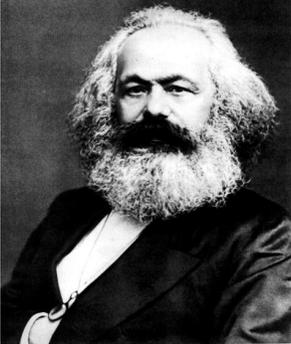


Marxism (Rev. 11/2020)



From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs

Feudalism declined as Capitalism took its place as perhaps a more efficient system of producing resources (not necessarily distributing equitably). During the Industrial Age, Karl Marx saw workers toiling in factories but getting paid much less than what their products were selling for. While workers (Proletariat) got paid barely enough to keep them alive and reproduced (subsistence wages) (Marx 1849), factory owners (Bourgeoisie) got the full value of what those workers produced. This "alienation" of their labor from the worker caused great resentment (Marx, 1844). In addition, they were alienated from their families and way of life, which drastically changed from Feudalism. Their whining helped create a solidarity or "class consciousness," where they felt an awareness or belonging to a class.

Capitalists (Bourgeoisie) tried to discourage this class consciousness. Workers who felt they were in an exploited class might organize strikes or revolution, so it would be advantageous to the capitalists if workers felt they could "climb the ladder," kept at bay, placated. Religion would also play a part in placating the worker, with a better life awaiting them later if they behaved well now.

While theoretically anyone could participate in the capitalist system, only those with capital (money) could be in a position to own the "means of production." This "relation to production" was of course much different for those who only had labor to offer. The "surplus army of labor," some of who were unemployed, were ready to fill the slot of any worker who didn't conform.

“The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities

he creates. The *devaluation* of the world of men is in direct proportion to the *increasing value* of the world of things. Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* – and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general.

This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces – labor's product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is **labor which has been embodied in an object**, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; **appropriation as estrangement**, as *alienation*.

So much does the labor's realization appear as loss of realization that the worker loses realization to the point of starving to death. So much does objectification appear as loss of the object that the worker is robbed of the objects most necessary not only for his life but for his work. Indeed, labor itself becomes an object which he can obtain only with the greatest effort and with the most irregular interruptions. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that **the more objects the worker produces the less he can possess** and the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital." (1844)

How to Accumulate Capital (take it from the worker)

If someone wanted a wooden spear (and you're an expert carver), you would spend say an hour on finding a branch and carving the wood to make a spear. The other person could then give you something equivalent, like 2 fruit pies, which took an hour to gather and bake. This transaction results in "net zero," or no left over surplus; it is an equal barter (1S = 2P).

How then can you make these transactions result in a surplus? Accumulating surplus capital (eg any resource) results in more power, opportunities, and life chances, given that the society is structured to allow this.

One way to accumulate a surplus (end up with more than you started with) is to charge more (eg 3P). However it's unlikely that the buyer will agree; the average labor that is embedded in a spear is two pies.

The only other way to accumulate a surplus (to end up more than you started with) is to have another worker carve the spear and then pay her with 1 pie (you have in your freezer). Then you can trade the spear (which cost you 1 pie) for two pies. Now you end up with 2 pies, one to replace the frozen pie and one to eat!

Why would a worker make a spear for only 1 pie? Because the social structure (molded by the elite) prevents the Proletariat (workers like her) from affording a business that can involve these transactions and accumulate profit. There's competition for jobs. The Bourgeoisie wants to maintain this structure to ensure that workers will continue to work cheap.

So you can accumulate "capital" (surplus labor) by paying workers less. In effect, they are giving up what they "normally" would have gotten (2 pies) for expending that labor. The payment for the spear is split between you and the worker, because the worker agreed to work for half of the value of what she made. If $1S=2P$, Bourgeoisie (you) results in an extra 1P (received 2P, minus 1P for the worker).

The Evolution from Capitalism to Socialism

1. Workers get off the land into factories, trade labor for money.
2. Capitalists maintain a system where private property (factories) is owned, sell stuff for money, and no alternatives exist to subsist (capitalist mode of production).
3. Proletariat share struggle of being exploited, creating a "collective consciousness."
4. Proletariat's "relation to the means of production" is much different than the Bourgeoisie's.
5. Proletariat is alienated from their labor, product, family, self.
6. Eventually they reach a breaking point and revolt!
7. Interim dictatorship until the new system is in place (hmmmm).
8. Production/distribution is centrally-planned to be more equitable.
9. Factories still run but controlled by the workers (is there motivation/efficiency?).

Class and Structure

A class is a category of people with a common characteristic, and one which cannot be escaped easily. Marx's two classes were those with capital and those who were without. Those who fall into the working class would certainly be denied some access to resources.

Society is now structured around making things (production) and use of capitalism to allocate these things. Marx thought that this disadvantaged the working class, who did not have capital to profit from production. Those with little capital or power can only work for subsistence wages and get taken advantage of by the rich class (Bourgeoisie).

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Marx thought that the Proletariat would eventually become angered enough to rise up and revolt—that this would be a natural course of events. Constant change is found in all economic (materialist) systems, which is why this is called "dialectical materialism."

Another idea that Marx developed is the concept of **false consciousness**. False consciousness is a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest. In fact, it is the ideology of the dominant class (here, the bourgeoisie capitalists) that is imposed upon the proletariat. Ideas such as the emphasis of competition over cooperation, or of hard work being its own reward, clearly benefit the owners of industry. Therefore, workers are less likely to question their place in society and assume individual responsibility for existing conditions. In order for society to overcome false consciousness, Marx proposed that it be replaced with **class consciousness**, the awareness of one's rank in society. Instead of existing as a "class in itself," the proletariat must become a "class for itself" in order to produce social change (Marx and Engels 1848), meaning that instead of just being an inert strata of society, the class could become an advocate for social improvements. Only once society entered this state of political consciousness would it be ready for a social revolution. (OpenStax, 2013:88)

“Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains”

The transformation from Capitalism to Socialism could be sudden and violent, but for the benefit of the worker. Upon revolution, the "means of production" would be owned by the collective people (like a street, bus, or school would be). The Bourgeois middle-man would be gone with no one skimming profit off the top of selling what you make.

"From *each* according to *his* abilities, to *each* according to *his* needs." Everyone would contribute to the collective society. Initial interim leaders would be necessary to guide society into a new system, however they would eventually go away, along with the need for money—society would run like a family.

While we would still need to work, workers would share a larger slice of the pie. Without the incentive of money/profit to produce or innovate, a form of "flag waving" might be necessary to motivate people.

Recent Revolutions

An effective revolution needs individuals who share a common injustice and can achieve some type of solidarity. David Little outlines "the elements that Marx takes to be crucial in the formation of collective consciousness:

- The group needs to possess "manifold relations" to each other.
- There needs to be effective communication and transportation across space, not just local interaction.
- There needs to be a degree of economic interdependence.
- There need to be shared material conditions in the system of production.
- There needs to be an astute appreciation of the social and economic environment.
- There needs to be organization and leadership to help articulate a shared political consciousness and agenda (Marx 1851).

The leaders of the soviet revolution and other revolutions appear to have seduced *peasants*, not capitalist workers, into joining the cause. Thus the masses people needed to change and maintain were the "wrong" type and would not be able to carry the revolution through to the utopian end.

In addition, the capitalist-build factories and infrastructure are now needed for the less efficient socialist system. The means of production developed from a previously capitalist economy would be required to fulfill the people's material needs, as mentioned in the 10 Point Program.

10 Point Program (Marx, 1848)¹

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production.

Teamwork! Sanctions would be needed to maintain conformity to the new norm of *collective* effort. Posters, songs, doctrine, laws, and systems would be needed to keep everyone working hard, doing what they're supposed to do, as there would not be the profit motive. Needs of the people would be centrally planned and supplied such as free school, healthcare, food, clothes, etc. No more would those with more capital take advantage of others—policies to discourage capital accumulation (and starting a capitalist system all over again) would be needed. There should not be classes anymore since we are all equal (in which the Bourgeoisie tried to convince us before). Ultimately a communist utopia would allow people to live a more complete and equitable life.

¹ Before making any quick judgments, see if these would make sense in maintaining motivational spirit and prevent individuals from gaining capital and power, and becoming an oppressive system.

From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs

“For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. **“He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood;** while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it **possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner,** just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.” (1845)

Misunderstandings

While the following passage came from Wikipedia², it seems to agree with other scholarly discussions:

Many Marxists say that modern "Communism" is not Communism at all. That nations such as USSR, The People's Republic of China, Venezuela, Cuba, and Vietnam are different forms of Capitalism, often with heavily "nationalized" industries. One of the biggest proponents of these ideas in Marxist thought was Tony Cliff, who wrote that states like the U.S.S.R and Communist China (before 1980) were "State-Capitalist." Not all Communists, Socialists or Marxists agree on this question, but many hardened Marxists generally agree that Socialism is workers' democratic control over economic decisions and social justice, while production is based on what people need, and that Socialism will wither away into Communism when Capitalism is defeated. With that idea in mind, Marxists have a tendency to discredit most of the listed regimes. Modern Communism claims to be based on Marxist ideas, but many Marxists disagree about whether Communist countries have understood Marxism correctly.

Many nations attempting Communism have turned into a Totalitarianism—extreme control over all aspects of life and the individual (like Orwell’s 1984). Totalitarianism perhaps is the “real” characteristic which the U.S. does not like with Communist nations. We should question whether the nature of economic allocation or Totalitarianism is the real culprit. There exist some communities which use socialist allocation of resources, eg “intentional” communities in Virginia, kibbutzes, and

² <http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism>

even families. The U.S. has many “socialist” means of distribution eg Social Security, Medicaid, bailouts, various insurances, indigent hospitals, safety/environmental regulation, and city services.

A Classroom Demonstration of Economic Systems

1. *Personal Use Economy.*

Person A is good at making paper airplanes, and makes one for her own use (creating value from labor). Person B is good at making paper boats, and makes one for his own use (creating value from labor).

2. *Barter Economy.*

Person A, good at making paper airplanes, needs a boat. Person B, good at making paper boats, needs an airplane. They each make their specialty product (same labor time as airplane), creating value, and trades for a complementary product. No one has a net loss or gain but each has a product they couldn't make themselves.

2. *Capitalist Economy.*

Person A (proletariat) needs to survive and can make paper airplanes. There is no other way to make a living than to trade labor for capital. Person B (bourgeoisie) has capital and pays Person A half of a boat to make an airplane. Person A creates 1 unit of value but gets 1/2 unit in return. Person B receives 1 unit of embedded labor value but paid 1/2 unit of value. Surplus value accumulated is 1/2 unit.

Surplus value could also be accumulated if the consumer paid more than 1 unit of labor value. However in a capitalist economy, consumers have more choices to buy and competition minimizes market prices to economic costs and necessary profit. So consumers cannot be exploited as easily.

References

- Little, D. (2015). Marx on peasant consciousness. understandingsociety.blogspot.com/2015/09/marx-on-peasant-consciousness.html
- Marx, K. (1844). Estranged Labour. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Retrieved 10/3/09 from www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm
- Marx, K. (1845). Part I: Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook: Private Property and Communism. *The German Ideology*. Retrieved 10/3/09 from www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm
- Marx, K. (1848). *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*. (more of a political pamphlet than a scientific paper). marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf
- Marx, K. (1851). *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/
- Marx, K. (1849). *Wage Labor and Capital*. (pamphlet)
- Marx, K. (1978). *The Marx-Engles Reader*, R.C. Tucker (Ed.). New York: Norton.
- Marx, K. (2002). *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: Penguin Classics. xMarxist Internet Archive. www.marxists.org
- OpenStax (2013). *Introduction to Sociology*. OpenStax College, Rice University.