Marx
FOR BEGINNERS
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First things first—The reader would like to know who this character Marx was!!

Karl Marx

Hmm... well... not exactly...

Charles Marx (Karl as he's called in German) was a Jewish-German philosopher who lived and struggled from 1818 to 1913. Everywhere in the world he's blamed for having invented Communism...

Based on his writings and ideas, one third of humanity practises Communism, while the other two thirds keep arguing about them...

Anywhere you go, words like Bolshevik, Marxist, Socialism, Leninism, Red, Fidelists, Maoist, Materialist, Communist and so on rub lots of people up the wrong way...

Capital, class-struggle, labour-power, proletariat...
Actually, Marxism today divides the world into two camps: those who hate him and those who place all their hopes in him...

Marx has something to say to everybody: there's not a major change in the last hundred years which doesn't owe something to Comrade Charlie's influence...

Economy, literature, space travel, the arts, history, human relations, the Vatican, the unions, revolutions, social changes, education, medicine, industry, agriculture, journalism... everywhere you'll find a hair or two of Charlie's!!

Because Charlie Marx is just like the Bible or the Koran: many quote him, but very few know him, and even fewer understand him... (Or better... make him out...)

Boy! He sure had lots of influence, the hairy old guy!

And he wasn't short of hair...!

Knowledge—and practice—of his ideas now makes possible what was impossible for twenty centuries: freedom from the exploitation of man by man...

In short: if in every sense we're better off today, we owe that to Marx especially...

That's not true! I owe it to my boss!

All revolutions, even those which claim to be spontaneous and without "putative" fathers, have a Marxist origin...

Not to mention some constitutional...

Worker priests are accused of being Marxists, South American generals talk about him. He's studied in Jesuit schools. Others have fled Cuba when it declared itself the first Marxist country in Latin America... but still you hear it said there's no interest in Marx...
BRIEFLY:
Marx went to Bonn University to study law. But he worked harder at raising hell and (so he teachers say) pursuing wine, women and song... To such a point that he ended up fighting a duel for a lady's favours, which earned him a wound on the eyebrow!
You can't really say that he kept his nose to the grindstone...

From Bonn he went to Berlin where he finished his studies. Then he returned to Bonn to try teaching, but his bad name didn't open any doors: in Berlin he'd turned atheist and subversive...

Well, what do you expect of a 19-year-old?

What? Both at once?

That was too much! His society barely tolerated artists, so just imagine what they made of subversives!!!
It is important at this point to clear up a detail about Marx's life: although his origins were Jewish, he didn't consider himself Jewish, or ever practise that religion. His father had become a Lutheran and Marx himself was one, but only in his youth...

How true! Young men today don't believe a damn thing!

Blame the ideologies, your lordship, the ideologies...

The University of Berlin was in a terrific turmoil of new ideas. Religious exemptions of man and the universe had been challenged and thinkers were looking round for other answers to the eternal questions of mankind...

Life is a Riddle

What is Man?

Who is God?

Why do we live?

What is Life?

To answer this thorny question, Marx decided to study philosophy...

The young Marx didn't ask himself "What to do?" in the sense of "How can I earn a living?" but "What is the meaning of my life and what purpose should it serve?"

What to be done?

His father grows angry worrying about his son's future...

The same old eternal questions

Someone called Frederick Hegel seems to have found the answers to the big questions. German philosophers gravitate round him, some to oppose and others to support his theories... Marx begins studying Hegel's ideas. Too bad the great philosopher had already died, alas...
"The teaching of Marx is all-powerful because it is true..."

1. The Philosophy of Marx

As we've already seen, the philosophical ideas of man are of two kinds; idealist and materialist.

Idealism starts by assuming the existence of super-natural and divine forces...

Materialism considers that there is nothing beyond natural things...

2. The Economic Doctrine of Marx

Idealism imagines things, presupposes the existence of spirits, "idealizes" everything, but doesn't offer proofs for what it proposes...

Materialism, instead, doesn't idealise, but seeks the scientific explanations of things—including even religion...

3. The Historical Materialism of Henry Marx

Faith by itself is enough to go on

Or to put it more simply...

(...) Which is like trying to know what sugar tastes like without sampling it...

Idealists explain things to themselves through religion...

Materialists explain what's what on the basis of science...
Right at the start of his philosophical studies, Marx joined forces with materialism. But he devoted his entire life’s work to giving it more consistency and scientific character...

"By God’s grace", the majority of atheists wished to prove the non-existence of God by starting the usual religious arguments, which got them into useless muddles.

Why? Because before Marx, materialists were content to deny God’s existence. Period! And that’s that...

Basing themselves on mechanics, which in those days was the height of science, the philosophers imagined that the same mechanical laws could be applied automatically to life and to nature...

Nature is immutable, subject to the cause and effect of rotary motion like machines...

* The philosophical criterion is called metaphysical

Why metaphysical?

In the XVII and XVIII centuries, the greatest scientific discoveries were made in the area of the mathematics and mechanics of celestial bodies. And so, materialism became “mechanistic”...

And that’s why Diderot, Descartes and others were called “mechanists”.

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Metaphysics, from the Greek, “placed beyond physics”.

In metaphysics, things are unchanging, i.e., immutable, given once, and for all, without inter-relationship, and hence may be examined independently of one another.

Hegel’s disciple, Feuerbach reasoned like this:

... nature augments only in quantity while always remaining the same...

(Tose who thought like this about nature, could think the same way about society too. Society changes very little for the metaphysician, except by repeating itself mechanically, e.g., wars, hunger, governments, etc.)

* Originally, those works of Aristotle placed after his “physics”

and mankind really can’t do anything to change things!
HAVING RECOGNISED THE ERROR OF THE MATERIALISTS AND METAPHYSICIANS,
MARX ASKED HIMSELF THE SAME QUESTION:

**AND MAN?**
Ladies and gentlemen...

LET'S LEAVE GOD OUT OF IT, AND ALL THOSE WHO WANT TO DRIVE THEMSELVES
CRAZY ASKING WHETHER HE EXISTS OR NOT—SO CHARLIE SAID— AND LET'S LOOK
AT MAN AND HIS ROLE IN THE WORLD. HOW IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE THAT NOTHING
CHANGES?...

**DIALECTICS:**
FROM THE GREEK, "DIALEUTIC" TO ARGUE, TO CONTENT

RELIGION (CATHOLICISM ESPECIALLY) OPPOSED DIALECTICS BECAUSE IT DIDN'T
PERMIT ARGUMENT. THINGS WERE JUST AS THE BIBLE SAID—AND NO
DISCUSSION...

"... HIS HORIZON WAS FUNDAMENTALLY
RESTRICTED BY THE KNOWLEDGE AND
CONCEPTS CURRENT IN HIS DAY,
ONE SHOULD ADD THAT HEGEL WAS AN
IDEOLOGIST, AND FOR HIM, THE IDEAS WERE
NOT MORE OR LESS ABSTRACT IMAGES
OF OBJECTS; ON THE CONTRARY, THINGS
AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT WERE A
PROJECTION OF IDEAS WHICH HAD
EXISTED, NO ONE CAN SAY HOW,
EVEN BEFORE THE WORLD ITSELF
EXISTED. HEGEL'S SYSTEM WAS A
GIANTIC MISCHAPENNESS, BUT THE
LAST OF ITS KIND, WHILE ON ONE
HAND IT AFFIRMS A FORMULA
ESSENTIAL TO THE CONCEPT OF
HISTORY, ACCORDING TO WHICH HUMAN
HISTORY IS A PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT
WHICH CANNOT, GIVEN ITS NATURE..."

KANT AND HEGEL BEGAN TO RE-EMPLOY
THE DIALECTIC METHOD.

GOT IT?
NO? YOUR JOKING?

**DIALECTICS**

supposing it edible...
how do you cook it?

"WAY BACK IN ANCIENT TIMES, SOME
PHILOSOPHERS HAD ALREADY APROVED THIS STRATEGY
TO APPROACH THE TRUTH, A SYSTEM OF
ARGUMENT WHICH BRINGS OUT THE CONTRADICTIONS
IN YOUR OPPONENT'S REASONING..."
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HEGEL (AND I'LL TRY HARD TO BE CLEAR) WAS AN IDEALIST. "THE ESSENCE OF REALITY," HE SAID, "ISN'T MATERIAL, BUT SPIRITUAL (OR MENTAL), AND IS THEREFORE INDEPENDENT AND THUS FREE..."

HEGEL'S ADVICE TO ANY WORKER EXPLOITED BY HIS BOSS WOULD BE: DON'T WORRY YOURSELF ABOUT MATERIAL Oppression, BUT ONLY ABOUT THE "SPIRITUAL" KIND. BY OBEYING THE STATE (GOD'S REPRESENTATIVE ON EARTH) YOU WILL FIND HAPINESS AND FREEDOM (OF THE SPIRIT...)

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE DIALECTICAL METHOD, NOTHING IS ETERNAL OR UNCHANGING... BUT IN SPITE OF THIS HEGEL DENIES THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE AND SOCIETY, THIS IS THE MOST SERIOUS CONTRADICTION IN HIS USE OF THE METHOD...

NOW HOWS ABOUT AN EXAMPLE EVEN I CAN UNDERSTAND!

WHAT'S ALL THIS?

WELL, JUST LOOK

WHAT THE 'ELL HE SAYING?

TODAY, HEGEL'S IDEAS SEEM ABSURD. BUT IN HIS DAY, THEY SOUNDED PRETTY DARING... AND THEY WERE ATTACKED JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE (IN THEIR OWN WAY) DIALECTICAL...

TODAY, HEGEL'S IDEAS SEEM ABSURD. BUT IN HIS DAY, THEY SOUNDED PRETTY DARING... AND THEY WERE ATTACKED JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE (IN THEIR OWN WAY) DIALECTICAL...

THIS LED MARX TO SAY THAT HEGEL'S METHOD WAS "INVERTED," UPSIDE-DOWN, AND IT NEEDED TO BE STOOD ON ITS FEET AGAIN...

... IN SHORT, TO MAKE IT MATERIALIST...

... IN SHORT, TO MAKE IT MATERIALIST...

BUT WHAT DOES HEGEL'S THEORY SAY ABOUT DEVELOPMENT?

WELL, LET'S TAKE IT STEP BY STEP:
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT—SAID HEGEL—HAD GONE THROUGH CONSTANT EVOLUTION, STARTING WITH PRIMITIVE ORIENTAL DESPOTISM, IN WHICH ONLY ONE PERSON WAS FREE (THE TYRANT) AND NEXT THE GREECO-ROMAN ARISTOCRATIC SYSTEM IN WHICH MANY MORE WERE FREE...

WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING WAS THAT FEUDALISM HAD EVENTUALLY GIVEN WAY TO CAPITALISM, A MORE MODERN AND QUASIER FORM OF EXPLOITATION.

...Doctor Hegel didn't take any notice of this...

But Marx said!

HEGEL WENT ON TALKING ABOUT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT WHILE DENYING IT, BECAUSE HE CLAIMED THE PRUSSIAN STATE HAD ALREADY ACHIEVED THIS DEVELOPMENT ALREADY, SO HE TOO SINKS BACK INTO METAPHYSICS...

MY, I DO LIKE THIS CHAP HEGEL. GIVE HIM THE NATIONAL AWARD.

HEGEL'S ARGUMENTS REMAIN VALID AND DIALECTICAL, EVEN THOUGH MISTAKENLY APPLIED BY HIM TO REALITY... LET'S SEE, FOR INSTANCE, WHAT HE MAKES OF THE "CONFLICT BETWEEN CONTRARIES"...

"Each thing is a combination of contraries because it is made up of elements which, although linked together, at the same time eliminate one another..."

DON'T HAVE A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN YET! THERE'S AN EXAMPLE COMING:

PRUSSIA HAD AN EMPEROR, AN ARMY, A VERY RICH CHURCH AND SOME BIG LANDOWNERS. THE PEOPLE WORKED FOR THEM, WITHOUT BEING SLAVES MIGHT OR OPPRESSED ENOUGH. HEGEL Didn'T NOTICE THIS OPPRESSION. HE IMAGINED ABSOLUTE LIBERTY EXISTED JUST BECAUSE SLAVERY WAS ABOLISHED...
Society, for example, is a combination of contraries (the rich and well-off versus the poor and miserable) hitched together, yes, but opposed...

If you wanna stick with me, TOLL! man, TOLL!!

WITH VERY GOOD REASON, Hegel said that what makes humanity evolve is the struggle between contraries. The triumph of one over the other produces change...

FUNNY, how in Hegel's Prussian state the conflict between contraries wasn't going to lead to transformation, but rather an improvement of society. This irritated Hegel, naturally... that's why...

AT THIS POINT, Marx steps in to put Hegel (and his method) the right way up...

... between real contraries, such as capital and labour, no reconciliation is possible. Is that clear...?

IF Hegel's dialectical method influenced Marx, Ludwig Feuerbach (pronounced "foh-er-back") turned him into a materialist.

But Marx took over Feuerbach's theory and changed it...

What did this bloke fo-er-back say and how did Marx change it?

FEUERBACH, a disciple of the idealist Hegel, gave up Hegelian idealism to switch over to materialism, but of a metaphysical brand, because he saw nature (and society too) sunk in sleep, motiveless, and motionless, with no immediate chance for change.

Hegel was dialectical, but idealist... Feuerbach was materialist, but metaphysical (sort of dialectical).

IT WAS UP TO Marx to re-shuffle the deck: to amalgamate the best of this one and that one and come up with his own famous, unique variety of dialectical materialism.

(Dialectics by G.W.F. Hegel and Materialism by L. Feuerbach)
CAPITALISM HAS PROVEN ITSELF UNABLE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE PEOPLE LIVING UNDER IT (NOT TO MENTION PROBLEMS IN GENERAL OF HUMANITY)... AND IT'S WELL ON THE ROAD TO FINAL CRISIS AND EVENTUAL COLLAPSE.

HUMANITY - THOUGHT MARX - DID NOT REQUIRE 'OUTSIDE' HELP TO INVENT ITS TOOLS. NO ANGEL APPEARED FROM HEAVEN TO TEACH MAN HOW TO CONSTRUCT PLOUGHS AND WHEELS...

Wheel!??
What I want to invent is the lifeline!!

EACH GENERATION COMES ALONG TO CREATE, AND GRADUALLY PERFECT NEW TOOLS - BY WORKING AND NOT THANKS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT! (EVEN IF NOT ALL THE GREAT INVENTORS WERE ATHEISTS...)

BUT TOOLS CANNOT WORK ALL BY THEMSELVES.

PEOPLE HAVE TO SWEAT TO KEEP THEM OPERATING...

The moving forces of society

HISTORY

History is the life of people - period - that's all.
But nothing is produced in isolation. Human labour always has a social character. Society was formed by men as a help, as a protection against wild animals, to get better results from work...

(to pull the wool over our eyes...)

Exactly, because this is what eventually happened. The owners joined forces to squeeze productivity out of the non-owners (i.e., those who had nothing but their labour-power...)

The work-force, maestro...

These relations, which people establish (like 'em or not) during the process of production, Marx calls:

The relations of production

(and that's how, as we've seen, the levels of social class arose, and how the precise kinds of relations between them were set up. One exploiters, the other exploited...)

The combination of "productive forces" (or units of production) and the relations of production, Marx defines by the concept of mode of production.

Indeed, Marx says—history becomes the history of the modes of production...

History isn't just the life and adventures of nobles, kings, priests and such, but it reveals the successive stages of the different modes of production by which mankind gained power over nature.

Marx distinguishes 5 systems or modes thus:

Primitve Community
Slave State
Feudal State
Capitalist System
Socialist Society
THOSE WHO ACTUALLY LIVED ON THE LAND HAD SOME CLAIM TO THEIR BIT OF EARTH. BUT THEIR LABOUR BELONGED TO THE FEUDAL OVER-LORD TO WHOM THEY PAID TAXES AND WHO USED THEM WHENEVER HE WENT TO WAR...

WHEN I SAY "KING" BY THE WAY, YOU CAN JUST AS WELL REPE "POPE", BECAUSE THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WAS ALSO A FEUDAL SYSTEM LIKE ANY OTHER (AND PROBABLY WORSE...)

WITHIN FEUDALISM, THE SOCIAL CLASSES SEEN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM WERE:

**Nobility**

**Clergy**

**Merchant**

**Guild Artisans**

**Serfs**

FEUDALISM COMES FROM THE LATIN WORD, "FEUDUM", THE NAME GIVEN TO THE LANDS WHICH THE KING DIVIDED UP AMONG HIS NOBLES IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR SUPPORT... A FEUDUM *A FEE*
As time went on, the merchants and guild artisans grew in numbers and power. They began to shuck off the burdensome yoke imposed on them by the nobles and clergy. The first intellectuals awoke, bringing new ideas into daylight. A new class is born, the **bourgeoisie**.

I'm really fed up with paying taxes to those low-about bishops and kings. Long live liberty.
Damn it!!!

*Commerce* this began to change the form of production. The bourgeoisie needed bigger (and freer) markets to shift the merchandise produced in their workshops. Their appetite for profits ran smack against the limits of the feudal mode of production... and these restraints provoked a series of bourgeois revolts against kings and church, leading to the birth of a new "system of production":

**Capitalism**...

Capitalism is already in its venerable old age. In practice, it saw the light of day in Paris, 1789, with the French Revolution...

The French Revolution was primarily a liberation movement. "Liberation" from what? From the power of the monarch and the clergy. For what? To defend private property and free enterprise. For whose benefit? The bourgeoisie, i.e., the rich who wanted the liberty to make more money and the liberty of the serfs so as to buy their labour freely.

The French revolution was a general class struggle, a tough-pitched battle in which everyone took sides against the common enemy: the nobility and the clergy.

Once defeated, their power went to the ascending class - the bourgeoisie. The peasantry got something out of it: ownership of their lands, but the serf-labourers got nothing at all...

"Except the "liberty" to exchange masters..."
The Bourgeois Revolution (or the French: same difference) was followed by another revolution - the Industrial Revolution. Humanity invented machines which took the place of manual crafts. This completely revolutionized this mode of production...

Oh swez! But those 'effin' machines won't work 'emotions!!

The appearance on the scene of machine-produced goods brings with it a couple of new social classes: capitalists, or owners of the machines, and workers, or the operators tied to these infernal machines, with machinery comes a new mode of production which Marx calls Capitalism.

Now the worker isn't the slave of a feudal lord. He's a 'free citizen' (i.e. free to sell himself to the 'highest' bidder...)

Right! Anyone feel like paying me more?...

Just as everyone was settling down happy with capitalism (and like he’s, thinking that society had finally taken the right road, along comes Marx and spoils the party...

'Ere! Who the 'ell invited you hippie??

Mary's theory of class struggle - inevitable and historical - really hit capitalism below the belt. Sooner or later, says Marx, capitalism is going to have to retreat before a newer and fairer system...

Quip!