HISTORICISM AND ITS CRITICS: THE CASE OF KARL MARX

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Abstract

The article investigates Karl Marx’s theory of history in the light of arguments made by Karl Popper, Isaiah Berlin and Friedrich Hayek. It investigates the concepts of historicism and determinism. Firstly, historicism is defined as a thinking which maintains that human history progresses according to certain laws, which can be discerned. Secondly, determinism is viewed as the belief that history has a predetermined ending, derivable from these laws. The article then applies the two concepts to Marx’s writings. The article argues that Marx’s theory of history can be understood in two ways: one centered on the struggle of classes, the other on development of productive forces. However both can be subsumed under a similar model. Finally, Marx’s theory of history is both historicist and deterministic.

Keywords: historicism, theory, classes, society.

1. Introduction

Within the history of political thought, authors have sought for the origins of the philosophical doctrines which lay at the basis of the two totalitarian political regimes of the XXth century: Nazi Germany and Stalinist USSR. Looking to condemn totalitarianism, scholars have first tried to understand it. While historians have sought for social and political causes, political scientists have explained mechanisms of terror and mobilization, intellectual historians have looked for the origins of the ideas.

After the end of the Second World War, Karl Popper published two books: The Open Society and Its Enemies and Poverty of Historicism. Popper argued that the origins of totalitarian political philosophy lay in a type of thinking branded historicism. According to him, a philosophy which seeks to find the inexorable
laws of history and to predict its end necessarily leads to a totalitarian political action. This excludes the interests of the wide mass of individuals and justifies the use of unlimited power in order to attain the philosophically determined historical goal. Popper’s thoughts were later echoed by Isaiah Berlin and Friedrich von Hayek. Moreover, Popper focused his attention on three philosophers: Plato, G.W. F. Hegel and Karl Marx. He claimed that these three writers are those crucially responsible for the development of historicist, totalitarian ideas.

However, Popper, Berlin and Hayek were severely criticized by other authors. Firstly, the critical connection between historicism and totalitarianism has been challenged. Secondly, Popper, Berlin and Hayek have been attacked as offering a very strong and mistaken reading of the philosophers under investigation. They have been accused of twisting the evidence in the heat of the moment, in order to suit their goal of defending liberal democracy. As the works of the anti-historicists were written during or shortly after the Second World War, this charge carries certain plausibility. Therefore, a deeper investigation of Popper’s, Berlin’s and Hayek’s argument seems necessary. This article will not look into the first charge: the connection between historicism and a totalitarian political philosophy. However, it will pursue the second argument against Popper, Berlin and Hayek: that they misread one of the key political thinkers of the XIXth century.

In the light of the arguments formulated by Popper, Berlin and Hayek, the article will investigate Karl Marx’s philosophy of history. The main questions which the article will answer are: Is Marx’s conception of history a form of historicism? What are the mechanisms by which history proceeds, in his view? Does Marx’s conception lead to an unavoidable end? In order to respond to these questions, the article will make reference to such crucial Marxist texts as The Manifesto of the Communist Party and the Capital. However, the analysis of the primary evidence will not suffice when interpreting the texts. Marx has left an immense legacy and his often ambiguous texts are open to different interpretations. Two main understandings of the Marxist theory of history will be discussed in the article: one having class
struggle and the other relying on the development of productive forces as the main engine of history.

The article will argue that the two types of theory of history offered by Marx are essentially similar and that they both can be subsumed under a single model: the “birth-pang” model. Both rely on an argument that each stage of history carries in itself the seeds of its own destruction. These seeds develop at once with the “host” and then complete the cycle by eliminating the previous historical period in a violent overthrow. Moreover, the final revolution is unavoidable. Therefore, Marx’s conception of history, in both its forms is both historicist (relies on the existence of historical laws) and determinist (leads to an unavoidable end).

Karl Marx’s works have been selected for analysis because of both their importance and their ambiguity. Firstly, Marx has founded a tradition of thinking. His works have been interpreted and re-interpreted by both philosophers and politicians. Authors such as Antonio Gramsci, Gyorgy Lukacs, Ralph Dahrendorf, G.A. Cohen and John Elster have offered philosophical renditions of Marx’s ideas. Finally, Popper himself dedicates half of the second volume of The Open Society and Its Enemies to Marx. However, all these interpretations differ to the greatest possible extent. Some read Marx as a prophet of destruction, others as one who simply analyzed the situation of industrial workers. Because of these ambiguities, Marx’s writings have special place in the discussion on historicism.

The article will proceed by first defining historicism and determinism, as they have been explained by Karl Popper, Isaiah Berlin and Friedrich Hayek. Moreover, the main arguments against such a thinking that the three philosophers have proffered will be reviewed. Then, the article will move to discussing Marx’s philosophy and analyzing it in the framework of historicism and determinism. Finally, the article will conclude that Marx’s philosophy of history is both historicist and deterministic.
2. Historicism and Determinism

Karl Popper introduced the concept of historicism when trying to give a name to the doctrine he intended to attack. His definition still remains the most comprehensive one, which other authors follow in their work. According to Popper, historicism is an approach to the social sciences which assumes that “historical prediction is their primary aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the 'rhythms' or the 'patterns', the 'laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history”\(^1\). Popper also defines historicism in *The Open society and Its Enemies*, claiming that there exist certain philosophical doctrines which aim at large-scale historical prediction.\(^2\)

Determinism can be defined as the belief that history has a predetermined ending which will occur due to the operation of these above-mentioned laws. Moreover, in the rendition of Popper, Hayek and Berlin, determinism is not understood in a weak sense. In other words, history does not only have a predetermined ending which people cannot escape, but this ending also represents the goal of history. This “end of history” is not merely accidental: it is the supreme state of humanity. All the previous stages are not simply inadvertent; they are stepping stones towards reaching that goal. Moreover, this ending is universal: it is supposed to occur for the whole of humanity and to last forever. In other words, it is similar to a Christian “Kingdom of God”.

In *The Open society and Its Enemies*, when analyzing the theory of Heraclitus, Popper establishes the connection between historicism and determinism: historicism implies determinism. Popper shows how Heraclitus believed not only that there are certain laws of change in history, but also that they are immutable. In Popper’s rendering of Heraclitus, everything is change and all change is inexorable decay.\(^3\) Moving to Plato’s writings, Popper further makes the claim that historicism implies

\(^3\) Karl Popper, *The Open society and Its Enemies*, 16.
determinism. Popper describes Plato as having been aware of the fact that his belief in inexorable laws of change would lead him to supporting the idea that history has a predetermined ending. Plato, however, advocates that by arresting change there is a way to block decay.  

Finally, in probably one of the most clear chapters of *The Open society and Its Enemies*, Popper argues that historicists are interested in finding out the “true purpose” of an institution, a purpose revealed by its history and to force that institution along what is its unalterable path.

Moreover, Popper does not mince his words when stating his belief in the connection between totalitarianism and historicism. When referring to Hegel’s philosophy and its historicism, Popper directly claims that there is a strong connection between Hegelian philosophy and left-wing and right wing extremism. Popper argues that Hegel invented a “historicist scheme” in which nations were the main actors on the stage of history. From this, there is just one step towards totalitarianism and it is taken by both the left and the right. The left wing replaces the nation with class while the right wing replaces it with race, as the main actor in history. Further on, Popper affirms that modern totalitarianism is deeply indebted to Hegel and that Hegel represents the “missing link” between totalitarianism and Plato.

Similarly, Isaiah Berlin maintains that certain philosophical conceptions claim to find the sources of historical events in causes largely outside the actions of individuals. He avers that, by supporting an outlook that there are certain discernible patterns in history, one refuses the notion of individual responsibility. Berlin charges the historicists with claiming that individuals who do not act according to their predetermined interests are simply blind and cannot see the underlying pattern according to which history proceeds. Therefore, individual freedom is only an illusion

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5  Karl Popper, *The Open society and Its Enemies*, 27.  
8  Berlin, “Historical Inevitability”, 55.
caused by lack of knowledge. Thus, on the historicist account, the more we know, the more we realize how un-free our wills truly are. ⁹ In a historicist view of the world, Berlin claims that notions of individual responsibility and guilt are meaningless. ¹⁰ What is left for the individual, is according to Berlin’s reading of the historicists, nothing more than to submit to the underlying patterns. Otherwise, when the forces of history act, the individual will be on the losing side of history. ¹¹ The individuals who are aware of these forces and who can see them most clearly are humanity’s natural leaders.¹²

Finally, F.A. Hayek argues that there is a “scientistic” view of history which is looking for a theory of history. In its attempts, it seeks to divide history into stages or phases. Moreover, it relies in its analysis on certain “wholes” (theoretical constructs which are made up of organically linked individuals-armies, governments) which are the actors of these laws.¹³ Hayek argues that such a view of history is essentially anti-individualistic: it does not purport to understand “wholes” by looking at the individuals that make them up and at the relations between them. Conversely, historicism claims to understand individuals by looking at the larger units which they compose.¹⁴ Finally, Hayek blames philosophers such as Marx or Hegel for not trying to build an empirical science and, through theory, to construct the “wholes” on which human existence is based. Rather, Hayek claims, these philosophers have tried to grasp the laws of history by looking at the actions of the “wholes”, which they believe they can directly apprehend.¹⁵

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⁹ Berlin, “Historical Inevitability”, 58.
¹⁴ Hayek, The counter-revolution of science, 129.
¹⁵ Hayek, The counter-revolution of science, 130.
3. Karl Marx’s theories of history-classes and productive forces

3.1. Class struggle

At least two contending interpretations of how Marx views the proceeding of history have been offered. The first is based on the struggle of classes. The second gives center stage to development and the fettering of the productive forces. Both of them are supported by textual evidence and both of them have been developed and explicated by other authors. However, what both of these interpretations have in common is the fact that the transition from one historical stage to another is governed by laws which make these transitions inevitable once certain conditions have been reached. Moreover, in both renditions, one historical period is parasitic on its predecessor and eventually brings its overthrow. Finally, in both models, violent changes are necessary in the transition from one stage to another.

Karl Marx begins his most famous and simplest work with the following unequivocal statement: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”16 While heavily relying on the concept of class, Marx never explained what he intended to mean by it. Two attempts to elaborate on the notion will be discussed below. Firstly, G.A. Cohen constructs the meaning of class to be a “set of men bound by similar production relations”17. Cohen argues that a person’s class position is given by the person’s “objective placement in the network of property relations”18. In other words, Cohen defines classes by taking as reference the relations of production and people’s placement within them. This position is what determines a person’s behavior

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18  Cohen, Karl Marx’s theory of history : a defence , 73
in the market: some will have to sell labor power to survive; others will be able to buy, while some will neither buy nor sell.\textsuperscript{19} Jon Elster improves upon Cohen’s interpretation of Marx and comes with a more elaborate vision. In Elster’s view, class position is “endowment-necessitated behavior”.\textsuperscript{20} Elster gives a coherent explanation to what Cohen had already hinted at before: a class is a group of people who have to behave in a similar fashion in the process of obtaining the necessary means of survival. People who compose a class possess goods or means of production which place them in a similar position in the market. Elster’s rendition of the classes avoids two main problems in the interpretation of Marx. Firstly, if classes are defined according to the simple ownership of means of production, then some absurd results might come out. For example, one might own a sewing machine, which can be a means of production, while another may own a ring made of gold of the same value as the sewing machine. However, this golden ring is not a means of production, as it cannot be used in creating new products. Thus, according to an interpretation of the concept of class relying on the ownership of means of production, the two owners would belong to different classes. However, since neither the sewing machine can sustain a small business or the golden ring provide enough resources for starting one, both owners are in a situation to sell their labor power.\textsuperscript{21}

The second interpretation of the concept of class which Elster manages to avoid is that of basing class definitions on the value of the possessions which one owns.\textsuperscript{22} It is irrelevant for the argument if within the same class there are differences in endowments, as long as these endowments impose the same behavior on individuals. While in the previous example, the owner of the sewing machine and that of the golden ring possessed things of similar value, another example would be illustrative for

\textsuperscript{19} Cohen, Karl Marx's theory of history : a defence , 72
\textsuperscript{21} For the example on which this argument is based see, Cohen, Karl Marx's theory of history : a defence, 71
\textsuperscript{22} Elster, Making sense of Marx , 322
the second argument. Let us imagine a comparison between the owner of two golden rings and one who possesses none. One could arbitrarily decide that there is some kind of difference between those that own property of certain value and those who don’t. For example, if one golden ring cost $1000 and the limit between petty bourgeois and proletariat was set at $1500, then the owner of the two golden rings would pass the threshold while the other would not. However, this makes little difference considering that the value of the two golden rings would not allow their owner to start a business in which to employ labor. As much as the one who does not own anything, the owner of the two gold rings has to sell labor on the market.

The first strand in Marxist theory of history is its class-centered form. Its textual base can mostly be found in the *Communist Manifesto*. This work gives the most detailed account of how classes evolve through history. The first part of the first chapter of the *Communist Manifesto* is dedicated to the detailed description of the rise of the bourgeoisie. Still during Medieval times, the bourgeoisie emerged from the free dwellers of cities, which were able to maintain their privileges in front of the feudal relations of production. Finally, when the bourgeoisie burst into the world, it transformed the world as it was known:

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. 23

23 Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party
The quoted passage sketches the development from feudalism to capitalism. In contrast to the theory of productive forces which will be outlined below, the class-centered form of the theory gives central place to two main contenders: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The transition from feudalism to capitalism is, as the passage shows, less of a transition from manufacture to industry but more a change of power between nobility and bourgeoisie. Each of these two classes has its own culture, which it imposes upon the world when conquering power. While the feudal nobility based its rule on “religious fervor” and “chivalrous enthusiasm”, the ideology of the free market legitimates the rule of the bourgeoisie. However, the free market, while being the instrument which allows the bourgeoisie to dominate the world is also its undoing:

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons — the modern working class — the proletarians.24

The constant development of the industrial capacity of society creates more and more the conditions under which a large part of the population loses all its possessions. These men and women have nothing to live on without selling their labor power. Because of the competition with large scale industry, those who had formerly owned some kind of means of production are forced to sell them and live by becoming employed in the large factories. However, while the economic development creates more and more proletarians, it makes them more and more alienated from the product of their work. Moreover, it also makes them poorer and poorer, a process known as the “immiseration of the proletariat”25.

On the other hand, the development of modern industry creates the conditions for the forging of proletarian unity:

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24 Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party
Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes.26

According to Marx, the phase before the revolution is characterized by two facts: more and more cooperation and communication between workers and a greater development of the awareness of the proletariat. Together, proletarians put up a struggle against the bourgeoisie. Moreover, they realize the even if they work hard, as the rhetoric of the bourgeoisie claims, they will never end up as bourgeois themselves. With this realization, the proletarians become accustomed to the idea that their own situation is not their own fault, but is a consequence of class relations. Therefore, these have to be abolished completely.27 Eventually, these pressures come to the boiling point:

In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.28

The revolution takes place and the state is seized by the proletarians. However, rather than ruling as a new bourgeoisie, the proletariat abolishes all class distinctions known before. The proletariat, because it is the “universal” class, is more interested in simply abolishing the difference between the few and the many. Thus, according to the interpreters of Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat is meant only as a temporary form of rule to be held only until the revolution is secure. Finally, once the power of the proletariat is secure, the state with its courts,

26 Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party
28 Marx, The Manifesto of the Communist Party
police and army has no reason to exist. The state withers away and the proletariat abolishes itself as a class.\textsuperscript{29}

3.2. Productive forces

The second and more elaborate strand of Marxism which Elster identifies looks at the development of the productive forces as the key to historical transition. Rather than viewing history as a transition from one ruling class to another, the productive-forces theory focuses on economic developments from one age to another. A new age is not determined by the class position of its rulers, but rather by the organization of the process of production. Transition between ages occurs when a certain type of relations of production fetter the development of the productive forces and a new organization is needed in order for these to continue developing.

Since the concept of productive forces is vague, its definition had to be elaborated by the exegetes of Marx. Cohen explicates the term of productive forces by arguing that something is a productive force if control over it contributes to establishing the position of the controller in the “economic structure of the society.” Furthermore, in order to be a productive force, something must be able to develop throughout history, be in a condition to be fettered and explain, together with similar things, the economic structure of society.\textsuperscript{30} Finally, Cohen includes in his catalogue of productive forces such exemplars as means of production, raw materials, spaces and labor power.\textsuperscript{31} However, Elster refuses this simple definition and argues that Marx’s theory is not coherent when it comes to defining what productive forces actually are. He uses the case of science, an uncontroversial productive force according to Marx, but not easily fitting Cohen’s criteria and the case of population to attack Cohen’s classification. Elster looks at Marx’s ambiguous statements of population, which sometimes is classified as a productive force and sometimes not.

\textsuperscript{29} Ball, “History: critique and irony”, 139.
\textsuperscript{30} Cohen, Karl Marx’s theory of history: a defence, 41.
\textsuperscript{31} Cohen, Karl Marx’s theory of history: a defence, 55.
This is done in order to show the impossibility to define productive forces as neatly as Cohen desires.\(^{32}\)

However, while the concept of productive forces is difficult to explain, what makes productive forces so crucial is the fact that they determine relations of production. Both Cohen and Elster take pains to explain this second concept and to differentiate it from the productive forces. While productive forces are material, relations of productions occur between other entities. Thus, each relation of production needs at least two terms: either two persons or one person and a productive force. Therefore, relations of production include such situations as ownership or control, slavery, mastery, hiring and being employed.\(^{33}\) Moreover, in an improvement of Cohen’s criteria of definition of relations of production, Elster also introduces the nature of the non-productive owners as a principle of differentiation. This is done in order to differentiate between serfdom and the Asiatic mode of production, two exemplars of modes of production mentioned by Marx. While in serfdom the non-productive owners of means of production are the nobility, in the Asiatic mode of production, these are the state bureaucracy.\(^{34}\)

Finally, in the productive forces-centered interpretation of Marx, the key determinant of the change between historical periods is the interaction between productive forces and relations of production:

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – 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

\(^{32}\) Elster, Making sense of Marx, 253
\(^{33}\) Cohen, Karl Marx’s theory of history: a defence, 35.
\(^{34}\) Elster, Making sense of Marx, 258
economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.  

Thus, at the same time, productive forces determine the relations of production ("the windmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam mill, society with the industrial capitalist"), and their development is affected by the existing relations. In the beginning of a new age, the newly developed relations of production permit the development of the productive forces. However, there comes a time when the maximum rate of development of productive forces possible under a certain arrangement of relations of production is reached. From now on, relations of production are fetters to the further development of productive forces.

Once this point is reached, a revolution occurs and new relations of production are established. The following passage describes the transition from capitalism to communism:

The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.

Thus, as the text suggests, there comes a point in which the rate of expansion of productive forces is not anymore permissible by the current economic organization. At that point, the relations of production have to be overturned. The most important part of the argument, the way the text describes the overthrowing, is that it is a violent process. There is no gradual transition from the


capitalist mode of production to communism. The passage’s apocalyptic tone and especially the last two sentences make it clear that expropriation has to occur. Moreover, the metaphor of a bursting integument leaves little to be expected when it comes to the methods by which this will be done.

Another argument for Marx’s belief in the inevitability of the communist revolution and his unilinear view of history is his view that historical questions can only be raised when the answer is also within reach. Inquiries into overcoming capitalism can only emerge when a way of doing is already in sight. Thus, his own theory could not have emerged if the social organization under which he lives cannot be terminated. An end of capitalist society is visible and inevitable.

As Elster points out, in order for the transition to happen, there must be an adequate development of the productive forces under capitalism. The capitalist relations of production will not simply go away when some desire. There has to be a building pressure on them and sufficient development such as after the transition to communism, the way that the productive forces will be put to use will be more efficient than under capitalism. If the revolution is premature (the question of ending capitalism is raised before the means for it are available) several unpleasant and unforeseen circumstances might arise. The new communist society might never overtake capitalism in the development of its productive forces and might perpetually lag behind. Or, alternatively, even if the new communist society will eventually overtake capitalism, it might not do it immediately.  

3.3 The “birth-pang” model

The analysis of the two accounts of the historical process described by Marx has to take into account two main factors: the dramatis personae, or the agents who do the actions and the processes by which these agents interact. At a close inspection of the two versions of the Marxist philosophy of history, it can be seen that while the agents are different, the processes are extremely similar. The main agents of the class-centered theory

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38 Elster, Making sense of Marx, 290-291
are groups of people while the agent of the productive-forces interpretation is technology. While the first is easier to comprehend because the concept of class can be easily expounded, the second needs much more articulation. However, after serious investigation, it comes out that technological development can provide as good a basis for historical progress as the struggle between poor and rich.

The most important finding which one notices by the comparison of the two theories is their striking similarities. In both, history proceeds according to what could be termed, to use Marx’s own metaphor, a “birth-pang” model. In both of them, history is structured in several stages, according to the social or economic organization of the time. In the beginning, one social and economic system emerges. However, from the very start, this system carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. For example, feudalism, because of serfdom, makes people run away from villages into towns. Gradually, towns develop and obtain protection against lords. The bourgeoisie is thus born. However, from the very moment of the bourgeois take over of power, its organization of the economy has the seeds of its own destruction planted inside. The bourgeoisie brings with it its “grave-diggers.” Alternatively, the process has a similar development in the productive forces-centered interpretation. Inside capitalism, there is a constant increase of surplus and technological innovation. However, this rate of technological innovation eventually cannot be maintained by capitalism. Other relations of productions are needed.

While each historical period develops, inside it, a future one also grows. In the beginning, the present period is strong and its successor is weak. However, one’s growth also triggers the growth of the other. In the early stages, this is not a problem, because the present mode of production can ensure prosperity and peace. But, there comes a certain moment in which growth stops, while the structural conditions for the transition to the next stage take a more clear shape. The disappearance of the present form of social organization becomes more and more obvious. Towards the end, the situation reaches a crisis point, in which social and/or economic problems lead to enough human suffering
that there are strong demands for radical change. Then, in a process similar to birth, the new historical period bursts into the scene by the violent overthrow of the previous form of social organization. The “birth-pangs” of history represent the upheaval by which one period succeeds its predecessor. The predecessor is consumed and exits the historical scene. Eventually, the process repeats itself until the last stage, communism, is reached.

4. Conclusion

When judged according to the criteria of historicism and determinism, established by Popper, Berlin and Hayek, it can concluded that Marx’s conception of history is both historicist and determinist. He begins with the assertion that the important facts about human life can be found in the economic organization. The laws which govern the development of the human society are deeply embedded in the very way in which it organizes itself. The organization of the economy develops according to law-like regularities. Productive forces change, and with them do change the relations of production. Relations of production determine the organization of society. When the productive forces have changed enough, relations of production also have to change, taking the legal and moral framework along with them. Alternatively, classes develop. The very development of classes leads to an inexorable conflict between those who members of different classes. Some people exploit the labor or other people. However, the exploited organize and begin to act politically. Finally, the exploited classes take over power from their exploiters. These are, according to Marx, the laws of progress which govern the entire human history.

Eventually, all these transformations have to end somehow. This is the reason why Marx’s theory can be said to be determinist. In both of its accounts, the end is settled, derivable from the observation of the natural laws of historical progress. Moreover, Marx postulates his findings with a claim of universality. The revolution that he envisions will occur all over the world, beginning from the most industrialized countries. Finally, after the proletarian revolution, history will stop moving forward. The
state, repression and need will wither away and the communist world will envelop the globe.

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