



What is Dialectical Materialism?

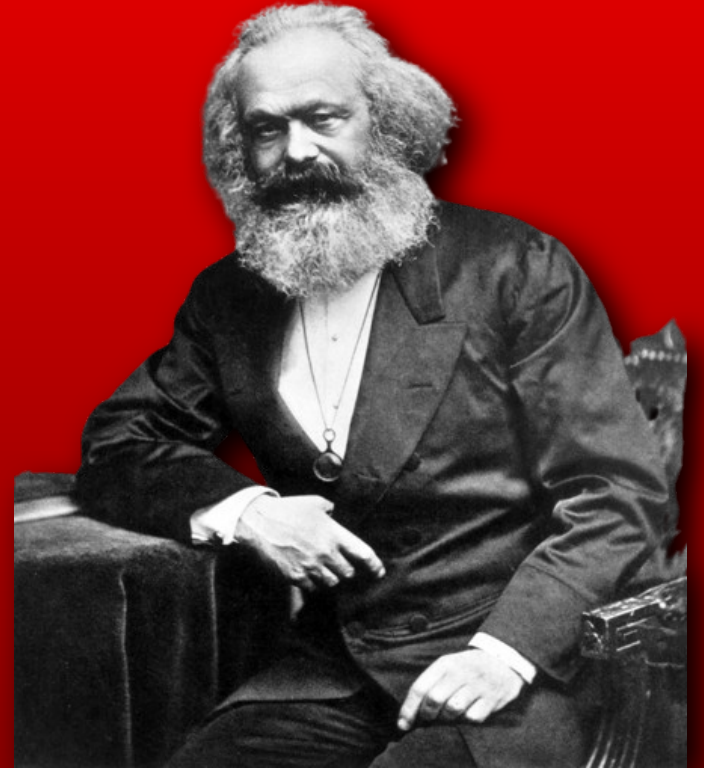
Unit 2: Marxist Philosophy

Dialectical Materialism - Basics

- What actually is Dialectical Materialism?
- Why should you care about Dialectical Materialism?

“Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.”

- Karl Marx, *Theses on Feurbach*



Development of Dialectical Materialism

- Dialectics were developed 2,500 years ago by Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, and later Socrates.
- Idealist dialectics as put forward by philosophers like Hegel and Fichte gained prominence in Prussia during the 1800's.
- Marx took the Hegelian Dialectic and flipped it on it's head, revolutionizing it, discovering Dialectical Materialism.
- The other classics of Marxism (Engels, Lenin, & Stalin) would go on to further articulate Marx's Dialectic, making it more digestible.



The Dialectic Component

- The (Thesis → Antithesis → Synthesis) Dialectic is commonly misattributed to Hegel.
- What is Hegel's Dialectic?
- The inherent flaws of Hegel's Dialectic as opposed to the Marxian Dialectic.
- The "Rational Kernal" of the Hegelian Dialectic.

"My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite."

- Karl Marx, *Afterward To The Second German Edition of Capital*



The Materialist Component

- Marx's materialism was both built upon and expanded upon Feurbach's Materialism.
- Feurbach's materialism argues that the study of material reality is the basis of all genuine knowledge.
- In Feurbach's materialism, ideas (the ideal) are a reflection of the material (matter), i.e matter thinking about itself or more succinctly, matter shapes consciousness.
- Feurbach's materialism failed to acknowledge dialectics or understand the process of scientific development



The Synthesis of Dialectical Materialism

- Marx's dialectic is both dialectical and material, an evolution in philosophy, which both builds upon and revolutionizes the philosophy of Hegel and Feurbach. I.e it is a synthesis of both Hegel and Feurbach.

Thus, the two components of Marx's Dialectic can thus be summarized as:

- The Dialectical Component - The study of the contradictions between opposing forces which drive conflict, leading to change and development.
- The Materialist Component – The understanding that material conditions are the primary drivers of historical and social development, and that ideas are merely a reflection/interpretation of reality.

DIALECTICS



MATERIALISM

The Three “Laws” Of Dialectical Materialism

In Dialectical Materialism, there are three “laws” of development as put forward by Friedrich Engels.

These three laws are:

- 1) The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa.
- 2) The law of the interpenetration of opposites.
- 3) The law of the negation of the negation.



How To Apply Dialectical Materialism

- **Identify the Contradictions:**

Examine your subject, consider all contradictions affecting it, both external and internal. Consider the subject wholistically, all of its constituent parts as a whole, as well as the systems entangled with your subject.

- **Look for Quantity of Your Subject:**

Look for the quantities your subject possesses. This could be anything from the temperature of water, the quantity of a certain chemical compound, the development of productive forces, or the ratio between constant capital and human labor.

- **Identify Quality, Identify the Negation of Your Subject:**

Look for where the changes in quantity will change quality. For example, the boiling point of water, a chemical reaction, a change in mode of production, etc. Find where your old subject is negated, where a new subject is synthesised out of the old conflict.

- **Apply the Scientific Method:**

It can help to think of all the previous steps of this method as the observation & research steps in the Scientific Method. Now you can Hypothesize → Experiment → Collect Data → Analyse → Conclude.

Open Discussion

- How can you use what you have learned about Dialectical Materialism to bring about social change?
- Do you have any additional questions?



Thank you for attending the Red Spectre Academy!