

Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism



Karl Heinrich Marx (Karl Marx), a philosopher, historian, sociologist, political theorist and journalist who developed the theory of Marxism. His sociological ideas have played a significant role in the understanding and development of social sciences and Marxist political movements. Marxist theories about society, politics, economy and culture signify that the culture gets progressed through dialectic of class efforts. On the other hand, Karl Emil Maximilian Max Weber (Max Weber) was another economist and sociologist of Germany who got profoundly influenced by the sociology along with its theory and research findings. He became famous for the notion in economic sociology that was completely elaborated in his book on “ The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”. This essay provides an insight about the concept of progress together with its comparison, by considering the opinions and views of the two sociologists depicted above. Specifically, the present essay concentrates on the cultural theorists who are interested in the process of social development as a whole and understands the concept of progress relative to this context.

In the reconsideration of this concept of progress, Karl Marx (1818-1883) grew highly influential as he started attacking the dominant philosophic and idealistic traditions pertaining to German Science and Philosophy with his inspection of the economies related to France, Germany and England as well as the emergence class associated to these countries. According to Marx, a man creates and reflects himself by the labour processes and develops awareness not only about himself but also his social characteristic features in relation to other individuals in the society. Nevertheless, a man’s association to his labour and to himself, nature and other people was been

highly disturbed through the establishment of Division of Labour as highly and well-organised means of production that subsequently resulted in man's estrangement from his own labour. This context of alienation was intensified further with the considerable development of capitalist mode of production where in which worker was further divided from his dynamic labour through industrialist's ownership in means of production. Thus, Marx asserts that individual's progress towards self realisation has been stymied by the development of capitalism-a structure of economic associations that utilize working man's labour in the name of proceeds (profits) and isolates man from other individuals and himself in a way through the conflict between the proleterian and bourgeois classes. But, in Marx's historical explanation, the bourgeois class development and the specific capitalistic mode of production is an obligatory step towards the category of society where the individual may once again obtain the origin for his perspective of self-realisation: communism. These enhancements of production forces, a construction of man's ability, find its restrictions in the association of power and contraindication of dominance. Thus, he meets the necessary criterion with the explanatory belief of self-realisation by his investing analysis of conflicts entrenched within social and economic construction of capitalism. In addition, Marx expands the idea of ' false-consciousness" by recognising the class that is unable to direct their true interests associated to well-being, self realisation and exploitation. By developing consciousness among the proletarian's class, the utilisation of human reason in understanding the characteristic nature and cause of exploitation as private possession of the ways of fabrication in capitalist society. Nevertheless, it can be understood that it is the subjugated use of reason, allied with Marx's philosophy of

material practice that can result in the development of freedom to humans and thus assist them in achieving progress. Lastly, the use and application of human reasoning as critiques with the faith in religious salvation, can be considered as human means for transforming their materialistic social situations and commence the re-arrival of enlightenment promise of freedom, which in Marx's perspective was been impeded and succeeded by the estrangement and exploitation conditions that manifest within the capitalistic society.

Contrastingly, Max Weber (1864-1920) considered seriously about the emerging dilemmas from the socio cultural and political state of affairs in Germany and criticised purely the historical materialistic concept of explanations. Within his book "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", Weber instead depicts a more conceivable and pragmatic explanation that the materialization of capitalism owed much to the specific patterns of religious motivational explanations in Calvinism between various industrialists at that period. As these people (Calvinists) believed that god's knowledge and astuteness was immeasurable to human minds, deliverance and resistance cannot be anticipate confidently as a reward for one's inherent merits. In this uncertainty, the preachers of Calvinism can only offer their valuable suggestions in a way that expertise in one's worldly calling can be assumed to be as a spot of celestial errand. This consequential methodology of hard work, methodological planning and reinvesting profits then led to success within business and economic growth. In Weber's edifying history writings, the principal theme is the rationalisation, the long-standing trend in Western societies towards considering every segment of

social activity more acquiescent to calculation. He asserts that, in increasing yearn for achieving mastery over meeting human needs (by maximisation of efficiency, predictability and control) an individual drives the rationalisation process. Unlike Marx, Weber direct that rationalisation cannot advance identically and concomitantly in every sphere and instead each individual sphere is rationalised in its own specific direction that is unique and different. In the spiritual sphere, the process of rationalisation advances with the deflation and the exclusion of magic through logical expansion and the realistic descriptions of Protestantism, especially the abstinent material performances. Different to Marx, Weber describes that rationalisation in economic sphere discovers itself in the modern bourgeois capitalism (Marx view of capitalistic progress) and the critical utilisation of reasoning in the computation of quest of yields. Additionally, Weber explains that the progress in administrative sphere can be directed only through a guided reckoning, impartiality and competence. In the intellectual sphere, progress was thought to be achieved by the aid of scientific methods, testing skills, experiential data collection because theories that are imitative through scientific reasoning supersede to those that are previously attributed to magical causes. However, this particular enlightenment ideology of motive and self realisation is distinguishable with that of Marx's view of progress and is still qualified by Weber by the rationalisation itself.

Compared to Marx perspective, the rationalisation and progress according to Weber involve the positive features of effectiveness, manageability, uniformity, unavoidability and impartiality. These positive aspects of rationalisation can result in enhanced capacity, the development of capacity

and power relations and thereby assists in attaining progress in each sphere depicted above. Unlike Marx, rationalisation in economic perspective as witnessed in Western Capitalism was been considered by Weber as the process of reasoning out unreasonable sentiments that hamper accrual and estimation of profit, progress and sentiments like faith, thoughtfulness solidarity and apprehension. Similarly, the rationalisation in administrative view by bureaucracy has led to dehumanisation of relationships amid of personnel surrounded by objective regulations of conduct that enhance competence, reduce prejudice and produce reliable, expected results. Moreover, the phenomenon of rationalisation in political perception develops a conflict with the human involvement in the form of democracy and comprises people supremacy with the influence of outside and external forces. Thus, it can be understood that Weber paints an austere picture of dehumanised relationships, where in which love, compassion and human relations are weeded out in rationalised links that promote regularity, impartiality and efficiency. Distinct to Marx, with this, Weber provides a critical analysis to the Enlightenment appeal, not only indicating the positive facets of rationalisation but also its negative implications.

To conclude this interpretation of progress among the two cultural theorists, the approach of modernity, radical discontinuity and the possibility of complete self realisation were figured within the work of each theorist. Simply, it can be explained as for Marx, the progress lies in the advancement of society including economic production methods that dialectically result to its radical oust and a societal reconstruction, a revolutionary shatter from the pre-existing forms of history. Towards the other side, the split is in

conventional forms of movement and organisation through rationalisation for Weber. Rather, human maturity and its development in Marx's view dictated radical variance and structural modifications, Whilst Weber view embodied an emerging tension between ideals of competence and distant relations versus unreasonable principles of human love, consideration and faith. Thus, this process of progress and rationalisation still persists for critical discussion in future as all the social practices and principles strive to conceal their embarrassment with power just in their way of changing domination.