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Is Marxism in the 21st century a utopian dream ?

Great economic thinkers

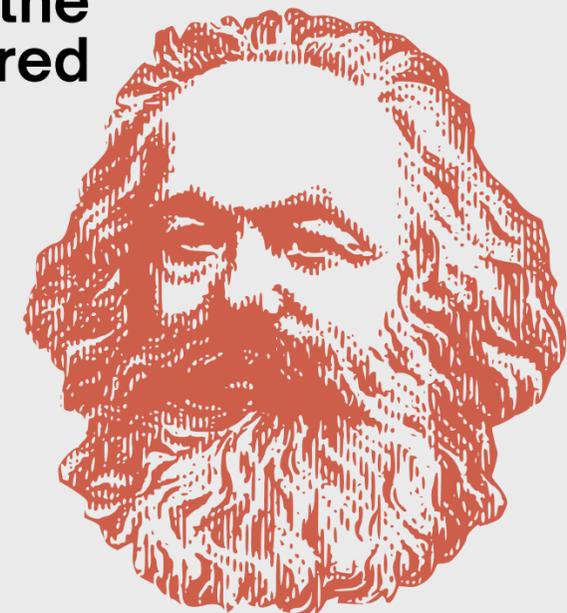
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Introduction

➔ More than a century after the death of Karl Marx, his theory continues to fuel debates.

**BUT IS MARXISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY AN UTOPIAN DREAM
OR DOES IT REMAIN A RELEVANT THEORY TO UNDERSTAND
OUR SOCIETIES?**

We will follow the logic of Marx's theory via the critique of developed capitalism and the proposed social transformation project to determine to what extent it can be considered utopian.



Marxism as a critique of capitalism : an analysis still relevant ?

A. THE MECHANISMS OF CAPITALISM ACCORDING TO KARL MARX :

The exploitation of labour : workers create value through their labor, but they are paid less than the value they produce.

The accumulation of capital : capitalism is driven by a continuous accumulation of capital, where profits are reinvested to expand production.

The concentration of wealth : competition leads to a concentration of wealth, where powerful companies dominate the market, increasing inequalities.

The economic crises : capitalism is inherently unstable, as the pursuit of profit can lead to overproduction and recurring economic crises such as bankruptcies, unemployment, and declining production.

→ At this stage, Marx's analysis appears less as a utopian vision and more as a critical framework describing the structural dynamics of capitalism that can still be observed today.

B. A CRITIC THAT REMAINS RELEVANT

Economic inequalities : capitalism concentrates wealth among a few, a trend confirmed by recent research, notably by Thomas Piketty.

The financialization of the economy : the growing influence of financial markets and investors on companies, often prioritize short-term profitability over productive investment, which echoes certain Marxist critiques of capital's dominance.

The precariousness of work : the rise of precarious jobs, such as temporary contracts and platform work, reflects Marx's idea that labor can become structurally vulnerable within capitalist systems.

The economic and environmental crises : contemporary capitalism remains marked by recurring crises, such as the 2008 financial crisis, and growing tensions between the pursuit of profit and the planet's ecological limits.

➔ Marxism still helps explain the contradictions of modern capitalism, but the realism of its proposed societal transformation remains debated.

Marxism as a project of social transformation : a utopia?

A. Marx's project

- According to him, economic systems change over history as societies evolve in the way they organize production and work.
- Marx develops historical materialism, arguing that the economic organization of society influences its political and social institutions.
- Capitalism is therefore not permanent but a historical phase that could be replaced by another economic system.
- Marx envisages a transition from capitalism to socialism, then to a communist society.
- The final goal would be a classless society, where production meets people's needs rather than profit.



B. The limits and contemporary debates

20th century experiments

- centralized and authoritarian regimes**
- criticisms of Marxist political project**
- limits of centralized planning (efficiency, innovation)**

These experiences led many scholars to view the Marxist political project as utopian or difficult to achieve.

→ However, Marxism is still discussed today and remains a framework used by researchers to analyze global capitalism, inequalities, and ecological issues.



Conclusion

Marxism today is less seen as a political model to apply directly and more as a theoretical framework to analyze the limits of capitalism and think about alternatives.

"the admirable communism of which Marx was the eloquent propagandist is nothing but a utopia"

Maurice Laguerre

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