

**Classical Sociology Theory**  
**Professor. R. Santhosh**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**Lecture No. 17**  
**Karl Marx: Intellectual Influences**

Welcome back to the session. We are starting with most substantive contributions of Karl Marx. We are beginning with discussion of his intellectual influences on Karl Marx when he began to think about a host of issues that was affecting in his time and society. So, hope you remember that in yesterday's class, we had a very brief overview of the person, his family life, his personal life and the kind of major features of his intellectual contribution.

Marx as we discussed yesterday, is a very important social thinker who was a political activist, philosopher, economist, and sociologist. Unlike any other social scientist or social theorist of his time or even after that, Marx was an as extra ordinary person and intellectual figure. So, that is why as we are going to see in the coming classes the contributions of Karl Marx as the kind of ideas that generated by Karl Marx are even now extremely relevant.

In this class we are going to understand the kind of intellectual influences on Karl Marx. What were the ideas, what were the theories that really shaped Marxian thinking? Or what was the kind of intellectual atmosphere which Marx really developed his theories? You know that no theorist is able to or no theorist simply comes up with his own ideas which are completely uninfluenced by others. Every thinker for that matter reflects over and critically engages with series of ideas present during his time and then improvise upon them, critically engages with them and then come up with his own arguments.

In the case of Karl Marx as well there has been a series of major intellectual traditions or major philosophical arguments that were raging at his time and Marx, very creatively responded to this debates and that was the reason why Marx was able to come up with his own original contribution. So, it is extremely important that we get some fair idea about the kind of intellectual background, intellectual atmosphere of Marxian time.

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- Engagement with vibrant debates in philosophy, history, politics and political economy in Berlin, France and England..
- He became interested in the emerging field of political economy and economics through the writings of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Frederic Engels.
- Philosophical engagements with George Hegel
- Debates with anarchists and Neo-Hegelians



Marx had very systematic and intense engagement with vibrant debates in philosophy, history, politics and political economy in Berlin, France and England. And as we have seen in the previous classes, the kind of the time that we are discussing, the eighteenth and nineteenth century really represents a very unique period in the history of Europe. It is a period that has seen quite a lot of social, economic and political discussions and debates and host of major changes, host of very extremely supping transformations in the European history.

Marx was very able to creatively engage with and reflect upon the kind of debates that took place in a series of disciplines including philosophy, history, politics and a host of other disciplines in in many of the European countries. So, he became interested in the emerging fields of political economy, the field that looks at the connection between politics and economy and in economics exclusively in every rather strict sense of the word.

He was influenced and engaged with the economic thinking of the likes of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Frederic Engels. Engels, as we discussed in the in the previous class, became his lifelong companions and intellectual benefactor, intellectual contributor. Frederick Engels played a very important role in the academic as well as personal life of a Karl Marx. Another one of the most important influence of on Karl Marx is the philosopher George W Hegel whom we are going to discuss. Marx was also heavily influenced by Neo-Hegelians and anarchists whom we are going to see down the line. So, these at least three major intellectual strands that influenced Marxian thinking during his time.

(Refer Slide Time: 4:41)

### His engagements with anarchists



- Anarchism was one of the dominant revolutionary ideas of his time that argued against the domination of state, capitalism, private property and so on and imagined a more free, independent life for human beings
- Marx's ideological tussles with Bakunin; role of agricultural peasants, nature of state etc
- Proudhon: 'The Philosophy of Poverty' and rebuttal from Marx: 'Poverty of Philosophy'



Let us look at his engagement with anarchists. Anarchism always rings a very negative sense as we usually tend to think that anarchism is completely lawlessness the anarchist are the people who are against any sorts of laws and argues that any person must be able to do whatever he or she wants to do. But anarchism as a philosophical tradition is much deeper than our common perceptions. It is a much more radical, and many times you can even call it as a romantic understanding about a completely emancipated state of being, a completely free a form of existence in the world.

During Marxian time, anarchism was extremely important and powerful as an ideology. So, anarchism was one of the dominant revolutionarily ideas of Marx's time that argued against the domination of state, capitalism, private property and so on. Anarchism imagined a more free and independent life for human beings. Most of the anarchist whom we are going to discuss whether it is Bakunin, or Proudhon and host of other people believed that human beings are kept in chains and host of institutions including modern nation state and capitalism and private property are really hindering the true spirit and freedom of human beings.

They vehemently argued that these manmade institutions needs to be abolished so that human beings can live in a much freer and independent world. They were very much against private property and they identified state as a completely oppressive mechanism. They did not see anything positive about the state and the economic system of capitalism rather they argued that these institutions are imposing unnecessary restrictions on the freer life of people as it do not enable them to live their life as normal or completely independent free human beings.


Marx had very serious discussions with Bakunin. we will discuss in the coming classes that that the industrial proletariat or the workers are the central category through which Marx envisions

revolutions. Workers occupied the most central role in Marxian scheme of things because they are the agents who will bring about revolutions. But Bakunin wanted to include agricultural peasants as the agents of revolution. Apart from this there was serious discussion and disagreements between Bakunin and Karl Marx about the nature of state. While Bakunin was vehemently against very idea Marx, Marxian understanding was much more nuanced.


Another very important anarchist and a young-Hegelian was Proudhon with whom Marx had a series of engagement and very bitter rivalry, bitter forms of engagement through polemics. For example Marx wrote a book titled 'Poverty of Philosophy' as a response to Proudhon's work titled 'Philosophy of Poverty'. Marx especially his younger period grew up as a person who very fiercely engaged with the arguments and theoretical debates that surrounded his Western Europe.

Therefore, the ideas of Proudhon especially on anarchism and Hegelianism played a very important role in shaping Marx's independent thinking.

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- Marx shares the anarchists' criticisms of the limitations of representative democracy, and the importance of decentralized, participatory democracy as an alternative to a centralized state.
- For Marx and the anarchists, the experience of participation in making social change is a central.
- Labour as identity-forming activity for workers. This is why they place so much emphasis is on labour unions. Liberation cannot be granted to workers; it must be earned by the proletariats themselves.



So, Marx shares anarchist criticism of the limitations of representative democracy and the importance of decentralized participatory democracy as an alternative to a centralized state. As I told you, the whole idea of representative democracy was one of the major themes of discussion because this anarchist were extremely critical of the nature of democracy that was emerging at that point of time. Because they argued that in the name of democracy, it was always the rule of a few and the vast majority of the people do not really get to represent themselves.

Marx had a series of engagements with them. For Marx and anarchists, the experience of participation in making social change is central. There were a series of disagreements and then

debates between Marx and anarchist. They also had a series of issues in which they found agreement. For example, both anarchist as well as Marx, believed that social change is something that is prerogative of human beings as human beings are not powerless entities who will simply flow along with the tide of social change but rather they are the active makers of the social change.

Both believed that by making social changes central, human beings have the ability to define their destiny. Human beings have the ability to shape their destiny. There was major agreement between anarchist and Marx in that sense. As both perceived human beings as active agents of social change. They also had very important consensus about the centrality of labor, labor as an identity and as an identity forming activity for workers. So, they placed so much of importance to the whole process of labor. Labor was never seen just as an activity for which you were remunerated to meet your basic needs.

But rather they identified labor as something more defining human character. And that is why they play so much of emphasize on labor unions. Liberation cannot be granted to workers, it must be earned by the proletariat themselves. Both Marx as well as anarchist believed that the workers have a central role to play as a collectivity. Workers as a group of people who occupy a very specific role in the society, they have an important role to play in defining the history of its time.

They argued that liberation cannot be granted to workers because it cannot be defined on the terms set by others rather they must be defined and it must be earned by the proletariat themselves. It is a very important revolutionary idea that has the potential to unsettle quite a lot of conventional and conservative understanding about society.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:34)

## Engagement with George Hegel



- In four main books, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), *The Science of Logic* (1816), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1817), and *The Philosophy of Right* (1821), Hegel developed one of the most original, complex, and obscure philosophical doctrines ever devised.
- Marx transformed Hegel's philosophy into an empirically based social science, decisively rejecting Hegel's idealism while retaining his reliance on dialectical analysis and applying it to the material world.



Another defining influence in Marxian life was the great philosopher George W Hegel. Hegel is one of the most very complex philosophers of modern period. Marx was extremely influenced by Hegel, especially during his early period. He identified himself as with a group called young Hegelians, a group of intellectuals who were influenced by Hegel's work. But later Marx became one of his most stringent critics and we will see that the kind of arguments, and revisions that Marx provided to Hegelian thought.

In his four major works such as the, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, *The Science of Logic*, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel developed one of the most original, complex and obscure philosophical doctrines ever devised. That is why Hegel is considered to be one of the most important philosophers of modern time. It was original at the same time it was quite obscure to understand. Marx transformed Hegel's philosophy into an empirically based social science, decisively rejecting Hegel's idealism while retaining his reliance on dialectical analysis and applying it to the material world.

This particular point really captures the central relation between Marx and Hegel. So, as I mentioned earlier, Marx was heavily influenced by Hegel. He was earlier attracted to his thought and later became a critic. At the same time he borrowed certain ideas of Hegel and then he transformed those ideas in order to come up with his own original thesis which is widely known as historical materialism or dialectical materialism. We need to be really specifically look at what are the specific points that Marx accepted and what are the specific arguments that Marx rejected.

Marx transformed Hegel's philosophy into an empirically based social science. Hegel was a philosopher who presented quite a lot of abstract philosophical arguments whereas Marx converted


many of those ideas into empirically based social science. Marx was a philosopher, but also as you might be aware, Marx was a social scientist who was able to transform his philosophical ideas into the theories of sociology, theories of economics and the kind of a specific narration of history. While Hegel was a philosopher, Marx was a philosopher as well as social scientist.

Marx's social science was heavily influenced by the philosophical contributions of Hegel. Marx decisively rejected Hegel's idealism. This is a point where we come across the kind of a fundamental conflict or disagreement between these two people. Marx was the materialist whereas Hegel was an idealist. We will see what do these terms mean in the coming classes. There is a fundamental difference. Hegel was an idealist who gave primacy to the realm of ideas and believed that social change takes place as a result of changes happening in the realm of ideas.

Whereas Marx believed that social change happens mainly because of the changes in the material condition. They are in the philosophical relations that constitutes a binary or a sort of diametrically opposite concepts. Marx retained Hegelian reliance on the dialectical analysis and applied it to the material world. The dialectics is another extremely important methodology or an important framework that Marx borrows from Hegel. We will discuss about it soon. In sum, Hegel was the proponent of dialectical idealism whereas Marx was the proponent of dialectical materialism.

Marx borrowed the idea of dialectics but rejected the idea of idealism. Marx combined his materialistic explanation of society with that of dialectics and presented a fascinating theoretical explanation about social change, about the evolution of human society. It is a meta-theory in that sense. It is it is overarching theory that according to Marx has the explanatory capacity to explain how human beings socially evolved and developed historically and shape the trajectory of human civilization in the future as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:47)

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- Marx as a young Hegelian fascinated by his idealist philosophy- ultimate conditions of human existence and development can be arrived at only through the examination of the abstract philosophic categories.
  - Categories such as reason, existence and history were used to understand human existence, especially the close link between the individual and the society
  - Marx became increasingly impatient with the idealist interpretation of the world



Marx as a young Hegelian was fascinated by Hegel's idealist philosophy. The ultimate conditions of human existence and development can be arrived only through an examination of abstract philosophical categories. This is the central idea of idealism. Marx, in his earlier period belonged to the young Hegelians, a group of young scholars and intellectuals in Germany who declared themselves as the disciples of Hegel as they were heavily influenced by Hegel's philosophy. The argument is that the ultimate conditions of human existence and development can be arrived only through an examination of the abstract philosophical categories.

Hegel argued that the change in human civilization from a very primitive to that of the modern capitalist societies in Europe can be understood only by looking at the changes that happened in the abstract categories that governed human existence. And categories such as reason, existence and history were used to understand human existence, especially the closer link between individual and the society. So, the Hegelian interpretation or Hegelian intellectual exercise revolved around understanding these categories such as existence, history and reason. How these ideas were developed. How these ideas were developed in different epochs in human history and how these ideas provided new worlds view or how these ideas provided new perspective to the to the world outside.

These ideas includes reason, existence and history. At the same time while Marx was initially influenced by these ideas, later he became increasingly impatient with the idealist interpretation of the world. He began to become restless because Hegel and many of young Hegelians gave primacy to the ideas, almost discounting or almost neglecting the kind of an empirical and material reality around them. Because for them empirical realities are only a product of this kind of idealist categories.



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- In Hegel's words, idealism "consists in nothing else than in recognizing that the finite has no veritable being." For Hegel, true reality is embodied in that which is discovered through reason.
- From this point of view, the objects perceived by the senses are not real. They are merely the phenomenal appearance of an ultimate reality of ideas. Only "logical objects," or concepts, constitute ultimate reality. As Hegel wrote, "It is only in thought that [an] object is truly in and for itself; in intuition or ordinary perception it is only an appearance."



In Hegel's words, idealism "consist in nothing else than in recognizing that the finite has no veritable being". For Hegel, true realities is embodied in that which is discovered through reason. So, it is almost kind of discounting or refuting the existence of empirical reality out here because this empirical reality is only a reflection of certain ideas that the finite has no veritable being. And he argued that the realities embodied in that which is discovered through reason. And this reason you need to keep in mind that this is something quite different from the kind of rationality and reason that we discuss while we were talking about this enlightenment.

In the empirical tradition you talk about rationality and reason as you identify certain things through your empirical approaches. You collect information, use your rationality, use your reason and come up with certain arguments. But here Hegel is talking about different understanding of reason. From this point of view the objects perceived by the sense are not real. It is a very interesting and controversial argument that there is no reality of existing objects out there. This reality is perceived through only your senses because our senses provide you an illusion of reality out there and the objects perceived by the senses are not real.

They are merely the phenomenal appearance of an ultimate reality of ideas. Only logical objects or concepts, constitute ultimate reality. As Hegel wrote, it is only in thought that an object is truly in and for itself. In intuition of ordinary perception it is only an appearance. As I told you, it is almost like negating the existence of empirical reality to say that objects exists only in our ideas or to say that ordinary perception is only an appearance.

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- Hegel asserted that if only concepts are real, then the ultimate concept is God, and Hegel's philosophy is essentially an attempt at proving the existence of God through the application of reason.

- Hegel argued that there was an inherent dialectical relationship between God (the infinite) and people (the finite). The essence of the dialectic is contradiction: Each concept implies its opposite, or in Hegel's terms, each concept implies its negation.



Hegel asserted that if only concepts are real, then the ultimate concept is God, and Hegel's philosophy is essentially an attempt at proving the existence of God through the application of reason. This is again a very interesting point, Hegel was a believer, so ultimately he developed this philosophical arguments about idealism and then reach the conclusion that the ultimate reality is God.

Hegel asserted that if only concepts are real then the ultimate concept is god and Hegel's philosophy is essentially an attempt of proving that existence of god through the application of reason. He argues how human beings develop this particular faculty of reason and finally in the most advanced societies, use the particular faculty of reason to discover the importance of god. And Hegel argued that there was an inherent dialectical relationship between god, the infinite and people, the finite. The essence of this dialectic is contradiction.

Each concepts implies its opposite, or in Hegel's terms each concept implies its negation. So, this is an extremely important methodological as well as philosophical tool that Hegel employs. This whole idea of dialectics that an arguments in itself contains its opposites and an arguments is able to develop further only when these two opposite ideas come together and that gives rise to a qualitatively different set of ideas. Again which has the kind of a contradictions inherent within that. The essence of dialectics is contradiction, each concept implies its opposite and or in Hegel terms each concept implies its negation.

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- Marx completely rejected Hegel's assertion that finite or empirical phenomena are not ultimately real. All his other criticisms follow from this basic point. Marx believed that when empirical phenomena are understood only as thoughts, people's more significant practical problems are ignored.
- Primacy of ideas over matter: Hegel's argument about the centrality of ideas in shaping social change was unacceptable to Marx who argued that ideas emerge from concrete material conditions and has only secondary stature. Debate on 'reason' and 'spirit'.
- While Hegel believed that freedom from oppression exists when individual change their consciousness, Marx argued that they arise from class differences and exploitation. Hegel's arguments about the slave and the master and change of consciousness.



Marx completely rejected Hegel's assertion that finite or empirical phenomena are not ultimately real. We know that Marx, while started as a Hegelian, became a materialist who argued that the material conditions are the central in understanding in human society and his all other criticism follow from this basic point. That is that finite or empirical phenomena are the real. And that is the kind of a diametrically opposite position to that of Hegel. Marx believed that when empirical phenomena are understood as thoughts, people's more significant practical problems are ignored.

If you go by a Hegelian understanding, the real problems of people like poverty or exploitation or discrimination or injustice. So, these actual problems will appear insignificant. Because they can even be considered as unreal. Because for Hegel, these kind of empirical existence do not have any basis. The primacy of ideas over matter, as we discussed, is an important matter of contestation. Hegel's arguments about the centrality of ideas and shaping social change was unacceptable to Marx. Marx argued that ideas emerges from the concrete material conditions and has only secondary stature. It is a very significant and interesting debate about this whole idea of reason and spirit.

Hegel argued that the philosophers engage in critical reasoning about ideas and they develop new ideas and that are central in producing society on the basis of its own shape. So, here when Hegel gives primacy to ideas as the propelling force behind social change. Marx took a completely diametrically opposite argument. He argued that the ideas are the products of social and material conditions. So, here you will see a kind of completely contradictory or polar opposite positions adopted by both Marx as well as Hegel. The debate is about primacy over matter or ideas.

Hegel's argument about centrality of ideas in shaping social change was unacceptable and it was

criticized and Marx argued that ideas emerged from concrete material conditions. It is a very fascinating argument which we will come to appreciate in the coming. While Hegel believed that freedom from oppression exists when individual change their consciousness, Marx argued that they arise from class differences and exploitation. And this is again a set of very fascinating discussions and debates about it.

For example, Hegel believed that the freedom from exploitation, exist only when individual changes change their consciousness. He argued that the whole idea that human beings are free or not is a purely a function of your thinking. Is only purely a function of your consciousness, it has nothing much to do with the kind of true empirical realities which you are embedded in. So, you decide your consciousness or your consciousness plays a very important role in defining whether you are free or not.

On the other hand Marx absolutely disagreed with these arguments. Marx argued that whether somebody is free or not, or whether somebody is kept in subjugated position or not is an empirical reality. It has nothing to do with his consciousness of being free or not. Your status as a slave or your status as a serf does not change, if you change your thinking. You must be very familiar with quite lot of spiritual arguments that that you are able to change your life by changing the kind of thinking that you have.

Lot of these spiritual Gurus would urge you to make fundamental changes in your thinking with the promise that, it will bring about positive changes in your life. Whereas Marx had a completely different argument. Marx argued that until and unless you are empirical situation changes, your thinking cannot have an impact that will alter your material existence. Therefore, Hegel's argument about the slave and master, is extremely important and vey philosophical. It is a deep argument about the identity formation between the slave and the master.

Hegel discusses how a kind of reciprocal understanding plays a very important role in providing identity to both the salve as well as the master. I am not going into the details of this discussion about change of the consciousness.

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• "In a simple example: If people are alienated such that they have no control over their lives or the material things produced by their labor, they cannot end their alienation by changing their perception of reality (or by praying for that matter). Rather, people must change the social structure in which they live; that is, they must make a revolution in this world rather than wait for the next world."

• Second, according to Marx, Hegel's emphasis on the ultimate reality of thought led him to misperceive some of the essential characteristics of human beings. For example, Marx contended that although Hegel correctly "grasps labor as the essence of man," "the only labor which [he] knows and recognizes is abstractly mental labor." Yet people have physical needs, Marx noted, such as those for food, clothing, and shelter which can be satisfied only by productive activity in the finite world. Hence, for Marx, the most significant labor is productive activity rather than mental activity.



This is the quote from Marx, "In a simple example if people are alienated such that they have no control over their lives or the material things produced by their labor, they cannot end their alienation by changing their perception of reality or by praying for that matter. Rather, people must change the social structure in which they live, that is they must make a revolution in this world rather than wait for the next world". This particular quotation has also very interesting implications to Marxian discussion on religion which we will take up in one of the coming sessions.

This is a very fascinating argument. He argues that if people are alienated such that they have no control over their lives or the material things produced by the labors, they cannot change the reality. If you think of a proletariat or factory worker in Charlie Chaplin's 'The Modern Times', he cannot change his reality of being an alienated person, simply by changing his thinking. Changing ones thinking as being completely free does not make any change in one's lived reality.

A worker's lived reality is heavily influenced by the kind of a material condition in which he is implicated. He is a proletariat, who sells his body or labor and who is subjected to extremely inhuman conditions in the workplace. That pathetic and deplorable situation will not change just because of the changing his perceptions of reality or by praying for that matter.


Rather people must change the social structure within which they lived and they must make a revolution in this world rather than wait for the next world. It is a very powerful argument because there is no heaven or hell waiting for you. The hell as well as heaven is in this world and you need to change this particular world rather than wait for the next world. Second, according to Marx, Hegel's emphasize on the ultimate reality lead him to misperceive some of the essential characteristic of human beings.

For example, Marx contended that although Hegel correctly grasps labor as the essence of man, the only labor which he knows and recognize is abstract mental labor. Yet people have physical needs. Marx noted such as those for food, clothing and shelter which can be satisfied only by productive activity in the finite world. Hence, for Marx the most significant labor is productive activity rather than mental activity. This is yet another very central and extremely important and central theme. While Hegel understood that labor is important, the primary focus of Hegel was on mental activity. On how human beings think, how human beings work on the realms of ideas, how human beings collectively come up with certain new ideas and new philosophical insights and how that shapes the world.


Whereas, for Marx that was only secondary because human beings, like any other animals have got their physical needs and these physical needs need to be met first. The centrality of Marxian thought revolves around the ability of human beings to engage in productive activity. We will have a detailed discussion about this topic in the coming classes. So, Marx foregrounds that human beings as a species, how they are differently positioned in comparison with other animals to engage in productive activities and that not only provides with the physical needs of food, shelter other things but also provide them with unique sense of being human.

Your sense of being human or your sense of being uniquely different from other animals is derived from your ability to engage in productive activity. This labor as productive activity was central to Karl Marx in comparison to Hegel who gave primacy to the mental labor or to the activity of thinking.

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- Marx disagreed with Hegel on his idea of the state. For Hegel, the state was developed out of the forces of 'spirit' in history and 'the actualization of the ethical'. Marx criticized this argument that the state represents a theological embodiment of the spirit of human beings. Marx did not agree with these formulations.
- Marx rejected the religious motif that pervades Hegel's work. As noted earlier, Hegel denied reality to the finite world to prove the existence of God, albeit a Christian God. Nevertheless, Marx believed through such arguments, people are prevented from recognizing that they are exploited and that they have an interest in changing the status quo in this world. For Marx, the next world is a religious fantasy not worth worrying about.



Marx disagreed with Hegel on his idea of state. It is another point of discussion or debate. For Hegel, the state was developed out of the forces of spirit in history and actualization of ethical. Marx criticize this argument that the state represents a theological embodiment of the spirit of human beings. Marx did not agree with these formulations. For Hegel, the state as a collective entity that is able to rule over the rest of the people is a manifestation of their ethical predispositions. That human beings have reached the highest pedestrian or they have traveled so much from the previous state of affairs so that they are in a position to lead a kind of a collective life by creating this entity called as state.

Many times Hegel presents state as a kind of a theological embodiment of the spirit of human beings. As the highest form of human reasons, human reasons has reached that highest position. And Marx completely rejects all this arguments. Marx has a completely different take on state that we will discuss later. So, Marx rejected the religious motive that perverts Hegel's work, as I told you Marx was an atheist whereas Hegel was a believer.


As noted earlier, Hegel denied actuality to the finite world to prove the existence of god, albeit Christian God. This was true of not only Hegel, but every philosopher of that particular time. If they had to conceive of a god, it has to be a Christian God. Christianity really influenced their way of thinking in its sensibility, its imagery, its theological ideas and all these aspects are fundamentally shaped the thinking of European philosophers during this particular time.

Nevertheless, Marx believed that through such arguments, people are prevented from recognizing that they are exploited and they have no interest in changing the status quo in this world. For Marx, the next world is the religious fantasy and it is not worth worrying about. As we mentioned briefly,

and that we are going to discuss more elaborately in one of the coming classes, that Marx did not believe in world hereafter. He did not believe in a life hereafter, or in god, or in any force or spirit that completely defines or determines the state of affairs.


He believed that the only real is the world in which we live in. Marx very passionately believed that human beings have the ability to change, unlike that of Hegel who believed that there is a supernatural power or a Christian God who has decided everything for human beings.

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Marx's Acceptance of Hegel's Dialectical Method

- Despite his complete rejection of idealism, Marx saw a significant tool in Hegel's use of the dialectic. In Hegel's hands, however, the entire analysis is couched in terms of a mystical theology. Thus, as Marx noted in *Capital*, Hegel's dialectic "is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell."
- He used the dialectical method in a materialist explanation




On the other hand, Marx accepts Hegel's dialectical method as we discussed. So while Marx was critical of this idealist orientation of Hegelian argument, he completely accepted the dialectical method. Despite his complete rejection of idealism, Marx saw a significant tool in Hegel's use of the dialectics. In Hegel's hand however, the entire analysis is couched in terms of a mystical theology. Thus, as Marx noted in *Capital*, Hegel's dialectics is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you want to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.

Marx uses this dialectical method which was already developed by Hegel but couched in idealist language and then argues that if the rational kernel of human society has to be retrieved, it must be retrieved from its mystical shell. The entire philosophy of Hegel appears as if or it is in a mythical shell and if you need to retrieve its rational kernel you need to move beyond its mysticism. You need to move out of the idealism of Hegelian thinking. Marx used this dialectical methods in a materialist explanation that we will discuss in detail later. We will look at how he used this logic of dialectics, that is opposite forces coming together to create a qualitatively new one which again has inherent contradictions as a kind of a continuous process.



Marx used this dialectical method in a materialistic explanation is known as his argument about historical materialism or dialectical materialism which we will discuss in the coming class.

(Refer Slide Time: 38:59)



Ludwig Feuerbach

In his book *The Essence of Christianity* (1842) Feuerbach criticizes idealist philosophies such as Hegel's, that equate the progress of humankind with the advance of spirit or abstract reason.

Feuerbach argues that the starting point for the study of humanity must be real people living in the material world. People are natural beings; the real does not emanate from the divine, but from nature. In fact, people project their real powers onto the idea of a God, creating a fantasy religious world of harmony and beauty, while the real world is one of pain and misery.



Marx also had a very interesting engagement with other young Hegelians, one of them being with this Ludwig Feuerbach. In his book *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach criticizes idealist philosophies such as Hegel's that equate the progress of humankind with the advance of spirit or abstract reason. So, there are a lot of agreements between Marx and Feuerbach because both of them were critical of the excessive idealist orientation in Hegelian thought.

Feuerbach argues that the starting point for the study of human beings must be real people living in the material world. An idea that is very similar to that of Marx. Human beings and the ability to reason does not emanate from the divine, but from the nature. In fact, people project their real powers into the idea of a god, creating a fantasy religious world of harmony and beauty, while the real world is one of the pain and misery.

Feuerbach did not agree with the Hegelian understanding of god rather he argued that human beings are projecting their positive qualities onto an entity called as god. They think that they are creating fantasy religious world of harmony and beauty while real world is one of pain and misery. So, Feuerbach argued that the religion is in a way, is an escape route as human beings are projecting all their good qualities or unachievable desirable qualities into that into an imagining into an imaginary entity and call it as a god. But they live in a real world of misery and difficulties.

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- Marx adopts much of Feuerbach's materialism but contends that Feuerbach does not sufficiently comprehend that material circumstances can be altered through conscious social change.
- Feuerbach's approach is ahistorical. For, he posits an abstract human nature that exists outside of society and does not understand that people change as society changes. People can actively change the world, and it is this interaction between humankind and the material world developing through history that forms the basis of Marxism.
- Their debate on religion



Marx adopts much of Feuerbach's materialism but contends that Feuerbach does not sufficiently comprehend that material circumstances can be altered through conscious social change. So, Marx is extremely appreciative of Feuerbach's argument about the primacy of material but he argues that he does not really comprehend the innate logic of this material condition. And Feuerbach approach is ahistorical. Feuerbach posits an abstract human nature that exists outside of society and does not understand that people change as society changes.

For Marx, Feuerbach presents that the human beings are having a given set of mental preoccupations or orientation. He is not sensitive to historical transformation. He is not able to really understand how different epochs in history is able to create different ideas in of human beings. On the other hand, Marx believed that people can actively change the world and it is this interaction between humankind and the material world developing through the history that forms the basis of Marxism.

Therefore, Marx argued that human beings have the ability to change the world. Every historical epoch or historical time period have created its own specific social structure and human beings are actively engaged with that. They were the one who changed it to the next level and that agency of human beings is missing in the arguments of Feuerbach, according to Marx. We will discuss about their debate on religion later. I just brought it to mention that one of the contentious areas between these two scholars is the field of religion. So, we will continue with the with Marx's ideas on historical materialism in the coming class. Thank you.