



## **Is the Modern Middle Class the Proletariat?: Marx's Concept of the Proletariat Class**

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### **Abstract**

Karl Marx predicts that an advanced capitalist society would end up with class polarization between the very small rich capitalist class and the very large poor proletariat class. There seems to be no place for the modern middle class who sells its labour for wages or income but has a different way of life and a better standard of living than the working class. However, the social reality after Marx's time seems to contradict his prediction – the quite stable existence of the modern middle class makes Marx's prediction untrue. Some scholars who claim themselves as Marxists would argue that the modern middle class should be counted as the proletariat class, and so, Marx's prediction still holds in the present time. This paper argues that, according to Marx, the modern middle class cannot be counted as the proletariat class. It proposes a distinction between the proletariat class in general and the revolutionary proletariat class, and when Marx discusses class polarization, he always refers to the latter kind only. The modern middle class may be viewed as the proletariat class in general but cannot be counted as the revolutionary proletariat class because it does not have objective conditions such as collective benefits and ways of life that would allow it to develop class consciousness for a socialist revolution. The revolutionary proletariat class, according to Marx, refers only to the factory workers whose work and way of life forces them to live together and to aim for the same goal – a socialist revolution; they would want to destroy the alienation between the actual alienated life and the real human essence.

### **Keywords**

Karl Marx, Capitalism, Proletariat class, Middle class, Class consciousness

## **Introduction**

One of the controversial issues regarding the evaluation of the success or failure of Karl Marx is his analysis of class polarization, in which he predicts that a developed capitalist society would lead to class polarization between the bourgeois or capitalist class and the proletariat class. Marx believes that class polarization is inevitable because it is the motion of the development of capitalism, which he claims that it is a prior condition for the socialist revolution. In other words, class polarization is the inevitable destination of capitalism itself as Marx claims that capitalism would dig its own grave. A criticism of this analysis is that such a class polarization never happened in developed capitalist societies. Although the size of the proletariat is still significant in the present time, we have also seen a stable number of those who possess no means of production and must sell their labour for wages just like the proletariat but have a significantly higher level of income and comfortable lifestyles. Moreover, the existence of these people is more likely to continue in the future. These people are the "modern middle class." This criticism points out the failure of Karl Marx for his mistaken analysis and prediction of the development of capitalism. However, some scholars defend Marx from such a criticism, arguing that it misinterprets Marx's definition of the proletariat class. They argue that even though the modern middle class is just part of the proletariat class; therefore, Marx's analysis and prediction still hold even today.

In this paper, I will give reasons to support the criticism that the stable existence of the modern middle class is an indication of Marx's failure. My main argument is that the modern middle class cannot be counted as the proletariat class according to Marx's concept of the proletariat class because Marx's meaning of "class" is much more complicated than the simple notion that people's classes are determined by considering their positions in certain relations of production; instead, classes must also depend on their way of life in relation to certain relations of production. This is because people's ways of life, according to Marx, are important factors that determine the development of class consciousness, which would become a prior condition for the socialist revolution. I will propose that we cannot understand Marx's concept of class and class polarization without taking the concept of class consciousness and revolutionary class into consideration. This paper consists of three parts. First, I will review and articulate an argument that the modern middle class can be counted as the proletariat in Marx's view. I will take Alex Callinicos' argument as a typical example of this argument. Second, I will discuss why we cannot count the modern middle class as the proletariat in Marx's view. Finally, I will extend and clarify my argument by dealing with some potential criticisms. Throughout this paper, I will try to show the relationship between class consciousness, alienation, way of life, and the determination of people's classes in relation to the mission of revolution in Marx's view.

Before I will proceed with my argument, it is important to clarify my objectives in this paper. First of all, as we shall see throughout this paper, my focus will be particularly on the thought of Karl Marx only rather than Marxism or the Marxist school of thought. My interest is how Marx himself actually understands class polarization and the proletariat class rather than how some Marxists have developed or revised Marx's original ideas. Therefore, when I argue that Callinicos' interpretation of Marx's ideas is misleading, this does not necessarily mean that I disagree with Callinicos' revolutionary project in the present time; instead, it just means that I am criticizing Callinicos for his misinterpretation of Marx's original ideas. Second, this paper aims only to defend Marx's original ideas from some scholars' misinterpretation rather than to present how Marxists have recently developed the so-called Marxist concept of class; this is why I intentionally title my paper "Marx's Concept of the Proletariat Class" rather than "Marxist Concept of the Proletariat Class." In this sense, I would not claim that my paper would be of interest to Marxist scholars in general; instead, I would claim that this paper may be of interest only to scholars who study the original thought of Karl Marx rather than Marxism as a school of thought. This paper does not make the assumption that Marx is a Marxist; whether Marx is a Marxist is a different question that is beyond my interest here. I choose to deal with Callinicos' argument not because Callinicos is a contemporary Marxist, but because his argument focuses on Marx's thought directly.

Third, as we shall see, this paper's primary target of criticism is Callinicos' work published in 1995, and some might wonder if this is a proper target to deal with as the work seems outdated. I would claim that I choose this work for three reasons. First, I found that his work, even until now, can still be held as a typical example of the argument that I want to deal with. Second, Callinicos' argument, discussed below, is appropriate for my objective because his work aims to present how Marx actually understands the proletariat class rather than to present Marxism in general. Third, as my objective is just to discuss the original idea of Marx rather than to present the Marxist tradition as a whole, so Callinicos' 1995 work would be enough because even today, Callinicos' argument is still held by many Marxists as the correct interpretation of Marx's original ideas. So, my argument against Callinicos' argument could be used as the typical response to the current (mis)understanding of Marx's concept of the proletariat class. Although my discussion would involve in what one might call the old debate in Marxist theory, I see it as still relevant to those who are interested in the political thought of Karl Marx.

Most importantly, it should be clear that this paper does not aim to explain the current phenomena (e.g., the growing modern middle class in some countries, lack of class consciousness among the modern middle class) by using Marx's original ideas, but to explain how Marx really presents his concept of class polarization. My interest is not to explain why the modern middle class lacks class consciousness, or even why some proletarians choose

to support rather than to act against capitalism. My interest is simply to argue that, according to Marx, we cannot and should not expect that the modern middle class would be able to develop their class consciousness for the socialist revolution in the first place, and that Marx's concept of class fails because Marx's prediction is incompatible with the current phenomena. Although many Marxists have revised and developed a Marxist concept of class, they are irrelevant to this paper as my focus is on Marx's original ideas rather than other Marxists. I also would like to touch a little upon my way of presentation. As we shall see, I quote a lot of Marx's original passages, and I focus more on Marx's original work than other Marxists' secondary work. This is because my aim is to focus on how Marx (and Marx only) actually understands the proletariat class rather than how those who claim themselves as Marxists (Lenin, Gramsci, or anyone else) understand it. I intentionally use many long quotes from Marx's original work to really prove that Callinicos' argument is not supported by Marx's original thought, and to show the way Marx actually argues and reasons. I partly consider this paper as falling into the category of the history of political thought: the presentation and criticism of Marx's concept of the proletariat class..

### **I. Callinicos' Interpretation of Marx' Concept of the Proletariat Class**

I take Callinicos' argument into account here because his view is typical of some contemporary Marxists who believe that Marx's prediction of class polarization still holds. As I said in the introduction, the purpose of this paper is to explore Marx's original ideas rather than to examine the current phenomena. It is important to see the difference between these two discussions: while the former discusses Marx's original work to find out how Marx actually thinks, the latter uses Marx's ideas to explain the phenomena; thus, the latter discussion would treat Marxism as a school of thought including many Marxists. Given this paper's purpose, Callinicos' work is still relevant as it looks at the original thought of Karl Marx, and his discussion of Marx's original ideas is presented more clearly than in many recent Marxist works. For instance, although Wright (2015) writes about the Marxist concept of class, he does not focus on Marx's original work; instead, it is a work of the latter kind of discussion. Particularly, his presentation of the concept of the middle class is not as clear as that of Callinicos. Wright (2015, p. 189) states that

*It is appropriate to use a much more abstract, simplified class concept, revolving around the central polarized class relation of capitalism: capitalists and workers ... In a stylized Marxian manner, I define capitalists as those people who own and control the capital used in production and workers as all employees excluded from such ownership and control. In this abstract analysis of class structure I assume that these are mutually exclusive categories. There is thus no*

*middle class as such. No workers own any stock. Executives, managers, and professionals in firms are either amalgamated into the capitalist class by virtue of their ownership of stock and command of production, or they are simply part of the "working class" as employees.*

Wright's work does not present and discuss Marx's original ideas but takes it for granted that a Marxist concept would hold that the modern middle class is simply the capitalist or proletariat class. The problems of choosing to deal with Wright's work over Callinicos' work are these. First, his position is not clear on whether the modern middle class is the proletariat class or the capitalist class, while Callinicos explicitly says that the modern middle class is the proletariat class, and it is the latter claim that this paper wants to criticize. Second, his concept of class is compatible with Callinicos' argument: this indicates that Callinicos' argument is still held even today. Despite this, Callinicos' argument contains more direct discussion of Marx's original thought.<sup>1</sup> I want to deal with the thesis that Marx's concept of class would count the modern middle class as the proletariat class, and Marx's prediction of capitalism is still correct; Wright's argument does not clearly present such an argument. So, given my objective, it is more appropriate to deal with Callinicos' work.

In *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (1995), Callinicos deals with three criticisms of Marxism. The third criticism argues that Marx is proved wrong because the tendency of class polarization in capitalist societies does not follow his prediction because of the emergence of the modern middle class. Callinicos (1995, p. 190) articulates this criticism as follows

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<sup>1</sup> Wright (1985; 2000; 2005) try to deal with the phenomena of the rise of the modern middle class; he tries to position the modern middle class in the Marxist tradition (or what he calls "neo-Marxism"). But it is important to note that his argument has nothing to do with my concern in this paper: while my paper wants to answer how Marx (and Marx only) would understand of the modern middle class, Wright rather wants to answer how we should understand of this class, regardless of how Marx himself would think about. In contrast, Callinicos (1995) wants to deal with the same question as mine: how Marx himself would understand of the class. In fact, even Wright (2005, p. 5) himself accepts that "any claims about the theoretical foundations of Marxist class analysis which I make, therefore, will reflect my specific stance within that tradition rather than an authoritative account of "Marxism" in general or of the work of Karl Marx in particular." In this sense, it is not surprising that Wright rarely cites and discusses Marx' original work. For example, Wright (1985) only cites Marx's *Capital V. III*; while Wright (2000; 2005) does not cite any original work of Marx at all. This is why Callinicos' work (1995) is still appropriate to deal with, given this paper's purpose.

*A third argument used against Marx today is that the working class, at least in the form in which he conceived it, no longer exists. The manual working class is now only a minority of the workforce, it is said, which is dominated by white collar workers enjoying middle class living standards and lifestyle, while, contrary to Marx's expectations, real wages have steadily risen in the past century. These economic changes have led to an erosion of class divisions so that, instead of there being bourgeoisie and proletariat confronting one another as antagonists, industrial (or rather 'post-industrial') societies consist largely of a vast amorphous middle class.<sup>2</sup>*

This criticism argues that the modern middle class – white collar workers whose living standard is better than factory workers - cannot be counted as the proletariat according to Marx's understanding. These modern middle classes are more likely to increase, whereas the proletariat is decreasing. This indicates the failure of Marx because facts contradict with his prediction: Marx predicts that the more capitalist societies develop, the more class polarization between bourgeoisie and proletariats will be violent and obvious. But the fact is that the modern middle class, who cannot be counted as both bourgeoisie<sup>3</sup> and proletariat according to Marx's view, is not likely to disappear, which contradicts Marx's anticipation of class polarization (Stevenson & Haberman, 1998, pp. 138-139).<sup>4</sup> The point here is, that if I am right that these modern middle classes cannot be counted as the proletariat according to

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Callinicos' articulation of such a criticism is a bit confusing. For the first sentence, Callinicos writes that proletariat as Marx conceived it “no longer exists” (proletariats whom Callinicos mean the manual working class only). This would make readers understand that this criticism proposes that the proletariat class no longer exists. But for the second sentence, Callinicos writes that the manual working class becomes a minority of the workplace, which would make readers understand that this criticism proposes that the proletariat class still exists but is hugely outnumbered by others. It can be seen that these two sentences are self-contradictory and would confuse readers about the real point of the argument. In my opinion, this criticism wants to propose that the proletariat class as Marx understands is decreasing along with the increase of the modern middle classes. I think that this is what Callinicos really wants to articulate.

<sup>3</sup> “Bourgeoisie,” according to Marx, only refers to the capitalist class who possesses means of production, not to the modern middle classes (e.g., office workers with high salary) as some might understand.

<sup>4</sup> Stevenson & Haberman (1998, p. 139) do not use the term “middle classes”; instead, they use “white-collar workers.” But they are referring to the same thing as what I mean by “modern middle classes”: workers who have better standard of living and cannot be counted as either manual labourers or industrial owners. Their point is that Marx's prediction of class polarization fails because of the existence of these new groups of people.

Marx's understanding, then we can conclude that Marx's prediction about the tendency of the capitalist development is unsuccessful because his prediction is not supported by the facts. In this sense, the success or failure of Marx's theory relies on whether we should count the modern middle class as the proletariat according to Marx's view or not. According to Callinicos, such a criticism is just a misinterpretation of Marx's concept of class. He argues that, according to Marx, we should count the modern middle class as part of the proletariat, which would make the tendency of class polarization anticipated by Marx still hold today. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Callinicos also agrees with this criticism on one point: the structure of classes in capitalist societies has changed in that while manual workers are decreasing, white collar workers are increasing (Callinicos, 1995, p. 192).<sup>5</sup>

We can summarize Callinicos' argument as follows. First, he argues that Marx puts an emphasis on "production" rather than "consumption" as a determination of classes of people. Given this, he claims that the above criticism misinterprets Marx, as it puts importance on how people consume rather than how people produce. He thinks that this (mis)understanding cannot see through the real hidden nature of capitalism but can see only the surface appearance (p. 191). For example, when the criticism says that a group of workers has better standard of living and lifestyle similar to some middle classes, it would conclude that workers disappear. Thus, according to Callinicos, this criticism is misleading because it focuses on consumption rather than the relations of production as the definition of classes. Second, he argues that Marx puts an emphasis on the "relations of production" rather than "sorts of work." He claims that Marx never considers the sorts of labour, whatever productive or unproductive labour, as a definition of classes, but takes into account only the positions of people in certain relations of production (those who possess the means of production and those who do not). Thus, Callinicos concludes that

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<sup>5</sup> He (p. 192) writes that "the structure of the workforce has changed dramatically since Marx's time. The figures for Britain are typical of global trends. In 1911 manual workers made up 75 percent of the workforce; by 1979 they had fallen to 48 percent. This transformation means that a majority of the British workforce today are white collar workers." Although my argument relies on some empirical facts (e.g., the existence of the modern middle class), I refuse to provide an evidence showing the *increasing* trend of the modern middle class because, as I have mentioned, I do not aim to explain the current phenomena and, more importantly, I think that the most important point is not whether the modern middle class is currently increasing or decreasing, but whether the existence of this class is quite stable or not. Given this, I think that it is safe to say that although the number of the modern middle class may increase and/or decrease in some countries at some times, no one would deny that the existence of this class is less likely to completely disappear in the near future.

*Marx regarded as a member of the working class anyone who was regularly compelled to sell their labour power in order to live, even if they were not engaged in manual labour. (1995, p. 191)*

*Marx insists that class antagonism is not a secondary or accidental feature of capitalism but defines its very nature: capital is at fundamental odds with the wage-labourers it employs, who comprise all those compelled by their economic circumstances to sell their labour-power and to work under supervision, irrespective of whether they do so in industry or services, or as blue- or white-collar workers. (2003, p. 35)*

Callinicos explains further that Marx divides labours into two sorts: productive labour and unproductive labour. Productive labour directly produces surplus value for capitalists. Unproductive labour does not directly produce surplus value but simply provides services for others, e.g., housekeepers, hotel staff, and singers.<sup>6</sup> This labour does not produce surplus value directly because those who receive their services simply pay them in return for the same value; there is no surplus value stemming from such a process of exchange. Callinicos (1995, p. 191) argues that even productive labours do not need to be manual workers only, e.g., managers, engineers, technicians, etc. He argues that the proletariat class means both productive and unproductive labours;<sup>7</sup> therefore, he concludes that the modern middle class, who does not possess the means of production and must sell its labour for a living, should still be considered as the proletariat. He writes that

*The working class is thus for Marx not what it is conventionally thought to be, namely manual factory workers, but all those whose conditions of life force them to sell their labour power, and who find themselves at work subject to constant pressure from an employer who seeks to extract the maximum of unpaid labour from them. What defines the working class is not the sort of work they do, but their place in the relations of production. (1995, p. 192)*

*The rest form what is called 'the new middle class' or 'service class', whose job is to administer the highly complex economy of advanced capitalism, and whose income and power over fellow employees make them a group separate and alienated from the working class. (1995, p.*

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<sup>6</sup> The example of singers is introduced by Marx himself (Marx 1977a, p. 395).

<sup>7</sup> The argument that Marx defines the working class as more than just factory and productive workers, but also includes unproductive labour always appears in the work of later marxists who try to defend Marx's theory. For instance, Eagleton (2011, pp. 170-71).



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For Callinicos, the middle class is the proletariat class on condition that they do not have their own means of production and must sell their labour to those who have the means of production. Although some of them do not produce surplus value directly, they must still work for wages and are disadvantaged in the capitalist mode of production. According to Callinicos, the middle classes are the working class, but they may not be aware or accept their working class status because they have a better level of income and standard of living than poor factory workers in general. This makes them alienated from class consciousness of their working-class status. In sum, Callinicos insists that Marx's prediction of class polarization still holds today because the modern middle class is also the proletariat class.

## **II. Marx's Concept of the Proletariat Class: The Revolutionary Proletariat Class**

In this section, I will propose why we cannot count the modern middle class as the proletariat class according to Marx's understanding, and why Marx's prediction of class polarization in capitalism is unsuccessful. I propose that we distinguish between "the proletariat class" and "the revolutionary proletariat class," otherwise we cannot understand the purpose or meaning of Marx's concept of class polarization, and cannot evaluate whether the modern middle class should be called the proletariat class according to Marx or not. I will discuss the importance of such a distinction later. I use the term "modern middle class" as a group of people with upper-middle income and a better standard of living compared to the lower class; they would work in an office; most of them do not have their own businesses or the means of production, but must sell their labour for a living. Marx himself rarely uses the term "middle class" in such a manner. The most straightforward and obvious passage showing Marx using this term in the present manner is from *Theories of Surplus Value* (1977a, p. 409), which Marx wrote from 1862-1863

*What he [David Ricardo] forgets to emphasize is the constantly growing number of the middle classes, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalist and landlord on the other. The middle classes maintain themselves to an ever increasing extent directly out of revenue; they are a burden weighing heavily on the working base, and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand.*

The above passage reflects Marx's attitude toward the modern middle class, which has been cited by many scholars when they discuss Marx's theory of the middle class (Nicolaus, 1967; Gough, 1972; Carter, 1988), even if they interpret the passage differently. For instance, Nicolaus (1967, p. 46) uses this passage to claim that Marx accurately predicts the increasing size of the modern middle class. Carter (1988, pp. 133-134) uses this passage to

claim that Marx's concept of the proletariat class is ambiguous and unsuccessful because Marx becomes aware of the increasing number of the modern middle class only in his later life and cannot even put such a class position into his concept of class consistently. In my view, the passage is important as it shows us that (1) Marx is also aware of the existence of the modern middle class who is neither the petty bourgeoisie class nor the small peasant class he discusses in *The Communist Manifesto*, but is a class with growing levels of revenue (it should be noted that Marx intentionally uses "revenue" rather than "wage"), and (2) Marx does not consider these middle classes as the proletariat class, as he argues that these classes take advantage of the proletariat class. In this sense, this passage indicates that Marx does not hold that the modern middle class is the proletariat class as some contemporary Marxists often claim. I claim that this is the only passage that shows Marx's attitude to the modern middle class straightforwardly. Except this passage, Marx never uses the term "middle class" in this meaning, and no longer mentions the tendency of the development of this class. Marx encounters a paradox here, whatever he would propose as Nicolaus or Carter claims. If he proposes as Nicolaus claims, then he would fail to show how the development of capitalism would lead to violent class polarization and eventually to the socialist revolution. If he proposes as Carter claims, then his theory of the development of capitalism fails, as he only becomes aware of the modern middle class later. Indeed, Nicolaus' claim can be used as a critique of Callinicos because while Callinicos proposes that the modern middle class is the proletariat class, Marx himself says that it is not. But I do not think that this argument shows an inadequate understanding of Marx's theory because, apart from this very passage, we never find Marx's analysis or anticipation in this manner. Therefore, I would propose that Carter's claim is more reasonable because if we evaluate and read Marx's theory as a whole, then we will see that Marx often uses "middle class," "proletariat," and "class polarization" in different ways. I will discuss Marx's understanding of the middle class by looking into the thought of Marx in general rather than just this specific passage.

In almost every Marx work, especially in *The Communist Manifesto*, when Marx refers to the middle class, he often uses the "petty bourgeoisie" which means the small capitalist class, and "the peasant class" which means those who own few means of production. Marx sees that this class as the independent class between the capitalist class (or bourgeoisie) and the proletariat class. In developed capitalist societies, he argues, the class struggle would lead to class polarization between the small capitalist class and the large proletariat class, whereas this independent class would disappear and become part of the proletariat class. As Marx and Engels (2002) write

*The lower strata of the middle class – the small tradespeople,*

*shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants – all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population. (p. 228)*

*The feudal aristocracy was not the only class that was ruined by the bourgeoisie, not the only class whose conditions of existence pined and perished in the atmosphere of modern bourgeois society. The medieval burgesses and the small peasant proprietors were the precursors of the modern bourgeoisie. In those countries which are but little developed, industrially and commercially, these two classes still vegetate side by side with the rising bourgeoisie. In countries where modern civilization has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeois society. The individual members of this class, however, are being constantly hurled down into the proletariat by the action of competition, and, as modern industry develops, they even see the moment approaching when they will completely disappear as an independent section of modern society, to be replaced, in manufacture, agriculture and commerce, by overlookers, bailiffs and shopmen. (p. 247)*

It can be seen from the above passages that Marx does not use the meaning of the middle class in the modern sense at all; instead, Marx's middle class refers to the petty bourgeoisie or the small proprietor. The middle class is the class between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and would exist only temporarily during the class struggle in capitalism. The middle class, according to Marx, would disappear in advanced capitalist societies. At first appearance, Marx's analysis of class only emphasizes the "means of production." But I would argue that, indeed, Marx's concept of class also takes "level of income" into account, though this factor is not explicitly discussed by Marx. I would claim that the level of income factor is so crucial that without it, Marx's concept of class would be incomprehensible. According to Marx, the capitalist or bourgeoisie class is always supposed to be the rich, and the proletariat class is the poor <sup>8</sup>, as he writes that "the modern labourer, on the contrary,

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<sup>8</sup> I am talking about Marx's attitude toward developed capitalist societies only, not on primitive or developing capitalist societies, in which we can see that Marx never sees that the bourgeoisie class possessing their own means of production must always be rich, as he always mentions the existence

instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth." (2002, p. 233) As Marx always holds this as a fact, he sees it unnecessary to discuss the level of income factor. He argues that the proletariat class would revolt not only because they could no longer endure economic difficulties, but also because they want to destroy alienation between themselves and the capitalist way of life that forces them to work for the capitalists. The decisive factors leading to the end of capitalism are that the majority (proletariat) do not have the means of production and must suffer economic difficulties. We can articulate the mechanisms leading to the collapse of capitalism as follows:

1. Violent class polarization between the capitalist and the proletariat makes the latter increase in terms of number but decrease in terms of standard of living.
2. Meanwhile, capitalism creates the conditions that makes a large number of the proletariat come to work and live together until they construct their collective class consciousness.
3. Therefore, the proletariat class, which has class consciousness, gathers together to eliminate capitalism.

Without the level of income factor, the socialist revolution cannot happen because the standard of living and the level of patience of the proletariat under capitalism determine their will or class consciousness in starting the revolution. But in the present time, in which we can claim that capitalism is highly developed, we can see that Marx's analysis is proved wrong because those without any means of production are not necessarily poor and sometimes they are much wealthier than those who own the means of production. More importantly, even if we hold that these people are still the proletariat because they lack the means of production, it does not make sense to presume that these people, whose standard of living and level of income are much better than other proletariats, would form their class consciousness of being the proletariat and have the motivation to overthrow capitalism. For instance, both A and B do not have the means of production and must sell their labour to those who have the means of production. We may hold that both of them belong to the proletariat class. But if we assume further that A is a university lecturer whose income is much higher than B who is a factory worker, then it is hard to believe that they would construct their collective class consciousness because they are different in terms of standards of living, benefits, and ways of life.<sup>9</sup>

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of the petty bourgeoisie class and the poor small proprietor. However, Marx does not see that those classes would exist throughout the development of capitalism, but rather sees that they would gradually disappear when capitalism is developed. In this sense, Marx is implying that the more developed is capitalism, the less amount of the petty capitalist and the small proprietor.

<sup>9</sup> For Marx, "way of life" is a decisive factor determining the definition of class, as he (2002, p. 231) writes

So, I would argue that the definition that the proletariat class means everyone who lacks the means of production and must sell their labour to capitalists becomes meaningless because we cannot reasonably hold that the socialist revolution could happen by such a proletariat.

Strictly speaking, when Marx speaks of the proletariat class, he does not mean to define who is and who is not the proletariat for the sake of *definition* itself, but he rather means to define who is and who is not a proletariat for the sake of *revolution*. This is why I claim that it is important to distinguish between the proletariat (in general) and the revolutionary proletariat. The former means those who have no means of production and must sell their labour to capitalists, the latter means those with those conditions, plus with the same economic difficulties and collective way of life. Marx's definition of the proletariat class must refer to the revolutionary proletariat class because only these people could form collective class consciousness. Marx's purpose of the concept of class polarization is not simply to analyse the development of capitalism, but to prove that the socialist revolution is inevitable.

So, the proletariat class, as a class of class polarization, can mean only the revolutionary proletariat class rather than the proletariat class in general. Let's consider the following texts from Marx:

*But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. (2002, p. 229)*

*The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeois, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeois produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeois, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. (2002, p. 233)*

*The first attempts of workers to associate among themselves always take*

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that "the proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family relations." We can see that "the family relations" become a factor in considering the similarity and difference of the definition of class. In this sense, Marx goes beyond simply the consideration of economic factors.

*place in the form of combinations.<sup>10</sup> Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance – combination. Thus combination always has a double aim, that of stopping competition among the workers, so that they can carry on general competition with the capitalist. If the first aim of resistance was merely the maintenance of wages, combinations, at first isolated, constitute themselves into groups as the capitalists in their turn unite for the purpose of repression, and in the face of always united capital, the maintenance of the association becomes more necessary to them than that of wages ... The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle. (1977b, pp. 213-214)*

*The small peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions, but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France's bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small holding, admits of no division of labor in its cultivation, no application of science and, therefore, no multiplicity of development, no diversity of talents, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it itself directly produces the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in*

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that "combinations" in this context do not simply mean the gathering of the proletariat class in general, but mean the gathering of the proletariat class in factory to work collectively. This passage is not a normative statement but a descriptive one, where Marx tries to explain how certain people become the revolutionary class. He also argues that although the proletariat would become revolutionary, they are simply a class in itself rather than a class for itself. The difference is that a class in itself is certain group of people who have common objective benefits, e.g., high wages, etc. but a class for itself is when those people become aware of their collective class benefits and start to fight for such a benefit for their class.

*intercourse with society. The small holding, the peasant and his family; alongside them another small holding, another peasant and another family ... In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile contrast to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union, and no political organization, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them the rain and the sunshine from above. The political influence of the small peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself. (1978, p. 608)*

From the above passages, we can see that Marx, in order to define the proletariat class, not only emphasizes the modes of production or relations of production, but also the very details of such modes of production. Marx never says that the peasant class could become the revolutionary class just as the proletariat class. Although peasants may have their class benefits contradictory to other classes, they cannot form their collective class consciousness because they work separately rather than collectively as their modes of production and ways of life do not force them to work and live together directly compared to the proletariat class. Although Marx perceives the peasant class as the exploited and poor class just as the proletariat class, he always insists that only the proletariat class is revolutionary while the peasant class is not. The question is why Marx has such a conclusion? Of course, what obviously distinguishes the peasant class from the proletariat class is that while the former still owns some means of production, the latter does not. But if we carefully consider Marx's above passages, we can see that another important factor that Marx uses to distinguish these two classes is that while the former's ways of life are separated due to the characteristics of their relations of production, the latter's is collective and socialistic due to the characteristics of their relations of production between themselves and capitalists and between themselves and other fellow proletariats. Marx, therefore, argues that the peasant class cannot be the revolutionary class not because they are rich and have

better standards of living than the proletariat class,<sup>11</sup> or simply because they still own some means of production, but because the fact that they still own some means of production makes them work and live separately rather than collectively; they cannot form collective class consciousness just like the case of the proletariat class. In other words, for Marx, the proletariat class only means the factory worker. I agree with McCarthy (1978, p. 78) who argues that, according to Marx, the proletariat class is defined narrowly to mean only those who work for wages in the large-scale factory collectively *and* who are also poor and propertyless; all of these factors constitute the proletariat class.

We can say that the modern middle class cannot be called the revolutionary proletariat class because their ways of life are separated due to their modes of production. Although they do not have the means of production and must sell their labour for wages like the proletariat class, the difference between them and the proletariat class is that while the proletariat class is forced by a condition of their modes of production to work and live together, the modern middle class is allowed to work and live separately. Moreover, as the standard of living of these modern middle classes is not getting worse as Marx predicts in the case of the proletariat class (Marx & Engels, 2002, p. 233), therefore, they are not the proletariat class. For Marx, only the proletariat class is revolutionary while other classes are reactionary and conservative (p. 231). This is because he views the proletariat class as having a way of life which is universal<sup>12</sup> and radical toward private property. The emancipation of the proletariat class means the emancipation of all classes because the characteristic of the proletariat class is classlessness. Since they have no means of production and are forced to work in factories with other fellow workers, they learn and develop class consciousness collectively and universally. They are the most radical in fighting capitalism because they do not fight for their specific benefits as other classes, e.g., the petty bourgeoisie or the peasant class fight for their specific class benefits because they still have

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<sup>11</sup> In this sense, Callinicos' argument (1995, p. 194) that some of modern middle classes whose standards of living are not better than factory workers cannot be called middle classes cannot be used to reason that these people are the proletariat class because their ways of life are separated. So, although some modern middle class people would be poor just like factory workers, they cannot be called the proletariat class.

<sup>12</sup> Marx applies the conception of the distinction between "universality" and "particularity" from German philosophy, especially Hegel's philosophy, to the context of political economy: the universal class refers only to the proletariat class because their class benefits really represent the benefits of all exploited human beings, so their class benefits become the same thing as that of all human beings around the world. However, Marx's idea has been criticized as a misuse of Hegel's philosophy. For instance, Lovell (1988) argues that while Hegel proposes that we can overcome the particularity and attain the universality only if we reconcile the differences of each individual (particularities) with the universality, Marx proposes that we can attain the universality only if we eliminate all particularities.



their private property to protect. Given this logic, we can say that the modern middle class is not the proletariat class because their ways of life are not as revolutionary as the factory workers. Their class struggle (if they do) would not destroy capitalism universally but would defend their narrow benefits. The point is that if the modern middle class cannot be called the proletariat class even according to Marx's original thought, then the fact that the existence of this class is quite stable in developed capitalism would mean that the tendency of the development of capitalism is opposite to Marx's prediction. Hence, Marx's prediction is unsuccessful.

### III. Four Potential Criticisms

In this section, I will extend and clarify my argument by responding to four possible criticisms. I choose this way of presentation because this allows me to further elaborate on each aspect of the argument. Let me discuss these four criticisms in turn.

The First Criticism: my argument ignores the specific historical characteristics of each society and treats Marx's analysis of the development of capitalism as if it could be applied to every society around the world.. In fact, Marx never says that the development of the class struggle would be the same everywhere; in other words, my argument seems to perceive Marx's thought as too mechanic rather than dialectic. I agree that Marx's analysis is not absolutely mechanic, as he discusses the difference between the Asiatic mode of production and European feudalism, and argues that the characteristics of private property in each pre-capitalist society are different and significantly affects their development of capitalism (Marx, 1964). Thus, it is not always the case that every society must start primitively, and transform to a slavery society, and then a feudal society, and then a capitalist society. In this sense, I cannot deny this criticism *if* I interpret Marx's idea as such a mechanic theory. Nevertheless, this criticism is irrelevant to my argument. First, I do not argue that Marx's analysis must be applicable in the same way everywhere, but I specifically focus on *developed* capitalist societies which is the unit of Marx's analysis. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that every *developed* capitalist society must develop similarly as Marx predicts around the world. Second, even if Marx would say that each pre-capitalist society has different characteristics which would affect their own capitalist characteristics, he never proposes that the characteristic of each *developed* capitalist society would be so significantly different that could make the characteristic of class polarization between the capitalist and the proletariat different or even opposite in each society.

The Second Criticism: the modern middle class is the proletariat class, but they do not have class consciousness to accept themselves as the proletariat just because they are deceived by the fact that they are better than other fellow proletariats

(Callinicos, 1995, p. 193).<sup>13</sup> I would argue that this criticism is a misinterpretation of Marx's idea as follows. First, as I have argued, according to Marx, the proletariat class is revolutionary not only because they lack their own means of production or live on wages but also because they are forced to work and live collectively. They become a universal and radical class, as they fight not only for their class but also for all human beings (Howard & King, 1985, pp. 20-21). Marx argues that both the capitalist and the proletariat objectively suffer from alienation, but while the former welcomes this alienation because it grants them wealth and material comfort, the latter actually suffers from this alienation, as it makes them powerless and inhumane (Marx and Engels, 1962, p. 51). In this sense, McCarthy (1978, p. 21) correctly articulates Marx's idea: "the consciousness of the proletariat is not a class consciousness, but a human consciousness - a recognition of the absolute contradiction between human nature (essence) and the conditions of life in bourgeois society (existence). This consciousness, potentially common to all members of society, is actualized fully only in the proletariat." According to Marx, all human beings, including those in exploitative classes, have the same essence. But, in an actual capitalist society, only the proletariat class can be aware of the alienation between their actual life and their human essence; they explicitly suffer from such alienation (Fromm, 2011, p. 56; Howard & King, 1985, p. 37). Given this logic, we could say that the modern middle class is not the proletariat class because although they, like everyone else, cannot avoid the alienation between the actual life and their human essence, they do not realize such alienation. Their standards of living are significantly higher than the proletariat; they still have the narrow benefits of their class to protect, which are not the same as that of the proletariat class. As they still have something to gain from capitalism, they do not have reasons to eliminate it.

Second, some scholars may argue that the modern middle class can be aware of their real class status only if they are encouraged and organized, e.g., to educate them, to make them participate with the factory worker, etc. But this is simply a misunderstanding of Marx's idea. It should be noted that Marx never proposes that there should be a political organization of the petty bourgeoisie or the farmer in the same way as a trade union. This is because he sees that their ways of life, due to their modes of production, cannot make them go beyond the particularity of their narrow class benefits. Marx, therefore, never easily proposes that a socialist revolution would happen only if we just make *anyone* aware of their alienation. In contrast, Marx strongly criticizes such a proposal as *utopian socialism*, as it tries to start a revolution without scientific and objective knowledge. He sees that only the proletariat class is appropriate for the tasks of the revolution, as their *objective* and *actual*

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<sup>13</sup> This criticism is based on an argument that the workers do not want to revolt against capitalism because the workers sometimes lack their class consciousness (false consciousness), and the solution is to organize and educate them (Ware, 2019, p. 99).

conditions of life allow them to do so. In this sense, the modern middle class cannot be the revolutionary proletariat class because they do not have the “objective conditions” which would allow them to develop their class consciousness for the revolution.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Marx never sees that the capitalist class, the petty bourgeoisie class, and the small farmer class could be the revolutionary class, despite the fact that he argues that everyone and every class, including these classes, all encounter alienation from their real human essence. The question is why does Marx not propose that if these classes are encouraged and organized to become aware of this fact, then they could become revolutionary? This is because Marx sees that these classes do not have the “objective conditions” which would make them want to destroy their alienation. Marx never simply argues that people could become revolutionary just because their real nature is alienated, whether they are aware of it or not. Instead, he insists that they could become revolutionary only if they have the “objective conditions” for an awareness of their alienation. Although the modern middle class is surely the proletariat class according to Marx's definition of the relations of production, they are not in relation to Marx's analysis of class polarization, in which Marx always refers to the revolutionary proletariat class rather than the proletariat class in general.

Third, I argue that Marx puts an emphasis on the means of production factor (i.e., those who hold the means of production and those who do not) as the definition of classes because he considers such a factor as the cause or condition for the objective conditions of the development of class consciousness. Marx takes it for granted that those who do not hold the means of production are always poor and must work and live with other people collectively, so, for him, the means of production factor is treated as the definition of classes. But I would argue that Marx fails to anticipate that those people could be rich and do not need to work and live with other people collectively. It is not always the case, therefore, that the means of production factor must be the cause for the development of class consciousness; Marx fails to search for the causes for the objective conditions of the development of class consciousness. I would propose that, aware of it or not, Marx could not define the revolutionary proletariat class without taking the sorts of work factor into account; in this sense, I would argue that Callinicos (1995, p. 191) is wrong in saying that the sorts of work factor is irrelevant to Marx's definition of the proletariat class. Callinicos is right in saying

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<sup>14</sup> This is the very foundation of the way Marx thinks about historical development, or what many scholars would call “historical materialism.” Marx (2000, p. 426) confirms that consciousness must be explained by *material* conditions of human existence, and not vice versa. Thus, it would be against Marx's materialism if one suggests that the modern middle class could be the revolutionary class *only if* they develop their class consciousness even if their material (or objective) conditions of their existence do not support them to develop their consciousness in the first place.

that Marx, in giving his definition of the proletariat class, only focuses on the “relations of production” rather than “sorts of work”, as Marx himself writes that the proletariat class consists of productive and unproductive labours,<sup>15</sup> hence the sort of work is not the definition of the proletariat class. But an important point is that when Marx talks about the tendency of capitalism, particularly class polarization, he does not talk about the proletariat class in a general sense or the proletariat class of “every sort of work” according to Marx’s own theoretical definition of the proletariat class. Instead, he only refers to the proletariat class that has the potential to lead the socialist revolution – the “revolutionary proletariat class”: the proletariat class of the physical sort of work that works in a large factory. This is because they are the only class that has the “objective conditions” that allow them to develop their class consciousness for the revolution.

Given this, it is more accurate to say that, according to Marx’s definition, any propertyless class could be counted as the proletariat class in a particular situation only if such a particular situation allows them to develop class consciousness. Therefore, the propertyless middle class in the modern situation could not be counted as the proletariat class because the modern situation does not allow them to develop class consciousness. McCarthy (1978, p. 69) argues that, indeed, the heart of Marx’s thought, especially the concept of the historical/revolutionary mission of the proletariat class, is not based on a scientific concept that can be proved by any empirical evidence, but based on a philosophical and purely speculative concept of human nature/essence. In other words, according to McCarthy, Marx’s idea that the proletariat class possesses potential revolutionary power is not based on his observation of workers’ actual attitudes and behaviours, but on his concept of human essence which cannot be proved by empirical observation.

I agree with McCarthy on the point that Marx’s concept of the proletariat class is not based on a rigorously scientific theory as Marx would claim, but on a philosophical and speculative theory. But I disagree with McCarthy on the point that the idea of the revolutionary mission of the proletariat class is also based on a “purely” speculative concept. Although McCarthy is right that Marx’s reason for this assertion is not because the *actual* proletariat really wants to start a revolution by themselves, this does not mean that Marx’s reason must be based on a “purely” speculative concept. In fact, I would argue, Marx’s reason begins with his assessment of the “objective conditions” of the proletariat class: Marx thinks that the proletariat class in an advanced capitalist society has the objectively material conditions for the revolution. Since the proletariat is very poor and has a way of life that enables them to easily construct collective class consciousness, they do not have private property or interests independent of that of other proletariats. Of course, we can question if

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<sup>15</sup> I will discuss Marx’s distinction between productive and unproductive labours in relation to class polarization in the Third Criticism.

Marx's assessment of the objective situations is correct. But my point here is that Marx does not begin with the idea that the revolutionary mission could be assigned to "anyone" that Marx desires as if it is based on a purely speculative theory. In contrast, Marx begins with the consideration of the "objective conditions" of every class, and then he searches for the most appropriate class. In this sense, Marx does not ignore empirical evidence at all. Given this, we can understand why the modern middle class, who, of course, is alienated, cannot be counted as the "revolutionary" proletariat class.

The Third Criticism: Callinicos claims that since Marx's definition of the proletariat class consists of productive and unproductive labourers, the modern middle class who do not have the means of production and must work for wages should be counted as the proletariat class because they labour to make their livings, though some of them are unproductive labourers. I have touched upon this issue in the previous criticism: I have argued that when Marx talks about class polarization, he always refers to "the revolutionary proletariat class" rather than the mere "proletariat class" according to his theoretical definition of the proletariat class. Thus, Callinicos' reason cannot be used to support the claim that the modern middle class should be viewed as the proletariat class in relation to class polarization according to Marx's understanding. Let's read the following passage from Marx (2002, pp. 226-227) at length

*In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed – a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market. Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also of labour, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness increases, the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labour increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increase of*

*the work exacted in a given time or by increased speed of the machinery, etc. Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeoisie class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. (underline added)*

I need to cite Marx's long passage here to show the overall context of Marx's message, in which we can see that when Marx talks about "the revolutionary proletariat class" he refers to the productive labour class only. As he writes: "a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital" (p. 227). Marx (1977a, pp. 394-396) used to say that unproductive labourers do not produce surplus value, so they cannot increase capital. Here Marx refers to the revolutionary proletariat class that increases capital. Moreover, it is obvious that, according to Marx, the revolutionary proletariat class means the very poor proletariat class that works collectively in a large-scale factory only. I would also add that Marx's concept of human or human essence plays a crucial role here, although he does not refer to such a concept explicitly in the above passage. In order to understand why Marx would hold that only the factory proletariat class could be counted as the revolutionary proletariat class, we should understand the connection between Marx's concept of human essence and his concept of the revolutionary class.

Marx argues that one of the human essences is to work – physical and mental labour – consciously for the real benefits of themselves and others rather than to work just because they are economically forced to make their daily livings and to work on something monotonous all the time due to the division of labour.<sup>16</sup> As capitalism deprives humans of this essence (i.e., causing human alienation), capitalism should be abolished. Marx & Engels write in *The German Ideology* (1998, p. 53) that a communist society would differ from a capitalist society as while in a capitalist society we are all under a strict division of labour (i.e., we must work monotonously), in a communist society we are all able to work as we desire (i.e., we could be a hunter today and a critic tomorrow); in a communist society we are not forced to work monotonously. The division of labour under capitalism destroys the unique characteristic of humans (human essence) as humans under capitalism must work on something monotonous all the time. Marx (1962, p. 51) anticipates that the factory proletariat

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<sup>16</sup> For insightful discussion of Marx's concept of human essence and alienation, please see Fromm (2011), Byron (2016), and Raekstad (2018).

class would really feel this human alienation; they can really see themselves as split into the real human and the alienated labourer, while other classes could not see and do not want to destroy their alienation. Because of this, Marx argues that only the factory proletariat class, who must work collectively and monotonously, can be considered as the revolutionary class. So, I would argue that Callinicos's argument cannot be used to support Marx's anticipation of the capitalist development because unproductive labour cannot increase capital and the modern middle class does not suffer as much as the factory proletariat class. Though they must still work monotonously, they are still far from how the factory proletariat class works. The modern middle class does not have the objective conditions to develop class consciousness.

The Fourth Criticism: my argument may be criticized that though my criticism may be applied to Marx's original thinking, it cannot criticize Marxism, as it ignores the fact that Marxism itself has been developing from Marx's original thinking. In other words, my argument seems inadequate to cope with the latest developments in Marxist theory. It is true that my argument can be applied to Marx's original thought only. But as I stated that this paper aims to examine the thought of Marx only rather than Marxism as a whole, this criticism seems irrelevant. Throughout this paper, I never propose that Marxism (or every Marxist theorist) fails because they all cannot explain or anticipate the development of capitalism; instead, I simply propose that Marx (and Marx only) fails because his prediction of the development of capitalism never happens in the real world. Therefore, if anyone wants to give a novel definition of the proletariat class so that the modern middle class could be held as the revolutionary proletariat class, then I would not have any problem at all. The only problem I would have is when it is claimed that such a novel definition is compatible with Marx's concept of the proletariat class and his prediction.

There has always been an attempt by contemporary Marxists to develop and revise Marx's original concept of the proletariat class in order to include other new classes which Marx never considered (Ware, 2019, p. 231). One obvious example is the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri who propose the concept of *multitude*. They propose that the revolutionary class in the present day must be interpreted more broadly than just the original definition of the working class. "Multitude" is, therefore, broader than "the factory working class" as it includes "every sort" of labour, even unwaged labour because they argue that the factory working class has lost its role as the dominant producer in modern capitalism to what they call "immaterial labour" - labour that produces immaterial things such as services, information, knowledge, discourse, etc. They say that such labour should be viewed as the proletariat class because they all have the potential to start a revolution, and that the current society, which they call the era of "empire," has already made production become social production; all sorts of labour have already become social labour (Hardt and Negri, 2004,

p. 131, 135). All this is an important condition that makes all of them have the potential to start a revolution at the global level (Hardt and Negri, 2001, p. 52). Hardt and Negri (2004, pp. 106-107) see that the revolutionary mission must be assigned to “multitude” rather than merely “the factory working class” as they see the difference between them. According to the authors, “multitude” is much broader than the old definition of the working class which excludes various *unwaged* classes; multitude would include *every* form of labour. Their idea of multitude as the revolutionary class is significantly different from Marx's original concept of the proletariat class. In fact, Hardt and Negri (2004, pp. 140-141) even accept explicitly that although their thoughts are influenced by Marx's method in some aspects, their concrete proposal significantly differs from that of Marx. Hardt and Negri accept that the social reality has changed since Marx's days, and thus, theories (except Marx's method) should no longer be held as they have become incompatible with the new social reality. In this sense, knowingly or not, Hardt and Negri already accept that Marx's prediction of the capitalist development is wrong. I think that their proposal, which is different from that of Marx, is interesting and could be held as the model of a revolution in our time, but my point in this paper is that we cannot use their proposal as a defence of Marx's prediction because they even accept Marx's failure (so we need a new theory based on his method). In this paper, I criticize only Marx's ideas, so my argument cannot be criticized for failing to address Marxism after Marx.

## Conclusion

I proposed that the modern middle class cannot be counted as the proletariat class in Marx's original concept of the proletariat class. Although Marx seems to theoretically define the proletariat as productive and unproductive labour without taking income level, standard of living, way of life, etc., into account, Marx clearly defines the proletariat class as productive labour who work collectively in large-scale factories with a poor standard of living when he predicts the development of capitalism. Marx predicts that the more developed capitalism is, the more violent class polarization between the capitalist and the proletariat would become; this would lead to the socialist revolution by the proletariat class. But we have rather seen the stable existence of the modern middle class – those who do not have the means of production and must work for wages as the factory proletariat class - means we cannot count them as the proletariat class according to Marx's understanding. The existence of the modern middle class is a concrete example of Marx's failure – the development of capitalism does not lead to class polarization as Marx predicts. Callinicos criticizes this argument as the misinterpretation of Marx's concept of the proletariat class. He proposes that the middle class is the proletariat class according to Marx's definition, which means that Marx is still successful in predicting the development of capitalism. I criticized his argument by proposing that we need to make a distinction between “the proletariat class” and “the revolutionary



proletariat class,” and that when Marx talks about the development of capitalism and class polarization, he always refers to class polarization between the capitalist and “the revolutionary proletariat class” only. This is because Marx always talks about the “causes” or “conditions” for the revolution: the proletariat class, as the antagonist, of the capitalist class must have the objective conditions such as collective benefit, way of life, etc. that allow them to develop class consciousness for the revolution. We cannot, therefore, count the middle class as the proletariat class when we talk about the development of capitalism because they do not have the objective conditions that allow them to develop “class in itself” and “class for itself.”

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