

# MARX & ENGELS



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2/4/2020

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GENT 12: The

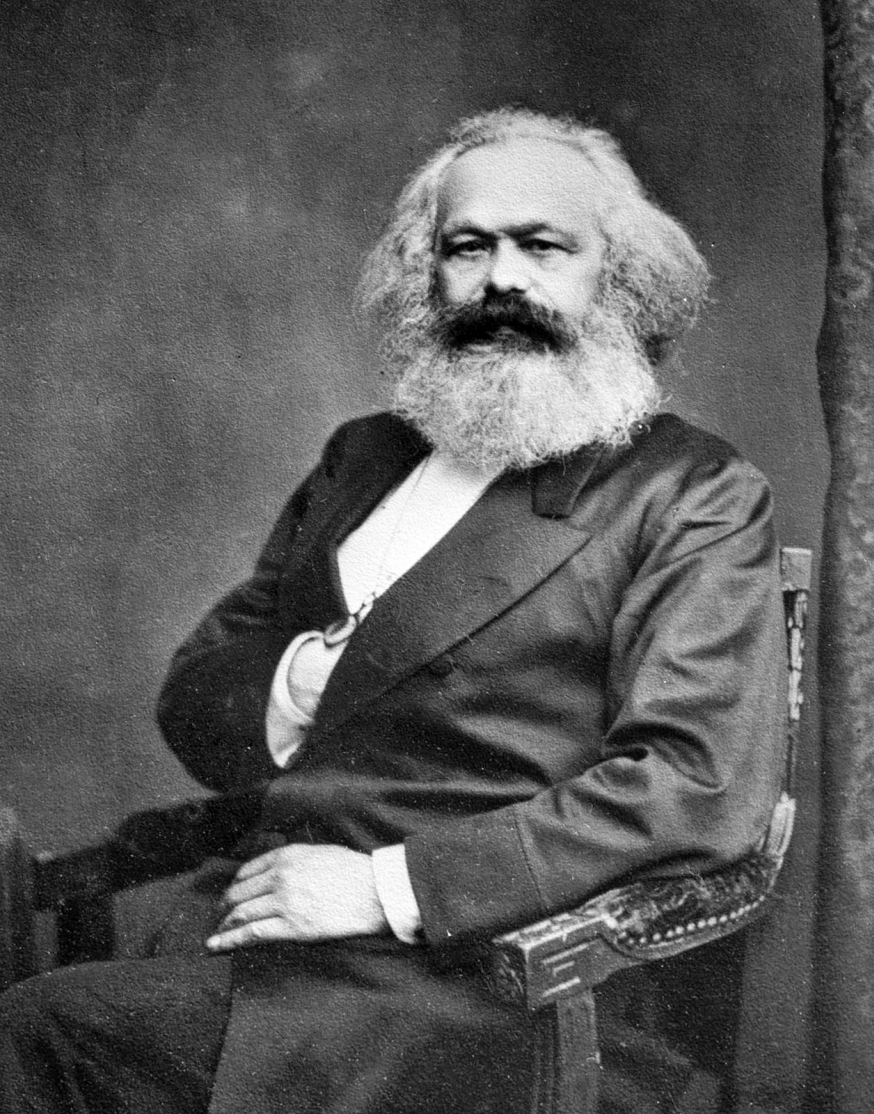


# Friedrich Engels (1820-1895)

- Born 1820, Rhine province (modern day Germany – then Prussia)
- Died 1895, London
- German socialist philosophy
- Close collaborator with Karl Marx
- Helped form modern communism
- Co-write *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)
- Edited 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> volumes of *Das Kapital* after Marx died



# Karl Marx (1818-1883)



- ❑ Born in Trier, (in modern day Germany)
- ❑ Jewish family converted to Christianity → so father could follow career as a lawyer
  - Prussia had anti-Jewish laws
- ❑ Marx studied law in Bonn and Berlin → wrote a PhD in philosophy comparing Democritus and Epicurus
- ❑ Hoped for academic job, but was already in league with too radical of a group for real job prospects
- ❑ Turns to journalism and became involved in political and social questions → began to consider communist theory



# Karl Marx as philosopher



- Perhaps best known as a revolutionary and not a philosopher
- Hard to think of a single thinker who has had as much influence on the creation of the modern world
- Though not thought of as a philosopher → trained as philosopher
- Turned away from “traditional” philosophy to focus on economics and politics
- Early work philosophical → later work engages in discussion with contemporary philosophical conversations and debates

# The Young Hegelians

- **The Young Hegelians or The Left Hegelians** → group of German intellectuals in the decades that followed Hegel's death (1831)
- Wrote and reacted to Hegel's legacy
- **Philosophy of history:** Young Hegelians developed on Hegel's premise that the purpose of history was the elimination (negation) of anything and everything which restricted freedom and reason
- Wrote radical critiques of religion and the Prussian state
- Rejected the "Old Hegelians" → Young Hegelians critiqued the anti-utopian aspects of Hegel: the idea that the world had already reached perfection

## Members:

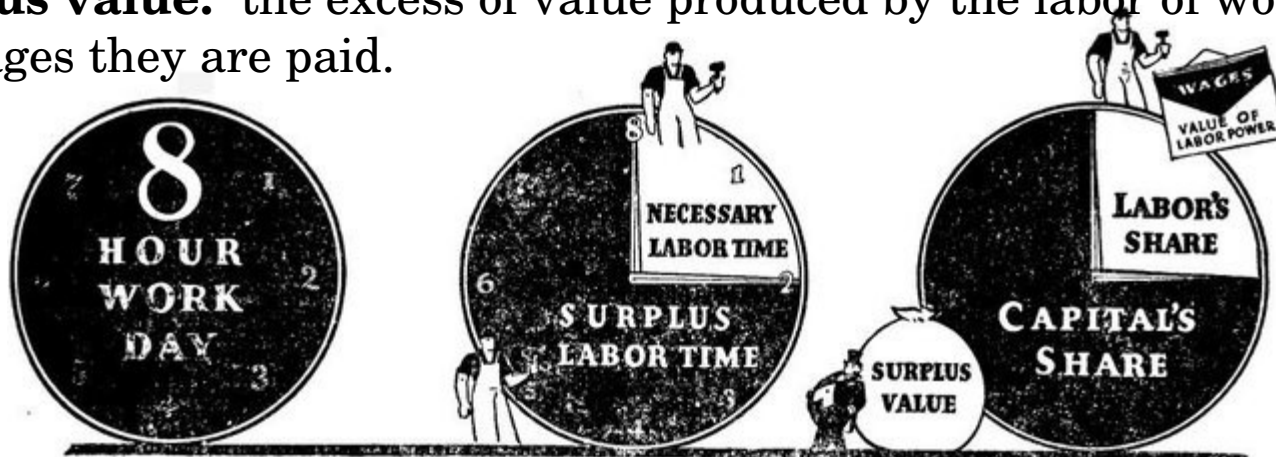
David Strauss  
Bruno Bauer  
Ludwig Feuerbach  
Carl Nauwerck  
Arnold Ruge  
**Max Stirner**  
**Karl Marx**  
August von Cieszkowski  
Karl Schmidt  
Edgar Bauer

# Some philosophical contributions

- Historical materialism: societies rise and fall as they encourage and then impede human productive power and development
  - Historical process driven by material conditions
  - History will culminate in communism
- Critique/analysis of capitalism developed based on Marx and Engels's **labor theory of value**: non-traditional theory of value → the economic value of a good or service is determined by the total amount of "socially necessary labor" required to produce it.
  - Includes analysis of the extraction of surplus value from the **proletariat** who are exploited
- Philosophy of history and economics → come together in the historical inevitability of the crash of capitalism and the rise of communism
- Refused to attempt to predict the form and nature of communism → thought it would rise through natural historical processes and could not be the result of a pre-determined ideal.

# Important concepts in Marxism

- **Proletariat:** workers or working-class people, regarded collectively → those who do not own the means of production. Exploited by capitalism. Sell their labor on the labor market
- **Bourgeoisie:** the capitalist class who owns the means of production
- **Alienation:** estrangement of people from their essence as a consequence of living in a society of stratified social classes. The alienation from the self is a consequence of being a mechanistic part of a social class, the condition of which estranges a person from their humanity. (c.f. Emerson, “American Scholar”)
- **Surplus labor:** the excess in labor above and beyond the needs to sustain oneself
- **Surplus value:** the excess of value produced by the labor of workers over the wages they are paid.





# *The German Ideology*

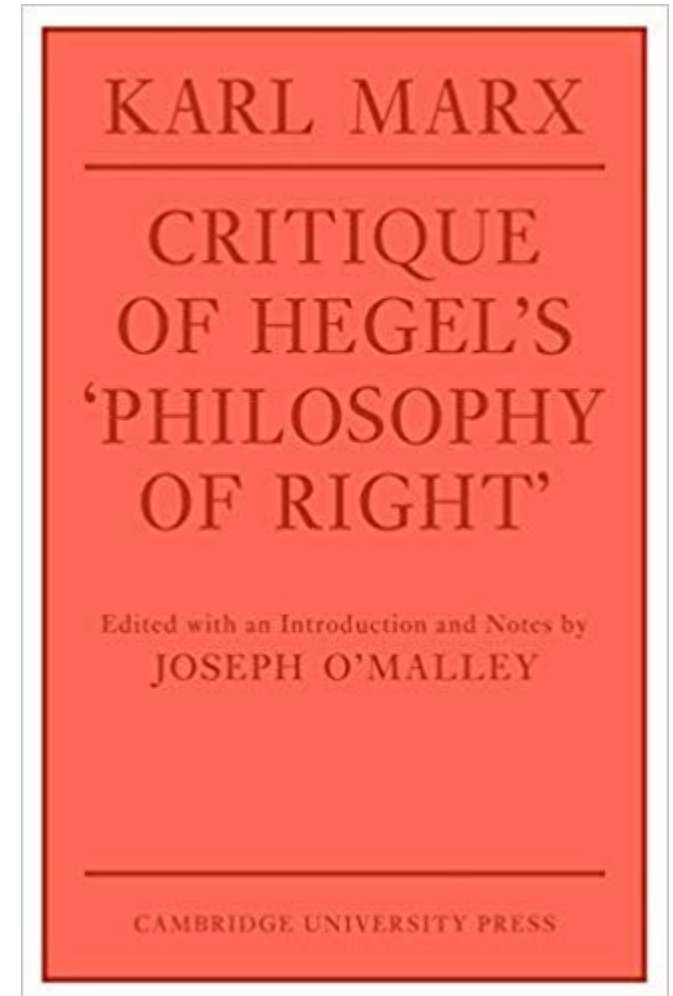


- *The German Ideology*: written in 1845 → written by both Marx and Engels
- Contrast new materialist methods against idealism → set out “the premises of the materialist method”
- Start from real human beings → essentially productive (i.e. must produce their means of subsistence to meet material needs)
- Material life conditions and determines social life → explanation must go from material production to social forms → then to consciousness
- As material means of production evolve and develop, modes of co-operation and economic systems rise and fall
- Eventually communism becomes a possibility once the workers understand their position and the possibility of alternatives
  - This motivates them to become revolutionaries



# Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right

- Where Marx's famous remark comes from: religion is the "opiate of the people"
  - A harmful painkiller, an illusion
- Sets out his account of religion in detail
- Attacking and undermining the state religion seen as a method of weakening the Prussian political power
- Here also considers the possibility of revolution in Germany and how it might be achieved
- Sets out the role of the proletariat in being the primary agent of society's emancipation



# Morality

## *Is capitalism unjust?*



- The question of Marx and morality is a difficult one.
- He appears (at all stages of life) to have a strong aversion to capitalism and he endorses a future communist society
  - Yet the motivations or the terms of these two positions are unclear
- Though we might expect it, Marx never says that capitalism is unjust
- Never says that communism would be a just form of social organization
- Makes effort to distance his work from work which engages in justice discourse
- Takes pains to avoid direct moral commentary

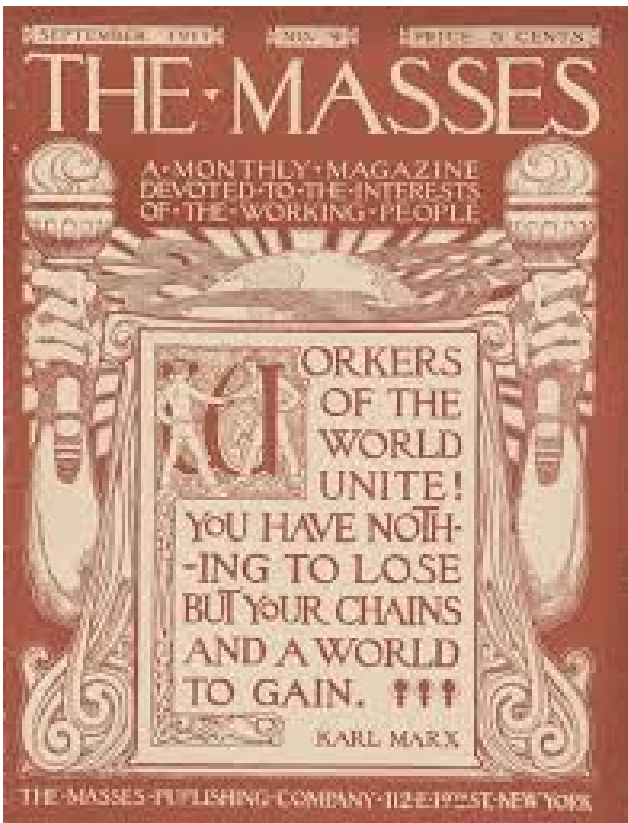


# Morality

- However we think about Marx and the question of justice, it's obvious that Marx believed that capitalism was not the best method for humans to live to their fullest potential
  - Under capitalism, workers find their labor a burden, a torment. They suffer poverty and overwork. They lack fulfillment and freedom.
  - Humans are unable to relate to each other as they should.
- The question is whether this is a **moral criticism** of capitalism or not
- Though he avoided moral language, it seems safe to say that this critique is a moral one: capitalism impedes the flourishing of humanity



# Morality



- Did Marx think that communism should be recommended on moral grounds?
- Morality/ethics as the idea of living well → then Marx might recommend communism on moral grounds
- In some sense, Marx's career and writings don't make sense unless we attribute this belief to him → since he believed that communism advances human freedom and flourishing
- However, Marx had theoretical antipathy towards the concept and word "good"
- Perhaps the main point: communism will not be made by high-minded philanthropists and benefactors of society



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**SOREN KIERKEGAARD**



**THE CONCEPT OF**  
**ANXIETY**

**FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY**  
**OLD CAPITOL BOOKS**

