

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE KARL MARX THEORY OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

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Abstract: *This paper is a theoretical review of the Critical Study of Karl Marx's Theory of dialectical materialism. Marx was a German economist, sociologist, philosopher, journalist, and historian. He was one of the founding fathers and theorists of sociology. On May 5, 1818, he was born in Trier to a middle-class Jewish family. Among his numerous contributions in sociology was dialectical materialism: where he borrowed the idea of Hegel on dialectic. Marx believed that dialectic should be used in understanding the historical changes in human society, and such changes should be understood from the perspective of the economy. He believed that economy is the basic or the infrastructure, while other institutions such as politics, religion, and family are the superstructure. Alienation according to Marx is the situation where workers are becoming alien to the goods they produced in the industries, and as a result of that, there are non-producing owners and non-owning producers. Marx believed that the relationship between the masses and the bourgeoisie in the industry is an exploitative one. On the idea of religion as the opium of the masses, Marx was with the opinion that workers have been exploited and as a result of that they will go to religion to receive solace, where religious leaders will make false promises to them, and in turn, the religious leaders are nothing but puppets of the capitalists. Marx suggested that the best way to deal with exploitation is to revolt against the capitalists.*

Key Words: Dialectical Materialism, Alienation, Bourgeoisie, Proletariat, Religion.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Karl Marx was a revolutionary, economist, sociologist, philosopher, journalist, and historian. On May 5, 1818, he was born in Trier to a middle-class Jewish family, but because of business reasons, his father converted to Lutheranism (Protestantism, following the ideology

of Martin Luther King) when Marx was young (Ritzer, 2011). His father, Henrich Marx, a lawyer, privately schooled him till the age of twelve. In 1830, he went to Trier High School. Marx attended the University of Bonn in 1835 to study philosophy and literature. His academic performance at the University of Bonn started to decline after the first term, so his father pushed him to transfer to the University of Berlin, where he started studying law in 1836 (Marx, 1867/2020).

However, at the University of Berlin, Marx became influenced by the work and philosophy of Hegel, more especially his idea of historical materialism. According to Maheshwari (2003), Marx was under the intellectual influence of Hegel. Adding that, he got a doctorate in philosophy in 1841 and wanted to become a lecturer, but he was denied because of his radical idea. Shankar (2012) Maintained that Marx was unable to teach at the German University because of his association with Hegel.

II. Literature Reviews Dialectical Materialism:

Marx and Engels established the scientific approach known as dialectical materialism to interpret history. Marx has often referenced his forebears in this area, particularly the German philosopher Hegel. A very old way of finding truth by identifying inconsistencies and contrasting opposing viewpoints is called dialectics (Gahatraj, 2018). Hegel used dialectic to analyze the development of human society, with an emphasis on the intellectual sphere. The dialectical flow of human ideas and thinking, in his view, was what caused historical transformations. According to Hegel, society is fundamentally an expression of ideas. Marx, however, disapproved of Hegel's idea. He maintained that contradictions, specifically those seen in the economic system and society overall, are the root of change. And because he places so much emphasis on the economy or the material world, his theory is known as dialectical materialism (Haralambos & Martin, 2000).

Hegel was deeply interested in the idea, and he believed that the idea is enough to understand human society. While for Marx, he believed that Hegel puts the idea upside down. For him, it is the economy that matters more than the ideas. Therefore, we can say Marx is Materialist, while Hegel is an idealist in understanding human society. As suggested by Gahatraj (2018),

Hegel argues that ultimately, the idea is what counts and everything else is merely its reflection. Marx substituted matter for the concept. Marx claimed that the concept is a part of the superstructure while the material or economic forces are in the substructure. The reflection of material forces is thought. The idea is determined by economic forces, not the other way around. Marx has therefore flipped the roles of thought and matter. He claims that "in Hegel, it was upside down and I have fixed it" for this reason. The forces of production and the relations of production make up the basis or the substructure. Together, these two make up the manner of production. Changes in the forces of production brought about by technological advancement also affect production relations. As a result, as the mode of production changes, so does the superstructure. The mode of production shapes the society, polity, religion, morals, values, and other aspects of society that make up the superstructure.

Marx, who believed that the material and the ideal are not only different but also opposed and that they form a unity in which the material is primary and the mind (idea) secondary, utilized Hegel's dialectics, which were used in the sphere of ideas, to explain the material conditions of life. In light of this, he contends that social economic development is the primary factor influencing how human history will ultimately turn out (Yadav, 2021).

III. Methodology Theory of Alienation:

Marx's work on alienation was a criticism of capitalism (Dawson, 2016). Understanding that the mind is what makes us human is vital in comprehending alienation. Marx believed that what makes us human is our capacity for creativity and our ability to work with nature to create things that improve the quality of our existence, whether it be the places we dwell, the objects we use, or the food we consume. Humans can only conceptualize, design, and produce for long-term requirements as opposed to animals, who only produce for urgent needs (Marx, 1992). As society progresses, there is the development of the means of production that led to the increase in human control over resources. As such the class of Bourgeoisie and Proletariats emerged. The Bourgeoisies have the means of production, while the proletariats are the Workers in the industries. The alienation happened as the result of separating or distancing the workers from the goods they produced in the industries. These

Workers do not have power over the goods they produced, nor do they decide the price of the goods. That means, there are non-producing owners and non-owning producers (Haralambos & Martin, 2000).

However, in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx outlines four types of alienation:

- Alienation from the Product of labor: this is a situation where workers in an industry are alienated from what they produced. When they go to work, they produce something which does not, nor will it in the future belong to them. These may be cars or computers that are been produced by companies. In no circumstances, are these things produced, and as the fruit of the labor of the working class belong to them. It is rather owned and controlled by the owners of the industries. Therefore, to Marx, the product the workers produced will remain ‘alien’ to them Marx, 1992).
- Alienation from the Labour Process: under capitalism, workers are compelled to do work to survive. Work, therefore, became a means to an end. Workers will be productive not because they wanted to be, but because they have to do it for survival. As Marx put it: ‘labor is external to the worker...who feels miserable and not happy, but does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind’ (Marx, 1992). Therefore, instead of finding joy in the human activity of productive labor, they turn out to be something else.
- Alienation from our Species-being: when a worker is working freely in their animal function, eating, drinking, and procreating, while losing his human sense, and will closely be nothing but an animal. People are working tirelessly like animals without a sense of being (Marx, 1992).
- Alienation from other People: in this alienation workers will be distanced from each other. They are attached to a different tasks in the industry. Some will be making applying paint, while others will be attaching tires or designing to make the car. The workers will be isolated from other people. They mainly interact with themselves in the

work spot (Marx, 1992).

IV Result & Implementation

Bourgeoisie and Proletariat Relationship:

As explained in the previous segment of the paper, the proletarians are members of the working classes who are employed by the bourgeoisie, who are capitalists who own the means of production. The bourgeoisie had virtually complete control over society as a result of their money, whereas the proletariat had little to no influence over political decisions. Marx predicted that as the population of proletarians grew, they would rise in revolt against the capitalists. The proletariat, according to Marx, has nothing to lose but its chain (Marx and Engels, 1848). However, in line with this explanation, the relationship between the two is an exploitative one. The masses, otherwise known as the proletariats work mainly in the industry for survival. While the Bourgeoisies, otherwise known as the rich, are the owners of the means of production. And that, whatever they do is for their material gain also. Therefore, the relationship between the bourgeoisies and the proletariats is that of the parasitic one.

V RELIGION AS THE OPIUM OF THE MASSES:

Marx's idea of 'religion as the opium of the masses was a reaction to how workers in industries were alienated. Ojo et al (2016) maintain that Karl Marx was moved by the great inequality, oppression, dehumanization, exploitation, enslavement, and intense suffering of the masses in the society of his day. He began investigating alienation as a result, and this eventually led him to study religion, particularly Christianity. Marx thought that the ruling class or the bourgeois were manipulating Christian notions of submission to authority, politeness, humility, and other related ideas to hold the masses in permanent servitude. Therefore, he thought that religion was a tool for tyranny over the populace and the populace's opiate. He denounced the idea that anyone who acts in a riot, such as rebellion, public conflict, and strife, is unfit for God's kingdom. This idea is latent in many religious doctrines. He compared upholding Christian principles to partaking in opium (Ojo et al, 2016).

However, Ojo et al (2016) added that Marx defined capitalism as an economic system founded on the private ownership of the means of production and one that is motivated by the pursuit of profit. This theory, also known as free enterprise, argues that only through investing labor can profit be generated. Profit is only realized when laborers in the masses are paid less than the value of their contributions. He claims that this is being exploited. The forces of supply and demand are encouraged to intervene to set prices rather than government interference in the economy, which capitalism despises. Therefore, according to Marx as cited religion is the cries of the downtrodden, the heart of a heartless world, and the sense of senseless circumstances. It serves as the populace's opium. In conclusion, Marx argued that the ruling class simply used religion as a ruse to oppress the masses.

VI CONCLUSION:

Karl Marx is a sociologist who was deeply interested in the study of the dynamic of the economy in human society. As influenced by the way his father switched from Jewish Christianity to Lutheranism, Marx was seriously damaged by the way his father changed his faith before he could get a job. Therefore, most of his reactions to the capitalist system of economy were violent against the system.

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