

## PRINCIPLES OF MARXIST THEORY

1. Marxism emphasizes the idea that social life is based upon "**conflicts of interest.**"
2. The most **fundamental** and important of these **conflicts** is that between the **Bourgeoisie** (those who **own and control the means of production** in society) and the **Proletariat** (those who simply **sell their labour power** in the market place of Capitalism).
3. Social Class: the concept of **social class** is **more than a descriptive category**; social class is used to explain **how** and **why societies change**.
4. **Class conflict** represents a process whereby change comes about through the **opposition of social classes** as they pursue what they see to be their (different and opposed) collective interests in society.
5. Marxism is a **political theory** who's main concern is twofold:
  - To expose the **political and economic contradictions** inherent in Capitalism (for example, the fact that while people co-operate to produce goods, a Capitalist class appropriates these goods for its private profit).
  - To point the way towards the establishment of a future **Communist** society.
6. Fundamentally, there are considered to be **two great classes in Capitalist society** (the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat). However, at any given moment a number of **class fractions** will exist (that is, subdivisions of each main class).
7. **Bourgeoisie** might be **subdivided** into:
  - The **Haute (High) Bourgeoisie** (owners of large companies),
  - The **Petit (Small) Bourgeoisie** (owners of small businesses) and The **Professions** (people who, while not owners of the means of production help to control the day-to-day running of industries).

8. Marxists tend to divide Capitalist society into two related "spheres of influence":
- a. The **economic base** (or **infrastructure**) and
  - b. The **political and ideological superstructure**.

Those whose **own and control the means of production** (the economic infrastructure) are **powerful** in that society (because they are able to use wealth to enhance and expand their power).

However, this **economically powerful class** has to translate this **power** into **political power** (control over the State, machinery of government and so forth)

**Ideological power** (control over how people think about the nature of the social world, capitalist society and so forth).

9. The concept of **alienation** is used to refer to the way in which Capitalist society **degrades** both the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

The **Proletariat** are **alienated** from society because although they are responsible for producing goods co-operatively (for the potential benefit of society as a whole), the fruits of their labour are appropriated by the Bourgeoisie (in the form of profit) for their private use.

The **Bourgeoisie** are **alienated** from their fellow human beings because of their **exploitation** and **oppression** of the rest of society. This condition of alienation is used to explain why such things as crime occurs in society - the social bonds that should tie people together are fatally weakened by the exploitative relationship between Capital and Labour.

**Capitalist society** - where technological development (machinery etc.) has allowed a bourgeois class to exploit factory forms of production for their private gain. The aristocracy (landowners) have either been marginalized or co-opted into the Bourgeoisie whilst the majority of people are wage-labourers (they own little or no capital). The main relations of production in this epoch are between employers and employees (those who own and use capital and those who exchange their labour power for a wage). An employer does not own his / her employee in this society and various political freedoms and equalities are able to develop.

**Communist society** - where the means of production are held "in common" for the benefit of everyone in society (the dictatorship of the Proletariat). In this society class conflict is finally resolved and this represents the "end of history" since no further form of society can ever develop...