

Marxism 101

DM & HM

RRC Poli-Ed

Roadmap

We'll be discussing the following this afternoon:

1. Book Club Logistics
2. Today's Topic
3. Discussion Questions

As always, let's speak to each other in a kind, understanding way!



Book Club Logistics

What's this Book Club About?

This is a Marxism 101 course! We're going to survey the following topics over six sessions:

1. Dialectical and Historical Materialism
2. Political-Economy of Capitalist Crisis
3. The State, Reform, and Revolution
4. The Battle for Ideological Hegemony
5. Marxism and Total Liberation
6. What Must Be Done?

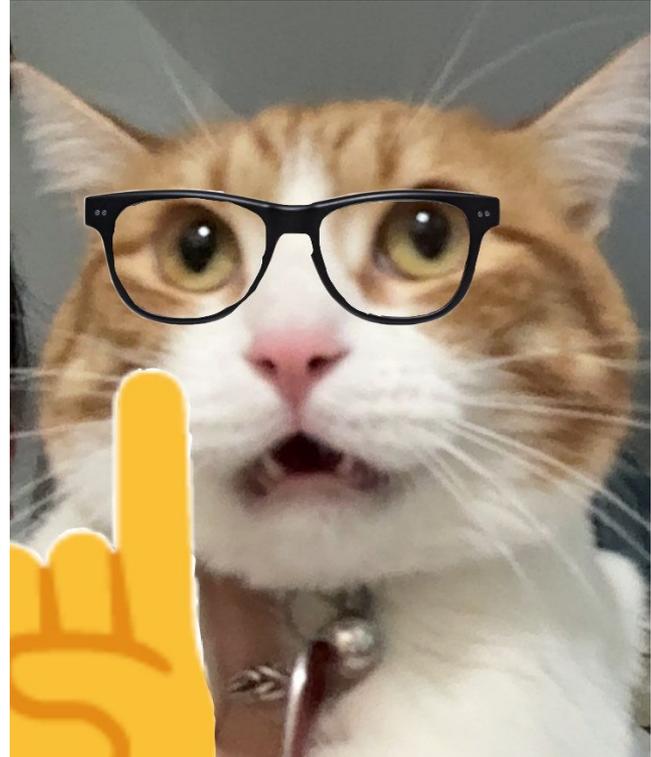


But what about Nerd Book Club?!

We'll have that too! It'll be hosted at the same time in the same general area of this book club

We're going to vote for which topic we'd like to first discuss at the end of this session!

Unfortunately I'll be unavailable for Nerd Book Club this semester, but another wonderful co-lead will help us out!



JULY

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DECEMBER

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Today's Text

Background Context

Written by Jose Maria Sison

- Founder of modern CPP
- Written during 1980's imprisonment
- Book had two goals:
 - Ensure broad understanding of Marxist fundamentals
 - Address "left" and "right" deviations and their consequences

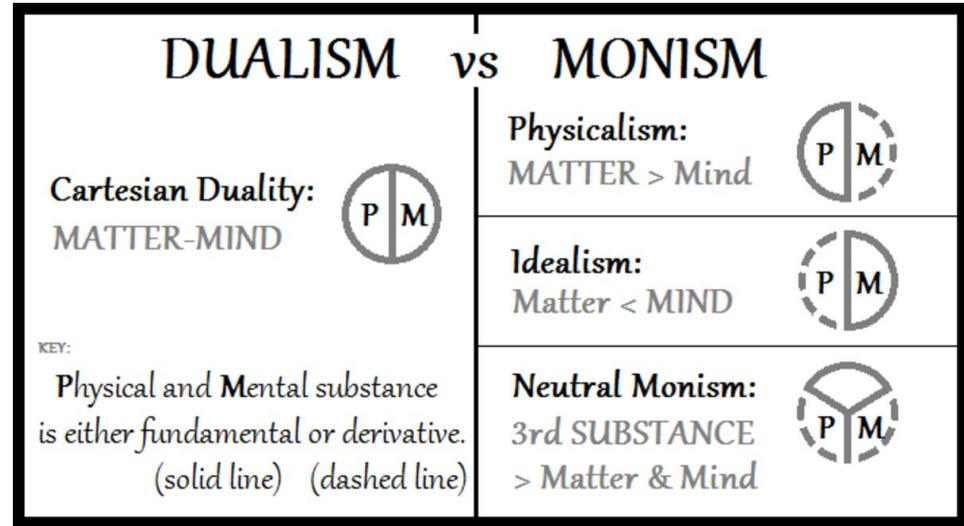


Dialectical Materialism

A. Materialism

Dialectical Materialism (DM):

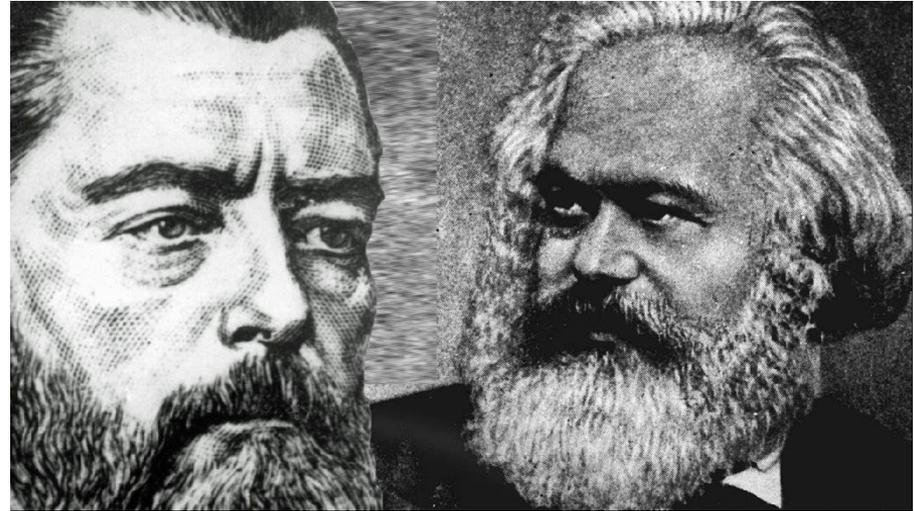
- Asserts all reality is material (or broadly physical)
- Consciousness arises from matter
- Stands in contrast to Idealist philosophy



B. Materialist Dialectics

Stands in contrast to “Mechanical Materialism”

- Consciousness still has a creative ability to change the world, not just ruled by mechanisms
- All of this emerges from matter itself, nothing “spooky” 🙈
- Happens because matter is moving “dialectically...”

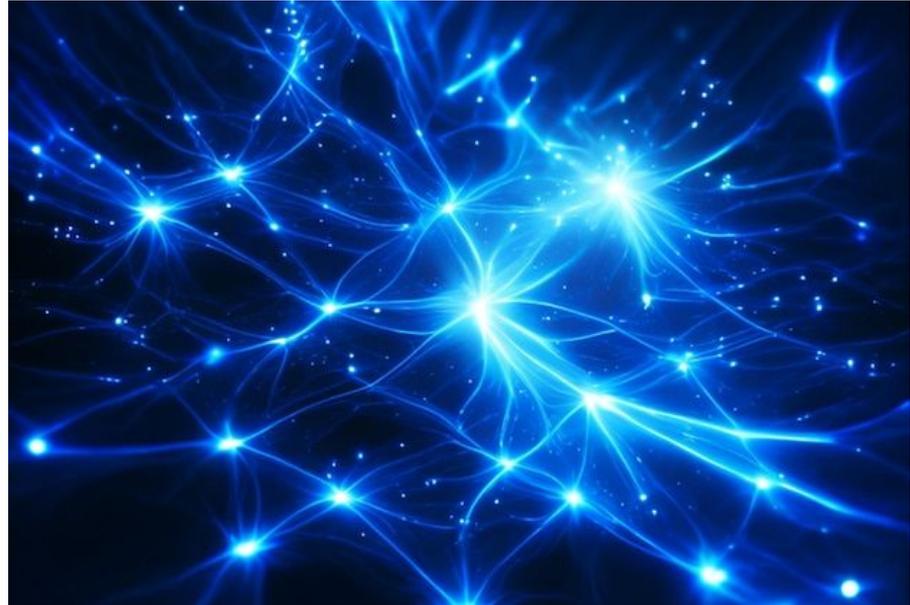


B. Materialist Dialectics

The “dialectic”-ness refers to matter’s constant change and interaction with itself, sometimes in “contradictory” ways

Matter obeys three laws in this view

1. The Law of the Negation of the Negation
2. The Law of the Interpenetration or Unity of Opposites
3. The Law of Quantitative to Qualitative Change

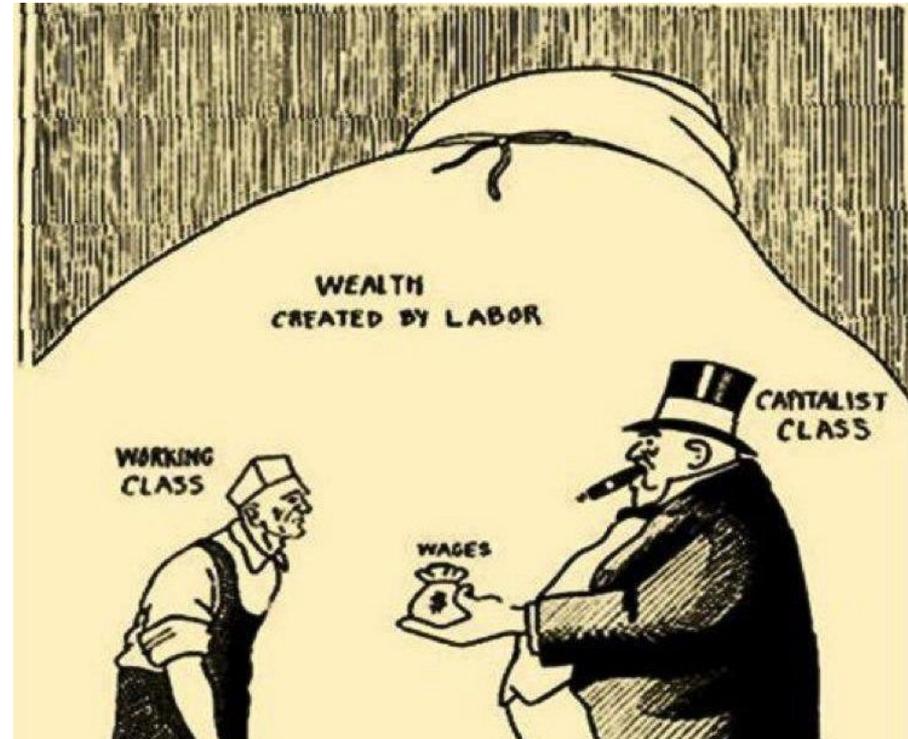


C. Theory of Knowledge

We can start viewing larger systems in this way, including social systems

The main one Marxists analyze is class society, and the dynamics of the struggle between classes for their interests

Societal change is driven by dynamics like class struggle, dialectically moving towards new forms of society



C. Theory of Knowledge

Sison notes that class society emerges in “waves” and believes we can understand them through “scientific experimentation”

Two kinds of knowledge are important

1. Perceptual/Empirical
2. Cognitive/Rational



Historical Materialism

A. The Material Base of Society

Historical Materialism (HM)

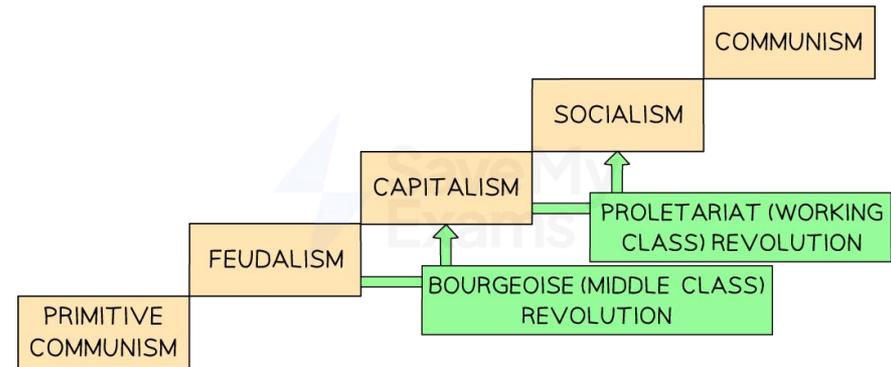
- The application of DM to societal development
- Examines how material conditions and social relations shape historical change
- Starts by studying societies material base, include Mode of Production (MoP) or economic system



A. The Material Base of Society

Society's MoP are composed of two parts:

1. Forces of production
 - a. Tools
 - b. Natural Resources
2. Relations of Production
 - a. Division of Labor
 - b. Distribution of Labor
 - c. Ownership of MoP

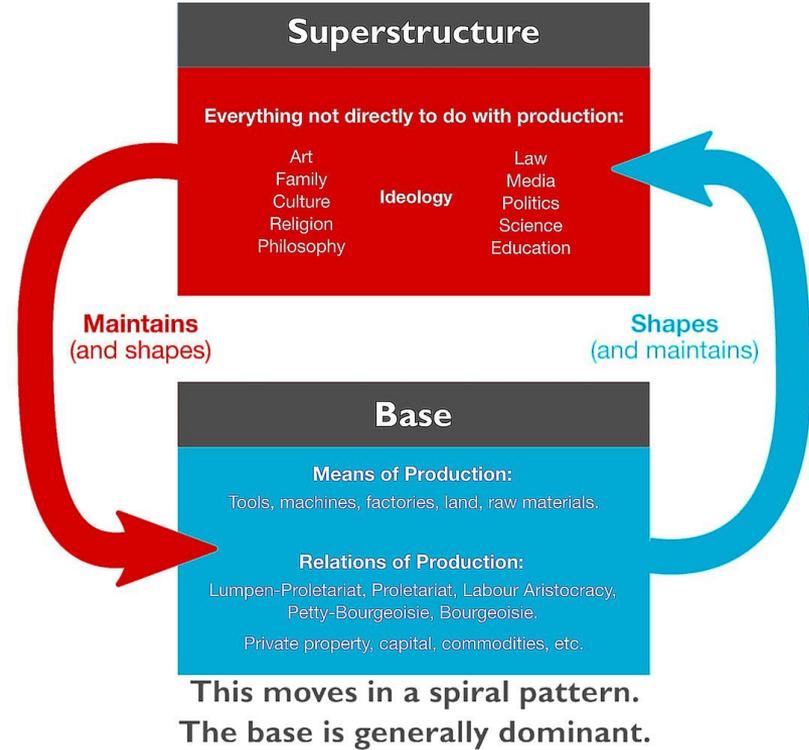


Typically, forces of production constraints societal changes

B. The Superstructure of Society

Superstructure

- Consists of the ideas, institutions, and fields of activities that reflect the material base
- Typically constrained by the material base, but can change the base in some cases



B. The Superstructure of Society

The State

- Incredibly important Superstructural institution
- Seen as a tool of class society, organizing for the ruling class

Sison analyzes the State historically, and notes that Socialist states seem different in that they try to undermine the conditions for a State's existence



C. Social Transformation: Revolution

As mentioned, societies are also subject to dialectical change, hence the possibility of radical transformations

In times of political crisis, two forces typically clash

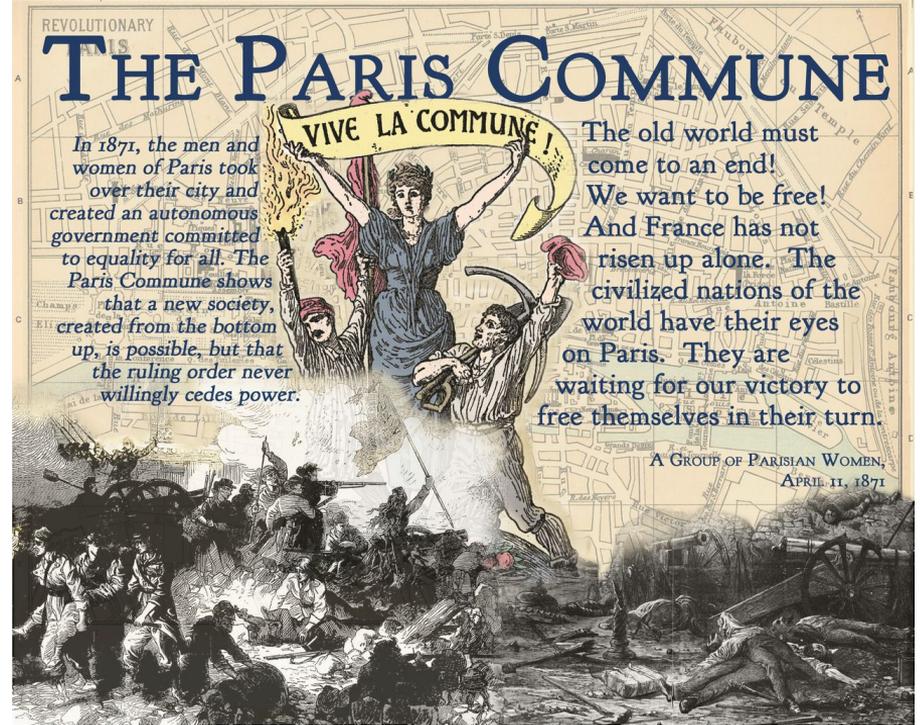
- The Ruling Class - Represses the exploited and/or offers reforms
- The Exploited Class(es) - Fight for a new order via revolution



C. Social Transformation: Revolution

The Proletariat shares the same historic goal, but its trajectory is different

- Potential for mass social revolution that eliminates classes overall
 - First steps achieved through changing relations of production and superstructure
- It's "State" is of a different type, undermining the existence of States in the long run



Content Questions?

Discussion

Question List

1. What are your thoughts on DM and HM? Do these theories make sense to you?
2. What (if anything) do they contribute to our organizing?
3. What questions would you like to explore using these frameworks?
4. How might these frameworks make sense of our historical situation today?
5. What errors in theorizing with/without DM and HM should we be careful of?
6. How might DM and HM impact other aspects of Marxism? Or non-Marxist thought?

Nerd Book Club
Voting!

Thanks for coming!

Preview for Session 2

Readings:

- [Basic Principles of Marxism-Leninism: A Primer](#) - Sison - Chapter 3
- [Economics for Beginners](#) - John Keracher

Discussion Topics:

- Why is Political Economy so important for Marxism generally?
- Where do you think these theories are strong and could improve?
- What do you specifically think is useful for practice.

Additional Resources:

- [Marx's Work on Political Economy](#)
- [Fundamentals of Political Economy](#) - Shanghai People's Press



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