

# The Historical Validity of Marx's Theory of Historical Materialism

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## Abstract

The current study aims to shed light on the historical validity of Marx's materialist theory which is considered the economic ties as the basis of the social ties. The study also showed that Marx thought that it was in three directions: German Philosophy, British Classical Economics, and French Socialism. These components help in producing Marx's historical materialism that succeeds in defining the economic doctrine and the social system of each historical stage of human life. They also rejected the idea of any economic and social doctrine that could be able to accommodate several different historical roles. Marx explained that the origin of historical conflicts is the disparity between the situation of the forces of production and the patterns of relations of production. He also claimed that the class struggles in societies is only a social expression of the imbalance between production forces on the one hand, and production relations on the other. His theory also stressed that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. The current study also explained the forms of social consciousness such as political, religious and moral.

**Keywords:** Historical materialism, dialectical materialism, Karl Marx, Marx's theory.

## Introduction

When we look at history, we find it as a mass of contradictions, a mass of lost events throughout revolutions, wars, and periods of progress and deterioration, and a mass of conflicts between classes and nations in the chaos of social development. In such a chaos, how can we analyze and explain such events especially when there is no logical base for such events?

From the very beginning, human beings sought to discover the laws governing their existence; different theories, ranging from the guidance of metaphysics to the leadership of "great people", came to present a certain explanation in some way or another. Others have assumed that since people are behaving independently of each other, the theories of the human development are absolutely worthless!

Such theories came to the capitalist class and its workers at the universities, schools and places of education to teach history in a totally biased academic method without linking it with our daily events that they continue to spread the myth of the existence of classes and private property in an attempt to justify the eternal nature of the capitalist exploitation and its underlying economic chaos, where volumes and volumes were written by leading academics and university professors to refute the Marxist writings and above all its materialistic conception of history.

Marxists pay a great attention and importance to the study of history not as an end in itself but to study the great lessons it contains. Without such understanding of the events, we cannot predict the future perspectives; we study and learn from history in this particular sense. Through using the materialistic dialectical approach, we can expose the complex processes of the historical development.

Through using this approach, Marx could have derived the path to a broad and comprehensive study of the process of the emergence, development and collapse of socio-economic systems; people are the makers of their histories, but what determines their motivations, especially the motivations of the human masses? What is the reason for the conflicts of ideas and opposing ambitions? What is the sum of these conflicts in all the human societies? What are the objective conditions for producing the material life on which the basis of each historical activity of people? What is the law on the development of these conditions? Marx has lent his attention to such issues and paved the road for a scientific study of history as one movement of development moving towards certain laws, despite their wondrous diversity and contradictions.

## Karl Marx 1818-1883

Karl Marx was born in the city of Trier, Germany, from a Jewish family, which turned into a Protestant (Russell, 1983, p. 227). He studied philosophy and law at the University of Bonn and the University of Berlin in 1836, and he was strongly affected by Hegel's views (1770 - 1831) that he joined the leftist group of Hegel (Froukh, 1987, p. 55). In 1841, he submitted a doctoral thesis entitled with "the Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature" (Subhi, 1990, p. 218). His democratic views he had earlier prevented him from working at the university, so he worked in the press, and later he became the editor-in-chief of the Rheinischezeitung in Cologne. He was not a news journalist, but a journalist, which rarely pays for its owner (Mu'nis, 1974, p: 84).

The Prussian authorities banned the journal in 1843 due to Marx's extreme orientations, so he decided to travel to France (Cole, 1978, p. 385). He studied the communist doctrines and the political economy; Marx criticized the communist ideas of Cabet, Dezamy and Blanquidue to their ideological rigidity and separation from reality (Corno, 1974, p. 9, 10). In France, Marx met Friedrich Engels (1820 - 1895), a son of one of the factory owners in Manchester, who later became his friend (Sadel, 1965, p: 93).

Friedrich Engels ran the Manchester factory and he provided Marx with the problems of career and industry in England. When the revolution of 1848 started due to the frequent crashes, low salaries and long working hours, et... and with the adaptation of one of the labour union committees, Marx and Engels issued the Communist Manifesto, which stated a criticism of pseudo-socialism, preaching of labour socialism, analysis of the capitalist system, and the worker's call for revolution (Cole, p:382). The manifesto was concluded with the known slogan, the Proletarians will only lose their shackles so they have the whole world before them and workers of all lands unite (Sidel, 1965, p. 93).

Marx participated in the revolution, and the government issued a decision to expel him from Brussels, where he moved since 1845 and he travelled to Paris, Cologne and London, where he settled except with some short trips to his country (Subhi, 1990, p. 194).

During his fifties, M'unis (1974 , p 85) writes that Marx lived in despair and poverty since his only salary was from writing books, most important of which are:

- a. Classes conflict in France (1848-1850)-Klassenkaempfe in frankreich 1848\_1850.
- b. Paris economical and philosophical manuscripts of 1844m.
- c. The critique of the Political Economy- Zurkritik der Politiischenoekonomie
- d. Capital - Das Capital.
- e. The German ideology 1846m.
- f. Theory of surplus value 1862-1863 m.
- g. Misery of philosophy-Misere de la philosophie, which was issued in French as a response to the Brodon's philosophy of misery.
- h. The Communist Manifesto 1848 m

The reason how Marx's family was able to manage itself is Engels, who transferred the returns of the cotton factory from his family to Marx's family under different reasons (Marx, 1984, p: 4).

### **Karl Marx's Sources of Thought**

Karl Marx's thought was constructed by several influences, which contributed to forming the materialism of the historical movement. It was represented in:

#### **Firstly: The Philosophy of Hegel**

Hegel (1770-1831) is considered the father of the ideal philosophy in explaining history as well as the first source of the thought of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Although Marx boasted in holding the dialectic method of Hegel, which was thought-class-action, he turned it upside down. Marx says: "my dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but it is its direct opposite". To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which under the name of "the Idea", he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurges of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea. Russel (1983) indicates "with me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human minds, and translated into forms of thought. ...the dialect for Hegel is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell" (Marx, house of publication, p: 22, Russel 1983, p: 229). He continues that Max's theory was class- action-thought.

Despite all this, Marx praised the idealism of Hegel since it is not free from logic representing in the thinking pattern in the historical understanding and the development of history with its connected roles. One role replaces the other except with the fourth role, which is irreplaceable. According to this role, Marx established his theory at a level following the control of the Proletariat (workers' class) (Faroukh, 1980, p: 55).

The other German source is Ludwid Andreas Feuerbach, the philosopher (1804-1872) whose philosophy was related to nature, man and expatriation; the human life becomes a struggle against the feeling of alienation, and this conflict is the history of the person represented in his daily activity (Obeid, 1981, p. 76).

Alienation for Feuerbach means that it is man who created God and not God who created man. The man's slavery means taking away the best qualities and dropping them to a strange subject or spirit, named divinity, which is also called religious alienation (Aweida, 1993, p. 3).

Alienation for Marx is the essence and core of history, which is considered an economic alienation that is found when the consequences of human actions contradict with his objectives; the last part of the conflict of man against nature is reaching to the Proletariat stage (Subhi, 1990, p. 227).

From here, Marx applied the idea of alienation in terms of the economic alienation. He stated that the man stole from the product of his work, so his job became strange to him controlling him though he created it; the economic alienation appears the most in the private property which leads to a conflict.

## **Secondly: French Socialism**

Marx met Socialists and the Communists in France in 1848. This was the beginning of Marx's transformation into the philosophy of man and he was affected by the thoughts of the French Revolution in 1789, from which he realized that the immortal job of the man was the revolution; he also knew the civilization values of the French society where he was affected by the thought of the French socialist Boraden that he appreciated Boraden's effective role in the history of socialism but criticized him for not realizing the historical role played by the Proletariat (Farah, 1978, p. 19). The intermingling of Marx with French socialist thinkers and his understanding of history curricula of French alsiosologi was the reason of the development of Socialist and political vision of the world

## **Thirdly: The English Political Economy**

Britain is the most advanced country in terms of economy in the 19th century and it attracted the attention of Marx (Farah, 1978, p. 20). Marx was affected by Adam Smith and Ricardo in the criticism of the political economy, where they established laws in this regard; Smith's law is the law of supply and demand which states: the price of goods is reduced as the number of items on demand increases, and it increases when the number of items on demand decreases; if the production of a certain commodity increases, its price decreases and vice versa. As for Ricardo's law, it adopted the law of supply and demand and applied it on the workers' wages. He stated that the more workers, the less wages and the greater the population, the better financial status of the capital owners and the worst financial status of workers; accordingly, the working class should reduce the number of births so that a balance between supply and demand is achieved (Awedah, 1993, p.: 119).

In Ricardo's doctrine, misery wins over hope; therefore, Marx applied his theory in the historical materialism and extracted the general economic rules that proved that the capitalist economic system moves towards collapse.

The English economists had a role in laying the first foundations of the labour theory of value (LTV). Marx stated that the main steps of his theory in value and money in the capitalwere the inevitable development of Smith and Ricardo theory. Ricardo is the first economic scientist that made the conflict among the class interests the starting point for his research (Marx, house of publication, p.: 14-18). Marx's labor theory of value means that there is no value for any substance except there is a human effort; value is measured by the amount of effort required in production that one item can be consumed in a day, two days or more; furthermore, the nature of the worker whether he is an expert or not determines the time estimation; if the price of producing something depends on the work it requires, the value of exchanging it depends on its benefit (Marx,house of publication, p: 48). – This is the law of supply and demand-

Marx quoted Ricardo in the theory of value; he tried to explain that the historical development of capitalism produces conditions and reasons for the emergence of the socialist society.

## **Fourthly: Darwin's Theory (Evolution)**

Marx was influenced by Darwin's theory on the struggle for survival, so we can say that Marxism does not differ much from the Darwinian Theory, except that it is applied on the social not biological life; such theory was applied on the classes' conflict in society (Budbus, 1984, p: 118). However, Marx applied his theory to social life not biological, and he was influenced by Darwin's idea that says that evolution does not stand at individual developed but at the entire human societies' development. This development is accompanied by the evolution in the relations of production and methods such as the shift and change in ideas, beliefs and values and morality.

### **1. Dialectical Materialism**

Dialectical materialism is attributed to Marx since he was the first one formulating a consistent philosophical theory to the communism. It can be defined as: a philosophical theory that explains the natural and intellectual phenomena in terms of the material; it adopts the dialectics as an approach for analyzing, investigating and understanding the reality of these phenomena, which are interconnected with each other; it considers the evolution principle as a fundamental principle of the materialistic and intellectual existence. There were three laws for the dialectical materialism, which are (Havana, 1979, p. 118-123):

- a. Changing from quantity to quality; it is a change that is called a revolution in society, which is considered as a boom, and called in society a revolution with various forms. For example, political revolution is the movement of people from natural political interaction to the state of revolution is called a quantitative change. Many accumulated changes had increased people anger which turned them from calm situation to revolution. Thus, the quantitative accumulation caused the anger of people with plundering their rights, and had led to a qualitative change.
- b. Opposites law - conflict of opposites-attraction and repulsion, bourgeois and Proletariat. So the opposites live together and this internal contrast is the core of the controversy and it is the primary mover.
- c. Positive and negative law; the negative law does not mean demolition; each stage denies its predecessor. And evolutionary movement here is a series of contradictions where old stages were exceeded to new stages. The stages like episodes interfere with each other that hardly separated.

Marx wanted to understand and analyze the world of history, so he can reach to the inevitable law that governs it making us able to predict how it can turn out according to the nature and tasks of science. Accordingly, Marx came with the dialectical materialism to reach to the law governing and controlling history that is the class conflict act, which evolves at a controversial level from one stage to another (Al-Khouly, 1989, p. 7). This conflict must be comprehensive, violent, then revolutionary through turning the current situation. This class conflict is economic: the workers' struggle to keep their existence and the capital struggle to use the surplus value. The theory of surplus value means that in order to live, the worker needs to consume products that represent a number of working hours that are less than the number of hours he can perform, for example: the worker consumes goods that are equivalent to five hours of work, but in fact he works ten hours; such difference goes to the capitalist (Marx, house of publication, p: 254).

## **2. Historical Materialism**

Marx's starting point was searching for the initial relationship that characterizes the human society. Such relationship has all the different phenomena of life. Society and everything related to its history is the production of all people: men and women with their different behaviors; despite that, they all do one thing in common which is the social production. Hence, Marx considered the productive work as the primary relationship between nature and man. This is the qualitative characteristic of the social life which made Marx reject the idea of interpreting the social life by using either "social physics" or "Social physiology". Therefore, he said it is important to search for the interpretation of life and evolution in the material and productive basis of the social life, and that the development of the socio-economic formations was one of the processes of natural history. Marx had isolated the economic field from the other fields of the social life, i.e. he isolated the production relationships from all other social relations and considering it as the primary and fundamental relationship through which other relationships are formed.

Historical materialism is that part of the Marxist philosophy, which aims to study the life of society, the overall development of society through the historical transformations that occurred within in addition to identify the reasons of the historical social activity of individuals and classes and thus interpreting the history and movement of communities by abstract laws which are checked by observing the human behavior, material objects and laws linking them (Prichkina, 1986, p: 6). Marx believed that laws are inevitable imposing themselves since they are resulted from the movement of history itself; the more the man realizes such laws, the more he can determine the future of the human community. Laws are related to the nature of work, production and ways of distributing wealth among people, i.e., the basis of linkages in societies is the economic ones (Mu'nis, 1974, p: 86).

Marx believed that the laws governing the economic system are not similar; each historical era has its own laws; the economic life shows the same phenomena we find in other branches in the science of life throughout its historical growth (Marx, house of publication, 20).

For Marx, history is governed by general and special laws; the laws of the public history govern the internal history of human beings; such general laws govern multiple forms of societies, while the special laws govern the individual actions in society or some aspects of the life of society; in general, laws govern the development of all the capitalist or socialist societies (Havana, 1979, p: 121).

Historical materialism was able to turn history into a science since it explains history, the method of making history, and the practical foundations of the revolutionary classes that make history, and examines the practical bases and plans of the revolutionary strata which is necessary for understanding the social construction, the revolutionary social transformation, and the will and awareness of individuals (Subhi, 1990, p: 228).

### **2.1. Foundations of Historical Materialism**

The historical materialism is based on some factors, most important of which are:

#### **2.1.1. The Determinant Factor of the Historical Development**

Marxism considers that the production of physical goods or commodities in the society is the factor determining the historical development, whereas the geographical factor and the demographic factor affect less on the speed of the social development (Obeid, 1981:95). Producing the physical goods means the relationship of human beings with the nature, and the relationship of human beings among themselves (Murad, 1984, p: 241).

Forces of production mean the means and machines used by people in their struggle and conflict with nature to meet their basic needs, as well as the human beings who use the machines, thanks to their special skills, knowledge, disciplinary experiences and their professional traditions (Farah, 1978, p. 45). Marx considered the physical / materialistic power of the human being as an influential force in nature (Marx, house of publication, p: 242). As for the nature of the forces of production, they are determined by the materialistic relations between the members of society and nature; the level of the development of the forces of production is a clear evidence on the extent of the human control over nature. The level of the development of the production forces is measured by the development of the production tools, the energy source and the level of the productive experience of humans and their knowledge and skills (a group of Soviet authors, 1981, p: 53).

As for the production relationships, they are complementary and necessary to the forces of production;

during the process of production, people affect the nature and they exchange the impact among themselves that they cannot make a certain production except through cooperation and forming certain relations among themselves (a group of Soviet scientists and Philosophers, 1977, p : 28). Accordingly, the production relationships are a set of economic ties among the members of the community, such as division of labor, sales and purchases, and distribution of products; they determine all other relationships of production (Farah, 1978, p. 46). Another part of the production relationships is: the ownership of the means of production where Marxism has distinguished between two forms of ownership: first, the private ownership of the means of production, in which relationships take the form of authoritarianism, exploitation and subordination; the rich and the intermediaries control the fruits of production and this leads to the creation of classes in the community. Second, the collective ownership of the means of production, in which the relationships take the form of mutual cooperation among individuals; societies cannot choose the kind of ownership as it depends on the development of the productive forces (Mu'nis, 1974, p. 84).

Production forces and production relationships form the production pattern; any change in the production pattern leads to a social change, which determines the ways of life of society, whether they are spiritual, political, legal or social; it also determines the community's identity and daily activities (Cole, 1978, p. 92).

### **2.1.2. The Dialectic Relations between the Production Forces and the Production Relations**

Production is a dialectical chain of relations as well as a dialectical unity between the production forces and production relations, within which the reciprocal influence of both the powers and relationships occur where each one of them requires the presence of the other (Al-Dhahir, 1988, p. 113).

Production forces represent the most vital ingredient at this dialectic stage because they represent the content of production activities while the production relationships represent the form. Marxism believes that the production relationships are objectively formed in a way that is independent from the will and desires of individuals in the society and that the history of the society is the history of the development of its production (Farah, 1978, p: 46).

From the above, we notice that what changes is the development of the production forces in the society, which leads to a change in the productive relationships; this is evident in the movement of the human societies from primitive to slave societies, and then from feudal to capitalist societies. Experience has been linked to the development of textile and steam machines (Havana, 1979, p: 223\_239).

The production tools develop faster than the production relationships leading to an imbalance in the relationship. Each time, this contradiction between the production forces and the forms of the productive relationships blew up a revolution that took various forms. Therefore, the origin of the historical conflicts is the contradiction between the situation between the production forces and the patterns of production relations (Berdos, 1984, p: 143). Marx's conflict of classes is considered a social expression of the imbalance between production forces and production relationships.

### **2.1.3. Base and Superstructure**

Marxism believes that the social life is a complex structure that encompasses different fields of human activity that reflect itself in the diversity of the relations in society; each society has its superstructure that was born from the base (Proletariat) which he cannot be separated from (Farah, 1978, p. 48). All the production relations and the economic structure of society started on the legal and political superstructure which in turn reflects specific forms of social consciousness (Widgeri, 1979, p: 261).

Marxism emphasizes the correlation between the developments from the base (Proletariat) and the developments in the superstructure (Salem, 1988, p. 99). Thus, the attempt to understand any period of time is done through discovering the main issues related to that period that are associated with the development of the production forces. Despite all of the above, the superstructure enjoys a relative autonomy from the base (Podosteink, 1981, p. 38). This is reflected in continuity of the development of the superstructure of society; the demise of the old base does not mean the demise of the superstructure; however, the factor of class conflict is the basis of the political and ideological conflict between them (Cole, 1978, p. 293).

### **2.1.4. Social Formations**

Society has a certain degree of historical development in all its aspects: the method of production, family relations, pension, level of scientific progress and the superstructure, which are all called the social configuration (Podosteink, 1981, p. 40). Marxism believes that the human society started with the primitive or collective communism then the slavery (classes, masters, and slaves) followed by the feudal community (agriculture), the capitalist society and finally the communist community (Podosteink, 1981 P: 43). Each of the above system generates the materialistic factors of its dissolution and the transition from one stage to another leading to war and revolution (Marx, house of publication p: 136).

### **2.1.5. Social Existence and Social Awareness**

It is assumed that the thoughts and objectives of the human being is the one that determines the life of the community, however this is not true; the human being needs food, drink, shelter and clothes to live, whether he wants it or not; these needs compel him to enter into a relationship with nature and to communicate with other

people; this is the material life of people or their social existence (a group of scientists, 1977, p. 15). The fundamental element of the existence of man as a social organism is job since he needs it to stay alive; however, the employer compels the worker to do his best and then he pays him the least satisfaction or even compels him to be satisfied with it (Faroukh, 1987, p. 57). Here, the job gradually impacted their development; accordingly, people occupied themselves with science, politics, art, philosophy or religion if they did not meet their physical needs, which means that the activities necessary for the preservation of life (social existence) determine the mental activity of the human activity (social consciousness) (Berdbers, 1984, p. 81), i.e. it is not the consciousness of the people which determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Mu'nis, 1974, p. 87).

#### **2.1.6. Forms of Social Awareness**

Historical materialism has distinguished between multiple forms of social consciousness according to the multiple phenomena of the social reality. The most prominent of which are:

##### **1. Rights' Awareness**

Awareness of the human rights includes the common views and perceptions in the society that reflect the relationship of the people to the law in force and the human understanding of what is allowed to do and what is legally prohibited. Rights' awareness is manifested in two basic forms:

- a. In the form of the concepts of the community members on the rights and duties.
- b. In the form of legal theories, i.e., legal ideology

The rights' awareness is the theoretical expression of that social relationship, which necessarily takes the form of rights' relations in every organized society as a country (Podosteink, 1981, p: 144). The main ideas of the socialist rights' awareness is the maintenance of collective property, the power of the people, the righteous democracy, the socialist legal principles, the true equality, and the development of rights and freedoms in their close association with the obligations before the society and others (Podosteink, 1981, p. 145).

##### **2. Political Awareness**

It is a system of ideas, opinions, feelings, goals and tasks that are manifested in the activity of classes and groups. They are linked to their economic interests since the political ideas reflect the fundamental interests of classes, nations and countries. The quality of political ideas depends on the class that expresses its interests; the political ideas that reflect the interests of the oppressed classes is the proof of the power of the exploitative system and the creation of the new society, which is a society without exploitation (a socialist society) (Preshkina, 1986, p. 197).

##### **3. Religion**

The historical materialism attacked religion because it failed to realize that man is the product of a social relationship; it does not acknowledge the physical existence of the Creator (God) neither as a creator of mankind nor as a divine providence throughout history so religion is an illusion (Podosteink, 1981, p. 165); it is a means used by a minority of people to subdue the majority (society) throughout different historical periods and the minority exploit it to turn the attention of the minority from the revolution; however, the Proletariat does not use anyone, so it does not need religion. Religion appeared due to the man's fear of nature and his lack of control over it, so man considered the nature powers as gods. (Havana, 1979, p. 404).

##### **4. Art**

It is one of the social life phenomena and a form of the superstructure; it is an influential factor in the social life that it can be progressive or reactionary in accordance with the nature where it belongs. At the society, politics, art, religion, morality and philosophy impact the art in order to turn the audience from the struggle to serving the class exploiting them; so, artists must participate in the class conflict (Farah, 1978, p: 63-117).

##### **5. Morality**

Marxism considered morality as mere reflection of the prevailing method of production of our time; there is no absolute law of morality that each social class has its own moral system; the Proletariat makes its own moral system and it considers all that leading to the destruction of the bourgeoisie is the rule of best morality (Poshnniki, 1992, p. 116); the greatest and most human morality is the communist in which the ideal of all workers is embodied (Podosteink, 1981, p. 150).

##### **6. Philosophy**

It is one of the forms of the social consciousness that expresses the concept of a certain class. The historical materialism recognizes only two forms of philosophy: The materialistic philosophy and the ideal philosophy believing that the materialistic orientation reflects the progressive classes while the ideal one reflects the mentality of backward classes (Farah, 1978, p: 117).

##### **7. Science**

Science represents the main pillar in the historical materialism; it differs from other manifestations of social consciousness in that its content is not determined according to the class and it does not lose its value by moving from one economic base to another; however, the conflict among classes is reflected on the social sciences since they affect the interests of classes (Havana, 1979, P: 420). Marxism considers science as emerging from the experience through which it develops seeing that the requirements of materialistic production are the main

engine of the evolution of science; it is not the fault of science that its benefits can be used against humanity because the sinners are those who use such benefits in such method (Podosteink, 1981 , R: 161).

### **Critique of Marxist Materialism**

The phenomena of the critique of Marxist Materialism presented by Karl Marx were represented in:

#### **The First: Maximizing the Role of the Economic Factor (Mu'nis, 1974, p. 89).**

It is considered as the main factor in interpreting history, which means that the human societies with similar materialistic factors must have the same moral, social, scientific and technical components in addition to having similar problems.

Furthermore, changing the production method inevitably leads to a change of the regime; however, the reality of Russia and the United States shows that despite the similar change in the forces of production and the technical expertise in the two countries, the relations in Russia have moved from individual to collective while they stayed as individual in the United States of America.

#### **The Second: Inevitability**

The historical materialism states that history is moving towards its goal leading to weak role of the human will; the theory has sidelined the role of leaders and great people although it presented the idea that the individuals are the creators of their own history; the history industry was restricted with certain circumstances and conditions as a result of the theory ( Al-Madrasi, 1989, p: 241). The historical materialism believes that the capitalist society is essential in order to reach to the communist community and the method of separating between the ethics or morality of the capitalist society and those of the Proletariat (Al-Dhaher, 1988, p. 117).

#### **The Third: One theory (Unitary)**

This theory is considered unitary in the historical interpretation making the spiritual and intellectual factors dependent on the economic factor neglecting the individual character of the historical realism (Subhi, 1990, p. 241).

### **Karl Marx's Predictions and their Critique**

One of the criteria used to judge any scientific theory is the ability to properly make predictions through using logic; Karl Marx was not hesitant in using his theory as such.

- a. Through relying on the historical inevitability, Marx predicted that the communist revolution would not break out from a backward society, but from a capitalist, industrial society in England and Germany (Hadi, 1988, p. 23).
- b. Marx predicted that classes will be limited to two: Capitalism and Proletariat; the Proletariat would include craftsmen, makers and peasants while the capitalism would shrink; this would increase the contradiction and the class conflict which eventually leads to the collapse of the capitalist system and the start of the socialist system (Al Khouly, 1989, p. 463).
- c. Marx predicted that the despair of the Proletariat would increase with the development of capitalism leading to reducing wages and prolonging working hours due to the fact that capitalism is unable to find markets to market its increased production; in such case, it has to get the greatest "surplus value" from the workers to avoid being bankrupt (Sadle, 1965, p: 101).

Marx was not very successful in his predictions on the dialectical evolution of history; he truly predicted with some precision that the free competition system would lead to forming monopolies over time, but he was mistaken in assuming that the rich would become richer and the poor poorer that such tension would reach to a revolution. This did not happen due to the fact that the industrialized countries of the world invented ways of organization that reduced the social conflict by limiting the freedom of action in the industrial fields and introducing social welfare projects. Karl was also mistaken in his prediction in the place of the potential revolution since it occurred in the agricultural Russia, not in the Western industrial part of Europe, as he predicted (Alhi, 1975, p. 27). Some attribute the Russian Revolution of 1917 to Marx's predictions, which is incorrect because of two reasons: the first property of this communist explosion described by Marx was not available in Russia before the revolution that the capitalism reached its limit which requires a revolution and the fact that Russia was an agricultural country heading towards industrialization (Majour, 1981, p. 153).

Despite all the above, it is absurd to rule out Marx because of his mistakes; there is no great thinker without a mistake or a thinker who formulated doctrines valid for all time.

### **Conclusion**

It is evident from the study that Marxism had a role in setting a new path for studying history from being political to economic and social. Through its social philosophy, it has achieved a success has never been achieved by a similar philosophy, and it has received a great welcome by the majority at a global level. Moreover, it has become a sole system of global governments and labor.

The principles of Marxism have led to a decisive change in the social or intellectual conditions of the working class, and the workers hoped to increase their science and become technologists. So, the intellectual level of workers was raised up, and led to the development of social level of all nations. Marxism also motivated

historians to question the role of the people in the history movement, and to demonstrate that the root cause of the revolutionary changes is the fact that the social and economic system has reached its maximum limits and become unable to develop the productive forces as it has done before. Marxism analyzes the main hidden factors that underlie the development of the human society from the tribal societies until the modern times.

The materialistic concept of history also enables us to understand history not as a series of unrelated and unexpected incidents, but as part of a clearly interrelated and understandable process. It is a series of actions and reactions that encompass politics, economy and a whole range of social developments. The relationship among these phenomena is complex and dialectical.

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Return to Content. Marx's Theory of Historical Materialism. Article shared by : ADVERTISEMENTS: Marx's general ideas about society are known as his theory of historical materialism. Materialism is the basis of his sociological thought because for Marx material conditions or economic factors affect the structure and development of society. His theory is that material conditions essentially comprise technological means of production and human society is formed by the forces and relations of production. Marx's theory of historical materialism is historical. It is historical because Marx has traced Marx's conception of the materialist theory of history has connections to both of these vernacular uses of the term. Marx believed that human beings were part of nature, not beings placed on Earth by God, although a belief in gods or God was itself a product of mankind's specific relationship to, and indeed, alienation from, the nature of which they were part. Although human beings are a part of nature, in very important respects they are quite unlike other animals. As such, the ideas involved in the basic outline of historical materialism have their correspondence in reality. But as with any ideas, there are dangers in understanding these ideas crudely and one-sidedly and in a way which seeks to reduce the complexities of life to simplistic abstractions. \*historical materialism\* A term applied by Karl Marx [1] himself to his theory of society and history. Marx wrote in the preface to the first edition of Capital that he conceived "the development of the economic structure of society to be a natural process." This is the main force of the adjective materialist in the phrase "materialist conception of history." Marx used the word materialist to make a contrast with what is obviously or implicitly supernatural, metaphysical, or speculative. Through materialistic interpretation of history, Marx interprets all the historical events. In every country, at every time, the whole life is influenced by the material conditions prevailing there— The super-structure(state) is determined by the substructure(economic foundation). Every society is characterized by its mode of production. It is very difficult to explain and understand historical materialism in isolation of the other component parts of Marxian methodology; namely the labour theory of value and the class struggle. When combined into a system analysis they reveal the bigger picture of social evolution taking place over thousands of years and describe why and how different modes of production came into being and created their own specific social relationships to the means of living.