

In one sense there is much force in Marx's doctrine. His emphasis on the importance of the economic factor in history was a natural reaction from that unreal closet philosophy which read all life in terms of intellectual speculation, and judged it beneath the dignity of history to take heed of the effect of the ways in which men earned their living. History was too much a record of the doings of kings and generals, of court intrigues and mistresses' rise and fall. The common people, and their institutions, were ignored, and especially economic institutions were entirely overlooked. All history is being rewritten under the influence of this fertile conception—a conception of course not due to Marx alone.

But, not content with merely stressing this factor, Marx, as is inevitable in the proclamation of a revolutionary idea, exaggerated the doctrine to an indefensible degree. It is impossible to bring all the wide range of human interest and motives under a single rubric. The thirst for fame and for power, religious aspiration, racial prejudice, sex-attraction, scientific curiosity, the instinct of play, are as real and as primary forces as economic environment. It is illuminating in many instances, in the discussion of past wars, for example, to seek the economic factor, to note the influence of the desire for booty, or territory, or markets, or mines, to exploit. In every war, Hunnish inroad, Iroquois raid, Mahometan expansion, Christian Crusade, Napoleonic struggle, British-Boer or Spanish-American conflict, one finds mingled in greatly varying proportions some or all of such motives as the desire for glory, the thirst for "snort" and excitement, religious fanaticism, the memory of traditional feuds, dynastic ambition, the altruistic desire to help the under-dog, racial jealousy fired by medicine-man or yellow press, and the economic interest of a whole or a dominant section of a people. The latter is only one of many causes.

Marx, however, goes further. Not only are economic motives dominant, but they work in one particular way, through class-struggle. All progress has come by the struggle of one class with another, and this will be so until the triumph of the workers ends all class-division.

This doctrine is even more open to criticism than the more general version. It is true class-struggle is a very real and very important factor in modern life. Yet men are not divided into two rigidly divided classes, as Marx maintains—capitalists and propertyless wage workers. Men's economic interests are rarely single; in the complexity of modern industrial society their relations are not confined to a single other group; they cannot be classified solely from one viewpoint.