

Karl "the history of all
hitherto existing
society



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Karl Marx, born on May 5, 1818 In Trier in Prussia Germany, was one of the world's reckoned sociologists, philosopher, political economist, historian, political theorist, communist and the pioneer of communism. He was a German but of Jewish origin because his father had converted to Christianity so that he could get an opportunity to practice law in the then racist German society. He studied law and did a thesis of philosophy although he found himself in a group of Hegelian thinkers that dealt with political and social issues drawing him to communism.

Marx was married to Jenny, a daughter of a Prussian baron, and had seven children but only three survived due to poverty and living conditions. Marx worked as a journalist for a liberal newspaper in which he would publish his articles on economics leading to controversies and the paper was closed making Marx opt to move to Paris. While in Paris, he wrote an editorial that was about French socialism, and Hegelism in Germany (Französische Jahrbucher). He also wrote several manuscripts, such as the " Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" (1844) which were published a century later. He also met his best friend Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) and even wrote a manuscript with him.

Due to their views they were expelled from Paris, they found their way to Brussels where he published the manuscript " The German Ideology" which was about the " nature of individuals depends on the material conditions determining their production." Marx believed in criticizing just about everything that was in existence and in 1848, he published his most popular and most controversial book ' the Communist Manifesto" and it was not long after its release that the German revolution started. Marx had summarized

the book in one sentence “ The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”. This book led to his expulsion from Germany, and he went back to Paris where he was also expelled, and back to Germany again where he was charged for incitement and that was the routine of his life until 1849, when he decided to go to London. Due to the many revolutions that characterized that decade Marx decided to concentrate on understanding capitalism and economics (Cohen 1978). By 1857 he had written over 800 pages of notes and short essays on capitalism, land, wage labor, the state, foreign trade and the world market but they were not published until 1941, under the title “ Grundrisse”. In 1859, He published “ The Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy”, his first major economic manuscript. Marx explained his labor theory of value, his understanding of surplus value and exploitation which he argued would ultimately lead to a falling rate of profit and the collapse of industrial capitalism.

Marx continued writing and in the last years of his life he fell sick and could no longer keep the pace but could only comment on Germany's and Russia politics and economics. He even predicted that Russia might move into communism directly without getting into capitalism for he was convinced the end of capitalism was uniting the worker with the means of production and Russia had communal ownership of land but unfortunately Russia ended up embracing capitalism just like other nations (Marx & Engels 2008). Marx in his writings was trying to explain why the society behaves the way it does by studying its economics politics and philosophy. He explained the cause of social conflict using economics and concluded that social conflict was as a

result of resources whose distribution is controlled by the economic system of a society. He also concluded that interaction and integration in a society is determined by resources since people can only interact with people of their social class.

Marx view of an ideal society is that which people own property communally; there are no people that are superior to others in terms of wealth, and that way there would be no conflict. Marx major contribution on social theories was the conflict theory which he developed. The theory argues that the society is divided according to material possessions hence creating classes in which superior classes exploit their subordinates. He argued the organization of work in society was a major determinant of its structure, its economics politics and social life. According to Marx there are two major classes of people in a society; the ruling class and the subjects. The ruling class owns the means of production while the subordinates have the labor.

The owners of capital who are the bourgeoisies buy labor from the workers, the proletariats, at very low prices that do not match the amount of work they do hence making the ruling class to gain huge profits that increase their wealth while the rest becomes poorer. This kind of exploitation leads to political oppression since the ruling class use their resources to influence politics and laws made so that they would stay in their favor. They are also able to get as many contracts as possible for which the subjects do the work. The intellectuals are paid so that they would write publications justifying the system hence making all ideologies and morals to support the class structure (Blackledge 2006) He argued that capitalism alienates the worker from the product he makes, since the product sometimes could be worthy than the

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worker, they feel used and view themselves as objects of oppression. They also view their fellow workers as objects of labor with no other destiny and all this will result to disappointment and anger. There will be therefore a revolution as the workers try to unite with the means of production and due to this tension, capitalism will collapse and give birth to a new society.

The society will be communistic, Marx says that “ the development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable” (Avineri 1968). He also believed that new technologies would be invented leading to less man labor hence more cost and less profits and as a result there will be an economic crisis leading to the fall of major sectors and the development of others. Marx also used capitalism to define and study history and he concluded that all social conflicts that have occurred have been due to resources and the forces of production. However, critiques have opposed this claiming that capitalism is the most effective and fair way of distributing resources.

Contrary, others argue that selfishness and the need to accumulate wealth is in the nature of man and that no economic system would change that Marx can be considered as the founder of modern sociology in collaboration with others social scientist like Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Marx died on March 1883, he was buried in London Highgate Cemetery, with only eleven people in attendance. He died stateless and his epitaph read “ workers of all lands unite”.

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