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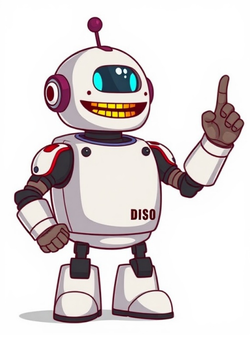

Marxism, developed by Karl Marx, explores the impact of capitalism on labor and economic growth, advocating for change through a worker-led revolution. Central to Marxism is the belief that class struggle—particularly between the ruling bourgeoisie and the working proletariat—shapes economic dynamics, ultimately leading to a communist transformation. The term “Marxist” can be an adjective or noun. It means “of, relating to, or having the characteristics of Marxism.” Marxism is a social, political, and economic philosophy developed by Karl Marx that critiques capitalism and envisions a classless society.Marxists believe that capitalism inherently leads to class conflict between the bourgeoisie (owners) and the proletariat (workers), which will result in a revolution.Marxian economics, based on the labor theory of value, argues that capitalists profit by exploiting workers and underpaying them compared to the value their labor creates.Marx's predictions of capitalism self-destructing through monopolies and class revolt have not yet materialized, as modern capitalist societies have adapted with regulations.While Marxism provides the basis for communism, real-world communist countries have not achieved the classless society Marx envisioned. Marxism is a social and political theory that includes class conflict theory and Marxian economics. Marxism was first publicly formulated in 1848 in the pamphlet “The Communist Manifesto” by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which lays out the theory of class struggle and revolution. In "Das Kapital," published in 1867, Marx outlined his critique of capitalism through Marxian economics. Marxism generally argues that capitalism is flawed and will eventually fail as an economic system. In capitalism, business owners control all means of production, including factories, tools, raw materials, finished products, and profits. Workers—labor—are hired for wages and have no ownership stake and no share in the profits. Moreover, the wages paid to workers are lower than the economic value that their work creates for the capitalist. This source of profit creates a class struggle between labor and capital. Historical materialism, another Marx theory, suggests society is shaped by its production methods and technology. In the modern era of industrial capitalism, capitalists organize labor in factories or offices where they work for wages using modern tools and machines. Like other classical economists, Karl Marx believed in a labor theory of value (LTV) to explain relative differences in market prices. This theory stated that the value of a product can be measured objectively by the average number of hours of labor required to produce it. In other words, if a table takes twice as long to make as a chair, then the table should be considered twice as valuable. What Marx added to this theory was the conclusion that this labor value represented the exploitation of workers. Marx claimed that there are two major flaws in capitalism that lead to the exploitation of workers by employers: the chaotic nature of free market competition and the extraction of surplus labor. Marx predicted that capitalism would eventually destroy itself as more people become relegated to working-class status, inequality rises, and competition drives corporate profits to zero. This would lead, he surmised, to a revolution after which production would be turned over to the working class as a whole. Marx’s class theory portrays capitalism as one step in a historical progression of economic systems that follow one another in a natural sequence. They are driven, he posited, by vast impersonal forces of history that play out through the behavior and conflict among social classes. According to Marx, every society is divided into social classes, whose members have more in common with one another than with members of other social classes. The following are some key elements of Marx’s theories of how class conflict would play out in a capitalist system: Capitalist society is made up of two classes: the bourgeoisie, or business owners, who control the means of production, and the proletariat, or workers, whose labor transforms raw commodities into goods that have market value. Ordinary laborers, who do not own the means of production, such as factories, buildings, and materials, have little power in the capitalist economic system. Workers are also readily replaceable in periods of high unemployment, further devaluing their perceived worth. To maximize profits, business owners have to get the most possible work out of their laborers while paying them the lowest possible wages. This creates an imbalance between owners and laborers, whose work is exploited by the owners for their own gain. Since workers have little personal stake in the process of production, Marx believed they would become alienated from their work, and even from their own humanity, and turn resentful toward business owners. The bourgeoisie are able to leverage social institutions, including government, media, academia, organized religion, and the banking and financial systems, as tools and weapons against the proletariat with the goal of maintaining their positions of power and privilege. Ultimately, the inherent inequalities and exploitative economic relations between these two classes will lead to a revolution in which the working class rebels against the bourgeoisie, takes control of the means of production, and abolishes capitalism. Thus, Marx believed capitalism would destroy itself. The alienation and exploitation of workers would drive them to rebel and take control of production. Enlightened leaders, the "vanguard of the proletariat," would lead the revolution, uniting workers by raising class awareness. After the revolution, Marx predicted, private ownership of the means of production would be replaced by collective ownership, first under socialism and then under communism. In the final stage of human development, social classes and class struggle would no longer exist. Karl Marx believed that the proletariat would overthrow capitalism in a violent revolution. Marx and Engels’ ideas laid the groundwork for the theory and practice of communism, which advocates for a classless system in which all property and wealth are communally rather than privately owned. China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam are the only nations that have communist systems today. Notably, most of these nations have relaxed some of their most rigid policies in the name of economic progress and global trade. The Soviet Union was an experiment in communism that was created in 1921 and collapsed in 1991, leaving behind 15 former Soviet Socialist Republics to rebuild their economies from scratch. None chose communism as a model. Notably, Marx and Engels didn’t consistently differentiate between socialism and communism. Today, there is often confusion about the ways they are distinct. Socialism predates communism by several decades. Its early adherents called for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth, solidarity among workers, better working conditions, and common ownership of land and manufacturing equipment. Socialism is based on the concept of public ownership and regulation of the means of production, but individuals may still own property. Rather than rising out of a class revolution, socialist reform has taken place within existing social and political structures, whether they are democratic, technocratic, oligarchic, or totalitarian. Both communism and socialism oppose capitalism, an economic system characterized by private ownership and a system of laws that protect the right to own or transfer private property. In a capitalist economy, private individuals or the companies they create own the means of production and the right to profit from them. Communism and socialism aim to right the wrongs of capitalism’s free-market system. These include worker exploitation, inequities between classes, and outright poverty. Marx inspired multitudes of followers, but many of his predictions have not come to pass. Marx believed that increasing competition would not produce better goods for consumers but would lead to bankruptcies and the rise of monopolies, with control of production in fewer and fewer hands. Bankrupt former capitalists, he thought, would join the proletariat, eventually creating an army of the unemployed. In addition, the market economy, which by its nature is unplanned, would experience crippling supply-and-demand problems and cause severe economic depressions. Capitalism has not collapsed, but it has changed since Marx’s time. Governments in many capitalist countries, including the United States, have the power to crack down on monopolies and monopolistic business practices. Governments set minimum wages and regulatory agencies set standards for worker protection. Economic inequality has increased in many capitalist societies. There have been recessions periodically as well as one Great Depression, but they are not thought to be an inherent feature of free markets. Indeed, a society entirely without competition, money, or private property has not materialized in the modern world, and recent history suggests it is unlikely to emerge in the future. Marxism is a philosophy developed by Karl Marx in the second half of the 19th century that unifies social, political, and economic theory. It is mainly concerned with the consequences of a society divided between an ownership class and a working class and proposes a new system of shared ownership of the means of production as a solution to the inevitable inequality that capitalism fosters. Marx thought that the capitalistic system would inevitably self-destruct. Competition would grow so fierce that most businesses would fold and be absorbed into unwieldy monopolies. Workers would reject a system that exploited them. The oppressed workers would ultimately overthrow the owners to take control of the means of production, ushering in a classless society of shared ownership. Not so far. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the most successful of the few remaining communist countries, notably China and Vietnam, have reformed some of their most rigid practices. None has been able to entirely eliminate personal property, money, and class systems in the way that Karl Marx envisioned.Capitalism, in its various forms, remains the dominant economic system. But it has changed, too, since Marx’s time, with some of the worst excesses addressed. Worker safety standards, child labor laws, minimum wage laws, and anti-poverty programs are all examples. Marxism is a philosophy, while communism is a system of government based on Marxist principles. Marx envisioned a society in which workers owned the means of production. In real-world communism, governments own the means of production. Marxism, developed by Karl Marx, critiques capitalism by highlighting inherent injustices against workers, predicting that these would lead to class conflict and eventual revolution. This theory has influenced historical events, notably the rise and fall of the Soviet Union and ongoing experiments, like China's unique blend of socialism and capitalism. While Marx's envisioned classless society has not materialized, his critiques hold lessons about labor dynamics and economic systems for today’s world. Marx and Engels' monument in Berlin m-1975 / iStock / Getty Images Plus Economic theories can get confusing. This is especially true with theories such as Marxism that have evolved since they were created. Get an understanding of what Marxism is in simple terms and see how it differs from communism and socialism. If you live in America, you know how it works under a capitalist system, meaning there are different socioeconomic classes. You may hear these classes called upper, middle, and lower class. However, you might also hear words like blue-collar worker, working poor, white-collar worker, etc. All these different terms define where someone stands on their society’s socioeconomic ladder. Some classes struggle, while others rule the corporate world. To analyze and remove this struggle, Marxism came into play. To define Marxism in simple terms, it’s a political and economic theory where a society has no classes. Every person within the society works for a common good, and class struggle is theoretically gone. Sounds simple right? Not so much. Actually, many horror movies and dystopian books are written based on trying to create a classless, utopian society. Now that you know what Marxism is, explore where this theory came from. Facebook and Snapchat weren’t the first ideas to change a society. In fact, they were far from it. Ideas about changing a nation go back to Socrates and Aristotle. However, in the 1800s, you had Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Together, these two realized that many of people’s current struggles occurred due to the unfair treatment they received from those that held the power (owners and CEOs). In an attempt to make the world a fairer and more perfect place, they drafted a manifesto called ‘The Communist Manifesto’. It was an attempt to explore the problems with capitalism and find a social and political theory to move beyond a capitalist society to one that benefits every member. The main points of Marxism include: Capitalism is broken into two classes: workers and capitalists (proletariats and bourgeoisies).Those that control the corporations exploit workers and control society.Eventually, workers will rise up to make everyone even and get rid of classes. While the full theory of Marxism hasn’t made it to fruition in a government, there have been a few different government types based on Marxism including communism and socialism. Explore these three government theories. Communism and socialism are both types of governments or theoretical governments born from Marxism. However, they vary in slightly different ways. At its core, communism opposes capitalism. In an effort to get rid of capitalism, communist governments, in theory, pay workers according to their ability and needs and remove capitalists by having a strong central government own all property publicly. One example of a current communist government is China. However, much like any theory, communism can be taken to the extreme and become its own form of oppression for workers which goes against the ideals that Marxism envisions. One example is North Korea. While they are a communist country, their own visions and ways of thinking have been added to the theory. Additionally, the government leader takes more of the role of a monarch. Much like communism, socialism is a system of politics and economics with roots in Marxist ideals. In socialism, a central government owns all means of wealth, but individuals can still own property. Additionally, unlike the violent uprisings that can arise with communism, socialism typically occurs more organically through reforms and changes with an elected government. While a true socialist society doesn’t exist, a few close runner ups are Norway and Denmark. However, these governments still have capitalist sectors. At its center, Marxism was a theory created by Marx and Engels to create a classless society where workers were appreciated and worked to benefit the common good. While the true theory has never reached fruition, a few governments have tried through communism and socialism. Explore how the theories of Marxism are opposite to capitalism by looking at examples of capitalism. You can even check out different types of governments. What Is Marxism? - Socialist Party website. HomeThis page uses frames, but your browser doesn't support them. Marxism is a way of understanding society developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. At its heart, it argues that history is driven by struggles between social classes, especially between workers and those who own wealth and resources. Marxism critiques capitalism for creating inequality and alienation, while imagining a future society based on cooperation, shared ownership, and fairness. It’s not just a theory of economics, but also a lens for thinking about power, politics, and social change. Definition: Marxism is a social, political, and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that explains society through class struggle and material conditions. Marxist Ideology: A belief system based on Marx’s ideas that calls for abolishing capitalism and building a classless, communist society. Unlike theory, it is explicitly political and prescriptive, offering both a worldview and a guide for collective action toward social change. Theory: Views capitalism as exploitative, arguing it creates inequality, alienation, and instability in society. It explains how economic structures shape politics, culture, and institutions, and sees class struggle as the driving force of historical change. Marxist Interpretation: Refers to applying Marxist concepts to specific institutions or issues, such as viewing education as reproducing class inequality or crime as rooted in capitalist exploitation. Impact: Marxism has influenced revolutions, political movements, and academic fields worldwide, sparking both lasting support and strong criticism. Marxism is a way of understanding society developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It’s a big-picture (macro-level) theory that focuses on how the economy – who owns wealth and resources – shapes everything else in social life, from politics and law to education and family life. Core Idea: The economic system, or base, determines the character of the superstructure – social institutions like government, law, education, and religion. Focus: At its heart is the class struggle between the bourgeoisie (owners of wealth and resources) and the proletariat (working class who sell their labour). This relationship is viewed as inherently unequal and exploitative. Goal: Beyond theory, Marxism is also a political ideology, seeking to expose capitalism’s contradictions and inspire movements toward a more just, classless society. How is Marxism different from socialism or communism? Although the terms are often mentioned together, Marxism, socialism, and communism are distinct. Marxism is best understood as a political ideology and worldview, while socialism and communism are economic and social systems influenced by its principles. Marxism (Ideology): A set of political ideas developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It critiques capitalism as exploitative, explains history through class struggle, and calls for the eventual creation of a classless society. It serves as both a framework for understanding society and a guide for revolutionary change. Socialism (System): An economic system where the major industries and resources are collectively owned – often run by the state in the name of the people. While some private property can exist, the aim is to reduce inequality and prioritise the collective good over private profit. Communism (System & Goal): A more radical system and the ultimate end point envisioned by Marx. In communism, all property is communally owned, there is no private ownership, no ruling class, and ideally no state – resulting in a fully classless society. In short: Marxism is the political ideology and theory, socialism is one possible economic model influenced by it, and communism is the envisioned end point of Marx’s critique – a society without classes or state power. Historical Background Marx and Engels’s theories were a direct response to the dramatic societal changes and inequalities they observed during the 19th century, particularly those brought on by the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism. Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher, economist, and social thinker who is often seen as one of the founders of modern sociology. He lived during a time of huge change in Europe, shaped by the Industrial Revolution and the aftermath of the French Revolution. Factories, urbanisation, and growing inequality made him focus on how economic systems affect people’s lives. Unlike some thinkers of his day who simply wanted to describe society, Marx believed the point of studying it was to change it. His ideas became the basis of Conflict Theory, which sees society as being driven by ongoing struggles between groups with different interests and resources. Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) was Marx’s close friend, collaborator, and financial supporter. Coming from a wealthy industrial family, Engels saw first-hand the harsh conditions faced by factory workers. He wrote The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844), exposing the poverty and suffering created by industrial capitalism. Engels and Marx co-authored The Communist Manifesto (1848), a powerful call for workers to unite, which went on to become one of the most influential political texts in history. Engels also contributed original ideas, including critiques of the family as a social institution tied to inheritance and property. Marx and Engels built their theories as a response to the huge social changes and inequalities of the 19th century, especially those caused by the Industrial Revolution and the growth of capitalism. 1. The Industrial Revolution and City Life The Industrial Revolution pulled millions of people from farms into rapidly growing cities to work in factories. These cities were often overcrowded, filthy, and dangerous, with widespread poverty. While some thinkers worried society was falling apart, Marx and Engels blamed capitalism for creating these harsh conditions. 2. Capitalism and Class Struggle Capitalism is an economic system based on private or corporate ownership of factories, land, and resources. Marx and Engels argued it split society into two main groups: Bourgeoisie – the wealthy minority who owned the means of production. Proletariat – the working majority, who had to sell their labour for wages that barely kept them alive. They saw this relationship as a constant struggle between the rich and the poor. 3. Exploitation and Alienation of Workers Marx and Engels believed that capitalism thrived on exploitation – owners grew rich by paying workers less than the value of what they produced. This led to terrible social problems: Working conditions were brutal: long hours, child labour, unsafe “satanic mills,” and exposure to toxic environments. Alienation meant workers were cut off from the products they made, from the process of work, from one another, and even from their own sense of purpose – reduced to mere cogs in the machine. 4. The Power of Ideas They also argued that the ruling class stayed in power not just through wealth, but by shaping beliefs. Institutions like government, education, religion, and the media spread ideas that made inequality seem natural and fair. This created false consciousness, where workers accepted values that actually harmed their own interests. Marx famously called religion the “opium of the people” because it comforted the poor while discouraging them from challenging the system. Drawing on these observations, Marx and Engels concluded that class conflict drives social change. They predicted that capitalism’s extreme inequalities would eventually push workers to recognise their shared oppression, develop class consciousness, and rise up to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The result, they argued, would be communism – a classless, more equal society based on cooperation instead of exploitation. The Communist Manifesto [1848] Written by Marx and Engels as a short, fiery pamphlet, it called on workers of the world to unite against capitalist exploitation. Its clear, dramatic language made it easy to spread among revolutionary groups and labour movements across Europe. Although it was first published during the wave of 1848 revolutions (which largely failed), it gave socialist and workers’ organisations a powerful rallying cry that continued to inspire activists for generations. Das Kapital [1867] Marx’s more detailed and theoretical work, Das Kapital analysed how capitalism operates, focusing on exploitation, profit, and the dynamics of class struggle. While not as easy to read as the Manifesto, it provided the intellectual foundation for socialist and communist parties. By grounding Marx’s ideas in economic analysis, it gave legitimacy to movements that wanted not just to protest capitalism, but to explain and replace it with a new system. Marxism spread quickly after Marx and Engels published The Communist Manifesto in 1848, which called on workers of the world to unite. Germany: The Social Democratic Party (SPD) [founded 1875 – still active] grew into one of the world’s largest Marxist-influenced political parties. France: Marxism shaped socialist parties such as the French Section of the Workers’ International (SFIO) [1905–1969] and influenced trade union movements. Britain: It shaped the rise of the Labour Party [founded 1900 – still active] and organisations like the Independent Labour Party (ILP) [1893–1975]. Russia: Underground revolutionary groups embraced Marxist ideas, culminating in the Bolshevik Party [1903–1917, then became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1917–1991]. Beyond Europe: By the early 20th century, Marxism began influencing activists in China, leading to the Chinese Communist Party [founded 1921 – still active], and inspired socialist and communist parties across Latin America, many of which remain active today. While these experiments differed from Marx’s original vision, they made Marxism one of the most influential and debated ideas of the modern era. Karl Marx’s ideas didn’t end with him – they’ve been adapted and reinterpreted to make sense of modern society. Many thinkers agree with Marx’s focus on power, inequality, and exploitation, but they combine his insights with other perspectives. Modern adaptations of Marxism show its flexibility: Neo-Marxism brings in culture and agency, especially in studies of crime and education. Critical Theory expands Marxism to include culture, communication, and ideology. Marxist Feminism analyses how capitalism and patriarchy work together to exploit women. Sociological Marxism integrates Marxist insights into wider sociology, focusing on reproduction of inequality and global capitalism. Together, these approaches prove that Marx’s core ideas – about power, inequality, and exploitation—are still shaping debates today. Historical materialism is Marx’s framework for understanding how societies change over time. Put simply, it argues that the way people produce and share the necessities of life – like food, housing, and goods – shapes everything else in society, from politics and law to culture and ideas. At the core is the distinction between: The Economic Base: how production is organised (technology, resources, and who owns them). The Superstructure: institutions like government, religion, education, and the media, which grow out of and help maintain the economic base. History, Marx argued, moves forward through a series of stages of production, each defined by who owns resources and who does the work: Primitive Communism: small, egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups. Slave Societies: slave owners exploiting slaves. Feudalism: lords exploiting peasants tied to the land. Capitalism: bourgeoisie (owners of capital) exploiting proletariat (workers). Communism (future stage): a classless, stateless society with collective ownership. At every stage, inequality and exploitation create class conflict, which eventually leads to crisis and change. Marx believed capitalism, like earlier systems, would collapse under its own contradictions – such as economic crises and growing worker resistance – paving the way for socialism and ultimately communism. Karl Marx believed that to really understand society – and why inequality exists – we have to look at how it’s built from the ground up. His base and superstructure model is a way of explaining how everything in society is connected to the economy. He said society is made up of two main parts: At the bottom of society is the economic base – this is the most important part, because it shapes everything else. It includes: Means of Production: These are the tools, machines, land, factories, technology, and workers needed to make things. Relations of Production: These are the relationships between people in the economy – mainly who owns what and who does the work. In capitalist societies, the base is made up of two main classes: Marx believed this setup was inherently unfair, because workers produce more value than they’re paid, and the owners keep the profits. Above the economic base is the superstructure – this includes all the other parts of society, like: Government and the legal system Education Religion The family Media and culture These institutions don’t stand alone – they’re shaped by the economic system underneath them. Marx argued that the economic base controls the superstructure. In other words: The class that owns the economy also controls politics, media, education, and culture. These institutions are designed to support capitalism and keep the ruling class in power. They promote ideas that make the system seem natural and fair, even when it isn’t. Examples: Education teaches obedience, respect for authority, and hard work – skills useful for future workers. The family helps raise the next generation of workers and teaches them to accept their role in society. The media spreads messages that support capitalism (e.g. success = working hard, wealth = deserved). Religion, according to Marx, offers comfort to the poor but discourages them from challenging their conditions (“You’ll be rewarded in the afterlife”). Karl Marx described capitalism as an economic system where businesses, land, and factories are owned by individuals or companies, not by the community as a whole. In capitalism, these resources are controlled by a small group of people known as the bourgeoisie (or capitalist class). Everyone else – the working class, or proletariat – must sell their labor in order to survive. Marx believed this setup was unfair. He argued that workers produce more value than they are paid, and that the difference – called surplus value – is kept by the capitalists as profit. In his view, this wasn’t just unequal – it was a form of economic exploitation, where capitalists profit from workers’ labor without fairly compensating them. Importantly, Marx thought capitalism doesn’t just use power or force to stay in control – it also shapes how people think (through ideological control). Institutions like schools, religions, and the media teach ideas that make capitalism seem natural or fair. This keeps workers from seeing how the system exploits them, a condition Marx called false consciousness. Although capitalism may appear stable, Marx believed it was full of internal problems. He argued that it would eventually go through repeated economic crises, like overproduction, recessions, and financial crashes. Over time, these contradictions would become too big to ignore, and the system would collapse – making way for a fairer alternative. Karl Marx believed that capitalist society is divided into two main classes: the bourgeoisie, who own businesses, land, and factories, and the proletariat, who must sell their labor to survive. He argued that this relationship is built on exploitation — the bourgeoisie profits by paying workers less than the value they produce. This unequal setup creates ongoing conflict between the two classes. To stay competitive and increase profits, employers often push for longer hours, faster work, and lower wages. As conditions worsen, workers grow frustrated and start to resist. With industrialization came a more intense division of labor and widespread use of machinery. Marx and Engels observed that workers were reduced to mere parts of the machine – physically exhausted, mentally drained, and paid just enough to get by. What begins as individual frustration can grow into a wider movement. Marx believed that, over time, workers would become aware of their shared exploitation and begin to organize across industries. This rising class consciousness could eventually lead to a revolution, replacing capitalism with a classless society where no group holds power over another. False consciousness is when people don’t realise they’re being treated unfairly by the system. They might blame themselves for their struggles and believe that success is just a matter of working harder. Class consciousness is when people become aware of their shared position in society. They recognise that inequality isn’t just personal – it’s structural. This awareness can lead to collective action to push for change. FeatureFalse ConsciousnessClass ConsciousnessAwarenessPeople don’t see how the system is treating them unfairly. They may blame themselves.People understand their class position and see how they’re being exploited.View of IdeologyAccepts the beliefs and values of the ruling class (e.g., hard work always leads to success).Questions those beliefs and sees them as tools to keep the powerful in control.Response to InequalityThinks poverty is a personal failure or bad luck. Accepts the system as normal or unchangeable.Recognizes that inequality is built into the system and feels it needs to be changed.Political StanceStays quiet, follows the rules, doesn’t question authority.Ready to take action, join with others, and demand a fairer society. Marx’s theory of alienation explains how workers in a capitalist system can feel disconnected – from their work, from other people, and even from themselves. He believed that modern industrial jobs turn workers into just another part of the machine, repeating the same tasks with little control or meaning. Marx said this alienation happens in four key ways: From the product – Workers don’t own or benefit from what they create. It belongs to someone else. From the work itself – They have little say in how or when they work. The job is just a means to earn money. From other people – Capitalism encourages competition, not collaboration, between workers. From themselves – With no purpose or pride in their work, people can lose a sense of who they are. Even though machines and technology make production more efficient, workers often see none of the benefits. They remain underpaid and overworked, while the profits go to the business owners. Marx believed this system not only exploits workers materially, but also disconnects them emotionally and socially, leaving them unfulfilled and powerless. Marx and Engels believed that communism would eventually replace capitalism. They argued that if workers continued to be exploited, they would become more aware of their situation and eventually rise up in revolution. In The Communist Manifesto, they described how the working class, once united, could overthrow the capitalist system and take control of the economy. In a communist society, there would be no private ownership of land, factories, or major businesses. Instead, these resources would be shared and managed by the community. The goal was to create a society without rich or poor – where everyone works for the common good and no one profits from another person’s labor. Marx imagined a classless and stateless world, where people contribute based on their abilities and receive what they need. Work would become meaningful, not just a way to survive, and wealth would be distributed fairly – not based on profit, but on human needs. Some key ideas in Marxist communism include: Community control over major services like banking, transportation, and communication. Abolishing inherited wealth A fairer tax system (with higher taxes on the rich) Free public education for all Marxism isn’t just a big-picture (marco) theory of history — it’s also used to analyse how everyday institutions work. Its key ideas help explain how power and inequality are maintained in capitalist societies. Three areas where Marxist analysis has been especially influential are education, the family, and crime. Education reinforces inequality: Schools reproduce class divisions by funnelling students into different outcomes and transmitting values like competition and obedience that serve capitalist interests. The family supports capitalism: Families reproduce future workers, pass wealth down through generations, and provide unpaid domestic labour that benefits the system. Crime reflects capitalism: Inequality and consumer culture push people toward crime, while laws and enforcement protect the interests of the powerful and target the poor. Resistance still occurs: Neo-Marxist thinkers highlight how working-class students, women, and even criminals can resist or challenge capitalist values, though often in ways that still reinforce the system. Marxists see education as more than a neutral path to knowledge or opportunity. Instead, they argue that schools are designed to serve the needs of capitalism. Reproducing Inequality: Schools reproduce class inequality by funnelling children from different backgrounds into different outcomes. Wealthy students often access elite private schools and universities that prepare them for leadership roles, while working-class students are pushed into lower-paid, routine work. This process of social reproduction makes inequality look normal and fair. Transmitting Ideology: Schools pass on a ruling-class worldview. Through lessons and the hidden curriculum (unspoken values), children are taught to accept authority, competition, and individual success as natural. This shifts blame for failure onto individuals rather than the system. The Correspondence Principle: Bowles and Gintis argued that schools reflect the workplace. Students are rewarded for obedience, punctuality, and conformitythe same traits employers need in workers. Schoolwork itself often mirrors the dull, repetitive tasks of many jobs. Critique of Policies: Marxists see reforms like school choice or marketisation as benefiting mainly middle-class families, who can use their wealth and cultural knowledge to secure the best schools. Vocational training is criticised for preparing working-class youth for low-paid jobs rather than offering real mobility. Neo-Marxist Views: Pierre Bourdieu argued that schools reward cultural capital – the tastes, knowledge, and habits of the middle class—turning privilege into success. Paul Willis’s famous study Learning to Labour showed how working-class boys rejected school values, but ironically, this rebellion prepared them for the very low-skilled jobs the system had destined for them. Marxists argue that the family, often seen as private and personal, also plays a major role in keeping capitalism stable. Supporting Capitalism: Families raise and care for future generations of workers, effectively reproducing “labour power” for free. They also act as a unit of consumption, buying goods and services that fuel profits. Families provide emotional support, functioning as a “safety valve” that helps workers cope with the stress of alienating jobs. Passing Down Inequality: Engels argued that the nuclear family developed with private property. Families pass wealth and property to children, ensuring class inequalities are reproduced across generations. Women and Capitalism: Marxist feminists highlight how women’s unpaid domestic work (cooking, childcare, housework) benefits capitalism. Women also form a reserve army of labour — a flexible, low-cost workforce that can be drawn into or pushed out of employment depending on economic needs. This maintains both gender and class inequality. Marxist criminology sees crime not as a personal failing but as a product of the capitalist system itself. Capitalism Creates Crime: Inequality, poverty, and unemployment push working-class people toward crime for survival. At the same time, capitalism promotes values of greed and competition, encouraging crime at all levels of society. Law and Power: Laws are created to protect the interests of the ruling class, especially private property. Law enforcement is selective: street crimes by the poor are punished harshly, while harmful corporate or white-collar crimes are often ignored or treated leniently. This creates the impression that the poor are the “problem,” diverting attention from the real damage caused by the powerful. Who Counts as a Victim: The state defines who qualifies as a victim. Crimes by corporations or governments – such as unsafe working conditions or environmental damage – are often overlooked, even though they harm millions. Neo-Marxist Views: Later theorists argued that crime can also be a form of resistance. Theft or vandalism can be understood as symbolic acts against inequality, while riots may represent collective uprisings against injustice. In this way, crime is not just caused by capitalism but can also challenge it. From a Marxist perspective, religion is less about divine truth and more about social power. It is seen as part of the superstructure – the institutions (like family, education, and media) that sit on top of the economic base of society. Marxists see religion as a human creation that becomes a powerful tool for maintaining inequality. By comforting the oppressed and promoting obedience, it helps keep capitalism stable – making it one of the strongest conservative forces in society. Karl Marx’s famous phrase captures how religion can act like a drug, comforting people but also dulling their awareness of exploitation. Justifying inequality: Religion often portrays the social order as natural or God-given. Poverty is presented as a test of faith or a path to heavenly reward, while wealth is framed as a blessing. This helps create false consciousness – workers accept their suffering rather than questioning capitalism. Enforcing control: Religious rules and moral codes encourage obedience and conformity, which stabilises the system. For example, commandments like “honour thy father and mother” or “do not steal” reinforce authority and private property. Masking exploitation: Religion provides comfort in the face of hardship, death, or injustice, but in Marx’s eyes, this consolation is an illusion. It distracts people from recognising that the real source of their suffering is capitalist exploitation. Marxists argue that ruling classes control not just material production but also mental production – the spread of ideas. Religion, like schools or the media, is an Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser’s term). Its job is to win “hearts and minds,” persuading people that inequality is natural and fair. In modern societies, schools may have taken over much of this role, but religion still functions as a key transmitter of ruling-class ideology. Max Weber’s challenge: Marx saw religion as a brake on change, but Weber argued it could also fuel change. His study of Calvinism claimed that Protestant values of discipline and hard work helped give rise to modern capitalism. Feminist critiques: Feminists add that religion often reinforces patriarchy. Many traditions portray women as inferior or prescribe submissive roles, helping to maintain gender inequality alongside class inequality. Fundamentalism: The growth of religious fundamentalist movements can be seen as a reaction to capitalism and modernity. Yet, these movements often promote conservative values that end up protecting the social order. Neo-Marxism is a broad label for sociological theories developed mainly in the 20th century that adapt and extend the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. While staying true to the core belief that capitalism is built on class conflict, exploitation, and inequality, Neo-Marxists combine Marxist insights with other approaches like symbolic interactionism, social action theory, and even poststructuralism. The result is a more flexible and less deterministic way of understanding society. Key Thinkers: Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu, Paul Willis, Stuart Hall, Ian Taylor, Paul Walton, Jock Young. Neo-Marxists share some fundamental assumptions with Marx: Capitalism is based on class exploitation between the bourgeoisie (ruling class) and proletariat (working class). The state, education, and media largely serve ruling-class interests. The economic base influences the superstructure (politics, law, culture). But they also move beyond Marx in important ways: Rejecting economic determinism: Classical Marxism can sound like people are just puppets of the economy. Neo-Marxists argue this is too simplistic. Instead, they stress that individuals have agency—they make choices and resist, even within unequal systems. Focusing on meaning and identity: Borrowing from interactionist perspectives, Neo-Marxists look at how people interpret their own situations. Working-class groups are not just passive victims of capitalism—they actively respond, sometimes resisting, sometimes adapting, and sometimes finding creative ways to survive. Neo-Marxism has been especially influential in education and criminology. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu explained how inequality persists not only through money but also through culture. Cultural Capital: Middle-class families pass on cultural assets – language styles, tastes, values – that schools reward. For example, knowing how to speak in a more “formal” code or appreciating high culture like literature or classical music. Symbolic Violence: Schools treat this middle-class culture as superior, making working-class students feel devalued. This can alienate them or push them into failure. Social Reproduction: Because schools reward middle-class culture, class inequality is reproduced across generations, even if it looks like success is based only on merit. Bourdieu’s work shows how education is not neutral but a powerful tool for maintaining social hierarchy. In criminology, Neo-Marxists Ian Taylor, Paul Walton, and Jock Young developed the New Criminology (1973), also called Critical Criminology. Crime as political action: Instead of seeing crime as just poverty-driven, they argued it can be a conscious act of resistance against injustice. Theft may be an attempt to redistribute wealth. Vandalism can be a symbolic protest against materialism. Riots may represent political uprisings against racism, police brutality, or inequality. A fully social theory: They insisted crime must be studied in its full context—the structure of inequality, the meaning of the act to the offender, and how society reacts (e.g., labelling). This perspective reframed criminals not simply as deviants but sometimes as agents of protest, challenging the system. Despite its influence, Neo-Marxism has been widely critiqued: Too idealistic: Everyday crimes like domestic abuse or fraud don’t neatly fit the idea of “political rebellion,” making the theory harder to apply in practice. Romanticising crime: Critics (especially Left Realists) argue it glamorises criminals as rebels, ignoring the fact that most victims of crime are working-class people, not the wealthy elite. Gender-blind: Feminists point out that Neo-Marxism often overlooks women’s experiences and the role of gender in oppression. Critical Theory began with the Frankfurt School in Germany in the 1920s. It developed out of Marxism but went further, broadening the focus from economics alone to include culture, ideas, and communication. At its heart, Critical Theory argues that theory should not just explain the world but also help free people from domination and expand human freedom. Key Thinkers: Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, Robert Cox. The Frankfurt School agreed with Marx that capitalism generates inequality, but they argued that reducing everything to economics was too narrow. Modern societies, they believed, are held together not only by production and labour but also by culture, ideas, and communication. Classical Marxism put the economic base (forces and relations of production) at the centre, with the superstructure (politics, law, culture) shaped by it. Critical theorist Jürgen Habermas argued this was too one-sided. He introduced the “paradigm of communication”: the idea that everyday interaction, language, and shared meaning are just as central to holding societies together as economic production. For Habermas, power is not only about who controls factories and capital—it’s also about who controls the flow of communication, who gets heard, and how decisions are justified in public life. This shift opened the door to studying the media, public opinion, and even everyday conversations as sites of domination and potential emancipation. Like Marx, critical theorists focused on ideology—the set of ideas and beliefs that make social inequality appear natural and just. But they refined the tools for analysing it. Their key method is immanent critique, which means holding societies accountable to their own ideals. Example: If a democracy claims to value freedom and equality, critical theory asks whether its institutions—laws, media, economic practices—actually uphold those values. This reveals contradictions between official claims and lived reality, such as societies proclaiming equality while tolerating racial injustice, gender inequality, or deep poverty. The aim of this critique is not just to describe contradictions but to highlight opportunities for change by showing how real conditions fail to meet widely accepted standards. By moving beyond Marx’s economic determinism, the Frankfurt School made Marxism into a more flexible framework. It could now be used to analyse culture, communication, and power in new contexts—such as mass media, propaganda, consumer culture, and later, global politics. This allowed critical theorists to explain forms of domination that weren’t just about the workplace or wages but about how people think, interact, and even imagine freedom. Marxist feminism is a strand of feminist thought that blends Marx’s ideas about class with feminism’s focus on gender. It argues that women in capitalist societies face a double oppression: they are exploited as workers under capitalism and subordinated as women under patriarchy. This isn’t accidental – Marxist feminists argue women’s subordination actively benefits capitalism by keeping profits high and inequality intact. Key Thinkers: Friedrich Engels, Margaret Benston, Silvia Federici, Christine Delphy, Heidi Hartmann. Marxist feminists place special emphasis on the family, showing how it benefits capitalism in ways that rely on the exploitation of women. Women raise the next generation of workers – bearing and caring for children who will later enter the workforce. This essential task is done as unpaid domestic labour, which means capitalism gets future workers at no cost. At the same time, wives maintain the current workforce by feeding, caring for, and supporting husbands, helping them stay productive for their paid jobs. Because of this, employers can pay men wages that only cover their own needs, while women’s unpaid labour fills in the rest – boosting capitalist profits. Within the traditional nuclear family, women often act as unpaid servants, responsible for housework and childcare. Sociologist Margaret Benston argued that this hidden, unpaid role directly supports capitalism by keeping the system running smoothly and cheaply. Women’s experiences at work also reflect their structural exploitation under capitalism. As sociologist Heidi Hartmann and others explain, women often act as a “reserve army of labour.” Employers can draw on them as a cheap, flexible workforce during economic booms and then dismiss them during downturns. This keeps women in insecure jobs, lowers their bargaining power, and helps drive down men’s wages too. Patriarchal norms and capitalist structures often force women into part-time jobs or into leaving work to raise children. This creates economic dependence on men and reinforces the traditional division where men are breadwinners and women carers, keeping male dominance intact both at work and at home. Marxist feminism connects to, but also differs from, other feminist approaches: Critique of Marxism: Classical Marxism often ignored gender, focusing mainly on class exploitation. Marxist feminists argue that this is incomplete without examining how patriarchy works alongside capitalism. Liberal feminism: Liberal feminists focus on reform—changing laws and policies to create equality. Marxist feminists argue reforms aren’t enough because the root of inequality lies in capitalism itself. Radical feminism: Radical feminists see patriarchy as the oldest and most fundamental oppression, existing in all societies. Marxist feminists agree patriarchy matters but insist it is deeply tied to capitalism’s class system. Postcolonial feminism: Postcolonial feminists caution against treating women’s oppression as universal. They argue that race, colonial history, and cultural context also sh

predominance of monopolies in capitalism (that Marx also predicted). Although heavily (and, for many reasons, rightly) criticized, Marxism remains one of the most influential sociological paradigms. That's because it touches upon many aspects of social life: economics, politics, and culture. The founder of Marxism, Carl Marx, saw capitalist society as clearly divided into two classes. Each of them has a different relationship to private property. The bourgeois (wealthy)They own capital. This includes resources like land, means of production (factories), materials, and money.The proletariat (workers)They don't own capital. They sell their labor power to the Bourgeoisie. Marx argued that the Bourgeois exploit the labor offered by the workers to make profit. This is their main source of income. Marx understood goods' value in terms of the amount of labor required to produce it. But the money paid to the worker by the employer is less than the total value of goods produced by the worker. Surplus value is the difference between the two. According to Marx, the bourgeoisie extracts surplus value from the worker. Profit is essentially the exploitation of workers in capitalist society. We saw that the bourgeoisie has complete control over the means of production and the economy. Those with economic power, according to Marx, control all social institutions. The term "superstructure" describes structures like education, family, religion, government etc. To an important extent, this was true during Marx's time (the mid-19th century): voting was restricted to men with property press barons used their papers to spread propaganda only the children of the wealthy could attend university. The capitalist system makes the worker feel alien to/estranged from: the production process his co-workers the final products produced. That's because workers lose control of their work and become a 'machine'. The Bourgeois use their economic power in society to keep the masses unaware of their exploitation (ideological control). They can do it because they control the superstructure, e.g., religion, education, and mass media. Ideological control leads to False Consciousness. This means that individuals are not conscious (do not understand) of their class position and are being exploited by the bourgeoisie (the ruling class). Marx assumed that a revolution would happen and capitalism would be eliminated when the proletariat recognized its social position. The workers would then take down the bourgeoisie. They would establish an egalitarian society in which there would be no incentive to profit or exploit others. There would be no private property; the means of production would be collectively owned. This society would take from "each would give according to their ability" and give "to each according to their needs', as Marx famously wrote in 1875. Marx warned us early on of capitalism's ability to create false needs among people of all ages. In 1844, he wrote: "The extension of products and needs becomes a contriving and ever-calculating subservience to inhuman, sophisticated, unnatural and imaginary appetites." This is reflective of the consumer culture that emerged in the twentieth century and is very prominent today. Commercial advertising—first on the press, then TV/radio, and now targeted ads on digital media—makes us feel we need more goods even when we have almost everything. Consider cell phones, for example, they become outdated in just a few months. People want to buy the latest model even if theirs is still perfectly functional. Marx recognized early on that economic crises were an inherent feature of the capitalist system. (This was what would lead to revolution). The economic history of the twentieth century has been marked by a shift between periods of tranquillity with economic development and prospering financial markets and periods of financial crises, coupled with the collapse of asset prices, rises in interest rates, bankruptcies among nation states and business firms Take, for example, the stock market crash of 1929 (known as the Great Crash) the subsequent Great Depression (1929–1939) the 2007-2008 financial crisis, felt as a mortgage crisis in the US and a banking crisis in many European countries (e.g., Iceland, Ireland etc.) According to Marx, the bourgeoisie keep salaries low to maximize profits. This is only possible as long as another worker willingly replaces the one who refuses to accept the conditions. An example of this in today's world is the move of large manufacturing companies from Europe and the United States to Asian and African countries in the twentieth century. They relocated to low-cost labor countries to maximize profit and maintain high growth rates. Research has also shown that workers' pay has frozen in many countries, while top executives make even more (Fryer, 2007). Many European countries face the so-called cost-of-living crisis. The prices of essential goods have been rising faster than household incomes. While many people struggle to make ends meet, the super-rich are making even more profit. This trend is paired with the formation of international monopolies. Traditional liberal economic theory believed that competition would keep ownership diverse. But Marx rightly claimed that capitalist markets tend to merge according to the law of the strongest. Some of the most famous monopolies in the world exemplify Marx's process. These include Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, and Meta (formerly known as Facebook). MarxismCommunismA political, social, and economic philosophy based on Karl Marx's thinkingAn system of economic production and a form of governmentA philosophical and sociological perspective that laid the groundwork for the theory and practice of communismA practical application of Marx's ideas (which has not been implemented yet)A theory focusing on the struggles between the working class and the capitalists.A classless system in which all property and wealth are communal (there is no private property).A theory advocating that society is progressing towards communism (in which all individuals are equal)A system in which people are considered equal and treated equally Note that when speaking of Marxism, we refer to a social and philosophical theory. When speaking of communism, we refer to a social, political, and economic regime. Many countries are considered to have established communism in the twentieth century. An example is the Eastern European bloc and the Soviet Union, which were under communist leadership until the 1990s. But these communist regimes—although ideologically founded upon Marxist ideas—were far from what Marx envisioned for society. So Marxism and Communism should not be confused. Marxism has been heavily criticized not only by liberal sociologists, economists, and political theorists. Let's look at the key criticisms. Many of our institutions today are relatively independent of bourgeois or political control. For example, many written and online press is critical of the economic elites. The same goes for artists who criticize financial exploitation in capitalist societies. In many western countries, there is a sizeable middle class that generates enough income to own property and even invest their surplus income. These could not be identified as Marx's "capitalist class". They're a form of petit-capitalists. As we saw, Marx believed that greater competition would lead to capitalist bankruptcy and the emergence of monopolies (as fewer and fewer people controlled production). Former capitalists who had gone bankrupt would join the proletariat. This would ultimately lead to capitalism's downfall and a harmonious socialist society. However, capitalism hasn't been overturned by the workers' revolution. Markets and the capitalist system have evolved over time. Wages have increased, and people now have access to a wide range of goods and private property. In many capitalist societies, however, economic inequality has increased. Modern structures of production (e.g., companies) have changed and have much less alienation. First, workers can voice their opinions more easily through the positive power of unions. Second, many self-employed people can work and live on their own terms. Third, when writing about alienation, Marx had in mind factory workers who were contributing to a tiny part of the product (e.g., drilling a hole and fitting a screw) and therefore felt foreign to the final products of their labor (e.g., a car). In today's service-oriented economy, professionals (e.g., teachers, digital marketer, developer, pharmacists) have a better feeling about what they produce. Contemporary scholars argue that Marx's grand or macro-narrative about the way the world works (and is destined to work) is no longer relevant. Rather than trying to explain large-scale phenomena, they claim, that theorists should focus on much more specific and localized social issues (Lafferty, 2016). We saw that Marx thought that economic laws determined the workings of society and the direction of history. But there are many factors that shape history. Societies have reacted differently to the global capitalist spread. For example The United States and Europe have embraced neo-liberalism. Cuba has a socialist dictatorship. China also has a totalitarian regime. It is governed by the Chinese Communist Party which bears no resemblance to communism as envisioned by Marx. Karl Marx developed the social, political, and economic theory known as Marxism. A conflict theory used in macrosociology, Marxism focuses on the struggles between the 'bourgeoisie' (ruling capitalist class) and the 'proletariat' (working class). Marx argued that the power dynamics between capitalists and workers were inherently exploitative, resulting in class conflict. This conflict would eventually result in a global workers' revolution that would overthrow the capitalist class and lead to a socialist society. More than 150 years on, Marxism still informs sociological analyses and has been one of the most influential and controversial theoretical paradigms. Eagleton, T. (2011). Why Marx was right. 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Economic and sociopolitical worldview Friedrich Engels (left) and Karl Marx (right) in the 1860s Part of a series onMarxism Outline Foundations Philosophy Alienation Dialectical materialism Ethics Historical materialism Ideology Praxis Reification Economic analysis Labour theory of value Law of value Value-form Abstract & concrete labour Socially necessary labour time Use value Exchange value Means of production Mode of production Capitalist Socialist Productive forces Relations of production Commodity (fetishism) Surplus product Surplus value Exploitation Wage labour Capital (accumulation) Critique of political economy Crisis theory Imperialism Reserve army of labour Tendency of the rate of profit to fall Social and political theory Class Bourgeoisie Proletariat Working class Lumpenproletariat Class consciousness False consciousness Classless society State theory State capitalism Withering away of the state Democracy Democratic centralism Dictatorship of the proletariat Radical democracy Soviet democracy Base and superstructure Communist society Cultural hegemony Human nature Immiseration Metabolic rift Private property Social reproduction Theory of history Class struggle Historical determinism Primitive accumulation Proletarian revolution World revolution Schools of thought Foundational Classical Orthodox Revisionism Revolutionary Marxism Leninism Marxism–Leninism Bukharinism Guevarism Hoxhaism Maoism Socialism with Chinese characteristics Stalinism Titoism Trotskyism Western Marxism Frankfurt School Humanist Praxis School Structural Libertarian Marxism Autonomism Communization Council communism Left communism Situationism Academic & Post-1968 schools Analytical Budapest School Dependency theory Ecological Feminist Neo- Open New Marx Reading Political Post- Regulation school Subaltern Studies Value-criticism World-systems theory Other tendencies Austrian Black radical tradition Eurocommunism Liberal Nkrumaism Fields of study Aesthetics Archaeology Criminology Cultural analysis Cultural studies Film theory Geography Historiography International relations Literary criticism Religion Theoretical works Foundational texts Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 Theses on Feuerbach The German Ideology Wage Labour and Capital The Communist Manifesto The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Grundrisse Das Kapital Critique of the Gotha Programme Anti-Dühring The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State Early 20th century What Is to Be Done? The Accumulation of Capital Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism Terrorism and Communism The State and Revolution Essays on Marx's Theory of Value History and Class Consciousness Prison Notebooks The Black Jacobins Mid-20th century & New Left On Practice Dialectic of Enlightenment Labor and Monopoly Capital Monopoly Capital The Wretched of the Earth Reading Capital The Society of the Spectacle Pedagogy of the Oppressed Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses How Europe Underdeveloped Africa Social Justice and the City Late 20th & 21st century Women, Race and Class Marxism and the Oppression of Women Imagined Communities Hegemony and Socialist Strategy The Sublime Object of Ideology Time, Labor and Social Domination The Age of Extremes The Origin of Capitalism Marx's Ecology Empire Caliban and the Witch Capitalist Realism Capital in the Anthropocene People Founders Marx Engels Classical & Orthodox Bernstein Bukharin Connolly Kautsky Kollontai Lafargue Lenin Liebknecht Luxemburg Morris Plekhanov Trotsky Zetkin Western Marxists Adorno Althusser Benjamin Bloch Gramsci Habermas Horkheimer Korsch Lefebvre Lukács Marcuse Poulantzas Sartre Austromarxists Adler Bauer Hilferding Left communists Bordiga Damen Gorter Mattick Pannekoek Economists Braverman Grossman Kalecki Mandel Marini Rubin Sweezy Uno Historians Anderson Deutscher Hobsbawm Thompson Wood Revolutionary leaders Castro Guevara Hampton Ho Mao Newton Sankara Stalin Anti-colonial & Postcolonial theorists Amin Cabral Davis Du Bois Fanon James Jones Mariátegui Mohanty Nkrumah Rodney Spivak Later 20th & 21st century Badiou Balibar Bensaïd Butler Cohen Davis Debord Eagleton Federici Foster Fraser Hall Harvey Heinrich Jameson Laclau & Mouffe Losurdo Löwy Miliband Negri Parenti Postone Rancière Saito Vogel Wallerstein Williams Wright Žižek Journals Antipode Capital & Class Capitalism Nature Socialism Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory Historical Materialism Mediations Monthly Review New Left Review Race & Class Rethinking Marxism Science & Society Socialist Register Related topics Critiques Criticism of Marxism Concepts Conflict theory Economic determinism Economism Intercommunalism Postcolonialism Scientific socialism Vanguardism Vulgar Marxism Movements Communism (History) Left-wing politics New Old Ultra Municipalism Socialism Authoritarian Democratic Eco- Market Reformist Revolutionary Social democracy Utopian Practices Collectivization Nationalization Planned economy Worker cooperative Workers' council Communism portal Socialism portalvte Marxism is a political philosophy and method of socioeconomic analysis that uses a dialectical materialist interpretation of historical development,[1] known as historical materialism, to understand class relations and social conflict. Originating in the works of 19th-century German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Marxist approach views class struggle as the central driving force of historical change.[2][3][4] Marxist analysis views a society's economic mode of production as the foundation of its social, political, and intellectual life, a concept known as the base and superstructure model. In its critique of capitalism, Marxism posits that the ruling class (the bourgeoisie), who own the means of production, systematically exploit the working class (the proletariat), who must sell their labour power to survive. This relationship, according to Marx, leads to alienation, periodic economic crises, and escalating class conflict.[5] Marx theorised that these internal contradictions would fuel a proletarian revolution, leading to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist mode of production. For Marxists, this transition represents a necessary step towards a classless, stateless communist society.[6] Since Marx's death, his ideas have been elaborated and adapted by numerous thinkers and political movements, resulting in a wide array of schools of thought. The most prominent of these in the 20th century was Marxism–Leninism, which was developed after Vladimir Lenin's death and served as the official ideology of the Soviet Union and other Marxist states.[7] In contrast, various academic and dissident traditions, including Western Marxism, Marxist humanism, and libertarian Marxism, have emerged, often critical of state socialism and focused on aspects like culture, philosophy, and individual liberty. This diverse evolution means there is no single, definitive Marxist theory.[4] Marxism stands as one of the most influential and controversial intellectual traditions in modern history. It has inspired revolutions, social movements, and political parties across the world, while also shaping numerous academic disciplines.[8] Marxist concepts such as alienation, exploitation, and class struggle have become integral to the social sciences and humanities, influencing fields from sociology and literary criticism to political science and cultural studies.[9] The interpretation and implementation of Marxist ideas remain subjects of intense debate, both politically and academically. Marxism seeks to explain social phenomena within any given society by analysing the material conditions and economic activities required to fulfill human material needs. It assumes that the form of economic organisation, or mode of production, influences all other social phenomena, including broader social relations, political institutions, legal systems, cultural systems, aesthetics and ideologies. These social relations and the economic system form a base and superstructure. As forces of production (e.g. technology) improve, existing forms of organising production become obsolete and hinder further progress. Karl Marx wrote: "At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution."[10] These inefficiencies manifest themselves as social contradictions in society which are, in turn, fought out at the level of class struggle.[11] Under the capitalist mode of production, this struggle materialises between the minority who own the means of production (the bourgeoisie) and the vast majority of the population who produce goods and services (the proletariat).[12] Starting with the conjectural premise that social change occurs due to the struggle between different classes within society who contradict one another,[13] a Marxist would conclude that capitalism exploits and oppresses the proletariat; therefore, capitalism will inevitably lead to a proletarian revolution.[14] In a socialist society, private property in the means of production would be replaced by cooperative ownership.[15][16] A socialist economy would not base production on the creation of private profits but on the criteria of satisfying human needs—that is, production for use. Friedrich Engels explained that "the capitalist mode of appropriation, in which the product enslaves first the producer, and then the appropriator, is replaced by the mode of appropriation of the products that is based upon the nature of the modern means of production; upon the one hand, direct social appropriation, as means to the maintenance and extension of production—on the other, direct individual appropriation, as means of subsistence and of enjoyment."[17] Marxian economics and its proponents view capitalism as economically unsustainable and incapable of improving the population's living standards due to its need to compensate for the falling rate of profit by cutting employees' wages and social benefits while pursuing military aggression. The socialist mode of production would succeed capitalism as humanity's mode of production through revolution by workers. According to Marxian crisis theory, socialism is not an inevitability but an economic necessity.[18] The term Marxism was popularised by Karl Kautsky, who considered himself an orthodox Marxist during the dispute between Marx's orthodox and revisionist followers.[19] Kautsky's revisionist rival Eduard Bernstein also later adopted the term.[20] Engels did not support using Marxism to describe either Marx's or his views.[21] He claimed that the term was being abusively used as a rhetorical qualifier by those attempting to cast themselves as genuine followers of Marx while casting others in different terms, such as Lassallians.[21] In 1882, Engels claimed that Marx had criticised self-proclaimed Marxist Paul Lafargue by saying that if Lafargue's views were considered Marxist, then "one thing is certain and that is that I am not a Marxist."[21] Main article: Historical materialism Further information: Marxist historiography and Marx's theory of history See also: Historical determinism, Historicism, Historiography, People's history, and Philosophy of history The discovery of the materialist conception of history, or rather, the consistent continuation and extension of materialism into the domain of social phenomenon, removed two chief defects of earlier historical theories. In the first place, they at best examined only the ideological motives of the historical activity of human beings, without grasping the objective laws governing the development of the system of social relations. ... in the second place, the earlier theories did not cover the activities of the masses of the population, whereas historical materialism made it possible for the first time to study with scientific accuracy the social conditions of the life of the masses and the changes in these conditions. — Russian Marxist theoretician and revolutionary Vladimir Lenin, 1913[22] Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand.—Karl Marx, Grundrisse, 1858[23] Marxism uses a materialist methodology, referred to by Marx and Engels as the materialist conception of history and later better known as historical materialism, to analyse the underlying causes of societal development and change from the perspective of the collective ways in which humans make their living.[24][25] Marx's account of the theory is in The German Ideology (1845)[26] and the preface A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859).[10] All constituent features of a society (social classes, political pyramid and ideologies) are assumed to stem from economic activity, forming what is considered the base and superstructure.[27][25] The base and superstructure metaphor describes the totality of social relations by which humans produce and re-produce their social existence. According to Marx, the "sum total of the forces of production accessible to men determines the condition of society" and forms a society's economic base.[28] The base includes the material forces of production such as the labour, means of production and relations of production, i.e. the social and political arrangements that regulate production and distribution. From this base rises a superstructure of legal and political "forms of social consciousness" that derive from the economic base that conditions both the superstructure and the dominant ideology of a society. Conflicts between the development of material productive forces and the relations of production provoke social revolutions, whereby changes to the economic base lead to the superstructure's social transformation.[10][29] This relationship is reflexive in that the base initially gives rise to the superstructure and remains the foundation of a form of social organisation. Those newly formed social organisations can then act again upon both parts of the base and superstructure so that rather than being static, the relationship is dialectic, expressed and driven by conflicts and contradictions. Engels clarified: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."[30] Marx considered recurring class conflicts as the driving force of human history as such conflicts have manifested as distinct transitional stages of development in Western Europe. Accordingly, Marx designated human history as encompassing four stages of development in relations of production: Primitive communism: cooperative tribal societies. Slave society: development of tribal to city-state in which aristocracy is born. Feudalism: aristocrats are the ruling class, while merchants evolve into the bourgeoisie. Capitalism: capitalists are the ruling class who create and employ the proletariat. While historical materialism has been referred to as a materialist theory of history, Marx did not claim to have produced a master key to history and that the materialist conception of history is not "an historico-philosophic theory of the marche générale, imposed by fate upon every people, whatever the historic circumstances in which it finds itself."[31] In a letter to the editor of the Russian newspaper paper Otechestvennye Zapiski (1877),[32] he explained that his ideas were based upon a concrete study of the actual conditions in Europe.[33] Further information: Anti-capitalism and Criticism of capitalism The "Pyramid of Capitalist System" cartoon made by the Industrial Workers of the World in 1911 criticising capitalism and social stratification. According to the Marxist theoretician and revolutionary socialist Vladimir Lenin, "the principal content of Marxism" was "Marx's economic doctrine."[34] Marx demonstrated how the capitalist bourgeoisie and their economists were promoting what he saw as the lie that "the interests of the capitalist and of the worker are ... one and the same." He believed that they did this by purporting the concept that "the fastest possible growth of productive capital" was best for wealthy capitalists and workers because it provided them with employment.[35] Exploitation is a matter of surplus labour—the amount of labour performed beyond what is received in goods.[36][37] Exploitation has been a socioeconomic feature of every class society and is one of the principal features distinguishing the social classes.[38][39] The power of one social class to control the means of production enables its exploitation of other classes.[40] Under capitalism, the labour theory of value is the operative concern, whereby the value of a commodity equals the socially necessary labour time required to produce it. Under such conditions, surplus value—the difference between the value produced and the value received by a labourer—is synonymous with surplus labour, and capitalist exploitation is thus realised as deriving surplus value from the worker.[36][41] In pre-capitalist economies, exploitation of the worker was achieved via physical coercion. Under the capitalist mode of production, workers do not own the means of production and must "voluntarily" enter into an exploitative work relationship with a capitalist to earn the necessities of life. The worker's entry into such employment is voluntary because they choose which capitalist to work for. However, the worker must work or starve. Thus, exploitation is inevitable, and the voluntary nature of a worker participating in a capitalist society is illusory; it is production, not circulation, that causes exploitation. Marx emphasised that capitalism per se does not cheat the worker.[42] Alienation (German: Entfremdung) is the estrangement of people from their humanity and a systematic result of capitalism. Under capitalism, the fruits of production belong to employers, who expropriate the surplus created by others and generate alienated labourers. In Marx's view, alienation is an objective characterisation of the worker's situation in capitalism—his or her self-awareness of this condition is not prerequisite.[43][full citation needed] In addition to criticism, Marx has also praised some of the results of capitalism stating that it "has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together"[44] and that it "has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal arrangements."[44] Main article: Marxian class theory See also: Class conflict, Classless society, Social class, and Three-component theory of stratification Marx distinguishes social classes based on two criteria, i.e. ownership of means of production and control over the labour power of others. Following this criterion of class based on property relations, Marx identified the social stratification of the capitalist mode of production with the following social groups: Proletariat: "[T]he class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live."[45][46] The capitalist mode of production establishes the conditions that enable the bourgeoisie to exploit the proletariat as the worker's labour generates a surplus value greater than the worker's wage.[47] Lumpenproletariat: the outcasts of society, such as the criminals, vagabonds, beggars, or prostitutes, without any political or class consciousness.[48] Having no interest in national, let alone international, economic affairs, Marx claimed that this specific sub-division of the proletariat would play no part in the eventual social revolution. Bourgeoisie: those who "own the means of production" and buy labour power from the proletariat, thus exploiting the proletariat. They subdivide as bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeoisie.[49] Petite bourgeoisie: those who work and can afford to buy little labour power (i.e. small business owners, peasants, landlords and trade workers). Marxism predicts that the continual reinvention of the means of production eventually would destroy the petite bourgeoisie, degrading them from the middle class to the proletariat.[49] Landlords: a historically significant social class that retains some wealth and power. Peasantry and farmers: a scattered class incapable of organising and effecting socioeconomic change, most of whom would enter the proletariat while some would become landlords.[50] Class consciousness denotes the awareness—of itself and the social world—that a social class possesses and its capacity to act rationally in its best interests.[51][52] Class consciousness is required before a social class can effect a successful revolution and, thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat.[53] Without defining ideology,[54] Marx used the term to describe the production of images of social reality. According to Engels, "ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces."[55] Because the ruling class controls the society's means of production, the superstructure of society (i.e. the ruling social ideas) is determined by the best interests of the ruling class. In The German Ideology, Marx says that "[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is, at the same time, its ruling intellectual force."[56] The term political economy initially referred to the study of the material conditions of economic production in the capitalist system. In Marxism, political economy is the study of the means of production, specifically of capital and how that manifests as economic activity.[57] Marxism taught me what society was. I was like a blindfolded man in a forest, who doesn't even know where north or south is. If you don't eventually come to truly understand the history of the class struggle, or at least have a clear idea that society is divided between the rich and the poor, and that some people subjugate and exploit other people, you're lost in a forest, not knowing anything. — Cuban revolutionary and Marxist–Leninist politician Fidel Castro on discovering Marxism, 2009[58] This new way of thinking was invented because socialists believed that common ownership of the means of production (i.e. the industries, land, wealth of nature, trade apparatus and wealth of the society) would abolish the exploitative working conditions experienced under capitalism.[17][59] Through working class revolution, the state (which Marxists saw as a weapon for the subjugation of one class by another)[60][61] is seized and used to suppress the hitherto ruling class of capitalists and (by implementing a commonly owned, democratically controlled workplace) create the society of communism which Marxists see as true democracy.[62] An economy based on cooperation on human need and social betterment, rather than competition for profit of many independently acting profit seekers, would also be the end of class society, which Marx saw as the fundamental division of all hitherto existing history.[44] Marx saw the fundamental nature of capitalist society as little different from that of a slave society in that one small group of society exploits the larger group.[63] Through common ownership of the means of production, the profit motive is eliminated, and the motive of furthering human flourishing is introduced. Because the surplus produced by the workers is the property of the society as a whole, there are no classes of producers and appropriators. Additionally, as the state originates in the bands of retainers hired by the first ruling classes to protect their economic privilege, it will wither away as its conditions of existence have disappeared.[64][65][66] May Day protester in Spain, 2006, waving a red flag with a raised fist, both symbols of socialism According to The Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx, "Marx used many terms to refer to a post-capitalist society—positive humanism, socialism, Communism, realm of free individuality, free association of producers, etc. He used these terms completely interchangeably. The notion that 'socialism' and 'Communism' are distinct historical stages is alien to his work and only entered the lexicon of Marxism after his death."[67] According to orthodox Marxist theory, overthrowing capitalism by a socialist revolution in contemporary society is inevitable. While the inevitability of an eventual socialist revolution is a controversial debate among many different Marxist schools of thought, all Marxists believe socialism is a necessity. Marxists argue that a socialist society is far better for most of the populace than its capitalist counterpart. Prior to the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin wrote: "The socialisation of production is bound to lead to the conversion of the means of production into the property of society. ... This conversion will directly result in an immense increase in productivity of labour, a reduction of working hours, and the replacement of the remnants, the ruins of small-scale, primitive, disunited production by collective and improved labour."[68] The failure of the 1905 Russian Revolution, along with the failure of socialist movements to resist the outbreak of World War I, led to renewed theoretical effort and valuable contributions from Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg towards an appreciation of Marx's crisis theory and efforts to formulate a theory of imperialism.[6] The Soviet of Workers' Deputies of St. Petersburg in 1905: Leon Trotsky in the centre. The Soviets were an early example of a workers council. Karl Marx criticised liberal democracy as not democratic enough due to the unequal socio-economic situation of the workers during the Industrial Revolution which undermines the democratic agency of citizens.[69] Marxists differ in their positions towards democracy.[70][page needed][71] Types of democracy in Marxism include Soviet democracy, New Democracy, and Whole-process people's democracy, and can include voting on how surplus labour is to be organised.[72] According to democratic centralism political decisions reached by voting in the party are binding for all members of the party.[73] Karl Marx saw freedom of speech and freedom of the press as requirements of democracy.[74] Main article: Marxist schools of thought See also: List of communist ideologies As a school of thought, Marxism has had a profound effect on society and global academia. To date, it has influenced many fields, including anthropology,[75][76] archaeology,[77] art theory,[78] criminology,[79] cultural studies,[80][81] economics,[9] education,[82] ethics, film theory,[83] geography,[84] historiography, literary criticism,[85] media studies,[86][87] philosophy, political science, political economy, psychoanalysis,[88] science studies,[89] sociology,[90] theatre, and urban planning. Main article: Classical Marxism Classical Marxism denotes the collection of socio-eco-political theories expounded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.[91] As Ernest Mandel remarked, "Marxism is always open, always critical, always self-critical."[92] Classical Marxism distinguishes Marxism as broadly perceived from "what Marx believed." In 1883, Marx wrote to his son-in-law Paul Lafargue and French labour leader Jules Guesde—both of whom claimed to represent Marxist principles—accusing them of "revolutionary phrase-mongering" and denying the value of reformist struggle.[93] From Marx's letter derives Marx's famous remark that, if their politics represented Marxism, 'ce qu'il y a de certain c'est que moi, je ne suis pas Marxiste' ('what is certain is that I myself am not a Marxist').''[93][94] Main article: List of communist ideologies § Libertarian Marxism See also: Libertarian socialism § Marxist Libertarian Marxism emphasises the anti-authoritarian and libertarian aspects of Marxism. Early currents of libertarian Marxism, such as left communism, emerged in opposition to Marxism–Leninism.[95][96] Libertarian Marxism is often critical of reformist positions such as those held by social democrats.[97] Libertarian Marxist currents often draw from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' later works, specifically the Grundrisse and The Civil War in France;[98] emphasising the Marxist belief in the ability of the working class to forge its destiny without the need for a vanguard party to mediate or aid its liberation.[99] Along with anarchism, libertarian Marxism is one of the main currents of libertarian socialism.[100] Libertarian Marxism includes currents such as autonomism, council communism, De Leonism, Lettrism, parts of the New Left, Situationism, Freudo-Marxism (a form of psychoanalysis),[101] Socialisme ou Barbarie[102] and workerism.[103] Libertarian Marxism has often strongly influenced both post-left and social anarchists. Notable theorists of libertarian Marxism have included Maurice Brinton, Cornelius Castoriadis, Guy Debord, Raya Dunayevskaya, Daniel Guérin, C. L. R. James, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Negri, Anton Pannekoek, Fredy Perlman, Ernesto Screpanti, E. P. Thompson, Raoul Vaneigem, and Yanis Varoufakis,[104] the latter claiming that Marx himself was a libertarian Marxist.[105] Main article: Marxist humanism Marxist humanism was born in 1932 with the publication of Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and reached a degree of prominence in the 1950s and 1960s. Marxist humanists contend that there is continuity between the early philosophical writings of Marx, in which he develops his theory of alienation, and the structural description of capitalist society found in his later works, such as Capital.[106] They hold that grasping Marx's philosophical foundations is necessary to understand his later works properly.[107] Contrary to the official dialectical materialism of the Soviet Union and interpretations of Marx rooted in the structural Marxism of Louis Althusser, Marxist humanists argue that Marx's work was an extension or transcendence of enlightenment humanism.[108] Whereas other Marxist philosophies see Marxism as natural science, Marxist humanism reaffirms the doctrine that "man is the measure of all things"—that humans are essentially different to the rest of the natural order and should be treated so by Marxist theory.[109] See also: Marxist ethics, Marxist film theory, Marxist geography, and Marxist philosophy V. Gordon Childe, an Australian archaeologist and one of the 20th century's most prominent Marxist academics According to a 2007 survey of American professors by Neil Gross and Solon Simmons, 17.6% of social science professors and 5.0% of humanities professors identify as Marxists, while between 0 and 2% of professors in all other disciplines identify as Marxists.[110] Main article: Marxist archaeology The theoretical development of Marxist archaeology was first developed in the Soviet Union in 1929, when a young archaeologist named Vladislav I. Ravdonikas published a report entitled "For a Soviet history of material culture"; within this work, the very discipline of archaeology as it then stood was criticised as being inherently bourgeois, therefore anti-socialist and so, as a part of the academic reforms instituted in the Soviet Union under the administration of General Secretary Joseph Stalin, a great emphasis was placed on the adoption of Marxist archaeology throughout the country.[111] These theoretical developments were subsequently adopted by archaeologists working in capitalist states outside of the Leninist bloc, most notably by the Australian academic V. Gordon Childe, who used Marxist theory in his understandings of the development of human society.[112] Main articles: Marxist criminology and Marxist sociology Marxist sociology, as the study of sociology from a Marxist perspective,[90] is "a form of conflict theory associated with ... Marxism's objective of developing a positive (empirical) science of capitalist society as part of the mobilisation of a revolutionary working class."[113] The American Sociological Association has a section dedicated to the issues of Marxist sociology that is "interested in examining how insights from Marxist methodology and Marxist analysis can help explain the complex dynamics of modern society."[114] Influenced by the thought of Karl Marx, Marxist sociology emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With Marx, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim are considered seminal influences in early sociology. The first Marxist school of sociology was known as Austro-Marxism, of which Carl Grünberg and Antonio Labriola were among its most notable members. During the 1940s, the Western Marxist school became accepted within Western academia, subsequently fracturing into several different perspectives, such as the Frankfurt School or critical theory. The legacy of Critical Theory as a major offshoot of Marxism is controversial. The common thread linking Marxism and Critical theory is an interest in struggles to dismantle structures of oppression, exclusion, and domination.[115] Due to its former state-supported position, there has been a backlash against Marxist thought in post-communist states, such as Poland. However, it remains prominent in the sociological research sanctioned and supported by communist states, such as in China.[116] Main article: Marxian economics Marxian economics is a school of economic thought tracing its foundations to the critique of classical political economy first expounded upon by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.[4] Marxian economics concerns itself with the analysis of crisis in capitalism, the role and distribution of the surplus product and surplus value in various types of economic systems, the nature and origin of economic value, the impact of class and class struggle on economic and political processes, and the process of economic evolution. Although the Marxian school is considered heterodox, ideas that have come out of Marxian economics have contributed to mainstream understanding of the global economy. Certain concepts of Marxian economics, especially those related to capital accumulation and the business cycle, such as creative destruction, have been fitted for use in capitalist systems.[117][118][119] Marxist education develops Marx's works and those of the movements he influenced in various ways. In addition to the educational psychology of Lev Vygotsky[120] and the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis' Schooling in Capitalist America is a study of educational reform in the U.S. and its relationship to the reproduction of capitalism and the possibilities of utilising its contradictions in the revolutionary movement. The work of Peter McLaren, especially since the turn of the 21st century, has further developed Marxist educational theory by developing revolutionary critical pedagogy,[121] as has the work of Glenn Rikowski,[122] Dave Hill,[123] and Paula Allman.[124] Other Marxists have analysed the forms and pedagogical processes of capitalist and communist education, such as Tyson E. Lewis,[125] Noah De Lissovoy,[126] Gregory Bourassa,[127] and Derek R. Ford.[128][129] Curry Malott has developed a Marxist history of education in the U.S.,[130] and Marvin Gettleman examined the history of communist education.[131] Sandy Grande has synthesised Marxist educational theory with Indigenous pedagogy,[132] while others like John Holt analyse adult education from a Marxist perspective.[133] Other developments include: the educational aesthetics of Marxist education[134] Marxist analyses of the role of fixed capital in capitalist education[135] the educational psychology of capital[136] the educational theory of Lenin[137][138] the pedagogical function of the Communist Party[139][140] The latest field of research examines and develops Marxist pedagogy in the postdigital era.[141][142][143] Main article: Marxist historiography Marxist historiography is a school of historiography influenced by Marxism, the chief tenets of which are the centrality of social class and economic constraints in determining historical outcomes. Marxist historiography has contributed to the history of the working class, oppressed nationalities, and the methodology of history from below. Friedrich Engels' most important historical contribution was Der deutsche Bauernkrieg about the German Peasants' War which analysed social warfare in early Protestant Germany regarding emerging capitalist classes.[144] The German Peasants' War indicates the Marxist interest in history from below with class analysis and attempts a dialectical analysis.[145][146][147] Engels' short treatise The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844 was salient in creating the socialist impetus in British politics. Marx's most important works on social and political history include The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, The Communist Manifesto, The German Ideology, and those chapters of Capital dealing with the historical emergence of capitalists and proletarians from pre-industrial English society.[148] Marxist historiography suffered in the Soviet Union as the government requested overdetermined historical writing. Notable histories include the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), published in the 1930s to justify the nature of Bolshevik party life under Joseph Stalin. A circle of historians inside the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) formed in 1946.[149] While some members of the group, most notably Christopher Hill and E. P. Thompson, left the CPGB after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution,[150] the common points of British Marxist historiography continued in their works. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class is one of the works commonly associated with this group.[151][152] Eric Hobsbawm's Bandits is another example of this group's work. C. L. R. James was also a great pioneer of the 'history from below' approach. Living in Britain when he wrote his most notable work, The Black Jacobins (1938), he was an anti-Stalinist Marxist and so outside of the CPGB. In India, B. N. Datta and D. D. Kosambi are the founding fathers of Marxist historiography. Today, the senior-most scholars of Marxist historiography are R. S. Sharma, Irfan Habib, Romila Thapar, D. N. Jha, and K. N. Panikkar, most of whom are now over 75 years old.[153] Main article: Marxist literary criticism This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed.Find sources: "Marxism"

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Thus the alleged proofs of inconsistency trump all other considerations, disqualifying Marx's theory at the starting gate. By doing so, they provide the principal justification for the suppression of this theory as well as the suppression of, and the denial of resources needed to carry out, present-day research based upon it. This greatly inhibits its further development. So does the very charge of inconsistency. What person of intellectual integrity would want to join a research program founded on (what he believes to be) a theory that is internally inconsistent and therefore false?", However, in his book, Kliman presents an interpretation where these inconsistencies can be eliminated. The connection between the inconsistency allegations and the lack of study of Marx's theories was argued further by Cassidy, John (20–27 October 1997). "The Return of Karl Marx". The New Yorker. p. 252. 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