

“Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself,” said Karl Marx. He was wandering through Hampstead Heath, absent-mindedly brooding, deep in thought, his brow furrowed. “We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things,” he said aloud to no one in particular.

He seemed completely oblivious of the moustached comic striding stooped beside him, his prominent eyebrows raised as high as Karl’s were knitted together. “Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies,” said Groucho Marx.

Karl looked to his strange companion as though he had never laid eyes on him before. Which, of course, he hadn’t. “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism!” he growled.

“Well, whatever it is, I’m against it,” said Groucho. “I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member.”

“Money is the universal, self-constituted value of all things. Hence it has robbed the whole world of its proper value,” Karl said, his humour not improving.

“While money can’t buy happiness, it certainly lets you choose your own form of misery,” retorted Groucho. “Why, look at me. I worked my way up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty!”

“Have you not read *Das Kapital*?” asked Karl, astonished and angry.



“Everybody’s got to believe in something. I believe I’ll have another beer”

Marx vs Marx

Karl Marx, author of *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*, died in 1883. Groucho Marx, comedian, wit and raconteur, was born in 1890. So, of course, they could never have met. But if they had...

“From the moment I picked your book up until I laid it down, I was convulsed with laughter. Someday I intend reading it,” said Groucho.

This provoked Karl no end. From his leather satchel he produced a copy of *The Communist Manifesto*. “Read it!” he roared.

Groucho flicked through the book, his fingers touching the pages as though they might be laced with arsenic. “This is not a book that should be set aside lightly,” Groucho concluded a moment later. “It should be flung with great force!”

Karl turned in fury. Before he could speak, Groucho said: “Why, a four-year-old child could understand this. Run out and find me a four-year-old child. I can’t make head nor tail out of it.”

“Reason has always existed, but not always in a reasonable form,” muttered Karl, under his breath.

“Humour is reason gone mad,” said Groucho, wagging his finger and his eyebrows. “If you find it hard to laugh at yourself, I would be happy to do it for you.”

“The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory, but is a *practical* question,” exclaimed Karl.

Groucho was bewildered. “There’s one way to find out if a man is honest: ask him. If he says ‘yes’, you know he is crooked,” he said.

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being

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that determines their consciousness,” said Karl.

“Well, everybody’s got to believe in something. I believe I’ll have another beer,” said Groucho.

“What? Are you leaving?” asked Karl.

“I’ve had a perfectly wonderful evening,” said Groucho, “but this wasn’t it. And stop pointing that beard at me, it might go off!”



Andrew Sawers is a freelance business and financial journalist. He is a former editor of *Financial Director* and has worked on *Accountancy Age*, *Business Age* and *Commercial Lawyer*. He tweets as @Mr_Numbers



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