

# MARX, MARGINALISM AND MODERN SOCIOLOGY

*Also by Simon Clarke*

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# **Marx, Marginalism and Modern Sociology**

**From Adam Smith to Max Weber**

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University of Warwick*

**Second Edition**

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The Origins of Modern Sociology</b>	<b>1</b>
	Talcott Parsons and the voluntaristic theory of action . . .	1
	The problem of order and the theory of action . . . . .	3
	Marx's critique of political economy . . . . .	6
	From social reform to modern sociology . . . . .	8
<b>2</b>	<b>Classical Political Economy</b>	<b>12</b>
	A theory of society . . . . .	12
	The materialist conception of society . . . . .	13
	The physiocratic theory of society . . . . .	18
	Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments . . . . .	21
	The Wealth of Nations . . . . .	24
	Smith's contribution to social theory . . . . .	30
	The limits of Enlightenment . . . . .	35
	Ricardo's completion of the system . . . . .	39
	Conservatism, radicalism and socialism . . . . .	43
<b>3</b>	<b>Alienated Labour and the Critique of Political Economy</b>	<b>49</b>
	The critique of Hegel's theory of the state . . . . .	52
	From political philosophy to the critique of private property	56
	Proudhon, Engels and the critique of political economy .	59
	Alienated labour and the critique of capitalism . . . . .	62
	Alienated labour and the critique of private property . . .	66
	Alienated labour and the critique of money . . . . .	70
	Hegel and the critique of political economy . . . . .	78
	Marx's early critique of political economy . . . . .	81
	The limits of the early critique . . . . .	86
<b>4</b>	<b>Value, Class and the Theory of Society</b>	<b>92</b>
	Marxism and the critique of political economy . . . . .	92

The critique of political economy and the labour theory of value . . . . .	96
The magnitude of value and the form of value . . . . .	100
Money as a social relation . . . . .	104
The theory of value and the theory of society . . . . .	108
Capital as a social relation . . . . .	113
The capitalist labour-process . . . . .	118
The capitalist process of exchange . . . . .	121
The 'trinity formula' and the theory of class . . . . .	126
The capital relation and its forms . . . . .	128
The Ricardian contradiction . . . . .	132
Formal and determinate abstraction . . . . .	140
<b>5 Political Economy and its Sociological Critics</b>	<b>144</b>
Classical political economy and the labour theory of value	144
The classical economic laws . . . . .	148
Classical political economy and the birth of sociology . .	153
The Positivist critique of political economy . . . . .	156
Classical political economy and the German Historical School	161
Herbert Spencer's liberal Sociology . . . . .	166
The decline and fall of political economy . . . . .	170
Social reform and the limits of Sociology . . . . .	174
<b>6 The Marginalist Revolution in Economics</b>	<b>182</b>
The marginalist revolution . . . . .	183
The problem of prices and the problem of reform . . . . .	185
The marginalist theory of price . . . . .	189
The marginalist theory of society . . . . .	194
Facts and values in economic science . . . . .	202
<b>7 The Irrationality of Marginalist Economics</b>	<b>207</b>
The irrationality of exchange and the problem of money	210
The irrationality of exchange and the problem of competition	213
The irrationality of exchange and the division of labour . .	219
The irrationality of capitalism: the marginalist theory of profit . . . . .	221
The contradictory social form of capitalist production . . .	228

<b>8 From Marginalism to Modern Sociology</b>	<b>235</b>
Economic theory, social economics and the tasks of sociology	235
The theory of the social economy . . . . .	238
Max Weber and the German Historical School . . . . .	243
Problems of methodology: Menger and Weber . . . . .	248
The problem of rationality . . . . .	255
The marginalist foundations of Weber's sociology . . . . .	261
Economy and society . . . . .	265
The typology of action and the theory of society . . . . .	273
Capitalist rationality and the dilemmas of modernity . . . . .	286
<b>9 Marx, Marginalism and Modern Sociology</b>	<b>290</b>
The antinomies of sociology and the dilemma of liberalism	290
The marginalist foundations of Parsonian functionalism . . . . .	298
Structure and action in 'Post-Parsonian' Sociology . . . . .	301
The limits of Marxism and the legacy of Marx . . . . .	306
Lukács and the foundations of 'Western Marxism' . . . . .	311
The Dialectic of the Enlightenment . . . . .	318
The irrationality of capitalism and the alienation of labour	323

# Preface to the Second Edition

I originally wrote this book because I felt that it was important to take liberal social theory more seriously than did the 'radical' social thought of the 1970s. The main aim of the book was to develop a Marxist critique of liberal social theory, which could identify both the scientific strengths and the ideological limitations of such theories. The book was well-received, but critical responses made it apparent that the central argument had not been widely understood, particularly by those who could only read Marx through the eyes of his orthodox interpreters, and so missed the distinctiveness of the interpretation of Marx presented here. The book was also read as an historical study, because it did not include an explicit discussion of the liberal foundations of contemporary economic and social theory, ending with the marginalist revolution in economics and Weber's sociology.

Since the book was originally published the intellectual landscape has changed dramatically. An uncritical return to liberal social theory has replaced its uncritical rejection, while the collapse of state socialism, in both East and West, has inspired the proclamation of the 'death of Marxism'. I believe that these changes have made the argument developed in this book more, and not less, relevant than when it was first written. There is no better testimony to the inadequacy of the orthodox Marxist and radical critiques of liberal social theory than the recent resurgence of liberalism. The development of a theoretically sound critique is all the more urgent as liberalism once more comes up against its limits.

The recent strength of liberalism has owed much more to its critique of the theory and practice of Orthodox Marxism than it has to its own positive virtues. Despite the 'death of Marxism', the inhumanity of capitalism is as evident today as it was when Marx wrote. The central theme of this book is that nobody more



clearly grasped the source of this inhumanity, and the possibility of its overcoming, than did Marx. But at the same time we have to recognise the limits of Marx's achievement. Marx laid the foundations of a critical social theory but, contrary to Marxist orthodoxy, he did not provide an all-encompassing world-view. Marx marked out a critical project, which was to understand and to transform society from the standpoint of the activity and aspirations of concrete human individuals. Marx's critique of liberalism sought to recover, both in theory and in practice, the constitutive role of human subjectivity behind the immediacy of objective and constraining social relations within which our social identity confronts us in the form of an external thing. This insight is as much a critique of the metaphysics of orthodox Marxism as it is of liberalism, a critique which I have sought to bring out in this second edition of the book.

Although the central argument of the book is unchanged in this edition, the miracles of modern technology have made it possible substantially to revise and expand the text. The main additions are in Chapter Three and at the beginning of Chapter Four, where I have related my interpretation of Marx to those which dominate the secondary literature, and the additional Chapters Seven and Nine, which sketch the implications of the critique of marginalism and of Weberian sociology for the critique of modern economics, orthodox Marxism and modern sociology. As with the original edition, I have tried to write the book in such a way that each chapter can be read independently of the whole.

I am very grateful to Chris Arthur, Tom Bottomore, Gillian Rose, and particularly Bob Fine, for their comments on drafts of parts of this new edition, and to those many colleagues and students with whom I have had the pleasure of discussing the issues over the years.