

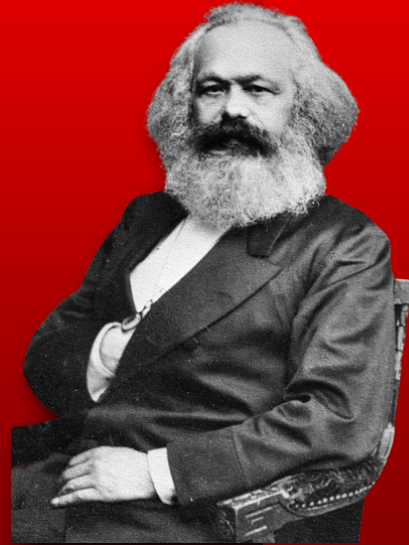


Introduction to Historical Materialism

Unit 2: Marxist Philosophy

What is Historical Materialism?

- Historical materialism is the scientific method of understanding history that argues that history and change is driven by class struggles rooted in the economic organization of society.
- Historical Materialism was discovered by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1800's, who took inspiration from British Materialist philosophy of the same era.
- Historical Materialism differs from British Materialism of the time because rather than focusing on "Human Nature" it focuses on what social conditions drive human behavior.
- Further, Historical Materialism relies on Dialectical Materialism (See U1, L2), while British Materialism was mechanistic. This means that British Materialism understood things in a vacuum from social and economic conditions and viewed the material as isolated phenomenon unrelated to other material.



Modes of Production

The mode of production is made up of the:

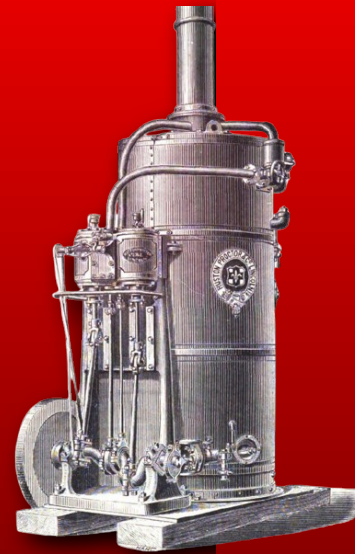
- **The Relations of Production:**

The relationships making up the process of production. For example, the relationship of the worker to the capitalist, the serf to the lord, the slave to the master.

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- **The Productive Forces:**

The union of labor and the means of production. For example, under capitalism we have the use of machine industry by workers, whereas under feudalism we have the use of fine tools and skilled labor by artisans.



The Advancement of Tools Accelerates Class Society

- In Historical Materialism, the advancement of tools (Means of Production) is considered a driving force in the development of class society.
- Advancement in the Means of Production render old socio-economic systems obsolete, and create conditions that give rise to new socio-economic systems.
- For example, the advancement in farming implements allowed for the Neolithic / Agricultural revolution, which led to a larger social surplus of goods, which required new ways to organize that surplus and enabled slavers to support themselves living off the labor of others.



History of Modes of Production -Synopsis

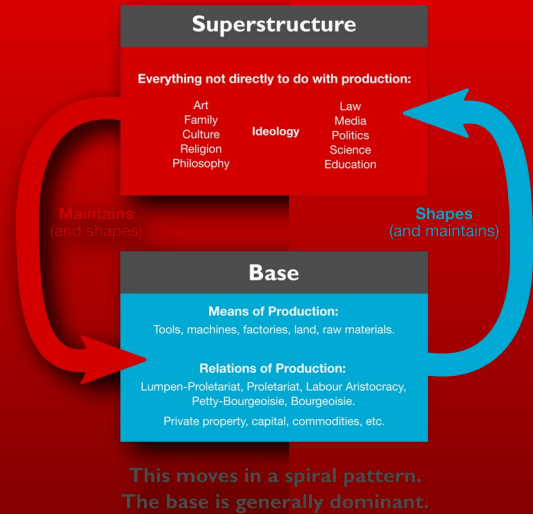
- **Primitive Communism:** (Stone tools and primitive agriculture) The Earliest mode of production, where resources and production were shared communally, and there was no private property or class divisions.
- **Slave Society:** (Bronze and Iron tools, ploughs and improved farming implements) A system where a ruling class owns slaves who are forced to work, marking the rise of private property and inequality.
- **Feudalism:** (Iron and Steel tools, more improved farming implements) Relied on a hierarchical structure where lords own land, and peasants work it in exchange for protection, with strict class divisions.
- **Capitalism:** (Machine industry/agriculture) A system where the bourgeoisie owns the means of production, and the proletariat sells their labor for wages, creating profit and class conflict.
- **Socialism/Communism:** (Machine industry/agriculture) A classless system where the means of production are communally owned, and wealth is distributed based on need, aiming to eliminate exploitation and inequity.



“Man's ancestors lived in hordes, or herds; the first men also lived in herds. But between men there arose a link which did not, and could not, exist in the animal world: the link through labour. Men made implements jointly and jointly they applied them. Consequently, the rise of man was also the rise of human society, the transition from the

Base and Superstructure - Sumarized

- The Base is the mode of production, think Socialism, Capitalism, Feudalism, Slave Society, or Primitive Communism.
- The superstructure is the social institutions in a society. This includes but is not limited to government, law, culture, religion, ideology, etc.
- The Superstructure is created and informed by the base. The base is primary to the superstructure.
- Superstructure supports and stabilizes the base. The superstructure is secondary to the base.



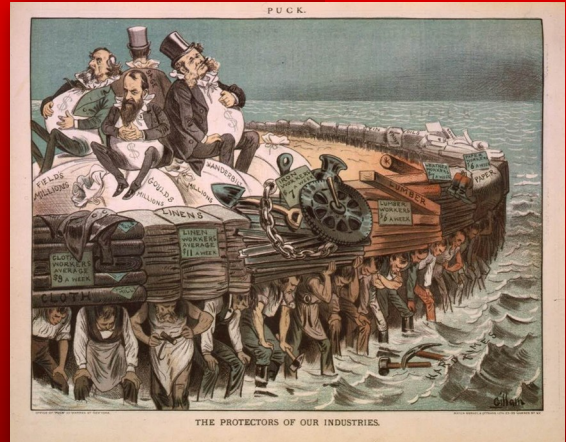
Class Struggle

Class struggle is the conflict between social classes due to differences in power and resources. It's driven by one group exploiting another and it determines how societies change over time.

Classes struggle primarily for:

- Subjugation of oppressed classes vs oppression of working classes.
- Control over the means of production.
- Control over the superstructure.
- Advancing the base to a higher mode of production, defending the old base, or regressing the base to a older mode of production.

Under capitalism, the contradiction between capital and labor drives conflict between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.



Open Discussion

- Why is it important for Marxists to understand Historical Materialism?
- Do you have any additional questions?



Thank you for attending the Red Spectre Academy!