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**Kolja Lindner**

## **Hegemonic Orientalism and Historical Materialism: Karl Marx, Edward Said, and Mahdi Amel**

Edward Said only wrote a few—critical—words on Marx in *Orientalism*, but these have caused a discomfort that rattles devoted Marx scholars to this day—so much so that “Against Said” was almost chosen as a subtitle for a widely read 2010 book on Marx’s view of the Global South<sup>1</sup>. Traditional Marxism’s opposition to postcolonial criticism should therefore not come as a surprise. In engaging with Said’s work, we do find arguments that are worth considering; others, however, call for serious challenges. The first release of an English translation of parts of Mahdi Amel’s work—unfortunately ignored by Western scholarship so far—gives us the opportunity to revisit the encounter between Marxism and postcolonialism as Amel comments extensively on Said’s reading of Marx. In what follows, I want to address two problems that arise in Amel’s analysis and to present solutions based on Marx’s work, solutions that avoid the inconsistencies often found in defences of Marx’s work against postcolonial critique.

According to Said, Marx (1) advances “the notion of an Asiatic economic system in his 1853 analyses of British rule in India”<sup>2</sup> as well as the idea of a “fundamentally lifeless Asia.”<sup>3</sup> Both notions are by this account “perfectly fitted ... to a standard Orientalist undertaking” (ibid.), that is to an effort “to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively.”<sup>4</sup> This view was based on “Romantic and even messianic”<sup>5</sup> sources of the kind that Said locates in Goethe’s *West-östlicher Diwan*. (2) A contradiction arises as “Marx’s moral equation of Asiatic loss with the British colonial rule he condemned gets skewed back towards the old inequality between East and West” (ibid.). Against the backdrop of an essentialist homogenization, Marx severely downplayed the suffering of colonized people: “they are Orientals and hence have to be treated in other ways.”<sup>6</sup> He reconciled condemnation and affirmation of “the human depredation introduced into [the Asiatic] system by English colonial interference, rapacity, and outright cruelty” (ibid.) through the notion of the “historical necessity”<sup>7</sup> of a social transformation in Asia.

(1) Amel rejects Said’s first criticism because it depends on a “monism of culture” (p. 482) opposed to a social conceptualization of thought that situates it in class relations and thus carves out its historicity. Said is accused of reproducing “history from the viewpoint of dominant thought” (p. 482). It is a standard operation within Marxism to inscribe ideas into social conditions and thus to deconstruct essentialist representations. Marx sought “to explain every cultural form as the historical product of the material circumstances shaping the existence of the human group that bears the culture in question.”<sup>8</sup> *The German Ideology*, written in 1845/46, would in this way enable a critique of the “essentialist definition of the West”<sup>9</sup> and the East alike. According to Amel, Said ignored this approach advocated by Marx and therefore wrongly

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Anderson at the workshop “Marx, Subaltern Studies and the Global South” held on May 26, 2015 at the Global South Studies Centre of the University of Cologne, Germany. His book is the following: Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*.

<sup>2</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 153.

<sup>3</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 154.

<sup>4</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 154.

<sup>6</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 155.

<sup>7</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 153.

<sup>8</sup> Achcar, “Marx, Engels and ‘Orientalism’,” 80.

<sup>9</sup> Achcar, “Marx, Engels and ‘Orientalism’,” 81.

categorized him as Orientalist. *Orientalism* reproduced a homogenizing and essentializing discourse according to which “thought in the West is uniform in its structure and reducible to [the category] Western thought” (p. 487). Said “‘traveled’ to the Arab intellectual field as a variation on ‘nationalist thought’,”<sup>10</sup> an ideology that Amel opposed.<sup>11</sup>

Amel is right to remind us of the historicity and discontinuity of thought, but his criticism is ill-conceived for two reasons. *First*, his understanding of historicity is reductionist; it conceives of ideas solely in their “historical class character” (p. 481). The Lebanese Marxist thus disregards race and gender as forms of domination and identifies specific ideas as necessary expression of class positions. Hence, the alternatives were “a dominant bourgeois thought or a revolutionary proletarian thought” (p. 487), and Said chose the former. However, racializing discourses and practices that are an important feature of Orientalism are not equivalent to class representations and praxis. *Second*, Amel’s interpretation of Orientalism as bourgeois thought hinders our understanding of it as a hegemonic discourse.<sup>12</sup> As such, Orientalism is socially situated in an imperial project of the European ruling classes. But it also forged social representations beyond said social group and made its way into revolutionary thought. This is all the harder to recognize because Orientalism in Marx’s 1853 essays for the *New York Daily Tribune*—and even after<sup>13</sup>—does not take the form that Said claims it does (where “Orientals” receive different treatment because of their inherent difference from Europeans), nor does it mainly stem from Goethe. Further complications result from the fact that Marx, in his late work, overcame Orientalist representations.

In 1853, Marx conceives of India as a country with a static social structure. Its climate necessitated an artificial irrigation system, which, as a result of the low level of social development and the sheer size of the country, could be created and maintained only by a central state authority. The bulk of the populace lived in isolated villages, that is, in a village system typical of “all Oriental peoples.”<sup>14</sup> This system, characterized by unity between agriculture and manufactures (handicrafts), inhibited the development of productivity and discouraged the emergence of urban centers. Marx regards the structure and isolation of India’s village communities as “the solid foundation of Oriental despotism” and of the country’s “stagnatory” life.<sup>15</sup> Finally, he assumes that the state in this “Asiatic system” is “the real landlord”<sup>16</sup> due to complicated tax and property laws.

The latter element is particularly important as it is linked to Marx’s 1853 vision of history, which I will discuss in more detail further on. Let us just note here that the absence of private, landed property was understood as an absence of class division, and by extension of social conflict and historical progress. This is why English colonialism, with its introduction of

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<sup>10</sup> Frangie, “Theorizing from the Periphery,” 477.

<sup>11</sup> See Bou Ali, “Mahdi Amel’s Colonial Mode of Production.”

<sup>12</sup> According to Gramsci (see Gramsci, *Selections*), hegemony ‘functions’ through two elements: a strategic part—the formation of an alliance of various social forces working toward a certain aim—and a motivational part—social representations legitimizing existing forms of domination and encouraging people to productively engage with them (see K. Lindner, *Die Hegemoniekämpfe*, 26-66). Orientalism plays precisely this role: it helps to organize an imperial alliance that goes beyond classes and diffuses othering as an ideology of white superiority.

<sup>13</sup> There is no space to engage with the debate on Althusser’s “epistemological break” here (see Althusser, *For Marx*, 31-9). However, I believe that it is impossible to deny an important development in Marx’s thought: from Young Hegelianism to social philosophy and critique of political economy to his late writings addressing ethnology and radical democracy. Serious work on Marx has to recognize these shifts even if the concepts that one might use to apprehend them are controversial. I will return to the different phases of Marx’s oeuvre below.

<sup>14</sup> Marx, “The British Rule in India,” 128.

<sup>15</sup> Marx, “The British Rule in India,” 132.

<sup>16</sup> Marx, “The War Question,” 215.

private property, is credited with inducing a social revolution that presumably pushed India forward. More importantly, this conception of India's social structure—prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western literature—stems predominantly from the French doctor and physicist François Bernier (1620-1688), who spent a total of twelve years in India. After his return to France in 1670, he published a highly influential travelogue<sup>17</sup> that was translated into several European languages and saw a number of different editions.<sup>18</sup> Bernier's narrative—which Said ignores—presents an exemplary “imaginative examination of things Oriental,”<sup>19</sup> identifying Europe as diligent, rational, enlightened, and dynamic, whereas India is trapped in a state of laziness, superstition, despotism, and stagnation.

The intellectual hegemony of this representation of India is illustrated by the fact that Marx relied, for his assessment of the subcontinent in 1853—just as Montesquieu and Voltaire had relied earlier<sup>20</sup>—on Bernier's account, even though, at the time, it was about 180 years old. In an 1853 letter to Engels, he claims that “on the subject of the growth of eastern cities one could hardly find anything more brilliant, comprehensive or striking than *Voyages contenant la description des états du Grand Mogol, etc.* by old François Bernier (for 9 years Aurangzeb's physician).”<sup>21</sup> “Bernier rightly sees,” Marx writes, “all the manifestations of the East—he mentions Turkey, Persia and Hindustan—as having a common basis, namely the *absence of private landed property*. This is the real *clef*, even to the eastern heaven.”<sup>22</sup> This counterfactual view<sup>23</sup> is perpetuated throughout Marx's work. In the *Grundrisse*, Asian societies are characterized by the absence of private land ownership, by monarchs who are “the exclusive proprietor[s] of the agricultural surplus product,”<sup>24</sup> and by the “unity of agriculture and manufactures.”<sup>25</sup> The latter factor is said to account for the fact that a transformation of property relations can be effected only “by means of altogether external influences”<sup>26</sup> such as colonial rule. After mentioning an “Asiatic mode of production”<sup>27</sup> in 1859, Marx, in the early 1860s, assumes that land was owned exclusively by the state in Asia<sup>28</sup> and that there was “unity of agriculture and industry” in the “Asiatic communal system.”<sup>29</sup> Here, too, he alludes affirmingly to “*Dr. Bernier*, who compares the Indian towns to army camps.”<sup>30</sup> Finally, in *Capital*, Volume One, we come across a reference to the “blending of agriculture and handicrafts,”<sup>31</sup> on which Marx blames the stagnation of Indian rural communes. Similarly, we find a passage about the state whose power is based on “the regulation of the water supply”<sup>32</sup> and in whose hands land ownership is supposedly concentrated. It therefore is England's burden, Volume Three adds, “to disrupt these small economic communities”<sup>33</sup> by expanding trade.

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<sup>17</sup> Bernier, *Travels*.

<sup>18</sup> I discuss Bernier's account in detail, including in its race and gender dimensions, in K. Lindner, “Marx's Eurocentrism.”

<sup>19</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> See Rubiés, “Oriental Despotism” and Minuti, “L'Inde.”

<sup>21</sup> Marx, “Marx to Engels, 2 June 1853,” 332.

<sup>22</sup> Marx, “Marx to Engels, 2 June 1853,” 333-4.

<sup>23</sup> see P. Anderson, *Lineages*, 487-92 and O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production*, 290-8.

<sup>24</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 467.

<sup>25</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 486.

<sup>26</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse*, 494.

<sup>27</sup> Marx, *A Contribution*, 263.

<sup>28</sup> See Marx, *Economic Manuscript of 1861-63*, 338.

<sup>29</sup> Marx, *Economic Manuscript of 1861-63*, 335.

<sup>30</sup> Marx, *Economic Manuscript of 1861-63*, 357.

<sup>31</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 362.

<sup>32</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 515, note.

<sup>33</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, 332.

Bernier's vision contributes to that "formidable library"<sup>34</sup> of Orientalism against which Marx eventually could have rebelled but did not—at least not before the late 1860s. This is particularly striking because Marx's critique of political economy, developed from the 1850s on, is concerned with epistemological issues: fetishism is conceived of as a false but necessary social representation that entraps all actors within capitalist society. Marx did not pay the same attention to the Orientalism that traverses his writings until that point. In fact—and this is where Said is right—Marx had much more in common with Orientalist discourses than Marxists are generally willing to admit. Nevertheless, this argument should be understood against the backdrop of the context sketched above: Marx mainly and naively imports "empirical" Orientalist elements into his highly problematic theory of historical materialism. To support Marx's technicist teleology as a non-essentialist and therefore non-Orientalist approach—as Amel does—is to ignore Marx's questionable view of colonialism.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, it seems more promising to anchor a critique of the Orientalist elements in Marx's writings in other parts of his work—especially the texts from the late 1860s on—that provide an alternative view of the Global South. The emergence of this understanding is not linked to a rise of "revolutionary proletarian thought" (p. 487), as Amel suggests. Rather it ought to be attributed to "the discovery of prehistory" and, relatedly, "the extension of knowledge of the rural non-capitalist societies enmeshed in a capitalist world, especially the works of Main, Firs and others on India."<sup>36</sup> Marx was now able to assess Asia based on realist accounts of its social structures. His 1879 notes on Maxim M. Kovalevsky's book *Communal Land Ownership: The Causes, Processes, and Consequences of its Disintegration* offer an important—but not isolated—deviation from his previous views. Here, Marx underscores "*private property* of different members of the [rural] commune"<sup>37</sup> in India, where—during the Mughal Empire—"the principle of private property was so solidly anchored...that the only remaining demand was that *such sales* [of real estate] *take place publicly*."<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, formerly used sources like Bernier are criticized for their ignorance of Sanskrit and their reliance on the Quran instead of historical analyses. On the other hand, the Orientalist Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron is praised for being "the *first to realise* that, in India, the Grand Mogul was not the *sole property owner*."<sup>39</sup> The idea of an absence of private landed property is finally seen as a materially grounded discourse of Western powers that legitimized the non-recognition of pre-colonial indigenous property and facilitated colonial expropriation. Instead of reproducing hegemonic Orientalism, as Marx did in the 1850s and 1860s, he now deconstructs it.

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<sup>34</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 157.

<sup>35</sup> Said's critic Sadik Jalal al-'Azm has made this argument in its pure form: "Marx's manner of analysing British rule in India in terms of an unconscious tool of history ... cannot be ascribed under any circumstances to the usurpation of Marx's mind by conventional Orientalistic verbiage. Marx's explanation (regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with it) testifies to his theoretical consistency in general, and to his keen realism in analysing specific historical situations. This is evident from the fact that Marx always tended to explain historical processes in terms of social agencies, economic struggles, political movements, and great personalities which simultaneously played the role of destroyers and creators. These were often cast by him in the guise of 'unconscious tools' of a history unfolding itself in stages and sometimes in inscrutable and unpredictable ways. There is nothing specific to either Asia or the Orient in Marx's broad theoretical interpretations of the past, present and future." (Al-'Azm, "Orientalism")

<sup>36</sup> Shanin, "Late Marx," 6. For a comprehensive account of Marx's late writings on non-European societies, see K. Lindner, "Late Marx."

<sup>37</sup> Marx, "Exzerpte aus M.M. Kovaleskij," 46.

<sup>38</sup> Marx, "Exzerpte aus M.M. Kovaleskij," 53.

<sup>39</sup> Marx, "Exzerpte aus M.M. Kovaleskij," 77.

(2) The second problem that arises from Said's reading concerns the contradiction between human suffering and social revolution, between devastation and progress. This contradiction is said to be resolved through Marx's idea of a "historically necessary" social transformation in Asia. Amel offers two arguments against Said's dismissal of Marx. (a) The first concerns the nature of the contradiction. He accuses Said of confusing dialectical thought with "logical *formalism*": the "material antagonism between stagnant traditional social structures that resist change, on the one hand, and the historical necessity of changing those very structures, on the other" would be replaced by a reasonable opposition in which "objects, like ideas, are to be arranged solely according to the following formula: either ... or...." (p. 485) (b) Amel's second argument is directed against the normativity that Said sees at work in the 1853 essays: "Marx observes the historical movement of undermining and dissolving Asian societies, and its respective relation to English colonization, from this viewpoint—the site of the objective process of history in its necessity, and not from a *moral* or 'humanist' position" (p. 492).

(a) What Amel presents as a consistent theoretical position in fact constitutes a problematic tendency in Marx's work from the mid-1840s until the late 1850s: historical materialism.<sup>40</sup> The basic framework for this tendency is established in 1859, when Marx grasps historical progress as the outcome of a contradiction between relations of production and productive forces: "At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production. ... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution."<sup>41</sup>

The tension driving society exist between the intellectual and material infrastructure of productive processes (productive forces) and its social framing in hierarchical command over these same processes (relations of production). The former have a historical tendency to grow, whereas the latter have to foster the productive forces in order to maintain themselves. Otherwise, the relations of production need to be adjusted. In the heartlands of capitalism, this adjustment is carried out by the proletariat through its conflicting relation to the bourgeoisie, that is, through class struggle. In the Global South, as we have seen above, that role belongs to Western imperialism. It is through this constant growth and revolution that we end up with different modes of production "marking progress in the economic development of society."<sup>42</sup>

This historical materialism, re-actualized in Amel's defence of Marx against Said's criticism and in his theoretical practice overall, is a philosophy of history: "Amel identifies the fundamental contradiction of all modes of production and the 'guiding thread' of Marxist materialism as that between the relations and forces of production."<sup>43</sup> As a teleology, this implies what Marx and Engels rightly rejected in Hegel, the Young Hegelians, and classical political economy: "a recipe or schema [...] for neatly trimming the epochs of history."<sup>44</sup> In the Brenner Debate<sup>45</sup> and the controversy following the publication of G.A. Cohen's 1978 book *Marx's Theory of History*,<sup>46</sup> this schema has been shown to be anachronistic, to falsely universalize features of capitalism to all historical epochs: "as soon as one begins to look for long stretches of stagnation and regression and stops working from images formed within capitalist

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<sup>40</sup> The detailed argument for a conception of historical materialism as a subsequently overcome phase in Marx's work can be found in K. Lindner and U. Lindner, "How Marx Got Rid of Historical Materialism."

<sup>41</sup> Marx, *A Contribution*, 263.

<sup>42</sup> Marx, *A Contribution*, 263.

<sup>43</sup> Bou Ali, "Mahdi Amel's Colonial Mode of Production," 248-9.

<sup>44</sup> Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 37.

<sup>45</sup> See Aston and Philpin, *The Brenner Debate*.

<sup>46</sup> See G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*.

economies, examples multiply rapidly.”<sup>47</sup> Hence, China witnessed a long period of development of the productive forces during the T’ang and the Sung Dynasty, followed by a long period of stagnation corresponding to the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties. The same applies to Europe: in Poland, agricultural productivity regressed between 1500 and 1800; it stagnated at the same time in France. Moreover, the idea of a constant growth in productive forces generously overlooks the “*coordination problem*.”<sup>48</sup> human beings may rationally develop means to satisfy their desires, but this does not mean that the aggregated result of these actions consists in growing productive forces. Sociopolitical institutions are necessary for that coordination, but this takes away the “*explanatory primacy*”<sup>49</sup> that Marx attributes to productive forces. Finally, the teleology of the development of productive forces contradicts the contingent outcomes of class struggles that, in theory, are meant to simply carry out an already known pattern of development.

From the mid-1860s on, Marx completely revised the application of historical materialism to colonialism. It is through his engagement with the Irish case that he learnt about colonial oppression and super-exploitation.<sup>50</sup> This preoccupation “provided the key to India and Algeria,”<sup>51</sup> that is, to an appropriate understanding of the whole of colonialism. This is now seen as a historical phenomenon that equals underdevelopment, which introduces barriers before the establishment of a capitalist mode of production comparable to the one in the West. In India, Marx now notes, “the suppression of communal landownership ... was nothing but an act of English vandalism, pushing the native people not forwards but backwards.”<sup>52</sup> The hope of salvation and any aspiration for a historical masterplan dissolve in the face of these insights.

**(b)** The absence of any ethical considerations in Marx’s historical materialism results from its claims to historical objectivity and necessity. No normative criteria to evaluate historical development are needed where the contradiction between forces and relations of production drives society progressively beyond the existing state of things. No politics are necessary in the metropole of capitalism as the proletariat will simply have to work toward freeing the fully developed productive forces from their fetters. On the periphery of capitalism—as Amel argues—the simple observation of the “historical movement of undermining and dissolving Asian societies, and its respective relation to English colonization” (p. 523) will be sufficient to obtain emancipation.

This is a politically underdetermined conception of emancipation with an avant-garde flair. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels state: “Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise.”<sup>53</sup> What needs to be done is not the outcome of democratic deliberation, but a process supposedly established by laws of history. Those who know these laws are entitled to lead those who have yet to recognize them, Marx and Engels declare in the mid-1840s: it is up to the communists to explain “*what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do.*”<sup>54</sup>

Amel is absolutely right: in 1853, Marx does not offer any critique of colonialism “from a moral or ‘humanist’ position” (p. 492). But it is no particular accomplishment to not dispose of any criteria to evaluate colonialism and therefore to end up with a defeatist, and finally affirmative, conception of Western imperialism. We should credit Said with pointing to that

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<sup>47</sup> J. Cohen, Review of *Karl’s Marx’s Theory of History*, 268.

<sup>48</sup> J. Cohen, Review of *Karl’s Marx’s Theory of History*, 264.

<sup>49</sup> Buchanan, “Marx, Morality, and History,” 111.

<sup>50</sup> See Marx, “Notes;” Marx, “Outline” and Hazelkorn, “Some problems.”

<sup>51</sup> Achcar, “Marx, Engels and ‘Orientalism’,” 91.

<sup>52</sup> Marx, “Drafts,” 365.

<sup>53</sup> Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, 37.

problem, although, in accusing Marx of essentializing the “Orientals,” he does not identify its real grounds. What would a normative assessment of colonialism in line with Marx look like if we reject the anti-ethics of historical materialism at work in the *Tribune* essays?

I suggest that we rely on two normative strategies of immanent critique presented by Marx.<sup>55</sup> The first opposes the coercion of capitalist markets with an understanding of freedom and autonomy that is consistent with human nature. From this point of view, capitalism is assessed negatively because it undermines the historically given possibility of “the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature.”<sup>56</sup> The “accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, [and] mental degradation”<sup>57</sup> produced by capitalist accumulation is incompatible with the basic provision for every human being. It is the latter that Marx sees as “most favourable to, and worthy of, ... human nature.”<sup>58</sup> Human beings are vulnerable and rely on other human beings with certain basic needs, such as the needs for useful activity and recognition. They are equipped with empathy, reflexivity, and practical reason. Emancipation therefore should lead to “a higher form of society...in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle.”<sup>59</sup>

It is precisely in this sense that colonial violence constitutes a wrong. Through segregation, humiliation, and dehumanization, it prevents human interaction, cooperation, and resonance, thus fundamentally damaging the physical and mental well-being of the colonized (see Fanon 1961: 1-52). Its ubiquitous and arbitrary violence causes unnecessary suffering. It blocks equality and reciprocity in human relations and relies on “unjust relations of domination, oppression, and misrecognition” (Bufacchi 2017: 210). Colonial violence makes “the victims and survivors feel vulnerable, violated, degraded, and inferior to the perpetrators of violence, morally and politically. Being the subject of arbitrary violence undermines a person’s self-respect, self-esteem, and epistemic status.” (ibid.: 209) It is on the complete opposite of a society ensuring free individual development and the collective organization of social reproduction.

A second normative strategy of immanent critique can be found in Marx polemics against doctrinaire criticisms which have no foundation in existing normative standards: “We develop new principles for the world out of the world’s own principles. We do not say to the world: Cease your struggles, they are foolish; we will give you the true slogan of struggle.”<sup>60</sup> Immanent critique in this sense is a critical evaluation of existing self-understandings that makes a transformative claim and locates resources for that endeavor in existing normative orders. Hence Marx questions the social reality of these orders: “Reason has always existed, but not always in a reasonable form. The critic can therefore start out from any form of theoretical and practical consciousness and from the forms *peculiar* to existing reality develop the true reality as its obligation and its final goal.”<sup>61</sup>

In 1795, Kant put forward the idea of “the right of possession in common of the earth’s surface.”<sup>62</sup> This notion that people should be able to visit each other and to establish political relationships was understood as a cosmopolitan right and was at the basis of the consciousness surrounding global affairs in those days. However, Kant also states that “the *inhospitable* behavior of civilized, especially commercial, states in our part of the world, the injustice they show in *visiting* foreign lands and peoples (which with them is tantamount to *conquering* them)

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<sup>55</sup> This is indebted to Urs Lindner’s distinction of different modes of immanent critique in Marx’s work (see U. Lindner 2011: 106-12).

<sup>56</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, 807.

<sup>57</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 640.

<sup>58</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, 807.

<sup>59</sup> Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 588.

<sup>60</sup> Marx, “Letters from the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,” 144.

<sup>61</sup> Marx, “Letters from the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,” 143.

<sup>62</sup> Kant “Towards perpetual peace,” 329.



goes to horrifying lengths.”<sup>63</sup> An immanent critique of this cosmopolitan norm assesses the reality of Western colonialism as a specific wrong: “the creation and upholding of a political association that denies its members equal and reciprocal terms of cooperation.”<sup>64</sup> And it can give us the true slogan of struggle against inhospitable behavior: anti-colonialism.

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Undoubtedly and despite his at least temporarily problematic conception of global affairs, historical development, and colonialism, Marx played an important role in influencing the theoretical and political projects of Marxist intellectuals in the Global South. In the Arab world in particular, Marx has served as an anchor in their confrontation with Orientalism. However, in their insistence on geographical particularity and the contingent outcomes of struggles, these intellectuals often distanced themselves from Marx’s historical materialism. Amel noted that the theoretical tools of Marxism “are themselves the main obstacles blocking the production of a Marxist theory and a scientific understanding of our problems.”<sup>65</sup> It is in this sense that we need to work on the deconstruction of elements in Marx’s work that hinder an adequate understanding of the Global South, and to develop those that foster such an understanding.

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<sup>63</sup> Kant “Towards perpetual peace,” 329.

<sup>64</sup> Ypi, “What’s Wrong with Colonialism,” 158.

<sup>65</sup> Amel quoted in Frangie, “Theorizing from the Periphery,” 468.

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