

## Lecture Notes 1 : Background

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According to Lenin, Marxism:

is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.

### German philosophy

Hegel's subject-predicate structure: God 'creates' Man

Feuerbach's inversion: Man 'creates' God

Very schematically: Marx rejects Feuerbach's ahistoricism, but retains his materialism. He also rejects Hegel's idealism, but retains his historicism.

### What is materialism?

Materialism as an *explanatory* thesis. The *explanandum*: social change through history.

Marx writes:

With the invention of a new instrument of warfare, firearms, the whole internal organization of the army necessarily changed; the relationships within which individuals can constitute an army, and act as an army, were transformed and the relations of different armies to one another also changed. (Marx 1850, 281)

### Two readings of the *explanans*

Narrow reading (NR): social relations are primarily explained with reference to the growth, or development, of productive forces.

NR presupposes a three-fold distinction between productive forces (PF), relations of production (RP), and superstructure (S). On this view:

PF → RP → S, where '→' signifies direction of explanation

Broad reading: social change is primarily explained with reference to the mode of production (M). M includes elements of PF and RP, such that:

M → S

### English political economy

Mandeville and Smith, order spun out of free trade

## Smith on value

Market price: '... regulated by the quantity which is actually brought to the market and the demand of those who may be called the effectual demanders.'

vs.

natural price: 'Natural price is, as it were, the central price, to which the prices of all commodities are continually gravitating.' (Smith 1776, I.VII 15, 75)

Significance of market competition follows if such competition induces convergence to natural price.

How is 'natural value' determined? Smith's beaver-deer story.

But this accounts only for 'an early and rude state of society which precedes both the accumulation of stock and the appropriation of land'. What determines natural price *beyond* that state?

Smith further claims that

the demand for men, like that for any other commodity, necessarily regulates the production of men; quickens it when it goes on too slowly, and stops it when it advances too fast.

Men are one commodity among others (cf. Ricardo's hats and men).

## Ricardo's theory

Ricardo seems to affirm a theory that makes natural price a direct function of labour time:

the quantity of labour bestowed on the production of commodities regulates their relative value... considerably modified by the employment of machinery and other fixed and durable capital. (Ricardo 1846, 20)

Corollary: wages are also determined by 'quantity of labour'. But what does 'considerably modified' mean?

Further corollary: if wages  $\uparrow$ , then prices of produced commodities will not increase. Instead, profit  $\downarrow$ . Ricardo discovered the class struggle in nascent form.

## Suggested Reading

Avineri, S. *Karl Marx: Social and Political Thought*, ch.1

Marx, K. *Wage-Labour and Capital*

## Further Reading

Cohen, G. A. 'Forces and Relations of Production', in *History Labour and Freedom*, Oxford 1988.

Miller, R. *Analyzing Marx*, ch. 5