

Marx and Socialism, day 1 (IPT, chapter 5 / MPT, 250-54)

What distinguishes **socialism** from **communism**?

What lesson does **utopian socialist Robert Owen** take from his claim that human nature is “without exception universally plastic”?

Against the competitive individualism of Hobbes, Locke (and the modern age of ‘**late capitalism**’), Owen preferences a spirit of cooperation. How can this be fostered, according to Owen? (And do you agree, either in whole or in part?)

What is the relativist’s dilemma mentioned on 130? How does it present a challenge to ‘anti-foundationalists’?

Marx’s distinguishing features of capitalism: **class struggle** between the **bourgeoisie** (property owners) and the **proletariat** (propertyless working class)

Roberts and Sutch on Marx’s **historical materialism**: “historical because it proposes an evolutionary understanding of mankind and society, materialism because the driving forces of this evolution are not ideas or philosophies but material or economic forces.” (131) [this is in opposition to ideas like the ‘**great man**’ theory of history]

- What are Marx’s six eras of human history? [131-2] (or ‘modes of production’)
- Historical materialism is a very important idea in Western intellectual history. It is presented as a descriptive rather than a normative idea—what are some of the effects of this distinction on the theory’s application?
- Marxist analysis looks at: the **economic base**, and the **institutional and ideological superstructure**
- What is the role of the state, in Marx’s view? [135]
- **Exploitation** and Marx’s ‘labor theory of value’ (and the concept of **surplus value**)
- What is **alienation**, and how is humanity alienated under capitalism? [136-7] What causes alienation?
- The wage-labor relationship (and Marx’s heavy focus on the labor theory of value), combined Marx’s (teleological) historical materialism, makes the fall of capitalism inevitable. Why? What, in retrospect, was he missing? (i.e., which claims have proven flawed?) Or are we still waiting?
- Distinguishing Owen and Marx on **political violence** – do you know where you stand?
- Marx claims that all conflict is, at base, economic conflict. Do you agree?

What does it mean to say that socialism initiated a historical ‘break from nature’?

A Whirlwind Tour of Socialist History

Three key contrasts

- 1) Robert Owen v. Marx and Engels
- 2) Eduard Bernstein v. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
- 3) Samuel Gompers v. Eugene V. Debs

From the vanguard of the proletariat to the nation itself
– socialism, **fascism**, and national socialism

Fascism(s) as a branch of socialism?

Maoism (from Jan 1949): the **iron rice bowl**, the **great leap forward**, and the **cultural revolution**

And later: China under **Deng Xiaopeng**:
“socialism with Chinese characteristics”

Democratic socialism (social democracy) under
Labor’s Clement Attlee in Britain

Nationalization and the welfare state

The Israeli **Kibbutz**’s blending of socialism and
Zionism, and the role of ‘children’s houses’

State planning and the second wave (post-WWII) of
democratization

The case of Julius **Nyerere**’s Tanzania and
ujamaa villages

Stages of Collapse

- By the mid-late 1970s: British malaise, the **winter of discontent** and Margaret Thatcher (and Reagan)
- Lech Walesa’s **solidarity** movement in Poland
- Gorbachev, **Perestroika** and **Glasnost**
- Tony Blair, Clause IV, and the **third way**