

Six Basic Principles of Marxism

1. **Materialist conception of history**
2. **Historical inevitability**
3. **Alienation**
4. **Labour Theory of Value**
5. **Class Struggle**
6. **Dictatorship of the Proletariat**

Materialist conception of history

- asserts the human necessity to produce and obtain a means of subsistence
 - M & E analyze the role of labour, the abundance or lack of raw materials, and the instruments of production available in society
- the material basis for the '**mode of production**' (a.k.a. economic system) determines the political, moral, legal and religious superstructure of society and is the driving force behind societal development
- material lives of people determine their ideology and their supporting institutions (rich men = capitalists, poor men = socialist?)

Historical inevitability

- history moves in predictable and calculable directions
- M & E's theory tries to explain why one economic system gives way to another and why prediction is possible to the final historical stage of human development (communism)
- examined the development of human history from primitive communism through slavery and feudalism to capitalism and socialism
- they believe that capitalism marked a transient stage of historical development destined to disintegrate because of class antagonism

Alienation

- maximized under capitalism, the source of alienation= the organization of work
- individuals living in a capitalist society lose their understanding and control of the world around them and in the process become something less than full human beings
- workers feel dissociated from the process of production- WHY?
 - they compete with other workers
 - receive only a small portion of the value of what they produce
 - are divided and specialized in what they produce
 - do not own the means of production or have much say in how the means are used
- M believed that the capacity of work is a distinctive human characteristic (they consciously act on and change the environment, shaping their lives, cultures and personalities in the process)
- workers see themselves as cogs in the productions of society because in a capitalist system they have diminished responsibilities and are reduced to a small part of the work process
- work becomes an enforced activity, not a creative or satisfying one, mostly because the profit produced by the labour of the worker goes to someone else

Labour Theory of Value

- M found that the majority of men, women and children lived in poverty
- they were victims of a mode of production that permitted the few who did not do the manual labour to enjoy most of the wealth produced by labourers
- the capitalist mode of production extracts **surplus value** from wage- labour to the benefit of the few
- true value of any commodity is derived by computing the labour that is

necessary to produce it

- because capitalists are not labourers, they do not produce value
- also, workers are not compensated for the total value of the goods they produce - what the capitalist withholds is **surplus value**
- surplus value is used to expand capital, creating competition
- accumulation of capital generates increasing demands for labour
- simultaneously, accumulation leads to the concentration of capital, which places greater amounts of capital in fewer and fewer hands
- natural tendency of capitalists to expand surplus value (profits) feeds the impoverishment of workers, creates under-consumption, and results in surplus production

Class struggle

- M recognized that many different social classes emerged at different times under different modes of production
 - ex: pre-Industrial Europe, aristocracy= ruling class, peasants = workers
- during I.R., 2 classes emerged- the **proletariat** (working class) and the **bourgeoisie** (ruling class) and shaped the economic destiny of the period through their "relation of production"-major classes are landowners and capitalists, and then the class of wage-earners
- M. saw social classes as the building blocks of society
- classes eventually become self-aware- this **class consciousness** leads to organization, politicization and then finally confrontation
- since the state is often ruled by the ruling class (both capitalists), the state uses its coercive power against the challenges of the proletarian class= creates revolution
- M.= history is a **dialectic of revolutionary change**
 - a process of class conflict and struggle involving social and political contradictions (**thesis** and **antithesis**), producing a conflict out of which a new and higher social order (**synthesis**) emerges= **communism**

Dictatorship of the Proletariat

- after the inevitable revolution, a short temporary period of socialist transition would take place after the fall of capitalism to help restore order
- **dictatorship of the proletariat**
- state under the control of the proletarians, defending the gains made during the revolution and guiding society through the inequalities and deprivations resulting from the transformation to communism
- proletariat, with its political dominance, can bring under control all means of production
- the state is a committee of proletarians making decisions, drafting laws, and taking action on behalf of the proletarian class
- under this ideal condition goods would be distributed according to need, and the unity of all humankind would be assured because of the elimination of greed

***“To each according to his needs,
from each according to his ability”***