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(In response to the prompt: According to Marx in The Communist Manifesto, what made capitalism revolutionary?)

Second-class Citizens to Capital

Yes, the Communists intend to “do away with private property” (Marx 23); they want to “destroy the most hallowed of relations” (24), the family; they desire to remove such *freedoms* as free trade. But the notions the Communists intend to eradicate, claim Marx, are only the *addictive* bourgeois image imposed onto the world, notions whose real representations are already stolen from the proletariat.

Due to their great influence, the bourgeois industry leaders stripped the “motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’, and ... left remaining no other nexus between man and man than ... than callous ‘cash payment’” (16). This fundamental change in societal values turns money into the first-class citizen of the bourgeois era (hierarchical feudal relations were arguably very restrictive, but are described as “motley” relative to money relations, for which there is “no other nexus” between people), which in turn sets the stage for the disparity between *capital* and *wage money*; the introduction of mass capital and its conflation with wage earnings is an addicting, revolutionary, and dangerous aspect of capitalism.

It is important to discuss what this *capital* is and how it differs from *money*. Marx defines capital as:

“... that kind of property which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labour for fresh exploitation” (22).

In a broader sense, capital comprises property that grows in value. Marx declares that the source of revenue is the difference between the wage-labourer’s labour and wage – i.e., “exploitation” of the proletariat. He claims next that capital is “a collective product”; i.e., it belongs only to the general populace which generates it. The *capitalist*, then, accumulates the capital and hands out only the minimal wages for subsistence of the working class. The latter is plain *wage money*, not suitable for growth.

The transformation of power from “natural superiors” to purely money relations has a series of implications. Firstly, bourgeois society is tightly coupled with industrialization and globalization, both generating an enormous workforce suitable for generating capital, resulting in more production in a century than in the rest of history (17). There is

also the primitive sense of (economic) freedom, as everyone earns money; however, like the success of production, this is an optimistic view caused by conflation of capital and minimum wage, and wage-labourers don't have the freedom for innovative success afforded to the bourgeoisie with sufficient capital.

As opposed to a feudal society, in which there are well-defined relationships and responsibilities determined between the social classes, the distinction is more subtle because both classes earn money despite the disparity in economic capability of minimum wage and accumulation of capital (thus hiding the inequality). This is why Marx warns that the reader's "ideas are the outgrowth of the conditions of [the] bourgeois production and bourgeois property" (24); thus, the concepts of "progress," "property," "freedom," and even "family" are capitalist notions whose realities are not admitted to the proletariat, and eliminating the bourgeois versions (i.e., the "class character" (23)) removes only the embedded inequality.

Bibliography

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. "The Communist Manifesto." *Marxists Internet Archive*, 2010, pp. 14–27.