

Marx and History

1. The basis of human society is how humans work on nature to produce the means of subsistence.
2. There is a division of labour into social classes (relations of production) based on property ownership where some people live from the labour of others.
3. The system of class division is dependent on the mode of production.
4. Society moves from stage to stage when the dominant class is displaced by a new emerging class.

Marx's clearest formulation of his "Materialist Conception of History" was in the 1859 Preface to his book *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

More features of Marx's view of history

1. Social progress is driven by progress in the material, productive forces a society has at its disposal (technology, labor, capital goods, etc.)
2. **Humans are inevitably involved in production relations (roughly speaking, economic relationships or institutions), which constitute our most decisive social relations.**
3. Production relations progress, with a degree of inevitability, following and corresponding to the development of the productive forces.
4. Relations of production help determine the degree and types of the development of the forces of production. For example, capitalism tends to increase the rate at which the forces develop and stresses the accumulation of capital.
5. Both productive forces and production relations progress independently of mankind's strategic intentions or will.
6. **The superstructure -- the cultural and institutional features of a society, its ideological materials -- is ultimately an expression of the mode of production (which combines both the forces and relations of production) on which the society is founded.**
7. **Every type of state is a powerful institution of the ruling class; the state is an instrument which one class uses to secure its rule and enforce its preferred production relations (and its exploitation) onto society.**

8. **State power is usually only transferred from one class to another by social and political upheaval.**

9. **When a given style of production relations no longer supports further progress in the productive forces, either further progress is strangled, or 'revolution' must occur.**

10. **The actual historical process is not predetermined but depends on the class struggle, especially the organization and consciousness of the working class.**