

Description of the Module

Items	Description of the Module
Subject Name	Sociology
Paper Name	Classical Sociological Theory
Module Name/Title	Historical and dialectical materialism
Pre Requisites	Historical method of economy
Objectives	This module seeks to examine the various phases that humans traversed to reach capitalism.
Key words	Realtions of production, means and modes of production, the historical phases of economic development, technology and production

Module Structure

Marx's conception of society: Historical and Dialectical Materialism	Marx's approach to history, Realtions of production, means and modes of production, the historical phases
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx was greatly influenced by the writings of Hegel especially his writings on the *Philosophy of History*. Karl Marx believed that Hegel had found a general historical law, called the dialectic, but attempted to make it materialistic by explaining the historical process in economics rather than metaphysical terms and applying its classes rather than nations. He thus tried to explain history in terms of the struggle between classes instead of the struggle between nations as Hegel had done.¹

Moreover, throughout Marx's historical process, his ideal is the productive man contrasted with the acquisitive man. He goes on to describe the actual condition of man in industrial society by the Hegelian term alienation.² In his concept of history and society he develops a historical trend that runs from primitive communism with class struggle being the vital impulse in the trajectory. Also he posits that the historical process is dynamic and cannot at the same time move as a single force, people make it and these people live in a society.

Furthermore he sees economic activity as the aspect which contributes to the growth of every society and has in turn enhanced the growth of man since the history of his being. The act and the process of production lie at the center of Marx's account of history. As humans gradually 'naturalize the system' they come to remain distended from other colleagues and they suffer in the capitalist system because they lack an organised class struggle. Our module will relate to the philosophy of life, of society and of relationship with the state. It also involves the method of transformation of human history and the different stages of development in it. In this work we shall bring out Marx's view on the development of human history and society from the primitive state of life to communism. We shall tackle the whole idea of materialism and the shortcomings of communism. Finally we shall look at the aspect of religion which Karl Marx rejects and how the European history of development becomes world history.

INTRODUCTION

¹Cfr. K. MARX, *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Penguin Books Ltd, London 1956, 24.

²*Ibid.*

Karl Marx envisages history as a class struggle with material production at the centre. His historical interpretation of history is based on the various material, economic and social conditions that men initiated and indulged themselves in. He took the various eras of development in European history and attributed them to all developing societies that have emerged in the world.

Karl Marx divides these different eras of development into phases or societies. He divides the first phase into three different societies. These are the primitive communist society, slave society and the feudal society. The second phase takes on the capitalist society alone and in the future phase he brings in socialism and communism. In this chapter, we shall consider Karl Marx's interpretation of history as strife between opposing forces, which for him was at its peak in the capitalist society. For him it is this strife that takes history from one stage of development to another with production at the center. However Marx was greatly influenced by the philosophies of Hegel and Feuerbach.

1.1. THE ROLE OF HEGEL AND FEUERBACH ON MARX'S THOUGHT

Hegel is one of those philosophers who hold reason in high esteem. "Reason for Hegel reigns supreme."³ Karl Marx initially adhered to Hegel's thoughts, but later on abandoned it, though not all of Hegel's Philosophy. In Hegel's view, the history of the world developed on rational grounds. On such grounds he claims that reason is the sovereign of the world. "Reality for him is what he calls the absolute idea."⁴ Hegel centres his thoughts on the notion of spirit or the mind. He makes it very clear that in order to grasp being one must grasp thought.

Hegel uses a dialectical process in establishing a rational world history where he says that the "dialectic of the historical process consists in the opposition between states and the states are always in conflict, since each wants to gain freedom which is one of the end of the absolute idea."⁵ The dialectical process established, moves from thesis to antithesis and amalgamates to synthesis.

In Marx's historical process we will soon discover that though Karl Marx laid down Hegel's views, he borrowed something from his dialectics. "Feuerbach on the other hand rejected

³L. LUCIO, *Marxism and Hegel*, Unwin Brothers Ltd, Toronto 1977, 18.

⁴F.J. SHEED, *Communism and Man*, Sheed and Ward, London 1946, 10.

⁵L. JULIUS, *Marx Against Marxism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1980, 35.

Hegel's idealism, substituting it with the view that the basic reality is material."⁶ For Ludwig Feuerbach, "history is the progress towards self-consciousness but not as Hegel had assumed, towards the self-consciousness of God but towards the self-consciousness of the finite human being of flesh and blood."⁷ Feuerbach notes also that it is man's task to realize himself within the confines of nature.

Feuerbach's reversal of idealism and materialism was not the result of a theoretical reflection or historical investigation but the expression of the distressing experience of his generation which witnessed how the great western intellectual tradition was exhausting itself in empty phrases.⁸

Apart from personal ideas, Feuerbach's materialism was greatly influenced by the people of his time who were fading up with idealism. According to them idealism did not take the human condition into consideration. It is from this background that Karl Marx shifted from Hegel's philosophy. He inherited from Feuerbach the inversion of the dialectic from idealism into materialism. He also accepted Feuerbach's idea that man finds his essence in the community.⁹ "The starting point for Karl Marx was not idealism but materialism; for it is only materialism that is capable of comprehending the process of world history."¹⁰ From this the Marxist materialist conception of history was born.

From this point of view one can thus say that Karl Marx's thought was greatly influenced by Hegelian dialectics and Feuerbach's materialism.¹¹ Matter becomes reality for Marx, and the highest activity of reality is human activity.

1.2. MARX'S APPROACH TO HISTORY

Materialism according to Karl Marx, "is the sum total of the natural environment, and this includes all of inorganic nature, the organic world, social life and human consciousness."¹² He regards the things in our heads as images of the real things, instead of regarding the real things as

⁶G.V. PLEKHANOV, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1969, 36.

⁷L. JULIUS, *Marx against Marxism*, Unwin Brothers Ltd, Toronto 1977, 37.

⁸W. GUSTAV, *Dialectical Materialism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1952, 54.

⁹Cfr. K. MARX, *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers Moscow 1932, 28.

¹⁰*Ibid*, 28.

¹¹Cfr. *Ibid*

¹²K. MARX, *Early Text*, Basil Blackwall, London 1972, 47.

images of this or that stage of development of an absolute concept. From the dialectic which he borrowed from Hegel, he is particularly interested in the part which refers to human history as conditioned by man's material economic needs.¹³

What Karl Marx calls materialist conception of history is usually known as "the economic interpretation of history or economic determinism."¹⁴ Karl Marx posits that the main motive of explaining the whole of human behaviour, and therefore, of history, is economic. He begins his materialist conception of history from the proposition that:

The production of means to support human life, next, the production, the exchange of things produced is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent on what is produced, how it is produced and how the products are exchanged.¹⁵

Production is supreme in Marx's materialist conception of history. Man, according to him, can only fully realize himself when he is able to produce his material needs. Thus he maintains that:

The final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insights into eternal truths and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange.¹⁶

Social changes and political revolutions are not to be realized in ideas, but in concrete production and the dynamisms that accrue in the modes of production and exchange. The act and the process of production lie at the centre of Marx's account of history. "Man's concrete activity is the birthplace of history, and world history is essentially the history of production."¹⁷

In his materialist interpretation of history Karl Marx sees class struggles as a fact which is unavoidable. He says that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."¹⁸ This is because classes arise out of the economic life of society where there is a

¹³Cfr. F. J. SHEED, *Communism and Man*, 28.

¹⁴K. .MARX, *Early Writings*, McGraw-Hill Books Company, New York 1963, 171.

¹⁵T .ROBERT, *Marx- Engels Reader*, Norton and Company, New York 1973, 64.

¹⁶A.P. MENDAL, *Essential Works of Marxism*, 64.

¹⁷G. DUNCAN, *Marx and Mill*, Cambridge University Press, London 1973, 57.

¹⁸K. .MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, Henry Regney Company, Chicago 1954, 13.

constant strife between the oppressed and the oppressors. Karl Marx further admits that what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man himself by human labour.

1.3. MARX'S HISTORICAL PROCESS

1.3.1. The Primitive Communist Society and the Development of Private Property

Karl Marx posits that the earliest mode of production, the one within which man emerged from the animal world, endured for most of man's history and is still today extant in several primitive societies. He says that "the first form of property is tribal property which corresponds to an underdeveloped stage of production, in which a people live by hunting and fishing, by cattle breeding, and at the highest stage agriculture."¹⁹

Under primitive communism the simplest tools and weapons possessed were communally owned and products were shared between members of the group. In this society the actual concept of ownership was foreign. "The land was just there to be used, and animals just there to be captured."²⁰ The relations of production prevailing within this kind of society were not conducive to rapid technological developments and brilliant inventions.²¹

According to Karl Marx "division of labour at this stage was still very elementary and was confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family."²² This was between men and women. The men were hunting and fishing and the women were gathering food and attending to the camp. There was some level of development though very slow. The social structure was limited to an extension of the family. As man was advancing, the primitive mode of production gradually disappeared. From here man entered the period of private property and slavery.

Although there was common ownership of resources the aspect of private property was gradually encroaching into the society. It resulted from the point of view that some people were involved in cattle rearing, others in handicraft and architecture.²³ Karl Marx and his great friend

¹⁹K. MARX, *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Penguin Books Ltd, London 1956,126.

²⁰WADDINGTON, *Outline of Marxists Philosophy*, Lawrence and Waddington Ltd, 1974, 73.

²¹Cfr. *Ibid.*

²²K. MARX, *The German Ideology*, 12.

²³Cfr. K. MARX, *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers Moscow 1932, 24.

Engels shared a common view that as people started exchanging their products, their relationship towards one another changed. "As time went on the cattle came to be considered as belonging to the cattle breeder, the land to the farmer, and the tools to the handicrafts."²⁴

1.3.2. The Slave Society

The second main thing in the past phase of Karl Marx's account on history is slavery. As exploitation reached its peak slavery came in. Karl Marx holds that "instead of tribes killing war captives or freeing them, they decided to force them to work."²⁵ Slavery in this epoch was a unique form of exploitation. The exploiting class did not only own the tools and means of production. The producer himself was considered to be the private property of the owner.²⁶ Slavery as considered by Karl Marx was a dominant feature of the classical antiquity. Society in this period was divided into classes, patrician and plebian, freemen and slaves.²⁷ Thus there began the history of class antagonism or class struggle which was henceforth to be the fundamental feature of human history according to Karl Marx. This later gave way to feudal society.

1.3.3. The Feudal Society

The ancient world gave way to feudalism with its relationship between lord, and serf, and between guildsmen and journeymen. According to Karl Marx, in Europe, the ancient mode of production with slave owners exploiting slaves, eventually collapsed and was replaced by feudalism. In this system serfs and peasants worked the land while the land owning ruling class directed production and administered society.²⁸

1.3.3.1 History of Feudalism

Feudalism began around the Middle Ages where population was scattered over a large area. During the last centuries of the declining Roman Empire, and its conquest by the barbarians,

²⁴*Ibid*, 74.

²⁵*Ibid*. 32.

²⁶Cfr. *Ibid*, 76.

²⁷Cfr. *Ibid*, 33.

²⁸Cfr. K. MARX, *The German Ideology*, Progress Publishers Moscow 1932, 76-77.

a considerable part of the productive force was destroyed.²⁹ “Agriculture declined, industries decayed for want of markets, trade died out and was being violently interrupted.”³⁰

The Feudal period, as Karl Marx maintains, was just as much as the ancient communal property, an association against a subjugated producing class, but the form of association and relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production. He adds that “the feudal structure of land ownership had its counterpart in the towns in the shape of corporate property.”³¹ Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual.

1.3.3.2 The Main Features of the Feudal Society

The key features of this period were serf labour, landed property and personal labour. According to Karl Marx “property during the feudal epoch consisted on the one hand, of landed property with serf labour chained to it and on the other hand, of personal labour.”³² During this period there were some persons who owned the land called land lords; and they were staying in the cities. Their land was distributed to peasants called serfs who tilled it and the land owners only appeared to take their own share of the produce.³³ Class division was only between princes, nobility, clergy, peasants and masters, journeymen, apprentices and also casual labourers in the town.³⁴ The feudal period due to the emergence of the industrial revolution gave way to capitalism. This was because a great part of the peasant population, that is the serfs was moving to the towns to seek for jobs in the newly created industries.

1.3.4. The Capitalist Society

With capitalism we are introduced to the present phase, the era in which Karl Marx lived. It introduces us to the economic, political and social situation of his time. Karl Marx lived at a time when capitalism had just emerged as a result of the industrial revolution. He studied the whole structure and was able to come out with a picture of what it was all about.

²⁹Cfr. *Ibid*, 23.

³⁰A. WOODS, *Marx Selections*, 90.

³¹K. MARX, *The German Ideology*, 25.

³²K. MARX, *Early Writings*, 129.

³³Cfr. WADDINGTON, *Outline of Marxists Philosophy*, Lawrence and Waddington Ltd, London 1974, 75.

³⁴Cfr. *Ibid*, 75.

Capitalism is a mode of economic production or an economic system characterized by the fact that the instruments of production such as land, factories and raw materials are controlled to a greater or lesser extent by the private individuals or groups. Karl Marx believed that the capitalist society in which he was had reached a state of crisis.

1.3.4.1. The Main Characteristic of the Capitalist Society

1.3.4.1.1 The Social Superstructure, Personal Interest and Class Interest

One of the aspects of capitalism is that it is a mode of production in which labour power is a commodity. Stemming from this Karl Marx says that “people’s ability to work is purchased on the market by the capitalist, who owns the means of production and employ the worker to use them.”³⁵ With this Engels supports Karl Marx by saying that “the capitalist exploitation consists of the fact that the value of the worker’s wage is less than the value of the product he creates.”³⁶ The social superstructure is divided into three classes; the capitalist, the middle class and the working class.

From the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, Karl Marx posits the aspect of personal interest and class interest. He holds that in the capitalist society there are some persons who concentrate more on their personal wealth rather than on the interest of others.³⁷ A number of these persons come together and form a class with the idea to make more profit. This class begins to determine the wages of those who are working for them.

All capitalists have a common interest in opposing excessive wage increase, but are in support of all measures which increase the mass of profits. Apart from this, Karl Marx adds that; “class interest is the primary motive force of history especially the class interest between the bourgeoisie and proletariat as the great lever of modern social change.”³⁸ When these aspects portray themselves so much, the worker at the end of the day becomes alienated from his produce.

³⁵D. RUNES, “Marx Karl” in *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Peter Owen Press, London 1950, 44.

³⁶K. WADDINGTON, *Outline of Marxist Philosophy*, Lawrence and Waddington Ltd, London 1974, 80.

³⁷Cfr. *Ibid*, 81.

³⁸*Ibid*, 335.

1.3.4.1.2. Alienation of Labour

“Alienation means to make alien or more concretely to separate from.”³⁹ Karl Marx posits that alienation in the capitalist society takes this form:

The more the worker produces the less he has to consume; the more value he creates the more worthless he becomes; the more refined his products the more crude and misshapen the worker; the more civilized the product the more barbarous the worker; the more powerful the product the more feeble the worker; the more the work manifests intelligence the more the worker declines in intelligence and becomes a slave of nature.⁴⁰

As a result of this the worker keeps on degrading as he works. The more his potentials are explored, the more he becomes an asset. On this note, Karl Marx makes it clear that work is external to the worker, that is, it is not part of his nature and consequently he does not fulfill himself in his work.

Karl Marx sees the worker under this system as “someone who is physically exhausted and mentally debased; because he does not develop freely his mental and physical energy.”⁴¹ Karl Marx as well maintains that “the worker only feels at home outside his work and in his work he feels a stranger. He is at home when he is not working but when he works he is not at home.”⁴² Man’s alienation comes as a result of his labour; not voluntary but compulsory, forced labour.

Karl Marx again, admits, that “the external character of labour for the worker shows itself in the fact that it is not his own but someone else’s.”⁴³ He concludes that “the labour of the proletariat is therefore not a satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs outside itself.”⁴⁴ Workers are alienated from the product of their work. They have no control over what is produced and how it is used. They are as well, alienated from the process of work. As a result of alienation the proletariat as a class is left with no choice than to look for solutions to their problems. This eventually leads to class struggle.

³⁹C.E. RICHARD, et al, *The Capitalist System*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1986, 143.

⁴⁰Cfr. K.MARX, *Early Writings*, McGraw-Hill Books Company, New York 1963 123-24.

⁴¹*Ibid*, 125.

⁴²K. .MARX, *Early Text*, 137.

⁴³*Ibid*

⁴⁴K. MARX, *Early Text*, Basil Blackwall, London 1972, 137.

1.3.4.1.3. *Class Struggle*

According to Karl Marx class struggle is an inevitable mark of every society that has developed in history.⁴⁵ He proceeds by saying that “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.”⁴⁶ He further asserts that “in the early epochs of history we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders and social ranks.”⁴⁷ That is why he says:

In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; and in almost all of these classes, again, there are subordinate gradations.⁴⁸

From this, one sees a society that is hierarchical, with some particular groups in control.⁴⁹ According to him these have carried on a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the era in which Karl Marx lived, the class struggle was between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He defines the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as:

The class of modern capitalist, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labourers; and the proletariat, the 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.⁵⁰

He maintains that modern bourgeois societies that sprouted from the ruins of feudal societies have not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, and new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. That is why he says; “our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms.”⁵¹ He sees the capitalist society as a whole splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other; the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. According to

⁴⁵Cfr. K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, Henry Regney Company, Chicago 1954, 13.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Cfr. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰K.. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, Henry Regney Company, Chicago 1954

⁵¹*Ibid*15.

Karl Marx class struggle will come to an end with the collapse of Capitalism. Socialism will be introduced and ultimately communism.

1.3.4.1.4. The Collapse of Capitalism

Karl Marx believed that the capitalist society in which he lived, had reached a state of crisis.

The opposition between bourgeoisie and the proletariat would become steadily stronger and lead to a revolution change which would usher in the final stages; first of all socialism in which all the property would pass to the hands of the state. Finally the state will move to the period of communism when the socialist state has withered away.⁵²

The crisis which capitalism had reached, Karl Marx maintains, was not a contingent fact of history, it was something entailed by the nature of capitalism itself. He notes that:

Means of production become more and more efficient, but markets decline as a result of all nations becoming industrialized. More is produced than consumers can buy and hence the capitalist crisis finally breaks the system.⁵³

The capitalist due to competition and over-production faced a crisis. As a result of this crisis and the pressure mounted by the proletariat on the bourgeoisie, the system collapses through a revolution. It is good to notice here that “capitalism is significant not simply as one more stage in the endless movement of human history, but as that stage before the last.”⁵⁴ The reason is that under a capitalist system the whole conflict has now been simplified to two classes. Karl Marx maintains that capitalism will fall and give rise to socialism and ultimately communism.

1.3.5. The Socialist Society

“Socialism is the attempt to reconstruct society on the basis of the common ownership of the means of production.”⁵⁵ Such reconstruction was undertaken in reaction to “individualism and

⁵²K. WADDINGTON, *Outline of Marxists Philosophy*, 75.

⁵³F.J. SHEED, *Communism and Man*, 52.

⁵⁴S. M. BEHON, *Hand out in Political Philosophy*, Unpublished, STAMS Bambui 2011,29.

⁵⁵RIUS, *Marx for Beginners*, Pantheon Books, New York 1976, 46.

capitalism; on the thesis that these movements lead to exploitation of the proletariat by owners of the means of production.”⁵⁶

1.3.5.1. Bourgeoisie Socialism

In the capitalist society, there is a section of the bourgeoisie who are desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. In this kind of socialism, the socialist bourgeois wants all the advantages of modern social conditions. They wish for a bourgeois without a proletariat.⁵⁷

For Karl Marx, “such a class of bourgeoisie naturally conceives the world in which he is supreme to be the best.”⁵⁸ Furthermore this class of bourgeoisie will say that the proletariat should remain between the bonds of present society, casting away all hateful ideas concerning the bourgeois. Moreover, they advocate that “free trade is for the benefit of the working class, prison reform for the benefit of working class, protective duties for the benefit of the working class.”⁵⁹ This class holds that “the bourgeois is a bourgeois for the benefit of the working class.”⁶⁰ Karl Marx also holds that according to this class of bourgeoisie all they do is to aid the proletariat in their misery.

1.3.5.2. Proletariat Socialism

Since the proletariat is considered as useful only at the level of production, this leaves him with a sense of misery for at the moments of leisure he has no place in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie determines his wage and even his social condition. This pushes the proletariat to advocate for reform. In the first place, “the proletariat will reject all political and especially revolutionary action; they will wish to achieve their goal by a peaceful means.”⁶¹

The bone of contention for the proletariat stems from the fact, that they want a society where there will be freedom and equality for all; and where the means of production will totally

⁵⁶*Ibid*

⁵⁷Cfr. K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, 71.

⁵⁸*Ibid*.

⁵⁹K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, Henry Regney Company, Chicago 1954, 71.

⁶⁰*Ibid*, 72.

⁶¹*Ibid*, 75.

be under the central government control. With this future reform Karl Marx remarks that “the socialist state after its formation will be only, as a temporary stage of the evolution of the ultimate society.”⁶² The socialists have to bear in mind that “a social movement cannot subordinate means to ends and cannot manipulate and deceive in order to achieve success.”⁶³

A socialist revolution is the shift of control over the process of production from the minority of capitalists, managers and bureaucrats to the producers themselves. Such a move makes possible the breakdown of the hierarchical divisions of labour and the antagonistic relationships among groups of workers in a stratification system. That is why Karl Marx shows hatred to the philanthropists who want to improve things within the present system of capitalism.

Finally, the proletariat socialism takes us closer to the end of history which is communism for Karl Marx. Socialism for Karl Marx is just a period of reform, recovery and preparation for communism.

1.3.6. The Communist Society

Communism is a stage following socialism.⁶⁴ Communism for Karl Marx is “the positive transcendence of private property, as human self-estrangement. It is the complete return of man to himself as a human being.”⁶⁵

Communism is the end of history for Karl Marx. He holds that during the communist regime the history of class struggle will come to an end and the proletariat will take over power.⁶⁶ The key thing that the proletariat wants to eliminate is private property and to promote equality and freedom and finally land into a period of classlessness. Before the proletariats achieve their aim, there will be a transitional period.

⁶²S. M. BEHON, *Hand out in Political Philosophy*, 34.

⁶³C. E. RICHARD, et ali, *The Capitalist System*, 406.

⁶⁴RIUS, *Marx for Beginners*, Pantheon Books, New York 1976, 144.

⁶⁵K. MARX, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*, International Publishers, New York 1964, 135.

⁶⁶Cfr. *Ibid.*

1.3.6.1. The Transitional Period

Karl Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* says that “of all classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class.”⁶⁷ The first step of this revolutionary class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.⁶⁸ They will make sure that all instruments of production are centralized in the hands of the state.

As everything will be centralized, in the hands of the state, Karl Marx maintains that “between the capitalist and the communist period lies the period of transformation of one into another.”⁶⁹ He further holds that this period corresponds to the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. It will not last long for it will not be the perfect communist ideal. From this view Karl Marx admits that:

What we are dealing with here is a communist society, not, as it has developed on its own basis but in the contrary as it is just issuing out of capitalist society; a society that still restrains in every respect economic, moral and intellectual, the birthmark of the old society from whose womb it is issuing.⁷⁰

It can be observed that the new society issuing from capitalism is not yet stable, for it has not come up on its own. The transitional stage will be marked by profound changes affecting property and religion. From this he says a classless society will emerge.

1.3.6.2. Emergence of a Classless Society

Karl Marx regards the fall of capitalism and the victory of the proletariat as inevitable. He also notes that “the dictatorship of the proletariat and its development into the classless society is inevitable.”⁷¹ Karl Marx points out that the fall of capitalism leads to the rise of a classless society; and he maintains that “there will be no need for force, since every member of society will conceive

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁸Cfr. K. MARX, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*, International Publishers, New York 1964, 45.

⁶⁹F. J. SHEED, *Communism and Man*, 53.

⁷⁰K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, 59.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

of himself only as a member of society and will be quite incapable of pursuing individual ends as distinct from the collective purpose.”⁷²

1.3.6.3. The Elimination of Private Property and the End of History

According to Karl Marx, “the distinguishing feature of communism is not the abolition of property generally but the abolition of bourgeois property.”⁷³ Furthermore he says that “we communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the rights of personally acquiring property as the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.”⁷⁴ When the elimination of private property is mentioned, it means the social character of it has changed, for it loses its class character.

What the entire communist regime wants to do away with is the miserable character of appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital and is allowed to live only insofar as the ruling class regime wants.⁷⁵

When society has reached this level with the abolition of property which is called by the bourgeoisie the abolition of individuality and freedom, the society will become stable and everything will be communally owned. At this level there will be no exploitation, all will be free and equal, ownership of private property will not be for exploitation but for the good of man. When society reaches this level man would have been completely socialized and will be incapable of any action other than social action.

1.3.6.4. Alienation of Religion and other Disciplines

According to Karl Marx the people in the past ages lived in a world of oppression and unhappiness, and therefore, they created for themselves an illusory world of happiness to which they could retreat. In so far as religion gave some crumbs of comfort it did good, but now when the people can achieve real happiness such illusion is not a distraction but a fatal narcotic. As a result of this, he says that:

⁷²F.J.SHEED, *Communism and Man* Sheed and Ward Ltd London, 53.

⁷³K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, 43.

⁷⁴A. WOODS, *Marx Selections*, Macmillan Publishers, New York 1988, 152.

⁷⁵K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, 43.

All religions so far have been the expression of historical stages of development of individual peoples or groups of peoples. But communism is the stage of historical development which makes all existing religions superfluous and brings about their disappearance.⁷⁶

Karl Marx envisages the communist society as that which would last forever for the cause of change would have vanished. Society being perfectly organized for production and for distribution of what is produced; all man's needs would be met. Religion for him will therefore, simply vanish, since in the past it has been invented by man to console himself for needs unsatisfied under the older system.⁷⁷ There will be no need for force since every member of society will conceive of himself only as a member of society and will be quite incapable of pursuing individual ends as distinct from the collective purpose. Philosophy and Art have no role to play in this society for man is man for the common good of another.

From all that has been said, we can, to a certain, extent, say that Karl Marx makes history to be progressive. He made a forecast on how society will look like when capitalism collapses. This for him will come to its fulfillment in the communist society. History for him has moved from one stage to another with class struggles and production spear-heading the whole process. History for him follows a linear process and comes to an end with communism. He further classifies religion as something external to man and so should be erased from society because it distorts people's way of thinking and relating with one another in their material conditions.

CONCLUSION: THE SHORTCOMINGS OF MATERIALISM

When we take a critical look of Marx's historical process, and materialism as a whole we will discover that it is polished by some atheistic overtones. First of all, such atheistic aspects come in, when we get back to the meaning of materialism. Materialism is the understanding which states that reality is only material matter and energy. There is no God or supernatural phenomenon. Ideas and dreams are all part of material reality. If we admit the alienation of God from the material realm, then, the whole idea of the metaphysical principle of the unmoved mover who puts order in

⁷⁶K. .MARX, *Principles of Communism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1969, 92.

⁷⁷Cfr. F.J. SHEED, *Communism and Man*, 59.

the material sphere will lose its validity. The concept of the immortality of the soul which many philosophers have held in high esteem will be of no value; since everything for Karl Marx remains within the material milieu. For him humans can only realize their potentials or be themselves only when placed within the material realm, as against absolute idealism.⁷⁸ Such a line of thought brings in a false vision of man and God.⁷⁹ Holding such a position, Karl Marx fails to see that one cannot successfully explain the universe without making recourse to God and the immortality of the soul.⁸⁰

Secondly, in the light Marx's historical process, man is reduced to the material order in the light of production and the social order in the line of reproduction. It is true that man should provide for the basic needs of life.⁸¹ It is also true that man by nature is a social being and man should reproduce. But conditioning human's activity on these two aspects is problematic. This is because there are spheres in life in which man cannot but be part of. For example knowledge and religion.⁸² It will be difficult for one to fully embrace the views of Karl Marx as far as materialism is concerned. After inheriting Feuerbach's materialism, Karl Marx transforms the generic man into the producer man and hence asserts that economic activities influence the material life of man.

No one would deny the fact, that economic factors have largely influenced history. Before everything, "man must live, must find food clothing and shelter. Karl Marx, in his materialistic interpretation of history, places production which is an economic activity at the centre of the historical process. Determining the whole historical development fabric as economical is problematic. Not all the societies that sprang up in history were backed by economics. Taking the whole aspect into extremes distorts the whole idea of history.⁸³ That is why one agrees with Austin Fagothey that: "the ancient civilization rested on a slave economy but such an economy was common to the whole ancient world; and there was nothing distinctive that developed the Greeks intellectual genius or the Roman power in conquest."⁸⁴ Austin Fagothey also notes:

⁷⁸Cfr. L.L. RAMON, *Man Incarnate Spirit*, Circle Press, Florence 1993, 4.

⁷⁹Cfr. *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁰Cfr. A. FAGOTHEY, *Right and Reason*, The C.V. Mosby Company, U.S.A 1976,375.

⁸¹Cfr. J. MURTRY, *The Structure of Marx's World View*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1978, 159.

⁸²Cfr. A. FAGOTHEY, *Right and Reason*, The C.V Mosby Company, U.S.A 1976 379.

⁸³Cfr. *Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

Looking at the peculiar position of the Jews, it is explained more by their religion than by their economics. The origin of and spread of Christianity was not the result of methods of production and exchange. The renaissance and the reformation contained strong economic factors, but humanistic and religious causes were even more fundamental.⁸⁵

From this point of view, we can see that there were other more appealing factors that contributed to the formation of some states rather than the economic factors with production and exchange at the center.

Economic factors to an extent contributed to these, but such contributions were mild as compared to the religious, cultural and others. “Great conquerors like Alexander Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon and other conquerors changed the course of history but not so much for economic motives but for the love of glory and the pride of conquest.”⁸⁶ In all these movements “an economic aspect can be discerned; and there were other events in which the economic motive was primary. But for Karl Marx to make the economic motive primary in all events is to oversimplify the really complex character of history.”⁸⁷

“Alienation enters human history at the point where human beings can no longer successfully understand themselves as beings in control of and at home in their social world.”⁸⁸ We discovered in chapter one that alienation in the capitalist society was really devastating. From this view, Anthony Brewer (1980) posits that in the capitalist society labour is a mere means to physical existence, it is rather not part of his life but the sacrifice of his life.⁸⁹ Private property is the product of this alienated labor. Such alienation is a denial of human freedom and self-determination. It prevents us from acting in our own true interests for the purpose of self-realization and happiness.

In the *Economics and Philosophical Manuscript*, Karl Marx asserted that “under capitalism, inhuman, sophisticated, unnatural and imaginary appetites are encouraged above all an

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶A. FAGOTHEY, *Right and Reason*, The C.V. Mosby Company, U.S.A 1976, 376.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸S. LUKES, *Marxism and Morality*, Oxford University Press, New York 1985, 85.

⁸⁹B. ANTHONY, *Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1980, 208.

obsessive need for money; so that all passions and all activities are submerged in avarice.”⁹⁰ He further posits that:

In alienation man becomes debased, enslaved forsaken despicable being whose life, activity becomes a mere means to his existence and laboring activity is not a satisfaction of a need, but merely a means to satisfy needs external to it.⁹¹

At the end of the day, alienation leaves man, that is, the proletariat with no dignity. The reason of looking at alienation as a degradation of man’s dignity is because those who are privileged create an artificial situation of low wages, in which those who do not have are forced to work not out of their conviction, but because they have to survive. This bitter experience of alienation which Karl Marx himself faced is still a problem today. People in the present society do not take work as part of their being but as something alien to them. Today alienation of labour and its ruining tendencies continue to destroy the society.

There is a lot of talk today on employment and the whole idea of minimum wage, but in most situations it does not obtain. The whole idea of profit maximization is at the forefront of every economic activity today, such that employers look for means to secure their enterprises at the detriment of those who are actually working. So, what was happening in Marx’s time has continued through the course of history and today still, we see that ninety percent of wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few and the majority are left with no choice than to succumb to their low wages which they offer. Karl Marx establishes in the *Communist Manifesto* that the history of every society is hitherto the history of class struggle.⁹² One will agree with him that many societies have in history experienced tension between the privileged and the underprivileged. But if Class struggles have always occurred they do not explain all the events of history.⁹³ Situating the whole idea of class struggle in the African or Asian society will not fit, for the different societies that have developed in this continent have not been on the basis of class antagonisms alone

⁹⁰K. MARX, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*, International Publishers, New York 1964, 309.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 274.

⁹²Cfr. K. MARX, *Communist Manifesto*, 13.

⁹³Cfr. A. FAGOTHEY, *Right and Reason*, 376.