

Max weber vs. karl marx essay examples

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Ideological Views on Social Change

Introduction

In sociology, the idea that Weber's writing and study of social stratification represents a, " Dialogue with the ghost of Marx" is most evident when you compare their views on social stratification and capitalism. We find in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that Weber spoke to many of the same concerns brought about by Marx; it can also be found that Weber came to a noticeably diverse assumption to social change than that of Marx interpretation. Weber is often seen as a Theorist of Conflict, he often speaks of the way in which social structures can cause social behaviour to conform. Weber also distinguishes the way in which physical relationships evaluated on the level of social class alone, effect status and power amongst human actions and perception. While Weber emphasizes the structures of physical relationships, and the significance of human actions and perceptions, this is not the focus of his beliefs or academic analysis of social change. Likewise, as a Conflict theorist, Weber studies the nature of human actions within *verstehende*, a behavioural structure within the meaning of the action, and seems to have more mutual beliefs in the conflict theory of Marx.

The sociological ideas and concepts of Weber and Marx compel one to look beyond the concept of social stratification and further toward evidence in fundamentally diverse ways; this should help one observe facts that there are a plethora of clear dissimilarities between the ideas, arguments and deductions put forward by Weber and Marx relative to social change. The aim of this paper is to help one have a better understanding of social change, and to assess Weber's ideas and their relationship to Karl Marx's

stance on social change. This study also aims to prove how Weber's methodological ideas and concerns are illustrated and used in his work. The line between meaningful action and merely reactive behaviour to which no subjective meaning is attached, cannot be sharply drawn empirically. (Weber, 1994, p. 1). Weber uses *verstehende* to connect the idea that the meaning of 'actions' within a society rather than the meaning of the individual motives of each member of said society with an entirely objective view.

Social Stratification and Power

Unlike Marx, Weber's academic findings in social stratification was not embedded in or connected to a general opinion or hypothesis of social development. However with the theory of Marx, Weber claimed that "class stratification" had a strong and vital economic aspect. Weber supported the belief that status and political party should be included in the study of social stratification if a full study of social variety from different forms of social stratification was to be obtained. This helps one to understand Weber's "three dimensions of stratification": Class, Status and Party; this goes into the belief that societies are structured in hierarchical systems of authority and subservience, which brings about significant social change

Power, in Weber's ideals was often granted as part of your access to certain social resources. Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history (Weber, 1958, p. 281). For instance, in the 1950s, if an individual owned a television, this was an announcement of grand social

status. Today, this social status is not given to owners of this resource, because it is common for each household to own more than one television. To understand the connection between power and social stratification, Weber speculated the many behaviors in which societies are ordered in the hierarchy of systems using Class, direct correlation to the access of material resources within said society. For example, if Person A has something that Person B needs, Person A then becomes more powerful than Person B. Person A is then in a dominant position and Person B is in a subservient position. Person A controls the material resource. This can be attributed to Weber's relation to objectivity and the role of subjectivity within the particular beliefs in a society through *verstehende* where societal behaviour can be used as a means to understand rather than the objectivity of an individual.

- Social Power (Status):

Weber's view on social power reflects the idea that, " we must not forget that Puritanism included a world of contradictions, and that the instinctive sense of eternal greatness in art was certainly stronger among its leaders than in the atmosphere of the Cavaliers. (Weber, Chapter 5). Take the artist Rembrandt, he may not have been pure in the eyes of God within Puritan value, but Rembrandt was highly influenced in " the character of his work by his religious environment,"(Weber, 1958, p. 280). For example, if you hold a high opinion of Person A or view her as your superior in social status because say she was a brilliant artist, then hypothetically, she can exercise power over you within demand, and you will be subservient. This simple hypothesis then renders social status, a social resource, because of the ideal that Person A has power while Person B does not. *Verstehende* then renders social

status, a social resource, because of the ideal that objectivity has power over subjectivity.

- Political Power (Party):

Political Power is often seen as the quintessential social status of possessing power through the means of the judicial system, and includes any organized group with power to influence how this 'power' is exercised legitimately through the law. Take Person A and put them in a position to influence a judicial or law-making process, Person A then puts Person B in a position of power. Although Person A may not directly influence Person B's decisions, Person A has placed Person B in the position of power; therefore, Person A is granted a higher social power. If we attempt rationalization of *verstehende* in political parties this necessitates objectification; the results themselves within politics and order of power then have to be considered no less subjective.

In Weber's eyes it is extremely important that you see the three dimension supporting one another in terms of social change and social economic status of power—as the three intertwine in the way that those who are economically powerful, are also of a high status in their immediate society (high class), and can use these two forms of social power to stimulate politics in their society.

Conclusion

Weber's methodological ideas and concerns within an ideal type of society, social action, are well illustrated in his work. For instance, the following study may thus perhaps in a modest way form a contribution to the understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history (Weber,

1958, p. 280). How this theory can then be applied to this concept of social change, through capitalism, in order to understand the relationship between class and status in our society is brought on by a separation of class, status and power; this belief was shared by both Weber and Marx. Seeing that Marx observed there were three dimensions of stratification, and that we can state these dimensions are held separate; it is difficult to separate them within the definition of human social interaction.

Marx had a way of relating social power to status, and political power to economy when he discussed the similarity between "infrastructure" and "superstructure" in society. Weber also, found the correlation between the three dimensions: each class high, middle and low are most commonly found to socialize together within a community, seeing that it is highly unlikely to find someone of very high social status socializing with someone who is on say welfare. However, we see here that Weber contrasted the views of Marx in this belief of the stratification of social order: The differentiation of men into the classes and occupations established through historical development became for Luther, as we have seen, a direct result of the divine will.

(Weber, 1958, p. 280).

Both Marx and Weber had the same hypothesis, using concepts that were very much alike. However, their hypothesis, assumptions and results were inclined to be different simply because they were trying to explain different theories. While Marx and Weber could be found to hold the same views on social status, capitalism, and social change, they both give us a plethora of excellent findings on socialism. Weber used a specific model within three dimensions to give us a great reason, depth, and cause for social change and

stratification. In distinguishing the difference in his theory, Weber states, “The more we ourselves are susceptible to them the more readily can we imaginatively participate in such emotional reactions as anxiety, anger, ambition, envy, jealousy, love, enthusiasm, pride, vengefulness, loyalty, devotion, and appetites of all sorts, and thereby understand the irrational conduct which grows out of them,” which shows his theory on social stratification to be distinct to his own beliefs, only reflecting somewhat Marxist beliefs.

Therefore, the difference in the views of Weber and Marx lie in terms of their overall hypothetical viewpoints on socialism and capitalism. Weber thus holds socialism in a conflicting perspective, and emphasizes the nature of social structure and how it relates to social action to influence social change and the form of capitalism. Weber believed, “To analyse the effects on the character of peoples,” was the exact way to determine what brings about social change within stratification that leads to capitalism and socialization of power.

References

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