

	Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems Issue 11, Vol. 8, 2025	
Title of Research Article		
The Philosophy of Revolution in Karl Marx: Historical Materialism, Class Struggle, and the “Transformation from Capitalism to Socialism”		
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	Issue web link https://imcra-az.org/archive/385-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-11-vol-8-2025.html	
Keywords	Karl Marx; Revolution; Capitalism; Socialism; Historical Materialism; Class Struggle.	
Abstract The nineteenth century was marked by profound social and political upheavals that reshaped the European intellectual and economic landscape. The revolutionary wave of 1848, initially framed as a democratic struggle, rapidly escalated into a confrontation between antagonistic social forces: workers and capitalists, liberals and socialists, conservatives and reformists. Within this historical conjuncture, and alongside the Industrial Revolution, Karl Marx formulated a philosophy of revolution grounded in historical materialism. He argued that history is governed by objective social laws—laws which, independent of individual will, propel society toward transformation. Central to his thought is the theory of class struggle, where society increasingly polarizes into two irreconcilable camps: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This study revisits Marx’s conceptualization of revolution as both a historical necessity and a scientific interpretation of social change. By analyzing the interplay of capitalism and socialism within Marx’s framework, it underscores how proletarian uprisings emerge not as accidental events but as structurally determined outcomes of capitalist contradictions. The paper concludes that Marx’s philosophy of revolution continues to resonate in contemporary debates on social justice, inequality, and systemic transformation.		
Citation. Douza M. (2025). The Philosophy of Revolution in Karl Marx: Historical Materialism, Class Struggle, and the Transformation from Capitalism to Socialism. <i>Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems</i> , 8(11), 587–591. https://doi.org/10.56352/sei/8.11.46		
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Received: 11.01.2025	Accepted: 01.07.2025	Published: 07.09.2025 (available online)

Actuality of the Study

The contemporary relevance of Karl Marx’s philosophy of revolution extends far beyond its nineteenth-century origins. In an era characterized by widening social inequalities, recurring economic crises, and global debates

on labor precarity, Marx's analytical framework provides enduring insights into the structural contradictions of capitalism. His emphasis on the inevitability of class struggle as a catalyst for societal transformation remains pertinent in analyzing both historical and modern revolutionary movements. Moreover, the transition from capitalism to socialism—conceptualized as a radical restructuring of economic and social relations—continues to inform political theory, critical sociology, and debates on post-capitalist futures. The study thus contributes to current academic and intellectual discourses by situating Marx's revolutionary thought within ongoing global challenges.

Introduction

Karl Marx was not mistaken in declaring that “revolutions are the locomotives of history.” Human history is, in many respects, a history of revolutions. Revolutions have consistently dissolved outdated systems and propelled progress, fostering new social, economic, and political structures. Within the theory of historical materialism, humanity continuously reshapes itself through contradictions across historical stages (Marx, 1859/1977).

Marx drew upon French socialist traditions to frame society as being in perpetual crisis, where the oppressed strive to dismantle the chains of domination (Engels, 1845/1975). For Marx, humanity's enduring task is revolution: “Society as a whole is splitting into two great hostile camps, directly confronting each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx & Engels, 1848/2012, p. 14). This study explores Marx's philosophy of revolution by analyzing the dialectical struggle between capitalism and socialism as interpreted through historical materialism.

1. From *Capitalism* to *Socialism*

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were marked by social revolutions across Europe. Capitalism flourished in Europe's emerging cities, as a robust bourgeoisie challenged feudal structures. The English Revolution of the seventeenth century inaugurated this process, but the French Revolution (1789–1792) delivered the decisive blow to the ancien régime by executing the royal family, abolishing aristocratic privileges, and dismantling feudal constraints (Hobsbawm, 1962).

In the nineteenth century, Europe again experienced profound upheavals. The 1848 revolutions began as democratic movements but devolved into fierce conflicts between workers and capitalists, liberals and socialists, revolutionaries and reformists (Draper, 1977). Political tensions reflected the clash between the conservative bourgeois state and reformist aspirations.

Europe's transition from commercial to industrial capitalism, spurred by the Industrial Revolution, expanded the working class and fostered revolutionary consciousness. Marx (1867/1990) argued that this process made proletarian victory inevitable—rooted not in subjective will but in objective social laws. Capitalism, he contended, was structurally unsustainable, as its exploitative relations of production intensified class antagonism.

The bourgeoisie—owners of the means of production—historically dissolved feudal bonds and transformed global society. Yet, as Marx and Engels (1848/2012) observed, this transformation reduced social relations to “callous cash payment,” stripping them of spiritual and moral meaning. In its pursuit of profit, capitalism commodified labor, alienated workers, and created the conditions for its own overthrow (Marx, 1844/1970).

Capitalist economists, according to Marx, obscured the contradictions of the system. However, these contradictions compelled the bourgeoisie to rely upon the proletariat, arming the very class destined to become its “gravedigger” (Marx & Engels, 1848/2012). For Marx, the proletariat alone was capable of revolutionary transformation, as all other classes decayed before the advance of large-scale industry (Lenin, 1917/1964).

2. Socialism and Its Revolutionary Doctrine

Socialism arose as both critique and alternative to capitalism. Though antecedents can be traced to antiquity and medieval thought, modern socialism crystallized in response to industrial capitalism's exploitation (Cole,

1954). Defined broadly, socialism entails public ownership of the means of production to prevent worker exploitation (Schumpeter, 1942/2008).

For Marx, socialism was not merely a moral ideal but a historical necessity. He emphasized that the proletariat, lacking property and compelled to sell its labor, could emancipate itself only by abolishing private ownership of the means of production (Marx, 1867/1990). In the *Communist Manifesto*, he declared that “society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps” (Marx & Engels, 1848/2012, p. 14).

Socialist revolution, therefore, required the proletariat to seize political power, centralize the means of production, and reorganize society on a collective basis (Marx, 1875/1970). Unlike reforms that merely adjusted existing structures, revolution sought the radical overthrow of bourgeois supremacy and the construction of a new social order (Luxemburg, 1906/1971).

Marx insisted that revolution was not a mere political event but a material process born of contradictions between productive forces and production relations. Social revolutions erupted when outdated relations constrained the development of new productive capacities (Marx, 1859/1977). Thus, the task of revolutionaries was to seize state power—the “central question of every revolution”—to dismantle the bourgeois state and establish a proletarian state (Lenin, 1917/1964).

For Marxists, this transitional phase represented the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” a necessary stage in moving toward communism, where class antagonisms would dissolve and human freedom would be realized (Marx, 1875/1970). In this vision, socialism and democracy were inseparable: genuine democracy could not exist so long as economic exploitation persisted (Engels, 1891/1972).

The Contemporary Worldview of Marxism

While Marx wrote in the nineteenth century, his philosophy of revolution remains highly relevant in the twenty-first century. Today's globalized capitalism has intensified many contradictions Marx identified, while also producing new forms of exploitation and inequality.

- **Economic Inequality and Global Capitalism.** The gap between rich and poor has widened dramatically, with the top 1% controlling more wealth than the rest of humanity (Piketty, 2014). Marx's critique of capital accumulation and concentration resonates in debates on neoliberalism and global financial crises (Harvey, 2010).
- **Precarious Labor and Digital Capitalism.** The rise of platform economies (Uber, Amazon, Deliveroo) and artificial intelligence has created new forms of precarious employment—gig work, algorithmic control, and surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). These dynamics echo Marx's analysis of alienated labor, updated for the digital age.
- **Ecological Crisis.** Environmental degradation and climate change highlight capitalism's destructive relation to nature. Scholars have reinterpreted Marx's notion of the “metabolic rift” to explain how capitalist production disrupts ecological balance (Foster, 2000). Here, Marxist ecology provides insights into sustainable alternatives to profit-driven exploitation.
- **Global South and Postcolonial Marxism.** Marx's framework has been adapted to analyze imperialism, dependency, and uneven development in the Global South (Amin, 1976). Contemporary movements link anti-capitalist critique to struggles against neo-colonialism, racial capitalism, and global inequality.
- **Social Movements and Revolutionary Praxis.** From Occupy Wall Street to global climate strikes, Marxism informs critiques of systemic power structures while inspiring collective struggles for justice. While classical proletarian revolutions are rare today, Marxism's emphasis on structural contradictions and collective emancipation continues to inspire resistance.

Thus, Marxism endures not as a closed doctrine but as a living tradition, constantly reinterpreted to address the evolving contradictions of capitalism in contemporary society.

Conclusion

Karl Marx's philosophy of revolution rests upon the principles of historical materialism and class struggle. He argued that capitalism, while historically progressive in its dismantling of feudalism, inevitably creates conditions for its own demise. The proletariat, as the only truly revolutionary class, carries the task of abolishing exploitation and inaugurating a socialist society. Marx's critique of capitalism—alienation, exploitation, and accumulation—remains a cornerstone for understanding systemic inequality and envisioning emancipatory alternatives in modern times.

Karl Marx was instrumental in shaping the philosophy of history and articulating a revolutionary framework that rejected exploitative class systems while envisioning a society grounded in justice and equality. He dismantled deterministic narratives that deprived the working class of its transformative agency, instead emphasizing the centrality of class struggle as the driving force of historical change. His philosophy inspired generations to envision socialist and communist alternatives to capitalism, reshaping intellectual and political discourse across the modern world.

For Marx, revolution is not merely a political event but a profound social movement—an intentional, organized transformation of society that seeks to restructure economic, political, and cultural foundations. Through the dialectics of historical materialism, contradictions between the forces and relations of production become sites of conflict, culminating in systemic rupture. In this sense, history is a history of class struggles, where the transfer of state power from one class to another is both inevitable and necessary.

Whenever injustice, tyranny, and systemic corruption prevail, revolution becomes an urgent necessity. The proletarian struggle, born from the contradictions of capitalism, represents both a critique and a transformative force, capable of redrawing society's balance of power. By mobilizing collective agency, mass uprisings challenge entrenched systems of domination, forging new paradigms of social organization.

In the twenty-first century, Marx's vision continues to resonate in debates on global inequality, labor precarity, ecological crisis, and democratic struggles. His revolutionary philosophy remains a living framework—one that interprets systemic contradictions while offering pathways toward emancipation and solidarity. The legacy of Marx's thought lies not only in diagnosing the flaws of capitalism but in illuminating the possibility of a new socialist vision where human freedom and equality prevail.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to colleagues from the Laboratory of Research in Literary, Linguistic, Educational and Translation, University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, for their constructive feedback and support during the preparation of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article.

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