UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

# Marx and Engels's theory of history. Making sense of the race factor.

van Ree, E.

DOI
10.1080/13569317.2019.1548094
Publication date
2019
Document Version
Final published version
Published in
Journal of Political Ideologies

License
CC BY-NC-ND

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
van Ree, E. (2019). Marx and Engels's theory of history. Making sense of the race factor. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *24*(1), 54-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2019.1548094

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)*

Download date:10 Nov 2026

JOURNAL OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES
2019, VOL. 24, NO. 1, 54–73
https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2019.1548094

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

# Marx and Engels's theory of history: making sense of the race factor

Erik van Ree

Department of European Studies, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**ABSTRACT**

This article argues that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's theory of history contained racist components. In Marx and Engels's understanding, racial disparities emerged under the influence of shared natural and social conditions hardening into heredity and of the mixing of blood. They racialized skin-colour groups, ethnicities, nations and social classes, while endowing them with innate superior and inferior character traits. They regarded race as part of humanity's natural conditions, upon which the production system rested. 'Races' endowed with superior qualities would boost economic development and productivity, while the less endowed ones would hold humanity back. Marxist race thinking reflected common Lamarckian and Romantic-Nationalist assumptions of the era.

This article explores the racist components in the thought of Karl Marx and of Friedrich Engels. Their numerous horrendous comments on Slavs, 'Negroes', Bedouins, Jews, Chinese and many others are well known, but the logic behind these comments has not been sufficiently examined.

Marx and Engels applied the term *Rasse*, or the English *race*, to a wide variety of human collectives – from skin-colour groups to ethnicities, nations and even to social classes. It is tempting to assume that they were applying the term loosely and that they were only unthinkingly repeating the stereotypes and prejudices of the day. On the contrary, I will argue that this common interpretation means to miss the serious points they were making. Whereas formal definitions and theories of race indeed cannot be found in their writings, their scattered comments add up to quite a coherent position on the question.

Let me state at the outset that I will not take a position in the old debate about the degree of identity of views between Marx and Engels; this article is not intended as a contribution to that debate. My conclusion on the issue at hand will be that both men were racializing human collectives but that they did not see completely eye to eye on the question of the emergence of race.

The subject of Marx, Engels and racism remains a difficult one. Intellectually, it is counter-intuitive to assume that the authors of a worldview defining production and class as history's motive forces could have nurtured racist assumptions in any serious way. Politically, too, this is a fraught issue. The fact that Marx and Engels continue to be controversial figures easily stands in the way of balanced conclusions. Carlos Moore's

**CONTACT** Erik van Ree e.vanree@uva.nl

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

and Nathaniel Weyl's unconvincing characterizations of the founding fathers of modern communism as racists of the Aryanist type, and racists first and foremost, are cases in point.[1]

The issue is particularly problematic for scholars of the Marxist persuasion. Their plight might be compared to that of present-day Lutherans who somehow must come to terms with the anti-Semitic outbursts of the founder. It would be unfair to accuse the Marxists of covering up Marx's and Engels's derogatory and abusive language. On the contrary, they roundly condemn it.[2] The problem with Marxist analysis lies rather in its failure to make intellectual sense of Marx's and Engels's views of race. Most effort is invested in showing what these views *were not*; it is held that they were mere *Fremdkörper*, elements incompatible with the overall drift of the two men's thinking. The question of how we should interpret their racist observations, apart from their being troubling and disturbing, remains largely unanswered.

This intellectually thin way of handling the problem was pioneered by the Austromarxist Otto Bauer, who in 1907 rejected Engels's view that the small nations of the Habsburg Empire were doomed always to remain '*nations without history*'. Bauer insisted that Engels's writings against the South Slavs were incompatible with the materialist method Engels himself had pioneered with Marx.[3] Roman Rosdolsky, Michael Löwy and Kevin Anderson follow in Bauer's footsteps. These scholars suggest that Marx's and Engels's abusive comments on the South Slavs and on other nations and races were either politically motivated ad hoc products or residues of Hegelian idealism. No effort is spent on further exploring the logic behind these comments, which only makes sense if there is no underlying logic in the first place.[4]

In an exceptional Marxist contribution, Ephraim Nimni argues that Engels's treatment of the South Slavs *was* compatible with the materialist worldview. Nimni reinterprets Engels's shocking outbursts in socioeconomic and demographic terms. The latter's real point would have been that the small size and peasant nature of some of the Central-European nations prevented these nations from establishing economically viable nation-states and *therefore* doomed them to play a counter-revolutionary role in history.[5] Nimni's point is a valid one but, on the downside, this scholar makes the racist aspects of Engels's argumentation disappear from view altogether, and we are no closer to understanding them than we were.[6]

The Marxist sociology of race, race relations and racism focuses on the question of how historical materialism can be made to serve the study of these phenomena in the contemporary world. There is little to no discussion of Marx's own views of race in this literature.[7]

To make theoretical sense of the racist elements in Marx and Engels, two problems must be addressed. First of all, how could they have found a place in history for race, if class and production came first? To my knowledge, Weyl stands alone in having offered a solution for this problem. This author suggested that 'historical materialism might be superimposed on certain more fundamental conditions which shaped man's fate'. If Marx assumed that people of different races differed in 'ability and hence in civilization-potential', then 'The more capable peoples would be expected to move more swiftly through the dialectically determined phases of the historical process and this would in turn stimulate their civilizational level'.[8] Weyl suggests, in other words, that Marx

regarded race as an element *underlying* the economic basis of society. I will return to this extraordinarily fruitful suggestion later on.[9]

Second, all this remains speculation as long as it remains unclear whether Marx could have believed in the reality of racial communities with hereditarily defined 'civilization-potential' at all. Fortunately, this is a question that has been discussed in the literature at some length.

In Solomon Bloom's reading, Marx regarded racial–ethnic character traits not as immutable or inborn but as a product of economic and other environmental factors and permanently in flux, which is why he could not have been very concerned with race and biology.[10] Iring Fetscher acknowledges that Marx accepted inborn racial characteristics, but he would have been little concerned with them, as he believed inborn differences in due course would be erased.[11] If Marx and Engels made the human character flexible and dependent on the environment, racism seems to be ruled out. Yet M.M. Bober and Diane Paul suggest that, if human nature could be moulded by environmental factors, so could, possibly, the underlying human heredity. Thus, in Marx's imagination, it is precisely the environment that might have been instrumental in creating hereditary racial communities.[12]

Paul concludes that Marx and Engels were neither 'extreme racists' nor 'anti-racists'. Their use of biology remained 'sporadic, ad hoc and sometimes inconsistent'. But in her reading, they did share the 'typical attitudes of nineteenth-century Europeans', for whom it was normal to link a hierarchy of cultures to a biological substrate.[13] Amy Martin characterizes Engels's assessments of the Irish national character in his 1845 *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, as biological 'racialism'.[14] Regina Roth argues that Engels treated the Irish national character as a product of history, while at the same time believing that national character 'turned into "nature"' in the course of time.[15] Thus, the existing scholarly literature suggests that Marx and Engels could have prioritized environment and yet have believed in hereditary race.

For a final important introductory observation, undeniably Marx's and Engels's remarks on race are scattered and unsystematic. But there are very many, and their mutual coherence is strong enough to suggest an underlying, reconstructable view.

The weight of these remarks is increased in that they are scattered over all types of the two men's writings. They are found not only in private correspondence and in works that remained unpublished during their lifetimes, such as *The German Ideology*.[16] Race also appears in journalistic articles and in major published works such as Marx's *Capital*, and Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, his so-called *Anti-Dühring* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. I found no significant differences in the treatment of race between these various types of sources nor, for that matter, did I detect any fundamental shift in their views on race as expressed over time.

This article will not explore the question of Marx's and Engels's anti-Semitism. Obviously, this question overlaps with the racism issue, but it has its own ramifications. It would require more space than available here to be treated with the seriousness that it deserves.

## Racism: the definition

The term 'racism' postdates Marx and Engels. It came in use only in the twentieth century.[17] But what we now conceptualize as racism was in full bloom in the Western world during their lifetimes. The 1967 UNESCO 'Statement on Race and Racial Prejudice' defined racism as 'arranging groups hierarchically in terms of psychological and cultural characteristics that are immutable and innate'.[18] According to this definition, to be adhered to here, racism is about the attribution of *innate* inferior and superior character traits to human groups.[19]

Classically, racism works under the assumption that certain superficial phenotypical characteristics such as skin colour are hereditarily correlated with inferior or superior character traits. But the definition used here allows other, non-skin-colour types of groups, such as ethnicities or even social classes, to be made subject to 'racialization' as well.[20] Then again, in all instances, for racism to be the case, the character traits attributed to human groups must be imagined as innately inscribed in the very bodies and brains of their members. Without that, even extreme prejudice towards particular groups does not add up to racism. What is now often referred to as 'cultural racism' deserves that name only if cultural communities are endowed with natural essences innate in them, through some sort of semi-biological mechanism.[21]

The late-twentieth-century problematic of cultural racism is quite relevant for our discussion of Marx and Engels, as they were commenting as much on ethnic and national character as on the alleged qualities of skin-colour groups. The definition makes collective character, furthermore, immutable. It is important to see that, in a nineteenth-century context, immutable and innate are not strictly the same things.

In his 1859 *Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin explained that favourable characteristics increase the chances of survival of individual members of a species and would therefore tend to become predominant within that species. But he could not explain how new characteristics emerge in the first place. According to a hypothesis widespread at the time, organisms adapt to the environment and thus acquired characteristics become hereditary. The environmental hypothesis is famously associated with Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, but many scholars, even Darwin, were open to it.[22] Applied to humans, the Lamarckian hypothesis suggested that cultural adaptations, i.e. learned behaviour, might in due course become hereditary too. In Paul's words, it was widely believed that 'a human population which maintained a unity of language and culture would *become* a race'. Nations were regarded as 'races in the process of formation'.[23]

But the Lamarckian process has no end point: the environment will always continue to require new adaptations. The Lamarckian variety of racism, then, regards races as immutable only in a relative sense. The shared, collective character of human groups is not really immutable; it will undergo transformations. However, these processes will always end in a corresponding recasting of the biological substrate, thus all the time re-rooting character in a new innate hereditary basis.

## Racism: skin colour, ethnicity, nation

Scientific racism originated in the eighteenth century as a product of the Enlightenment. Carl Linnaeus, the Count of Buffon, and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, followed in the

early nineteenth century by Georges Cuvier, used skin-colour variations to classify humanity into a limited number of races endowed with specific characters and to be ranked hierarchically – white on top and black at the bottom. The inferior races were regarded as degenerations emerging from particular environmental and social conditions. Environmental factors held responsible for racial variety and degeneration included the climate, geography, nutrition patterns, lifestyle and racial intermixtures. These early race theoreticians however held on to the biblical monogenetic view of one human species with one common origin.

In Immanuel Kant's interpretation of the monogenetic hypothesis, the common human essence consisted of potentialities selectively activated by the environment. Once formed, races become fixed. Kant too distinguished superior and inferior races. By the mid-nineteenth century, Lamarck had become the monogeneticists' most used model.

An alternative, polygenic theory, formulated in the late eighteenth century by Lord Kames and shared by David Hume, Voltaire and Saint-Simon among others, posited separate origins of human skin-colour races. Polygenists had no place for the environment and for the notion of degeneration: racial hierarchy was humanity's birthmark. As humans of different 'races' can procreate and have fertile offspring, it was difficult to define races as separate species, but the polygenists came close. Polygenism became dominant only after the mid-nineteenth century. Also in the mid-century, Robert Knox, the Count of Gobineau, and others began to promote racial purity and to treat race as the single most important motive force of history.[24]

Popular-ethnic communities became tainted by race too. In the late eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried von Herder defined nations as products of ethnic mergers and he rejected the idea of skin-colour groups as races. Even so, Herder's viewpoint, which became highly influential among the German Romantics, accommodated racist interpretations. Herder endowed each nation with a distinctive character of its own. And while he did not rank national characters hierarchically, he did make them innate and essentially immutable.[25]

Romantic national diversitarianism came to dominate the early nineteenth-century national-revivalist movements.[26] The Romantic turn was accompanied by a close interest in the ethno-tribal stocks out of whose merger nations supposedly had grown. Romantic nationalists did not clearly distinguish nation and race and often used the terms interchangeably. The defining character traits of particular ethnic stocks were often essentialized as innate. Joep Leerssen refers to a 'racial-comparative paradigm'.[27] What is more, Romantic diversitarianism was soon reinterpreted hierarchically. The philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, the republican Giuseppe Mazzini, and the liberal John Stuart Mill classified nations on the basis of the question of whether or not they were viable and capable of independent state-formation. Small nations lacking that potential were of inferior quality.[28]

## Race as a natural condition

Turning now to Marx and Engels, the first thing to be cleared up is how they could have had a place for race at all, if they regarded production and class as the primary motive forces of history. If race meant anything to them, it must have been tied in to that

theoretical framework. I have located six important passages in their works highlighting the general significance of race. As we are dealing with scattered remarks, let me present them as such.

(1) In *The German Ideology*'s section about Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx and Engels assert that the 'first precondition of all human history' is the 'corporeal organisation' of 'living human individuals'. That includes the individuals' 'physical quality [*Beschaffenheit*]' as well as the 'natural conditions [*Naturbedingungen*], the geological, orohydrographical, climatic and other conditions'. A deleted passage added: 'These conditions determine not only the original, natural organisation of people, particularly the racial disparities, but also their whole further development'. The text then continues: 'All history writing must start with these natural foundations'.[29]
(2) In the Max Stirner section, *The German Ideology* asserts that the 'developmental potential' of children was crippled by the 'present social conditions', which 'emerged in history and can just as well be historically abolished again. Even the natural differences between species, such as distinctions between races [...] can and must be eliminated in history'.[30]
(3) In 1857, Marx noted down for himself that a number of points must never be forgotten when writing about production. Among these points was the following one: '*The natural conditions* [Naturbestimmtheit] *are, of course, the starting point*; subjective and objective. Tribes, races etc.'[31]
(4) Again, Marx wrote the following in the 1867 first volume of *Capital*: 'Not counting the more or less developed form of social production, the productivity of labour continues to be tied to natural conditions. These are all traceable to the nature of man himself, race etc., and to nature surrounding him'.[32]
(5) In the work's third volume, compiled by Engels from texts written in 1863–1867, Marx observed that 'under the influence of numerous different empirical circumstances, natural conditions, racial conditions [*Racenverhältnisse*], extrinsic historical influences etc., the same economic basis [...] can become operative in endless variations and shades'.[33] A few pages on we read 'The possibility of a degree of economic development is given here, though of course depending on favourable circumstances, hereditary [*angebornen*] racial character, etc.'[34]
(6) Finally, in a letter to W. Borgius dated 25 January 1894, Engels noted that 'Under the economic conditions [*Verhältnissen*] we also count the *geographical basis*, upon which these rest [*sich abspielen*]'. He continued: 'We see the economic conditions as the ultimately determining element in the historical process [*Entwicklung*]. But race is itself an economic factor'.[35]

These observations, written down over a period of almost 50 years, are remarkably consistent, and without obvious disparities between Marx's and Engels's views. Their joint key idea was that the production system rests upon certain 'natural conditions'. Importantly, this left the logic of historical materialism intact: the hypothesis of the natural conditions does not affect the economic sphere's primacy in relation to philosophical, legal, political and other ideas and institutions. It is only that the economic sphere itself was again seen to be resting upon a natural foundation, the true ground level of the human structure.

This idea was consonant with the whole drift of Marx's work. In his 1844 Paris manuscripts, he famously defined humanity as an '*active* natural being', fitted out 'with *natural powers*, with *vital powers*'.[36] It was these natural powers that Marx later redefined as humanity's productive forces.[37] In his 1875 critique of the social-democratic programme adopted in the German city of Gotha, he angrily dismissed the idea of labour as sole source of wealth, the other source being *nature*. Marx added that human labour power itself was 'only the expression of a force of nature [*Naturkraft*]'.[38] Marx conceptualized production as an active, living extension of nature.

And that is where race came in. In nineteenth-century usage, the term race could refer to any sort of human collective of sufficient numbers – nations, inhabitants of a particular region, lineages or even social classes. Marx and Engels followed this broad usage.[39] The mere fact that they referred to a particular group of people as a race is therefore hardly significant and certainly cannot serve to impute 'racist' motives to them. The point, however, is that the human groups they referred to as 'races' acquired biologically defined identities under their hands and came to differ in economic potential.

Given that they consistently correlated race with *natural* conditions, it cannot reasonably be maintained that Marx and Engels were using the term without any specific meaning attached to it. Obviously, they were referring to humans in their specific capacity of natural, i.e. biological beings.[40] In good accordance with the Lamarckian spirit of the times, they regarded race as human adaptations to surrounding natural conditions.[41] They would have thought of races as the modifications of the human material, emerging due to geological, climatic and other factors.

This understanding of race as biological variety is supported by an interesting passage in *The German Ideology*, where we have the two friends acknowledging that nations too have a biological aspect to them. They described the nation, here referred to as the state, as an 'illusionary community', but which always rested on the 'real basis of the ties existing within each conglomerate of families and tribes, such as *flesh and blood*, language, division of labor'.[42]

At the same time, Marx and Engels conceptualized race as *part of* the natural conditions, i.e. as the subjective aspect of these conditions upon which production rested. That again allowed them to endow race with an active role in history. They were quite explicit in indicating that the productivity of labour and general economic development partly depended on a country's racial conditions; some races would be more naturally capable of boosting production than others.

Finally, in a paradox, while Marx called racial character hereditary in so many words, he and Engels accepted at the same time that social changes would result in the elimination of racial disparities at some point in the future. Race was thus fixed in heredity *and* in flux. As explained earlier, this apparent incoherence makes perfect sense in the context of the Lamarckian hypothesis of the environmental impact on heredity. Marx's and Engels preoccupation with conditions spawning racial variation furthermore strongly suggests their acceptance of the monogenetic hypothesis.

## The emergence of races: conditions

Marx and Engels did not see completely eye to eye when it came to the precise way in which humanity's conditions spawn racial differentiation. Whereas Marx was most impressed by the direct influence of the natural environment, Engels was more interested in the impact of factors related to the social order, such as nutrition patterns and culture impacting on heredity.[43] But the latter was also extraordinarily fascinated by the effects of the purely biological mixing of blood.

In a letter dated 24 June 1865, Marx informed Engels of the Polish ethnographer Franciszek Henryk Duchiński's hypothesis that the Russians were no Slavs and did not belong to the 'Indo-Germanic race' but were really Mongols and Finns. Marx suggested that this was somehow tied in to the fact that, 'from the geological and hydrographical angle', Asia begins east of the river Dnepr. Marx hoped Duchiński was right.[44]

This intimation had a follow-up in 1866, when he and Engels carried on a fascinating discussion by correspondence about the French ethnographer, Pierre Trémaux's, 1865 book *Origine et transformations de l'homme et des autres êtres* ('Origin and transformations of man and of the other beings'). Marx believed Trémaux had explained what Darwin failed to explain, i.e. the process of the 'differentiation' and 'degeneration' of organisms: the single most important factor was the 'condition of the soil [*Erdformation*]'. Marx continued that all this was very relevant for human history: 'Here we have the natural basis for particular questions such as nationality'. The same soil would always produce 'the same nature, the same faculties'. Marx believed, for example, that the Russian soil 'Tartarizes' the Slavs. He also suggested that the soil had caused the degeneration of an earlier, higher 'Negro type' into the present 'nasty [*gemeine*]' one.[45]

Marx's use of the degeneration thesis once again suggests his adherence to the monogenetic hypothesis. Also, importantly, he discussed ethnicities (Slavs and Tatars) in the same racial terms as skin-colour groups. In his first response, Engels rejected the whole idea as nonsense: as if the soil could turn white people into 'idiots and niggers'![46] Marx was quick to admit that 'historical modifications' of the soil due to 'various modes of production' must be taken into account: for instance, chemical transformations induced by agriculture.[47] On his part, Engels admitted that even Darwin was open to the influence of the soil. He now accepted Trémaux's hypothesis of 'the influence of the "soil" on the emergence of races and consequently also of species' as 'extraordinarily plausible', but he insisted there was no final proof and he remained very sceptical about the weight of the soil factor.[48]

Engels formulated the idea of environmental moulding of heredity as a principle. In his so-called *Anti-Dühring*, he praised Darwin for having discovered the hereditary basis of the 'characteristics of a race, variety or species'. But he complained that Darwin left it in the dark how individual organisms acquire new hereditary characteristics in the first place: with Darwin, individual transformations emerge 'out of nothing'. Engels referred to Ernst Haeckel for the suggestion that individual organisms acquire new characteristics by adapting to the environment.[49]

Engels was more interested in nutrition than in the soil as a factor conditioning heredity. In his 1876 essay on the contribution of labour to the emergence of the human species, he explained that the invention of hunting and fishing tools allowed

proto-humans to switch from plants to a meat diet. This represented an 'essential step in the process of hominization', because meat consumption provided the chemical materials to enlarge the brain.[50] Nutrition patterns were essential for racial differentiation. Engels observed in *Origin of the Family* that the rich meat and milk diet of the 'Aryans and Semites' might account for the 'superior development of both races'. Also, the vegetarian Pueblo Indians of New Mexico had a 'smaller brain' than meat-eating Indians.[51]

In the Lamarckian universe, humans did not only adapt racially to the natural conditions surrounding them, cultural adaptations too might become hereditary. It was again Engels who was the most explicit about this aspect of the Lamarckian mechanism. In his unpublished *Dialectic of Nature*, written over the period of 1873–1886, Engels wrote that 'modern natural science' accepted the 'heredity of acquired characteristics'. Once acquired, characteristics would be passed on to one's offspring through heredity. Importantly, Engels gave this the racist twist that 'with us' children easily learned mathematical axioms, which their ancestors had already assimilated and to 'a certain degree' transferred to them by birth. On the contrary, a 'Bushman or Australian Negro' could hardly learn the axioms, even if offered the proofs.[52]

## The emergence of races: hybridization

Next to the influence of natural and social conditions on heredity, the second mechanism of race formation was hybridization, the mixing of blood, a process both Marx and Engels almost invariably regarded in a positive light.[53] A text fragment compiled into *The German Ideology* discusses how the United States became the locus for the 'most advanced social formation [*Verkehrsform*]'. This was one of the reasons: 'Personal energy of the individuals of specific nations – Germans and Americans – energy through racial hybridization [*Rassenkreuzung*]'.[54] The authors furthermore suggested that if one could improve 'races of animals', and even create new races through 'racial hybridization', why would that be impossible with humans?[55]

Engels seems to have been more preoccupied with hybridization than Marx. In the former's eyes, the mixing of blood of the various European ethnicities had a favourable effect on the temperaments of the modern European nations. In 1844, he asserted that the key to the 'English national character' lay in the merger of 'Teutons [*Germanen*] and Latins [*Romanen*]'. This combination of 'Germanic [*germanischen*] and Latin elements' had caused the 'eternal anxiety' of the English, while triggering their tremendous 'energy', which Engels, again, straightforwardly called the 'source of colonial ventures [*Kolonisation*], shipping, industry'.[56] Thus, Engels traced the English national character, and even their industrial and trade successes, to hereditary character induced by ethnic merger.

In a 30 September 1893 letter to Laura Lafargue, Engels praised the Austrians as a 'racial mixture [*Rassenmischung*]' of Germans, a 'Celtic [...] tribe' and a 'Slav element'. The fusion of the 'blood of the three main European races' made the Austrian temperament 'livelier and more excitable than that of the Germans who are less mixed with other races'. The Austrians were therefore more prone to 'great deeds'.[57]

Such examples can easily be multiplied. Engels seems to have regarded the positive effects of racial hybridization almost as an established principle. In 1866, he postulated that, in general, it produces 'Change in the otherwise too monotonous uniformity of national character'.[58] In *Origin of the Family*, he approvingly quoted the American

anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, to the effect that mixtures of blood in tribal societies produce a 'physically as well as mentally stronger race'. When two tribes mixed, 'the new skulls and brains naturally widened out, until they encompassed the competences of both'.[59] This brand of racism, favouring hybridization rather than purity, harmonized quite well with Romantic-nationalist notions of nations as ethnic fusions.

## Innate character

A human group is only made subject to racialization if the inferior or superior traits that are being attributed to it are held to be innate. Otherwise, even the most horrendous comments on the alleged character of particular nations or skin-colour groups do not qualify as racist. That collectively possessed character qualities might become innate was regarded as a matter of course by Marx and Engels.

Let us turn first to the two men's notorious comments on the small Slav nations of the Habsburg Empire. These comments were made in reaction to what they perceived as a counter-revolutionary position assumed by these nations in 1848–1849. The Czechs, Slovenes, Croats and others were afraid of being swallowed up by the German and Hungarian national revolutions. They preferred accommodation with Habsburg rule to minority status in a new national state.

Three articles written by Engels are the most illuminating: the early 1849 'The Magyar struggle' and 'Democratic Panslavism', and 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany', the last one written in 1851 and 1852.[60] Once again, Engels was more engaged with this problematic than Marx, but in allowing the last article to appear over his signature, the latter did show his agreement.[61] Engels attributed the counter-revolutionary role of particular nations to their inability to play a productive, state-bearing role in history.[62] He referred to their small size and fragmented conditions, while casting nations such as Slavonians, Poles and Czechs as 'essentially an agricultural race', without proper appreciation for trade and industry.[63]

The terms in which Engels contrasted the South Slavs, Rumanians and others, with the Germans, Magyars and Poles, leave little doubt that he was talking about innate qualities. He praised the latter three nations as the only 'viable [*lebensfähig*]' nations and as the 'bearers of progress'.[64] Engels believed that the whole history of Central Europe testified to the 'physical and intellectual power of the German nation'.[65] By contrast, he depreciated the 'Slavonic race', whose only 'energetic' part he believed to be the Russians.[66] The small Slav nations lacked what he called 'historical thrust force [*Aktionskraft*]'.[67] Since the days of Charlemagne, these nations had failed to show an interest in intervening in history but instead had allowed themselves to fall into subjection to the Germans and Magyars, whose historical task it had been to impose civilization upon them.[68] That 8 million Slavs had allowed themselves to be dominated by 4 million Magyars for a full 800 years indicated who were the 'more viable and energetical' nations.[69]

A couple of years later, Engels and Marx wrote that the Balkans were populated by a 'conglomerate of different races and nationalities, of which it is hard to say which is the least fit for progress and civilization'. Of all these 'races', the Turks seemed to be the 'most competent to hold the supremacy', but that too had now become questionable.[70]

Engels wrote in 1866 that small nations lacking the 'energy' to make history must allow themselves to be assimilated into 'large, undoubtedly viable [*lebenkräftige*]' and 'more powerful' nations, possessing more 'vital strength'.[71] Obviously, then, Marx and Engels believed 'races' differed in their innate levels of viability and energy.[72]

Yet, this image can be nuanced. Overall, Marx and Engels valued the European races more than non-Europeans. Tellingly, Engels attributed the defeats of the Asian empires to the superior 'enterprise of the European race'.[73] However, both Marx and Engels suggested that all races had positive as well as negative inborn qualities. The latter insisted that the original Germans had been a 'highly talented Aryan tribe', but he poked fun at the idea that the tribes that once had rejuvenated Europe possessed a 'magical power inborn in the Germanic tribe'.[74] He regarded 'physical and mental clumsiness' as an 'inherited trait of the Germanic race'.[75] The 'Anglo-Saxon race' had a 'sluggish brain [*schwerfällig von Gehirn*]'.[76]

Marx believed the 'Hindoos' suffered from 'natural languor'. But he also regarded them as a noble people, living in a country where 'our languages, our religions' originated. The Indians possessed a 'particular aptitude for accommodating themselves to entirely new labour', 'great *industrial energy*', as well as remarkable 'mathematical' talents.[77]

Marx and Engels reserved particularly negative comments for black-skinned people, who, the latter suggested in so many words, stood a degree closer to animals than the rest of humanity.[78] Engels assumed 'savages' had reverted to a 'more animal-like condition' through 'regression of the organism [*körperlicher Rückbildung*]'.[79] On one occasion Marx indicated that the form of the skull of the 'Jewish nigger', Ferdinand Lassalle, betrayed his descent. 'Now, this way of linking a Jewish and a Germanic element with the Negro substance is bound to produce an extraordinary product. The pushiness of the fellow is also niggerlike'.[80] This passage is again particularly telling because Marx was tracing character, 'pushiness', directly to skull and race.

But Marx also had a very low opinion of Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 'An essay on the inequality of the human races' (1853, 1855). In a 5 March 1870 letter to Laura and Paul Lafargue, he ridiculed the book for deifying the white race and demonizing the black race for evil reasons.[81]

With the appearance of *Origin of Species*, there arose a powerful tendency in the European academic world to deny that non-European 'races' were capable of rapid 'improvement'. Lamarckians continued to find improvement possible, but the process would be a long-drawn-out one and require intense effort on the part of the European imperialists.[82]

What would Marx's and Engels's position have been on the question of improvement? They surely believed that innate deficiencies made some races unfit for proper self-development. Notoriously, they cheered the 'energetical Yankees' for wresting California from the 'lazy Mexicans, who didn't know what to do with it'. The Americans could be trusted to increase the population, to create cities and to open up shipping and rail connections, something the Mexicans would be unable to accomplish.[83]

But as adherents of the environmental hypothesis, they could not easily accept that any race would be beyond redemption. Given time, even inborn deficiencies could be overcome. In 1853, Marx scathingly referred to the 'hereditary stupidity' of the Chinese,

but all the same indicated that the Opium War and the Taiping rebellion now seemed to be arousing them from that hereditary infliction.[84] Apparently, even heredity was not cast in iron.

In some cases, for example the conflicts within the Habsburg Empire referred to earlier, lack of belief in the chances of regeneration of the less energetic races was strong enough for Marx and Engels to reject what would have been the emancipatory position. But in fairness that was mostly not the case. Once they became convinced of the need to support India's struggle against British imperialism, they became supportive – 'natural languor' or not.

Both men strongly supported abolitionism. Then again, the question of race remained an issue for them: whether the 'negroes' were capable of emancipation at all did represent a real question. In a 14 June 1853 letter to Engels, Marx indicated that, in the past, Jamaica had been importing new negro slaves all the time, making for a population mostly consisting of 'newly imported barbarians'. On the contrary, the 'present negro generation in America [represents] an indigenous product, more or less turned into Yankees, English speaking etc. and therefore becomes *capable of emancipation*'.[85]

## Racialization of classes

Marx and Engels even racialized social classes. For the character of classes to turn innate, such groups would have to be subjected to particular conditions long enough for their heredity to be affected. That might be a difficult condition to be met, particularly in periods of social mobility, migration and urbanization. But on occasion, Marx and Engels did loosely refer to classes as the 'races' constituting a nation.[86] We also have the former's intriguing 1853 observation: 'The classes and the races, too weak to master the new conditions of life, must give way'.[87]

No doubt, Marx and Engels correlated character profiles of particular classes primarily with the position they occupied in the production process. For example, the bourgeois psychology expressed the system's profit orientation. They associated the industrial proletarians' allegedly energetical character with their modern conditions, primarily with the large scale: workers lived in large cities, worked in compact masses in large factories and tended to team up in large associations for joint struggle.

Yet, the tendency for Marx and Engels to racialize social classes was unmistakable. They regarded the bourgeoisie, in particular the German bourgeoisie, as a cowardly, unheroical class, whose character weakness had been displayed all along. Even in their revolutionary heyday, the bourgeois had left the actual fighting to the popular classes. On one occasion, Engels referred to the 'abnormally inbred [*ausgebildeten*] character' of the cowardly German bourgeois strata, which he regarded as the fruit of an 'interrupted, arrested [*zurückgedrängten*] development' going back to the Thirty-Years' War.[88] On another, he called the bourgeoisie's lack of energy 'inherited' [*ererbten*] in so many words.[89]

Both Marx and Engels referred to the working class as a 'race' quite frequently, mainly when they were making the point that the capitalists must provide the workers with the wages to allow their 'race' to survive.[90] Engels defined the proletariat as a class 'with a courageous nature [*ihrer Natur nach mutige*]'.[91] For the most striking testimony of racialization of the workers, we must turn to his 1845 *Condition of the Working Class*

*in England*. According to the author, the character of the English workers was first of all marked by their work experience in large factories and their urban life conditions.[92] But he identified the injection of 'Irish blood' into the 'workers' race' as an additional factor.[93] Irish immigrants transferred their 'passionate, lively [...] essence' to the English workers, crowding out the latter's 'cold English character' through 'racial fusion [*Stammverschmelzung*]'. Incidentally, this offers further confirmation of Engels's generally positive appreciation of racial hybridization. Engels continued that, by now, English workers and bourgeois spoke different dialects and had acquired different ideas, morals and politics. Stunningly, he concluded that 'the working class gradually became a completely different people [*Volk*] than the English bourgeoisie. [...] They are two completely different peoples, as different as racial difference [*Unterschied der Rasse*] can make them'.[94]

I found no other example of the racialization of class in these crass terms. But Marx did repeatedly indicate that the proletariat's miserable living and working conditions might turn that class into a hereditarily degenerated race. In an October 1864 speech, he approvingly quoted from a report on child labour, to the effect that a 'physically and mentally degenerated population' was growing up: the 'progressive deterioration of the race is inevitable'. Intermarriage with 'more healthy races' might slow the process down, though.[95] If degeneration could be inhibited by intermarriage with healthier races, Marx was obviously assuming the degenerated mental qualities were in the process of turning innate. On another occasion, he had suggested that the process of degeneration of the worker's 'race' would take 'a few generations'.[96] For obvious reasons, Marx and Engels were racializing classes less frequently than skin-colour and ethnic groups, but the interesting thing is that they engaged in this at all.

Michel Foucault suggested in 1976 that, in providing class with race-like features, Marx and Engels may have been inspired by the concept of 'race war' as it was nurtured by French historians, most prominently by Augustin Thierry.[97] Like other Romantic nationalists, Thierry regarded modern nations as products of fusion of a number of ancient racial–tribal entities into new, reconciliated wholes. But he gave a particularly tense, class twist to this idea. In Thierry's hypothesis, the modern class struggles dividing the French nation continued to reflect ancient struggles between the original ethnic stocks. Even though the two 'races' had harmoniously fused in the course of time, the nobility and the bourgeoisie could still trace their origins to fifth-century Frankish conquerors and the ancient Gauls subjected by them.[98]

Marx and Engels nurtured a degree of admiration for Thierry. The former acknowledged Thierry's role, as well as the role of François Guizot and other 'bourgeois' historians, in the formation of the class-struggle idea.[99] Marx furthermore accepted that, in some countries, serfdom had emerged as the fruit of 'conquest and race dualism'.[100] Engels agreed that, even though it offered too neat an explanation of the rise of serfdom, Thierry's theory of conquest was valid.[101] Even so, it seems unlikely that either man was much in debt to Thierry. Whereas the latter saw race turning into class, Marx and Engels were, on the contrary, turning class into race. They were racializing social classes for the same reason they were racializing other groups: if collective characters in the course of time could become innate, there was no fundamental reason why the mechanism that worked in the case of skin-colour and ethnic groups under sufficiently stable conditions could not work for social classes as well.

## Concluding remarks

One searches in vain for a systematic theory of race in Marx's and Engels's writings. Neither man ever spelled out his views on this issue in a single, compact essay. But in the light of the evidence presented here, it cannot be maintained that their views lacked coherence and that they were just repeating current stereotypes out of hand. Otherwise put, even if their observations reflected all too common prejudices, it does not follow that they could not have taken them very seriously. Their observations were numerous, and they appeared in all types of their writings – from notes and private letters to major published works. Most importantly, they do not strike one as thoughtless or arbitrary at all. There is enough pattern to them to allow a reconstruction of the underlying views that held them together.

Implicitly, Marx and Engels worked with a definition of race as a sufficiently large group of people sporting an innate physical and mental profile of its own. Skin-colour groups, nations, ethnicities and social classes might all come to display such 'racial' features. One of the reasons why they never systematically expounded their views on race would have been that they found the 'Lamarckian' assumptions underlying them almost self-evident. It would have been a matter of course for them that humans living and working under the same natural and social conditions for a sufficient period of time tend to grow certain shared innate character profiles.

While Marx paid most attention to the strictly natural conditions, the soil as a race-creating factor, Engels was more interested in factors with cultural and social connotations, such as the quality of food and the heredity of learned behaviour. Their differences must be seen in terms of accent and interest, though, not of hard disagreements. For example, in racializing the working class, Marx too referred to socially defined factors, i.e. the workers' atrocious living and working conditions. Even in the discussion about Trémaux, the two men reached some sort of very fragile and conditional consensus. They agreed (and probably found this once again utterly self-evident) that races would be further modified through hybridization, i.e. through the mixing of blood, a point again in which Engels was more interested than Marx.

For present-day standards, the racism displayed by Marx and Engels was outrageous and even extreme. For nineteenth-century standards, though, it was not. The two men's preoccupation with the alleged degeneration of races and with environmental factors strongly suggests that they sympathized with the monogenetic, not with the polygenetic, hypothesis. Their enthusiasm about the beneficial effects of racial hybridization on the temper of nations placed them in one camp with the Romantic Nationalists rather than with racial-purity adepts such as Gobineau. Again, the Lamarckian proposition of circumstance remoulding heredity allowed them to predict the erasure of racial disparities in the future. Most likely, they expected this happy turn of events with the new dawn of world communism. More limited changes in inherited profile might even be effected within a few generations.

Also, Marx and Engels did not follow the tradition from Linnaeus to Gobineau to produce a formalized hierarchical classification of human races into three or four types. If races represented only temporary modifications of the species, and miscegenation worked out well, no purpose would have been served in strictly delimiting them. Furthermore, they accepted that all 'races' represented mixtures of negative and positive features.

Even so, Marx and Engels were endowing 'races' with inferior and superior qualities all the time. Whites were more intelligent than blacks, the Aryans and Semites more capable than other races, the South Slavs were lacking in the innate energies and thrust displayed by Magyars and Germans. Whereas the Americans could, the Mexicans could not economically develop California. Whereas the English industrial and colonial triumphs were partly due to the innate character of that nation, the Asians were defeated because they lacked the entrepreneurial spirit of the European races. And so on.

It goes without saying that neither man accepted the Gobineau thesis of race as master concept and main motive force of history. Marx and Engels conceptualized race as no more than one element of humanity's natural conditions. But they did give it a specific place in their materialist interpretation of history: by defining race as part of the natural conditions upon which production rests and depends, they made it theoretically possible for the development of national economies and labour productivity to be influenced by the racial human material available. Even though race never became history's main motive force, it *mattered*. 'Races' endowed with superior qualities would serve as generators of production; the less endowed ones would hold humanity back. Thus, in either inhibiting or boosting the process of economic development, race to an extent modified the dynamics of history as conceptualized in the theory of historical materialism.

## Notes

1. Carlos Moore, 'Were Marx and Engels white racists?: the prolet-Aryan outlook of Marxism', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 19 (1974–75), pp. 125–56; Nathaniel Weyl, 'Notes on Karl Marx's racial philosophy of politics and history', *The Mankind Quarterly* (July 1977), pp. 59–70; idem, *Karl Marx: Racist* (New York: Arlington House, 1979). For a more balanced overview of racist and anti-Semitic elements in Marx and Engels, and differences between the two men: W.H. Chaloner, W.O. Henderson, 'Marx/Engels and racism', *Encounter* (July 1975), pp. 18–23.
2. See for example: Michael Löwy, *Fatherland or Mother Earth? Essays on the National Question* (London, Sterling: Pluto Press, 1998), pp. 22–7; Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 49–52. See also Horace Davis, 'Nations, colonies and social classes: the position of Marx and Engels', *Science & Society* 29 (1) (1965), pp. 26–43.
3. Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Ignaz Brand, 1907), pp. 166, 236–7.
4. Roman Rosdolsky, *Engels and the 'Nonhistoric' Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848* (Glasgow: Critique Books, 1986), especially chapter 8; Löwy, *Fatherland, op. cit*., Ref. 2, especially pp.23–7; Anderson, *Marx at the Margins, op.cit*., Ref. 2, for example, p.52.
5. Ephraim Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London, Boulder: Pluto Press, 1994), chapter 1.
6. In his study of Eurocentrism, Samir Amin discusses Marx at length, but not the question of Marx's racism. In Amin's view, Eurocentrism was more a peculiarity of later Marxists than of Marx himself: *Eurocentrism. Modernity, Religion, and Democracy: A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism. Second Edition* (New York: Monthly Review Press; Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), pp. 191, 223–4. Biko Agozino flatly denies any racism on Marx's part. This scholar even casts Marx as father of an 'African paradigm': 'The African paradigm in *Capital*: the debts of Karl Marx to people of African descent', *Review of African Political Economy*, 41(140) (2014). pp. 172–84.

7. W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction. An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (Philadelphia: Albert Saifer, 1935); Oliver Cromwell Cox, *Caste, Class, and Race. A Study in Social Dynamics* (New York: Doubleday, 1948); Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism. The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983), pp. 64–77. For the Marxist sociology of race and racism from the 1970s to 1990s, see John Solomos, 'Varieties of Marxist conceptions of "race", class and the state: a critical analysis', in John Rex and David Mason (Eds) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 84–109; Robert Miles, 'Apropos the idea of "race" ... again', in Les Back and John Solomos (Eds), *Theories of Race and Racism. A Reader. Second Edition* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 180–98, and editorial introduction; James A. Geschwender and Rhonda F. Levine, 'Race. Classical and recent theoretical developments in the Marxist analysis of race and ethnicity', in Patrick McGuire and Donald McQuarie (Eds), *From the Left Bank to the Mainstream. Historical Debates and Contemporary Research in Marxist Sociology* (New York: General Hall, 1994), pp. 66–85; John Solomos and Les Back, 'Marxism, racism, and ethnicity', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38(3) (1995), pp. 407–20. For a more recent Marxist sociology of racism: Mike Cole, *Racism. A Critical Analysis* (London: Pluto Press, 2016).
8. Weyl, 'Notes', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, pp. 60–1.
9. Andrzej Walicki argues that chauvinist nationalism is compatible with historical materialism, in that privileging certain nations is not fundamentally different from privileging certain classes: *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 152–67.
10. Solomon F. Bloom, *The World of Nations: A Study of the National Implications in the Work of Karl Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), chapter 2.
11. Iring Fetscher, 'Karl Marx on human nature', *Social Research* 40(3) (1973), p. 444.
12. See M.M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (Cambridge M.: Harvard University Press, 1948), chapter 4 and p. 313; Diane Paul, '"In the interests of civilization": Marxist views of race and culture in the nineteenth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 42(1) (1981), pp. 118, 124–5. See also: Richard Weikart, *Socialist Darwinism: Evolution in German Socialist Thought from Marx to Bernstein* (San Francisco, London, Bethesda: International scholars Publications, 1999), p. 43.
13. Paul, 'Interests', *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 137–8.
14. Amy E. Martin, 'Blood transfusions. Constructions of Irish radical difference, the English working class and revolutionary possibility in the work of Carlyle and Engels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31(1) (2004), pp. 85, 95–8. See also Matthias Bohlender, '"...um die liberale Bourgeoisie aus ihrem eignen Munde zu schlagen". Friedrich Engels und die Kritik im Handgemenge', *Marx-Engels-Jahrbuch 2007* (Berlin: Internationale Marx-Engels-Stiftung, 2008), pp. 9–33.
15. Regina Roth, 'Engels' Irlandbild in seiner *Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* von 1845, *Marx-Engels-Jahrbuch 2011* (Berlin: Internationale Marx-Engels-Stiftung, 2012), pp. 116–7, 124–8.
16. This text was later compiled of fragments written by Marx and Engels during 1845 and 1846. For its complex history, see Inge Taubert and Hans Pelger (Eds), *Marx-Engels-Jahrbuch 2003* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2004); Terrell Carver, '*The German Ideology* never took place', *History of Political Thought*, 31(1) (2010), pp. 107–27.
17. See Miles, 'Apropos', *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 180; George M. Frederickson, *Racism. A Short History* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 156; Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism. Second Edition* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 58–9.
18. See Miles and Brown, *Racism, op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 60.
19. For similar definitions: Frederickson, *Racism, op.cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 5; David M. Newman, *Sociology. Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles etc.: Pine Forge Press, 2010), p. 382.
20. For the term 'racialization': Miles, 'Apropos', *op. cit.*, Ref. 7, p. 195. See also Frederickson, *Racism, op. cit.*, Ref. 17, pp. 154–6.

21. For this argument, see Solomos and Back, 'Marxism, racism', *op. cit*., Ref. 7, p. 414; Frederickson, *Racism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 17, pp. 7–8; Ali Rattansi, *Racism. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 88, 94–107; Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race*, *op. cit*., Ref. 7, p. 21; Miles and Brown, *Racism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 17, pp. 61–4.
22. Maxim Mikulak, 'Darwinism, Soviet genetics, and Marxism-Leninism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31(3) (1970), pp. 359–60; Paul, 'Interests', *op. cit*., Ref. 12, pp. 116–7; Loren Graham, *Lysenko's Ghost: Epigenetics and Russia* (Cambridge MA., London: Harvard University Press, 2016), chapter 2.
23. Paul, 'Interests', *op. cit*., Ref. 12, pp. 119–20.
24. These paragraphs are based on: Michael Banton, 'The idiom of race. A critique of presentism', in Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race*, *op. cit*., Ref. 7, pp. 58–62; Bernard Boxill (Ed.), *Race and Racism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), introduction, especially pp. 17–19; Robert Bernasconi, 'Who invented the concept of race?', in Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race*, *op. cit*., Ref. 7, pp. 84–97; Frederickson, *Racism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 17, pp. 53–70; Miles and Brown, *Racism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 17, pp. 39–40; Rattansi, *Racism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 21, pp. 23–36, 54; Robert Wald Sussman, *The Myth of Race. The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2014), chapter 1.
25. Bernasconi, 'Who invented', *op. cit*., Ref. 24, p. 85; Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race*, *op. cit*., Ref. 7, pp. 96–7; Frederickson, *Racism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 17, pp. 69–70; Rattansi, *Racism, op. cit*., Ref. 21, p. 36.
26. John Hutchinson, 'Cultural nationalism', in John Breuilly (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199209194.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199209194-e-3?print=pdf (accessed 20 June 2016), pp. 4–9. For the prehistory of the idea of national character among Enlightenment philosophers, see Joep Leerssen, 'The poetics and anthropology of national character (1500–2000)', in Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Eds) *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 69–75; Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), pp. 66–70.
27. Joep Leerssen, 'Nation and ethnicity', in Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (Eds) *The Contested Nation. Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 78–82. See also: See Erica Benner, 'Nationalism: intellectual origins', in Breuilly, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, *op. cit*., Ref. 26, p. 3.
28. Benner, 'Nationalism', *op. cit*, Ref. 27, pp. 13–16.
29. 'Die deutsche Ideologie', in: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol.3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1978), pp.20–1 [*MEW*].
30. *MEW*, vol.3, p. 410.
31. 'Aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlass. Einleitung zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie', *MEW*, vol.13, p. 640.
32. *MEW*, vol. 23, p. 535.
33. *MEW*, vol. 25, p. 800.
34. *Ibid*, p. 802.
35. *MEW*, vol. 39, pp. 205–6.
36. *MEW, Ergänzungsband*, part 1: p. 578.
37. See Andrew Chitty, 'The basis of the state in the Marx of 1842', in Douglas Moggach (Ed.) *The New Hegelians. Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 220–41.
38. *MEW*, vol. 19, p.15.
39. See for this point: Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York, London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), p. 412.

40. For the foundational aspect of the biological in historical materialism, see Joseph Fracchia, 'Beyond the human-nature debate; human corporeal organisation as the "first fact" of historical materialism', *Historical Materialism*, 13(1) (2005), pp.39, 45–6.
41. Sperber attributes Marx's interest in race, and in the works of Darwin, Thomas Huxley and others, to his openness to the new positivistic-scientific spirit of the mid-nineteenth century: *Karl Marx, op.cit.*, Ref. 39, pp. 389–99, 413.
42. *MEW*, vol.3: p.33. Emphasis added.
43. Mikulak suggests that Marx leaned towards a 'geographical solution' and Engels towards a 'cultural solution' with the principal role for labour: 'Darwinism', *op. cit.*, Ref. 22, p. 366.
44. *MEW*, vol.31, pp. 126–7.
45. Marx to Engels, 7 August 1866: *MEW*, vol. 31, pp. 248–9.
46. Engels to Marx, 2 October 1866: *MEW*, vol. 31, p. 256.
47. Marx to Engels, 3 October 1866: *MEW*, vol. 31, p.258.
48. Engels to Marx, 5 October 1866: *MEW*, vol.31, pp. 259–60. The Trémaux exchange has been widely discussed. See Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, p.70; Ralph Colp, 'The contacts between Karl Marx and Charles Darwin', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 35(2) (1974), p. 330; Weyl, 'Notes', *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, pp. 63–8; Paul, 'Interests', *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 120–4; John L. Stanley and Ernest Zimmermann, 'On the alleged differences between Marx and Engels', *Political Studies*, 32 (1984), pp. 233–4; Weikart, *Socialist Darwinism*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 29–30, 36, 43; Sperber, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 39, pp. 412–3. Horace Davis inaccurately suggests that Engels set Marx straight on Trémaux: 'Nations, colonies', *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 33. Mikulak goes too far in suggesting that Engels totally rejected Trémaux: 'Darwinism', *op. cit.*, Ref. 22, p. 365.
49. 'Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft' (1876–8), *MEW*, vol. 20, p. 65.
50. *MEW*, vol. 20, pp. 448–9.
51. 'Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats' (1884), *MEW*, vol. 21, pp. 33–4. In his 1880–2 notebooks, Marx excerpted the following passage from Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*: '*The Iriquois brain approached in volume the Aryan average;* eloquent in oratory, vindictive in war, indomitable in perseverance, they have gained a place in history': Lawrence Krader (Ed.) *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx (Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), p. 173. Paul suggests that, in taking nutrition patterns rather than the soil as the decisive trigger of racial differentiation, Engels may have listened to Morgan. He might also have taken Ludwig Feuerbach's aphorism literally: 'Der Mensch ist was er isst [People are what they eat]': 'Interests', *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 124–5.
52. *MEW*, vol. 20, p. 529.
53. Cuvier's and Darwin's views on hybridization were another issue discussed in the Trémaux exchange: *MEW*, vol. 31, pp. 248, 257, 259.
54. *MEW*, vol. 3, p. 73.
55. *MEW*, vol. 3, p. 410.
56. 'Die Lage Englands I. Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert': *MEW*, vol. 1, pp. 552–4.
57. *MEW*, vol. 39, p. 125. Compare: 11 October 1893 to Victor Adler, *ibid.*, pp. 135–6.
58. 'Was hat die Arbeiterklasse mit Polen zu tun?': *MEW*, vol. 16, p. 158.
59. *MEW*, vol. 21, p. 52.
60. 'Der magyarische Kampf': *MEW*, vol. 6, pp. 165–76; 'Der demokratische Panslawismus', vol.6, pp. 270–86; 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* [CW], vol.11 (New York: International Publishers, 1979), pp. 3–96.
61. According to Löwy, there is nothing to show that Marx agreed with Engels's theory of non-historical peoples, to be found in these articles: *Fatherland*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, p. 22. Anderson argues that Marx must have been in general agreement, not only because he allowed one of them to appear under his own name but also because he helped Engels to see them published: *Marx at the Margins*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, pp. 49, 261.

62. Engels referred to Hegel as the author of the theory of historical and unhistorical nations: 'Magyarische Kampf', *MEW*, vol. 6, pp. 172, 174. For this theory of Hegel's, see Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (New York, London: Routledge, 2000), chapters 9 and 10.
63. 'Revolution und Counter-Revolution': *CW*, vol. 11, p. 44.
64. 'Magyarische Kampf': *MEW*, vol. 6, p.168.
65. 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution', *CW*, vol. 11, p. 71.
66. 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution', *ibid.*, p. 47.
67. 'Magyarische Kampf': *MEW*, vol. 6, pp. 172, 174.
68. See 'Magyarische Kampf', vol. 6, pp. 169–70; 'Demokratische Panslawismus', vol. 6, p. 275; 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution', *CW*, vol. 11, pp. 43–6, 70–1.
69. 'Demokratische Panslawismus', *MEW*, vol. 6, p.278.
70. 'British Politics. – Disraeli. – The refugees. – Mazzini in London. – Turkey' (7 April 1853), *CW*, vol. 12, p. 7.
71. 'Was hat die Arbeiterklasse': *MEW*, vol. 16, pp. 157–8.
72. In 1855–6, Engels was working on a series of articles about racial relations. The articles have not been preserved, but Engels's prospectus has been, and it begins as follows: 'Latins [*Romanen*], Teutons, Slavs. 2000 years of struggle of the first 2, eliminated by civilisation, revolution & impossibility of lasting rule by one tribe over another'. Engels continued that the 'third great race', the Slavs, was now demanding hegemony over Europe: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)*, vol. I, 14 (Amsterdam: Internationale Marx-Engels-Stiftung, 2001), p.789. See also p. 1530. Sperber (*Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 39) suggests that this might indicate that Engels (and Marx) saw 'racial differences primarily as a feature of pre-capitalist societies' and that the 'continuing significance of race in Russia' would signify its continuing backwardness. It seems to me, however, that Engels suggested merely that the struggle for hegemony between Latins and Teutons, not their racial differences as such, had been overcome.
73. 'Russia's Successes in the Far East' (November 1858), *CW*, vol. 16, p. 83.
74. 'Ursprung', *MEW*, vol. 21, p. 149.
75. 'Aus den Reiseeindrücken über Amerika' (1888): *MEW*, vol. 21, p. 467.
76. 31 December 1892, Engels to Friedrich Adolph Sorge, *MEW*, vol. 38, p. 560.
77. 'The future results of British rule in India' (8 August 1853): *CW*, vol. 12, p. 220–1.
78. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 26 April 1887, *MEW*, vol. 36, p. 645.
79. 'Anteil der Arbeit', vol. 20, p. 445.
80. Marx to Engels, 30 July 1862: *MEW*, vol. 30, p. 259.
81. *MEW*, vol. 32, pp. 67–8. See also Sperber, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 39, p. 410. Marx also qualified it as a stupid remark on the part of Henry Summer Maine (*Lectures on the Early History of Institutions*, 1875) that, while there existed a '*wide separation between the Aryan race and races of other stocks*', the difference between 'Aryan sub-races' was minor: Krader, *Ethnological Notebooks*, 290. He also poked fun at an observation in John Lubbock's 1870 *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* that the belief in the immortal soul was confined to the so-called *'highest* (?) races of *mankind*' and that even an 'intelligent black' could not grasp that concept: Krader, *Ethnological Notebooks*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 51, p. 349.
82. See for example: Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ch. 5.
83. 'Demokratische Panslawismus', *MEW*, vol. 6, p. 273.
84. 'Revolution in China and in Europe' (14 June 1853): *CW*, vol. 12, p. 94.
85. *MEW*, vol. 28, p. 266. Compare Engels's 15 July 1865 letter to Marx: vol. 31, p. 128.
86. See for example: 'Montesquieu LVI' (Marx, 22 January 1849): *MEW*, vol. 6, p. 191; 'Züchtigung der Soldaten' (Marx/Engels, 1855): vol. 11, p. 511; 'Theorien über den Mehrwert', vol. 3 (Marx, written 1862–3): vol. 26.3, p. 325.
87. 'Forced emigration. – Kossuth and Mazzini. – The refugee question. – Election bribery in England. – Mr. Cobden': *CW*, vol. 11, p. 531.
88. 5 June 1890 letter to Paul Ernst: *MEW*, vol. 37, p. 412.

89. 'Die Rolle der Gewalt in der Geschichte' (written 1887–8): *MEW*, vol. 21, p. 431.
90. See for example: Marx's 1844 manuscripts: *MEW, Ergänzungsband*, part 1, p. 471; 'Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England' (1845), vol. 2, p. 311; 'Das Elend der Philosophie' (Marx, written 1846–7), vol. 4, p. 83; 'Die moralisierende Kritik und die kritisierende Moral' (Marx, 1847), vol. 4, p. 348; 'Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei' (Marx/Engels, 1848), vol. 4, p. 469; 'Lohnarbeit und Kapital' (Marx, 1849), vol. 6, p. 406; 'Theorien über den Mehrwert', vol. 3, 26.3, p. 325; 'Das Kapital', vol. 1, *MEW*, vol. 23, pp. 186, 534; '[Konspekt über] "Das Kapital" von Karl Marx. Erster Band' (Engels, written 1868), vol. 16, p. 261.
91. 'Die preussische Militärfrage und die deutsche Arbeiterpartei' (written 1865), *MEW*, vol. 16, p. 77.
92. *MEW*, vol. 2, pp. 350–1.
93. *Ibid*, p. 281.
94. *Ibid*, p. 351. See also pp. 430–1.
95. 'Inauguraladresse der Internationalen Arbeiter-Assoziation': *MEW*, vol. 16, p. 8. See also 'Das Kapital', vol.1, *MEW*, vol. 23, p. 285; 'Lage der arbeitenden Klasse', *MEW*, vol. 2, p.295. For the German workers as a 'bureaucratically drilled [*eingeschulte*] race', see Marx's letter to Engels dated 26 September 1868, vol. 32, p. 168.
96. 'Ökonomisches Manuskript 1861–1863', *MEW*, vol. 43, p. 353.
97. Michel Foucault, *'Society Must be Defended'. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (London etc.: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 49–85, see especially p. 79.
98. See for race, conquest, class and Thierry: M. Seliger, 'Race-thinking during the Restoration', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19(2) (1958), especially pp. 275–7; Lionell Gossman, *Augustin Thierry and Liberal Historiography: History and Theory, Studies in the Philosophy of History*, xv, no. 4 (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), chapter 3, pp. 23–4; Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 56; Chris Manias, *Race, Science, and The Nation: Reconstructing the Ancient Past in Britain, France and Germany* (New York, London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1–12, 79, 107, 135–6.
99. Letter to J. Weydemeyer, 5 March 1852: *MEW*, vol. 28, p. 504. See also letter to Engels, 27 July 1854, vol. 28, pp. 381–2.
100. Letter to Engels, 30 October 1856: *MEW*, vol. 29, p. 82.
101. Letter to Marx, 22 December 1882: *MEW*, vol. 35, p. 137.

## Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Pepijn Brandon, Terrell Carver, Artemy Kalinovsky, Joep Leerssen, Ian Thatcher and James White, who read earlier drafts of this paper and whose comments helped me importantly to reformulate my argument. He also wishes to thank one of the anonymous referees for his very useful comments and suggestions.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.