

# Marx, weber, and rousseau

Philosophy



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The establishment of modern society is tied closely to the common line of thought expressed by modern thinkers like Marx, Weber, and Rousseau. These men all had complicated ideas in regards to the formation of modern society, but they all addressed certain aspects of that development. They all focused their studies on human nature and specifically, how human beings came to live out some of the goofy ideas that are now commonplace. Among those was the important premise of personal property.

Modern human society places a great deal of importance on gaining things and this is something that is certainly not new. In fact, it has been around since very early on. Even more important than the material possessions is the actual strife to gain these things, which human beings seem to take great solace in. The overriding characteristics of modern human society can be closely tied to the theories presented by these famed thinkers. They hold similar ideas on how society developed as a result of the acquisition of personal property, and from those ideas, one can quickly gather insight about the overall development of modern society.

Marx had his own ideas on personal property that have become something of a resource guide for other thinkers and government formers alike. Karl Marx is a highly misunderstood figure among the American public, because most people are quick to associate him and his ideas to communist ideals. Even though many of his theories were eventually used to found communist nations, it cannot be denied that Marx was a brilliant economist and well rounded thinker. Marx had his own particular opinions on personal property and the accumulation of wealth and he was not shy about sharing those ideas with other people.

Marx found capitalistic society to be something that was destined to fail for a few reasons. In his writings, he indicated the price based competition in business would force small businesses out of the mix and would eventually lead to lower wages for people, as big business controls the activity. Marx was not completely right about a lot of his theories in regards to modern society, but he did hit the nail on the head on a few things. Marx had strong feelings on the issue of private property as it relates to the development of a society.

He was always of the opinion that human nature was a drastically shifting thing, but it stood strong on a few different foundations. Human beings might change their feelings on a lot of things, but according to Karl Marx, they would never stop with the striving to work hard for their possessions. Work, to Marx, was a much more important aspect of society's underlying nature than the actual possessions that come as a result of that work. That is why much of Marxism is based upon the theory of work. People in society can not survive without it, even if they have the possessions that they desire.

According to Marxism, people will always want to acquire more things than they already have. That is why work is so important to the development of society, in addition to acquiring things in society. Though Marx and fellow thinker Max Webber do not completely agree on the issue of personal property, they do share many of the same underlying beliefs on its role in the development of modern society as it is known today.

While Karl Marx held onto the belief that possessions were not the end all for people in modern society, Max Weber felt strongly that they were an important part of what he referred to as The Spirit of Capitalism. Anyone who has studied the thoughts of Max Weber knows that much of his theory is based upon religious things. To him, they played an important role in the shaping of modern society in addition to the economic factors that were so prevalent.

That creates a very interesting paradox in his line of thinking. Most of the time, the pursuit of material possessions did not go along with the pursuit of religious purity, but that thinking had to change when modern society was considered. People, on the whole, could pursue both things and they did that in modern society. The Spirit of Capitalism is the most important ideal in Weber's book and it possesses the basic premise of a pursuit. People did not just desire the goods and the economic wealth; they desired the pursuit of such ventures. That particular wording of the theory brings it closer in line to what Karl Marx wrote about in his literature. It is interesting to consider that over time, Weber's theory evolves from what he originally thought.

As he becomes much deeper in his research of certain aspects of capitalistic society, he understands that religion does play a role in forming how people go after their economic goals, but it is not the only thing. Overriding that religious aspiration is the fact that modern society is a highly competitive place that will chew up people and spit them out if they are not careful. At some point, instinct takes over and individuals have to look out for their own good as opposed to doing the right thing and keeping with Protestant values while going after economic gains.

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An interesting comparison can be drawn between Weber and Marx when one considers their theory on the development of the modern world and how material possessions played a role in that. According to Weber, the most important way that possessions had an impact was that they caused people to do things that they normally would not do. Weber thought that the desire to work for material possessions took people completely out of their element. In a way, society changed the way that people worked and the way that people dealt with their friends and their family.

Human beings, by nature, only want to do just enough to get by and just enough to have the things that they need. When personal possessions are out there to be had, people change their ways, though. Marx believed this to be true, as well, though he does not apply the basic religious principles in his thinking that Max Weber is so quick to apply. On the other hand, Marx always held on to the idea that material possessions changed the way people viewed the world. When faced with the prospect of having to make one's own success in a capitalist society, people had the tendency to change their world view and make it meet their current situation.

For some, this created a false sense of security and a false sense of reality. When people have their world view flipped on its head, it changes the way that they deal with other people and it changes the way that they make decisions in forming a society. Marx enjoyed arguing that Capitalism and the desire for possessions changed the way governments operated and the way that nations were formed. This basic premise is not wrong, as it has certainly bared itself true in many situations over the last one hundred years and change.

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Another important economic thinker that cannot be left out of the equation is Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was a man who liked to come up with theories on the basic inner workings of human beings and how they think at a most basic state. His early research was on this fact and later, he came to develop ideas on the development of society. Rousseau makes a point in writings to analyze the role that personal property had on the development of human beings and as such, the development of modern society on the whole. In the beginning, man was content to operate on two basic premises.

Human beings would do enough to ensure self-preservation and they would ultimately operate as a result of pity. Those were two basic ideas that eventually had to change as human beings learned to live together in a modern society. Then there was something different introduced into modern society. Someone decided that human beings must take possession of land and other things in society, as the entire dynamic had to change. All of a sudden, the things that were required for basic survival of human beings went from being just air, food, and water to being much more complicated than that. In fact, people had to learn to work in order to keep up with others in society and get the possessions that they learned to covet.

That was not the whole of it, though. Human beings not only had to learn to love work in order to sustain themselves personally, they also had to learn to do enough work to sustain the whole body of society. This is an important idea and an important aspect of work that thinkers like Marx and Weber also kept in mind when they were writing down their particular policies.

For Jean-Jacques Rousseau, people were not the only ones who were forced to change as a result of the introduction of private property into the equation. Society as a whole had to change to allow for the differences between human beings. Society became much more regimented and things became much more complicated than they had ever been before. Possessions played a role. In the early days of human society, the biggest and strongest individuals did all of the talking because they had all of the power. Now that possessions were necessary for survival, work became just as necessary. As Marx had mentioned in his writings, the desire to gain possessions was just as important as the material possessions themselves. Therefore, the smart and the shifty were now the people who were put into control.

They instantly became more important than the strong folks that used to have complete control over society. That created a society that was broken down into two parts. The society that comes about as a result of private property is one that has a distinct class system. There are the haves and the "have nots". Those with the land, money, and possessions are the ones who can impose their will on the people who are not lucky enough to have this type of control.

According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it takes the rich people with the possessions a little while to figure out that they have such power, but when they do, the results are somewhat catastrophic to society as a whole. The moral implications of this type of control are also worth keeping in mind. For the first time, people with the good things in life do their best to start

deceiving the people without property. This is the first time that society begins to eat itself alive for the sake of personal property gain.

For all three of these theorists, the connection between personal property and human inequality is a strong one. As mentioned before, Rousseau felt that when personal property became important for human society, people began to establish classes and the smart took over where the strong had once been in control. He felt very strongly that personal property was the cause of many of the ills of society that had not originally been in place when society was first being formed. Marx, on the other hand, did not have this strong of a feeling on the matter because his research and his theories were mostly based upon economic principles.

He did feel that capitalism was destined to fail because the system would eventually collapse upon itself. Instead of people simply doing enough work for their own personal survival, people started doing work to gain more things than the person next to them. This important theme is one that turned society into a cut throat one. There was now a desire for people to get ahead of their neighbor when there was no other reason to do so. Max Weber understands that the search for new possessions and the ability to work for those things is an extremely important part of the development of society.

Human nature is always shifting, so this was just one thing that eventually caused people to compete with one another. In one sense, it was bound to happen, but the creation of a class system happened more quickly because work and possessions came about in the newly forming society.



The development of human society cannot be considered without also looking at the development of personal property and work. As Weber, Marx, and Rousseau brought to light in their research, society took a turn when personal property was introduced into the equation. Some felt that this change was for the worst, while others felt that the change was for the good, but it cannot be argued that personal property did nothing to the formation of modern society.

When people realized that work and personal property were things that they had to do in order to survive, they began to work just as hard as they ate and just as hard as they breathed. Human nature is such that people will do whatever it takes to survive. That survival moved to include work and because of that, modern society changed in a profound way that no one could easily escape.