

# DAS KARL

MARX AS HUSBAND, FATHER, FRIEND,  
THEORIST, HISTORIAN, REVOLUTIONARY

*A gentle primer to the man, his ideas, and his influence, in which the lionized and villainized is humanized, to supply inspiration to the left, opposition research to the right, and primary sources for anyone of curious mind, in a collection on this most infamous of historical figures, the arch-enemy of capital himself, Dr. Karl Marx.*

wherein

PROLETARIAT UNITED  
SOCIALISM SCIENTIZED  
BOURGEOISIE PANICKED  
HISTORY MATERIALIZED  
CLASS CONSCIENCED

with

BIOGRAPHY BY FRIEDRICH ENGELS  
INTERPRETATION OF VLADIMIR LENIN  
SUMMARIZATION OF *DAS KAPITAL*  
THE *COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*

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Foreword, Summaries, and Footnotes  
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# FOREWORD

*H.C. Earwicker, 2024*

*A brief sketch on Marx’s ideas and legacy; editorial approach; recommendation to reader.*

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is one of the most renowned and controversial figures in economic thought, but to label him merely as an “economist” would fail to capture the complexity of his contributions. Marx was not just an economic thinker, but also a revolutionary dedicated to dismantling the capitalist system and liberating the working class from subservience to their economic oligarchs. He sought to ignite a *class consciousness* among workers and inspire them to shed their yokes of exploitation.

This lifelong ethical and social crusade extended beyond economics into the realms of philosophy, history, and active organization. Although his legacy is complex and contentious, it can be anchored to three primary works or ideas:

(1) *The Communist Manifesto*, co-authored with lifelong friend Friedrich Engels and written on behalf of the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA),<sup>1</sup> defines his vision of communism.<sup>2</sup> In it, he calls for workers to seize the means of production and issues a direct warning to the ruling elite—*we’re coming for you.*<sup>3</sup>

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1. The IWA, sometimes called the First International, was created to further collaboration between smaller labor and political groups.
  2. In a single sentence: The theory of communism is the abolition of private property.
  3. “In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so, that is just what we intend” (p. 302).

(2) *Das Kapital* (“Capital”), Marx’s searing three-volume critique of capitalism, introduces the concept of surplus value, which Marx sees as the primary exploit by capitalists. Employers pay less than what the workers generate in revenue, capturing the difference. He believed most capitalists kept too much of this “surplus” value for themselves, rather than pay fairer wages.

(3) Historical Materialism, Marx’s theory of history, interprets major societal struggles as conflicts between “oppressors” and the “oppressed.”<sup>4</sup> While this approach might oversimplify the complex social dynamics of past upheavals and revolutions, it certainly has some explanatory power. Its legacy can be seen in the contemporary framing of social and political conflicts: oppressive patriarchy versus oppressed women, discriminatory police versus marginalized citizens, foreign colonizers versus colonized locals, and persecuting majorities versus persecuted minorities.

While this historical framework remains influential, Marx’s economic theories are largely outside of contemporary economic discourse, instead persisting within small academic

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4. *Dialectics* is a method of inquiry dating back to the Greek philosopher Socrates, initially as a conversational form of question-and-answer but later emphasizing the reconciliation of some conflict or tension between two ideas, *i.e.*, thesis–antithesis–synthesis. This method was traditionally applied to understanding the world of feelings and ideas, but Marx extended its use to physical, material reality. He called this approach of using dialectics to better understand our material world *dialectical materialism*. His philosophy or theory of history is the result of applying this approach to the study of history and society. The “oppressor” class and the “oppressed” class are two material forces in conflict, and social upheaval or revolution is the process by which that conflict is reconciled. The significance of class struggle to the historical process is just one aspect of dialectical materialism.

circles. But critiques of capitalism and corpocracy<sup>5</sup> are commonplace today,<sup>6</sup> and some of them actually are based in Marxist thought, so it's worth at least knowing who he was and what he believed.

In our selection and structure, we tried to orient everything around the man himself. Most every educated person has heard of "*Marx*," but what do they know about "*Karl*?"

Was the arch-enemy of capitalism grumpy or gay? Was he a good father? What were his favorite books? For a man as infamous as he, it only seemed appropriate to give him a fair treatment as a person before exploring his controversial and polarizing ideas.

The first part, "*Of Marx*," is the biographical sketch of the man. These essays were mainly written by those who knew him, and are generally titled to indicate some role he played or the relationship he had with the author. The second part, "*On Marx*," focuses on his ideas and body of work, as told by others. These essays are Marx in review, with titles indicating the main theme of each chapter. The final part, "*By Marx*," contains Marx's beliefs, ideas, and attitudes—in his own words. These come from books, speeches, letters, and interviews, and are titled in that form.

The chapters don't always fit neatly into each part; there is often discussion of Marx's ideas within personal recollections, and likewise, biographical notes within commentaries on his work. For that reason, readers should feel free to flip forward and backward, reading whatever interests them most. Only the first part, "*Of Marx*," is somewhat chronological. The overall structure is simply intended to frame Marx's infamy within his humanity.

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5. Corpocracy (corporatocracy) is any social system in which corporations dominate the economic and political process.

6. e.g., wealth inequality; minimum wage; corporate lobbying; campaign funding; environmental impacts; global labor exploitation.

# HUSBAND

*Eleanor Marx, 1883–97*

*Daughter Eleanor<sup>7</sup> shares details on Marx's upbringing and parents; love for his wife; personal photographs kept in his breast pocket.<sup>8</sup>*

Karl Marx was born in Trèves on May 5, 1818, of Jewish parents. His father a man of great talents—was a lawyer, strongly imbued with French eighteenth-century ideas of religion, science, and art; his mother was the descendant of Hungarian Jews who in the seventeenth century settled in Holland. Among his earliest friends and playmates were Jenny (afterwards his wife) and Edgar von Westphalen. From their father, Baron von Westphalen (himself half a Scot), Karl Marx imbibed his first love for the Romantic School; and while his father read him Voltaire and Racine, Westphalen read him Homer and Shakespeare. These always remained his favorite writers.

Karl was a young man of seventeen when he became engaged to Jenny. For them, too, the path of true love was not a smooth one. It is easy to understand that Karl's parents opposed the engagement of a young man of his age... The earnestness with which Karl assures his father of his love in spite of certain contradictions is explained by the rather stormy scenes his engagement had caused in the home. My father used to say that at that time he had been a really ferocious Roland. But the ques-

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7. Figure 8, page 19.

8. The first paragraph is from essay “Karl Marx I,” *Forward*, May 1883. The remaining text is from an introduction written for *Die Neue Zeit*'s 1897 publication of a letter from Marx to his father.



tion was soon settled and shortly before or after his eighteenth birthday the betrothal was formally recognized. Seven years Karl waited for his beautiful Jenny,<sup>9</sup> but “they seemed but so many days to him, because he loved her so much.”

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1843, they were wedded. Having played together as children and become engaged as a young man and girl, the couple went hand-in-hand through the battle of life.

And what a battle! Years of bitter pressing need and, still worse, years of brutal suspicion, infamous calumny, and icy indifference. But through all that, in unhappiness and happiness, the two lifelong friends and lovers never faltered, never doubted: they were faithful unto death. And death has not separated them.

His whole life long Marx not only loved his wife; he was in love with her. Before me is a love letter, the passionate, youthful ardor of which would suggest it was written by an eighteen-year-old, but Marx wrote it in 1856 after Jenny had borne him six children. Called to Trier by the death of his mother in 1863, he wrote from there, saying:

[I have made] daily pilgrimages to the old house of the Westphalens<sup>10</sup> (in Römerstrasse<sup>11</sup>) that interests me more than the whole of Roman antiquity because it reminds me of my happy youth and once held my dearest treasure. Besides, I am asked daily on all sides about the former “most beautiful girl in Trier” and “Queen of the ball.” It is damned pleasing for a man to find his wife lives on in the imagination of a whole city as a delightful princess...

Marx was deeply attached to his father. He never tired of talking about him and always carried an old daguerrotype

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9. Figure 1, page 12; Figure 6, page 17.

10. Wife Jenny von Westphalen’s old family home.

11. “Street of the Romans.”

photograph of him. But he would never show it to strangers because, he said, it was so unlike the original. I thought the face very handsome; the eyes and brow were like those of his son, but the features were softer about the mouth and chin. The type was in general definitely Jewish, but beautifully so. When, after the death of his wife, Marx undertook a long, sad journey to recover his health—for he wanted to complete his work—he always had with him the photograph of his father, an old photograph of my mother on glass (in a case), and one of my sister Jenny. We found them after his death in his breast pocket. Engels laid them in his coffin.

## FATHER

*Eleanor Marx*

*Daughter Eleanor describes her experience growing up in the Marx household; the many nicknames they gave one another; the games they played, the books they read, the stories they told; her parents' sense of humor and love for each other.<sup>12</sup>*

My Austrian friends asked me to send some recollections of my father. They could not well have asked me for anything more difficult. But Austrian men and women are making so splendid a fight for the cause for which Karl Marx lived and worked, that one cannot say nay to them. And so I will even try to send them a few stray, disjointed notes about my father.

Many strange stories have been told about Karl Marx, from that of his “millions” (in pounds sterling, of course, no smaller coin would do), to that of his having been subventioned by Bismarck, whom he is supposed to have constantly visited in Berlin during the time of the International!

But after all, to those who knew Karl Marx, no legend is funnier than the common one which pictures him a morose, bitter, unbending, unapproachable man, a sort of Jupiter Tonans, ever hurling thunder, never known to smile, sitting aloof and alone in Olympus. This picture of the cheeriest, gayest soul that ever breathed, of a man brimming over with humor and good-humor, whose hearty laugh was infectious and irresistible, of the

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12. Published as “Karl Marx (A Few Stray Notes)” in *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels*, The Institute of Marxist-Leninism of the C.C., C.P.S.U., 1956. The editors note that the text was written in English by Eleanor Marx.

kindest, gentlest, most sympathetic of companions, is a standing wonder—and amusement—to those who knew him.

In his home life, as in his intercourse with friends, and even with mere acquaintances, I think one might say that Karl Marx's main characteristics were his unbounded good-humor and his unlimited sympathy. His kindness and patience were really sublime. A less sweet-tempered man would have often been driven frantic by the constant interruptions, the continual demands made upon him by all sorts of people. That a refugee of the Commune—a most unmitigated old bore, by the way—who had kept Marx three mortal hours, when at last told that time was pressing, and much work still had to be done, should reply, "*Mon cher Marx, je vous excuse*"<sup>13</sup> is characteristic of Marx's courtesy and kindness.

As to this old bore, so to any man or woman whom he believed honest (and he gave of his precious time to not a few who sadly abused his generosity), Marx was always the most friendly and kindly of men. His power of "drawing out" people, of making them feel that he was interested in what interested them was marvelous. I have heard men of the most diverse callings and positions speak of his peculiar capacity for understanding them and their affairs. When he thought anyone really in earnest his patience was unlimited. No question was too trivial for him to answer, no argument too childish for serious discussion. His time and his vast learning were always at the service of any man or woman who seemed anxious to learn.

But it was in his intercourse with children that Marx was perhaps most charming. Surely never did children have a more delightful playfellow. My earliest recollection of him is when I was about three years old, and "Mohr" (the old home name will slip out) was carrying me on his shoulder round our small garden in Grafton Terrace, and putting convolvulus flowers in my brown curls. Mohr was admittedly a splendid horse. In

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13. "My dear Marx, I excuse you."

earlier days—I cannot remember them, but have heard tell of them—my sisters and little brother, whose death just after my own birth was a lifelong grief to my parents, would “harness” Mohr to chairs which they “mounted,” and that he had to pull... Personally, perhaps because I had no sisters of my own age, I preferred Mohr as a riding-horse. Seated on his shoulder, holding tight by his great mane of hair, then black, with but a hint of gray, I have had magnificent rides round our little garden, and over the fields—now built over—that surrounded our house in Grafton Terrace.

One word as to the name “Mohr.” At home we all had nicknames. (Readers of *Capital* will know what a hand at giving them Marx was.) “Mohr” was the regular, almost official, name by which Marx was called, not only by us, but by all the more intimate friends. But he was also our “Challey” (originally, I presume, a corruption of Charley) and “Old Nick.” My mother was always our “Mohme.” Our dear old friend Helene Demuth,<sup>14</sup> the lifelong friend of my parents, became, after passing through a series of names, our “Nym.” Engels, after 1870, became our “General.” A very intimate friend, Lina Schöler, our “Old Mole.” My sister Jenny was “Qui Qui, Emperor of China” and “Di.”<sup>15</sup> My sister Laura (Madame Lafargue) “the Hottentot” and “Kakadou.” I was “Tussy,” a name that has remained, and “Quo Quo, Successor to the Emperor of China,” and for a long time the “Getweg Alberich” (from the *Nibelungen Lied*).

But if Mohr was an excellent horse, he had a still higher qualification. He was a unique and unrivaled story-teller. I have heard my aunts say that as a little boy he was a terrible tyrant to his sisters, whom he would “drive” down the Markusberg at Trier full speed, as his horses, and worse, would insist on their eating the “cakes” he made with dirty dough and dirtier hands.

14. Figure 9, page 20.

15. Figure 3, page 14.

But they stood the “driving” and ate the “cakes” without a murmur, for the sake of the stories Karl would tell them as a reward for their virtue.

And so, many and many a year later, Marx told stories to his children. To my sisters, when I was then too small, he told tales as they went for walks, and these tales were measured by miles, not chapters. “Tell us another mile,” was the cry of the two girls. For my own part, of the many wonderful tales Mohr told me, the most wonderful, the most delightful one, was “Hans Röckle.” It went on for months and months, as a whole series of stories. The pity no one was there to write down these tales so full of poetry, of wit, of humor!

Hans Röckle himself was a Hoffmann-like magician, who kept a toyshop and who was always “hard up.” His shop was full of the most wonderful things: wooden men and women, giants and dwarfs, kings and queens, workmen and masters, animals and birds as numerous as Noah got into the Ark, tables and chairs, carriages, and boxes of all sorts and sizes. And though he was a magician, Hans could never meet his obligations, either to the devil or the butcher, and was therefore constantly obliged to sell his toys to the devil. These then went through wonderful adventures, always ending in a return to Hans Röckle’s shop. Some of these adventures were as grim, as terrible, as any of Hoffmann’s; some were comic; all were told with inexhaustible verve, wit and humor.

And Mohr would also read to his children. Thus to me, as to my sisters before me, he read the whole of Homer, the whole *Nibelungen Lied*, *Gudrun*, *Don Quixote*, the *Arabian Nights*, etc. As to Shakespeare, he was the Bible of our house, seldom out of our hands or mouths. By the time I was six, I knew scene upon scene of Shakespeare by heart.

On my sixth birthday Mohr presented me with my first novel, the immortal *Peter Simple*. This was followed by a whole course of Marryat and Cooper. And my father actually read

every one of the tales as I read them, and gravely discussed them with his little girl. And when that little girl, fired by Marryat's tales of the sea, declared she would become a "Post-Captain" (whatever that may be) and consulted her father as to whether it would not be possible for her "to dress up as a boy" and "run away to join a man-of-war," he assured her that it might very well be done, only they must say nothing about it to anyone until all plans were well matured. Before these plans could be matured, however, the Scott mania had set in, and the little girl heard to her horror that she herself partly belonged to the detested clan of Campbell. Then came plots for rousing the Highlands, and for reviving "the forty-five." I should add that Scott was an author to whom Marx again and again returned, whom he admired and knew as well as he did Balzac and Fielding. And while he talked about these and many other books, he would, unconscious though she was of it, show his little girl where to look for all that was finest and best in the works, and teach her, though she never thought she was being taught—to that she would have objected—to try and think and understand for herself.

And in the same way, this "bitter" and "embittered" man would talk "politics" and "religion" with the little girl. How well I remember, when I was perhaps some five or six years old, feeling certain religious qualms and (we had been to a Roman Catholic Church to hear the beautiful music) confiding them, of course, to Mohr, and how he quietly made everything clear and straight, so that from that hour to this no doubt could ever cross my mind again. And how I remember his telling me the story—I do not think it could ever have been so told before or since—of the carpenter whom the rich men killed, and many and many a time saying, "After all, we can forgive Christianity much, because it taught us the worship of the child."

And Marx could himself have said, "suffer little children to come unto me," for wherever he went, children somehow would

turn up also. If he sat on the Heath at Hampstead, a large open space in the north of London near our old home, or if he rested on a seat in one of the parks, a flock of children would soon be gathered round him, and on the most friendly and intimate terms with the big man with long hair, beard, and good brown eyes. Perfectly strange children would thus come about him and stop him in the street.

Once I remember a small schoolboy, about ten years old, quite unceremoniously stopping the dreaded “chief of the International” in Maitland Park and asking him to “swop knives.” After a little necessary explanation that “swop” was schoolboy for “exchange,” the two knives were produced and compared. The boy’s had only one blade. The man’s had two, but these were undeniably blunt. After much discussion, a bargain was struck and the knives exchanged, with the terrible “chief of the International” adding a penny in consideration for the bluntness of his blades.

How I remember, too, the infinite patience and sweetness with which—the American war and Blue Books having for the time ousted Marryat and Scott—he would answer every question, and never complain of an interruption. Yet it must have been no small nuisance to have a small child chattering while he was working at his great book. But the child was never allowed to think she was in the way. At this time, too, I remember feeling absolutely convinced that Abraham Lincoln badly needed my advice as to the war, and long letters would I write to him, all of which Mohr, of course, had to read and post. Many years later, he showed me those childish letters, which he had kept because they amused him.

And so through the years, of childhood and girlhood, Mohr was an ideal friend. At home, we were all good comrades, and he was always the kindest and best humored even through the years of suffering when he was in constant pain, even to the end...



I have jotted down these few disjointed memories, but even these would be quite incomplete if I did not add a word about my mother. It is no exaggeration to say that Karl Marx could never have been what he was without Jenny von Westphalen. Never were the lives of two people, both remarkable, so at one; so complementary of the other. Of extraordinary beauty—a beauty in which he took pleasure and pride to the end, and that had wrung admiration from men like Heine and Herwegh and Lassalle—of intellect and wit as brilliant as her beauty, Jenny von Westphalen was a woman in a million.

As little boy and girl, Jenny and Karl played together; as youth and maiden (he but seventeen, she twenty-one), they were betrothed; and as Jacob for Rachel, he served her seven years before they were wed. Then, through all the following years of storm and stress, of exile, bitter poverty, calumny, stern struggle and strenuous battle, these two, with their faithful and trusty friend, Helene Demuth, faced the world, never flinching, never shrinking, always at the post of duty and danger. Truly, he could say of her in Browning's words:

Therefore she is immortally my bride,  
Chance cannot change my love nor time impair.

And I sometimes think that almost as strong a bond between them, as their devotion to the cause of the workers, was their immense sense of humor. Assuredly, two people never enjoyed a joke more than these two. Again and again, especially if the occasion were one demanding decorum and sedateness, have I seen them laugh until tears ran down their cheeks, and even those inclined to be shocked at such awful levity could not choose but laugh with them. And how often have I seen them not daring to look at one another, each knowing that, once a glance was exchanged, uncontrollable laughter would result. To see these two with eyes fixed on anything but one another, like two schoolchildren suppressing their laughter, is a memory I

would not barter for all the millions I am sometimes credited with having inherited.

In spite of all the suffering, struggles, and disappointments, they were a merry pair, and the embittered Jupiter Tonans a figment of bourgeois imagination. And if in the years of struggle there were many disillusionings, or if they were met with ingratitude, they still had what is given to few—true friends. Where the name of Marx is known, there too is known that of Frederick Engels. And those who knew Marx in his home remember also the name of as noble a woman as ever lived, the honored name of Helene Demuth.

To those who are students of human nature it will not seem strange that this man, who was such a fighter, should at the same time be the kindest and gentlest of men. They will understand that he could hate so fiercely only because he could love so profoundly; that if his trenchant pen could as surely imprison a soul in hell as Dante himself, it was because he was so true and tender; that if his sarcastic humor could bite like a corrosive acid, that same humor could be a balm to those in trouble and afflicted.

My mother died in December of 1881. Fifteen months later he, who had never been divided from her in life, had joined her in death. After life's fitful fever, they sleep well. If she was an ideal woman, then "he was a man, take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again."<sup>16</sup>

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16. *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 2.