

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture 26
Marx - I: Intro & Historical Materialism

Hello and welcome everyone. Today, we are going to start with a new thinker, Karl Marx. and like many other thinkers in the course, we are going to have three lectures on Marx. In the lecture today, we will discuss briefly his biography, intellectual and political context. We will focus on his theory of historical materialism. That is the way to interpret history or understand major changes and transformations that have taken place in the history of mankind.

So, historical materialism and Marxist understanding is the way or the method to understand such historical changes and transformations. Today, we will focus on that in the second lecture on Marx. We will particularly focus on his theory of class or class struggle or his theory of the state. We will briefly discuss his theory of alienation or exploitation that necessitates the class struggle in any society in the second lecture. In the concluding lecture on Marx, we will start by discussing his theory of politics, and why he regarded politics as a tool for class exploitation to resolve the class conflict. What would be the rule of politics in his imagination of communist society that would be a classless society, where there would be no private property. In the absence of private property, there would not be any conflict.

We will focus his views on politics in the concluding lecture on Marx, before discussing the critical interpretation leveled against Marx and his political thought. Let us start this lecture today.

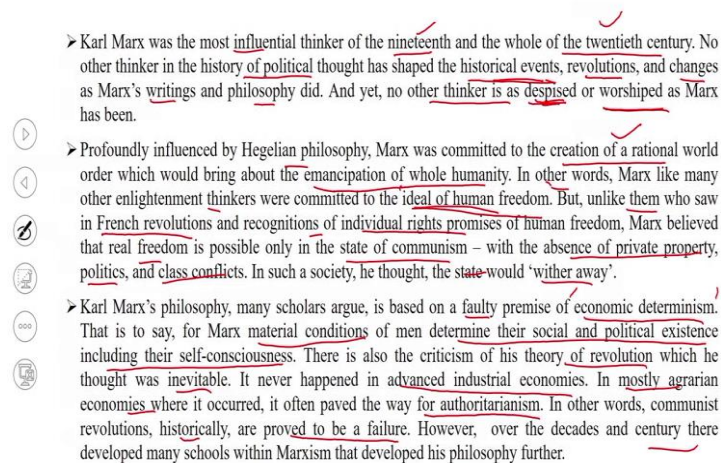
The uniqueness or the specificities of Marxist thinking is not merely to understand society or politics, but change it. In that sense, unlike other thinkers in the course, which did play a role in their thought and theorization did play a role in the making of modern state or polity or understanding of human being, their natural rights.

Historically, speaking, in terms of making historical changes or transformations to a large scale through a movement or revolution. Marxist philosophy remained oriented towards the practical side of it. So, in the Marxist famous dictum, the philosophy or role of philosophy is not merely to help human beings understand their context. But also enable him to change it.

The emphasis in Marxist thought and thinking was to not just interpret the world, but also, how to change it in a manner that would lead to more freedom and real emancipation.

We will see it in the three lectures that we are going to have. There is a kind of a misconception, I will say about reducing Marx merely to some kind of reductionist or deterministic theorist, where he was like an enlightenment thinker, humanist or developing thought and theories to create a condition for the greater emancipation or freedom for the individual. In doing that, he focused more on the practical part of it, or the practical side of theory, thought, or philosophy.

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- Karl Marx was the most influential thinker of the nineteenth and the whole of the twentieth century. No other thinker in the history of political thought has shaped the historical events, revolutions, and changes as Marx's writings and philosophy did. And yet, no other thinker is as despised or worshiped as Marx has been.
 - Profoundly influenced by Hegelian philosophy, Marx was committed to the creation of a rational world order which would bring about the emancipation of whole humanity. In other words, Marx like many other enlightenment thinkers were committed to the ideal of human freedom. But, unlike them who saw in French revolutions and recognitions of individual rights promises of human freedom, Marx believed that real freedom is possible only in the state of communism – with the absence of private property, politics, and class conflicts. In such a society, he thought, the state would 'wither away'.
 - Karl Marx's philosophy, many scholars argue, is based on a faulty premise of economic determinism. That is to say, for Marx material conditions of men determine their social and political existence including their self-consciousness. There is also the criticism of his theory of revolution which he thought was inevitable. It never happened in advanced industrial economies. In mostly agrarian economies where it occurred, it often paved the way for authoritarianism. In other words, communist revolutions, historically, are proved to be a failure. However, over the decades and century there developed many schools within Marxism that developed his philosophy further.

Karl Marx was the most influential thinker of the 19th century, and more importantly, in the 20th century. Many revolutions such as the Russian Revolution or the Chinese revolution derived inspiration from Marxist writings and philosophy. So, he was the most influential thinker of the 19th and the whole of the 20th century. No other thinker in the history of political thought had shaped the historical events or real historical transformative events, or changes as Marx's writings or philosophy did. And also, no other thinker was as despised or worshiped.

So, about Marx, there is a rejection of his philosophy and worshipping of him as a cult figure or an icon, making or symbolism associated with Marx and his writings. On the one hand, he was despised and his philosophy was rejected as utopian which led to a bloody revolution.

On the other hand, there is a religious view like worshipping of Marx and his writings, without critically subjecting his thoughts and ideas to rational scrutiny. There is both kind of

approaches to study Marx and his writings, where on the one hand, he is despised, on the other hand, he is worshiped by millions of followers across the world.

Profoundly influenced by Hegelian philosophy, Marx was committed to the creation of a rational world order that would bring about the emancipation of whole humanity. He shared with many enlightenment thinkers the whole purpose of reason and rationality, and human life would create the conditions for freedom in which he or she could fully develop himself or herself. And the whole enlightenment project was to construct a state to build a society where a human being would realize that kind of freedom.

So, the classical economist gave one kind of understanding, and other thinkers like Kant, Hegel, (7:51) argued about other forms of such society. Rousseau was talking about 'general will'. In that paradigm, Marx was also looking for creating conditions for human emancipation or human freedom.

However, unlike many other enlightenment thinkers, it was realized that limited emancipation or freedom had been achieved through a political revolution. So, real emancipation or freedom is possible only through social and economic transformation, and not merely by changing the laws or political revolution. In other words, Marx, like many other enlightenment thinkers were committed to the ideal of human freedoms.

That is at the center of Marxist philosophy and Marxist thought about how to create a condition, a rational, or political order in which human being can be true to themselves, realize their human essence, that is doing something which is the realization or if you recall, Hegelian idea, the actualization of his self or his will.

Unlike many enlightenment thinkers and scholars who saw political revolutions, such as the French Revolution or the recognition of individual rights, this was also the period when the individual was regarded as the rational subject. Therefore, he or she should have certain inalienable rights and political society, and the state emerged to protect those rights or to guarantee those rights.

Now, in contrast to such faith and trust in individual rights or political revolution, Marx argued that real freedom was possible only in the state of communism. This state of communism, he defined it with the absence of private property. There was no private property in that state. But if you recall other thinkers, that we have done in this course like Locke or even Hegel, the private property is necessary and individual agree to live in the state

by contracting with others who are equal and free members to protect their life, liberty, and property.

So, the property is the necessary condition, and it must be protected by the state. Whereas Marx, imagined a collective life where there would be no private property, and if there was no private property, there would be no conflict. The real freedom or emancipation was possible to realize or achieve only in communism with the absence of private property and there would be no politics or class conflicts. In such a society, he thought the state would wither away and there would be a self-regulating mechanism among the individuals. This theory, we will discuss when we will be discussing his views on communism later on in this lecture.

Karl Marx's philosophy, many scholars argued was based on a faulty premise of economic determinism. That is to say, for Marx, material conditions of men determine their social and political existence, including their self-consciousness. Marx considered himself as the materialist thinker and many left-leaning young Hegelians were critical of Hegel's philosophy, precisely, because of his focus on ideas at the center of dialectics that moved history from one stage to the next.

Marx, as a materialist thinker, believed that the matter was at the center of the dialectics and human history moved according to the changes in the material conditions of man. So, it was the material social-economic condition that determined the consciousness of the individual, not the other way around, as Hegel argued. However, this deterministic or reductionist argument leads many scholars to criticize much of Marx's thoughts and ideas.

There is also the criticism of his theory of revolution which he thought was inevitable. We will discuss how he argued that because of the class and inner conflict prevalent in capitalism, it would inevitably lead to the next stage that he called communism through revolution. He wanted it to happen in the advanced countries. But it never happened in the advanced industrial economies and in mostly agrarian economies, where such revolution happened such as in Russia or China, it often paved the way for authoritarianism.

In other words, if you look at historically these revolutions had proved to be a failure to create that condition of life which Marx argued. It would be possible to live in the life of communism. So, often these revolutions turned into a kind of authoritarian regime, not necessarily creating the conditions of life which Marx argued in communism.

However, over the decades and centuries, there developed many schools within Marxism, that developed his philosophy often by challenging it or by including newer dynamics to it. Also, by focusing more on the other aspect rather than the economic determinism or what it is called the scientific law in Marx.

So, over the decades and century, there developed many schools within Marxism that interpreted in varieties of ways, not necessarily reducing it to the economic determinism and the reductionist understanding of Marx. This we will come back to discuss when we will start discussing criticisms against Karl Marx's political thought.

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Political and Intellectual Context

- Marx's political philosophy was profoundly shaped by German Idealism, particularly Hegelian philosophy. His early writings, where he developed the ideas like alienation, objectification of labor, human emancipation, and communism, were developed through his engagements with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For the rest of his life, he went on to further develop these thoughts by deeper engagements with the works of classical economists and French socialism. Thus intellectually, there is a shift in young, humanist Marx and matured 'scientific' Marx.
- Intellectual and political upheavals in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe with its promises of freedom and equality coincided with the rise of industrial society and the growth of capitalism. It created economic inequalities and divided the societies into classes. These in turn led to class conflicts. Marx was devoted to examining the sources of such inequalities and means and modes of overcoming them. In that sense, contrary to his popular image of a revolutionary thinker, Marx was a humanist committed to human emancipation and the full realization of freedom for everyone.
- Karl Marx, while acknowledging the contribution of the French Revolution (1789), argued that the freedom and equality that it achieves is only partially successful. It achieved them only in the realm of politics and law. In the absence of social and economic freedom, political and legal freedom and equality are meaningless. The year 1848 saw many revolutions in Europe. Marx believed them as the epochal moments. Although it never materialized, Marx and his philosophy became the symbol of workers' emancipation across Europe and beyond.

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Now, let us look at the political and intellectual context of Marx. We have to begin with the influence or intellectual influence on his writings. So, if we look at the philosophy of Marx, that we find is profoundly shaped by 'German Idealism' as we have discussed and particularly, by Hegelian philosophy.

So, German idealism was a school of thought that said to be started or funded by Immanuel Kant, with his writings on three critiques and enlightenment, and 'categorical imperative'. All those were parts of such a school or tradition of thought which later developed as the 'German Idealism', where there was a kind of primacy of idea, will, human freedom. Marx's political philosophy was profoundly shaped by 'German Idealism', particularly, Hegelian philosophy, which is a kind of culmination of 'German Idealism'.

In Hegelian philosophy, we have also discussed how Hegel in a sense, combined this divide between idealism and materialism. So, any ideas or abstract will, according to Hegel, must

manifest itself in the real concrete historical circumstances, and it is through such manifestation that an idea is realized. In that sense, the real ideas are immaterial merely in the realm of abstract thought and imagination. It must manifest socially and historically.

So, there are then possibilities of such material explanation or interpretation. But again, according to young Hegelians, or left Hegelians, Hegel gave primacy to the ideas. Marx's philosophy was deeply influenced by 'German Idealism', particularly, Hegel's philosophy. And if we particularly look at his early writings, where he developed his ideas like alienation, objectification of labor, human emancipation, or communism, were developed through his engagement with Hegel's, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

For the rest of our life, Marx went on to further develop these thoughts, particularly, his ideas of communism that he first articulated in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*, 1844. So, he went on to give it a more scientific, historical, or material explanation, and moved away from Hegel, eventually. But these ideas were shaped as a result of his engagement with the Hegelian philosophy.

He further, explained or developed it through his engagement with the words of classical economists like Adam Smith and others, and the French Revolution. So, in Marxist philosophy or political thought, you have the combination of three traditions or intellectual traditions, German idealism, on the one hand, a classical economist on the other, and French socialism on the third.

These combinations of three traditions or intellectual traditions shaped much of Marx's political philosophy and the contribution of Marx particularly his understanding of the pitfalls or many internal conflicts that existed in capitalism. And why it was necessary to achieve the next stages of human progress, human development. That is possible in communism.

So, intellectually, there is a kind of shift in Marx's writings or Marx philosophy, where it is divided into two kinds of writings or philosophy. There was a young humanist Marx, who focused on human alienation, how to achieve human emancipation, and what should be the solution to the exploitation? And a matured Marx, or who is called the scientific Marx, where he moved away from the Hegelian influence to a more political and economic explanation of the society, polity, and the world order.

Thus, the intellectual and political upheavals in the 18th and 19th century Europe, with their promises of freedom and equality had become the central theme of the enlightenment

tradition. How to achieve equality among men? Because they are all rational created by the same God. Therefore, we have the same natural rights. So, freedom and equality become the kind of central theme or promise of enlightenment tradition, and this coincided with the industrial society and the growth of capitalism.

And the growth of capitalism created economic inequalities and divided society into classes. So, if you remember, when there was the enlightenment tradition or faith in human reason, and rationality, there were the romantics who argued about going back to nature or the pre-industrial life of harmony or mutual dependence.

There was a kind of churning at the level of ideas, at the intellectual level as to how to respond to the economic disparities or sub-human conditions and that most of the workers in the industrial society lives. Marx tried to address these economic inequalities and disparities, which led to class conflicts in many societies. And if you look at the period between 1832 whole of the 19th century, but certainly till 1848, even the Glorious Revolution in the UK, in 1888, there was constant movement and churning at the level of political and social mobilization as well. It was also a period of expensing the right to vote, universal vote, and also the recognition of individual rights.

And this movement, politically, and in the realm of social as well continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Many progressive laws, for the protection of laborers for equal wages, for minimum wage were achieved through those struggles and the inspiration for such struggles came from Marxist writings or political philosophy as well. So, these economic inequalities divided society into classes that led to class conflict. Marx was devoted to examining the source of such inequalities, means, and modes of overcoming them.

So unlike romantics or idealists, Marx believed in the reality of matter, and on that basis, he wanted to develop a scientific theory in a kind of theory of history, which would help the society or community to achieve more freedom or greater emancipation. The purpose of Marx was to understand or examine the source of inequalities in the capitalist industrial society, and how it could overcome. In that sense, contrary to his popular image of a revolutionary thinker, Marx was a humanist, committed to human emancipation and the full realization of freedom for everyone.

In the capitalist industrial society, the freedom or political right that was available or the equality that was recognized was in the real practical sense exercised only by those who had the property. The nature of capitalism was such that it would lead to monopolization. So, the

few would earn more control more wealth, and the majority of them would be dependent on their scope for working in the factory or live in a sub-human existence. They would not get the work they wanted to do, they would not get employment. That is how capitalism survives or thrives.

Marx was trying to follow from the Hegelian idea of movement in history, as seen as the kind of movement of progress from a limited to more progress or freedom for the human being. He realized that capitalism was not the final stage. It must be transcended to the next stage of human emancipation and freedom which he called communism.

So, contrary to the popular perception of Marx as a revolutionary thinker, he wanted a bloody revolution at all costs to achieve communism. He was looking for the condition of life which would be emancipatory and free for everyone in the society and not just the few who owned the property. He was concerned about how to avoid class conflicts, economic disparities that would make political and legal equality real for everyone in the society? So that they could develop their self, according to their talent without exploitation and control by others.

Karl Marx, while acknowledging the contribution of the French Revolution, argued that freedom and equality that it achieved was only partially successful. It achieved them only in the realm of politics and law. So, many of the political developments in the 19th century and the whole of the 20th century were such a realization across the world about equality and freedom. So, in the real sense, it is still not achieved.

There is the hierarchy that exists even today, at the level of ideas and imagination, the whole of the 19th and 20th centuries, the struggle for equality, that is in principle, everyone realized that men and women across the race and class should be treated equally or fairly. And this would have certain rights given to them. Because of their being human, not because they own property, or they have certain other qualifications.

So, to make that fully accessible for everyone, Marx was thinking about a condition of life, that would transcend capitalism based on private property, controlled by few and left many to live the condition of servitude or sub-human life. He realized that the French Revolution or the political realization of individual rights or recognition of individual rights achieved the freedom to a certain extent. It is limited in the realm of politics and law.

The real possibilities or actualization of freedom is possible when human beings are socially and economically free as well. So, in the absence of social and economic freedom, Marx

argued, political and legal freedom, and equality is meaningless. And, politically, if you look at the history of Europe, 1848 saw many revolutions across Europe, and this revolution also represented the struggle between two classes. The earlier feudal lords or monarchs with the mercantile capitalist classes were emerging and asserting their superiority over the feudal lords and nobility. Because of their technological innovation and new modes of production that was also happening.

So, the year 1848, saw many revolutions in Europe, and Marx believed them as the epochal moments, although it never materialized. Marx and his philosophy became the symbol of workers' emancipation across Europe and beyond. This was also the period when there was the growing assertion, not just among the mercantile class or the feudal lords or the monarchy, which was by then somewhat established. That is the Industrial Revolution and the emerging class of mercantile capital, the capitalist had asserted their superiority.

However, the working class or the peasantry, were largely subjugated and they began to develop consciousness or began to struggle for their rights, and that led to many upheavals across Europe in 1848, as we have discussed while discussing Hobbes in the case of England, or Locke, in the case of England. Similarly, in France or other countries in Europe, such development was taking place.

Marx saw in them as a kind of movement towards the next stage of history which never materialized the way Marx thought during his lifetime and also after his death. But certainly, in Eastern Europe or many other non-European countries, the revolution had taken place. But these societies remained not as Marx thought the advanced industrial society, they were largely agrarian society or partially industrial society. Nonetheless, the significance of Marx was that his writings were for the workers and their struggle for emancipation or greater rights. Marx remained a symbol of inspiration and motivation.

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Karl Marx (1818-1883): Brief Bio-sketch

- Karl Marx was born in Trier, Germany in 1818 in a middle-class Jew family. At that time anti-Semitism was rife. And to escape the humiliation and discrimination, his family converted to the Protestant branch of Christianity. His father was a successful lawyer.
- Marx was initially tutored by his father and had his early education in Trier. He was, then, sent to the University of Bonn to study law. However, finding him inattentive towards studies, his father sent him to the University of Berlin. Here Marx switched from law to philosophy in which he completed his doctorate. Marx could not find a job after completing his PhD and began to write for a newspaper – *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne in 1842.
- At the University of Berlin, Marx also came into close contact with Hegelian philosophy and radical leaning left Hegelians. His thought was profoundly shaped by them, however, soon he criticized them for their exclusive focus on religion and religious orthodoxy alone. He wanted the radical and emancipatory potential of Hegelian philosophy to be applied to understand and transform the then prevailing exploitative socio-economic and political order in Europe.

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Now, if you look at Karl Marx's brief biography sketch, Karl Marx was born in Trier, Germany in 1818 in a middle-class Jew family, and at that time, anti-Semitism was rife, and to escape the humiliation and discrimination, his family converted to the Protestant branch of Christianity. His father was a successful lawyer, and Marx initially tutored by his father, and had his early education in Trier. His father wanted him to study law. So, he was sent to the University of Bonn.

However, finding him inattentive towards his studies, his father sent him to the University of Berlin, where he was expected to study law. But he changed or switch to philosophy in which he completed his doctorate, and Marx could not find a job after completing his Ph.D. and began to write in a newspaper 'Rheinische Zeitung' in Cologne in 1842. It was at the University of Berlin, that Marx came in close contact with Hegelian philosophy and radical leaning left Hegelians, and his thought was profoundly shaped by them.

However, soon he developed criticism against the young Hegelians who were focusing exclusively on religion and religious orthodoxy. Whereas, Marx wanted the radical and emancipatory potential of Hegelian philosophy, to be applied to understand and transform the then prevailing exploitative socio-economic and political order in Europe.

There was a kind of inspiration from the Hegelian philosophy or the young Hegelians. But he also developed criticisms against them. Because of their focus on religion and religious orthodoxy alone, whereas, Marx wanted Hegelian philosophy to be applied in the realm of society and polity as well, to make it more emancipatory or free for most of its inhabitants, not just the few who own the property.

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- His criticism of the existing Prussian government led to the closure of *Rheinische Zeitung* and to avoid persecution he left for Paris where he came into close contact with French Socialist thinkers. He also met his friend and lifelong collaborator, Fredrick Engels during this period. He wrote *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript* in Paris. In this text, Marx appears to be much more humanitarian, in comparison to his later works. However, this text was only published in the middle of the twentieth century.
- To avoid persecution, Marx had to leave Paris in 1845, and the next three years he spent in Brussels. In 1847, the *Communist League* was formed in London. Marx was made the founder member of the League. He also wrote its manifesto which is famously known as the *Communist Manifesto* or *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Soon, he was expelled from the Brussels and after staying briefly in Cologne, Marx settled for good in England. He studied classical economists like Adam Smith at the British Museum and worked on his monumental *Capital* Vol I-III. The only first volume was published in his lifetime in 1867. The other two were later edited and published by Engels. He was also associated with the *International Working Class Movement* which splintered after the death of Marx and Engels. Karl Marx died in England in 1883.
- **Major works:** *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript* (1844); *Theses' on Feuerbach* (1845); *The German Ideology* (1845-6); *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1846-7); *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848); *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) *Capital*, Vol I-III; *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1975).

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As a reporter of 'Rheinische Zeitung', he was very critical of the Prussian government that led to the closure of this newspaper, and to avoid persecution, Marx left for Paris, where he came in close contact with French socialist thinkers. He also made his friend and a lifelong collaborator, Fredrick Engels, who was himself the son of an industrialist who had a factory in Manchester. Because of his influence, like Marx of young Hegelians, and radical left, he was very critical of the industrial society or capitalism, and he became a lifelong collaborator of Marx.

Marx wrote, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript* in Paris, which is also known as Paris manuscript. In this text, Marx appeared to be much more humanitarian, in comparison to his later works. However, this text was only published in the middle of the 20th century. So, to avoid persecution, Marx had to leave Paris in 1845, and for the next three years, he spent in Brussels. In 1847, the Communist League was formed in London and Marx was made the founder member of the League. He wrote its Manifesto which is famously known as *Communist Manifesto* or the manifesto of the Communist Party.

Soon he was expelled from Brussels and after staying briefly, in Cologne, Marx settled for good in England. He studied classical economists like Adam Smith, and many others at the British Museum and worked on his monumental *Capital*, published now in three volumes. However, the first volume alone was published during his lifetime in 1867. The other two volumes were later edited and published by Engels.

He was also associated with the International Working-Class Movement, which splintered after the death of Marx and Engels. Marx died in England in 1883. So, he had a kind of very

vagabond life if you like. He constantly moved from one country to another, and yet committed to the ideal of communism, or creating the conditions for the emancipation or freedom of the working class.

Major works of Marx were *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*, *Theses on Feuerbach*, *The German Ideology*, *The Poetry of Philosophy*, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *Capital* in three Volume and *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Some of the texts he wrote in collaboration with Engels.

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Historical Materialism

- Historical materialism is said to be based on a 'scientific' theory of history. Inspired by Hegelian dialectics, it explains 'how society works and how it changes over time'. However, in contrast to Hegel, for whom at the center of dialectics is 'idea', Marx argued that at the center of any progressive movement in history is 'matter'. It is best exemplified in his *Critique of Political Economy*, where he wrote that 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness'.
- According to Marx the most basic fact about any society is the nature of its economic organization, in other words, its 'modes of production'. The modes of production is the combination of means of production (raw materials, land, machines, capital, and labor) and relations of production (determines who owns what and who does which job). Although the relations of production is complicated in any given society, however, Marx argued that it fundamentally divides society into two main classes – haves and have-nots. In the capitalist system of the economy, they are called bourgeoisie and the proletariat respectively.
- Fundamental to understanding Marx's description of historical materialism is his theory of economic determinism or base-superstructure model. It argues that the economic organization of the society is at the base which determines the superstructure – laws, government, education, religion, arts, beliefs, and values.

Now, we move on to his idea of historical materialism that is necessary to understand Marx's thought and philosophy. It is said to be based on what is called the scientific theory of history. That is to say, there is a kind of certainty determining influence on the movement of history.

So, this historical materialism is also regarded as the scientific theory in Marx, inspired by Hegelian dialectics. And it explains how society works and how it changes from one stage to the next overtime. Through historical materialism, Marx explained different stages of history. Thus, how a particular stage of history functioned and operated within its epoch and what gradually led to its change over time.

In contrast to Hegel, however, if you remember Hegelian dialectics, there were simultaneous contradictions at any given moment. And that reality at that moment was constituted of the conciliation of those contradictions. And next, that conciliation would lead to further contradiction which would lead to further synthesis. That is how human history moved.

However, in contrast to Hegel, for whom the center of such dialectics is the idea or the human thought, Marx argued at the center of any progressive moment in history is matter. In that sense, Marx established himself as a materialist thinker. In contrast to the Hegelian philosophy or Hegel, as the idealist thinker or idealist philosopher, Marx saw himself as the matter. The matter is the true guide of any science or theory of society and politics, not the ideal or idealism or the world of abstract thoughts and ideas.

For Marx, the center of such dialectics that moves history from one stage to the next is not the idea as Hegel argued. But the matter and that is his biggest criticism to Hegel, whom he regarded as the idealist, who led to logical mysticism in the realm of ideas, consciousness, or mysterious doctrines. Whereas, Marx believed in the primacy or absoluteness of the matter.

He considered that as at the center of the dialectics that in most history the focus was on the matter. Its primacy could be best exemplified in his *Critique of Political Economy*, where he wrote that it was not the consciousness of men that determines their existence. But on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.

In Hegelian thought, the will or abstract will must be free or a source of right. But that will must manifest itself in the real concrete historical will. Nonetheless, the abstractness of the will is supreme, an abstract which is in the realm of ideas. It is in the realm of thought that gradually and progressively manifests itself in different realms of life in the families, civil society, and the state.

Whereas for Marx, it is not the consciousness that determines the social existence of the men, but it is the social existence that determines their consciousness. So, it is like the other way around of Hegelian dialectics or imagination of self or self-consciousness vis a vis the social existence or historical existence of men.

According to Marx, the most basic fact to understand about any society is the nature of its economic organization. So, if you understand a society and its economic organization, the way it operates and determines the social relations in society. Then you can understand the larger dynamics shaping the social, political, economic organization in the society. And the exploitations that are taking place. How then to overcome those exploitations and create the condition for greater freedom and emancipation?

So, for Marx, the most basic fact about any society is the nature of its economic organization. And this economic organization is also referred to as the modes of production. This is

fundamental to understand the working or functioning of any society. Now, these are some of the technical terms which one should be aware of getting engaged with Marx's writings and thought.

The modes of production are the combination of two things, means of production and the relations of productions, and means of production is raw materials, land machines, capital, and other tools, and labor, that helps in the production. The modes of production are means of production and the relations of production that determines who owns what, and who does which job. In that sense, it determines the relationship between men and men.

So, who in the society are privileged or the ruling class and who in the society do all kinds of job and yet live, exploited life, the life of servitude, without owning any property, and yet are doing work all the time? The relations of productions are based on whether a person owns that property or not, or the ownership of means of production that determines the class positions of the individuals in society.

The modes of production necessary to understand society and its nature are constitutive of these two things, the means of production and relations of production. The means of production are raw materials, capital, land, machines. Relations of production is whether that person owns or does not own. That means, it determines the class position of that individuals in society. So, in any real society, these relations of production are complicated.

However, Marx argued that it fundamentally divided society into two main classes, which he called haves and have-nots. Those who own the property and those who do not own the property and are the two fundamental classes. In the Marxist explanation of social class, there are two main fundamental classes in the society, those who own the property and those who do not.

However, we will discuss it more, when we discuss his views on class and politics, the role of the middle class that sustained democracy is somewhat, not given that much importance in Marx writing. For him, the fundamental classes in society are just the two; those who own and those who do not own. That leads to many scholars who criticize his preference for the proletariat as the agent of change. And that we will discuss when we will discuss his views on class.

For Marx, these relations or productions, he had acknowledged through the complexities in human society. But it fundamentally divides that society into two classes, the have and have-

nots. In the capitalist system, these are called the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, respectively. So, fundamental to understand Marx, a description of historical materialism is his theory of economic determinism or what is also called the base-superstructure model.

So, this economic determinism or base-superstructure model argued that the economic organization of the society is at the base. If you understand the modes of production, that is the center or base of any society which governs and determines the superstructure, and the superstructure is its laws, government, education, religion, arts, beliefs, and values. It can develop the theory or understanding of society by looking at these things, laws, whether law treats everyone fairly or equally or not, whether the government protects the interest of everyone or not, or education, religion, or beliefs and values.

However, for Marx, fundamental to the understanding of a society and its functioning is to understand its modes of production. The base is the social and economic relationship between men and men, depending upon their ownership of property and means of production. So, in Marx, in that sense, the understanding of society methodologically, allows one to understand the hidden things. That is determining the laws, government, education in any given society, once one understands its fundamental structure. That is its modes of production are what is called the economic base.

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- Explaining this, Marx writes that 'In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis, on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general'.
- Marx, like Hegel, believed that history is a progressive, not circular, movement from a limited to more emancipatory stages of history. These stages of human history for Marx are – primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism which must pave the way for communism after a brief period of what he calls the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. Marx also talked about 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and 'Oriental despotism' which he discarded as static, lacking internal dynamism for any change. And it was on this ground that he thought the British rule in India, through exploitative, was necessary for bringing India out of its deep slumber. However, Marx's main focus was mainly on feudalism to capitalism and how the internal conflicts within capitalism would pave the way for a truly emancipatory and free society – communism.
- Primitive communism, according to Marx, was a classless society without any private property. It was characterized by scarcity where everyone was struggling for mere survival with little or no major technological advancements. Slave society emerged as the first class society with the slave owner living off the labor performed by slaves. Settled agriculture paved the way for the rise of feudalism. In this society peasants and serfs did all the work on the land, however, the land was under the control of nobles and warlords. Such ownership was the source of exploitation which was sanctified by the medieval Church and monarchies.

Explaining this, Marx writes that in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will. So, what that will does not matter in determining their actual, real existence in the society or economy, relations of production that correspond to a definite stage of development of their material, and productive forces.

The sum total of these relations of productions constitute the economic structure of society, or the real base on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond different forms of social consciousness. The modes of production are the real base that determines the superstructure. So, even the social consciousness that one has, or the political superstructure that one comes across, or one sees in the society is determined by this base or economic structure. It is also called the modes of production.

So, the mode of production of material life conditions, the social, political, and intellectual life process in general, in another way, looking at the relationship between the base and superstructure. That is the economic base or the modes of production that determine the superstructure, the nature of laws, government, education, religion, beliefs, or general consciousness that exists in society is in direct proportion to the social or economic base of that society.

Marx, like Hegel, believed that history is a progressive, not circular movement from a limited to a more emancipatory stage of history. If you recall, Machiavelli, or even different forms of government in Aristotle, there is a kind of circular movement. From one stage to the next stage, one comes back to the foundational movement. Machiavelli argued, it in his views on

the Republic. There is the start of the Republic or foundational ideas that led to corruption and that corruption led to the rise of a strong prince, and that prince would again create the republican institution and that circle would continue.

In contrast to that circular movement, you have a kind of linear movement in history, in Marx, which is progressive from one stage to the next stage. And the next stage is the stage of greater freedom or emancipation than the previous one. So, these stages of human history for Marx are from primitive communism to slavery, feudalism, capitalism. Capitalism according to Marx, is not the final stage of history.

It must pave the way for communism which would come after a brief period of what he called the dictatorship of the proletariat. It would work and fight for the protection of the interest of proletariats against the capitalist interest. Marx also talked about the Asiatic mode of production or oriental despotism which he eventually discarded as static and lacking internal dynamism for any change.

Besides, these stages of history, that is primitive communism to slavery to feudalism to capitalism to finally an ultimate stage of human emancipation in communism, Marx also talked about the Asiatic mode of production or oriental despotism. However, he discarded those modes of production. Because he thought those were static and did not have the internal dynamics for change and transformation, as it was there in from slavery to feudalism, and from feudalism to capitalism.

Therefore, he thought those are static or not contributing in moving history from one stage to the next stage and that kind of understanding was in Marx, the basis for his justification of British rule in India. He regarded it exploitative. But considered necessary to bring India out of its deep slumber. In Marx, however, in his historical materialism, the focus was mainly on feudalism to capitalism, and how the internal conflicts within capitalism that are the main focus of his studies, certainly, in *Capital's* three Volumes, would pave the way for a truly emancipatory free society, which he called the communism.

So primitive communism, according to Marx, was a classless society without any private property. Thus, everyone collectively owned resources in society. There was a sense of private property in the primitive stage of communism. And this stage of life was characterized by scarcity. Human beings constantly tried to fulfill their needs, and there was a struggle for mere survival, just to protect life, or meet one's basic needs. It was the utmost concern for human beings and everyone was in that struggle for survival.

In this primitive communism, where there was no private property and technological advancement, certainly, no major technological advancement, slave society, emerged as the first-class society with the slave owners living off the labor performed by the slaves. That is the emergence of class society, where the slave owners now live off on the labor performed by the slaves.

Now, settled agriculture gradually paved the way for the rise of feudalism and in feudalism, the peasants and the serf did all the work on the land. However, the land that is the basis of all production in feudalism was controlled by nobles and warlords. And this ownership of land, where most of the labor was performed by the serf or peasant, and yet the nobles and lords led a prosperous life or controlling the serfs or peasants, through their control of the land.

And such ownership was the source of exploitation that was sanctified by the medieval church and monarchy. So, the medieval monarchies were based on the justification of this ownership of land by the nobles or warlords. The serfs and peasants merely survived to perform their labor on the land of which these warlords or the nobles lived their life of ease on the work done by the peasants and serfs.

And these modes of exploitation in the feudalism at least allowed the peasants and the serfs to perform their labor and performing the labor or see the product of their labor was also the source of self-consciousness. Whereas in capitalism, we will discuss and particularly in the next lecture, human alienation, where workers are alienated from the product of their labor itself. And that is worse than the peasants and serfs in feudalism.

Nonetheless, the point is that from feudalism, there is a kind of organization of polity and state that justifies such class dominations, by the few over the many. So, the church and monarchies justified such ownership and control of land as the source of exploitation in feudalism that eventually gave rise to capitalism.

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- With the technological innovation and changes in trade practices, capitalist modes of production emerged out of the ruins of feudalism. Bourgeoisie is the ruling class in the capitalist economy which owns or controls the finances, the factories, and the tools on which modern industrial production is based. Such ownership enables them to exploit the workers whose very sustenance depends on working in these factories.
- Marx believed that capitalism taught the men the techniques of production and it is no longer characterized by scarcity but economic inequalities and disparities. It leads to the problems of distribution as the majority of the population lose purchasing power and live in the conditions of servitude. Thus, Marx believed that capitalism could not be the final stage of human history. It would necessarily and inevitably pave the way for a more advanced and emancipatory state of history – which he calls communism. It would be a classless, stateless society with the collective ownership of production. In the absence of private property, there would be no conflicts, hence no need for state or politics. Human beings would be truly free. It would be based on the idea 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'.
- Thus, Marx provides a definite understanding of human history and its different stages of evolution. It influenced many revolutions and epoch-making events in the twentieth century such as Russian and Chinese revolutions. However, these countries were mostly agrarian or partially industrial. As per Marx's logic, the revolutions should have happened in advanced Industrial countries in the West, particularly in England. Thus, many scholars question the economic determinism in Marxist historical materialism as a reductionist argument. It could be a method of understanding historical changes and transformations, but it is not and should not be taken as the 'law' of history applicable in all societies across the histories.

With the technological innovation and changes in trade practices, so mercantile capitalism and new modes of trade, and business-led to new modes of production, that is called the capitalist modes of production. It emerged out of the ruins of feudalism. So, no longer the land but the industry or factory becomes the new center of production. However, the working class performed their labor in an alienated form and it led to innovation in production and new ways of social and political organization.

In this capitalist mode of production, the bourgeoisie is the ruling class that owns or controls the finances, factories, and tools on which modern industrial production is based. Such ownership enables the bourgeoisie to exploit the workers, whose very sustenance depends on working in these factories. Its condition is similar to the peasants and serfs in the feudalism for their very survival. They must perform their labor in the land.

Similarly, in the capitalist modes of production, the worker must work in the factory for very survival. But the capitalist or the bourgeoisie who owns that property or modes of production did not necessarily contribute to the production process. Yet it acts or exploit the workers. Because they could not own the property or means of production. Marx, however, believed that capitalism taught the men, the techniques of production.

In the capitalist modes of production, there was no scarcity of the product. It is no longer characterized by scarcity, as in feudalism or during slavery or primitive communism. But of economic inequalities and disparities. So, the problem of the capitalist mode of production was not the scarcity of goods. So, with the technological innovation and production process, production is abundant.

The problem with capitalism is that of economic inequalities and disparities, where the majority of the population lose purchasing power and live in the condition of servitude. The goods are there in the market. But the people do not have the resources and means to purchase those goods. And that is the new problem or challenge in capitalism which is not of scarcity. But the problem of economic disparities and inequalities.

Thus, Marx believed that capitalism could not be the final stage of human history, it would necessarily and inevitably pave the way for a more advanced and emancipatory state of history, which he called communism. And communism would be a classless, stateless society with the collective ownership of production. In the absence of private property, there would be no conflicts. Hence, there was no need for state and politics in that society.

Human beings would be freer, and it would be based on the idea of 'from each according to his ability to each according to his needs'. So, human beings while performing their labor, doing what they think are their need, and the labor is performed to satisfy the needs, and not for the profit or maximization of profit as in capitalism. That society would be a more free and emancipatory society for human beings. Thus, Marx provided a different understanding of human history and its different stages of evolution.

So, from primitive communism to communism after capitalism, there was a kind of progressive movement in history. There was a definite explanation for the movement or evolution of these stages. This influenced many revolutions and epoch-making events in the 20th century such as the Chinese and Russian Revolutions. However, these countries were mostly agrarian or partially industrial.

As per Marx's logic, the revolution would have happened in the advanced industrial countries in the west, particularly in England. But that was not the actual historical development. The revolution, according to Marxist principle happened in the mostly agrarian or partially developed industrial society that often led to authoritarianism and failed experiment in communism.

Thus, many scholars questioned the economic determinism in Marxist historical materialism as a reductionist argument, so everything was reduced to the economic base. And many Marxist and non-Marxist scholars criticized such a reductionist or deterministic understanding of historical materialism in Marx. It could be a method of understanding historical materialism in Marx. It could be a method of understanding historical changes and

transformation. But it should not be taken as the law or definite law of history applicable to all societies across the histories.

When we talk about historical materialism in Marx, we should use it as a method to understand the social progress and functioning of any society to understand its overall transformation over a period of time. But it cannot be a definitive guide to understand the social movement as inevitable. It is something that necessarily leads to from one stage to the next stage. That kind of argument had been criticized by many scholars, including the Marxist. But historical materialism, nonetheless, is a helpful guide to understand the functioning of society and its major changes, and transformations happening over some time.

And it should be taken as not a guide of action and having a very sure deterministic kind of understanding that one society within this condition will certainly unnecessarily lead to other conditions. There is a challenge or criticism of such deterministic or reductionist understanding of historical materialism in Marx. So, it is a kind of method, not a kind of definite or tool or scientific tools, of changing the world or transforming the world through human acts and mobilization, revolutions, and wars. That is all on Marx's historical materialism.

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To understand more on this, you should refer to some of these texts, like Shlomo Avineri's, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*; David Boucher and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present*; Gerald A Cohen gives you a much more detailed account of historical explanation in Marx. So, Karl Marx's, *Theory of History: A Defense*, you should refer to.

And you can also refer to Shefali Jha's, *Western Political Thought: From the Ancient Greeks to Modern Times*; and David McLellan's, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, should refer to and also James Alan Ryan's, *On Politics*; and Peter Singer's, *Marx: A Very Short Introduction*, from the Oxford University Press.

Thus, these are some of the texts you can refer to to understand more on Marx, his personal life, social, political, and intellectual context, and particularly, his views on historical materialism. That is all in this lecture, today. Do share your comments and feedback. We will be happy to hear and respond. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.