

# Study Guide for *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* by Joseph Stalin

First Edition

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This document is in the public domain; however, I would like to emphasize that I disapprove of its usage in any generative, “AI,” for any reason.

## Introduction

*Dialectical and Historical Materialism* is another integral document written by Joseph Stalin, which is part of a larger educational course about Marxism-Leninism. Here, Stalin displays his excellent skill at explaining complex topics in simple, easy to understand language. *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, as the name would suggest, expounds upon Karl Marx's methodological worldview of dialectical materialism, and its use in historical analysis, historical materialism.

Without understanding dialectical materialism, one isn't fully capable of understanding the Marxist worldview, and without understanding historical materialism, one isn't fully capable of understanding why the transition into the dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary before the establishment of the higher stage of Communism.

Therefore, this document is absolutely integral for understanding Marxism-Leninism, and indeed Marxism in general.

While many potential readers may be immediately repulsed by the author due to neoliberal propaganda, it must be noted that we as Marxist-Leninists are *supposed* to critique other Marxist-Leninists while also *not* dogmatically discarding actually useful theory.

Joseph Stalin provides incredible contributions to Marxism-Leninism, both writing theory from his own observations, and serving as a good teacher in that he demonstrated an excellent ability to both summarize and reinforce existing Marxist-Leninist theory, much alike Vladimir Lenin was able to do with the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels before him.

As new terms come up in the document that may be unfamiliar or have experienced lingual drift, they'll be clarified for their individual sections. Additionally, to encourage reading the document rather than seeking summaries, key takeaways for different sections will be presented as questions for the reader to answer, allowing them to seek the answers themselves and come to a greater understanding of the document.

This is unfortunately due to the fact that—while being somewhat viable as onboarding to reading Socialist theory, assuming someone is actively encouraged to learn and possibly assisted in doing so (as opposed to berated)—summarized Socialist theory significantly waters down the original documents and will only provide a rudimentary understanding.

The headings beyond this point in the document will simply denote the relevant sections of *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.

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## **Introduction**

Key Takeaways:

- Why is dialectical materialism named as such?
- What is historical materialism?
- Are Marx's dialectics identical to Hegel's dialectics? Why?
- Is Marx's materialism identical to Feuerbach's dialectics? Why?
- What is dialectics?

## **Section 1: Marxist Dialectical Method**

### **Subsection A: Nature Connected and Determined**

Key Takeaway:

- Why does Marx's dialectical method view nature as interconnected, rather than separate phenomena?

### **Subsection B: Nature is a State of Continuous Motion and Change**

Key Takeaways:

- What does this continuous motion and change imply for features in nature?
- What part of this do dialectics prioritize with this in mind?

### **Subsection C: Natural Quantitative Change Leads to Qualitative Change**

Key Takeaways:

- What distinguishes a qualitative change? Why do these occur?
- How does this affect the process of development?

- How do evolution, physics, and chemistry all prove the validity of the dialectic method?

## **Subsection D: Contradictions Inherent in Nature**

Key Takeaways:

- How do contradictions cause development?
- Why do dialectics make the concept of, "eternal justice," nonsense? (Note: This also applies to the concept of static human nature.)
- How do dialectics demonstrate the inevitability of Communism?
- What allowed the proletariat to be the dominant force in the Russian Empire?
- Why do the characteristics of dialectics make reformism (as seen in social democracy and democratic socialism) impossible?

## **Section 2: Marxist Philosophical Materialism**

### **Subsection A: Materialist**

Key Takeaway:

- What is the distinction of materialism against idealism?

### **Subsection B: Objective Reality**

Key Takeaways:

- How does Marx's materialism interpret the relationship between reality and consciousness?
- What is the Marxist explanation of how consciousness arises?

### **Subsection C: The World and Its Laws Are Knowable**

Key Takeaways:

- How does Marx's materialism justify the validity of scientific investigation and experimentation?
- How does Marx's materialism impact the development of society?
- Where does social life come from?
- Why does Marx's materialism prove the inadequacy of idealist philosophies, such as utopian Socialism and anarchism?
- Why do new social ideas emerge? How do these, in turn, affect the material life of society?
- What do Marxist-Leninists need to do in order to make these new social ideas useful?

## Section 3: Historical Materialism

Key Takeaway:

- What are the some of the conditions of material life of society? Do these meet the requirements of the chief force of the development of society? Why?

### Subsection A: What Is the Chief Determinate Force?

Key Takeaways:

- What is the chief determinate force of the development of society?
- What are the three relations of co-operation?

### Subsection B: The First Feature of Production

Key Takeaways:

- What is the first feature of production? What parts of society does this affect?
- How does this affect the Marxist-Leninist perception of history? What does this imply for how we should proceed for developments in the future?

### Subsection C: The Second Feature of Production

Important Context:

- There is also acknowledged a sixth method of social organization between the first two mentioned, which we understand as primitive patriarchy, albeit this in itself carries stronger characteristics with the next form.
- Manufactories, or manufacture, was used to describe manual labour with the assistance of manual machinery during the 19th and 20th centuries. An example of this is the manual loom, which contrasts with the steam, and later, electric looms.
- The principle Stalin outlines for the social means of production is a known flaw of what is called the First, or Lower, Stage of Communism. Marxist-Leninists recognize that there is an inherent unfairness to this structure, as people provide unequal quantities of labour power, and consequently receive unequal compensation.

Correctional systems of equity are put in place to mitigate this flaw to an increasing degree until such point as humanity is able to put aside the concept of markets, in favour of, "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs," i.e., that people contribute what labour they're able to (for the betterment of themselves and society, for self- and communal-fulfillment, rather than economic compensation), and take what they need from the production of society (without need of economic compensation): the Second, or Higher, Stage of Communism.

Key Takeaways:

- What is the second feature of production? What does this affect?
- How does the dictatorship of the proletariat resolve the contradiction between the means of production and the ownership of the means of production?
- What are the five main types of relations of production? What were the drivers of these stages?

## **Subsection D: The Third Feature of Production**

Important Context:

Key Takeaways:

- What is the third feature of production? What are the two reasons for this?
- How do changes in the relations of production occur? Why and how does this occur? (Note: This is a transformation of quantity into quality.)