

Marx and arnold – individual in the class



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Karl Marx was one of the most influential ideologues of all times. His ideas fired men to revolutions and empowered them as a class denoted by the proletariat to wage struggle against domination by the bourgeois. (Marx. Engels. Et Al.: 1998). His ideology of individual empowerment contributing to class control over society holds sway amongst a large swathe of humanity even to this day. While Marx was a powerful believer in individual power, it was through its regulation that change in society was brought about.

This change was not the way a person pleased or sought it to be but on the basis of history and as per existing circumstances. (Marx. Engels: 1986). In the struggle of the classes, Marx believed that it was individual influence as denoted in labor power which had been undermined over the years by the bourgeoisie. The control granted to individuals through their work denoted labor power which comprised of the prime energy which created a vital force in nations. (Marx: 1999).

Marx values labor power as it is the only means which can produce more value than its worth, thus this is the productive value of individuals. (Marx: 2003). Class struggle as per Marx begins with individual power generated by personal toil which is coagulated to destroy those elements which work against their interests. Thus Marx believed that the exploitative nature of individual power particularly amongst the bourgeoisie will be brought to an end through collective authority of individuals of the proletariat. (Karl Marx: 2006). Marx states that each man in a capitalist system works in his own interest and thus ultimately results in the destruction of the organism as a whole. (Aron: 1965).

The ideal structure for harnessing individual power is thus felt to be the communist system wherein the power of each individual can be channelised for the collective good. An individual's role is related to his role in class and economic relations and thus his power is also channelised in that direction. (Marx: 1999). The view of individual power held by Marx is thus of production, material creation and contribution to the class struggle. The individual soul loses its power in the collectivity of the class to which he belongs.

Arnold was a poet in the Victorian era who is said to have guidance and rationality in an age which was increasingly industrialized and when individuals were losing their moorings to increased vocationalisation of human activity. By adopting the analogies of the Barbarians, Philistines and Populace wherein individuality was subordinated, Arnold attempted to bring back a sense of power to the individual. (Arnold EB: 2006).

Arnold's philosophy of individualism was based on the ability of the individual to change society by following a contrarian approach rather than just blindly following reality.

Arnold abhorred the average man who he believed failed to contribute to quality in society. It is the individual who is not average, the "remnant" as he called it who contributes most to the social order and democracy. A remnant is required to be humble and should look upwards to some standard. Once a majority of the people assume such a quality, as per Arnold, the whole society will rise above the normal. For raising such a social order, education was a key parameter.

Education has to be humanist and religious and not merely utilitarian or sentimental. The scientific temper of education has been reducing the humane standards that people have. There was a greater need for reinventing education to enable a holistic approach. (The Dialogue: 2006).

Arnold calls for finding the best amongst oneself and then follow it. This self needs to be one which is the best and not what is upper most in the mind. An individual should not go against this, " best light" and ensure that this light is not darkness. (Arnold : 2000). Pursuit of culture which generates beauty and intelligence or what Arnold has called sweetness and light in individual is its main purpose. (Arnold : 2000) Action by individuals should be guided by such sweetness and light. There should be no fear that such men cannot bear the trials of a tough life, by avoiding rough action.

By relying on less random action people can confront such acts. Arnold believed that the central theme of British society was assertion of personal liberty. However he was clearly against individualism resulting in anarchy. (Arnold : 2000) Arnolds identified religion as per Christ as a force which was based on individual proclivities acting on himself rather than injunctions from outside. Thus the individual can gain control over himself and thus contribute to society. (Style : 2006).

Arnold spawned the movement of humanism in the United Staes which provided the guiding light of morality from past civilisations for individuals to survive in a world which was turning towards greater individualism and materialism. (New Humanism : 2006). The strength of Arnold's style lay lies

in his use of the satirical and analytic to denote his theories which made them more explicit. (Genre : 2006).

The individual power denoted by Marx is one which has been harnessed for creation, production and destruction. (Marx. Engels: 1986). It is power in the individual for action resulting from his labor, as against intrinsic power developed through intermix with education and culture. Marx wants to harness individual power to change society, to bring class struggle; Arnold wants individual power to raise the resistance of humans to survive in an increasingly materialistic and industrialized World. (Marx. Engels: 1986).

The strength or power in an individual as per Arnold came from within, while Marx believed that individual power came from the society and the environments surrounding him. The power of individuals as per Marx rests in his ability to produce value through labor, it is to be harnessed collectively, on the other hand, Arnold believes in power of the individual which is derived from his culture and sensitivities and which guides him to do the right things for the overall good of society. (Arnold : 2000). Thus there was a major differentiation between the identification and use of power between Marx and Arnold.

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