or the limitations of the rationality of the mythical proletariat posed as a problem. The dark sides of working class consciousness such as sexism, class hatred or the reservations towards mental labour, are never analysed in any exact or open fashion, even though they are relevant in the demonization of reality exercised in Stalinism, for example (cf. also: Willis 1979).
- Marx’s vision of a communist society void of conflicts and power leaves completely untouched the problems that are related to restricting the power of the emerging “socialist state”. The Marxist tradition tries to hide away in a museum all theoretical argumentation which concerns the scale and limits of state authority. The concepts of socialist civil society or constitutional state become logically impossible.

### **Commodity form, legal fetishism and the state**

It was Lenin himself, who drew attention to the curious paradox: the revolutionary forces had launched a sustained and determined campaign against the state, yet very few Bolsheviks or even Mensheviks had written anything more theoretical about the state or law. The only revolutionary theorist who had published comprehensively on state and law was Mikhail Andreyevich Reisner (Михаил Андреевич Рейснер, 1868–1928). He represented left wing of SR-party. Reisner had in 1911 published a major book *The State* (Государство) on the state and law. He emphasized the ideological role of law and argued that all classes have their intuitive legal consciousness. After the revolution, the formal

law could be replaced by the intuitive legal system of the proletariat. Reiser participated in the formulation of the first Soviet constitution, and his theory was the first version of theories of legal fetishism and had a strong ideological and socio-psychological emphasis was soon replaced by more sociological approaches with a strong link with Marx and *Das Kapital*. In the Marxist theory of the state, especially the work of Evgeni Bronislavovich Pashukanis (Евгений Брониславович Пашуканис, 1891–1937) represented the first systematic effort to link theory of state and law with Marx theory of capitalism. He wanted to follow Marx's method as well.

In the second chapter of Capital Marx writes:

“Die Waren können nicht selbst zu Märkte gehen und sich nicht selbst austauschen. Wir müssen uns also nach ihren Hütern umsehen, den Warenbesitzern. Die Waren sind Dinge und daher widerstandlos gegen den Menschen. Wenn sie nicht willig, kann er Gewalt brauchen, in anderen Worten, sie nehmen. Um diese Dinge als Waren aufeinander zu beziehen, müssen die Warenhüter sich zueinander als Personen verhalten, deren Willen in jenen Dingen haust, so dass der eine nur mit dem Willen des anderen, also jeder nur vermittelst eines, beiden gemeinsamen Willensakts sich die fremde Ware aneignet, indem er die eigene veräußert. Sie müssen sich daher wechselseitig als Privateigentümer anerkennen. Dies Rechtsverhältnis, dessen Form der Vertrag ist, ob nun legal entwickelt oder nicht, ist ein Willensverhältnis, worin sich die ökonomische Verhältnis widerspiegelt. Der Inhalt dieses Rechts- oder Willensverhältnisses ist durch das ökonomische Verhältnis selbst gegeben.“ (MEW 23, 99).

In his major book *The General Theory of Law and Marxism* («Общая теория права и марксизм. (Опыт критики основных юридических понятий)») (Pashukanis 1924). Pashukanis wanted to use Marx's method of rising from abstract to the concrete (cf. Ilyenkov 1960). For him the 'commodity of the legal theory' is 'legal subject' and from here on the other categories of legal theory as well as the basic form of the state could be conceptually derived. The mutual recognition by commodity owners explains why the class power in the exchange relations cannot be immediately present. Commodity can only have an exchange value when coercion is not there. This mutual agreement is basis for the fact that coercion in bourgeois society can only exist in a form of abstract common will, and consequently, the state has to pretend to be a neutral instance above individual commodity owners. Pashukanis emphasized that this also meant that the class character of the Bourgeois state must be camouflaged behind the relation of equal legal subjects.

Pashukanis' theory had several significant implications. If law is connected to commodity exchange and form determinations of capitalist mode of

production in general, the role of law should be withering away when the capitalist relations of production disappear. On the other hand, if the exchange relations, state and law remain in socialism it would not be possible to start legal theory from the will of the proletariat. Other prominent scholars Piotr or Pётr Ivanovich Stuchka (Пётр Иванович Стучка, 1865–1932) and Isaak Petrovich Razumovskij (Исаак Петрович Разумовский, 1893–1937) in this ‘sociological school of state theory’ emphasized the role of norms and ideology as independent dimensions of legal system (Stuchka 1921; Razumovskij 1925; 1926). The whole discussion ended up with accusations against Pashukanis and Razumovskij as representatives of ‘legal nihilism’. Both were executed in 1937 and Vyshinski’s position of the will of the proletariat as the starting point of legal theory was used as ‘theoretical starting category’ of Stalinist purges.

However, the Marx-Renaissance brought this sociological school into attention for a new generation of scholars in the 1970’s. Several attempts for form-genetic derivation of the basic form of the bourgeois state were made especially in Western Germany (Projekt Klassenanalyse 1974; 1976; Hirsch 1974; Hochberger 1974; L pple 1973). Also the leading French state theorist Nicos Poulantzas took Pashukanis as one of the starting points for his structuralist theory of the state. One of the key arguments for both was that bourgeois state with its democratic structures is connected only to the surface of capitalist society — equality of the commodity owners — neglecting the real inequality between capital and wage labour. As we have already seen in Wright’s scheme, connecting classes with the labour process is revealed only in Marxist tradition. However, none of these Marxist approaches made any effort to analyze in historical terms the power relations and positions of the working class within the civil society and political system. The capital-logical school ended up discussing in Hegelian spirit the relations between capital and state using categories of general will and general conditions of production. The French tradition was more open to political practice but without any analysis of the problems in Marx’s theory of the state. In the end, none of these new approaches was able to analyze limitations of Marx’s theory in terms of democratic institutions. In that sense, they seem to have similar problems in state theory as traditional Leninism.

### **Class character of the state: The Leninist simplification**

My argument then is that democracy, representation and pluralism are problematic even in the basic premises of Marxist state theory. However, Marxism cannot perhaps be blamed so much for what was created as for what wasn’t. The gaps in the theory do not translate directly into shots in the neck, but these things are very definitely connected.

Lenin's concept of the state is well-known. In *The State and Revolution*, he heavily underlines Marx's theory of the class state, elaborates on the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the most important tasks of the working class. He also discusses at length the withering away of the state.

Lenin's concept of class state is straightforward:

*(E)very state is a "special force for the suppression" of the oppressed class. Consequently, every state is not "free" and not a "people's state" (Lenin 1970: 22).*

A democratic republic is merely the best conceivable façade for capitalism. Parliament is essentially a bourgeois institution in which parties are engaged in a battle to execute the will of the bourgeoisie:

*To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament — such is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics (Lenin 1970: 54).*

However, it seems that Lenin takes quite an optimistic view on the withering away of the state and the management of administrative tasks. He is excited about Engels's remark that the state has not existed forever and will not last forever. Society which organizes production in a new way on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers will put the whole machinery of the state where it belongs: into the museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe. However, revolution does not mean the withering away of the state, but only the abolition of the bourgeois state. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or "semi-state", as Lenin puts it. This semi-state is the proletariat, organized into the ruling class. The genuine Marxist extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In other words, the bourgeois state, the machinery created by the bourgeoisie for itself, has to be abolished and a proletarian state, a dictatorship of the proletariat set up in its place, which will then step by step wither away with the evolution of socialist society.

The state is a parasite:

*The bureaucracy and the standing army are a "parasite" on the body of bourgeois society — a parasite created by the internal antagonisms which rend that society, but a parasite which "chokes" all its vital pores (Lenin 1970: 34).*

In his treatment of the withering away of the state, Lenin compares himself to early Christians whose naive religion has been forgotten by the state church. It may sound naive, but Lenin says a “reversion” to “primitive” democracy is absolutely essential for him: “for how else can the majority, and then the whole population without exception, proceed to discharge state functions”:

*Capitalist culture has created large-scale production, factories, railways, the postal service, telephones, etc., and on this basis the great majority of the functions of the old “state power” have become so simplified and can be reduced to such exceedingly simple operations of registration, filing and checking that they can be easily performed by every literate person, can quite easily be performed for ordinary “workmen’s wages,” and that these functions can (and must) be stripped of every shadow of privilege, of every semblance of “official grandeur” (Lenin 1970: 52).*

Society has to transform and be organized in the same simple fashion as the “postal service”, yet with all wage differentials removed and all tasks clearly distinguishable:

*To organize the whole national economy on the lines of the postal service, so that the technicians, foremen, bookkeepers, as well as all officials, shall receive salaries no higher than “a workman’s wage,” all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat — this is our immediate aim. It is such a state, standing on such an economic foundation, that we need. This is what will bring about the abolition of parliamentarism and the preservation of representative institutions. This is what will rid the labouring classes of the prostitution of these institutions by the bourgeoisie (Lenin 1970: 59–60).*

Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* is open to many criticisms. Indeed, the work displays the most fundamental problems of the whole Leninist tradition.

1. *The idea of class power as the root cause of all oppression in society.* For Lenin and Engels, class power is the root cause of all forms of oppression in society. When class power begins to wither away, all forms of dominance by one group of people over others should gradually disappear. Therefore, in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, people were dreaming not only of the state withering away. Alexandra Kollontai followed Engels in arriving at the idea that private property and the family were closely interwoven. When property no longer ties the spouses together, their relationship may be based on genuine love; and when love is exhausted, even the relationship may be dissolved (Kollontai 1972).

Child-rearing, the domestic chores and the shopping may be done collectively. Kollontai was defeated in the debate on the “withering away of the family”. The peculiar third road that appeared in-between the bourgeois family and the withering away of the family was the Stalinist Soviet family, in which the wife was active in the labour market but at the same time worked alongside her husband as a faithful housewife. Indeed, in the early 1930s it was declared that the whole women’s issue had been resolved (Browning 1987).

It could be argued that this whole story reinforces the basic position of present-day power research, which has it that class power is only one form of power to which other forms of dominance cannot be reduced.

2. Another simplistic assumption in Lenin’s thinking is that the state’s relationship to class power is determined at the level of the general concept of state. This implies that it is no longer a research problem and does not require serious analysis of how class interests are mediated to the state. This involves a strange paradox that cuts across the entire history of the radical labour movement. The movement, for which the state is the class enemy par excellence, has throughout the twentieth century attempted precisely to strengthen the state. Even today the creation of the welfare state is regarded by the radical labour movement as its greatest achievement.

This is not a problem in the same way to the Social Democratic movement, for which (as Sydney and Beatrice Webb have pointed out) the state has mainly been a practical and neutral mechanism. On the other hand, Social Democracy has made very little progress in unravelling the qualitative differences between the power resources of different classes vis-à-vis the state. For instance, the power resources of capital are closely tied up with the opportunities of the so-called market forces to transfer their monies when necessary from one country to another. The power resources of the working class, on the other hand, lie primarily in collective organization. The impact of these resources on political processes is very different (Therborn 1980). In academic Marxism these kinds of questions were raised, but with very limited practical political consequences.

As I already argued, Capital-logical theorizing on the form and functions of the state was based on the totalizing perspective according to which the specific form of the state was reduced to the functional implementation of capital reproduction (see e.g.: Läßle 1973; Hirsch 1974; Flatow & Huisken 1973; Clarke 1991). The premises of Louis Althusser’s and Nicos Poulantzas’s state theory were reducible to classifications presented in Communist Party programmes of state-bearing classes or class blocs (Althusser 1971; Poulantzas 1973). This, however, entailed the assumption that only the working class had significant and relevant interests to defend.

3. When the essence of the state is reduced to its class character, the whole discussion concerning the institutional boundaries of state actions and the justification of different kinds of interests recedes into the background. This is the problem that is at the core of attention in the theory of civil society. We have already seen how in the real political process civil society is superseded by party rule. This problem is closely interwoven with Rousseau's idea of the disappearance of the dividing line between state and civil society. The roots of the problem can be traced back to Marx.

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## МАРКС О КЛАССЕ И ГОСУДАРСТВЕ: НАСЛЕДИЕ И КРИТИКА

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**Аннотация.** Карл Маркс является значительной фигурой в развитии современной социальной науки, особенно в области критики капитализма и изучения класса и государства. Однако его наследие также включает в себя множество ошибочных утверждений, а различные формы марксизма чрезмерно упростили и исказили его идеи. Чтобы сделать наследие Маркса актуальным для современной эмансипативной социальной науки, важно признать его ограниченность, вступить в диалог с другими социологическими традициями и обосновать его эмпирическими исследованиями. Хотя работа Маркса о классе и государстве является неполной, она все еще может быть полезна при анализе этих вопросов сегодня, но необходимо выйти за рамки его идей, чтобы заниматься актуальной социальной наукой. В статье обсуждается использование идей Маркса в анализе класса и государства и аргументируется важность структурного подхода, учитывающего конкретные уровни классовой ситуации и формы организации и сознания. Также обсуждаются ограничения идей Маркса и необходимость деконструкции упрощений в рамках марксистской традиции, чтобы сделать его наследие актуальным для современной социологии.

**Ключевые слова:** классовый анализ, государство, структурный подход, Маркс, Ленин.