I. Marx’s Social Theory

A. Society

1. origin and development

“The first act of history is the production of the means to satisfy . . . needs.” (German Ideology GI)

a. needs: food and shelter

i. collectively work together to satisfy needs (species being)

ii. transform nature into human social world (society)

b. society determines conditions under which human beings live

c. historical process: stages

“In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.” ( A Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy, Preface CCPE)

d. stage or social formation

i. base or mode of production

ii. superstructure

e. mode of production involves:

i. forces of production: division of labor, technology

ii. relations of production: property relations

iii. economic base determines superstructure

f. superstructure

i. political

ii. legal

iii. ideology

iv. culture

v. social institutions

vi. consciousness

“It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.”(CCPE)

g. each stage conflict

“The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle.” (Communist Manifesto CM)

i. internal dynamic of history

ii. forces of production vs relations of production

iii. “progress”

“No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.” (CCPE)

B. Capitalism

1. class conflict

a. bourgeoisie (capitalists) and proletariat ( workers)

b. capitalist ownership for profit

i. produce commodities for profit: exchange

ii. profit = surplus value

c. worker

i. exploited

ii. alienated

iii. false consciousness

d. capitalism will self-destruct (declining rate of profit)

e. positive dimension of capitalism: forces of production

i. technological development

ii. productive power to overcome scarcity

2. Final stage: communism

a. forces of production and relations of production are in harmony.

b. realm of freedom (species being)