

# Marx

## Classical Marxism (Marxism of Marx)

### Philosophical Foundations

**Classical Marxism—the Marxism of Marx himself.**

But to understand Marx, we **must first understand Hegel**, the official philosopher of Prussia and **Marx's intellectual starting point**.

#### Hegel's Big Idea: The Philosophy of History

Hegel wasn't just a thinker—he was a **visionary**. He believed that **history isn't random**.

It's a **purposeful process**, driven by the **conflict of ideas**.

Think of it like a movie where every scene is a clash—**thesis vs. antithesis**—and from that struggle comes something new: a **synthesis**.

This process is called **dialectical evolution**.

#### Hegel's Dialectic: From Matter to Spirit

For Hegel, **the idea is real**. It's not just a thought; it's **the force that drives reality**.

So how does the **idea evolve**?

1. Starts with **non-living matter** (nature),
2. Moves to **living beings** (like humans),
3. Then to **family**,
4. Then **civil society**,
5. And finally to the **state**.

The state, according to Hegel, is **"the march of God on earth."**

Why? Because it's in the state that the **universal spirit**—God's essence—**fully unfolds itself**.

#### The Influence on Marx

Marx **took Hegel's dialectic**, but he flipped it.

Hegel said: **"The idea is real."**

Marx said: **"Matter is real."** (Enter **dialectical materialism**!)

Marx agreed that history is driven by **conflict**—but not of ideas. For Marx, it's a **conflict of material interests**, especially **class struggle**.

Understanding Hegel helps us see how **Marx didn't come out of nowhere**.

He **borrowed Hegel's tools**—dialectics, philosophy of history, the idea of evolution—but filled them with **materialism**, not mysticism.

So, while Hegel saw the **state as the final form**, Marx saw it as a **temporary tool of class domination**—to be overthrown and replaced with a **classless society**.

### The Essence:

- **Hegel**: "State is the march of God on earth"
- **History**: Conflict of **ideas**
- **Idea is real**, reality is **God**
- **Dialectical evolution**: Matter → Life → Family → Civil Society → State
- **Universal spirit** unfolds through **history**
- **Marx**: Took the **dialectic**, replaced **idea** with **material**

## Historical Materialism

Hegel said **ideas** shape history.

But Marx? He **flipped Hegel on his head**—literally and intellectually.

Marx's big move was:

"It's not ideas that drive history, it's **material conditions**."

This idea became the heart of **Historical Materialism**—a powerful lens to understand **how societies evolve**.

### The Core Insight: Man Must Eat First

Let's break it down.

Before people build churches, write poetry, or start revolutions, they must do one basic thing:

**Eat.**

And to eat, they must **produce**—grow food, make tools, trade.

So, Marx says:

"The **first act** in history is not thinking—it's **production**."

And production isn't a solo thing—it requires **social interaction**.

We form **relationships of production**—who owns what, who works where, who gets paid, who profits. These **material relations** are the base of society.

### The Economic Interpretation of History

From here, Marx builds his **economic interpretation of history**:

It's not religion or philosophy or culture that ultimately shapes society —  
It's the **mode of production** and the **class relations** it creates.

So history isn't just a timeline—it's a **struggle between classes**:

1. **Masters vs. Slaves** (Ancient society)

2. **Landlords vs. Serfs** (Feudalism)
3. **Capitalists vs. Workers** (Capitalism)

And what drives history forward?

The **contradictions** within these systems—the **class antagonisms**.

### Why Capitalism is Doomed (According to Marx)

Marx believed that capitalism, just like feudalism before it, carries the **seeds of its own destruction**.

Why?

Because the **worker creates value**, but the **capitalist takes the profit**. This **exploitation** leads to alienation, misery, and eventually—**revolution**.

So he declares:

“Capitalism is doomed,  
**Socialism is destined** to replace it.”

### The Essence

- Marx **turned Hegel on his head**
- **Material conditions**, not ideas, drive history
- History = **class antagonisms**
  - **Masters vs Slaves**
  - **Landlords vs Serfs**
  - **Capitalists vs Workers**
- “Man must eat” → **First act is production**
- Production → **Social interaction** → **Material relations**
- This leads to the **economic interpretation of history**
- **Capitalism is doomed, socialism is destined**

### From Utopian to Scientific Socialism

Before Marx, there were a few noble dreamers who wanted to build a better world—no poverty, no exploitation, just harmony and cooperation.

These were the **early socialists**—  
**Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen.**

They had **big hearts**, but in Marx’s view, **soft heads**.

### Utopian Socialists: Dreamers Without a Map

Marx called them **Utopians**.

Why?

Because they wanted **social change** through **appeals to kindness**, through **model communities**, or **moral persuasion** of the rich.

But Marx said:

“That’s not how history works.”

They **ignored class struggle**.

They **overlooked power and exploitation**.

They were like **doctors writing prescriptions without diagnosing the disease**.

## Enter Scientific Socialism

Now *this* is where Marx flips the script.

He introduces **Scientific Socialism**—grounded not in dreams, but in **material analysis**, in **history**, and in **class struggle**.

It’s not about **imagining a perfect world**,

It’s about **understanding how the real world works**, and **changing it**.

Marx rooted socialism in **praxis**—

A powerful dialectical loop where:

- **Theory leads to action**
- **Action reshapes theory**

This isn’t armchair philosophy—it’s about **revolutionary practice**.

## Revolution as the Engine of History

And yes, for Marx, **violence** isn’t just unfortunate—it’s sometimes necessary.

He called it:

“**The midwife of change.**”

Why?

Because **old systems don’t die peacefully**.

The **ruling class won’t give up power willingly**.

History has always moved through **struggle**.

## Workers of the World, Unite!

And so, Marx issues his battle cry—one of the most powerful in political history:

“**Workers of the world, unite!**”

**You have nothing to lose but your chains.**”

This wasn’t just a slogan.

It was a **call to action**, a spark for a **global revolution**.

## The Essence

- Early socialists: **St. Simon, Fourier, Robert Owen**
- Dismissed as **Utopians** by Marx—**disconnected from class struggle**
- Marx offered **Scientific Socialism**
- Anchored in **praxis: theory → action → refined theory**
- “**Violence is the midwife of change**”
- “**Workers of the world, unite!**”
- “You have **nothing to lose except your chains**”

## Base and Superstructure

society is like a building.

- The **foundation**—what it *rests on*—is called the **Base**.
- Everything that sits **on top**—law, politics, media, religion, education—that’s the **Superstructure**.

Sounds simple, right? But Marx wants you to look deeper.

### The Base: Mode of Production = Power

The **Base** is made up of two critical elements:

1. **Means of Production** – factories, land, machines, tools.
2. **Relations of Production** – who owns the means and who works them.

Together, this forms the **Mode of Production**—and it’s the engine of society.

- In **capitalism**, the **bourgeoisie (haves)** own the means.
- The **proletariat (have-nots)** sell their labour to survive.

These relations are not cooperative—they’re **conflictual** and **dialectical**. Why?

Because one class benefits **only by exploiting** the other.

This contradiction drives history forward.

### The Superstructure: Not as Innocent as It Looks

Now, let’s look **above** the base—to the **Superstructure**:

- **State, law, education, culture, ideology, even religion.**
- It seems **neutral**, even noble: “We’re all equal before the law,” “Merit matters,” “Freedom of choice.”

But Marx says—**hold on!**

This so-called neutrality is an **illusion**.

In reality, the **superstructure reflects the base**—and serves to **justify and maintain** the economic status quo.

### A Mask Over Exploitation

Think of it like this: the superstructure is a **mask**.

- It **normalizes inequality**.
- It **makes exploitation look natural**.
- It **teaches workers to accept their position**.

So when a poor worker says, “Maybe I’m just not working hard enough,” that’s not just self-doubt—that’s **ideology working through the superstructure**.

### But Here’s the Twist

Marx doesn’t just describe this system—he wants to **change it**.

He believes the **proletariat**, the **exploited class**, will **rise**—because the contradictions in the base are unsustainable.

When the **relations of production** begin to choke the **productive forces**, revolution brews.

### The Essence

- Society has a **Base** and **Superstructure**.
- **Base = mode of production = means + relations of production**.
- It is **conflictual, dialectical**, not harmonious.
- The **Superstructure** (state, culture, law) looks neutral but **reflects the interests of the base**.
- This **illusion of neutrality** helps **sustain exploitation**.
- **Change must begin at the base**, through class struggle.

### Class and False Consciousness

let’s talk about who you really are.

Not your religion.

Not your nationality.

Not even your caste or gender (though they matter too).

For **Marx**, your **true identity** is your **class**.

Are you a **worker** who sells labour?

Or a **capitalist** who owns factories?

That, he says, is the root of everything.

## Class Is the Core

Marx sees **class** as the **fundamental identity** in a capitalist society:

- The **bourgeoisie**: own the **means of production**.
- The **proletariat**: own **nothing but their labour**—which they must sell.

This relationship is based on **exploitation**—workers produce value but receive only a portion of it, while capitalists keep the rest (remember: **surplus value**).

But here's the problem...

## False Consciousness: The Great Distraction

Why don't the exploited rise up immediately?

Because they're caught in what Marx calls **False Consciousness**.

It's when people **fail to see their real condition**.

They're distracted by:

- **Religion** ("your suffering will be rewarded in heaven")
- **Nationalism** ("we're all in this together—rich or poor")
- **Caste, race, consumerism**, etc.

These **ideologies mask class conflict** and create a **false sense of unity**.

## From Class in Itself → Class for Itself

Let's imagine two stages of **class consciousness**:

1. **Class in itself**
  - Workers exist as a group with shared interests (low wages, long hours)
  - But they **don't yet realise** their collective power
2. **Class for itself**
  - Workers become **aware** of their shared exploitation
  - They **organise, unite**, and act—this is the **spark of revolution**

That's why Marx says:

*"Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains."*

It's not just poetry—it's a **call to action** rooted in deep theory.

## The Revolution

Once the **class for itself** emerges:

- Workers **shed false consciousness**
- They **demand change**
- They seek to **abolish the system** that exploits them—**capitalism**
- And replace it with **socialism**, leading eventually to **communism**



## The Essence

- **Class** is your real identity, not religion or nation.
- **False consciousness** hides this truth.
- When workers become aware of shared **exploitation**, they become a **class in itself**.
- When they act on it collectively, they become a **class for itself**.
- This transformation leads to **revolution**.

## Alienation and Economic Exploitation

You spend 8 hours a day making shoes.

You don't wear them.

You don't set the price.

You don't even decide how to make them.

You're just... **a cog in a machine**.

That, friends, is **alienation**—one of Karl Marx's most powerful critiques of **capitalism**.

### What is Alienation?

**Alienation** means being **disconnected** from something essential to your humanity.

- You were born creative.
- You were meant to shape the world with your hands and mind.
- But capitalism turns that creativity into **mechanical, soul-less labour**.

### But wait, didn't someone else talk about alienation?

Yes—**Hegel**.

He said we're **alienated from God** or the **Absolute Spirit**.

It's a spiritual or metaphysical alienation.

But Marx flips it.

He says: "It's not about God. It's about your job."

**Alienation is grounded in material reality**, in how the economy exploits your work.

### The Four Types of Alienation (Young Marx, 1844)

Let's break this down using Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*:

#### Alienation from the product of labour

- The things you make don't belong to you.
- You build cars, but you can't afford one.



- **Your work creates value**, but that value is **taken by the capitalist**.

You become a stranger to your own creation.

### **Alienation from the process of labour**

- You don't control **how** you work.
- Every step is decided by supervisors or machines.
- Work becomes **forced**, not free.

You're not creating—you're just complying.

### **Alienation from fellow workers**

- Work is no longer **social** or **cooperative**.
- You compete for wages, promotions, survival.
- No time for community or solidarity.

Instead of bonding, you're **isolated**.

### **Alienation from self (species-being)**

- This one's deep.
- Humans are **naturally creative beings**—we express ourselves through work.
- But under capitalism, work is just a **means to survive**, not to thrive.

**Labour becomes commodified**—your **soul becomes a product**.

### **And What Causes All This?**

One word: **Capitalism**.

- Capitalism turns **labour into a commodity**.
- Workers **sell their labour**, but don't own the fruits of it.
- The more value you create, the **poorer you feel**—because your labour enriches someone else.

That's **economic exploitation**—where **alienation is not just emotional**, it's **systemic**.

### **The Essence**

- **Alienation**: a state of disconnection caused by capitalist production.
- Workers are alienated from:
  - The **product**
  - The **process**

- **Each other**
- **Themselves**
- **Hegel** saw alienation as spiritual; **Marx** made it material.
- It all stems from **economic exploitation** and **commodification** of labour.

## Class Conflict and Surplus Value

### Imagine a tug of war...

On one side: **workers**, pulling with sweat and strength.

On the other side: **capitalists**, sitting comfortably, pulling in profit.

This struggle—this unending tension—is what Karl Marx calls **class conflict**. And he boldly begins his *Communist Manifesto* with a timeless line:

“The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle.”

### What is Class Conflict?

**Class conflict** is not just about pay disputes or strikes.

It’s about the **deep structural fight** between those who **own the means of production** (capitalists) and those who **sell their labour** (workers).

- In feudalism: it was **lords vs. serfs**.
- In slavery: **masters vs. slaves**.
- In capitalism: **bourgeoisie vs. proletariat**.

Each mode of production carries within it **an inherent contradiction**, and that contradiction becomes the fuel for **historical change**.

### The Secret Engine: Surplus Value

Now let’s get to Marx’s economic insight: **surplus value**.

You work 8 hours a day.

- You get paid for 4 hours (say, enough for food and rent).
- But the product you make is worth 8 hours of value.
- That extra 4 hours of value? That’s **surplus value**—and your boss keeps it.

This isn’t a small theft—it’s **systemic exploitation** built right into **capitalism**.

“Exploitation,” Marx says, “is not a bug—it’s a feature.”

### Capitalism: Built to Exploit, Doomed to Collapse

Capitalism looks strong—but it’s full of **internal contradictions**:

- **Labour vs. Capital**: Workers want fair wages. Capitalists want maximum profit.

- **Liberty vs. Equality:** We're told we're free—but inequality grows.
- **Man vs. Society:** People are treated as tools, not as human beings.

These contradictions build tension.

They cause **cyclical crises**—booms followed by **overproduction**, then **economic stagnation**, layoffs, and chaos.

Eventually, capitalism begins to **dig its own grave**.

## From Socialism to Communism: A New World

Marx believed that **revolution** would end this injustice.

- First comes **socialism**: where workers control production and distribute wealth fairly.
- Then, one day, we reach **communism**: no classes, no exploitation, no private ownership.

And when there's no class conflict?

The **state**—which existed to protect the interests of the ruling class—will “**wither away**.”

No need for coercion. No need for domination.

Just **free human beings** living in community.

That, for Marx, is **the end of history**.

## The Essence

- **Class conflict** is the motor of **historical change**.
- **Surplus value** is the profit extracted from **exploitation**.
- **Capitalism's contradictions** cause overproduction, stagnation, and collapse.
- The path through **socialism to communism** ends exploitation.
- **The state will wither away**, and class struggle will end.

## Political Vision: Revolution and Freedom

Close your eyes and imagine a world turned upside down...

Not just a change of rulers—but a **complete transformation** of society. That's what **Marx's political vision** was all about. Not a band-aid fix, not a mere regime change, but a **proletarian revolution** that would shatter the foundations of capitalism and build something entirely new.

## Revolution: More than Politics

For Marx, revolution isn't just about seizing power—it's about changing the **mode of production** and the entire **superstructure**.

Politics, law, religion, even morality—they're all shaped by the economic base.

So, to truly change the world, the **working class**—the **proletariat**—must rise up and **transform the base**, and with it, **rebuild the superstructure**.

But how does this happen?

Marx says two things are needed:

1. **Objective conditions:** Economic exploitation, inequality, unemployment—capitalism creates these.
2. **Subjective conditions: Class consciousness**—workers realizing they are not just isolated individuals, but a collective **class**, ready to fight for change.

When these two align, the **revolution** becomes inevitable.

## Freedom: Not What You Think

Now let's talk about **freedom**—but not in the way liberal thinkers do.

- Liberals say: Freedom is the right to choose.
- Marx says: That's meaningless if you're choosing between working 12 hours or starving.

For Marx, **true freedom** is **freedom from necessity**.

You can't be free if you're hungry.

You can't be free if you sell your labour just to survive.

You can't be free if society blocks your human potential.

Real freedom comes when society guarantees **basic needs**—food, shelter, health, dignity—so that individuals can act **in accordance with their true nature**.

That's not just economic security. That's **human emancipation**.

## The Essence

- **Revolution** must change both the **mode of production** and the **superstructure**.
- It requires **objective conditions** (exploitation) and **subjective conditions** (**class consciousness**).
- **Freedom**, for Marx, is not a right—but a **social product**.
- It means **freedom from necessity**, not just choice.
- **True freedom** begins only when **basic needs** are met and **human potential** can flourish.

So when Marx says:

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it,”

he's calling not just for analysis—but for **action**. And in that action lies the path to **revolution and freedom**.

## Socialism vs Communism

Let's clear up a common confusion—\*\*Socialism and Communism are not the same thing. Marx was very precise about this. These are not interchangeable terms but **two different stages** in the journey towards human liberation.

### Socialism — The Transitional Stage

Marx saw **Socialism** as the **bridge** between capitalism and the final goal of communism. It's the **beginning of a new world**, where:

“From each according to his ability, **to each according to his work.**”

That means:

- ✓ Everyone contributes based on what they can do.
- ✓ But you receive based on how much work you've done.

It's still a society **structured around contribution**, but exploitation is gone. No more capitalists sucking surplus value. The means of production—factories, land, resources—are **socially owned**, not privately.

However, **classes may still exist** at this stage. The **state remains**, but it's a **workers' state**, guiding the transition and ensuring fairness.

## Communism — The Final Goal

Now comes the **dream: Communism**.

“From each according to his ability, **to each according to his need.**”

Here, there's **no private property**, **no classes**, and even **no state**. The **state withers away** because it's no longer needed to manage class conflict—there are **no classes** left!

This is the **true emancipation** of humanity. People contribute whatever they can, not for wages, not for survival, but because society is built on **cooperation**, not competition. And everyone receives **not based on effort**, but based on **need**—because basic human dignity is not earned, it is guaranteed.

## The Essence

- **Socialism:** Transitional stage, **from each according to ability, to each according to work**, classes still exist, **workers' state**.
- **Communism:** Final stage, **classless, stateless**, true equality, **from each according to ability, to each according to need**.
- The **state withers away** when no longer needed.
- The journey moves from **exploitation** → **equality** → **emancipation**.

So next time someone says socialism or communism casually—remind them that for Marx, this wasn't just politics—it was a **historical process**, a **philosophical vision**, and above all, a **hope for a just and humane world**.

## Critique: Karl Popper

**Marx's fiercest critics: Karl Popper.**

Popper wasn't just any critic—he was a philosopher of science and a staunch defender of **liberal democracy** and **the open society**.

And for him, **Marxism was dangerous**.

## Popper's Key Critique of Marxism

He accused Marxism of being:

### 1. Holistic

Popper said Marxism tries to explain **everything**—history, politics, economics—using **one grand theory**. It sees society as a single, unified system that must be changed as a whole. But Popper warned:

“When you treat society as a machine to be fixed, you ignore the real complexity of human life.”

He believed this **totalizing approach** ignores **individual freedom**, **local solutions**, and **plural perspectives**.

### 2. Historicist

Popper coined this term to critique Marx's **deterministic view of history**.

According to Marx, history follows a predictable path:

**Feudalism → Capitalism → Socialism → Communism**

Popper said:

“This is dangerous. History does **not** obey scientific laws.”

For Popper, trying to **predict the future of society** based on rigid patterns is **bad science and worse politics**.

### 3. Deterministic

Popper argued that Marx reduced human beings to **puppets of economic forces**.

There's no room for **moral choice**, **individual agency**, or **unexpected outcomes**. Everything is supposedly dictated by the **mode of production**.

But Popper asked:

“Where is the space for disagreement, for creativity, for dissent?”

### A Warning: Enemy of the Open Society

Popper's biggest fear was that Marxism, in practice, becomes **totalitarian**.

Because if you believe history has one correct path, and you know that path—you might suppress anyone who disagrees.

That's how Popper saw regimes that claimed to follow Marx—**Stalin's USSR**, for instance—as betraying freedom and becoming **closed societies**.

So, Popper labeled Marxism an **enemy of the open society**, where **criticism, democracy, and diversity** should thrive.

### The Essence

- **Holistic:** Treats society as one whole, ignoring individuality.
- **Historicist:** Claims to scientifically predict history's path.
- **Deterministic:** Believes economic forces fully control human destiny.



- **Teleological certainty:** Assumes history has a fixed, final goal (communism).
- **Suppression of pluralism:** One truth = no room for disagreement.
- **Enemy of the open society:** Dangers of turning ideology into authoritarianism.

So while Marx dreamed of emancipation, **Popper feared indoctrination**. His critique reminds us: **Utopias can turn oppressive when they silence doubt**.

In an open society, questioning even the most noble of ideas is not betrayal—it's our duty.

## Classical Marxism: Relevance Today

### 1. Economic Inequality & Exploitation

The **widening wealth gap**—visible in billionaire growth vs. stagnant wages—echoes Marx's theory of **surplus value** and **systemic exploitation** of workers. Platforms like **Amazon**, where labor conditions are debated while profits soar, illustrate the **capital vs. labor contradiction**.

### 2. Alienation in the Gig Economy

In today's **gig economy**, workers often feel **alienated**—from their work, each other, and themselves—mirroring Marx's idea of labor becoming **a commodity**. Food delivery workers, for example, have little connection to the product or employer and suffer from job insecurity and depersonalized tasks.

### 3. Dialectical Conflict in Global Movements

Movements like **Black Lives Matter**, **climate justice protests**, and **farmer agitations** show that **social change is still driven by class-like struggles**. Marx's idea of **praxis**—theory leading to action—is embodied in these global mobilizations for rights and justice.

### 4. False Consciousness and Media

The dominance of **consumer culture** and **celebrity worship** often masks deeper inequalities, reinforcing **false consciousness**. People vote or act against their economic interests under the influence of ideologies pushed by corporate media.

### 5. Environmental Crisis as Systemic Contradiction

The **ecological destruction** driven by profit motive showcases a contradiction between **man and society**, as predicted by Marx. Climate change represents capitalism's unsustainable push for production and accumulation.

## PYQ (It includes Orthodox Marxism, Neo Marxism and Marxist theory of State)

1. Marxism is a political theory of action demanding strict compliance with its core principles. Comment. 2024, 15
2. Marx's concept of 'alienation' is an essential part of the reality in capitalism. Explain. 2021, 15
3. Examine the Marxist conception of class struggle. 2020, 15
4. What is the contemporary relevance of Marxism? 2019, 15
5. What is meant by 'relative autonomy' of State in Marxist analysis? 2012, 20



6. Evaluate Mark's instrumentalist approach to the State, 2010, 30
7. The root of politics, according to Marx, does not lie in the state; it lies in the social conditions underlying this institution, that is, in the material conditions of life as reflected through the mode of production. Comment. 2005, 60
8. Critically examine Marxist theory of the state with reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat. 2001, 60
9. Comment on: State is a march of God on the Earth (Hegel). 2000, 20
10. Critically examine the Marxian theory of social stratification. 2004, 60
11. Differentiate between Freedom and Liberty. Discuss Marx's notion of freedom. 2017, 15
12. Examine in detail Marx's prescription for ending alienation and reaching the stage of dealienation. 2009, 60
13. Explain Marx's understanding of Human Essence and Alienation. 2016, 15.
14. Discuss in what sense Marx's understanding of state can be considered as materialistic. 2013, 15
15. Comment on: that the anatomy of this civil society, however, has to be sought in political economy (Marx). 2006, 20
16. The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle (Karl Marx). Comment. 2003, 60.
17. Discuss the relationship between base and superstructure in Marxist theory. 2015, 15



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