

MARXISM

Marxism



MARXISM

Three perspectives on Marxism:



MARXISM

1. A philosophy (and history) of the world.

Key concepts in Marxism: historical materialism

- “The **materialist conception of history** starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to 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 upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view, **the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange.**” From *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (written entirely by Engels after Marx's death)

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2. A political system and a basis for political movements.



**"Politics is the art of
looking for trouble,
finding it everywhere,
diagnosing it incorrectly,
and applying
the wrong remedies."
*Groucho Marx***

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3. An economic system characterized by state control of property and the means of production.

Key Ideas:

- Power was held by a minority (the **elite** or **bourgeoisie**) who had access to capital and could use their money and power to generate more wealth.
- The majority of the population (the **mass** or **proletariat**) had only their **labour** (strength and time) to help them make a living.
- Industrialisation had meant that the elite were the only ones who had access to the **means of production**.
- Without the ability to produce for themselves, the mass were dependent on the elite for survival.
- To maximise profits, the elite needed to get as much labour from the mass for as little cost as possible.
- The elite needed the mass to accept their position as powerless workers.

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Marx's work, above all, was an interpretive approach to history and a critique of capitalism...



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**Hegel, Idealism,
and the
Dialectic**



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1. Much of **Marx's** early thought is based on the work of Hegel, the great German idealist philosopher.



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Philosophy of Hegel

- Dialectics
 - Thesis vs. Antithesis=synthesis
- Historic change comes through the clash of antagonistic elements.
- History is a process of development through time, logical and deterministic, everything happens in sequence by cause.
- Hegel saw primacy of ideas that cause change, Marx focused on economic reality.

2. The source of truth and change in the universe is Spirit or Idea (human freedom).

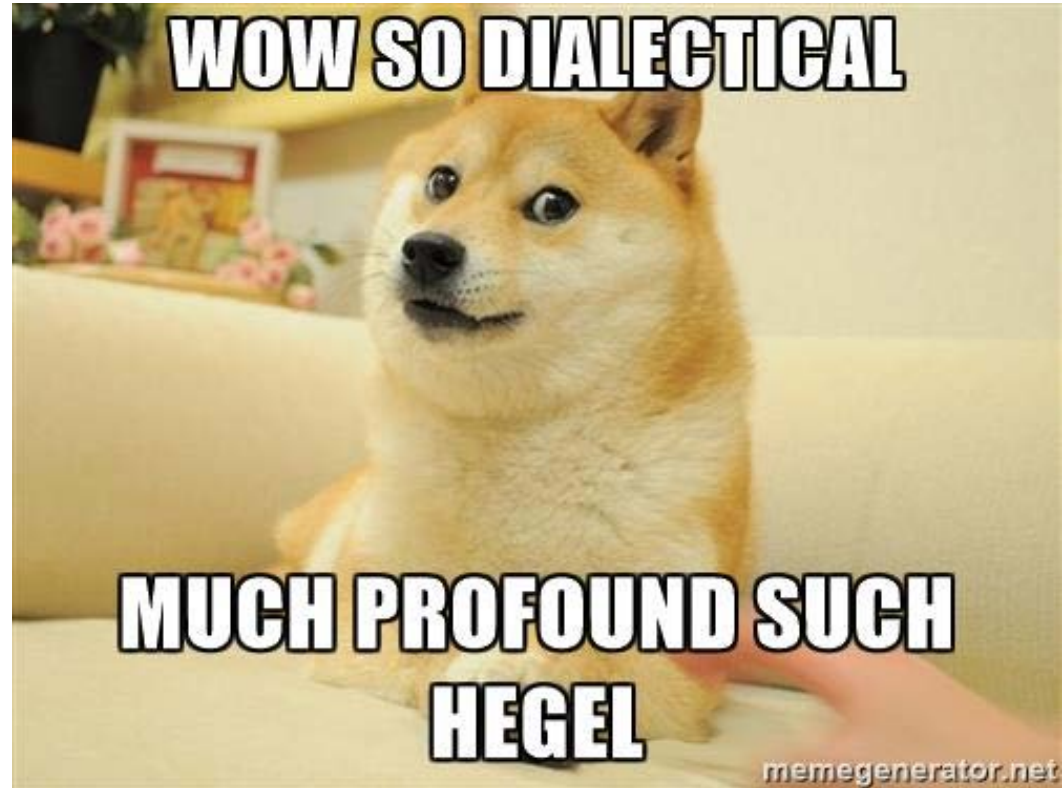
*We learn from history that
we do not learn from history*

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

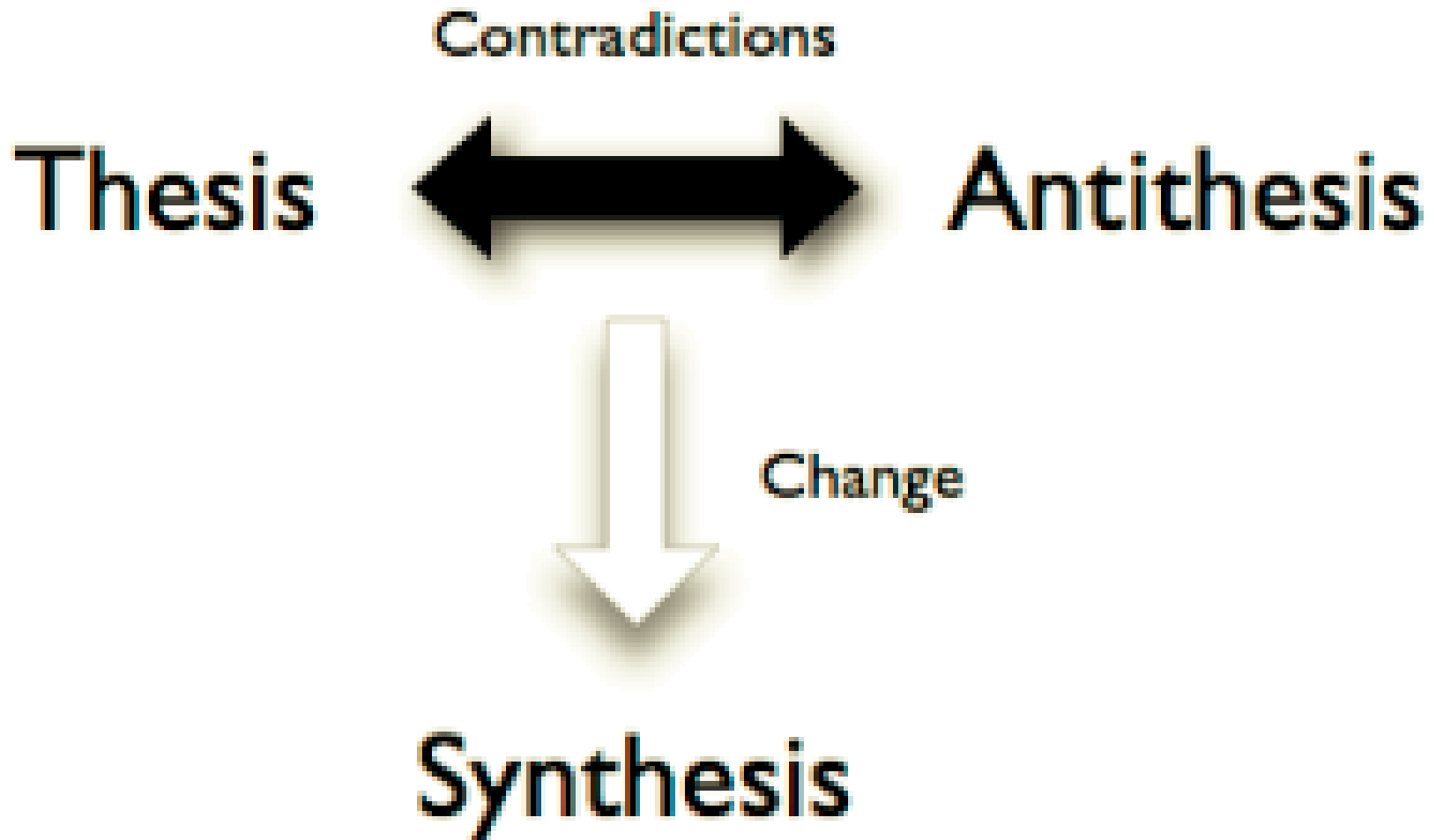


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3. The Idea moves *dialectically* through history (which appears as the following):

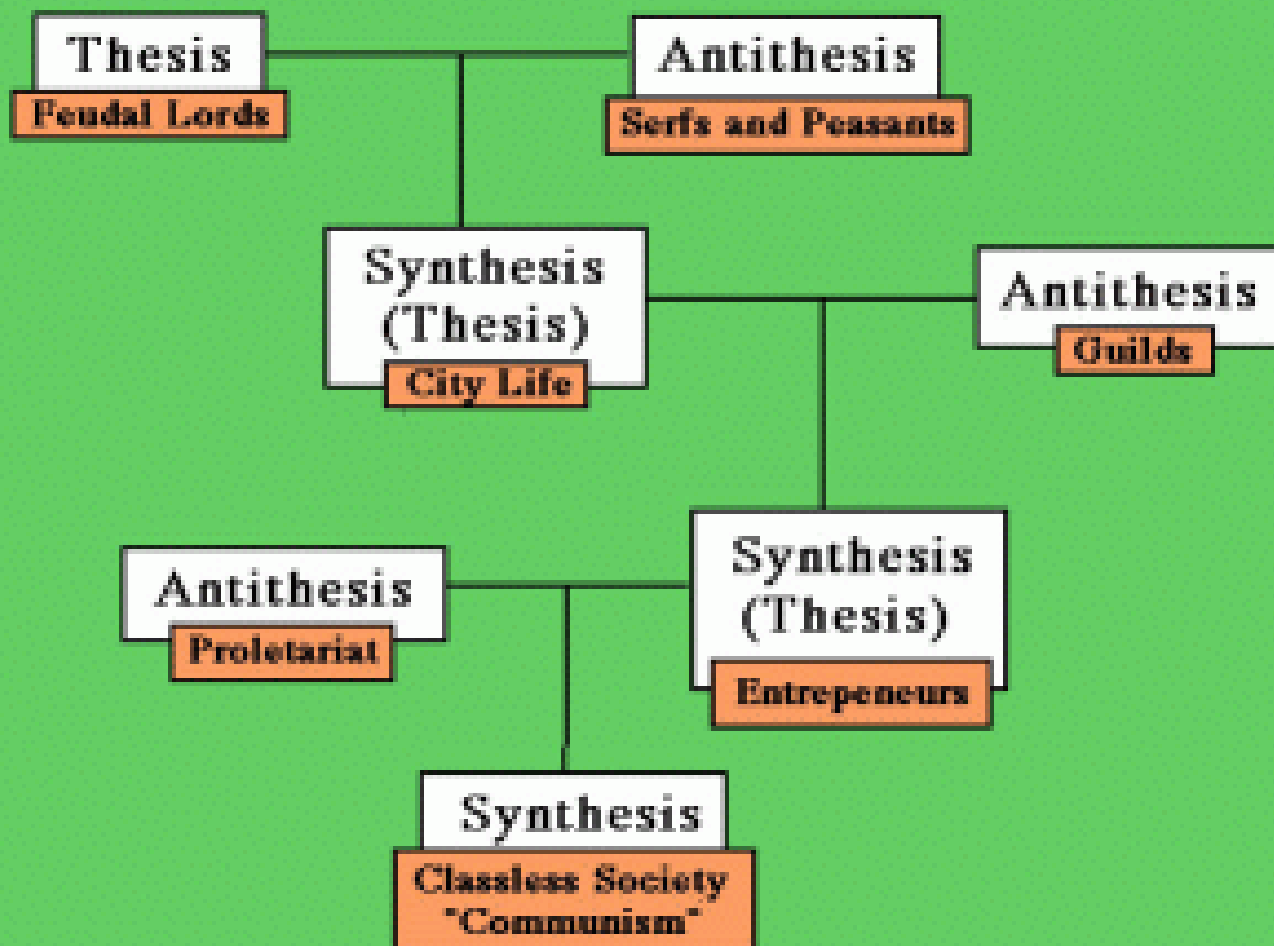


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The Dialectic in Action



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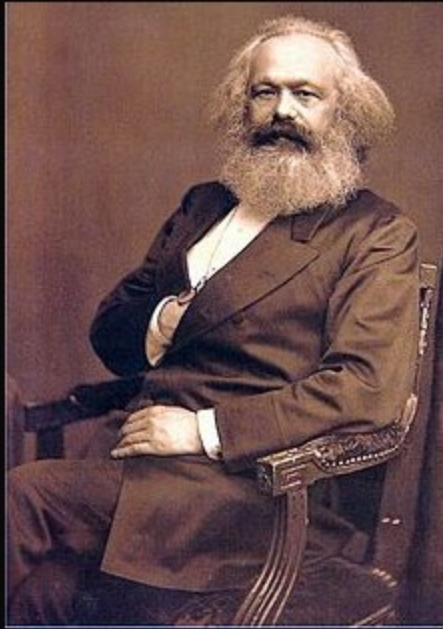
Marx

**(Ontological
Materialism)**



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1. **Marx** was a materialist, not an idealist.



If anything is certain, it is that I myself am not a
Marxist

(Karl Marx)

izquotes.com

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2. Economic production and human beings were what was real in history.



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Hunter-Gatherer Societies

- ▶ Early humans formed **societies**, or communities of people who share a common culture.
- ▶ **Nomadic hunters-gatherers**, wandering in search of food/resources and gathering wild plants, seeds, fruits, and nuts.
- ▶ Lived outside or took shelter in caves



**a. Hunter-Gatherer
(200,000 to 10,000 b.c.e.)**

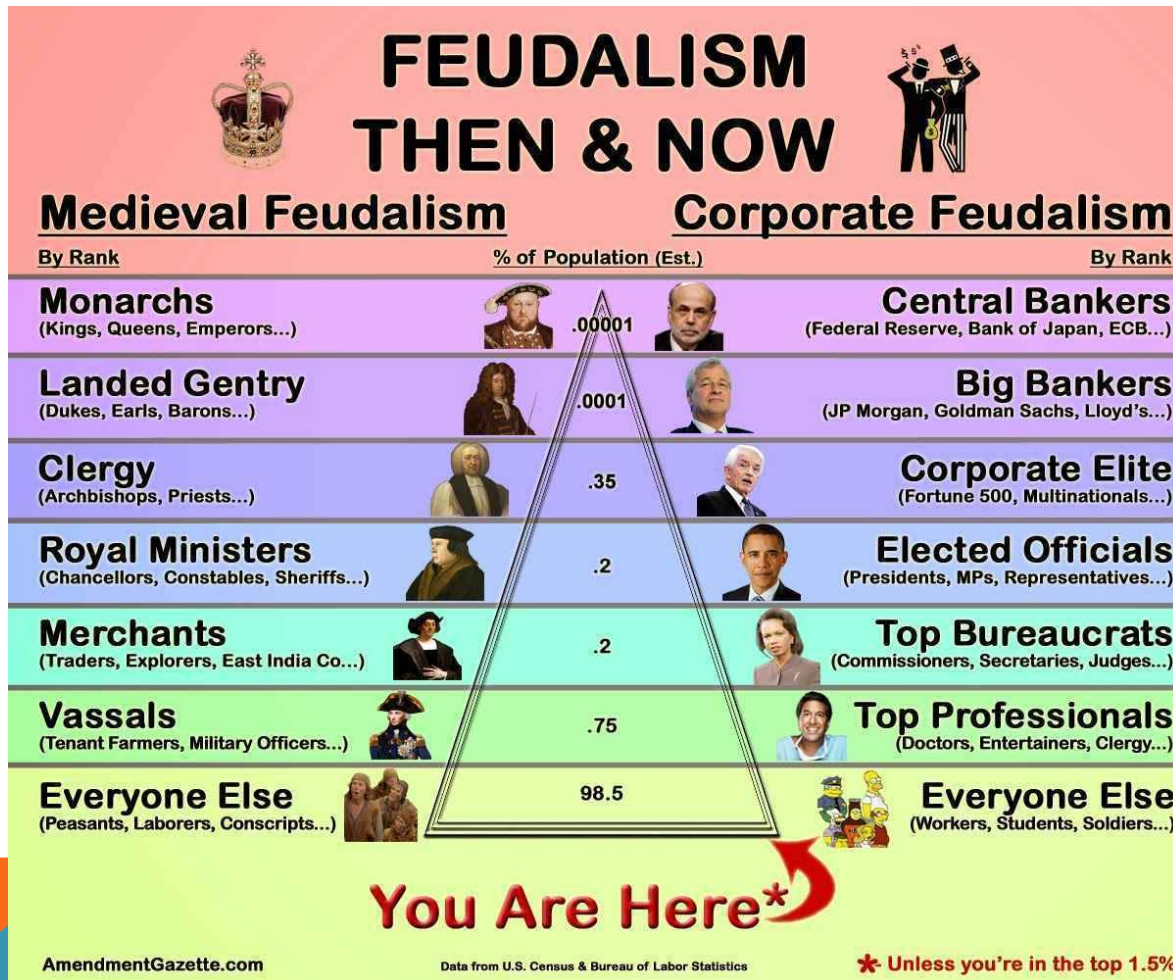
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- FARMING LED TO THE GROWTH OF EACH OF THESE CIVILIZATIONS. GROWING CORN AND OTHER CROPS CREATED A SHIFT FROM HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIETIES TO MORE COMPLEX, STATIONARY SOCIETIES.
- ALTHOUGH THE MAYANS, AZTECS, AND INCAS WERE GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED AND LEFT LITTLE BEHIND, THEY WERE EACH ADVANCED CIVILIZATIONS.



b. Agricultural (10,000 to 5,000 b.c.e)

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c. Feudalism (500 to 1,500 a.d.)

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d. Capitalism (1,500 a.d. to present)

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e. Socialism /
Communism (future?)

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3. History is grounded in material forces, not ideas.



SOCIALISM

A SOCIAL-
ECONOMIC SYSTEM
BASED ON THE
COMMON OWNERSHIP
OF PROPERTY

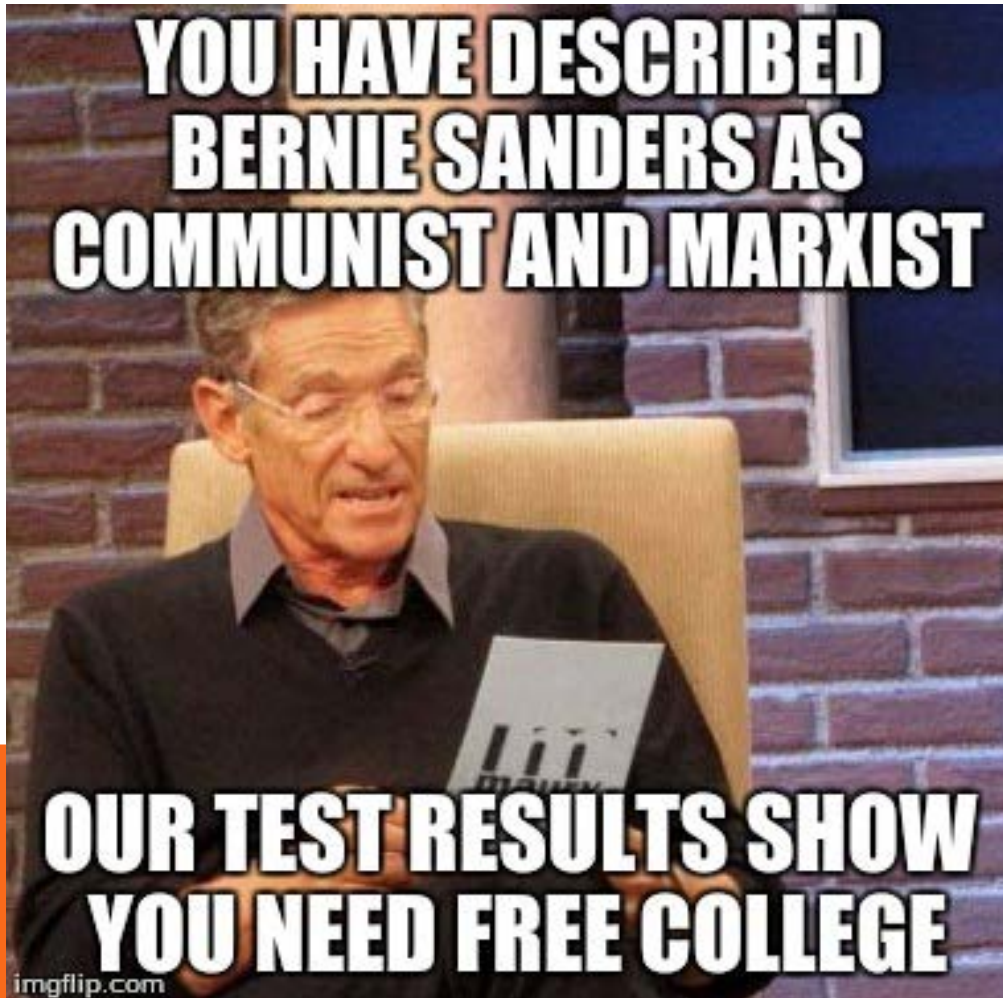


IT DOES NOT MEAN



ANYTHING
A GOVERNMENT
DOES

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4. Capitalism must collapse since it is producing its own antithesis; the proletariat (or *precariat*).

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I. Theory of History



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1. Atheism and determinism

Determinism and atheism

- Sam Harris declared that free will is nothing but an illusion and wishful thinking.
- Jerry Coyne stated, “I’m starting to realize there are striking parallels between belief in God and belief in free will. There is no evidence for the existence of either, and plenty of evidence against both. Belief in both makes people feel better”



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2. He proposed a ***scientific* (?) method for studying human historical development.**

Scientific Socialism

- Marx was not saying that capitalism would collapse because it was *immoral* or because it was *inefficient*.
- He was saying that capitalism would collapse because of the unalterable rules of social change that invariably destroy economic systems marked by class inequality.
- This is why another name for dialectical materialism is **scientific socialism**.

KARL MARX

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3. The four epochs (Asiatic, ancient, feudal, capitalist).

Marx's view of history
focused on changes in
production relations:

Tribal Society

- Primitive Communism

Asiatic Society

- Despotism

Ancient Society

- Slavery

Feudal Society

- Serfdom

Capitalist Society

- Wage Labor

Socialist—Communist?



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4. Although he allowed that cultural factors such as religion and nationalism (what he called “false consciousness”) influenced history, the driving force was economics, particularly *forces of production.*

False Consciousness

Social institutions like the mass media play a key role in ensuring that the working class remain happy with their situation despite the inherent unfairness of the system.

Marx described the situation in which members of the subordinate classes cannot see that they are being duped as ‘false consciousness’.

In Marxist terms, ideology can ultimately be identified as the lies, deceptions and misinformation given to the working classes in order to maintain the state of ‘false consciousness’.



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5. These forces of capitalism would over time become more and more unstable, leading to a major social revolution where workers would take power and institute a new communist phase of history.

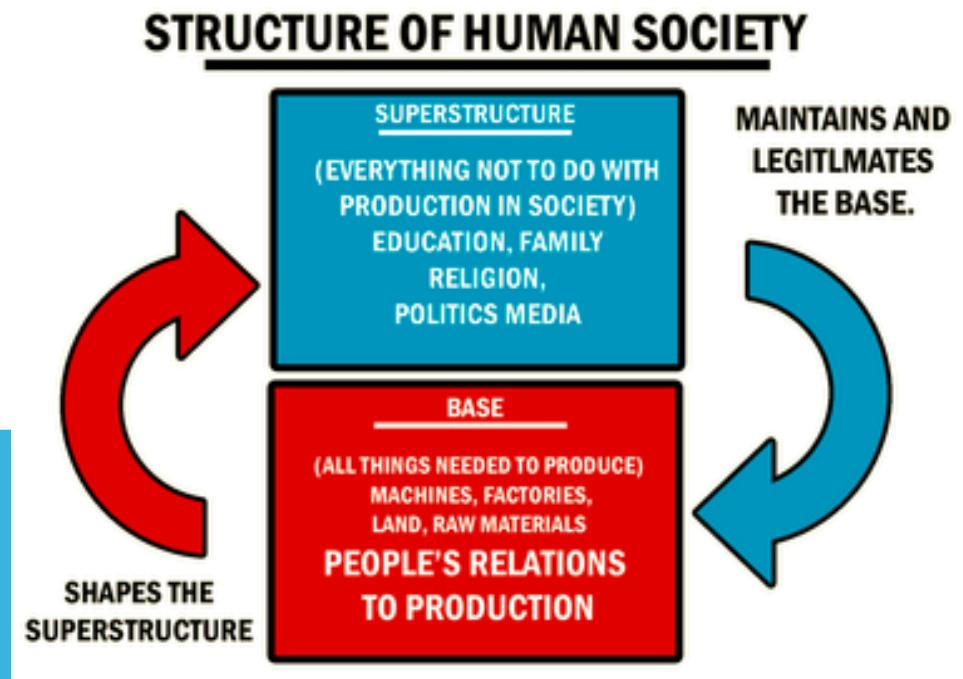
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II. Theory of Human Nature



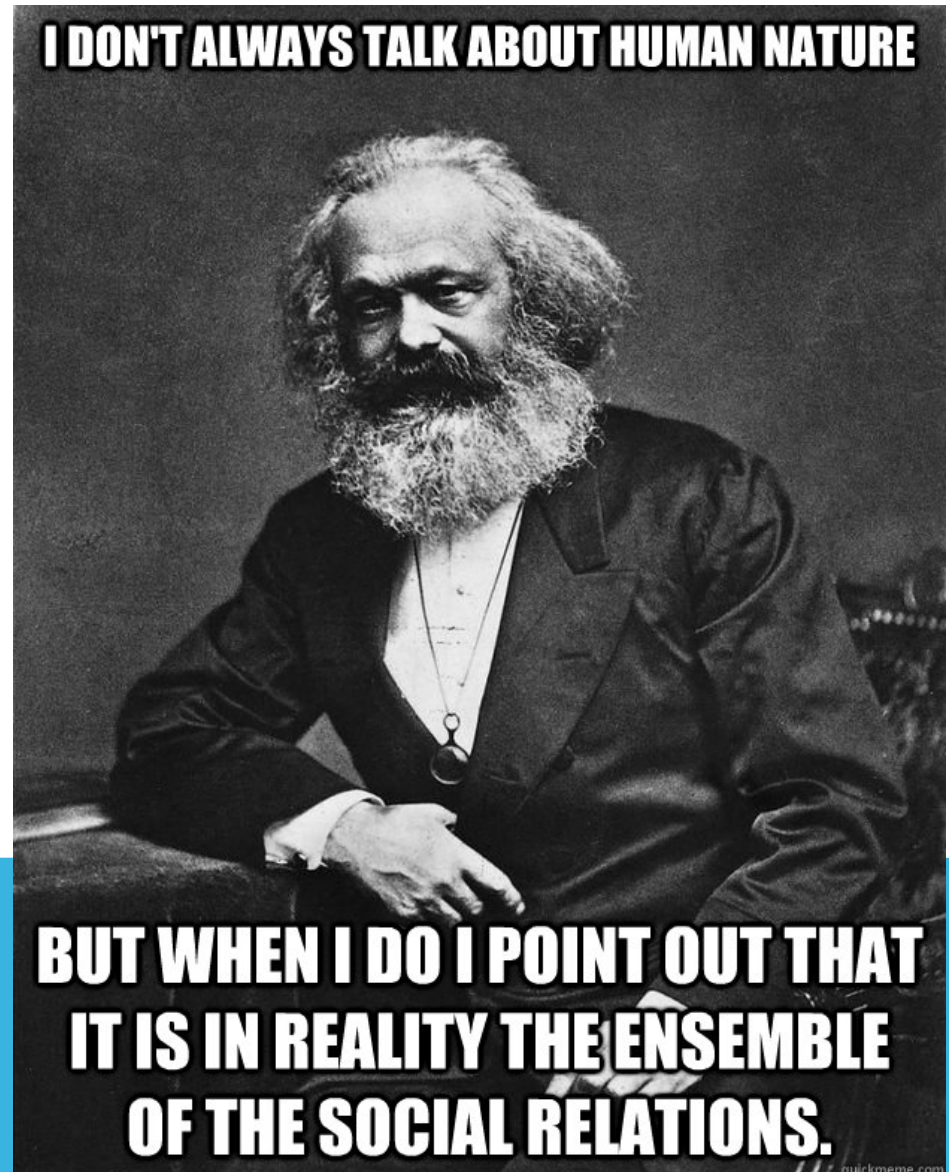
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1. Consciousness, although nonphysical, was entirely determined by material events (a reflection of socioeconomic roles that people are not consciously aware of).

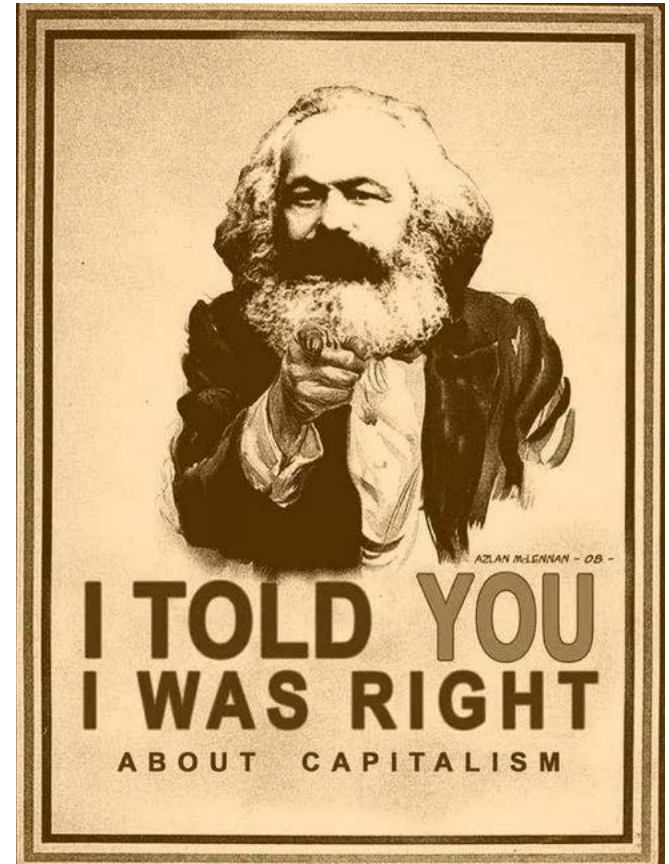
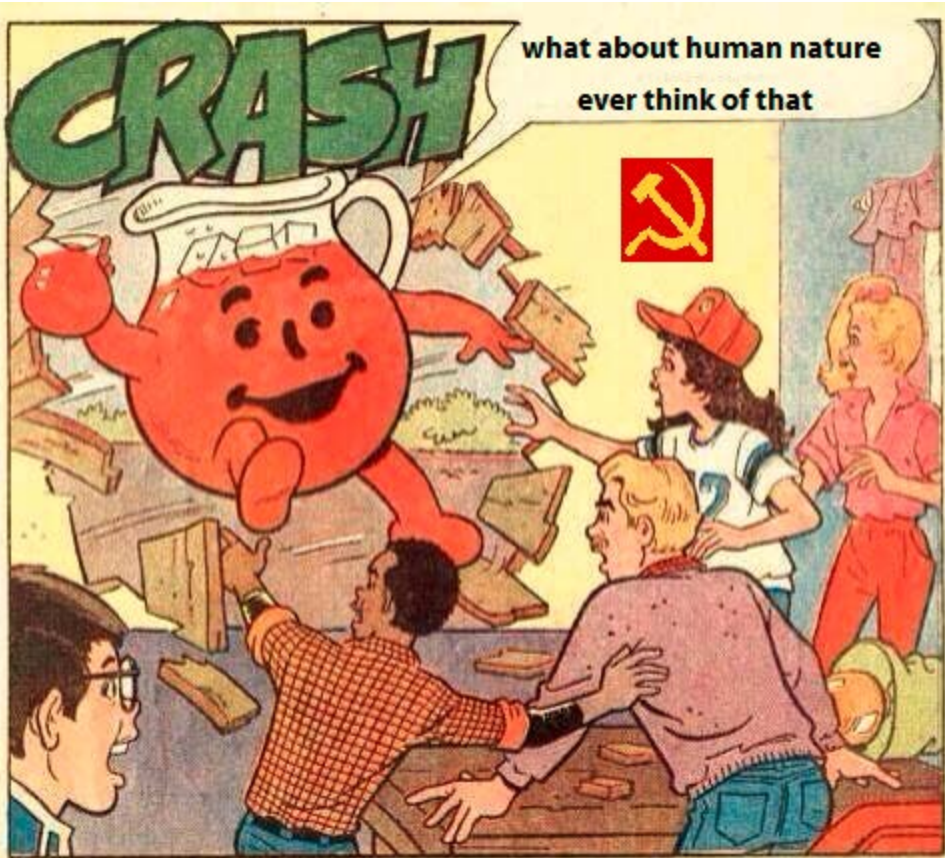


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2. The most distinctive feature of **Marx's** concept of humanity is that it is essentially social in nature.

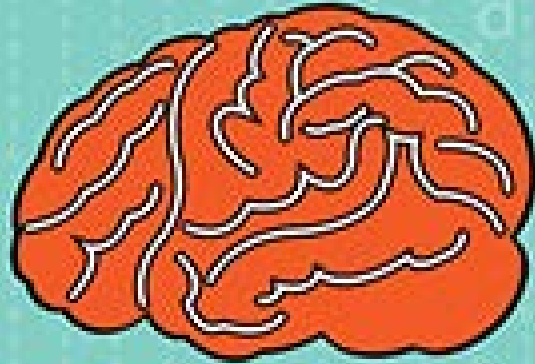


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3. **Marx** believed there was no such thing as a fixed, individual human nature; that what is true of people in one society or period may not be true of them in another place or time.

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Psychology is the study of human thoughts and feelings.

Sociology is the study of various cultures and societies.



4. ***Sociology is not reducible to psychology. Not everything about humans can be explained in terms of facts about individuals.***

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5. Universal generalization: humans work for their living but that work should be *appropriate* (not alienating).



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III. Diagnosis



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1. “Alienation” or “estrangement” from:

a. Man from work

b. Man from nature

c. Man from himself

CAPITALISM AND ALIENATION

- Alienation – the experience of isolation & misery resulting from powerlessness
- Capitalism alienates workers in four specific ways:
 - From the act of working
 - Workers have no say in production, work is tedious & repetitive
 - From the products of work
 - Workers have no ownership in the product that is merely sold for profit
 - From other workers
 - Work has become competitive rather than cooperative
 - From human potential
 - Workers deny, not fulfill themselves in their work

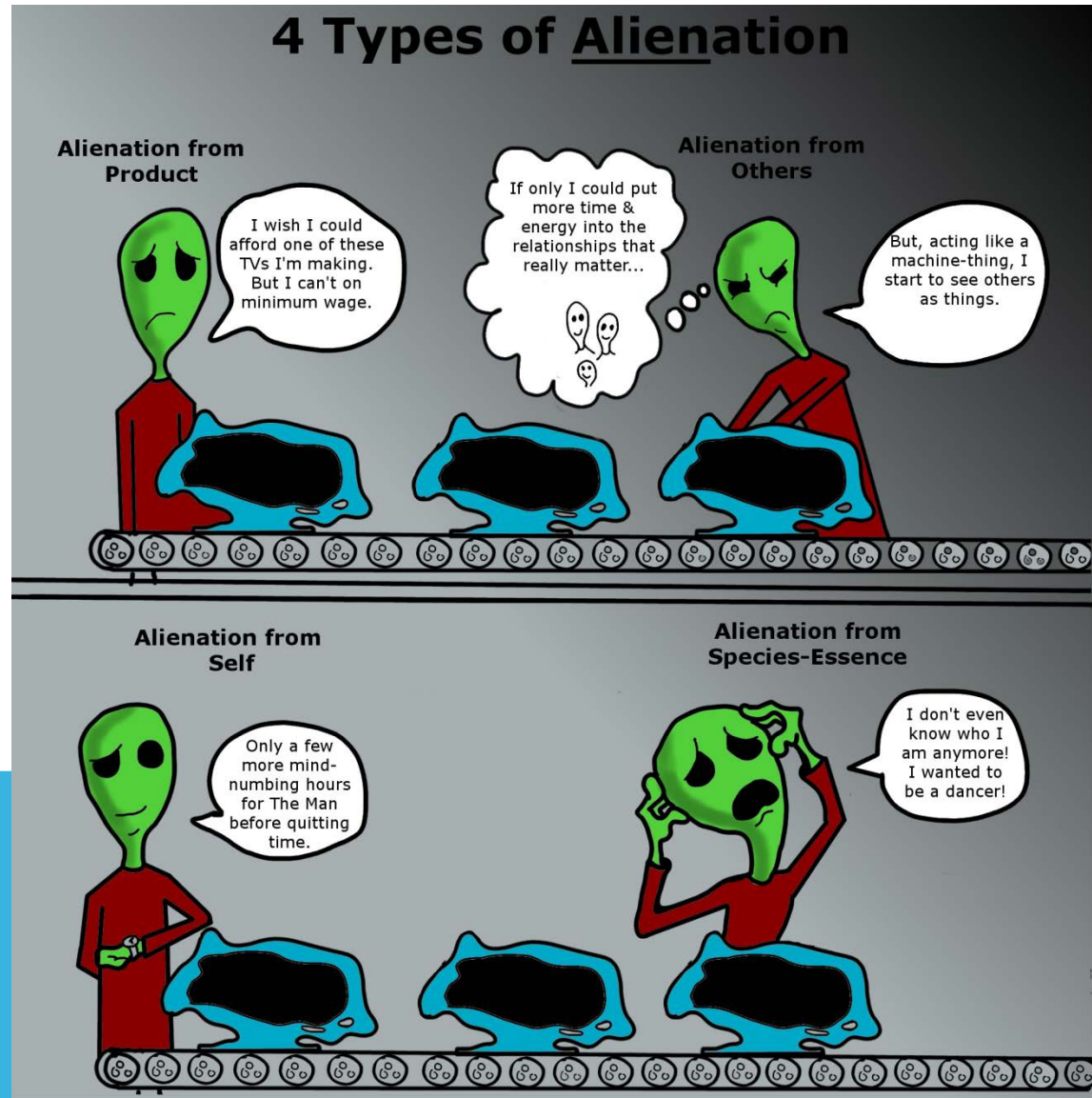
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2. The institution of private property contributes to the process of alienation by forcing workers into labor conditions that make them miserable, physically exhausted, and mentally debased.



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3. We lack a sense of community and a feeling that our work contribute to anything legitimate.



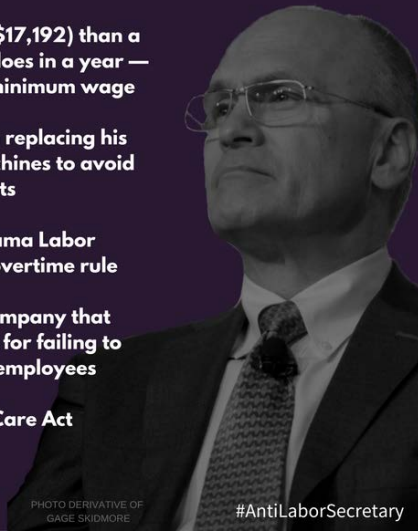
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4. Capitalism allows human beings to be treated solely as *economic* entities, and allows managers of corporations to try to beat competition by extracting the greatest possible profit from the labor of their employees.

ANDY PUZDER

Trump's pick to lead the Department of Labor

- X Makes more in one day (\$17,192) than a minimum wage worker does in a year — but opposes raising the minimum wage
- X Said he'd be interested in replacing his own employees with machines to avoid paying for worker benefits
- X Is a vocal critic of the Obama Labor Department's proposed overtime rule
- X Currently the CEO of a company that has been frequently sued for failing to properly compensate its employees
- X Opposes the Affordable Care Act



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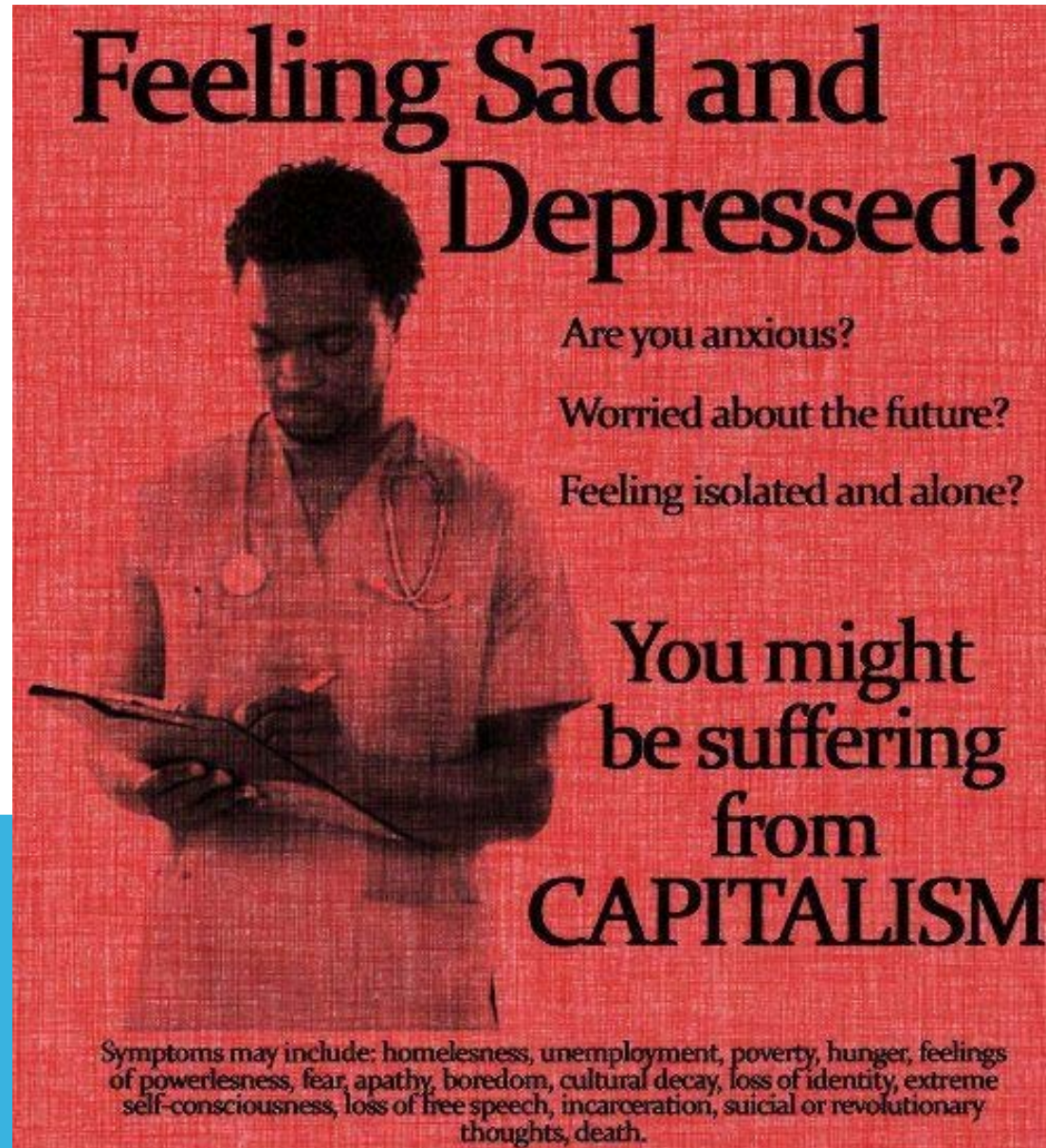
IV.

Prescription



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1. If alienation is caused by capitalism, then we should replace it with a better system.



Feeling Sad and Depressed?

Are you anxious?
Worried about the future?
Feeling isolated and alone?

You might be suffering from **CAPITALISM**

Symptoms may include: homelessness, unemployment, poverty, hunger, feelings of powerlessness, fear, apathy, boredom, cultural decay, loss of identity, extreme self-consciousness, loss of free speech, incarceration, suicidal or revolutionary thoughts, death.

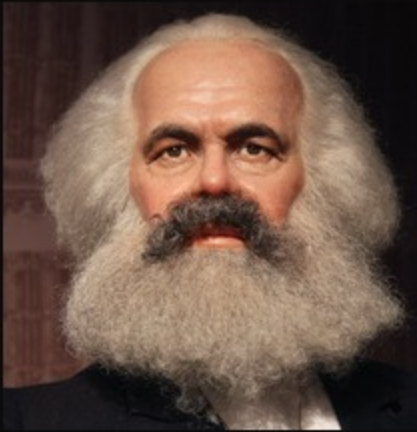
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2. Disagreements within Marxism as to whether people should wait for conditions to be right to begin the revolution or whether we should *act* (Lenin) to bring revolution about.



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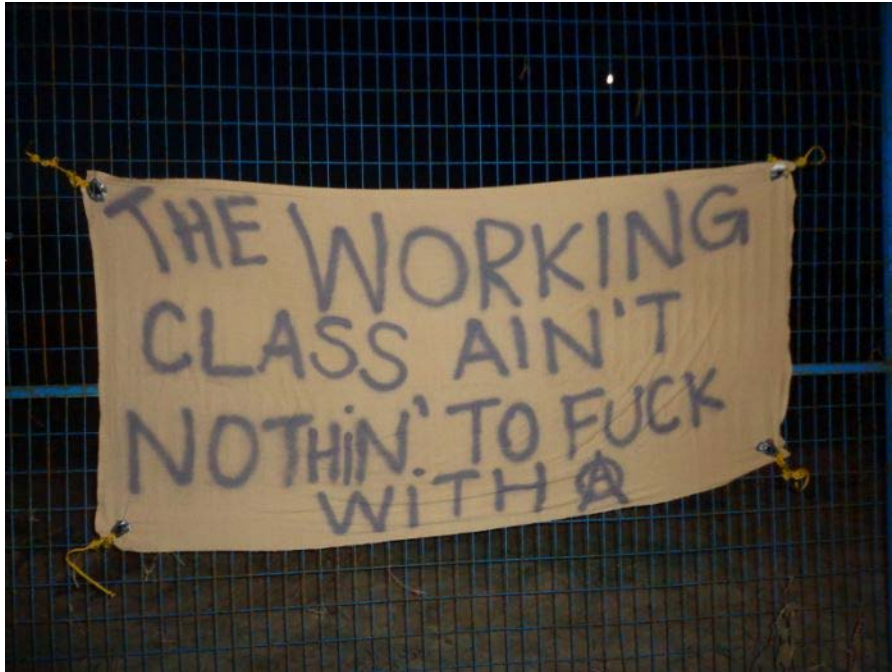
3. Limited “reforms” (higher wages, shorter hours, stiffer penalties for corruption) might soften the harshness of the system, but they do not alter its basic nature.



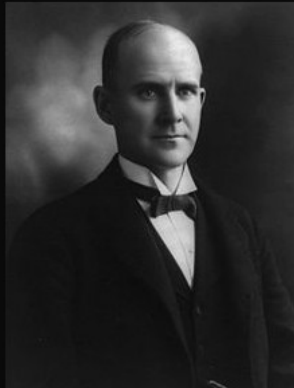
Karl Marx

Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite!

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**4. Raise
consciousness
of class
solidarity.**



The political solidarity of the working class means
the death of despotism, the birth of freedom, the
sunrise of civilization.

(Eugene V. Debs)

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V. Critical Discussion

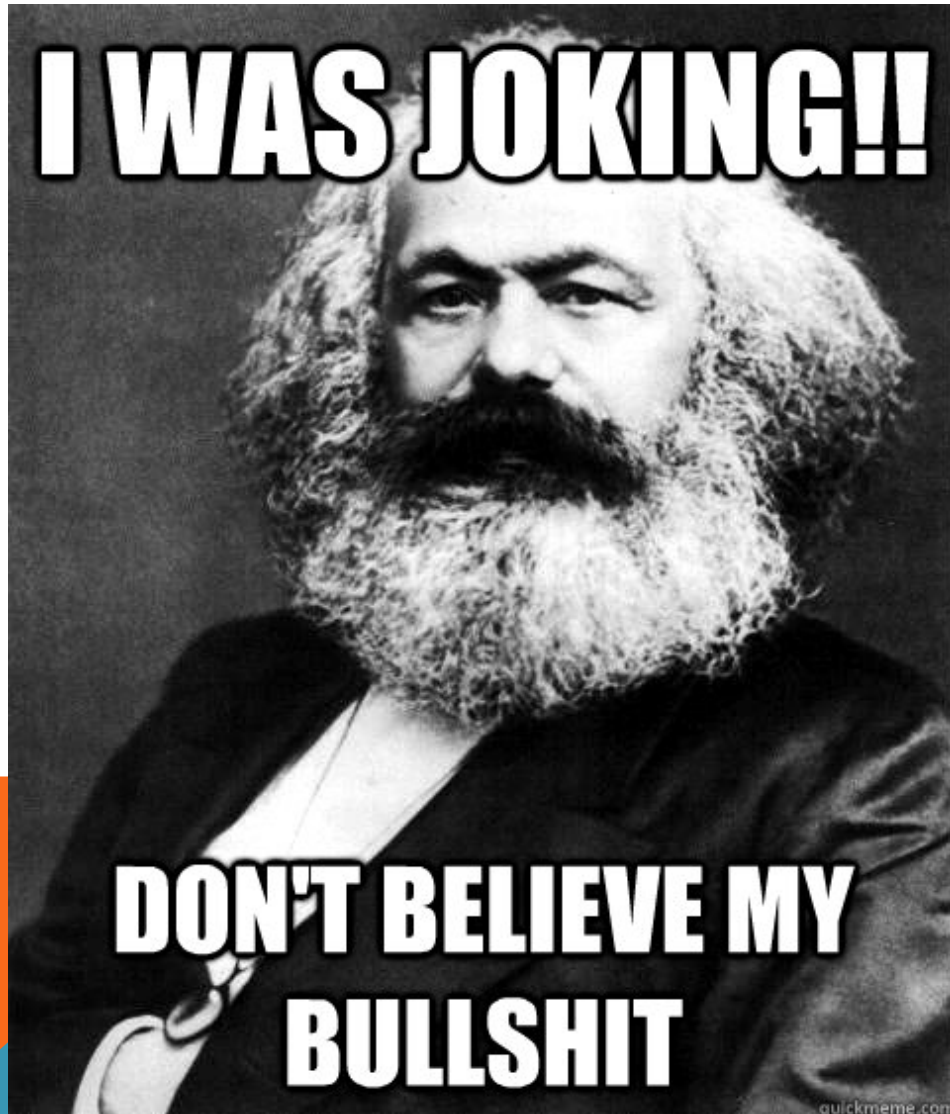


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1. Would a communist society be truly classless?



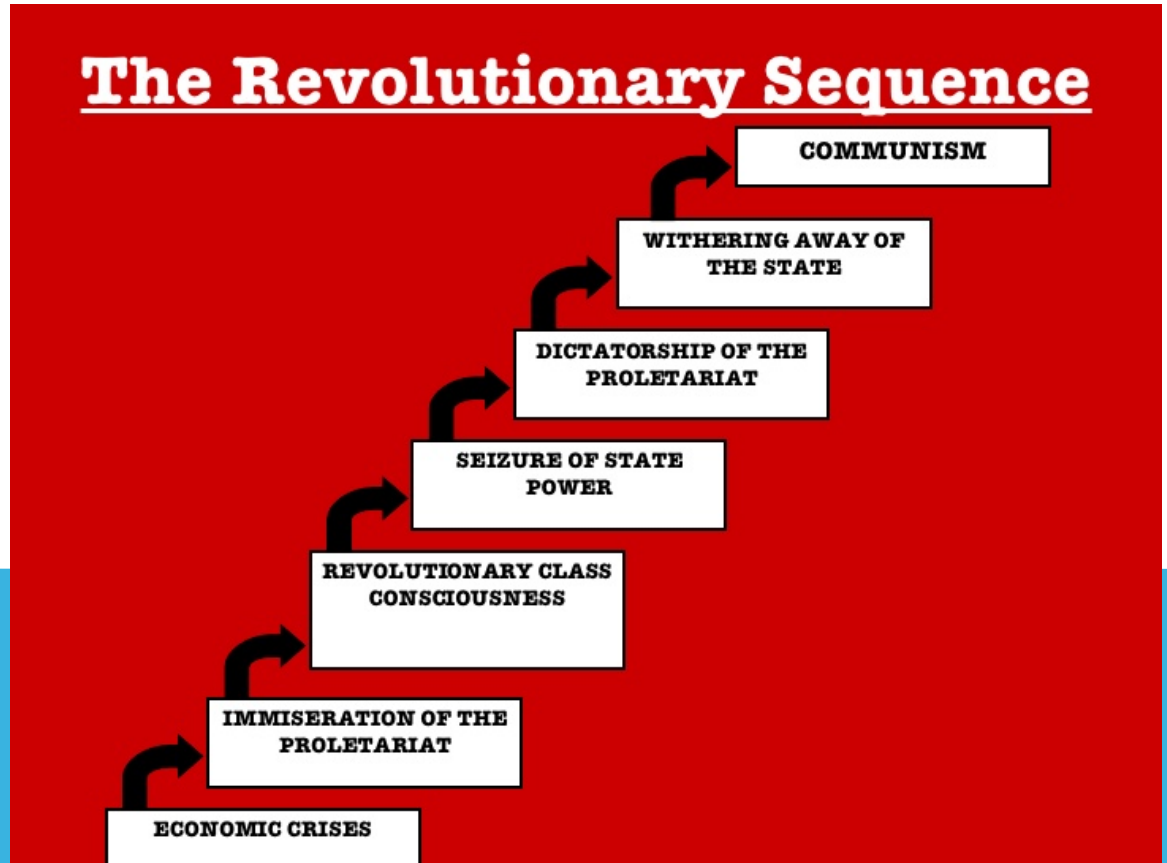
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2. Will any set of economic changes eliminate all conflicts of interest?

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3. Will the state actually “wither away”?



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4. Too economicistic (agent vs. structure problem).

