
Social Justice as the Elusive Goal of the Communist Manifesto

The Communist Manifesto (1848) clearly articulates the fundamental tenets of Communism and Marxism, expounding on historic class struggles, revolutions, counter-revolutions, inequality, industry, capitalistic exploitation, alienation and the declared war by unified workers. Set in the time of the Industrial Revolution, the manifesto outlines the role of economics in defining and degrading human relationships. Marx and Engels' argument has as its base some of Friedrich Engel's dialectic theory which they both partially contradict and endorse.

A commodity fetish is conceptualized existent in capitalism in which products are monetized and separated from man, who initiates and originates the process of production. Because of the materialistic quality of Communism, Marxists employ the philosophy of Hegel to trace the past, evaluate the present and determine the future of both Communism and laissez-faire Capitalism.

According to the Communist Manifesto, the essence of history comprises of class struggle. Marx and Engels commence with the statement that "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles." The Marxist document launches into a narrative explaining from the dawn of Greco-Roman civilization to the era of the publication of the manifesto. History has its roots deep in the conflict of ideologies which stem from different groups seeking to capitalize on wealth and power and other groups standing as the counteractive forces to resist a school of thought. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel authored the famed Hegelian dialectic which has as its premise that a thesis and antithesis produces a synthesis of both divergent ideas. Hegel's idea forms the foundation of Marx' and Engel's argument, however they improve on it to add a class-conscious materialistic perspective.

The opposition of ideas engenders conflict between ruling and oppressed classes. Again, Marx and Engels reiterate that "the history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms" (The Communist Manifesto). The pyramidal structure or gradation of society remains as a threat to harmony among social classes. Because of the repetitive and cyclical formation of history, class struggles would endure unless the workers rise up, demand their rights and implement socialistic and communal ownership of resources. Nevertheless, the dynamic of social classes incorporates a materialism which hinges on the production and possession of means. Although Marx and Engels predate the Cold War, they both anticipate the Cold War clashes between the bourgeois-run society represented by democratic capitalism and the communist-run society or the communist socialists. The Cold War marked a bitter conflict of both ideologies until a synthesis resolved the warfare in 1991 and terminated the war between

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both entities, thus Marx and Engel's argument of materialistic changes to get rid of divisive class structure proved true to a certain extent and ushered in a post Cold War reality.

A post Cold War reading interprets the course of events which unfolded after the Cold War, lasting between 1945, the end of WWII, and 1991, the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. The Cold War defines the indirect and covert war between the Democratic and capitalistic U.S.A and the Communist-socialist U.S.S.R. Both countries endorsed different political ideologies and developed opposite economic systems. The Communist Manifesto furnishes the characteristics of the U.S. with its capitalism, lopsided concentration of wealth, industrialized and metropolitan cities, system of taxation and centralized government. After the Cold War came the disintegration of barriers such as the Berlin Wall in 1989, the USSR in 1991 and the Apartheid system in 1993. In place of the U.S.S.R, the Russian Federation emerges in 1991 and the economy revamps itself from the government-owned industry to privatization which still put enormous riches at the disposal of a few. Here, the observer of the manifesto sees that the lofty idea of Communism ultimately fails and yields to capitalism, free trade and exploited industry, in which "the commodity form acts as a veil that conceals exploitative relations" (Goodman). After the Cold War ends, rapid industrialization, liberalization, privatization and de-humanized commerce boom in countries such as Communist China and even Communist Russia. One cannot help but feel that after the Cold War, the capitalist giant still prospers through exploitation of human beings, belittled to means of production. In Asian countries such as India and China, mega multinational corporations take advantage of the cheap labor and low cost of production and wield them for profit. Free trade agreements become popularized classing the world into trading blocs which work as a defense against monopolization and competition. Religion influences business and doctrine since capitalism embraces liberal Christianity, while Communism leans toward Atheism. The Post Cold war era has also been riddled with outbreaks of warfare which denies its "wish to attain (Communist) ends by peaceful means" (Communist Manifesto).

Within the economic framework, the commodity fetish lies in "the fetishism of the commodity-the domination of society by "intangible as well as tangible things"-attains its ultimate fulfillment in the spectacle, where the real world is replaced by a selection of images which are projected above it" (Debord). A fetish is a magical object invested with power or a cherished idea, hence the commodity fetish idolizes the material, while at the same time, debases other objects to the level of commodity. Human beings only are validated as it relates to production and sustainability of a business venture. Also, the fixation with commodity in the economic world, has removed the reverence and respect for occupations, converting people to units of production or wage workers instead of the worth of humanity. The world becomes an environment filled with commercial products, instruments of labor and images, rather than one with inherent, intangible and incalculable value. Debord points out that the commodity fetish is a principle of capitalism in which "all are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to

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use...These laborers who must sell themselves piece-meal are a commodity" (The Communist Manifesto). The economic focus is an inverted vision of money.

Inversion comes into play here because money, which is a means to an end, symbolizes the end in itself. Marx is attributed with inverting Hegel's theory which posits that the consciousness or mind of man is the breeding ground for alienation, dehumanization and reification. Hegel maintains that reality is formed not only in the mind as a mental abstract, it is materialistic and manipulated by social classes. Instead of striving to change consciousness, Marx prefers to revolutionize and renovate corrupt economic systems which lead to the ruin poor workers, the instability of society and commodification of once treasured values, vocations and people. In addition, Marx agrees with Hegel that the melding of compounded conflict will conclude in a synthesis, a new ideology made up of elements of both former entities. The major difference is the introduction of the dialectic in socio-economic discourse which requires material considerations. The product or the synthesis is called dialectical materialism or socialism in which social classes benefit from the reformations and revolutions. Marx and Engel, in the Communist Manifesto, stress that reformation occurs "by changes in the material conditions of existence" (The Communist Manifesto). Communists materialize philosophy in order to wage war against the material world epitomized in capitalism and consider that "Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism bears an inverse relation to historical development". As such, since historical development is pervaded with class antagonisms, the utopian socialist Communism seeks to rectify ills by reconciling all social classes.

Class struggle and warfare still continues in contemporary society. Once there is organized society, there inevitably will be classification of groups and class struggle. Although many of the former social and governmental systems have disappeared such as slavery, feudalism, monarchy and social orders, remnants of elitism and class discrimination subsist. Social tiers resurface in the basic social rungs: the wealthy, the middle-class and the working poor. These class divisions can be further subdivided to include wealthy-middle class and poor middle class. Class distinctions arise in numerous forms contingent upon country and history, however, as the international community grows and merges, social class begin to be similar worldwide. Racial dynamics or demography, political systems, gender roles and "civilized" status all play an essential role in delineating social groups. However, the privileged or upper crust customarily enjoys higher education, more property, more political power, better institutions and facilities and more entitlements. On the other hand, the lower society would be deprived of amenities and possibilities for advancement. Although old hierarchies have dissolved, the contemporary social class system thrives on capitalistic industry, free trade and the exploitative relationship between poor workers and wealthy owners. In turn, they engineer and control a system which maintains their social position and continues to trample rights and strip the possessions of poorer classes.

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In sum, social justice becomes an elusive goal in the Communist Manifesto. Applied in practical reality, it withstands much opposition from domineering forces and established social orders, however, it crumbles as opposing philosophies synthesize and merge into a New World Order. Freedom factors in the equation with social classes battling for freedom, equality and property. However, the Communists realize the holes in their opponents' stance since ideals and persons are eroded to commercialized concepts and economic, political relationships.

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