



Marx's theory, which he called "*Historical Materialism*" or the "*materialist conception of history*" is based on Hegel's *claim* that history occurs through a dialectic, or *clash*, of opposing forces. *Hegel* was a philosophical idealist who believed that we live in a world where ideas and the "*absolute Spirit*" are the only forces enabling history to happen and man to come to action; for Hegel history is an ideal gradually becoming true reality: it is the *reification of an absolute consciousness*. Marx accepted this notion of the dialectic, but rejected Hegel's idealism because he did not accept that the world could be understood just in terms of the power of ideas: world is far better understandable in terms of interests, convenience for upper classes and elites, economic power detained by few against the many. In other words: materialism, systems of production and economic organization of a society make this society and its classes think and act in a certain way and not in another: ideas are produced by economical facts and *arise* on the base of economical interests. History is made by economics, not by ideas. Ideas are the logic outcome of certain economic powers and balances: we could say: "tell me how do you work and I gonna tell you how do you see the world and what do you think about it". History is founded on materialism, not idealism.

So Marx placed *Hegel literally "upside down"*: not simple ideas and the obscure concept of whatever "absolute Spirit" would be the key structure of social progress and development but the *sheer* material interest of a *bunch* of "capitalists" who simply *end up* exploiting the rest of population and treat this as slave in an industrial world of profit speculations and financial investments into more industry, more large scale production and industrial slavery, more goods to be purchased, more money to be earned for being able to purchase, more expansion.

This has as a consequence that into a certain society with certain means of production and a given economic organization an *ideology* is produced. Ideology represents the theoretical justification that can *disguise* the real material conditions of the lower working classes, hiding its real life conditions: these are people who are not the owners of the means of production and have to exchange their work for money. Ideology is a product of the upper classes, that is of an elite of *wealthy entrepreneurs* who own the means of production and exchange money for work: so they spread out their idea of the society representing the world they want to preserve for their advantage at the cost of the lower working classes. This representation was called by Marx the "*false consciousness*": it successfully prevents people from making sense of the real economic interests and balances; it let them live into the illusion of *self-determination* where they are instead living like trivial producing and consuming machines. We still live today in such a world: a world were ideology (or superimposed "common sense") and false consciousness are strategic for our *thermo-industrial society* of the *global market*.

Marx left us a huge *legacy* with his materialistic conception of history: *from then on* it was in no longer possible for historicists, social scientists and analysts to avoid the *compelling* perspective of an historical materialism. When a thinker observes an historical society as an object he cannot *restrain* himself from establishing 1) what are the means of production and the economical organization, 2) what are people of different social classes thinking of themselves and of that society and 3) how this thinking, this "*Weltanschauung*" turns out to be strictly related to the existing economical organization of that society.

As a matter of fact, as *Vilfredo Pareto*, an Italian economist of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in his "*Trattato di Sociologia generale*" (1916) stated, we tend to adopt a certain "materialistic" style as part of our personal cognition in our everyday life world: in fact we always *seek* a background motivation, a practical proof of what others are saying and doing. We do not think at all, that people are acting in full accordance with their statements and accounts. We are well aware, that they just make their own interests *accountable*, in order to justify with principles and general ideals ("*Derivations*") actions that are instead deeply rooted into their personal interests and conveniences ("*Residues*"). We secretly observe and carefully scan for their confirmation under the surface of any social interaction, of any political communication, of any personal relationship, of any professional performance. We are like this and Marx discovered that society is simply like we are.

\***Karl Marx (1818-1883)** Born in Trier, Germany. German philosopher, historian, political economist, sociologist. One of the most significant thinkers of Western philosophy. He introduced for the first time the conception of history as something strongly influenced by economics and by the kind of production means used by a society. Author of "*The Capital*" and of the "*Manifesto of the communist party*" he was the key contributor and the ideologist of the modern communist party all throughout Europe. His political ideas were in part wrongly interpreted by many dictatorships as a ideological justification for dominating large numbers of people and for the false dream of an international communism able to free people of any country. His contribution to social sciences and economics is simply enormous and contains the principles for the social-historical sciences worldwide.