

COMMUNISM

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Preface

While respected economists like Adam Smith provided the blue print of capitalism, liberty and the western way of life as we know it, Karl Marx provided the one alternative: Communism.

The objective of the article is to understand the meaning of Communism and the nature of its evolution. In order to do so one must be familiar with terms like:

Means of Production (MoP): This term means ownership of commodities or tools capable of creating a product and generating wealth, e.g., ownership of machinery that helps in the manufacture of a product is defined as a MoP

Proletariat: Refers to a class in the capitalist society that depends on exchange of labor as the **only means** of generating wealth, owns no other Means of Production (MoP) and has no share in the product it produces. Example: A laborer working on a construction site exchanges his labor for wages but has no share in the final product (constructed infrastructure) is a proletariat, but if the same construction worker owns property through which he earns rent, that is this ownership helps him generate wealth in ways other than simple exchange of labor, then he is **not**

a proletariat. In that case this individual is categorized as Bourgeois.

Bourgeois: A class in the capitalist society that employs more than one MoP. Example: An entrepreneur.

Karl Marx was influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, and incorporated the theory in his understanding of social structure. Marx maintained that disparity between classes in society has been responsible for the failure of society. He proposed that the only solution to this problem was to form a classless society, and this principle formed the basis of Communism. During our lifetime however we have passively observed the failure of Communist States. Those in favor of the principle have long argued that the failure does not lie in the principle as much as it lies in its means of applying.

This article is neither in favor nor against the principles of communism, though I would like to share, by quoting Leonard Peikoff, that "art is the recreation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value judgments' and not require or tolerate an explanatory preface. **It's a self contained universe beckoning the reader to enter and respond"**

Marx believed that man cannot work,

forever, with the objective of maximizing wealth, and that someday man will evolve to work for his people. Marx thus created a utopian society where each produced according to one's ability and consumed according to one's need. Marx's work has worked to show the path to this society.

This utopian society is Marx's recreation of reality, it is now time for the reader to beckon and respond.

Communism and the Nature of its evolution

Definition of Communism: More than just an economic principle, Communism is a way of life - a philosophy that advocates a stateless, classless, utopian society, in which man will strive to evolve through association than through competition.

This philosophy was the brainchild of Karl Marx, alongside Frederick Engels, who envisaged a state of pure communism post a brief period of **Proletariat** dictatorship.

Marx's reasoning was the product of his interpretation of the then prevalent **Capitalist** society, and the influence of class structures in the functioning and evolution of societies. As per Marx, the evolutionary path of societies, in order, is as follows:

a) Primitive Communism
(Hunters and Gatherers)–

b) Ancient Society (Masters and Slaves)

c) Feudalism (Warlords and Serfs)

d) Capitalism (Bourgeois and the Proletariat)

e) A brief period of Proletariat dictatorship

f) Socialism and

g) Communism

- **Primitive Communism** refers to a state of pre agrarian human society that produced whatever was consumed and what was not consumed, example tools, was shared equally amongst the communes. This society neither owned private property nor created surplus as their only production was the food they hunted.

- **Ancient Society:** The advent of agriculture (agrarian economy) led to the ownership of land (private property) and productive forces (labor). This era is identified by the two prevailing classes: “**Master**” and “**Slave**”, and the brutal (physical) exploitation that the latter was subjected to by the former. This sowed the seeds of a violent uprising and laid the foundation of the Feudalistic Society

- **Feudalist Society:** A feudalist state refers to a “**state at war**”, which quiet aptly summarizes this

era. During this period man either inherited position or usurped it. This spawned uncertainty and widespread instability to both **life** and **property**. Consequentially territorial integrity was reinforced to safeguard lives (example several provinces united to form the empire of England) and property (productive forces). Additionally the economic and the physical exploitation of the **serfs** by the **landlords** led to a class of town dwelling merchants, who provided products and services with the objective of maximizing wealth and there by laying the foundation of the Capitalist Society.

- **Capitalist Society:** This society was marked not only by the ownership of assets but also ownership of Means of Production (MoP). Here M.O.P implies inclusion of all those entities required for design, manufacture and sale of products. Example of MoP are tools, machines and (most importantly) labor. Since the objective of this society was to maximize profit, the owner of assets and MoP (the **Bourgeois** class) would try to minimize costs. This in turn would mean lowering the wages of the labor class (the **Proletariat**). By the adoption of this method the bourgeois class would become wealthier, with greater spending

power and therefore a greater demand. The increased demand would logically be followed by an increase in supply, which would imply a further increase in production and which in turn would employ further utilization of assets and MoP. generating still greater wealth for the bourgeois. This cycle would continue, and would lead to the development of a collective class conscious with the proletariats now identifying themselves as the exploited class. **While the production process is socialized the ownership remains in the hand of the bourgeois** and hence Marx argued that the class struggle between the bourgeois and the proletariat is inevitable, and if this struggle is successful, in the favor of the proletariats, it would create a new social order; **Socialism**.

- **Socialism:** Karl Marx maintained that socialism was the first stage in the transition to a purely Communist society that is a **classless** society. In order to understand the gravity of Marx's interpretation we must understand the meaning of **Social Class** and its significance in the evolution of society.

Class is the function (relation) between the productive forces (labor) and their stake in the product. Each socio-economic era is

recognized by a class structure specific to its period, example the freeman and the slaves, lords and serfs, patricians and plebians were specific to the feudal class with bourgeois (entrepreneur) and the proletariat (labor) being specific to the capitalist society and so on. In any society the role of each class in the governing economics is equally significant, and hence economic prosperity must be equally shared amongst each existing class. **If however there is an economic disparity between any classes then it implies a failure of the social system. Consequentially the classes would restructure their roles and shares in the final product thereby reforming the socio-eco structure.**

Marx therefore argues, in the communist manifesto, that **“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”** where a class struggle will be inevitable as long as there exists an economic and social disparity, and the nature of this struggle will be violent, as there will be an obvious resistance by the benefiting class to any social transformation. Marx maintained that this phenomenon of class struggles would come to an end when the proletariat would eliminate all other classes thus will lay the foundation of **Communism**.

