

# The Making Of [ov]

(*Verdinglichung*)

## *An Educational Overview of Reification in Marxist Theory*

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### 1. What Is Reification?

**Reification** is a philosophical and social theory concept that literally means “**the making into a thing.**” The term comes from Latin roots (*res* = “thing”, *facere* = “to make”), and in theory describes the process of treating **abstract relations, activities, or human processes as if they were concrete, independent objects.** ([Philopedia](#))

In everyday thinking, this can take the simple form of treating an idea like “the economy” or “society” as though it were a thing with fixed properties — rather than something shaped by people and their interactions.

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### 2. Reification in Marxist Thought

In Marxist theory, reification is a **specific kind of alienation** tied to capitalist society: the way basic social relations between people begin to appear as relations between objects.

([Wikipedia](#))

#### Key Features

- ◆ **Social relations appear “thing-like”:**

Under capitalism, relationships between people (e.g., between workers and employers) take on the character of relationships between things (like commodities or money). ([Wikipedia](#))

- ◆ **Objects seem active, people seem passive:**

Human creativity and labor become invisible; the things produced dominate their makers, as though the objects have independent power. ([Wikipedia](#))

- ◆ **Abstract becomes concrete:**

Processes like labor, value, and exchange — normally human and relational — are treated as if they were stable, natural components of the world rather than products of human social activity. ([Philopedia](#))

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### 3. How Reification Relates to Other Concepts

Concept	Relation to Reification
<b>Alienation</b>	Reification is one <i>form</i> of alienation — the way relationships and labor lose their human context and appear as things. ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> )
<b>Commodity Fetishism</b>	A specific case of reification identified by Marx: commodities appear to have value independent of human labor. ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> )
<b>Hypostatization</b>	A logical fallacy of treating abstract ideas as real objects — conceptually similar to reification. ( <a href="#">Philopedia</a> )

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### 4. Why Reification Matters

Reification is a framework for understanding how **capitalist societies shape human experience**:

- **Makes social relations seem “natural”**

We begin to see structures like markets, competition, or social institutions as eternal facts of nature, not human-made arrangements. ([Philopedia](#))

- **Hides human agency**

When abstract systems appear as independent forces, it becomes easier for people to feel powerless to influence them. ([Reddit](#))

- **Shapes consciousness**

Reification affects not only economics but also the way people think — encouraging a mindset where complex human relations are simplified into measurable, objectified categories. ([Philopedia](#))

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### 5. How Reification Plays Out Practically

Here are some **everyday examples** of reification in social life:

-  **The “Economy”**

We often talk about “the economy” as a thing that grows or contracts — but in fact it’s a set of human activities and relationships.

-  **Jobs and Work**

A job title like “salesperson” or “engineer” can come to define a person as if that role is their unchanging essence rather than a set of tasks in a specific context.

## Markets and Value

Prices and markets seem like objective forces — yet they are the result of human interactions framed by laws and institutions.

Explanation drawn from general interpretation of reification concepts. ([Philopedia](#))

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## 6. Historical and Theoretical Development

The idea of reification grew in early 20th-century Marxist and critical theory:

- **György Lukács** (1923) expanded the idea in *History and Class Consciousness*, tying it to the pervasive commodity system of capitalism. ([Wikipedia](#))
  - **Frankfurt School thinkers** (like Horkheimer, Adorno, and later Axel Honneth) reinterpreted reification in relation to culture, consciousness, and recognition. ([Wikipedia](#))
  - Later theorists have discussed how reification affects everyday social practices, perception, and identity. ([Philopedia](#))
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## 7. Reification vs. Human Agency

A central insight of Marxist critiques is that **reification hides the fact that people create society** — and therefore can change it. When social structures are seen as fixed “things,” it becomes harder to recognize our own role in shaping them. ([Reddit](#))

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## 8. Summary of Core Ideas

- Reification = “making into a thing.” ([Philopedia](#))
  - In Marxism, it means seeing social relations as objectified structures. ([Wikipedia](#))
  - It connects to alienation and commodity fetishism. ([Wikipedia](#))
  - It encourages the mistaken belief that social systems are independent of human activity. ([Philopedia](#))
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