

# **FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES**

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# Lecture-39



## **Fundamental Principles of Marxism:**

It has been asserted that Marx in all his works followed certain fundamental principles and Kolakowsky puts it more categorically in the following words. There are certain **“fundamental principles of Marx’s theory, from which he never departed. The whole of his work, down to the last page of Capital, was a confirmation and elaboration of these ideas”**.

**Let us briefly state (following Kolakowski) these fundamental principles:**

1. Both Hegel and Marx have dealt with a basic question – How is man to be reconciled with him and with the world? Hegel was of opinion that mind of man passes through history and finally comes to realize what is the world.

This realisation is truth. Hegel also speaks of Spirit and man understands it through his realisation of the world. But Marx did not support the contention of Hegel. The opposite view of Hegel was first formulated by Feuerbach and Marx borrowed it from him.

According to Marx man is not concerned with Absolute Idea or Spirit but with the stark reality. This he tries to understand and explain in the background of his own life. He always interprets the world around him.

2. Both Hegel and Marx thought that man was the product of self-knowledge and he goes on reconciling with the world. But to Hegel the concept of self- knowledge is associated with Spirit or Absolute Idea. Marx has rejected it and has laid down the famous doctrine of alienation. That is, he tries to understand himself or the world around him through the alienation. The theory of alienation is the product of the alienated labour. In fact, alienation occupies a very important place in Marx’s theory.

3. In capitalist economy there is a division of labour which means that a labour produces a single or small part of an article. The capitalist system has introduced this division of labour to have better results. But its harmful consequence is with the passing away of time man is gradually alienated from the whole production system and finally the society.

He is ultimately converted into a machine. The division of labour no doubt helps the progress of industry of capitalist society. But man is the victim of its harmful effects. Again, this alienation is responsible for dehumanisation. According to Marx this dehumanisation is the greatest evil of capitalist society.

4. The general meaning of alienation is that it is the “subjugation of man by his own work, which has assumed the guise of independent things”. The entire economic process including production and distribution is beyond the control of workers. They work just like machine.

In other words, the workers are alienated from the mainstream of productive process and from here the dehumanisation starts. Hence alienation and dehumanisation are closely related and the entire capitalist system is absolutely responsible for this.

5. In the opinion of Marx, since alienation is the greatest evil of capitalist system the workers must be freed from this evil. But he has warned us by saying that there is no scope of freeing individuals from the curse of alienation because it is an integral part of the capitalist system.

The only way in which the curses of alienation are to be removed. But in a capitalist system there is no possibility of freeing man from alienation.

6. If we go through Marx's analysis we shall find that the only way of freeing man from alienation is the establishment of communism or communist society.

**Let us put it in the words of Kolakowski:**

**“Communism puts an end to the division of life into public and private spheres and to the difference between civil society and the state, it does away with the need for political institutions, political authority and governments, private property and its source in the division of labour. It destroys the class system and exploitation; it heals the split in man's nature and the crippled one-sided development of the individual”.**

Hence communism and disappearance of alienation is almost same thing. That is why it has been rightly observed that the transcendence of alienation and communism are identical. The building up of a communist society will completely transform the existence of men and women.

7. Only in communism man gets the full opportunity to flourish his latent qualities and this makes him a perfect human being. In a capitalist society he is deprived of this. Man has many good qualities and abilities.

Capitalism suppresses them. But in communism he gets full scope to develop them and ultimately he arrives at the stage which he desires. Only in communism man frees him from all sorts of exploitation and bondage.

Communism creates an atmosphere which ensures the “realization of freedom, not only from exploitation and political power but from immediate bodily needs. It is the solution to the problem of history and is also the end of history”.

8. The Utopian socialists “imagined” that communism could be achieved through the repeated and fervent appeal to the capitalists. But Marx did not accept it. He thought that only through an intense struggle against the bourgeoisie a communist society can be finally built up. In his opinion the present age (when Marx was writing 1845-1883) is quite ripe for an intense struggle.

It is the duty of the working class to fully utilize the situation. The contradictions within capitalism have achieved the stage of maturity. There was maximum dehumanisation and this is intolerable.

A worker is no more than a commodity. He gets no respect as a human being. In other words, the capitalists treat him as a commodity. This is an unimaginable humiliation only communism can save him and to achieve it workers will have to fight.

**Kolakowski says:**

“The proletariat is not a mere agglomeration of suffering, degradation and misery but also the historical instrument by which man is to recover his heritage.”

9. About consciousness Marx's opinion is clear. He says that the consciousness of the proletariat is not all. That is, it may be passive or active. If the consciousness is of the former type emancipation from exploitation will not be possible because the passive consciousness cannot do the job.

The consciousness must be active and must have a revolutionary spirit. The proletariat must be prepared for all sorts of hazards. Workers must fight against these. Naturally, consciousness of revolutionary category is the only way of emancipation. What Marx means is that without struggle emancipation is not possible.

10. Marx also talked about various aspects of consciousness. For example, proletarians will be conscious of their own class. Again, be conscious of the fact that only struggle against the bourgeoisie is the way of freedom. Without prolonged struggle, communism cannot be achieved. Moreover, communism can be protected through continuous struggle.

**Marxism: Defined in Two Very Separate Ways:**

1) Critical Theory: A philosophical tool for analyzing/explaining social-historical-political events, relationships, and ideologies

2) Prescriptive Method: An economic system (socialism and communism) meant to create human equality and justice through economic equality and the elimination of personal property. Like the Enlightenment and Romanticism, (and all religions) this element of Marxism is utopian; it believes it can permanently eliminate certain types of human suffering by creating social equity.

In this class, we're primarily interested in the first way because while few still believe communism works, Marx's view of history and knowledge (Ideology) remains highly influential and is as much a part of the way conservatives see the world as it is a "liberal" theory.

(Note: While Communism as an actual political-economic theory has been widely dismissed by most Westerners, both Social Democracy and Marxist Critical Theory remain widely accepted and practiced; it's worth noting that with few exceptions, the countries with the highest standards of living have adopted explicitly Social Democratic systems of government. (ie: Canada, Australia, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark etc.) Note also, for example, that over 80% of the Alaskan state budget is funded by the socialization of its oil fields, which belong to the state, not to private companies; technically, Alaska is therefore a largely socialist state.

Marxism: The Five Underlying Principles and Key Terms:

1) The Means or Mode of Production: This is Marx's term for all the material things necessary to produce wealth or products -- it includes everything (but labor) necessary to make and distribute stuff. When we talk about the "means of production" we generally mean natural resources like land, minerals, oil, trees etc.; tools and factories; means of distribution like roads and highways, vehicles.

**2) Historical Materialism:**

a) History itself is nothing but an endless power struggle over controlling the means of production: the natural resources and labor necessary to live. All struggles, though they may appear to be over nationalism or religion etc., are really rooted in a struggle over the means of production and labor.

b) All cultural beliefs (ideologies) follow material/economic relationships; we cannot escape our economic lives (our dependence on others for goods and services) and all of our basic beliefs -- and he does mean all -- are a reflection of those economic relationships.

*"In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production [or "means of production"] of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." (note: this is Existential)*

*-- A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*

Note that this is really just a continuation of Rousseau's theory of The Origin Of Human Inequality: everything that we think (Ideology) and all of our human relationships stem from struggles over property.

Heart Of Darkness revolves around this theory: the colonialists say they are in Africa to "bring civilization" to the natives (see Ideology, below), but they are in fact there for ivory and gold.

Working Class or Proletariat: "those individuals who sell their labor and do not own the means of production"

Bourgeoisie: those who "own the means of production" and exploit the proletariat.

The Proletariat are always struggling to become the Bourgeoisie and the Bourgeoisie are always struggling to keep them from doing so. All conflicts, including all wars, including all racism, including all sexism, are essentially this conflict: a battle between these two social classes over the means of production.

**3) Hegemony:** the dominance of one group over another (the Bourgeoisie over the Proletariat) *through force or Ideology* (see below); the means through which one group calls "all the shots" in terms of both Material/Economic relations and beliefs.

In Heart Of Darkness, we would say colonial Belgium is exercising hegemony over the native Congolese. In Things Fall Apart we would say men exercise hegemony over women.

#### 4) Capitalism, Profit And Labor:

Capitalist Ideology argues that profit belongs to whomever controls capital (material goods and means to produce and distribute those goods: the land, natural resources, tools, the means of distribution etc).

Marxist Theory (or "Marxist Ideology") argued that profit margins are actually largely located in labor, thus labor has economic value. Capital may belong to the capitalist, but labor belongs to each man or woman him or herself. The working class is exploited in the form of profit: what the laborer rightly earned is given to the capitalist. This is key: no man can own or control the value of another man's labor or the relationship is inherently exploitive and, thus, immoral.

5) Ideology: The control of knowledge to maintain existing or establish social class structures. A belief system adopted as "inherently true" that operates unconsciously and **permeates a culture as truth itself**. In *The German Ideology* Marx most clearly defines ideology as pertaining to "politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics etc." This is the part of Marxist theory we are most interested in because Marx radically changes the way philosophers see knowledge itself.

Dominant ideologies:

a) Are produced, controlled and distributed by the hegemon; those who control the means of production also control a culture's belief system.

b) Appear neutral while those threatening existing class structure are painted as "radical." Dominant ideologies are the one we all accept as "true" without really challenging.

c) Are "existential": people create ideas, rather than those ideas actually having a verifiable factual basis.

d) Because the dominant ideology supports those in power, analyzing and understanding a given ideology explains material conditions of class power structures ("who is who's ho").

e) Are fluid, mutable: when the power structure changes the dominant ideology will change as well to reflect the new power relationship.

A society cannot change the existing means of production and class structures without changing the existing ideology. Vice versa: changing existing ideologies is actually an attempt to change class structure. Inherently and always. Thus any and all discussion of values and beliefs is in fact an attempt to define class relationships: who controls the means of production.

#### Examples Of How Ideology Intersects With Means of Production and Class:

There are many different types of Ideology. In this framework, all religious values are Ideology. The basic American Ideologies are Freedom, Equality, and Capitalism: these are the basic principles we pretty much all hold as "inherently true". Of course, where Marxism seems to have gone "wrong" is in not recognizing that Marxism or Communism would simply become another Ideology, in the same cynical sense it was designed to escape.

Colonialism: This is the easiest example and most direct form: one group uses racism, ethnic nationalism or its own inherent values to justify exploiting another race or nation's labor and natural resources. What's important here is that Marx doesn't believe people exploit others because they are racist but rather that racism exists so that we can exploit each other; remember, ideologies come from economic relations, not vice versa.

Civil Liberties: The most straightforward examples of this include value-issues such as Immigration, Illegal Immigration, Marriage Rights For Gays And Lesbians, the Legalization Of Marijuana etc. In each of these cases we find that the most powerful political lobbies are often those with the deepest economic stake in the issue. (Roughly 10 million illegal immigrants live and work in the USA. 50 percent of all farm workers in the US are illegal aliens, and Americans spend less on food than the citizens of any other industrialized country. Only 1,063 employers were fined for hiring illegals in 1992, and that number dropped to 13 in 2002; all told, less than \$10,000 dollars in fines were

collected in 2003. In other words, while we talk about ending illegal immigration we systematically profit from its existence, and this is not coincidental: we profit from it because we think it is wrong; hating illegal immigrants is what justifies exploiting them).

**Romanticism And Nature:** From a Marxist perspective, for example, Romantic views of Nature and the Sublime were seen as no more than wealthy, industrialized urbanites using Romantic Ideology to justify control of rural lands -- movies like Bambi, conceived of and produced in urban Los Angeles, would be viewed as an attempt to demonize rural means of production (hunting, logging etc.) and thereby gain economic control of those means (ski areas, national parks etc.).

**Diversity:** People living in regions valuing "diversity" (California, New York etc.) have an economic interest in diverse peoples seeing each other as "equal" -- these regions are dependent on international trade, the importation of well educated foreign workers etc -- while states valuing segregation or "white supremacy" (Mississippi etc.) have economies built around cheap, race-based labor. In short, if seeing different cultures as "equal" lines my pockets, I will embrace equality; if seeing different cultures as "equal" costs me profit and seeing others as "inferior" lines my pockets, I'll lean toward racism and bigotry.

## **6) Alienation:**

It now became the interest of men to appear what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things; and from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train. -- Rousseau "Discourse On The Origin Of Human Inequality"

Marx picks up where Rousseau left off, arguing that modern, capitalist and industrial economies create a condition of alienation.

a) **Alienation From Self and Labor:** In industrial societies, workers are paid to produce material goods, and these goods are then sold to others; thus, labor (the work necessary to produce something) is objectified (labor is turned into a material object), and the worker is alienated from this object: his days are spent producing things for others, so he becomes separated from his life/work.

**Example:** A good, contemporary image to represent this would be the barefoot, teenage, Muslim, Indonesian woman running a machine to produce \$100, size 10 Nikes for a six-foot, American, teenage boy (who will not hold a full time job until he is 22) to play basketball in, a sport the Indonesian teenager has never seen.... Compare this example to a peasant farmer or a hunter gatherer: these people produce the tools used to produce labor necessary to produce their own food, either on their own land or on ancestral hunting land; there is no or at least less separation between one's own labor (means of production) and one's own life, self, family, clan, tribe....

b) Alienation From Others: In industrial, capitalist society, labor is a commodity; it is something bought and sold on the economic market. Thus, capitalist society produces and ideology where-in all its members perceive one another as commodities. Further, capitalism encourages exploitation since the pursuit of capital -- vs. the pursuit of morality, or love, or community -- is the dominant ideology: the economic system pressures to get as much labor from one another for the least amount of capital. Simply put, capitalism forces everyone to perceive one another as commodities, objects for generating more capital.

Alienation is deeply tied to Ideology: Rather than Nike existing to serve other American by giving them jobs etc, or to help build a moral society, or for some other "higher purpose", Nike exists to generate capital (profit). In this model -- capitalism, profit is the moral good itself; that is to say: capitalist Ideology states that profit itself is a moral good. Thus, all Nike's executives, stock holders, managers, middle-managers -- in short, every single person with a stake in Nike -- are all alienated from the teenage, Muslim, Indonesian woman running a machine to produce \$100, size 10 Nikes. In fact, the more one is alienated from her, the less concerned we are about her well being...thus, Nike is encouraged by capitalist ideology to view the worker as a commodity -- an object, a number in a book -- rather than a human being.

Similarly, all of Nike's employees view each other this way. The stock holders view each other and the company this way. Everyone involved in this means of production is alienated from everyone else.

Here's a good example: Phil Knight of Nike has never set foot in one of his overseas factories (or "sweatshops") Marxist theory would argue that Knight's alienation from his employees (or from his contractors' employees -- one further step of remove) allows him an Ideology of exploitation, and, conversely, his Ideology (Free Trade) justifies his alienation.

Most importantly, because Ideology permeates all levels of society, **everyone in a capitalist society is trained to view everyone else as a commodity, an object**: we are all taught to see each other as something we can exploit...and in a free-market society, this exploitation is the highest moral good.

The Norwegian documentary Sweatshop: Dead Cheap Fashion shows how false and thin this alienation really is simply by breaking down the economic barrier separating what Marx and Rousseau call our common humanity.

Ancient, Medieval, Enlightenment and Rousseau-ean Foundations of Marxism:

Medieval and Puritan Roots: While it is certainly accurate to say the Communism saw religion as the enemy, and vice versa, it's important to realize that the foundational Communist assumption pre-date capitalism and were common ideas to Judaism, the Catholic Church and Protestant Puritans: one should not exploit other members of one's own community and all economic relations must be moral -- that is, good for all

concerned parties and the community as a whole. As we've already discussed, ancient Romans and Catholics alike banned interest on money-lending (usury). Further, the early American Puritans had far more in common with modern Communists than with free market and democratic capitalists: they held property in common and saw the community as a whole, rather than individual gain, as the measurement of economic good.

Rousseau-ean -- Romantic Basis: Property is the root of all social evil. Selfishness is existential: it is not an inherent/instinctual human quality but rather the result of capitalist economic systems. Communism also deified the worker or peasant, idealizing them as the greatest repository of morality and social good.

Rousseau and the Socialist Solution to Alienation: If property is the problem, common (communal) ownership is the solution. Common ownership of all goods, services, commodities, property etc. creates an ideology in which rather than competing to exploit one another, we work toward our own good as the common good.

Enlightenment Basis: There is a material basis to everything and science can explain it:

a) Human systems and relationships can be understood thru the application of scientific principles: rationally and numerically. (Political Economy)

b) Human systems and relationships can be *improved* thru the application of scientific principles.

Note, however, the ambivalent relationship between much Marxist theory criticizes the Enlightenment as a tool-of-oppression used to maintain hegemony: science itself can be used to keep the weak down; the industrial revolution alienated workers from their means of production, families, land, religions etc.; capitalist and democratic ideology is often used to invade and conquer competing countries, etc. "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all other ones." CM (2175))

### **Modern Adaptations of Marxist Theory:**

Consumer Culture and Marketing: IF Ideology determines relationships to goods and services, and IF Ideology is somewhat fluid (ideas have no essential "truth") and are thus open to change, THEN marketers should be able to produce new ideologies (marketing campaigns) that create and exploit false material relations. That is: we can make you think you need to buy things you don't need at all, but to do so we must reshape your very conception of truth and culture. Thus: Culture can be manufactured to the capitalist's advantage.

Examples: Cosmopolitan Magazine, Song airlines, Harley Davidson, Fender guitars "emotional and spiritual relationship to commodity items."

## MCQ

1. Marx believed that in the present capitalist system of society:

- A. The number of workers will come down      B. Middle class will become powerful  
C. Ranks of middle class will swallow      D. Middle class will come at the forefront of  
struggle against state  
E. Middle class will form the rank of the workers

2. Which one of the following is regarded by Gustav Rains as an important indicator of development?

- A. Growth of trade unions      B. Extent to which the social and political  
institutions are reorganised  
C. The growth of bureaucracy      D. None of the above

3. According to Karl Marx workers:

- A. Had no mother land      B. Have a motherland to which they must stick  
C. Should confine their activities to their country      D. Should give maximum cooperation to the state

4. Dialectical materialism of Marx believes that:

- A. Social phenomena is applicable to political life      B. Social phenomena has nothing to do with  
political life  
C. Social phenomena is antithesis of political life      D. Political Life and social phenomena can't go  
hand in hand

5. According to Marxian philosophy dialect:

- A. It result of actions and reactions      B. No actions and reactions but matter  
C. Means that action and reaction must be in the  
same direction