Responses to In-Class Questions Submitted September 17

1. The Supreme Court justices are appointed by the Government and the Government is manipulated by lobbyists (=ruling class/puppeteers).

That may be so, but the Supreme Court justices are not evidently manipulated by ruling class puppeteers.

1. Did Marx predict a date for the working class revolution? Is it possible that it just hasn’t happened yet?

That’s true – it may not have happened yet. However, remember Malthus’s principle of the ostriches: no sign we are turning into them yet, so let’s leave the discussion until we see the signs.

1. Pointing out the management class [is distinct from the bourgeoisie] is arguing semantics, is it not? Paying people to exploit people doesn’t make them Bourgeoisie – think ‘Uncle Tom.’

We cannot label everything and everyone that makes a profit for capitalists as proving the correctness of Marxian theory. Moreover, like the supreme court, the managerial class enjoys some autonomy and power, and does not own the means of production

1. What exactly is capitalism?

It is a type of economic organization in which capital (chiefly, money) is invested at risk to make interest, or a profit.

1. Why does Marx overlook the poor?

He doesn’t.

1. Is conspicuous consumption’s survival not reliant on the continuity of these symbols of class by the upper class themselves, but also on the knowledge and envy of the lower classes? i.e., if the middle or lower class no longer view these symbols as worthy of envy, will they lose their value in the upper class.

Yes. If the lower classes did not envy and emulate the rich, the endless search for new status symbols would like grind to a halt – at least, in Veblen’s view. The old status symbols would continue to suffice.

1. Can you explain “just world theory”? Are these people conscious that they want to live in this “just world” or is it all subconscious?

The just world theory proposes that people tend – to a greater or lesser degree – to embrace the just world fallacy that human actions yield fair and fitting consequences. Thus, good actions are rewarded and bad actions are punished. This reflects the tendency to believe in a supernatural power that maintains moral balance in the world, so that people always get what they deserve. Belief in this moral balance leads believers to feel that rich and poor people get what they deserve. In the context of this course, it is a justification for blaming the victim. Believers tend to avoid and ignore evidence that victims are **not** to blame. Likely, many people are conscious of holding these views, but unconscious of the reasons they do, and unconscious that they are refusing to look at contradictory evidence.

1. Please provide distinct examples of behaviour observed in individual who are believers.

The evidence can take various forms. Mainly, true believers will avoid disconfirmatory evidence that victims are blameless. They will go out of their way to avoid getting factual information about these events, and go out of their way to think of alternative explanations (i.e., excuses or justifications.) They may go so far as to attribute unfair outcomes to fate or demons or bad luck. And they may imagine, without evidence, that people who enjoy better outcomes have invested more effort or have more merit than people who receive worse outcomes.

1. From the RS book: It stated that women’s jobs such as nurses and childcare get paid less than male jobs such as firefighters, etc., and concluded this is really gender wage discrimination. Isn't the book ignoring job conditions, workload, and job security? Is this really a gender-wage differentiation or are they, in their own way, creating a distinction?

You are right that women and men often do different kinds of work, and these different kinds of work may (sometimes) involve different job conditions, workload, and job security. So, you are saying we are comparing apples and oranges, and moreover, women are choosing to do different jobs, so they bring the lower wages on themselves. We will discuss this matter at the next lecture. In short, however, to the extent that we can make assessments of pay for different work of equal value, many conclude that women are unequally and unfairly paid less than men.