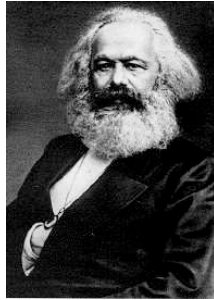


Marx and the Communist State

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." - Marx



Question . . .

- Who has the most political power and influence in society, the working poor or the wealthy?
 - Who is in the majority, the working poor or the wealthy?
- Isn't there something unjust about a social structure in which the workers make up the bulk of society but have the least power and the wealthy are the elite minority but have the most power?

Question . . .

- Suppose America were a just society. How would one address the following statistics: the wealthiest one percent of families owns about 39 percent of total net wealth; the top 10 percent of families owns more than 72 percent of total net wealth; the bottom 40 percent of families owns less than one percent.
- If one assumes that one is born into one's economic class and it is exceptionally hard to overcome the disadvantages of poverty, then how should the government respond? Should the government enact laws to respond to these inequalities? Is this in fact how American laws and economic policies operate? Can America consider itself a just society?

Locke

- What is the purpose of the state, according to Locke?
- To what extent is the state allowed to perform its task?
- Are individual liberties ever restricted under Locke? How about under Hobbes?
- What restrictions does Locke place on property ownership?
 - Does Locke's notion of property ownership apply to cash or monetary accumulation of wealth?

Marx's Collectivism

- Collectivism: stance that government ought to subordinate individual liberties to the needs of society because serving the common good is more important than serving individual goods

Marx's Philosophy

1. Economics rules everything
2. Class struggle is the one constant throughout history
3. Capitalism survives by exploiting the workers
4. History is a deterministic, dialectical process
5. Capitalism will undermine itself and lead to communism

1. Economics Rules Everything

- Driving force in human history is economics (not ideas)
 - Human survival depends on products of labor
 - Changes in society result from changes in technology and economic systems
- Whether an idea gains influence in a society depends on whether it supports the prevailing power structure

Marx in Relation to Locke

- Locke's theory stresses individualism, right to own property, and noninterference from government
- Marx thinks that these ideas reflect the interests of those in power:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas;...The class which has the means of production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production." *German Ideology*
- Marx would argue that Locke's ideas supported the economic interests of those in power
 - Locke's economic interests were the basis of his philosophical theory

Marx and Religion

- Marx is opposed to religion for the same reasons he's opposed to social institutions--both are trying to protect their interests
- Marx said, "Religion is the opiate of the masses."
 - Religion subdues people into living in their current oppressive states while waiting for eternal reward instead of rallying for change and justice in this life
- Religion blesses and sustains the economic status quo and social and economic alienation

2. Class Struggle One Constant Throughout History

- History reveals the struggle between those in power and those without, between those who have property and those who don't
- Bourgeoisie vs. Proletariat
 - Bourgeoisie: the owners of the means of production, the capitalists
 - Proletariat: the workers who own no property and survive by selling their labor
- Bourgeoisie also includes the middle class which benefits from the economic system

Alienation

- Humans become alienated by subjecting themselves to social idols and institutions which humans have created
- From a state of nature in which humans depend on nature, the alienation increases as humanity's dependence increases in each stage
 - Stages are from slave-owning society to feudalism to capitalism
- In capitalism, humans are not only alienated from nature but also from other humans, from the products of their labors, and from their labor itself
- Humans become determined by the conditions of social production and organization

Class Struggle

- Society is divided into classes and are defined by their means of production
- Societies in all ages have had exploiters and exploited
 - Slave owners and slaves, feudal lords and serfs, bourgeois and proletarians
 - Intermediate (middle) class: artisans, merchants, professionals, public servants
- Classes pursue their interests and view the world from their social position
- Classes are not static but dynamic forces that change history

3. Capitalism Thrives by Exploiting the Workers

- Capitalists control the capital
 - Capital: anything that makes up economic wealth, e.g., money, property, other goods
 - Capitalists: those who control the capital and the means of generating capital
- Capitalism: economic and political system which endorses and sustains the private control of the economic wealth and means of production
- Freedom was only for those who had the money and power and who exploited others to maintain that freedom

Exploitation

- In Marx's time, the capitalists increased profits by exploiting the workers and paying them as little as possible
- Exploitation: the process of extracting surplus value from the labor of those who work the means of production
- In exploiting the proletariat, the capitalist is taking what is not theirs
- What is reasonable or fair is a relative concept depending on the state of the market
- Exploitation is an objective, non-relative concept that reflects one class's appropriation of the labor of another class

Source of Value

- Labor is the source of all value
- Both a moral and economic principle
- One can produce more than one needs, thus creating surplus value
 - Surplus value appropriated by those who control the means of production
- Before capitalism, the lord took the serfs' surplus
 - In capitalism, the capitalist pays the worker less than what the worker produces

4. History is a Deterministic, Dialectical Process

- History a dialectical process, Hegel
 - One force opposes another and a new stage in history results
 - There's an unavoidable progression to the dialectical process
 - Marx changed Hegel's theory from ideas to economic and material forces

Three Stages of History

1. Thesis: the initial state of affairs
2. Antithesis: the initial state of affairs eventually produces its own contradiction
3. Synthesis: The tension produced by the internal contradiction remains until another state of affairs arises to replace them
 - Synthesis of communism abolishes both capitalist and proletariat
 - Each of these stages is marked by conflict and struggle and are an inevitable aspect of history

History is Deterministic

- History is moved toward inevitable results
- There are internal laws driving history in a particular direction
- Internal laws and human actions hasten or impede the march of history
- Social justice is the inevitable goal of history

5. Capitalism Will Undermine Itself and Lead to Communism

- Capitalism arises when small numbers of people own property and the means of production and they exploit others who do not own property or the means of production
- Capitalism produces its own internal contradiction based on individualism and private property
- In order for capitalism to survive, it will require an increasingly growing social base that is complex, interdependent and organized
- The drive for profits will require replacing workers with machines, the cost of which will force additional exploitation of the proletariat

Capitalism is Its Own Antithesis

- Driving workers out of factories will result in unemployment and drive wages down since there's a greater supply of workers
- Companies will grow, monopolize, and become international conglomerates
- Capitalism produces a larger and larger body of impoverished and alienated workers who eventually revolt against the power structure
- Bourgeoisie produces its own destruction

Three Phases of New Order

1. Dictatorship of the Proletariat: proletariat gains power and removes capitalism from society
2. Socialism: transitional period in which the means of production are in the hand of society, but distribution is based on contribution
3. Communism: the people control the economic and political life of the country
 - No private property
 - No socially significant division of labor
 - No exclusive ownership of means of production

Questions

- According to Marx, what causes changes in our views, conceptions, and consciousness?
- How will the proletariat use its political power?
- What's the future of class divisions?
- Marx predicted that the worker's situation would continue to get worse. Has it?
- Marcuse argues that the increase in wealth has made workers even more alienated from their lack of political and economic power. Do you agree?

Questions

- Is a more just society one that allows each individual the potential to become rich or one that provides basic educational, health and guaranteed subsistence for its population?
- Would Marx change his critique of capitalism if he could have seen current forms with their suppression of monopolies, regulations governing child labor, occupational safety and health, affirmative action, and employee benefits?
- What is Marx's view of human nature given his ideal communist state? How does this compare with Locke and Hobbes? Does human nature change just because the economic or social system changes?