

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture 28
Karl Marx – III: Views on Politics, Communism
& Critical Assessment of his Thought

Hello and welcome everyone. This is the third and concluding lecture on Marx. In the previous two lectures, we have discussed his theory on historical materialism, and also his views on alienation, exploitation, and particularly, we will emphasize his views on class and state. And how he argued that the class or proletariat as a class is the agent of change from the capitalist mode of production to the communism that is the next stage of life.

In this concluding lecture, we will begin by discussing his views on politics and his understanding of communism. In the second part of the lecture, today, we will focus on the critical aspect of his thought and various criticisms leveled against Marx's political thought. Before concluding, we will try to understand the enduring legacy of Marx's thought and philosophy in the modern world.

And how it helps us to understand many of the challenges, such as socio-economic disparities that we often come across within the nation, locality, and also at the global level. So, the resources are appropriated or possessed by few and few individuals, and the majority of them live in the absolute, dependent on the market forces or forced to sell their labor just for survival. We will see in the concluding part of the lecture, today, the enduring legacy of Marx.

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- Karl Marx was a philosopher in a distinct sense. For him, the role of philosophy should not be limited to merely an interpretation of the world; but, it should develop the roadmap to change it. Thus, there is a combination of theory and practice in Marx's philosophy. And in that sense, many took his philosophy as a call to action. Being a materialist, Marx's life-long pursuit was to understand the functioning of capitalism and devise the means and mechanisms to overthrow it.
- In Marx, primacy is indeed given to the economy. It has led many scholars to argue that there is no consistent theory of politics and state in Marx. It is valid to a great extent. Marx saw in them the instrument of class exploitations. In his vision of a future communist society, he argued that there would be no role of state or politics.
- Among the Marxist as well as the non-Marxist scholars, there is a sharp debate about the characterization of Marx as a 'humanist'; or a 'revolutionary' thinker. Marx's early writings, where he engages with the questions of alienation and communism, are seen by many as 'true' Marx, whereas they see his later works as 'betrayal' from his early works. However, much of Marx's perception in the nineteenth and the twentieth century is based on his later works. And it is on that basis that for many of his followers 'true' philosophy of Marx is based. But both these positions are somewhat inaccurate. The truth is the problems that Marx first identified in his early works; he went on to develop them fully in his later years.

2

Let us start with the idea that Marx was a political philosopher. But he was a philosopher in a distinct or unique sense. For him, the task of philosophy or a philosopher was not just to help in the understanding or interpretation of the world. The primary and major responsibility for a philosopher or a philosophy according to Marx, was to develop the ways and mechanism to change it.

The idea was not just about interpreting the world or understanding the world. But how to change it and this change was to ensure the greater freedom for individuals which capitalism necessarily deny to the majority of its member. For him, the role of philosophy should not be limited merely to interpretation. But should develop the roadmap to change it or transform it.

In this sense, there was a combination of theory and practice in Marx's philosophy and much of his later works developed. Particularly, his work on *Capital* or *Communist Manifesto* developed based on his own personal and political engagement with the working-class movement in England or France and other countries in Europe.

So, there was in his thought and theory, the combination of ideas and theory with the practices and the rule of theory, and philosophy was not just in helping or making sense of the world, but also, enabling the individual or community to change it for the better or to organize it in a rational manner that would ensure maximum freedom for everyone and not just for a few, as capitalism or modern bourgeois revolution had done.

In Marx, you have this recognition of political revolution or liberal bourgeois revolution, which acknowledged the rights of every man. But in the absence of economic freedom or economic social rights, those freedoms are inadequate. According to Marx, for the majority of people to realize their freedom, to live their life the way they want to live. In that sense, many took his philosophy as a call to action.

The inspiration from Marx is not just to understand the world, theoretically. But also to change it and one of the reasons for his perception or acknowledgment, as the theorist of revolution is based on the fact that his works had shaped many historical and political events in the modern worlds. For instance, the Chinese Revolution or Russian Revolution or in Cuba, and other places, all derived inspiration from Marx's writing.

One of the significances of Marx is not just his writings or ideas that are contained in many of his writings. But also, his influence on the actual event in history and it is on that basis, there are the popular perception and misperception or incorrect perception about Marx and his writings.

Thus, being a materialist, Marx's life-long pursuit was to understand the functioning of capitalism and the way exploitation, and alienation happened in the capitalist mode of production. And what should be the means and mechanism to overthrow it. So, in Marx's writings, one thing is very sure and consistent, is the exploitative nature of capitalism.

The inherent contradictions in capitalism, according to his historical materialist understanding must pave the way for the next stage of human history that is communism. His life-long pursuit was not to understand the state or a polity or laws or rights. But to understand the economic base of capitalist society and on that basis how to create a condition of greater freedom or freedom for everyone in the society.

Marx's primacy was indeed given to the economy and this we have discussed while we discussed his views on class and historical materialism, the base-superstructure model, where the economy is seen as part of the base that determines the superstructure. And in the superstructure, there is polity, law, education.

So, in Marx, indeed primacy is given to the economy and it led many scholars to argue that there is no consistent theory of politics and state. Unlike many thinkers, that we have covered in this course, so you can recall social contracts tradition thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke,

Rousseau, even Hegel or Kant, there is this acknowledgment of the rule of the state, even in Machiavelli or Plato and Aristotle. Whereas in Marx, you do not find a very consistent theory.

We have discussed it while discussing his theory of the state, the primary view of the state as an instrument, and the secondary view, there is a kind of autonomy and yet it functions to protect the interest of the bourgeoisie. In Marx, you do not have a thorough consistent engagement with the idea of politics and state. We will discuss that, in Marx, you have a kind of anti-political approach.

He did not consider politics as the base or a tool to understand the real nature of any society, it has to be economy. That led many scholars to argue, there was no consistent theory of politics and state in Marx. And this is valid to a great extent and Marx saw in politics and state something which is the instrument of class exploitation.

So, politics and state, according to Marx was used in capitalism to protect the interest of those who possess the means of production, the propertied class or bourgeoisie, in his vision of future communist society. He argued that there would be no role in state or politics. So, among the Marxists as well as non-Marxist scholars, there is a sharp debate about the characterization of Marx as a humanist or a revolutionary thinker.

Marx's early writing, where he engaged with the question of alienation and communism was seen by many as true Marx. Whereas they see his later works as a betrayal from his early works. We have discussed while discussing his theory of alienation and communism that in Marx, there is a kind of concern or primacy for human freedom. So, like the enlightenment thinkers, in that sense, he was also trying to envisage in life or his rational, social, political order that would ensure real freedom for everyone and not just for a few.

According to Marx, capitalism denies that freedom for the majority was merely free to sell their labor. So, there was no real, actual freedom for the majority of workers in capitalism. In his early writings, the primary concern was to ensure is or think of a social order that would ensure the freedom of everyone and also human being while performing the labor should not be alienated from the labor, from the process of labor, from the product of their labor and also from their fellow beings and species being.

In Marx's early writings, there is an approach to understand human nature in their real material condition and think about society or polity that would maximize that freedom. Whereas in the later writings of Marx, the focus was given to a scientific or deterministic kind of understanding of human history based on modes of production. It should not necessarily lead from one stage to the next and capitalism for him, is not the final stage of history that must pave the way for the next stage. Because of its contradiction between the two classes, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat.

And this division of classes led to a conflict that is unsustainable within capitalism and therefore the next state is inevitable which is communism. That would be a classless society. In the later writings of Marx, the focus was given to more on the scientific explanation or the revolution or proletariat revolution. Therefore, many confusions about Marx and his writings, whether he was the humanist thinking about human freedom or creating the conditions for human freedom, or he was a revolutionary thinker who wanted to overthrow the capitalist state.

So, for many writers, the true Marx was there in his early writings. And later, Marx was the kind of betrayal from that true Marx. However, much of Marx's perception, in the 19th and 20th centuries was based on his later works. There was a historical reason for that. Marx is popularly known as associated with the popular revolution in the 20th century, the Chinese Revolution, or Russian Revolution, or Cuban Revolution.

And in his early writings, he was known much after his works like *German Ideology* or *Communist Manifesto* or *Capital*. So, early writings such as economic and philosophical manuscripts were discovered much later, after the popular perception of Marx that is based on *Communist Manifesto*, *German Ideology*, and *Capital*.

So, in that sense for many of his followers, the true philosophy of Marx was contained in his later works that led to some kind of debate and confusion about considering Marx as a revolutionary or humanist thinker. Both these positions are somewhat inaccurate. The truth is the problems that Marx first identified in his early works, he went on to develop them fully in his later years.

How to prevent human alienation or to create the condition of human freedom or overcome the exploitation in the capitalist modes of production. These were some of the problems which he identified in his earlier works, such as *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

And in his later works as well, he developed a more scientific and deterministic outlook. But those problems, he tried to develop or overcome with his later works, such as *Communist Manifesto* and *German Ideology*. So, there is no kind of fundamental break in Marx from early writings and later writings.

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Views on Politics & Communism

- Ironically, Marx, whose philosophy has shaped or influenced the politics of every society in the world, was essentially, like Plato, an anti-politics thinker. He did not develop a systematic theory of politics. He did not consider it as the basis of 'true' understanding of any society or any stages of human history. According to him, politics is not autonomous from the economic 'base'!
- According to Marx, politics has a role to play only in a class-divided society. Along with the institution of the modern state, he saw politics as an instrument of class domination. He argued that in communism – which would be the highest or the final stage of history, state, along with politics, would 'wither away'. In the absence of private property, there would be no class. And in a classless society, life would be free and harmonious; hence, there would be no need for either state or politics to manage the class conflicts.
- Marx argued that the inner contradictions of capitalism and the law of history would inevitably lead to the next stage of development – communism. Communism, according to Marx, would be the final or highest stage history. Now, the question is how to bring about that transformation or 'revolution'? The dominant view is that it would be through a revolution led by the proletariat. They would first overthrow the capitalist system and establish the collective ownership of natural resources. This transitory phase is called the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3

Let us come to discuss his views on politics and communism, and ironically, Marx whose philosophy had shaped or influenced the politics of every society in the world was essentially like Plato and an anti-politics thinker. So, if you can recall, in our discussion on Aristotle, there were different classes and different classes have different interests that led to some kind of conflict.

And the art and science of politics were to manage or mediate these social conflicts. It is there similarly in Machiavelli, where he also discussed that to sustain the republic, it was necessary to have different classes and in fact in the institutional mechanism of the republic, to remain sustainable, it is necessary to have those social classes and their conflicts. So, politics is to be seen as an art and science of mediating those social interests or social conflicts.

In Marx, which is similar to Plato, the role of politics was to harmonize or ensure the harmonious existence of human life. So, a theory of justice or life in the state, according to Plato should be a perfect harmony or it is similar to Kantian perpetual peace. There is in Marx, the ultimate or final stage of history that should be the perfect harmonious kind of living where there should be no rule of politics and state.

Politics for him was to be seen as an instrument of class oppression or class exploitation. Therefore, his thought and philosophy shaped the politics of many countries, but himself, Marx was an anti-politics thinker. He did not develop a systematic theory of politics and did not consider politics as the basis of true understanding of any society or even any stage of human history.

For Marx and the historical materialism, (17:37) we have seen the primacy or even the significance was not associated with the political aspect of that society or historical change. For him, the real base for social-economic change or transformation was the economy and therefore, for Marx to understand a society such as capitalism, one should understand its economic functioning rather than its political and legal promises.

So, he did not develop a kind of systematic theory of politics and according to him, politics was not autonomous from the economic base. It is the centrality or primacy on which Marxist theory of state, politics, and stages of history was based. According to Marx, politics had a role to play only in a class-divided society.

That is when the society was divided between those who own the means of production and those whose lives depend on that means of production or working for them, those who own the means of production. So, along with the institution of the modern state, Marx saw politics as an instrument of class domination and he argued that in communism, that would be the highest and the final stage of history, state along with politics would wither away.

There was no role of politics and state in communism, according to Marx. And the reason for that is in the absence of private property, there would be no class and if there would be no class, there would be no conflict. In a classless society, life would be free and harmonious. Hence, there would be no need for either state or politics to manage the class conflict.

In the Marxist or Marx's scheme of things in communism, that would be a classless society with no private property. There would be no need for politics and state, precisely because in the classless society, everyone would live the life of freedom and there would be no conflict between individual and the social men from one section to the other. Because if there would be no class, there would be no class and no conflict. Life would be a kind of self-regulating life or self-managed life.

There is no need for state or politics. So, Marx argued that the inner contradictions of capitalism and the law of history would inevitably lead to the next stage of development in human history that equals communism and communism according to Marx, would be the final or highest stage of history.

And as we have discussed in Hegel, the movement of dialectics from one stage to the next stage of human progress, where Marx considered capitalism was not the final stage of history. Although, it is necessary which leads from the life of scarcity to a life of abundance in terms of production yet it is inherently contradictory because of the class nature of society.

So, only the minority possess the maximum wealth and the majority are merely free to sell their labor dependent to work for those who possess the means of production. He was envisaging a kind of life, where freedom was there not just for a few, but everyone in the society. Communism, according to Marx, is the final and ultimate stage of history. Because in the absence of classes in communism, there would be no contradiction.

And if there is no contradiction, there is no further movement in history. So, life would be permanently peaceful or perpetually peaceful, and everyone would live according to their abilities and work according to their needs. Now, the question is how to bring about this transformation from capitalism to communism or revolution. So, the dominant view is that it would be through a revolution led by the proletariat. This view is something perpetuated by Engels or later on, by Lenin and other Marxist writers.

In Marx himself, you do not have a conclusive explanation of the road to revolution. It might be revolutionary but it could be other ways of bringing about a transformation in the economic conditions of life or the modes of production. According to this view that the proletariat would bring about this transformation from capitalism to communism. It is argued that they would first overthrow the capitalist system or state and establish the collective ownership of the natural resources. This transitory phase is called the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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- Since all states, according to Marx, represent and protect the class interest, the dictatorship of the proletariat would, too, represent the interest of the workers. However, it is different, in a sense, that unlike all other forms of state, it is based on the will or interests of the majority – workers. After abolishing the institution of private property, the dictatorship of the proletariat must pave the way for self-regulating modes of harmonious living in the forms of communism. Life in the communism would be such that 'freedom of each will be the condition of freedom for all'. Production would be governed by the logic of 'each according to his ability to each according to his needs' (Originally Saint-Simon's (1760-1825) idea). Marx recognizes the essentially social nature of man. However, he does not want the individual to be subjected to the tyranny of society. He also argued in favor of men-women equality.
- Marx's views on communism are based on the following four premises – first, he rejected the 'crude' communism. Second, for him, workers as a class are the agent of revolution. Third, the abolition of private property and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a necessary precondition for communism. Fourth, cooperative modes of living without alienation and exploitation of men by men are possible only in a classless society without state and politics.
- Marx was correct in explaining the existence of the ruling class and ruled in every society. However, his conception of communism is as utopian or ideal as he accused Hegelian idea of the state to be. Historical experiences of communism in many countries have proved his predictions wrong. Capitalism not only survived and flourished, but communist regimes in many countries, instead of paving the way for communism, have perpetuated the worst form of tyranny.

Now, since all states, according to Marx, represented and protected the class interest, the dictatorship of the proletariat would be to represent the interest of the workers. So, all forms of state, according to Marx is representative of the class interest and it works only to protect and perpetuate their class interest. It is true with feudalism or slavery or it is true in capitalism.

Similarly, the dictatorship of the proletariat would be a class state that means it would protect the interest of the working class. However, this dictatorship of the proletariat, according to Marx is different in the sense that unlike other forms of state, it is based on the will or interest of the majority and not the minority. So, in capitalism, only a few control maximum wealth, and thereby, the rule or state in capitalism protects the interest of the few.

Similarly, in feudalism and other forms of state, but the dictatorship of the proletariat would be different. Because it would be representative of the interest or will of the majority that is the workers and they would protect their interest. After the establishment of this dictatorship of the proletariat, they would abolish the institution of private property and work towards the abolition of the class itself.

So, there would be no class of bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and other conflicts that exist in the class society after abolishing the institution of private property, the dictatorship of the proletariat must pave the way for self-regulating modes of harmonious living in the forms of communism that is the crucial explanation in Marx.

And that is also problematic because in many societies as we have seen historically when the proletariat revolution took place, it did not lead to communism or a classless society. So, like the previous revolution from feudalism to capitalism, the old ruling class was replaced by a new ruling class and so it is true with the communism or communist revolution.

However, Marx was somewhat similar to his critique like, Hegel, Kant or Plato, which is a kind of utopian or idealistic approach that the dictatorship of the proletariat, after capturing the power or abolishing the private property would eventually pave the way for a stateless society or a classless society that did not happen historically in the material real sense.

However, according to Marx, life in communism would be such that freedom of each, would be the condition of freedom for all. So, it was complete in that sense, the union of the self with society and community, and self with fellow beings. The freedom of each is possible on the condition of freedom for everyone else.

This slogan, however, is somewhat confusing in the sense that in the real material world, what does it mean, is not spelled out, neither Marx nor any other Marxist scholars explained what did this term meant, that life in communism would be freedom of each on condition of freedom for all.

So, it is a kind of project or an objective. But it did not have a clear explanation of what did it mean to live a life in communism and exercise that freedom on the condition that freedom was based on freedom for everyone else. Similarly, production would be governed by the logic of each, according to his ability, to each according to his needs.

This phrase is again from Saint Simon, who was a socialist thinker and this idea of regulating the production or labor in communism was fundamental in the communist living or understanding of labor as explained in his theory of alienation. So, production is guided by the need of the individuals and not the profit. It is the profit or the motive that leads the capitalist to exploit the workers.

When the production was based on the need while performing the labor, human being actualizes on self, the society, and its economic production would be based on its need without exploitation. But when it was driven by profit and profit for the sake of profit and not necessarily based on the actual need of the individual, it leads to exploitation or conflicts in society.

So, production in that society would be based on the principle of 'each according to his ability to each according to his needs'. Marx recognized essentially, the social nature of men. However, he did not want the individuals to be subjected to the tyranny of society. In Marx, there was a recognition that men realize their true human nature while living in association with others.

In that sense, it was like Aristotle or other thinkers, who argued that man is by nature a social animal. So, we develop ourselves while living among others. It is capitalism that alienates us from others, friends, our relationships, where everyone in every relationship is transformed into a commodity with its use-value and exchange-value.

Marx envisioned a life where an individual would live in communion with others and in living that life, an individual must not be subjected to the tyranny of society. So, it is a different explanation in Marx, where the communal mode of living or social living for the individual is recognized. But the individual is not subjected and limited to the tyranny of society.

He or she should be free to express in whatever creative or intelligent way he or she desires and in that sense, it is different from the liberal and market views on freedom-based merely on one's political and legal equality or freedom. In the absence of a real economic condition of life or materialization of such freedom is not possible. Marx developed a unique sense of human freedom prevalent in the community.

The human being lives in association with others yet expresses himself, creativity, and the first condition for creating communism is to ensure maximum freedom. So, the individual is not according to Marx, a subject of tyranny by the society or community that many proletarian revolutions in different countries have practiced, where the state and objective of the state are given priority over the freedom of individual citizens.

In Marx, the individual was not subjected to the tyranny of society. He was in favor of men, women's equality and argued against the objectification of women as sexual objects. So, Marx's views on communism were based on the following four premises: first, he rejected crude communism, so crude communism and before Marx, there were many socialist thinkers.

And this reason why Marx called his philosophy communism and not socialism, before Marx there was this thinking that private property a kind of theft. Proudhon and many other socialist thinkers. However, the difference from their modes of thinking about communism, to Marx is that, for him, the idea was not to bring everyone down to the same level and having the sense of envy or position as in capitalism.

He was thinking or envisaging a form of life where these values of position or envy would be abstract. For him, communism was not crude communism. That means the property should be divided among everyone equally and all of them should continue to have a sense of position in the absence of private property. Marx did not want a crude form of communism, where everyone should be at the same level, and property should be divided equally.

Second, for him, workers as a class were the agent of revolution. So, the revolution and transformation from capitalism to communism would be carried by the proletariat. Third, the abolition of private property and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat was a necessary pre-condition for communism and he differed it from many socialists and anarchist thinkers.

We will discuss Bakunin, while we will discuss the criticism of Marx's theory on the state, later on in this lecture. But for Marx, a revolution from capitalism to communism necessitates the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whereas for Bakunin and many other social anarchists, all forms of state lead to the condition of un-freedom to the man. (34:47). In Marx, for communism to bring about, it is necessary to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat that would abolish private property.

Third, the cooperative modes of living without the food, or the cooperative modes of living without alienation and exploitation of men by men would be possible only in a classless society without state and politics. That is his idea of communism from capitalism through different stages and a transition by establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, to a kind of cooperative living, where there would be no classes, no private property, and everyone would live, according to his ability or creativity without exploitation of men by men that characterize the capitalist modes of production.

So, Marx was correct in explaining the existence of the ruling class and ruled in every society. However, his conception of communism was as utopian or ideal as he accused the Hegelian idea of the state to be. In his theory of communism, he was as idealistic or utopian

as Hegel and many other thinkers, he accused of to be. The historical experiences of communism in many countries had proved his predictions wrong and capitalism not only survived and flourished but communist regimes in many countries, instead pave the way for communism or the way at least Marx envisaged it, had perpetrated the worst form of tyranny.

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Critical Assessment of his Thought

- Marx's significant contribution to the history of political thought is his theory of historical materialism. It gives us a tool to understand the past and its various stages – historically and materially. His emphasis on the actual and given or material existence of men as the basis of understanding the functioning of a society or its polity gives a new tool for social and political inquiry. He was a great materialist thinker. It is clear from his assertion that the 'material existence of man determines his consciousness and not the consciousness that determines his material existence'.
- Similarly, his interpretation of exploitations and alienation in the capitalist modes of production has shaped many historical and political events. It is still relevant in explaining the periodic crises in capitalism. However, Marx's prediction that capitalism will destroy itself due to its inherent contradictions was wrong. Capitalism not only survived but flourished in the previous two centuries. And revolutions that Marx envisaged never happened in the advance capitalist countries.
- Louis Althusser (1918-1990) introduced the idea of 'epistemological break' in Marx's writings, which is similar to many other scholars who divide his works into two categories - 'young', 'humanist' Marx; and 'mature', 'scientific', or, 'revolutionary' Marx. This is also based on Marx's engagement with Hegelian thought in his early years and eventually drift away from that in his later years. He started using less and less Hegelian terms. His popular perception as a 'revolutionary' or 'scientific' thinker is based on Engels characterization of his philosophy.

5

Now, we move on to the critical assessment of his thought. Marx's significant contribution to the history of political thought was his theory of historical materialism and this theory of historical materialism gave us a tool to understand the past and its various stages, historically and materially. So, his emphasis on the actual and given or material existence of men, as the basis of understanding the functioning of a society or its polity gave a new tool for social and political inquiry.

So, understanding of society and politics is incomplete without understanding the real, actual, or material existence of man. He was a great materialist thinker and it was clear from his assertion that the material existence of man would determine his consciousness and not the consciousness that determines his material existence. And this was his sharp difference from a Hegelian idea or Hegelian priority of idea over matter.

Similarly, his interpretation of exploitation and alienation in the capitalist modes of production had shaped many historical and political events. It is still relevant in explaining the periodic crisis in capitalism. There is a boom and burst in capitalism. And every time there is a burst, people go back to Marx, and through them try to explain the next stage of history.

However, capitalism has so far not only survived, but it has every time resolved the tensions or the periodic decline. However, Marx's prediction that capitalism would destroy itself due to its inherent contradiction was wrong, it has been proven wrong historically and capitalism not only survived but flourished in the previous two centuries.

And the revolution that Marx envisaged never happened in the advanced capitalist country. So, he thought, England or France with its working-class had the ideal material condition, to develop the class consciousness that he was talking about. It would lead to the proletariat revolution. But in these two societies that revolution never actually happened.

Louis Althusser had introduced the idea of an epistemological break in Marx's writing, which was similar to many other scholars who divided his work into two categories, young humanist Marx and mature scientific or revolutionary Marx that we have discussed in the introductory part of this lecture as well. This division of Marx was based on Marx's engagement with the Hegelian thought in his early years and eventual drift away from that in his later years.

Later, Marx stopped using many of their Hegelian terms and used scientific and economic determinism more as the basis of his theory, the practical, and material existence of life. So, his popular perception as a revolutionary or scientific thinker is also based on Engel's characterization of his philosophy.

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- Working on and publishing Marx's unfinished manuscripts, Engels wrote that 'just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history'. And according to that, capitalism must be overthrown by the workers through a revolution. First asserted by Engels, and further perpetuated by Lenin and other revolutionary thinkers, this idea then becomes the basis of Marx as a 'scientific' thinker who discovered the 'deterministic law of human history'.
- Marx's understanding of two fundamental classes in capitalist society is equally incorrect. There is not just the presence of a large middle class, but even these two classes are mediated through many other identities such as caste, gender, race, language, religion, and nationality. Many scholars also question his consideration of the working class as the agent of revolutionary change. The working class is not a singular homogeneous category. Many hierarchies exist among them – such as white color workers and blue color workers, and so on.
- There are today fewer takers of Marx's ideas, such as economic determinism and the 'scientific' theory of history. And that the proletariat should bring about the revolution. The historical experience of proletariat revolutions in many countries has proved Marx's theory wrong. He also failed to understand the historical significance of nationalism that was the ruling ideas during the nineteenth and twentieth century. It continues to shape the social and political imagination in the modern world.

6

Working on and publishing Marx's unfinished manuscript after his death, Engels wrote that just as Darwin, discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history. There was a kind of deterministic, scientific theory associated with Marx and his philosophy. According to that, capitalism must be overthrown by workers through a revolution.

For many Marxists, in the late 19th and throughout the 20th century, Marx's writing was the scientific history or scientific theory that should necessarily lead to the next stage of human history, that is communism. First, asserted by Engels and further perpetuated by Lenin and other revolutionary thinkers. This idea became the basis of Marx as a scientific thinker different from young humanist Marx or Marx's focus on human freedom than his focus on the revolution.

So, this becomes the basis for Marx as his scientific thinker or a revolutionary thinker, who discovered the deterministic law of human history. According to that, capitalism should inevitably pave the way for communism. Marx's understanding of the two fundamental classes in capitalist society is equally incorrect.

Certainly, if you think about the advanced capitalist society and its division of labor between the managerial or the working class or white color workers or blue color workers and also many intermediary identities such as religion, caste, language, race, ethnicity that keeps the workers fragmented from developing what he called the international solidarity or consciousness among the workers.

So, there is not just the presence of a large middle class which Marx never took seriously. The whole liberal democracy or constitutional democracy is based on this middle class, they have interest in the maintenance of the status quo and if you recall our lecture on Aristotle, he wanted to avoid the extreme of either the authoritarian or mobocracy or the rule of everyone.

There has to be a kind of balance and that balance is ensured by the middle class. The stability, according to Aristotle is based on the number of the proportion of this class in the society. He wanted the middle class to be more in number, to stabilize the democracy and this is true in modern liberal democracies. However, Marx did not give any significance to this middle class.

Even the two classes that he talked about were mediated through many other identities that Marx did not take seriously, such as the identity of caste in the case of India or societies like India, gender, race, language, religion, and nationality. Many scholars also questioned his consideration of the working class as the agent of revolutionary change. So, the working-class itself was fragmented on so many other identities.

So, the working class was not a singular homogeneous category and many hierarchies existed among them, besides caste, gender, race, language, religion, nationality, and ethnicity. There is also the organization of the working class based on white-collar workers and blue-collar workers, and their respective positions in the organization of production in modern life.

There are today fewer takers of Marx's ideas such as economic determinism and scientific theory of history, and that the proletariat should bring about revolution. A very few scholars or thinkers take these ideas seriously, even the Marxist thinkers. The historical experience of the proletariat revolution in many countries proved that Marx's theory was wrong. He failed to understand the historical significance of nationalism. That was the ruling idea during the 19th and 20th centuries. It continues to save the social and political imagination in the modern world. So, there were a lot of things that Marx did not take seriously or engage with critically such as the idea of nationalism.

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- For many scholars, his views on communism were as utopian or ideal as perhaps Platonic ideas of harmonious living in the state, or Kantian ideals of perpetual peace, or Hegelian ideals of universal or absolute will in the state. Marx's ideas that envy or desire for possession is the product idea of the capitalist mode of living; and that the men would overcome them in the communism have been proved wrong by the historical experiences. And Peter Singer, while assessing the role of Marx, has rightly argued that no matter how egalitarian society is, there would always be a ruling class and ruled with their associated privileges and obligations. It exists even in communism.
- Similarly, Marx's base and superstructure model is criticized by both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars. Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Louis Althusser, among many others in their theory of hegemony and ideological state apparatus, question the economic determinism of Marx. They acknowledged the role of laws, politics, and ideology in legitimizing the power of the ruling class. Similarly, Bakunin (1814-1876), a socialist and revolutionary anarchist, criticized Marx's philosophy as 'statist' which limits human freedom. He argued that 'If there is a state, there must be domination of one class by another and, as a result, slavery; the state without slavery is unthinkable – and this is why we are the enemies of the state'.
- Marx also fails to understand the frailty of human nature. He thought human nature is not fixed and the product of their material condition. Therefore in the change conditions of life in communism, they would develop new ways of association with themselves and their fellow-beings. However, it is not entirely correct. For instance, the egoism and enviousness of men are not eliminated either in communism or with material abundance. The satisfaction of basic needs leads to the creation of more 'newer' needs. And perhaps Hobbes and other classical economists are right that it is this drive that leads to progress and prosperity in the society

So, for many scholars, his views on communism were as utopian or ideal as perhaps platonic ideas of harmonious living in the state or Kantian ideals of perpetual peace or Hegelian ideals of universal or absolute will in the state. While Marx accused him of being ideal or utopian, his idea of communism was perhaps as utopian an idea as theirs.

Marx's ideas that envy or desire for the position was the product of the capitalist mode of living and that the man would overcome them in communism had been proved wrong, by the historical experiences. Marx thought that the human desire to possess and possess more than his neighbor was something the capitalist values. It would be overcome by the man in the communist mode of living.

And Peter Singer, while many others also argued that human being is driven by the desire and in Hobbes, we have seen how he characterized human nature as this self-regulating mechanism of desire and aversion. Thus, anything that fulfills his desire, he is attracted towards that and he avoids those that are a threat to his desire or life.

Many thinkers like Peter Singer while assessing the role of Marx have rightly argued that no matter how egalitarian society is, there would always be a ruling class and ruled with their associated privilege and obligation. It exists in communism as well. So, communism does not lead to the ideal classless, property-less society as Marx envisaged.

Similarly, Marx's base and superstructure model is criticized by both the Marxist and non-Marxist scholars. Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, among many others, while

developing their ideas on hegemony and ideological state apparatus, respectively. So, they questioned the economic determinism of Marx and acknowledged the role of laws, politics, and ideology in legitimizing the power and sustaining the rule of the ruling class.

For Marx, what sustains the capitalist modes of production or capitalist state was the ownership of the bourgeoisie over the means of production. Therefore, he considered laws, politics, state, merely as the instrument of exploitation in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Whereas these thinkers did realize the rule of ideology, politics, in not only legitimizing the power or sustaining the rule of the capitalist powers but also, in ways of developing the contrary ideology or overthrowing the capitalist society.

Similarly, Bakunin, a socialist and revolutionary anarchist criticized Marx's philosophy as a statist that limits human freedom. There was a difference within the international working-class movement, where Marx and his followers recognized the primacy of state or dictator, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary step towards communism from capitalism.

However, Bakunin and many of his follower's questioned this primacy of state and all forms of authority as a tyranny, according to them. He considered Marx's philosophy as a statist, similar to a kind of liberal argument for state and just listen, and through them bringing about human freedom. So, Bakunin argued that if there is a state, there must be domination of one class by another as a result, slavery.

A state without slavery is unthinkable and this is why we are the enemies of the state. Similarly, in Marx also, when he talked about communism, he wanted to do away with the state in communism. There was no need for a state, according to Marx. He also realized like Bakunin the exploitative nature of the state. However, the difference was from capitalism to communism. It was necessary to establish the proletariat dictatorship.

So, there was a kind of recognition in Marx for human emancipation, for ensuring human freedom. But for Bakunin, those kinds of assertion or establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat would necessarily perpetuate tyranny and bring about a new kind of exploitation and new forms of authority over individual freedom. Therefore, they were against all forms of state and authority.

Marx also failed to understand the frailty of human nature and he thought human nature was not fixed and product of their material condition. Therefore, in the change conditions of life

in communism, they would develop new ways of association with themselves and their fellow beings. However, it is not entirely correct. For instance, the egoism and enviousness of men are not eliminated either in communism or with material abundance.

So, his understanding of human nature was also flawed, in the sense that he thought certain values or principles characterized bourgeois society or capitalist mode of production. It would not be present in the communist mode of living in the absence of private property in a classless society. But that is not historically true.

The satisfaction of basic needs led to the creation of newer needs for the individual. And perhaps, Hobbes and other classical economists were right. That it is this drive for more possession or the desire to fulfill newer needs, leads to progress and prosperity in the society, whereas for Marx, it was a kind of stagnation or some kind of perpetuation of living in communism.

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Marx's Legacy

- The uniqueness of Marx's philosophy is that it provides not only the scientific analysis of the functioning of capitalism and its inherent contradictions and the basis of alienation and exploitation in society, but it is also a call to create the conditions of freedom for all. And this has a tremendous influence on the political and historical events in the nineteenth century. Marx and his philosophy of communism inspired many revolutions such as the Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution, and in other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well. Although, such revolutions never occurred in the advanced capitalist countries as Marx envisaged.
- Marx's writings have a tremendous influence on twentieth-century scholars as well. His historical materialism and theory of alienation and exploitation in the capitalist modes of production continue to inspire many inquires in various disciplines in social sciences and humanities. In that sense, Marxism as a school of thought derives much of ideas and theories from Marx's writing but also question and go beyond them. The political economy approach in various disciplines is based on Marx's philosophy.
- Giving primacy to matter and actual existing conditions of human beings, Marx's philosophy helps us to see and interpret the world in a particular way. It is very different from liberal, and market view's on human freedom, state, and politics. Often if we look at the economic disparities nationally and globally, as well as the periodic crises in Capitalism, Marx's writings appear to be still relevant to make sense of our twentieth century's world. However, Marx should be treated as a philosopher, and his writings must be subjected to criticism in the light of historical experience and circumstances.

Now, if you look at the legacy of Marx, the uniqueness of his philosophy is that it provides not only the scientific analysis of the functioning of capitalism and its inherent contradiction and the basis of alienation and exploitation in this form, but it is also a call to create the condition of freedom for all. That is the influence of Marx's writings. So, it does not only explain and interpret the functioning of capitalism, but the way exploitation and alienation works.

But it is a call to create the condition for human emancipation or real freedom for everyone and not just for a few. And this has a tremendous influence on the political and historical events in the 19th century. Marx and his philosophy of communism had inspired many revolutions such as the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and in other countries like Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well.

So, many exploited countries took inspiration from Marx and his theory of communism was seen as the next emancipatory stage in human history. Although these revolutions never occurred in advanced capitalist countries as Marx envisaged, it continued to inspire politics in many societies and countries for the greater emancipation of the whole of humanity and not just for the few who possess the property and inequalities, and disparities that existed even today continued to make Marx's writings and interpretation relevance to understand them.

Marx's writing had a tremendous influence on 20th-century scholars. And his historical materialism and theory of alienation and exploitation in the capitalist mode of production continued to inspire many inquiries in various disciplines of social science and humanities. So, Marx and Marxism become a kind of methodological tool for any kind of inquiry in various disciplines in humanities and social science, sociology, political history.

In that sense, Marxism as a school of thought derived much of ideas and theories from Marx's writings, but also, questioned and went beyond them. There was a kind of argument about post Marxism without apology. They derived inspiration from his ideas. But they also questioned and went beyond the ideas prescribed by Marx.

The political economy approach in various disciplines was based on Marx's philosophy and giving primacy to matter, and the actual existing condition of human beings. Marx's philosophy helped us to see and interpret the world in a particular way. It was very different in that sense from the liberal and market views on human freedom, state, and politics as we have discussed.

So, often, we look at the economic disparities nationally and globally as well as the periodic crises in capitalism. Marx's writings appeared to be still relevant to make sense of our 21st-century world. However, Marx should be treated as a philosopher and his writings must be subjected to criticism in the light of historical experience and circumstances.

So, one of the arguments that come from many Marxist scholars and thinkers is that the historical experience of communism should not be seen by the Marxist vision of communism that was different than the actual practices in the communist or so-called communist society in China, Russia, and other places. But the truth is that Marx's ideas and their popularity were also based on this revolution.

It is not correct to attribute to Marx's certain scientific or deterministic understanding and yet rescue him from the actual practices of his idea. So, like other thinkers, he should be seen as a philosopher and must be subjected to historical experiences or newer discoveries or newer understanding. Therefore, our understanding of Marx should not be in isolation or separation from actual experiences of communism in different societies or indifferent countries.

So, if Marx's popularity was based on his association with those revolutions, historical and political revolution, then it should also be the basis or the ground of criticism against many of his fair idea. To conclude, we should look at Marx as a philosopher and thinker with many insights which helped us to understand the functioning of the society, and the way exploitation works, about alienation and economic disparities, are artificial, constructed.

How men exploit other men and what should be the ways and means to overcome them. Nonetheless, we should also subject many of his ideas in the light of historical evidence, such as the Hegelian influence on his thought or the influence of classical economists or the French socialist on his thought. And also, the way it has been practiced in different communist regimes. Thus, on that basis, we can develop a better understanding of Marx. But that should not restrict us to read the original works of Marx. So, that is all in this lecture today.

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9

You can refer to these texts like Shlomo Avineri's, *The Social and Political Thought of Marx*; David Boucher and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present*; and Gerald A. Cohen's, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense*; and Shefali Jha's, *Western Political Thought: From the Ancient Greeks to Modern Times*; David McLellan's, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*; and also, James Alan Ryan's, *On Politics*; and Peter Singer's, *Marx: A Very Short Introduction*.

So, these are some of the texts which you can refer to, to understand whatever we have discussed in this lecture, today, on Marx's views on politics, communism, and the critical aspect or the critical assessment of Marx's thoughts. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.