

Karl marx: labor, capitalism research paper examples

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



Both Karl Marx and Max Weber are studied as two of the most interesting and valuable contributors to the field of sociology in their lifetimes. Both of them had strong, philosophical beliefs about what they felt was right and wrong for society as a whole. Both men felt that society would benefit from a capitalistic society ending and a socialist society replacing it in terms of government and economy. But, these two men had very different views as to the reasons behind the changes and how the changes should be instituted.

Karl Marx, the father of communism, had strong convictions of labor and its contributions to society. Marx believed that labor was the source of all wealth. The only way one can amass wealth was through the use of one's labor (Johnson 949). When working for someone else, as the laborer works more, the laborer becomes less wealthy, but makes the person for whom the laborer works wealthier. Labor itself is a valued commodity. Labor becomes an object and the more objects produced by a laborer (for others) the more the laborer becomes enslaved to the laborers own product, capital (or money) (Johnson 940). The labor is not voluntary; it is forced and constrained as it is done only to earn capital, or payment. The labor belongs to someone else, the employer. Since the laborer owns the labor produced, the employer owns the employee. The laborer is only functioning out of free will in the most basic animal instincts, when eating, drinking or when inside of his dwelling (Johnson 941).

According to Marx, “ Communism is the positive supersession of private property as

human self-estrangement, and hence the true appropriation of the human essence through

and for man; it is the complete restoration of man to himself as a social i. e., human being,

a restoration which has become conscious and which takes place within the entire wealth

of previous periods of development. This communism equals humanism; it is the genuine

resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true

resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-

affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species.

It is the

solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution.” (Johnson 942)

If a person does not work, that person lives at the expense of labor provided by others, enjoying the wealth of others (Johnson 949). An individual laborer

should receive back from society the same value as the contributions made to society according to communism. There is no recognition of the

differences between classes. All people are workers (Johnson 950). “ From

each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!” is a statement from Marx (Johnson 951).

Marx toys with the idea of a socialist revolution to overthrow a capitalistic society. When he wrote his most famous work, the Communist Manifesto (1848), he creates an idyllic picture of the bourgeoisie, those who would benefit from a socialist society. Marx believed that a society against capitalism would possess ethical values that were universal, such as freedom for all, equality for all, justice for all, and the pleasure of self-accomplishment. He presented a post-communist society as a utopia for mankind (Lowy 146).

Max Weber: Capitalism, Protestant Work Ethic

In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), there are views presented that are quite different than those of Karl Marx. Similar to the ideals that the bourgeois aspired to live by, Weber viewed the basis of capitalism as a result of the Protestant work ethic. This ethic incorporates the combination of working diligently and hard, saving a portion of one's wages, living a frugal lifestyle, and reinvestment of savings as the means of being economically successful.

Weber does not discuss the working class as being exploited. He also appears to have little interest in the economic crises occurring at the turn of the century. The difficulties of the proletariat, the working class people, do not receive sympathy from him (Lowy 149).

Criticizing Benjamin Franklin, who Weber considers to be an ideal portrayal of capitalistic success, Weber describes the aims of capitalistic society as being one in which the goal is to amass money and gather even more money and the more money possible becomes the ultimate aim in life (Lowy 150).

Weber was especially critical of Franklin since Franklin considered himself to be a Christian man. Weber, in referring to the various Christian faiths, referred to the writings of many scholars in his day (Lehmann 5. 2. 236). In his writing entitled *Realenzklopadie*, Weber is critical of an article that had recently been published by Troeltsch on the topic of the Protestant work ethic. Weber criticizes the article for not differentiating between the ethical styles of the Lutheran and Calvinist faiths (Lehmann 5. 2. 236). In his same work, Weber also criticized the writings of Albrecht Ritschl. Weber is critical of Ritschl's views on objectivity and Pietism (Lehmann 5. 2. 237).

Conclusion

Karl Marx focused primarily on people owning the right and control of themselves being able to produce labor and therefore owning their labor controlled their destiny. This control of one's output of labor was how capitalism should be transformed into communism. He had little interest in religion. Max Weber also saw that people should focus on things much more important than amassing wealth, as was the main objective in a capitalist society, but also focused on the importance of the Protestant faith and work ethic. These two very different ideas had one in the same underlying principles, that people, regardless of what they owned, were equal. No one was better than anyone else. That same principle is being carried forth by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation today in their mission to help better the lives of people throughout the world. Ironic, being that capitalism is what enabled Gates to become so incredibly wealthy in the first place and begin his philanthropy.

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