

جامعة تكريت

كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

قسم اللغة الانكليزية



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Full name: Mohammed Nasif Jasim

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- Elements of the Marxist Literary Theory Marxism

is an ideology and political movement that stems from the class conflict and social differences. Karl Marx, a German philosopher, was one of its founding fathers. Marxism is a complicated ideology, for Marx is by no means the only influence on this critical school. Despite his influence on several political movements such as socialism, Trotskyism, communism and Leninism, one despairs at trying to provide a fair and lucid introduction.

Nonetheless, there are a number of Marxist thoughts that present a huge influence on recent scholarly developments; particularly in literary, cultural, and political studies. Thus, giving a sense for the major concepts influencing this approach while attempting to stay conscious of the various ways that individual terms have been contested over the last number of decades. The major distinction in Marxist thought that influences literary and cultural theory is that between traditional Marxists and what are sometimes referred to as post-Marxists or neoMarxists.

The major distinction between these two versions of Marxist thought lies in the concept of ideology: traditional Marxists tend to believe that it is possible to get past ideology in an effort to reach some essential truth. Marx based his class conflict theory on the capitalist society where a class is defined by the ownership of property. Such ownership vests a person with the power to exclude others from the property and to use it for personal purposes.

In relation to property there are three great classes of society: the bourgeoisie who own the means of production such as machinery and factory buildings, and whose source of income is profit, landowners whose income is rent, and the proletariat who own their labor and sell it for a wage. The two facets that incorporate this theory are class consciousness in which the proletariat class becomes conscious of its oppression and the unfairness of the social situation and the class struggle that is the start of the fight against this social reality; an attempt to settle a fairer ownership and a struggle against the oppression of the working class. 14 Class Consciousness Class Consciousness is a core facet of the Marxist theory of class conflict which focuses on the social, economic, and political relationships between workers and owners within a capitalist economy.

It is mostly developed on the basis of theories on how workers could overthrow the capitalist system that controls their livelihood. His concern was neither with gauging levels of consciousness nor with plumbing the mysteries of psychological phenomena. His objective was to characterize, theoretically and politically, the historical processes that determine the movements of class consciousness (Iasi 2006, 2007). According to Karl Marx, class consciousness is one's awareness of his social class as well as an understanding of the economic rank of the class to which he belongs in the context of the larger society. In order to acquire a class consciousness, a considerably large number of people realizing that they are living under the same circumstances is not sufficient.

However, the existence of said individuals who struggle with their circumstances and the imposed labour become politically and economically aware, lets them step into a territory where they could unite in order to overthrow the exploitative capitalist system, where owners abuse their power by overworking the labourers in exchange for small wages. According to the Marxist scheme, the workers start from a generally inert situation, capable at most of occasional acts of instinctive revolt.

Through the experience of industrialization, which brings them together in huge factories to impose upon them a common fate, they acquire a revolutionary class consciousness". On the basis of such accounts, which have long been commonplace, the working- class commitment to socialism poses few problems. Their life situation generates, virtually automatically, the appropriate political consciousness. Our purpose here will be to suggest that while such an interpretation has a certain basis in Marx's writings, it is ultimately far from adequate.

This approach is what we shall refer to as the topographical theory of consciousness, 15 according to which particular sets of ideas are the ideational expression of the perspective available from a given economic and social situation. What you see is determined by where you are looking from. Thus, the perspective available from the bottom of the social pyramid looking up is diametrically different from that seen from the top looking down. In respect of the relative value of these different perspectives a common assumption here is that the burden of having the full dead weight of society above one is, at least partially, compensated by the view it affords of social reality.

Differential vision confines the bourgeoisie generally within their narrow philistine horizon" while presenting the proletariat with a more expansive and hence realistic panorama. The social class reality comes with the very clear difference in the power dynamics of two very distinct social classes; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Whereas the bourgeoisie consists on owners of factories and land who contribute to production with their properties, the proletariat consists on workers who can only contribute to said production with their labour and working force.

We have several examples that amplify the concept of class consciousness. Having class consciousness requires getting to form opinions as a whole class instead of individually; wherein: the working class forms a sense of realization that they are being exploited by the bourgeoisie class and being alluded that they are paid as much as they offer. There is however an opposing concept called False Consciousness that slows the process of Class Consciousness or even prevents it from ever happening. False consciousness is a concept derived from Marxist theory of class conflict.

The concept refers to the systematic misrepresentation of dominant social relations in the consciousness of subordinate classes. False Consciousness is a dictated reality that prevents the proletariat from seizing their independence and natural right from the upper class. Members of the proletariat class suffer from false consciousness in that their mental representations of the social relations around them systematically conceal or obscure the realities of subordination, exploitation, and domination those relations embody Consciousness or lack thereof is not what determines one's social standing; social being, however, does determine one's consciousness according to Marx in Preface of a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (159)

False Consciousness is presented by the owners of these businesses and lands, offering illusions to the labourers that, one day, they will be rewarded for their hard work and be able to climb the social ladder through their own hard work. The bourgeoisie hold controlling their workers to a great importance, for if that control went loose, their authority as business owners would be threatened. Therefore, they try controlling their workers by giving them hope that they will succeed in changing their social status in the future.

