**Karl Marx and His Contributions**

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Karl Marx is well known for his contributions within the sociology discipline. He wrote many significant works that are still learned and used in today’s society. From living in Germany where it was divided and political tensions were high, Marx, took those hardships and developed theories to explain what was occurring in society. He also learned from The German Enlightenment and Fredrich Engels. From these theories of Marxism, capitalism, and division of labor, Marx explained what was occurring in society of the upper and lower classes (Allan & Daynes, 2017).

**Major Concerns of Marx**

***German Enlightenment***

The German Enlightenment was very influential to Karl Marx and his theories' development. One of the most influential German Enlightenment thinkers was Immanuel Kant. Kant, like Gottfried Leibniz, took a metaphysical approach to understanding the universe. He critiqued the English and French thinkers for their mechanistic, law-bound approach because it did not take into consideration the human soul or spirit. He claimed that “if all empirical phenomena can be reduced to natural law, then human consciousness is nothing more than chemical reactions among bits of brain matter” (Allan & Daynes, 2017, pg. 53). Kant believed that the mind contains intrinsic categories and ideas that order each individual’s experience of the empirical world. The German Enlightenment was rooted in mysticism and to preserve the metaphysical existence of human nature and reason. This heavily influenced Marx and his sociological imagination. Marx saw German philosophers during the enlightenment were trying to bring together the modern government with traditional faith, unlike English and French intellectuals who were trying to separate the church and state. Furthermore, Marx grew up in Germany where it was broken up into multiple political and economic territories. During this time, the political tension was increasingly high. Marx growing up in this social world was heavily influenced by it. He was an outsider. The country he grew up, Germany, start prosecuting individuals of Jewish faith. Then having the German Enlightenment, Marx established the foundation of his work (Allan & Daynes, 2017).

***Friedrich Engels***

Friedrich Engels also had a significant role in Marx’s life. When Marx was living in Berlin after completing his studies, he sought out academic employment but struggled to find a job within the academic field. He eventually began working for a radical newspaper. There he became an editor and a publisher. His publishing's caught the attention of the political elite and had to deal with censorship on further publications. However, he then wrote an article on the Russian emperor. Due to its content, the Prussian government shut Marx’s paper down. After getting back lash for his article, he moved to Paris where he met Friedrich Engels (Allan & Daynes, 2017). This is significant because Engels explained to Marx the abuses of industrialized capitalism, including child labor and the impoverished working class. Engels also saw the start of class oppression occurring in society. He also sent Marx multiple articles about these conditions, which impacted his views and later his works (Allan & Daynes, 2017).

**Theoretical Contributions**

Karl Marx is well known for his theory of Marxism. This theory is based on social, political, and economic struggles of the working class. This theory became known in the 19th century during the Industrial Revolution in Europe. He saw the power dynamics between the capitalists, those in charge, and the workers. The workers were being exploited and Marx saw the class conflict that would form. Marx coined the term proletariat for the lower-social class workers and for the individuals who were in charge, meaning bosses, owners, and managers, where labeled as the bourgeoisie. Marx saw that the proletariat were performing labor at minimal wages, yet the bourgeoisie were reaping their labor and profiting. Marx argued that there would be constant class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This class tension is coming from the individuals in charge who want to maximize their profits through exploiting the labor of the workers, but the individuals who provide that labor want are unsatisfied and want the exploitation to end. This ties into his theory of capitalism. The capitalists, as described by Marx, are the bourgeoisie business owners who control the means of production. He viewed their profit as theft since the capitalists are profiting from the underpaid labor of the workers. Capitalism in Marx’s eyes is an unstable system that would create major class issues (Guy-Evans, 2024). To describe this, Marx used the term division of labor. To Marx, the division of labor explained what is wrong in the world from the differences in social classes and the tension in society. He explained how it is damaging the unity of humanity. It establishes social classes that are created from economic differences. Thus, this is how the unity of humanity will suffer from having an economic divide. The workers are being used and essentially enslaved to the capitalists who are profiting from their labor (North, 1969).

With this class division between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, Marx and Engels proposed that the capitalist’s exploitation would eventually cause a proletarian revolution. Since the working conditions and wages were worsening, they believed that the working class would revolt. This proposal is heavily discussed The *Communist Manifesto* that Marx and Engels wrote. They described how society would be after the proletariat revolution. Instead of the bourgeoisie controlling the means of production, it would be replaced with collective ownership over economic assets. This is a shift from Marx’s concept of capitalism to communism (Guy-Evans, 2024). In Marxism, communist societies do not private property or inherited wealth, increased income tax, and centralized control of banking. In their book, society was described as classless with no private property and only collective ownership. With the abolishment of private property and means of production becoming a common agreement, society operates as communist. Since there are no social classes, no class can exploit the other (Marx & Engels, 2019).

**Relevant in Society Today**

Karl Marx’s theoretical contributions are still relevant in studying and understanding society today. While the working class has improved from Marx’s time to now, workers today are still being exploited within the workplace. A great amount of workers' labor and output are still being claimed and profited by the capitalists. While the structure of society has been modernized, Marx would still see how it is similar to how he left it. The capitalists still own the means to production and workers are being underpaid (Gurley, 1984). Marx also warned of the class differences and tensions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and these are still being seen. While those terms are not used today, they are still applicable. Individuals, especially in today’s world, cannot afford to not work. Yet, they are still not getting paid enough to keep a roof over their head, food on the table, and items essential to live. In America, there have been worker unions formed, boycotts taking place in workplaces and strikes taking place to show how they are being exploited. Tensions are still high in society today as Marx saw in his time. By still studying his works, society can be better understood. Marx ideas and concepts are still applicable to today’s society.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Karl Marx heavily influenced society and has a long-lasting impact. His works were very significant and still applicable today. He grew up in a society that was divided, and tension filled and used that to drive his works. From being friends with other intellectuals, he gained a lot and applied his views to create some of his significant theories of capitalism, Marxism, and division of labor. By understanding and learning about Karl Marx, society can be better understood.

**References**

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