

Karl marx's views on religion assignment

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Karl Marx has greatly influenced the creation of the modern world and was one of the first revolutionary communist. Through his literary works and philosophies he helped to inspire many 20th century communist regimes including the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and North Korea. Marx's ideas did not end at communism; his religious ideology also helped shape and mold the 20th century world. Karl Marx was born in 1818 in Trier, Germany and died in 1883. He was a philosopher who turned to economics and politics in his mid 20's. His family was Jewish but they converted to Christianity so that Marx's father might pursue his career as a lawyer.

Marx studied law in Berlin and then wrote a thesis for his doctorate in philosophy. Marx had originally hoped to have an academic job but he had involved himself with a group of too radical thinkers and received no job prospects. Marx turned to journalism which led him to consider communist theory. Marx wrote many pieces of literary works, some are the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction, On the Jewish Question, the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Theses on Feuerbach, the German Ideology, and the Communist Manifesto.

The Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Introduction discusses the criticism of religion. Marx states that the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism. According to Karl Marx, religion is like other social institutions in that it is dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. It has no independent history; instead it is the creature of productive forces. As Marx wrote, " The religious world is but the reflex of the real world. " (Marx) Marx believed that man makes religion and religion does not make man.

Religion is man's self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or has already lost himself again. State and society produce religion. Religion is the general theory of this world. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against the world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Marx states that " religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation.

It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions (Marx). " In the above quotation, Marx is saying that religion's purpose is to create illusory fantasies for the poor. Economic realities prevent them from finding true happiness in this life, so religion tells them that this is alright because they will find true happiness in the next life.

Although this is a criticism of religion, Marx is not without sympathy: people are in distress and religion provides solace According to Marx, religion can only be understood in relation to other social systems and the economic structures of society. In fact, religion is only dependent upon economics, nothing else ??? so much so that the actual religious doctrines are almost irrelevant. This is a functionalist interpretation of religion: understanding religion is dependent upon what social purpose religion itself serves, not the content of its beliefs.

Marx's opinion is that religion is an illusion that provides reasons and an excuse to keep society functioning just as it is. Much as capitalism takes our productive labor and alienates us from its value, religion takes our highest ideals and aspirations and alienates us from them, projecting them onto an alien and unknowable being called a god. Marx has three reasons for disliking religion. First, it is irrational ??? religion is a delusion and a worship of appearances that avoids recognizing underlying reality.

Second, religion negates all that is dignified in a human being by rendering them servile and more amenable to accepting the status quo. In the preface to his doctoral dissertation, Marx adopted as his motto the words of the Greek hero Prometheus who defied the gods to bring fire to humanity: " I hate all gods," with addition that they " do not recognize man's self-consciousness as the highest divinity (Marx). " Third, religion is hypocritical. Although it might profess valuable principles, it sides with the oppressors.

Jesus advocated helping the poor, but the Christian church merged with the oppressive Roman state, taking part in the enslavement of people for centuries. In the Middle Ages the Catholic Church preached about heaven, but acquired as much property and power as possible. Martin Luther preached the ability of each individual to interpret the Bible, but sided with aristocratic rulers and against peasants who fought against economic and social oppression. According to Marx, this new form of Christianity, Protestantism, was a production of new economic forces as early capitalism developed.

New economic realities required a new religious superstructure by which it could be justified and defended. In addition to critiquing religion, Karl Marx wrote about the basic ideologies and principles on socialism and communism. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx discusses the problems facing society and how the government is responsible for this. According to Marx, the East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, and trade with the colonies gave to commerce, navigation, and industry. This led to a rapid development of society.

Marx states that when the bourgeoisie has the upper hand, it puts an end to feudal, patriarchal, and idyllic relations. It removes all ties from man and his "natural superiors". "It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation (Engels)." Karl Marx opposed free trade. He accused the bourgeoisie of turning personal worth into an exchange value. He also accused the bourgeoisie of turning family relation into a monetary relation.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments and relations of production. The bourgeoisie is distinguished from earlier epochs in three ways. First, the bourgeoisie revolutionized production. Second, it was the uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions. Third, it left the people with everlasting uncertainty. The *Communist Manifesto* was intended as a definitive programmatic statement of the Communist League, a German revolutionary group of which Marx, and Engels the co-author, were the leaders.

The two men published their tract in February 1848, just months before much of Europe were to erupt in social and political turmoil, and the Manifesto reflects the political climate of the period. While dissenters had been waging war against absolutism and aristocratic privilege since the French Revolution, many of the new radicals of 1848 set their sights on a new enemy that they believed to be responsible for social instability and the growth of an impoverished urban underclass. That enemy was capitalism, the system of private ownership of the means of production.

The Manifesto describes how capitalism divides society into two classes: the bourgeoisie, or capitalists who own these means of production (factories, mills, mines, etc.), and the workers, who sell their labor power to the capitalists, who pay the workers as little as they can get away with. Although the Communist League was itself apparently too disorganized to contribute much to the 1848 uprisings, the Communist Manifesto is a call to political action, containing the famous command, “ Workers of the world unite! (Engels) But Marx and Engels also used the book to spell out some of the basic truths, as they saw it, about how the world works. In the Communist Manifesto we see early versions of essential Marxist concepts that Marx would elaborate with more scientific rigor in mature writings such as Das Kapital. Perhaps most important of these concepts is the theory of historical materialism, which states that historical change is driven by collective actors attempting to realize their economic aims, resulting in class struggles in which one economic and political order is replaced by another.

One of the central tenets of this theory is that social relationships and political alliances form around relations of production. Relations of

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production depend on a given society's mode of production, or the specific economic organization of ownership and division of labor. A person's actions, attitudes, and outlook on society and his politics, loyalties, and sense of collective belonging all derive from his location in the relations of production.

History engages people as political actors whose identities are constituted as exploiter or exploited, who form alliances with others likewise identified, and who act based on these identities. In addition to discussing government, Marx spoke to distinguish himself from his radical liberal colleagues in *On the Jewish Question* (Wolff). Marx makes his argument by introducing a distinction between political and human emancipation. Marx argues that political emancipation is perfectly compatible with the continued existence of religion.

The *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* cover many topics, including private property, communism, and money. Marx adopts Hegel's concept of alienation, the idea that human beings can become out of sync with the world they live in, but he interprets this concept differently, arguing that alienation arises from the way human beings regard their own labor. In these early manuscripts, Marx reveals himself as the great philosopher of work, which he sees as a process of transforming physical matter (raw materials) into objects of sustenance.

This process is fundamental to a person's identity and sense of place in the world, according to Marx. In capitalism, this is founded on the principle of private property, work as a source of identity and location is seriously undermined. Those without property (namely, workers in factories, etc.)

must hand over their productive capacities, their essence as human beings, to another person, to the factory owners, the wealthy capitalists.

This is not only inherently frustrating and unsatisfying but also turns workers against the capitalists and the system of private property that is the source of their frustration (Wolff). The Theses on Feuerbach is another of Marx's works. This work contains one of Karl Marx's most memorable remarks. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it". The eleven theses provide Marx's reaction to the philosophy of his day. Marx objects to all existing materialism and idealism.

Marx adds the insights of both of these traditions to suggest a view in which humans do indeed create the world they find themselves in. "Industry is the real historical relationship of nature. (Wolff)" The German Ideology, like the Communist Manifesto, was written by both Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels. In this work, the two contrast their materialist method with the idealism of previous German thought. They emphasize that human beings are productive. Human beings must produce their means in order to satisfy their material means. Eventually, communism will become a real possibility once the plight of the workers and their awareness of an alternative motivate them sufficiently to become revolutionaries (Wolff). Karl Marx's philosophies on religion and communism flourish in 20th century life causing many changes in everyday lifestyle. Works Cited Engels, Friedrich, and Karl Marx. The Communist Manifesto London: Penguin, 2002. Marx, Karl. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." Paris, France 1844. Wolff, Jonathan. "Karl Marx." Stanford University, California. 28 January 2008 ; <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx;> <https://assignbuster.com/karl-marxs-views-on-religion-assignment/>