

Marxist tradition

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



In the development of Social Sciences discipline, Marxist tradition is among central theoretical frameworks. In fact, the kind of opinion on capitalism created by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels left a significant trace in current and further understanding of the world around us. In this context, the way their vision appeared and explained the challenges of Industrial Revolution led to the appearance of such concepts as ‘proletariat’, ‘means of production’, and ‘rule of capital’. Consequently, this essay illustrates the overview of Marxism by highlighting its strong and weak points. In this context, Marx demonstrated progressive vision on capitalist changes, but did not notice the nature of human relations; thus, classical Marxism could never work appropriately in the reality.

To start with, Marxism arguments spring from the transformations that happened in the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, these new circumstances created material production as the brand-new “object before us” (Marx, 1857, p. 3) and prevalence of consumption as “immediately production [...] that replaces the need” (Marx, 1857, p. 10-12). In this context, an understanding of political world has also transformed. In fact, Karl Marx presented this new logic of political economy in a statement: “An increase in the productivity of labour means nothing more than that the same capital creates the same value with less labour, or that less labour creates the same product with more capital” (Marx, 1863-1883, p. 271). In other words, industrial development neglected the value of working class, as capitalists had put their incomes on the pedestal of social relations. In short, the dialectical type of antagonist relations that showed up after capitalist change was the main object of Marxist critique.

On the one hand, Marx clearly understood the key trends of his time based on the prevalence of economic relations in all social spheres. In this context, Marxism proposed the pioneer theoretical framework; it stated that working hard means nothing in the new society. In contrast, classical liberalism that believed in market self-regulatory power to human prosperity (Smith, 2007) could not overcome this new type of social inequality. Moreover, Marxism served as a good base to further investigation of capitalist transformations in the society. For instance, modern ‘theory of oppressed’ (Debord, 1958) shows that Marx was convincing and predicted the main challenges of capitalist social order. In general, Marxism noticed the main danger of the twentieth century that led to huge transformations of the world order; in this context, Marx and Engels (1848) widely discussed the position of proletariat as neglected by revolutionary class, whose voice is important but not heard. Therefore, the strongest point of Marxism is its ability to see the core reasons and consequences of Industrial Revolution.

On another hand, Marxism oversimplified the human nature and standardized social relations. In particular, Marx and Engels (1848) believed that “society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps [...] – Bourgeoisie and Proletariat”. In other words, Marxists see the world solely in black and white. For such a worldview, capital displaced the labour and created certain type of illusion for workers; consequently, human nature was steadily neglecting (Marx, 1957, p. 306). Nevertheless, this theoretical assumption did not work in the reality. Among the practical evidence, repressions of Soviet Union that followed Marxist views is the most prominent one. In addition, Marxism was not right about the future of

capitalism. As van Berg (1980) explains this flaw, Marx failed to discover the way modern capitalism has transformed in the field of working relations; precisely, Marxism did not notice its ability to change and adapt. In other words, industrial development caused the change in human relations in order to keep the social balance stable. For instance, several welfare states appeared in Europe and showed that world had changed after World Wars. Thus, the key weak point in classical Marxism is its simplification of human nature.

In order to sum up, Marx and Engels were prominent thinkers, because they saw the core reason of social transformations in their time. In particular, they clearly understood that capitalist relations were so powerful that they could replace most spheres of social life. In this context, they underlined the appearance of political economy and material production as the new trends for the twentieth century. In fact, these key ideas enabled the appearance of numerous approaches that assisted us to understand the contemporary world around us. In contrast, the practical power of classical Marxism itself is limited; actually, it oversimplifies the human nature and its ability to adapt and transform. Consequently, the importance of Marxism is rather in the scope of its analysis than in its concrete theses.

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