

THE ABSOLUTISM OF MARX AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: FOCUS ON KARL POPPER'S CRITIQUE OF MARX

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Abstract

Marx's works have left enormous influence on Western thought. Social change is the main concern of his thought. He views social change as a dialectical process which ultimately leads to absolute social order. For Marx the dialectic of material forces is central in the process of social generation that eventually leads to 'socialism'. Marx thinks that individuals have their identity because of some kind of collectivity. Each historical stage furnishes individual with a fixed identity and corresponding role. Karl Popper, who is one of the most renowned critics of Marx, critically examines Marx's work. He is of the view that Marx's thought embraces historicism and holism which cannot be rationally justifiable. Popper points out the irrational consequences of Marx's absolutism. This paper attempts to highlight the absolutistic trend lying deep in Marx's thought and then focuses on Popper's critique of Marx's absolutism.

Keywords: Absolutism, historicism, holism, anti-humanitarian, *Marx's thought*, *Popper's critique*

Introduction

In order to propose the permanent solution to the social problems traditional philosophers have been in search of absolute knowledge of social reality. They have been of the view that knowledge of social reality is based upon such absolute, universal and irreducible laws that can explain social change with absolute certainty. Such philosophers think that the absolute laws can be discovered by a systematic interpretation of human history. Social change is the main concern for them. Karl Popper, who is one of the most influential critics of traditional philosophical methods, includes Marx in such philosophers. According to Popper such absolutism has following features.¹

- (i) Social change takes place in accordance with absolute laws.
- (ii) Without knowing of the absolute laws social reformation becomes impossible and irrational. The political program for social reformation should be compatible with absolute laws.
- (iii) In social process the whole or the society has a significant preference over the part or the individual.

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¹Karl Popper, *Open Society and its Enemies part 2* (London: Routledge, 1966), 1-10

If we examine Marx in the above perspective, his views seem to be based on this form of absolutism. The main concern of Marx is the social chaos of his respective time. He believes that the social chaos should be understood by examining social change. As far as his conception of change is concerned it is absolutistic. He regards social change as process of development that takes place through the development of mode of production. For Marx, every stage of mode of production has its own social conflicts. The modes of production develop dialectically as the result of which social conflicts are resolved. This development ultimately leads to the absolute social order. He believes that the political program to reform a society must be compatible to this goal.

In Marx's studies we can see that individuals have their identity because of their social existence. Thus society or collectivity has priority over individuals. Individuals have a restricted role in different stages of development. In this perspective individual is not regarded as self-sufficient. Instead he is dependent on some sort of collectivity. Here it can be inferred that Marx gives preference to the whole or the collective over the part or the individual in process of social change.

Karl Popper, who is one of the most influential philosopher of twenty century and supporter of reason, critically examines Marx's position. He argues that Marx's embraces absolutism. Absolutism presumes historicism which is not rationally justifiable. According to Popper historicism takes 'holism' for granted which entails that social wholes have their control over parts by means of some absolute laws. Popper argues that there is no rational justification of such absolute laws. For him all knowledge is fallible. He inquires that the absolutism ultimately encourages violent revolution.

In order to highlight the absolutism of Marx and its Karl Popper's critique I divide this paper into two sections. In first section I discuss absolutistic trends in Marx's thought. Here I focus on Marx's theory of dialectical materialism and his prophecy of socialism. I examine that how for Marx the historical process is necessarily linked with the development of mode of production and how it ultimately leads to the absolute social order. In second section I focus on Popper's critique of Marx's absolutism. Here I discuss that for what reasons Popper dismisses absolutism. I explicate Popper's reservations against historicism and holism which are the main presumptions of absolutism. I also evaluate Popper's position that the consequences of Marx's absolutism are anti-humanitarian.

Marx's Absolutism

Marx presents his systems as an evolutionary theory. He believes that evolution takes place through interaction of opposite elements. According to him social change is the result of the evolution in economic circumstances of human life. Social relationship of man is bound up with productive forces. Thus Marx's dialectics is materialistic. Marx conceives that human history can be understood in the perspective of development of relation between men and their economic life.

Dialectical Materialism and Change as Progress.

According to Marx the development of economic life is directly linked with the development of the productive forces. He explicates that men have relation to the nature. Fact that makes them different to the animals is that they can produce their means for survival. Moreover, it can be seen that the way in which men produce means of survival depends directly upon the nature of productive forces or nature of actual means of production available. In Marx, the way in which men reproduce means for survival is usually known as mode of production. For Marx, the mode of production changes with the change in productive forces. He thinks that the mode of production constructs material life of men that includes relation between men. It develops with the change of productive forces.²

According to Marx man lives in realm of necessities. He struggles to satisfy his needs. In all kind of societies we can see that man is engaged in this kind of struggle. Marx explicates that with the expansion of the human kingdom, human needs also increase and thus the satisfaction of these ever-increasing needs requires the expansion of productive forces.³ Marx identifies that in different stages of history there have been different kinds of 'productive forces'. These forces develop as the human population increases and technology advances. Thus the mode of production also changes.

Marx believes, the mode of production constructs material life of men. A particular mode of production is a definite kind of activity of men because of which a particular kind of relation between men is built. This relation is independent of will of men. It is the inevitable result of that mode of production. Marx explicates that when men produce their means through hand mills, they have the feudal system of relationship that includes a feudal lord, the owner of land and the formers. When men produce their means through steam mills, they have the industrial capitalist system of relationship that includes an industrial lord, the owner of mills and the labour. In this fashion society reshapes.

In order to elaborate the mechanism of reshaping of a society Marx presents the theory of class antagonism. According to him society is reshaped because of the class antagonism that is evolved at the certain stage of development of the productive forces. The class antagonism, for Marx, is the conflict of labour. It is between owners of means of production and workers. Both groups share the production but do not share labour. The owner of means of production exploits the workers. The working class is bound to produce extra production. For example, in feudalism workers produce for satisfying their needs and for the lords. In short, the essence of class antagonism is the class division. In each mode of production there are two distinct classes, the class who has control over means of production and the class who works and exploited by the owner of production. The owners of means of production force the workers to do work for them. They are bound to repress them for the sake of their status. On the other side, the working class is bound to produce extra production because they are dependent on owners. According to Marx the class antagonism emerges out at the certain level of the growth of productive

² David McLellan, *Karl Marx Selected Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 177

³ Karl Marx, *Capital*, translated. (London: New left Review, 1981), 959

forces. At this stage the "labour conflict", in a particular relation of production, becomes explicit. It exposes the contradiction of existing relation of production. It causes the social revolution or reshaping the society.⁴

As a result of reshaping of society a better relation of production is built. The new relation of production has the solution of the problem of old relation of production. It replaces the old relation of production. In Marx own word,

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict ... with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure ... No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation.⁵

That is to say that with the development of means of production the 'nature of property' changes and with the transformation of 'nature of property' the conflict of labour changes. Thus every new stage of history has its own contradiction and form of conflicts that requires a particular struggle to manage these conflicts. For instance, in the pre-capital mode of production the form of struggle is the struggle between the land lords and the farmers while in the capital mode of production the class struggle ultimately is between the capitalists who possess capital and the proletarians who are more technical and freer workers than farmers. Contradiction in feudal mode of production is replaced by the contradiction of capitalist system. The development of the means of production negates the contradiction of previous stage by creating new relation of production.⁶ As the development of the means of production creates new relation of production which eliminates problem of older relation of production, the resulting social change is regarded as progressive.

Another important point is that the development of ideas and development of consciousness of struggle are also by virtue of the social existence of men. Marx believes that it is not true that the consciousness of men determines his social existence. What is true is that social existence of men determines his consciousness.⁷ He argues that the political and social activity of men is caused by their material activity. What men produce as their social, religious and political ideas are the result of the conditions caused by the development of productive forces. For Marx, the production of our ideas is by virtue of our consciousness and consciousness is by virtue of the social existence. The social

⁴ Jon Elster, *An Introduction to Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 80-2

⁵ Etienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, translated, Chris Turner (London: Verso,2007), 82

⁶ *Ibid.*, 81-3

⁷ M.M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1950), 5

existence is our real life process which is not initiated by our abstract ideas but by our real activity. Our ideological reflexes are based upon our material activity. Our thought is the result of material life process that can be empirically verifiable. Moreover, all ideologies regarding life have no independent development. Material life of men undergoes development, along which ideas develops.⁸ What follows from this is that according to Marx, the development of human history is the dialectic of material conditions. As the result of this dialectic, human society develops and directed towards absolute social order.

Development of History and Socialism as Absolute Social Order

In order to describe the development of human history Marx focuses on four different mode of production in history of human material life. These are the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and modern capitalist mode of production. According to Marx these different kinds of forms of production constitute different kind of economic and social order.⁹ The stage of a particular economic order transforms into another order because of dialectic of material conditions.

The Asiatic mode of production is most primitive in the history of men. In this mode of production the property is shared by the members of tribe. The agriculture and craft are the main occupation. The division of labour in this mode of production is based on natural conditions like age, sex and weather. According to Marx, in this primitive nature of order there is no development of productive forces. Therefore social relations between men are limited and merely based on community.¹⁰ This communal order is gradually destroyed by the phenomenon of private property along with the rise of family as unit. The accumulation of land or wealth increases up to the point that the old economic order is eventually swept away.

The second stage of the history is ancient mode of production. The central feature of this stage is slavery. As the phenomenon of private property and accumulation of land in few hands gains traction, the phenomenon of forced labour blossoms. In this period the slaves serve for land owners. As in this period the slaves are more in numbers than free men, therefore they produce surplus production. Due to this, the phenomenon of trade arises. It produces the new class within wealthy class; merchants. The merchants do not produce any production but they become owner of production. Since they have control over production, therefore they become the central figure in the society. As the merchants have control over production, therefore they exploit the producers, using money as their weapon. Gradually the merchants and money become the criterion of nobility in society; disintegrates the earlier social order.¹¹ The role of money and exchange between land and money stimulate the strife between master and slave. Along with the change of material conditions, the abolition of slavery emerges and free labour begins to replace slaves.

⁸ David McLellan, *Karl Marx Selected Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 180-1

⁹ M.M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 46

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 50-1

The third stage of history is the 'Feudal' mode of production. The central feature of this stage is farming and handicrafts that are under actual ownership of the lord but with some sort of land ownership of farmers and workers. In this mode of production, the workers are allowed some control over products for their needs by engaging in farming and local industries. But they are bound to perform labour for the lord or the state and are bound to pay rent for possessing means of production.¹² In this form of production also, the merchants and money play their role. The merchants connect the products to the users and earn more and more capital. The wealthy persons charges exorbitant interest on loans to the workers in their bad circumstances. This increases the process of accumulation of capital in hands of few. With the development of material conditions the accumulation of capital finally strengthens the merchants and other wealthy persons who then break the feudal restriction and begin to turn their capital to industries and more border markets. At this stage the wage-labour properly begins. This is the beginning of capitalism.

The fourth stage of history is the modern capitalist mode of production. Accumulation of wealth in few hands, the turning of capital in the industries, the industrial production and wage- labour are important features of this mode of production. With the discoveries of new geographical regions, expansion of market and raise of demands of commodities; the capitalist mode of production begins to grow.¹³ One of the most crucial phenomena in the capitalist production is hiring of wage labour by the capitalists. The misery of farmers and their expropriation from lands provide favorable circumstances for wage labour. The phenomenon of wage labour separates the masses of workers from original means of production. On the one hand this separation liberates the wage earners from the restriction of feudal communal bonds and brings new circumstances for socialization, while on the other hand it traps them in new kind of bondage. This bondage consists of laws and regulations for bringing them in discipline that is necessary for wage system. In these circumstances the proletarian class is created which is ready to be hired and exploited by capitalist.¹⁴

In the capital mode of production when technical advancements are fully associated production, the phenomenon of accumulation of capital through surplus production further increases. It further exploits the proletarian class because of which the proletarian class organizes to safeguard its interest. Marx is of the view that process of socialization of workers, their sense of class affinity and centralization of capital in few hands create such conflicts, based on contradictory interest of proletarian and capitalists, which will inevitably produce the revolution for classless society.¹⁵ In other words internal contradiction of capitalism makes socialism inevitable.

Most of Marx's analysts explain that the accumulation of capital, which is the prime objective of capitalists, causes the ruthless competition within the capitalist class in order to acquire more wealth. The need for wealth accumulation demands an increase in sale. Increase in sale in turn requires increase in production, for which more workers are

¹² *Ibid.*,54

¹³ *Ibid.*,57

¹⁴ *Ibid.*,58

¹⁵ Tom Rockmore, *Marx after Marxism The philosophy of Karl Marx* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 90

needed. In order to attract workers, higher salaries are offered which pushes up the prices charged to buyers. But rising prices force workers to demand higher salaries. Obviously, this will not be in the interest of capitalists and thus tension will emerge between workers and capitalists which will be counterproductive for the capitalists. According to Marx, tension between capitalists and workers will lead to a proletarian social revolution, because the capitalist mode of production would not have the capability to resolve that tension. As a result of revolution, we will arrive at class-less society or socialism. This is known as Marx's prophecy of socialism.

We can find traces of Marx's idea of classless society in his political thought. Marx regards politics as movement parallel to development of means of production. John Elster better explains it. He says that in Marx's philosophy the political struggle proceeds along with the progress of relations of production. First it stabilizes dominant economic relations then it takes revolutionary form. John Elster writes;

When the new relations have come about, the political movement that brought them into being is solidified into a political system that contributes to keeping them in place. When performing this stabilizing function, politics is initially progressive but later becomes reactionary. It is progressive as long as the relations of production remain optimal for the development of the productive forces; it becomes reactionary when new, superior relations appear at the horizon.¹⁶

In this way the political movement, going parallel to development of material forces, takes reactionary form in capitalist mode of production and then leads to movement of communism that is socialist movement of classless society. Elster explicates Marx's position that in the capitalist state, when the capitalists have gained political power, the capital and government becomes one and creates an explosive social situation. In this situation the workers fight against economic exploitation and political power.¹⁷ According to Marx, because of further development of suitable economic conditions for communism and due to effects of exploitation of capitalism the communist revolution will arrive.¹⁸ It will ultimately lead to self-government of community rather than the government of some class. When there is self-government of community, there will neither be exploitative laws and nor the environment for accumulation of wealth in personal interest since there will be no property owned by individuals. Rather all property will be owned by community. As we have seen that Marx views the division of classes as determined by the distinction between owner of means of production or non-owner; it follows that there will be no class division in socialism. There will be no social conflicts once property is not owned.

It follows from foregoing analysis that in Marx's philosophy the culminating point is classless society which is some kind of absolute solution to social conflict. It can also be identified that the individuals as a whole cannot escape from the process of history. The

¹⁶ Jon Elster, *An Introduction to Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 141

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 146-7

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 160

social status of men, their thought and their political and social activities all are the result of material conditions. The material conditions constitute the dynamics of whole society. Therefore any individual action is the function of society that can only be intelligible in relation to social whole. In Marx, whole has significant importance over individuals. The role of individuals in history is determined as a class struggle for classless society. Marx believes that social progress leads to perfect social order. In this perspective he is an absolutist.

Popper's Critique of Marx's Absolutism

Karl Popper identifies that the absolutism of Marx has two basic presumptions. First is that there are absolute hidden laws in history which govern us. The second is that the social groups are just like organic unities which run according to specific laws. Popper argues that this approach is a historicist approach. His main thesis is that historicism is not rationally justifiable. He dismisses the Marx's thought because of its historicist form.

According to Popper historicism takes 'holism' for granted which entails that social wholes have their control over parts by means of some absolute laws. Popper identifies some of the important features of holism. In holism it is assumed that the absolute laws can be discovered if we acquire proper knowledge of fundamental nature or essence of whole. By the help of knowledge of essence of whole we can control or restructure its entire constituent. For holists, a social group can easily retain its character intact if it loses some of its member or if their members are replaced. This approach leads holists to believe that a whole is more than parts and has its own tradition and rite. Holists argue that if someone knows the knowledge of social whole then he can be able to know the present and future of social reality.¹⁹ Popper discovers this trend of thought in Marx's absolutism. He is of the view that Marx regards society as whole and maintains that a society has essence or fundamental nature. In order to describe the limitations of the absolutism Karl popper first focuses on holism. He is of the view that the idea of holism is flawed.

The limitations of Holism: Popper's case against Absolutism

Popper rejects holism on the basis of following reasons. (a) It is impossible to justify that there is a fundamental nature or unchanging essence of whole. We cannot grasp the same (b) The holists method is impossible method, either it is impossible to control all constituents of whole, for instance a society cannot be controlled on the basis of any abstract notion of knowledge.

According to Popper the idea that a whole is more than parts is based on presumption that a whole has a fundamental nature that belongs to totality of all the properties as well as relation to its constituent parts. He argues that such kind of concrete depiction of fundamental nature cannot be grasped because of the reason that whenever we describe whole, we must be selective. We can only see some aspects of a whole rather than all its relations. Popper further says that not one example of a scientific description of a whole

¹⁹ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of historicism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 16-7

has ever been cited which covers all aspects of a thing since in every case it would always be easy to point out aspects that have been neglected.²⁰ In this connection, Popper holds that the term holism is ambiguous. He writes that,

The word whole as used by holists is ambiguous. In one sense it is taken as a totality of all the properties or aspects of a thing, and especially of all the relations holding between its constituent parts. This cannot be studied scientifically. In another sense it denotes certain special properties or aspects of thing in question that makes it appear an organized structure rather than a mere heap. Scientific study of such wholes is possible.²¹

What Popper wants to conclude is that all knowledge whether intuitive or discursive, comprises of abstract notions. We can never grasp the concrete structure of whole. We cannot justify that there is a fundamental nature of a whole and whole is more than parts. It is not sound to believe that there are absolute laws related to wholes.

The second reason due to which Popper dismisses holism is that holists not only plan to study the whole, for example, a society, by an impossible method but also plan to control and reconstruct it as a whole. For Popper, it is an impossible task. His argument is that holists presume that control is too simple while because of possibility of infinite relations between constituents of whole, the control of whole is logically impossible. For instance, when a sociological factor is controlled then in the result of this control other relations or factors emerge. If we control these new relations then they will cause the emergence of the other new factors. Thus it may lead to infinite regress.

Both of above criticism regarding holism lead Popper to strengthen the case against absolutism of Marx. He thinks that his social and political thought involves such problems. According to Popper it is mistaken to believe in essence or fundamental nature of social reality. Marx's historicism that there are hidden social laws which govern us is also unjustifiable. Moreover Marx's plan to control or reconstruct the whole of society is also mistaken. Popper argues that because of mistaken conception of historicism and holism the philosophy of Marx involves serious weaknesses.

Weaknesses of Marx's thought: Popper's Case against Marx

Popper interprets Marx's historical materialism as the law of sociological determinism and economic historicism.²² According to Popper, on the basis of the law of historical materialism Marx predicts that an ideal social condition or socialism will be realized. We have seen that in Marx's system a particular period of economic development corresponds to a particular social system and a historical period is best characterized by its social system of classes. Popper argues that one of the most important consequences of Marx's thought is that the social system in Marx philosophy resembles a vast machine in which individuals are caught and crushed. It works blindly. Thus, the social engineering becomes impossible and useless in Marx's system and we cannot impose our interests

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79

²¹ *Ibid.*, 76

²² Karl Popper, *Open Society and its Enemies part 2* (London: Routledge, 1966), 100-4

upon the social system. The system forces upon us what we are led to believe to be our interests.²³ It is completely deterministic in Popper's view

In order to criticize Marx, Popper analyzes various features of Marx's sociological determinism and economic historicism. Popper is of the view that Marx's dialectical materialism or economicism is unacceptable. He considers the thesis that social development depends upon physical means of production as false. For Popper, ideas that constitute our knowledge are more fundamental than material means. Popper explicates that economic system and technologies can be built up if we have knowledge. If machineries and physical means of production are there in a savage society then they cannot be put to use because of lack of knowledge.²⁴ Popper concludes that our knowledge does not depend upon material means.

We have seen that Marx's economicism maintains that no change in society is possible without change of means of production. Popper criticizes this thesis. He holds that if this is the case then legal or political activity is of no use. Popper rejects Marx's view by giving the example of Russia. Change in Russia was not in accordance with economicism; the Russian revolution is due to Marx's idea that "workers of all countries should unite for struggle".²⁵ It was a political idea. This means that ideas, which constitute our knowledge, are more fundamental than the more complex material means; they can change society. This shows that domination of economic reality in society as a hidden law is wrong. Popper opposes economicism as a hidden law of history. He is not against the study of society from the point of view economics. According to him, economic analysis of the society is one of the many ways of analyzing society. For him it is true that all social studies, whether institutional or historical may profit, if they are carried out with an eye to the economic condition of society. But to believe that all social dynamics are the result of material means necessarily is not true.²⁶

As far as Marx's idea of class struggle between specific classes is concerned Popper does not satisfy with it. We have seen that Marx believes that all history is history of struggle between specific classes. For him, the conflict between the classes of exploiters and exploited is fundamental in social dynamics. Popper rejects this idea. He argues that there may be dissension within the classes e.g., struggle can be seen within the ruling class, between Popes and emperors.²⁷ Popper thinks that the concept of social conflicts is important for studying the history but he does not consider that there is a specific kind of conflict like the conflict between exploiters and exploited as a necessary principle of social dynamics. Popper explicates that it should not be considered as the hidden law.

Another point that Popper raises here is that if the class struggle is taken as generalized rule of history, then, it would keep us away from real issues or problems. Popper writes,

²³ *Ibid.*, 113

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107-8

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 108

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 107

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 116

One of the dangers of Marx's formula is that if it is taken too seriously, it misleads Marxists into interpreting all political conflicts as struggle between exploiters and exploited (or else as attempts to 'cover up' the real issue, the underlying class conflict). As a consequence there were Marxists, especially in Germany, who interpreted a war such as the First World War as one between revolutionary or 'have-not' Central Power and an alliance of conservatives or 'have' countries- a kind of interpretation which might be used to excuse any aggression.²⁸

What Popper wants to explain is that Marx's concept of class struggle may lead us to interpret that social dynamics is necessarily violent.

The salient feature of Marx's philosophy is his prophecy of socialism. We have seen how Marx holds that misery of working class will ultimately lead to proletarian social revolution. Popper rejects this view. He agrees with Marx that due to capitalism wealth will be concentrated in the hand of few and misery of working class would increase tremendously. He disagrees with Marx that this misery cannot be overcome in capitalist mode of production. Popper maintains that there are many ways for improving the situation. Social insurance, system of income tax for social security and other legislation for wellbeing of industrial workers by modern capitalist states are clear cut examples in this vein.²⁹

Another point that Popper raises is that Marx presupposes that there are only two classes in capitalist society, bourgeoisie and proletariat. We have seen that how Marx conceives that a unified bourgeoisie class necessarily emerges out in capitalist mode of production. Popper does not agree with this. He maintains that it is possible that rural middle class may not disappear into opponent of capitalist class. Popper finds that because of difference between form of life of rural and urban workers the unified struggle is hardly possible. The consciousness of rural and urban workers is usually different. Thus, Marx's idea of class unification and unified struggle against capitalist class is a defective idea.³⁰

Marx asserts that due to social revolution we will acquire emancipation from class oppression. This revolution will ultimately result in a classless society. Popper rejects this idea of classless society. He argues that new classes can come up after proletarian victory from within them. For example, class of revolutionary leaders could emerge as the ruling class.³¹ What Popper wants to establish here is that even though a unified struggle against capitalist becomes successful, the hope of classless society would not be possible. He points out that classes are formed because of multiple interest rather than specific kind of interest upon, as suggested by Marx.

On the issue of limitations of Marx's prophecy of Socialism Popper has one more objection regarding the rational and scientific nature of idea of predictions. He is of the view that the trend of predictions in sociology is due to the influence of natural sciences

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 140-1

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 147

³¹ *Ibid.*, 138

upon it. But the trend of prediction in traditional sociology misunderstands the method of natural sciences. Popper thinks nature of scientific prediction is misunderstood by many sociologists who claim that their sociological theories are scientific. He says that scientific law (laws of physics) must have conditions and limit but historicist's doctrines do not have. In science the predictions are not holistic. In science predictions are limited to particular part or a particular mechanism. Predictions in physics can be regarded as speculations based on some particulars conditions; they have some specific limitations. Holists make prediction about whole, for instance about whole social structure. Historicist's predictions are absolute; they have no limits and therefore cannot be regarded as scientific. They are mere 'prophecies'.³²

According to Popper a scientific law deals with a particular phenomenon or situation. Popper argues that in a society there are different social phenomena. Therefore, laws relating to society should be associated their respective phenomena. A single law relating to all phenomena is merely a sweeping hypothesis based on absolute prophecy. It is epistemologically impossible. Popper holds that predictions in sociology can only be accepted if they can be tested. Prediction in absolute sense cannot be accepted because they cannot be tested due to their holistic nature. Since in Marxism, the prediction of socialism is about the whole society which has different kinds of phenomenon having different conditions; therefore this prediction is not scientifically true. Popper has reservations that if we over emphasize upon truth of prediction of socialism then it begets the anti-humanitarian consequences. He contends that Marx's Historicism has such anti-humanitarian consequences.

Popper thinks that in Marx's conception of class struggle, there is always a possibility of civil war. There is a danger of treating men means for some end. Popper regards it ethically unjustifiable. Popper is of the view that prophecy of socialism promotes the violent revolutionary politics. Prophecy of socialism is basically prophecy of violent revolution in practical politics. Popper considers this to be the most harmful element in Marxism.³³ Popper wants to reject prophecies of violence. For him prophecy of any social revolution that based upon violent politics ultimately promotes an attitude that justifies use of power in politics; it is inhuman. What Popper wants to make clear is that any doctrine that involves a thought that at certain stage of social dynamics, the social reforms necessitate a violent political revolution is anti-humanitarian. He thinks that Marx's thought involves such spirit. For Popper social reformation should be piecemeal and peaceful.

Conclusions

What follows from foregoing discussion is that Popper rejects Marx's absolutism for following reasons.

(a) Marx's absolutism is not rationally justifiable. Marx approach is a historicist approach. Historicist approach has two basic presumptions. First is that there are absolute

³² Karl Popper, *The Poverty of historicism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 118 & 128

³³ Karl Popper, *Open Society and its Enemies part 2* (London: Routledge, 1966), 151

hidden laws in history which govern us. The second is that the social groups are just like organic unities which run according to specific laws. Popper argues that historicist approach is not cogent. We cannot justify that there is a fundamental nature of a whole which runs according to absolute laws. Popper maintains that all knowledge whether intuitive or discursive, comprises of abstract notions. We can never grasp the concrete structure of whole. He dismisses the Marx's absolutism because of its historicist form.

(b) Marx's absolutism ultimately leads him to sociological determinism and economical historicism. Popper argues that in Marx's system we cannot impose our interests upon the social system. The system forces upon us. It is not reasonable to believe that social development depends upon physical means of production. For Popper, ideas that constitute our knowledge are more fundamental than material means. Economic system and technologies can be built up if we have knowledge. If machineries and physical means of production are there in a savage society then they cannot be put to use because of lack of knowledge. Popper concludes that our knowledge does not depend upon material means.

(c) Marx's absolutism has anti humanitarian consequences. The main objection of Popper against the absolutism is that it promotes such political theories those believe in 'ultimate end', whereas there is no scientific and objective criterion to determine ultimate end. Consequently, absolutism ultimately encourages a specific political agenda. Marx's absolutism promotes the idea of 'violent revolution' whose consequences are anti-humanitarian. Popper maintains that Marx's concept of class struggle may lead us to interpret that social dynamics is necessarily violent. Popper thinks that in Marx's conception of class struggle for an ultimate stage of socialism, there is always a possibility of civil war. There is a danger of treating men means for some end. Popper regards it ethically unjustifiable.