

Reading Questions on Marx, The Communist Manifesto

1. What does Marx mean when he writes that history is the history of class conflict? What do classes conflict over? (p. 473-474)
2. what does Marx see as progressive and dynamic about capitalism (see pp. 477-78 in particular)
3. why does Marx believe that capitalism is more rational than previous modes of production? But why is it also more transparent in its forms of exploitation?
4. Why does Marx believe that capitalism is like the ‘sorcerer’s apprentice,’ conjuring up social forces that it cannot control? (see p. 478)
5. How does the proletariat, an oppressed class which only has its labor-power to sell, gain the capacity to organize a social revolution (see pp. 480-481). Why is the political organization of the working class crucial for its development into a revolutionary class? (pp. 481-83)
6. Marx believes that a certain sector of the bourgeois intelligentsia will throw in its lot with the proletariat. Why? (see p. 481 bottom)

Part II Bourgeois and Proletarian

1. How does Marx describe the relationship between communists and the mass working class movement? (pp. 483-84)
2. Marx argues against many standard criticisms of communism? What are these criticisms and what does Marx say about them. (pp. 485-489)

Marx outlines an immediate program for communists on pp. 490-91. In what way is it a surprisingly moderate, reformist program? What view does he believe communists should have towards political democracy? (see p. 490 and again pp. 499-450 re: the democratic revolution against aristocratic rule in Germany) (**everyone**)

Question to guide reading of the Preface to a Contribution to the Critique..., p. 3-7 of Marx-Engels Reader

Define the terms “mode of production,” “forces of production,” “relations of production.” Why does Marx believe that the social forces of capitalist production are ultimately “fettered” by the private social relations of capitalism?

Part I -- Bourgeois and Proletarians

Section argues that Modern capitalism has not eliminated class antagonisms, but has simply established new ones. Moreover, capitalism, by driving out of business small-producers and proletarianizing the professions (from self-employed to wage-labor) is distinguished by an increasingly simplified class structure (p. 9-11). Part I charts the rise of the bourgeoisie or capitalist class, its need for alliances with workers to defeat the remains of the aristocracy of feudalism. Finally, it argues that the rational, calculating nature of capitalism creates an efficient mode of production which gains sway over the globe (p. 10-12) and also strips away the organic, religious, ideology of interdependence of noble and serf, thus rendering the exploitation of workers by capitalists transparent (p. 11-12).

In this section Marx advances his historical materialist theory of history

I. Theory of History (Capitalism as Dynamic and Progressive as compared to feudalism, but ultimately a system of wage-slavery in which the capital which workers create comes to dominate and control the workers themselves.)

1. description of capitalist dynamics

a. as class conflict -- classes fight over social surplus and control over the labor process. (473-74)

b. forces versus relations of production (social forces vs. private relations) Relations fetter (render irrational) the forces (p. 15) 478

c. capitalism as productive, dynamic form of production; constantly innovating, revolutionizing, but destroying uncompetitive economic sectors (14-15) 477-78

d. But constant revolutionizing of production yields material requisites of freedom. Abundance and self-conscious, politically free, but economically dominated proletariat. (13-15) 477-78

e. state acts to rationalize and manage common interests of a ruling class which competes against itself and has divided interests: "...the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." (p. 11) Note: Marx sees semi-autonomous role for state actors -- they manage common affairs of bourgeoisie and are neither themselves necessarily capitalists nor representatives of a particular sector of capitalists.

2. Capitalism as own "grave-digger" (p. 21) -- the "sorcerer" capitalism creates a "sorcerer's apprentice which it cannot control -- a Frankenstein -- p. 14)

a. transparent social relations render exploitation transparent. Strips away superstitious, non-rational, religious veil of feudal social relations.

Capitalist world reduces all social relations to the "cash nexus" (p. 11-12) 475-76

b. crises of overproduction and underconsumption and mass unemployment. Capitalism produces more than it can consume (because it pays workers too little) (p. 15) Despotism of the firm versus anarchy, uncoordinated nature of overall market. Deskilling of workers by automation and creation of domination of management over laborer. (p. 14-16) 477-78

c. Concentration of ownership and centralization of production in large factories creates many workers and fewer and few capitalists. (16-17) 477-78

d. Bourgeoisie trains its future political enemy by mobilizing emerging proletariat against feudal aristocracy (1848 revolutions) (p. 18) 477-78

e. But workers through their own experience move from rejecting industrialization (sabotage) to trade union organizing to organizing to take over state power and abolish capitalism (see pps. 18-21) 477-78

f. when becomes clear that future is on side of proletariat a portion of the bourgeoisie -- some bourgeois intellectuals or "ideologists" -- join the side of the proletariat (Marx explaining his own role.) (p. 19-21) (book on)

Part II Bourgeois and Proletarians

a. liberation as self-emancipation. Need for proletariat to undergo long period of struggle to develop its capacity for self-rule. Role of communists -- join the mass movement, but have the best understanding of the "line of march" of history, of the true interests of the proletariat. Is this strictly a vanguardist view of role of communists? (22-23; see also 18-21)

483-84 480-83

b. What Communism is Not -- or how Marx attempts to refute dominant capitalist ideology

1. not abolition of personal property. Capitalism is socially produced property, but it is owned privately. Communism will not expropriate one's personal effects (toothbrush, house, car, etc.) But rather it will socialize control over a private property system which is already socially produced (i.e., workers create capital, but are enslaved by capitalists. Past labor dominates present labor) (24-26) 485-86 486-87

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2. not universal laziness. Under capitalism lazy often make the most money and hard-working often are low-paid. (25-26). Not abolition of individuality, as it is capitalism that eliminates individuality of worker (24-25) 486

3. not cultural barbarism. Workers under capitalism have no time for culture. (26-27) 486-87

4. not community of women or destruction of family. It is capitalism which creates prostitution by poor women and splits up families due to unemployment, etc. (27) 487-88

5. it is capitalism, not communism, which destroys national boundaries by destroying national boundaries in search of profit. (28) 488-89

II.b. Moderate, Transitional Nature of First-Stage Communist Program (p. 30-31)

490-91

Note that Marx writes that the working class "will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie." (p. 30) Marx assumes workers will use democratic political means to gain power, unless the bourgeois state represses the movement violently. The the working class must resort to armed conflict. Moderate first-stage program:

- a. progressive taxation
- b. public education, healthcare
- c. gradually nationalize key sectors of economy
- d. start with nationalization of banks, land, transport and communication.

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Part IV --Position of Communists in Relationship to Other Parties (p. 41-42)

a. note that Marx makes clear that working class supports bourgeois parties in their fight against aristocratic, feudal reaction in both Germany and elsewhere. But "the bourgeois revolution in Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution."

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Some Friendly Guidance for Thinking about Marx and the Communist Manifesto

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One of the main problems in studying Karl Marx is that most contemporary theorists interpret Marx in their way -- the point is to interpret Marx in his way. So I urge you to read Marx with your eyes open. Even though The Communist Manifesto is a popular polemic (thus simplifying Marx's analysis of capitalism), it outlines Marx's basic conception of historical materialism and class conflict; his analysis of the capital-labor relation; and his belief that pregnant within an increasingly interdependent capitalist mode of production is the potential for a democratic form of production -- communism. Such a society will not come about from an inevitable playing out of "material" forces; rather, the conscious political organization of the working class will play a critical role in bringing about communism. Politics and ideas do play a relatively autonomous role in Marx's analysis of history (even if he ultimately believes they are structured by the way production in all its forms -- intellectual as well as material -- is organized). So the Manifesto is a richer text than your average high school class would have it.

(Before going on to the Manifesto, let me in telegraphic fashion flush out my game on what the collapse of communism means for Marxism and socialism. You can skip down to the questions on The Manifesto which begin on the middle of page two, if you are short of time.)

1. The collapse of authoritarian communism means the death of Marxist-Leninism as an official developmentalist ideology that envisioned rapid industrial development of less-developed societies under the guidance of central planning and a one-party state. Such a political project has little to do with classical Marxism as Marx believed capitalist development and political democracy were prerequisites for socialism.
2. Decades of authoritarian communist ideology equating of its own rule with authentic socialism means that in E. Europe any mention of the "s" word -- whether it be social democracy or democratic socialism -- will not have great popular resonance. But as these societies try to build democratic mixed economies a political struggle will ensue over how to distribute ownership rights and the proper mix of political regulation and market mechanisms. That is, politics will return to Eastern Europe and a left similar to W. European social democracy will reemerge.
3. The "triumph of capitalism" and "triumph of the market" rhetoric will also die down in the West as the legacy of the deregulation of the Reagan-Thatcher era leaves a legacy of increased inequality and the decline of public goods, infrastructure and productive capacity. The highly indebted, speculative nature of the inegalitarian "boom" of the 80s (which only benefited the top-third of our society) will bring its chickens-home to roost. Your generation is likely to be the first generation in America to experience overall downward-social mobility. Ask any recent Harvard law school or B-school grad about the job market on Wall Street.
4. Contrary to ideological misreadings of Marx he was neither a crude egalitarian or a

statist. Marx criticized a levelling conception of equality as based on a bourgeois notion of "keeping up with the Joneses." A good society would enable each individual to develop the uniqueness of their potentiality. Marx's vision is more one of the diversity of human potentiality than of drab similarity. Nor did he believe a good society involved statist control of the economy. Marx argued that this would simply invest the state as a "universal capitalist", undemocratically controlling the labor of its citizens. Whether Marx adequately outlined the relationship between market mechanisms and democratic planning which would facilitate workers' control of production is another story, however.

5. Just as Christianity cannot be completely exculpated of responsibility for the excesses of the Crusades and Inquisition, Marx himself must bear some responsibility for deeds done in his name. Yes, Marx's vision is ultimately an emancipatory one, a vision of human beings consciously controlling their social destiny, a vision of extending democracy from the political realm into the economic and cultural sphere. But Marx consciously denigrated the role of moral values and of individual rights in promoting such societies (narrowly equating individual rights with the right to private property). And while increased prosperity may well lessen the intensity of political conflict, Marx was simply wrong to think that an abundant society would not need to deliberate politically about its priorities. Neither politics nor the state can wither away completely; and that Marx had nothing to say about the political institutions (and checks and balances on state power) of a socialist society provided anti-authoritarian leftists with little moral and intellectual resources to combat the rise of authoritarian states ruling in the name of Marx. So while I'll argue that many aspects (but not all) of Marx's analysis of capitalism still carry considerable weight, I come neither to bury nor to praise Marx.

In reading the portions of The Manifesto we'll discuss you should consider the following issues (I assure you'll they'll come up in discussion. I know how frenetic life is; so hopefully these notes will help focus your reading):

1. Why might Part I "Bourgeois and Proletarians" be partially interpreted as one of the greatest celebrations of capitalism. What is progressive about capitalism in Marx's mind? When does capitalism outlive its usefulness? Why is the possibility of communism predicated on the full development of capitalist productive forces? Why is the dynamic and international nature of capitalism central to Marx's analysis (remember that one discusses the "triumph of capitalism" one should consider what capitalist development looks like in Latin and Central America, East Asia, as well as the garment sweatshops of East Los Angeles--capitalism is the first international system of production)?
2. Why might Marx be described as celebrating the "modern" and rationalizing aspects of capitalism. What is it about capitalism's rendering social relations "transparent" and products of a "callous cash nexus" that promotes the possibility of human emancipation (p. 475)
3. Why is capitalism like the "sorcerer's apprentice", conjuring up social powers that it cannot control? (p. 478) Tease out how Marx views communism as subjecting productive forces unconsciously created by human interaction to the conscious control of human beings.
4. How does the proletariat, an oppressed class which only has its labor-power to sell, gain the capacity to organize a social revolution? Why is the political organization of the working class so crucial to its maturation? (see p. 480-481) Does Marx think the revolution is inevitable and

workers can sit back and wait for the collapse of capitalism?

(While the working class may have not developed into as revolutionary a force as Marx may have envisioned -- they have more to lose than their chains -- working class-based social democratic, socialist, communist and labor parties of Europe played the central role in building the welfare state of the 20th century. One cannot comprehend the movement towards political democratization in East Asia, South Africa or Latin America without analyzing the role of trade unions and working class political activity in those societies.)

5. Marx knows that workers are not legally enslaved and he believes them to be freer than either serfs or slaves (Marx does, in certain ways, value the political liberties of bourgeois democracy.) Then why does he use the metaphor of slavery throughout his work (see p. 483) to describe the relationship between capitalist and wage-laborer? Can slavery be abolished by paying workers better wages?

Part II. Proletarians and Communists

Here Marx takes on the standard objections to communism, as well as addressing the political tasks of communists. Your job is to evaluate how he deals with the standard objections.

1. that communism abolishes personal property (i.e., your toothbrush will be nationalized. Why does Marx argue that capitalism has already abolished private property for the vast majority and that capital is not a form of personal property, but rather already a real form of social property? Remember that 40 per cent of American capital is owned by insurance and pension funds--are these individual capitalists who scrimped and saved and engaged in enterpenuerial risk-taking?) 2. that communism will fail because no one will have an incentive to work 3. communism will destroy culture and level everyone down to the same intefectual and cultural level. 4. communism will destroy the family 5. communism will abolish national identity and 6. communism will abolish all moral values.

Two final questions:

1. What does Marx see as the political role of communists? Does the political strategy he outlines on p.483 (bottom)-484 and on p. 499-500 strike you as different from Lenin's conception of a vanguard party that brings communist consciousness to a working class incapable of becoming revolutionary through its own daily experiences? Might Marx leave himself open to such a vanguardist interpretation?

2. Examine Marx's program for the first-stage of communist rule (or what he later terms "first-stage communism" or "socialism"). Does the program strike you as particularly radical? What does Marx mean by a classless society which abolishes "political power, properly so called" (p. 490) and institutes a society "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all?"

Meanwhile, be happy and unalienated in your labor on this text and I look forward to discussing these and other issues in Marxism with you

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Some tips on reading The Communist Manifesto:

As Tucker points out in his introductory note, the Manifesto was written by Marx and Engels late in 1847 for a small revolutionary group. It was meant to be a pamphlet, designed for wide dissemination and strong impact. Thus, the argument is presented without extended exposition or careful qualification. Nevertheless, it's packed with insights, and much of Marx's overall system is there in capsule form. It sets out, in a remarkably compressed and powerful way, a general theory of society and history, a theory of the nature and dynamics of modern society, and a call to action; it has become, so to speak, the sacred text of a world religion. Your task is to unpack it, to identify the wider ideas it contains. We'll spend much of the next week seeing how Marx develops the arguments which are presented here so schematically.

Try, in particular, to puzzle out Marx's arguments on the following points:

I. General theory of society and history

- (1) As he later puts it, Marx sees the "real foundation" of a society in its mode of production. The mode of production, in turn, involves a particular combination of forces of production and relations of production. What does all this mean?
- (2) Marx sees a given social formation as constituting a system, an integrated totality--but a system with built-in tensions and contradictions. All present and previous societies are characterized, in particular, by two sorts of contradictions: (a) between the forces and the relations of production--see, e.g., pp. 477-478; and (b) between different groups of people who are forced into antagonistic relations by the social organization of production.
- (3) That is, all previous and existing societies have been class societies. What are classes? What is the source of class antagonisms? How are these antagonisms expressed?
- (4) Marx develops a theory of social ideology or "false consciousness." What is ideology, and what is the relationship between ideology and class society?
- (5) Finally, Marx develops a theory of the transition from one social formation to another which includes a theory of revolution. What is the relationship between class conflict, the inner contradictions of the mode of production, and revolution?

II. The theory of capitalist (or bourgeois) society

While reading the Manifesto, keep in mind that it is Marx's analysis of the development of modern society, his account of the total transformation of society that we have been talking about since the beginning of the course. What does he make of it? How does he explain the French Revolution? the Industrial Revolution? How do they fit together? What is capitalism? What is the logic through which it rises and then destroys itself?

MODE OF PRODUCTION

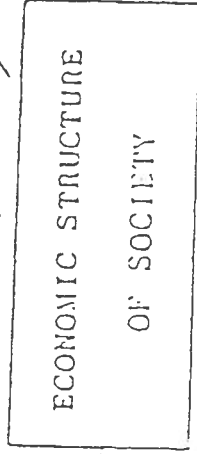
i Forces of production
comprising: instruments
of production (tools,
machines, etc.), methods
of working (skills,
forms of cooperation,
division of labour, etc.)
and applied knowledge
(science, etc.)

combined with

ii Relations of production
relations between people
necessary for a certain
form of material
production, comprising:
distribution of means of
production, forms of
possession (collective
and individual private
property), and distribution
of the product

to which 'correspond' forms of SOCIAL
CONSCIOUSNESS

forms 'foundation of' POLITICAL
and LEGAL
SUPERSTRUCTURE
comprising the
State, legal fo
of property
right, etc.



'Class struggle'
gives rise to t
State as the me
of its
representation ;
regulation

CLASSES
determined by
relations of
production

Part II

- a. property and the division of labor
- b. The Golden Age Family -- family and small community; moral love, but not jealousy; absence of dependency
- c. Emergence of large-scale civilization -- and its discontents
 1. judgment/jealousy/moral love
 2. dependency of the division of labor
 3. markets, appearances and inauthenticity
- d. the historical contract as a swindle by the rich over the poor
- e. possibility of reason being used to create a new, just contract

II. Reason and Liberation-- The Social Contract

1. The Social Contract as a Conscious Human Creation

- a. conventional agreement (civic virtue is not natural)
- b. the just social contract as humans creating their own liberating "chains" of democratic interdependence -- "whoso all gives himself to all gives himself to none"
- c. the unanimity of the basic contract
- d. how a democratic community can force a dissenting individual to be free

II. The General Will vs. Particular Wills

- a. Rousseau's hostility to particular interests
 - b. need for Legislator to create moral climate of social solidarity
 - c. does solidarity of Rousseauian democracy stand in tension with pluralism of modern complex society?
 - d. critique of liberal self-interest; vision of self-sufficient artisanal, peasant economy.
- Can we extend Rousseauian democracy towards a pluralist conception of radical liberal democracy. Or does pluralism threaten democratic solidarity?

Outline of Key Issues in Central Texts of Marx

The Communist Manifesto

I. Theory of History

- a. as class conflict -- classes fight over control over social surplus and over control over labor process
 - b. forces vs. relations of production (cf. Preface to a Critique of Political Economy, Tucker, p.3-7)
 1. capitalist contradiction -- increasingly social forces of production (way we produce) vs. private relations of production (way production is controlled)

II. Manifesto as Homage to Capitalism

- a. transparency of capitalist social relations -- the "cash nexus" vs. feudal mysticism -

- (rationality of capitalism). Contrast this with Marx's different view of the veiled nature of capitalist ideology (ideology of freedom of exchange and political equality hides domination in production)

b. constant revolution of production yields material prerequisites of freedom (p. 476-477, Tucker)

c. capitalism as "sorcerer's apprentice" (capitalism as digger of own grave)

1. creates proletariat and social conditions for political organization

2. centralization and concentration of capital

3. crises of overproduction, underconsumption, creation of mass unemployment and economic insecurity

4. despotic planning in capitalist firm versus the anarchy of the capitalist market; communism as rational planning of economy

III. Centrality of Political Organization of Working Class (480-481)

a. liberation as self-emancipation

b. need for working class to go through long period of struggle to develop its capacity for self-government

c. rejection of capitalism as wage-slavery (483). No matter how good wages may be, workers still do not control production.

IV. What Communism is Not

1. not abolition of personal property (484). Capital is already socially produced property. Communism will not expropriate privately owned goods such as personal effects; rather it will socialize control over already socially produced capital.

2. not universal laziness (486). Under capitalism the lazy often make much money

3. not cultural barbarism (487)

4. not community of women (488). Capitalism causes prostitution.

5. not abolition of national identity; capitalism already destroys natural boundaries

V. Moderate Nature of Revolutionary Program (490)

a. progressive taxation

b. free education

c. nationalize banks, transport and communications

d. gradual transition

VI. Critique of Other "Socialisms" as Elitist or Reactionary (section on utopian socialism)

II. Outline of Argument of On the Jewish Question

a. Bauer's argument -- why Bauer believes Jews should give up religion if they wish to become citizens

b. why Marx disagrees -- why capitalist democracy is compatible with citizens keeping their particular identities in civil society

c. political emancipation (one person/one vote) vs. civil emancipation (freedom to

compete in the market)

d. state as realm of false universality (we are not really equal in power in civil society)

e. human emancipation -- human control over their production

analysis of religion and state as false realms of universality (we don't really control our destiny democratically in the "real world" of economic production) leads to his broader analysis of alienation

III. Key Issues in The Manuscripts

a. parallels between alienated labor and alienation in the state and in religion (human beings create institutions which come to control them)

b. political economy ignores the sordid origins of capitalism -- not through virtuous entrepreneurs but through slavery, theft and alienation--that's where capital comes from

c. four forms of alienated labor

1. from product

2. from production

3. from self as creative, species-being

4. from fellow humans who are seen only as competitors

d. view of communism as truly human production. Opposes "primitive communism". If not on universal scale of economic abundance will get state as a universal capitalist exploiting a society of workers to achieve economic development

e. critique of money as a falsely universal commodity which can buy attributes that human beings don't truly have. In good society only love can be exchanged for love, trust for trust -- that is money will no longer be a universal "pimp" able to buy things that humans do not merit

IV. Key Issues in The German Ideology

a. critique of "German Ideology"--the "crude empiricism" of Feurbach -- recognizes humans create ideas, but doesn't try to change human material circumstances that give rise to these ideas; critique of "crude idealism" (Max Stirner) -- believes ideas drive history and fails to see that it is historical material circumstances that give rise to ideas.

b. ideology -- a surface view of world which a material system of production produces which obfuscates the true material causes of that belief system (i.e., feudalism produces ideology of honor and obligation, but hides how that obligation is created by enforced dependence of feudal hierarchy; capitalism creates ideology of freedom of choice, equality in politics, but obfuscates how such "freedom" arises from domination in production).

c. life produces consciousness, not consciousness produces life

d. study individuals as they really are in production rather than as they appear to themselves (154)

e. why the state develops -- to mediate class conflicts in society.

f. Origin of division of labor

1. individual vs. community

- 2. fixation of activity in division of labor
- 3. state as illusory general community

2. possibility of communism (164-165)

- a. 1. need for advanced material production
- 2. primitive communism leads to old crap in new forms. State as universal exploiter. Communism only possible if develops in "world historical" circumstances of advanced capitalism.
- b. history made from below -- not ideas and great men that make history, but ordinary people (166)
- c. but revolution only possible if there is a revolutionary class which develops out of a new mode of production pregnant within the old mode of production
- d. dominant ideology -- ruling ideas ideas of ruling class (172-174). But where do revolutionary ideas come from -- from the interests of a revolutionary class. All revolutionary classes claim to be universal classes. But working class as only first truly universal class (174-175)

3. Communism as Democratic Community (p.190-200)

- a. working class matures through revolution
- b. individuals control definite social relations (194)
- c. human history no longer a history of making
- d. true individuality develops only through conscious community (197)
- e. no longer arbitrary combinations, "freedom" no longer dependent on social contracts based on "fortune" of one's class position (198)
- f. accident of market perceived as capitalist freedom (199). In reality humans dominated by violence of things and the market
- g. true workers' control of production allows for abolition of state as false realm of universality. State replaced by "free association of producers" (199-200)

V. Key Issues in Gotha Programme Selections

- a. first stage communism -- arises from womb of capitalism. Critique of equality and justice -- reward to equal productivity of labor negates difference of individual human needs
- b. higher wages of advanced capitalism still human wage slavery
- c. need for social surplus product in all societies. Communism will have profits/social surplus. But will be controlled by community.
- d. freedom and state under communism
 - 1. dictatorship of proletariat -- state necessary under first stage of communism to develop production and to expropriate the bourgeoisie
 - 2. but state should be subordinate to society. Criticizes LaSalleian socialists authoritarian, statist tendencies. Bourgeois democracy should be defended against authoritarian alternatives (539)
 - 3. universal free education. But Marx opposes state control of curriculum and favors religious toleration (p. 539-540)