
A Character Analysis: Boxer and Capitalism in George Orwell's Animal Farm

Boxer... The Proletariat

Communism. What comes to mind when you hear the word, communism? Do you think about malevolent leaders, or do you think about a thriving society? In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx pushed forward his ideas of Communism and discredited the Capitalist system by depicting the constant struggle between the Bourgeoisie, the upper middle class, and the Proletariat, the working class. Marx constantly informs the reader that the Bourgeoisie had changed people of previous professions into "paid wage-laborers," how, the proletariat becomes just another "part of the machine", and how the proletariat is being taken advantage of by the bourgeoisie. All these themes are prevalent both in *The Communist Manifesto* and in *Animal Farm*, which are manifested into Boxer, the "work-horse" on the farm. These themes support the idea that Orwell's depiction of Boxer fits into Marx and Engels' critique of capitalism

Orwell's depiction of Boxer fits into Marx's and Engels's critique of capitalism because it shows how Boxer, once just a workhorse on the farm, is transformed into a full-fledged worker. When Marx states: "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers," (TCM, page 16) he shows how the working class is stripped of who they used to be, and how they are transformed into laborers. In *Animal Farm* when Orwell states: "The pigs did not actually work, but directed and supervised the others. With their supervisor knowledge it was natural that they assume leadership. Boxer and Clover would harness themselves to the cutter or the horse-rake (no bits or reins were needed in these days, of course) and tramp steadily round and round the field with a pig walking behind and calling out, 'Gee up, comrade' or 'Woah back, comrade!' as the case might be," (AF, page 27-28) it is shown how the pigs give everyone roles as laborers, while they do not work.

Marx's and Engel's critique of capitalism fits well with the depiction of Boxer in *Animal Farm* because it is shown how mainly Boxer, but many other working animals on the farm, are just another piece to the puzzle. When Marx states: "Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individuals character, and consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, an most easily acquired knack, that is required of

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him,” (TCM, page 20) he shows how the proletariat becomes a part of a machine that constantly works and produces, never stopping. When Orwell shows: “Certainly the animals did not want Jones back; if holding debates on Sunday morning was liable to bring him back, then the debates must stop. Boxer, who had now time to think things over, voiced the general feeling by saying: ‘If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right.’ And from then on he adopted the maxim, ‘Napoleon is always right,’ in addition to his private motto of ‘I will work harder,’” (A.F. page 56) he shows how Boxer does not question any of Napoleon’s judgments and how he is submissive. Boxer is indeed just another appendage of the machine; he stays compliant and does his job, and when Napoleon is not sated, Boxer replies with “I will work harder.”

Boxer’s depiction by George Orwell fits into the critique of capitalism by Marx and Engel because in both readings, it is shown how the proletariat, or in this case, Boxer, is constantly being taken advantage of by the Bourgeoisie, or the pigs. When Karl states: “Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers... Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and, above it all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself,” (TCM, page 21) he shows how the proletariat is fully exploited and manipulated by the bourgeoisie for economical gain, and how they are “enslaved,” made to work. When Orwell includes: “All the animals took up the cry of ‘Get out, Boxer, get out!’ But the van was already gathering speed and drawing from them. It was uncertain whether Boxer had understood what Clover had said. But a moment later his face disappeared from the window and there was the sound of a tremendous drumming of hoofs inside the van. He was trying to kick his way out. The time had been when a few kicks from Boxer’s hoofs would have smashed the van to matchwood. But alas! His strength had left him...” (A.F. page 123) he shows how once Boxer came down with an illness and lost most of his working strength, the pigs found no more use of him, as he was now a liability, and utterly useless in their eyes, since he could no longer work. Although there was no “workshop” that was taken from Boxer, the pigs abused his extraordinary ability to work and exploited it as long as they could.

Karl and Marx used their Communist Manifesto to spread their communistic ideas to shut down the corrupt capitalist system. The twain used the relationship between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat to show how capitalism is nonfunctional. Boxer, a vital character in Orwell’s Animal Farm was used to show this relationship and how the capitalist system is flawed. The Bourgeoisie had changed people of previous professions into “paid wage-laborers,” the proletariat became just another “part of the machine”, and the proletariat is taken advantage of by the bourgeoisie. All these ideas can be implemented in the relationship between Boxer and the pigs, which support how Orwell’s depiction of Boxer fits in the critique of capitalism by Karl Marx.

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