

Idealism and materialism essay sample

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



Both Karl Marx and Max Weber had very different ways of looking at the societies economic system. Marx's strong beliefs in what would make society thrive were in the materialism approach and Weber's was in the idealism approach. Karl Marx believed that the majority of societies problems came from the industrial capitalist system; this is the system that was making the rich, richer and the poor, poorer, with the larger portion of society being what Marx called the proletariat (the poor laborers)(Macionis/Gerber, 2002, p. 94). Marx felt that this was a very poor way to run a society and argued that the people themselves would have to change it. This however could prove to be difficult, the proletariats need some sort of a wage to survive and take care of their families and the capitalists held the jobs where they could earn that wage, this puts the poor at an immediate disadvantage and the rich at an advantage.

The capitalists believed that this was not a problem with society and that individuals themselves were to blame for being poor or rich, this is what Marx called " false consciousness" (p. 95), he did not believe in this as the answer. What he did believe in was that they were dominating the society by " legally protecting their wealth" (p. 95). Although Marx felt strongly about his views Max Weber (1864-1920) did too. Max Weber had a different way of looking at the world; he believed that people " viewed the world" through tradition or rationality. Tradition was followed mainly by pre- industrial societies who believed that following the same beliefs and traditions that their ancestors had followed was the right way to lead their lives.

Those in the industrial – capitalist societies took to a rationality approach, which virtually eliminates tradition from daily life. Weber used the phrase "

rationalization of society” to represent the change from pre-industrial to industrial-capitalist societies (p. 99). This change was due to the Calvinists. The Calvinists beliefs in predestination drove them to work hard and strive for high standards of life, they believed that this would allow God to give them a better fate. This motivation to work hard paid off with wealth, which was not shared with the poor, who in their eyes were what God rejected. Weber believed that it was because of this religion that the industrial-capitalist revolution started. In sum, Weber believed that all wealth came down to ones ambition for personal achievement this was generally through religion, where as Marx felt that industrial- capitalism was responsible for the poverty and social problems that societies were being faced with (p. 94).