

Karl Marx

By
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Quotes

"Workers of the World Unite! You have
nothing to lose but your chains"

(Communist Manifesto, 1848)

"Religion is the opium of the people"

(Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, 1843)

Outline

- Biography
- Intellectual influences
- Historical materialism
- Alienation and exploitation in capitalism
- Laws of capitalist development

Intellectual Influences

- German Philosophy: Hegel and Feuerbach
- English political economy: Smith, and Ricardo
- Political Theories of French utopian scientists: Proudhon

Historical Materialism

- Based on dialectical causation: Thesis (Proletariat), anti-thesis (Bourgeoisie) and synthesis (Classless communism)
- As against Feuerbach, Marx argues that human nature is socially determined and is alienated due to the initial material conditions that preceded existence .
- Generative mechanism of history is class conflict.

Alienation and Exploitation in Capitalism

- Alienation due to worker commoditization where the producer is separated from the product (first type of alienation).
- Exchange value = Amount of money a good exchanges for on the market = cost of production based on socially necessary labor time (labor power) + fixed costs or dead labor
- Surplus value = Exchange value of good - exchange value of human labor or wage (cost of subsistence) - fixed costs or dead labor
- Exploitation refers to the appropriation of surplus value by the capitalist

Laws of Capitalist Development

- Increasing alienation of proletariat and decreasing standards of living
- Increasing confrontation between proletariat and bourgeoisie
- Proletariat's collective awareness of their fate results in social movements requesting ameliorative action

Laws of Capitalist Development

- Resistance of bourgeoisie to comply with proletariat's requests (*crucial assumption*)
- Proletariat adopt revolutionary stance and revolt against the bourgeoisie
- This results in the dictatorship of the proletariat followed by communism or a classless society.

Questions?