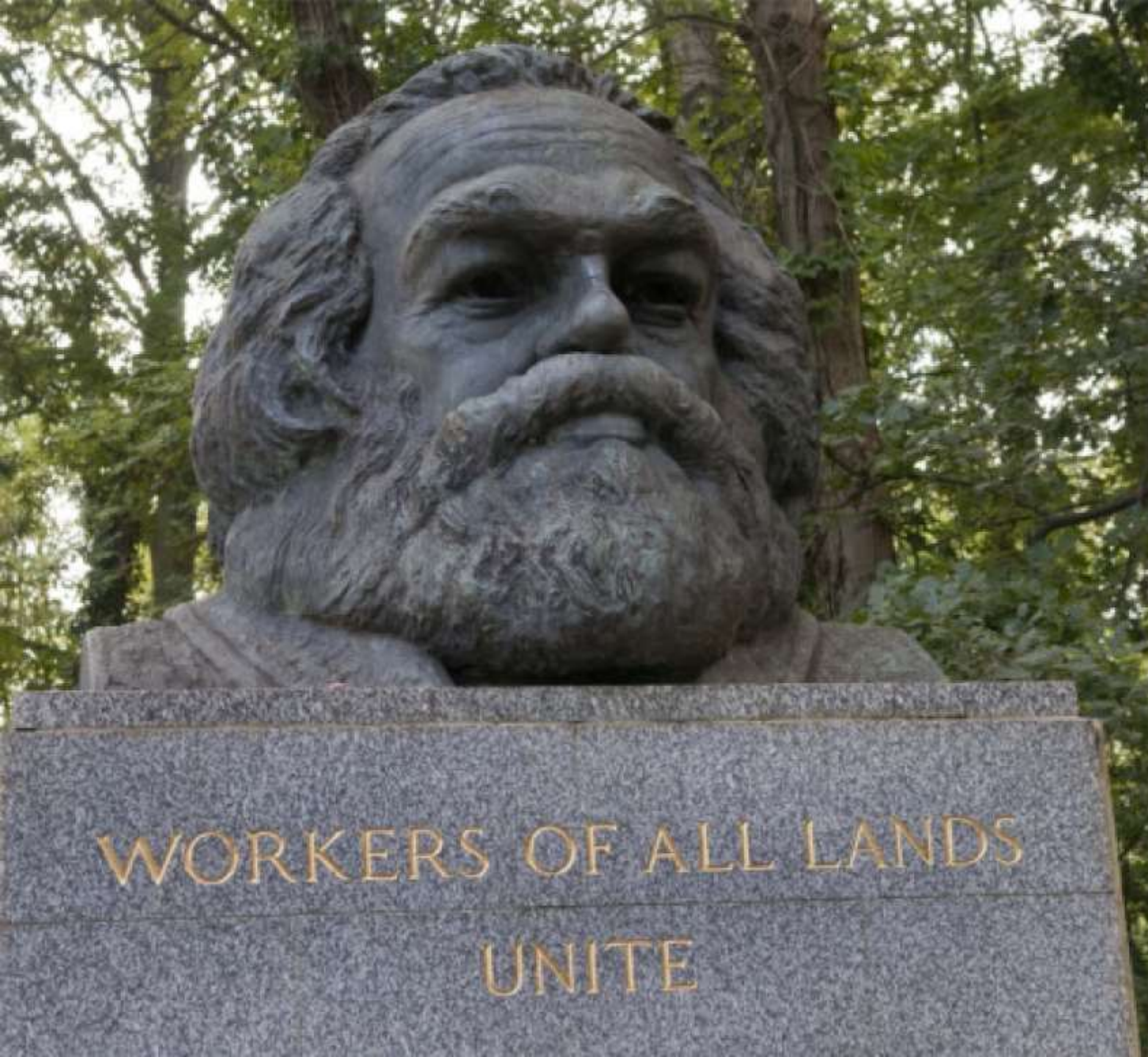
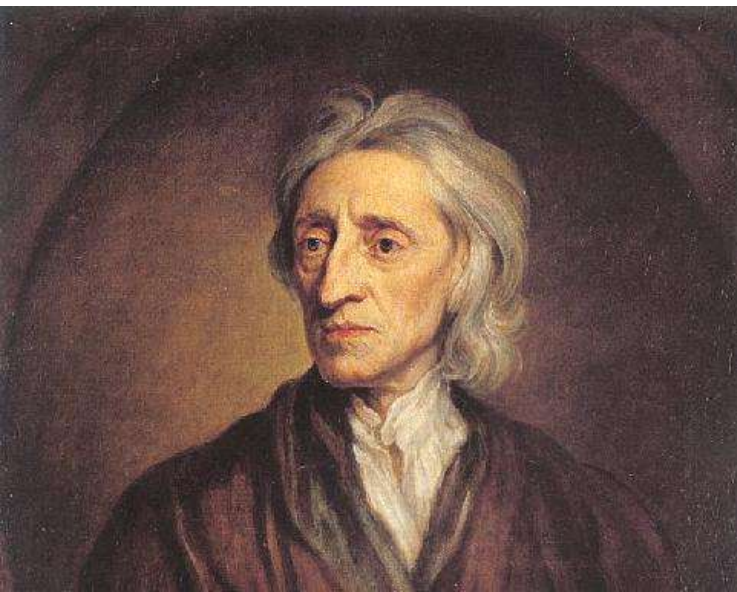


Political Philosophy

Week 6.

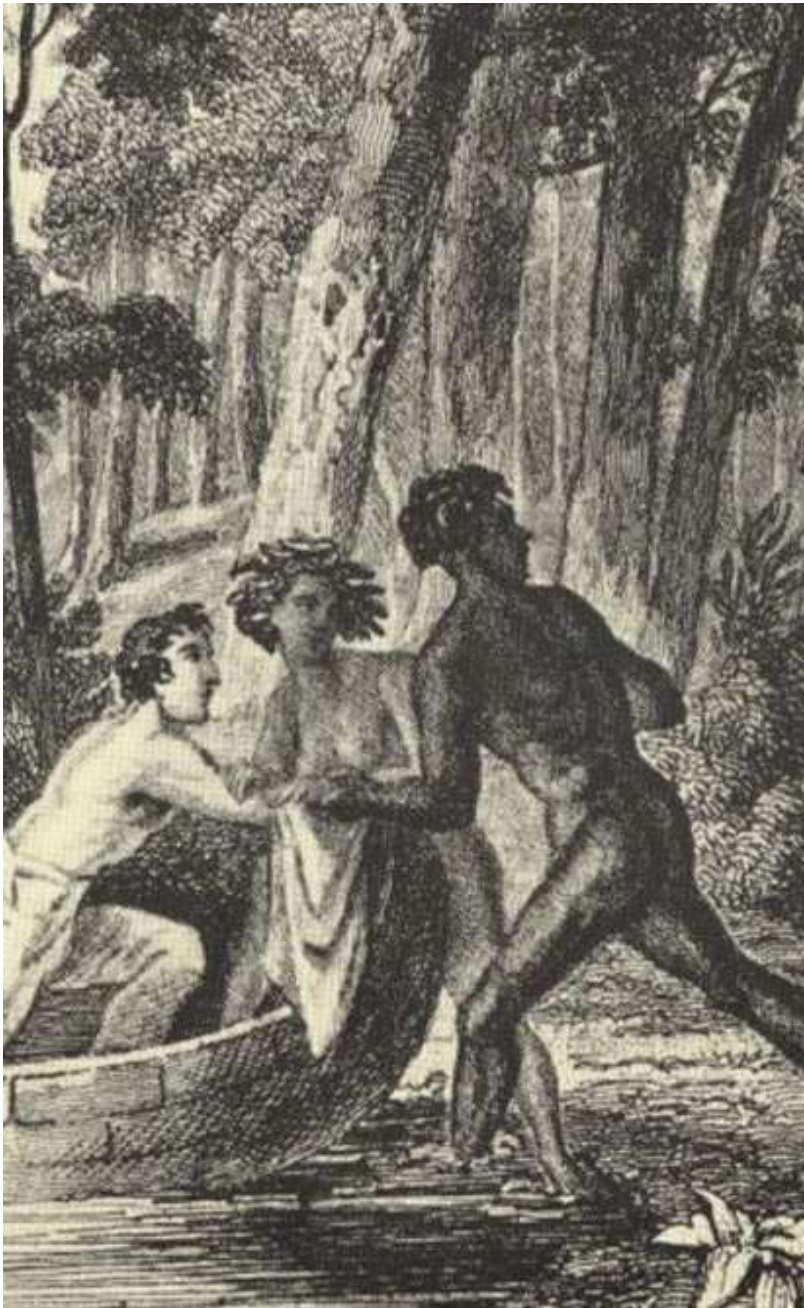
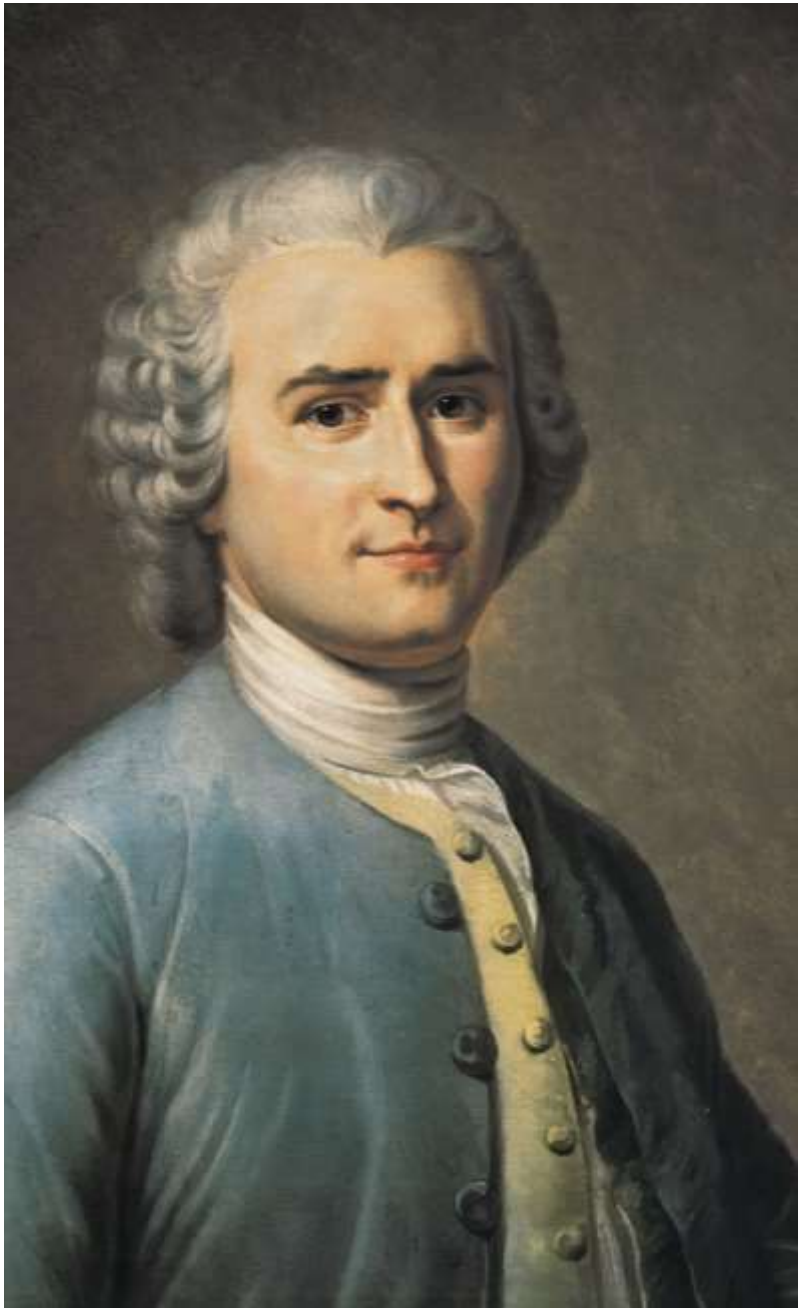
Karl Marx: The
Economic is Political





Themes in political philosophy so far

- Defining human nature: virtue, vice; social, antisocial
- Whether the statesman should aspire to virtue, or draw on whatever's necessary and expedient to survival
- The state of nature and the social contract
- Should we obey? When should we disobey?
- The freedom of the individual mind, free speech and toleration
- Political sovereignty is always founded in the people

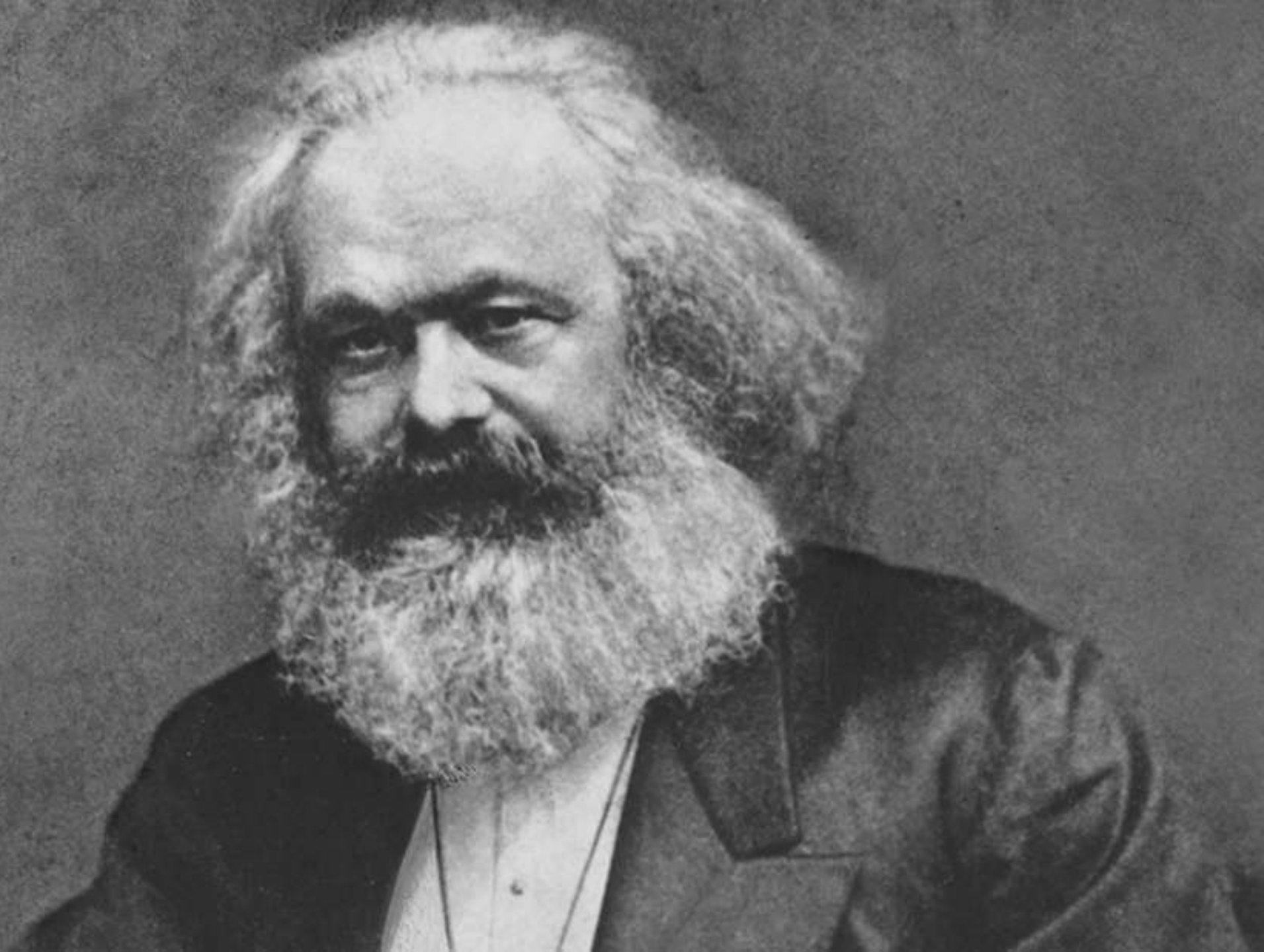


Limitations of political philosophy so far?

- European context, works often produced by members of the educated middle class
- Lack of attention to social and economic factors
- Preoccupation with abstract philosophical principles and definitions of human nature, often based on religion (Locke, Wollstonecraft)
- Talk of democracy, natural equality and the 'Rights of Man' has come at the exclusion of women and slaves – until pushed...

‘The
philosophers
have only
interpreted the
world, in various
ways; the point
however is to
change it.’





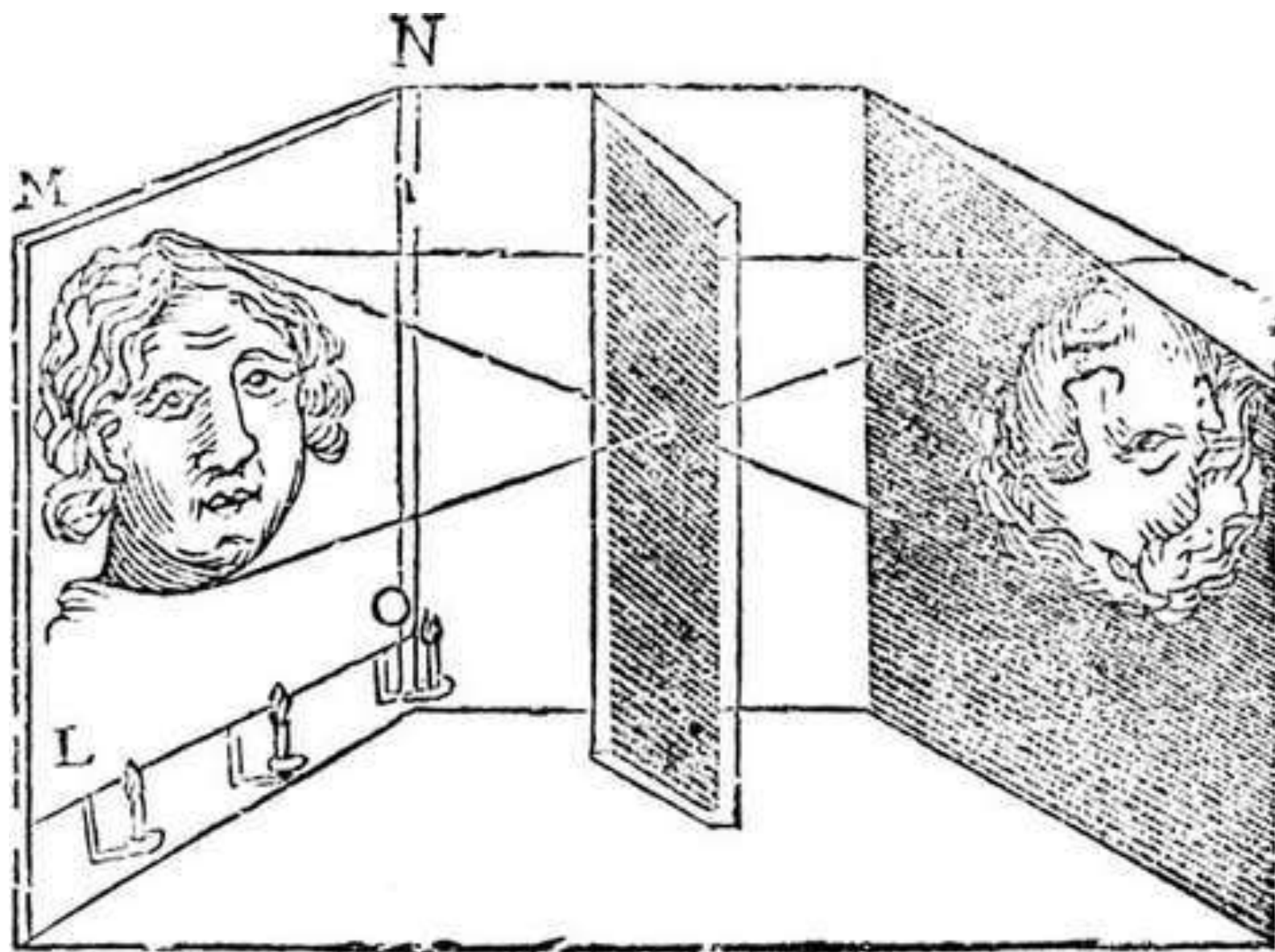
Introducing Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- Born in Prussia to a middle class Jewish family, which converts to Protestantism
- Initially studies law then philosophy, influenced by Hegel...
- Becomes increasingly concerned by social inequality as a journalist on the *Rheinische Zeitung* from 1842
- Hounded by the government, he's exiled to Paris, Brussels then London (1850), where lives much of his life with his wife and family
- Lifelong friendship, support and collaboration with Friedrich Engels
- Major works include *The Communist Manifesto* (1847), *Capital* (1867), as well as much published posthumously (*The German Ideology*, *Grundrisse*, *Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*)



Capital in a nutshell

- An economic analysis of how capitalism works
- Produced over three volumes (I: production; II: circulation; III: distribution), based on decades of research in the British Library
- Capitalism is a social order characterised by two conditions:
 1. Commodities are produced for sale in order to make a profit
 - *Not for immediate use or need*
 2. Production is based on wage labour – people who must sell their capacity to work in order to survive
 - *The workers do not own the machines they use (means of production), nor the wealth they produce, nor the profits of what they make...*



Does capitalism reflect human nature?

- The “Camera Obscura” effect: philosophers have hitherto explained the world inversely to its economic and historical development
- Hegel (and others) assumed that our ideas produce our social world
- Tendency to view social things, like the market economy, as arising out of human characteristics of individuals (self-interest, competition)
- Poverty reduced to individual explanations – fecklessness, inability
- For conservatives, this is inevitable and the state shouldn’t restrict great individuals who make money; for liberals, this is also inevitable, but necessitates mild state intervention to protect the poorest
- But what if this view of human nature is actually a historical-social construct of capitalism? What if by nature we are not so competitive?






Workers are free, in two senses

- Capitalism is founded on a simple social relation between the capitalist and the worker:
- The capitalist buys the worker's labour power, and a certain means of production, and extracts surplus value from the process
- The worker is 'free' to sell her/his labour power to who they like, and 'free' of any ownership of the means of production...
- In other words, workers are forced to sell their labour out of material necessity to the capitalist, who drives down wages
- This leads to the impoverishment of workers, an army of the unemployed, the investment of surplus capital into new markets, projects and assets, and cycles of crisis and collapse







‘So-called’
Primitive
Accumulation

Over to you

In groups, discuss one of two questions:

1. How has capitalism historically developed? And how does its real development differ from the ‘insipid childishness ... preached to us in defence of property’? (1)
2. Capital comes into the world dripping ‘with blood and dirt’: what do you make of Marx’s analysis of the role of expropriation, debt and slavery in capitalism’s birth? (e.g. Ch31)

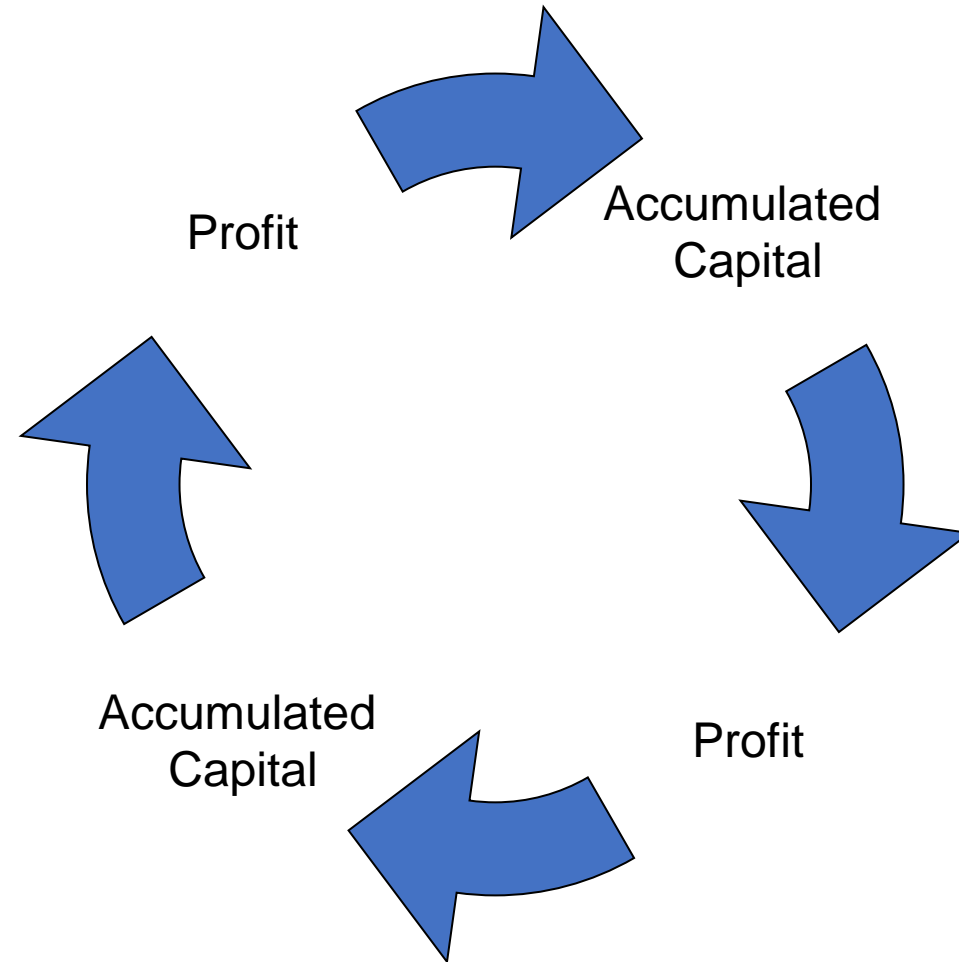
- ‘Upon the whole, the circumstances of the lower ranks of men are altered in almost every respect for the worse. From little occupiers of land, they are reduced to the state of day-labourers and hirelings; and, at the same time, their subsistence in that state has become more difficult.’ – Richard Price (late 18th c)
- ‘The spoliation of the church’s property, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalistic agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a “free” and outlawed proletariat.’ – Marx (9)

The legend of the first capitalist!

- Marx mocks the idea put forth by people that once upon a time “in times long gone-by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance.”
- Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins.

Who was the first capitalist?

- To generate and accumulate capital one needs to make profit, and to make profit one needs to have capital to invest.
- Vicious Circle →
- Profit is created by the working class, and appropriated by the capitalist class



- Marx argues that surplus-value (profit) is created by what he calls surplus labour:
- Assuming one hour's work is paid £10

The number
of hours worked

The number of
of hours needed to work

8 hours

-

5 hours

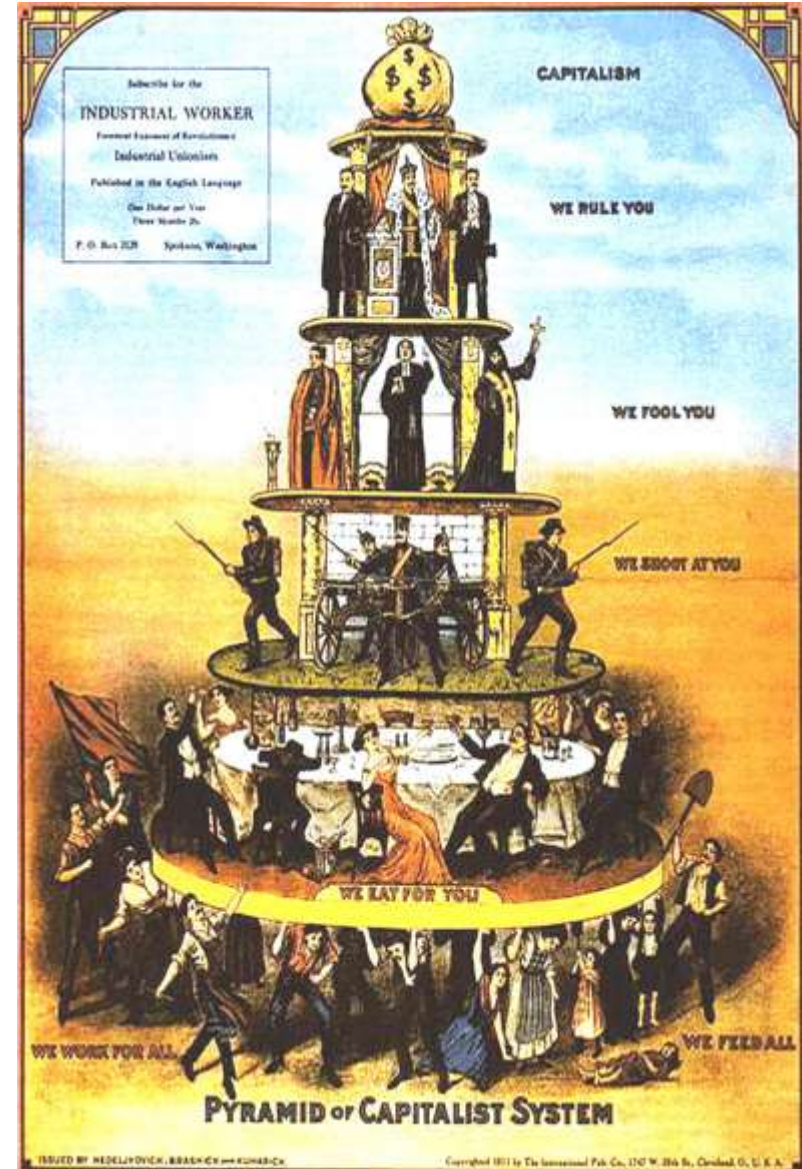
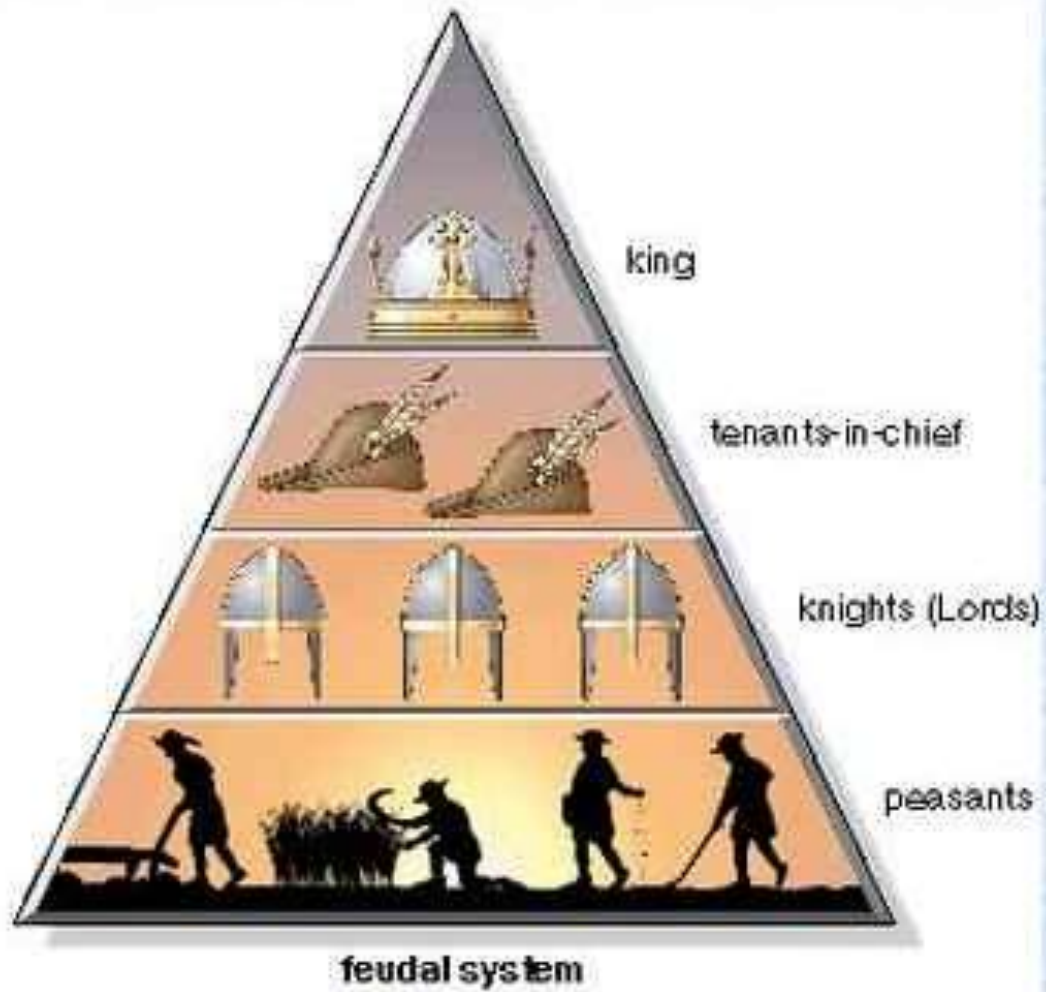
= 3 hours (surplus labour)

£80

-

£50

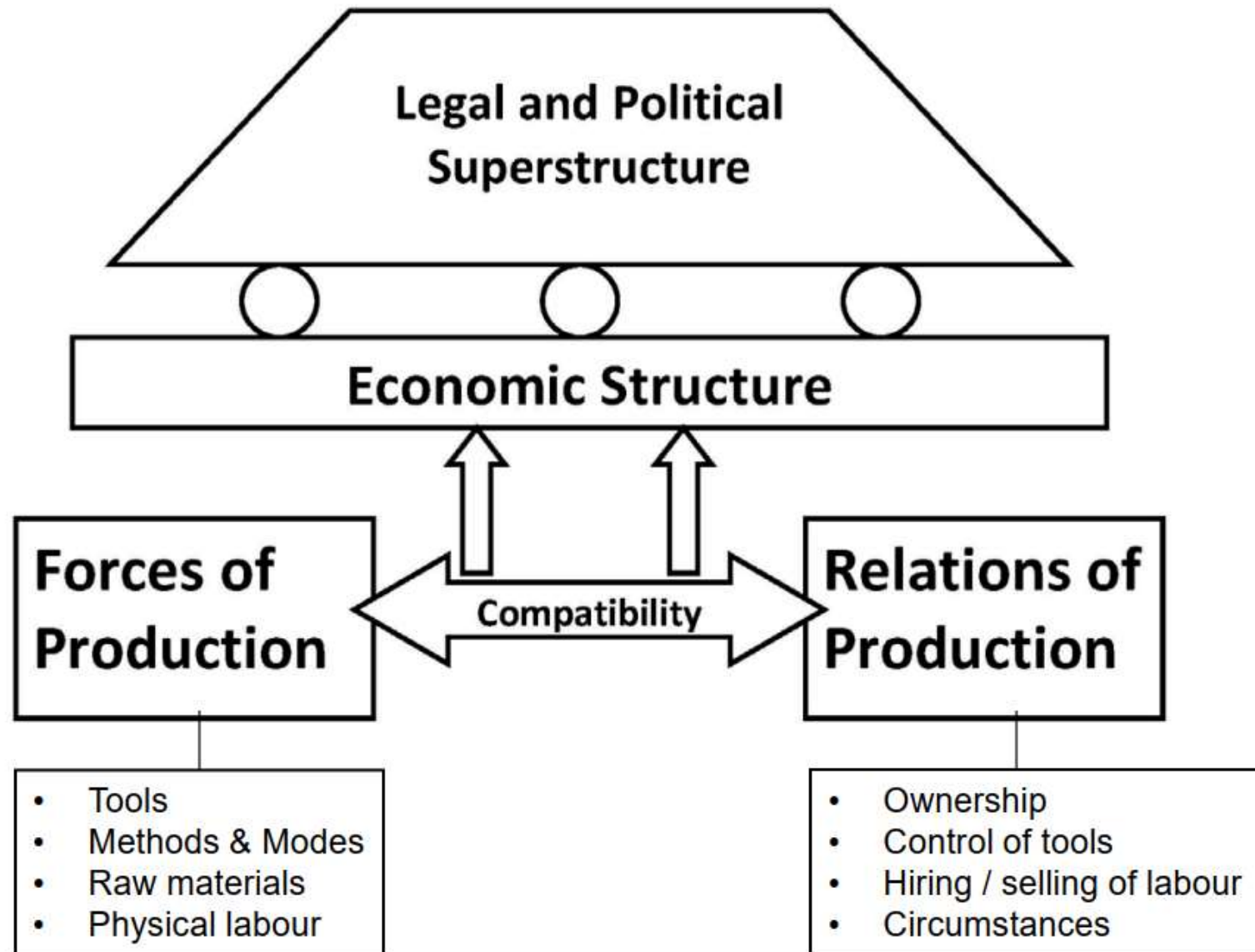
= £30 (profit)

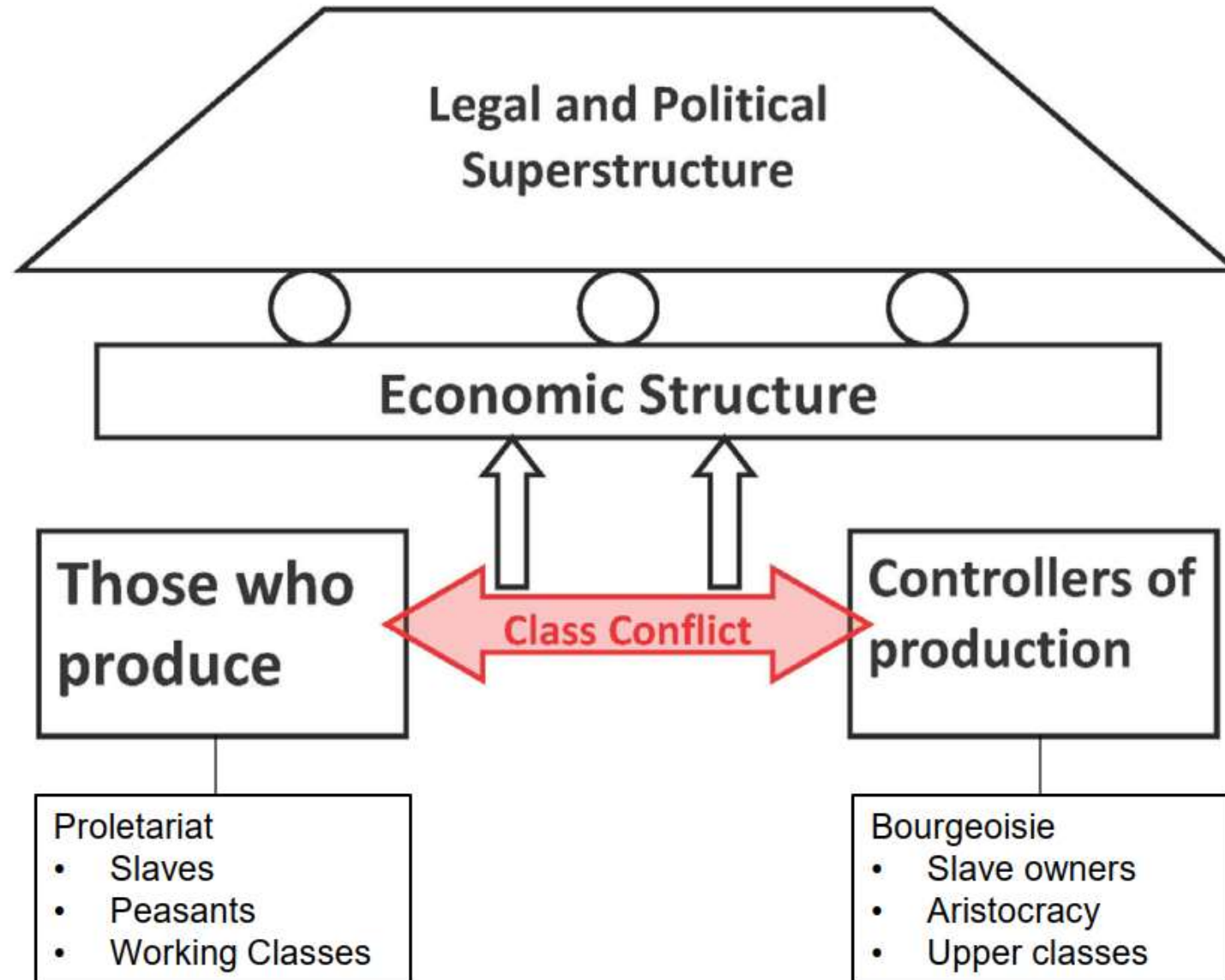


Primitive Accumulation

‘If money ... “comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek”, capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt’

- Exclusion of peasants and small tenants from their plots
- Appropriation of common land and transformation of farmland into pasture
- Enclosure, monopolisation and concentration of large plots of land
- Expropriation of the Catholic Church, and pauperism of its tenants
- Feudal peasants forced to become wage labourers
- Imprisonment and imposition of forced labour on the poor





Why do we accept it?

‘The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident, natural laws. ... The silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Direct extra-economic force is still of course used, but only in exceptional cases. In the ordinary run of things, the worker can be left to the “natural law of production”.’

- Marx, *Capital*



Why do we accept it?

‘The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident, natural laws. ... The silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Direct extra-economic force is still of course used, but only in exceptional cases. In the ordinary run of things, the worker can be left to the “natural law of production”.’

Workers have been socialised by and internalised the ‘natural order’ of capitalism. We value freedom, equality and property, and dream that one day we too will be rich. In the meantime, we work longer and for less, without any actual direct physical coercion. We encourage our children to get ahead in the same way..

What does Marx want?

‘The centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour reach a point at which they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.’



ДѢТЕЙ
ЗАЩИТНИКОВЪ
РОДИНЫ

ПРИБАВКУ ПАИКА
СЕМЬЯМЪ СОЛДАТЪ
ЗАЩИТНИКАМЪ СВОБОДЫ
И НАРОДНОГО МІРА.

What does Marx want?

- Capitalism inevitably collapses, and socialism will inevitably arise
- Social class will be abolished, workers will own the means of production and share its goods equally
- People will work less and have more free time
- 'A society where 'everyone could give himself a complete education in whatever domain he fancied', with each person having 'the possibility to do this today and that tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to go fishing in the afternoon, to do cattle breeding in the evening, to criticise after dinner', as he chose' (*German Ideology*)



ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТ ВОЖДЬ СОВЕТСКОГО НАРОДА
ВЕЛИКИЙ **СТАЛИН**



毛主席革命路线胜利

“among the great authoritarian founders of new faiths, ruthless subverters and innovators who interpret the world in terms of a single, clear, passionately held principle, denouncing and destroying all that conflicts with it.

His faith . . . was of that boundless, absolute kind which puts an end to all questions and dissolves all difficulties.”

– Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*

Oxfam: World's richest 26 own same wealth as poorest half

Billionaires' fortunes grew by billions daily as poorest saw wealth decline by 11 percent last year, Oxfam report says.

21 Jan 2019



The
Observer
Global recession

Pessimists are predicting a global crash in 2020. You can see why

Phillip Inman

@phillipinman

Sat 5 Jan 2019 17:00 GMT



1009 933

Forecasters may be anxious not to be caught out, as they were by the 2008 recession. Nonetheless, the signs look ominous



Next week... *Jane Addams and Rosa Luxemburg*

- How do we end social and political injustices: reform or revolution?
- We'll look at the work of three different thinkers: the abolitionist Sarah Grimké, the progressive Jane Addams, and the revolutionary 'Red Rosa'
- We'll explore how sexual and racial injustices were challenged in different ways over the 19th and early 20th century
- We'll ask whether social and political change is better achieved by gradual adjustments and amelioration, or by forcibly overthrowing the status quo
- Please read take at Jane Addams, "Democracy and Social Ethics", ch7, and the excerpts from Luxemburg's "Social Reform or Revolution?"
- Full versions of both – and Sarah Grimké's Letters – will be up on Moodle for the diligent and dedicated!
- Email any questions to dan.taylor@marywardcentre.ac.uk