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Modern Political Theory

Paper 3: *We, The Sheep*

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### We, The Sheep

Karl Marx and his theory of Marxism are often directly associated with the development of communism and his lack of realism. With his writings unjustly being used to positively propagate the Nazi party, Marx is left with few American supporters, and those who remain must acknowledge the fanaticism of his writings. Marx criticizes Capitalist economic systems for their inherent unfairness to the working population and believes that if these people were to declare themselves the ruling class and go on to destroy a classed society, they can ultimately transfigure a conflictless nation. For Marx, there is a direct correlation between class and conflict, and if one is destroyed, the other must follow. This thinking appears to be idealist or even borderline utopian. But it leaves one to question: does he have a point?

The very structure of our beloved Pomona College thrives on the transactional nature of humanity. But this “transaction” is not so much about money for a physical, tangible good, but more so for a hypothetical. We trade the value of our being for the insecure promise of being something *greater*. In this reality, we are the working population, submissive to our higher education, unwilling to destroy this class distinction because we believe it is for our benefit. We sacrifice our bodies, our souls, our time, our energy, a quarter of a million, to welcome our inevitable transition into machinery. We, the robots of our own sacred institution.

The fact of the matter is that Pomona College perceives its students as objects - objects to ventriloquize or silence. Dehumanized from the start, the application, our institution narrows

down our very being to our accomplishments: our extracurriculars, our GPA, our SAT scores. Our value is synonymous with what we have produced. From this, they decide who is deemed most suitable to attend such a prestigious university. But it's all bullshit, really. We, the students, "sink down to the level of a commodity and [become] indeed the most wretched of commodities; that [our wretchedness] is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of [our] production" (Karl Marx, *Econ. and Phil. Manuscripts*, 70). We are not people. We are who Pomona can mold based on our prior exemplifications of worthiness. We are workers who will produce.

*Admission to Pomona College is not the "reward" for your efforts, but an invitation to become even more knowledgeable, more creative and more aware of both the complexity of the world's challenges and multiple approaches to solving them.* The irony lies in this romanticized statement. Pomona College's invitation is restricted to what is beneficial to the college's reputation, not the student at all. Our college can only brag about their "national recognition" as an educational institution, when that recognition doesn't stem from news articles covering how our own president called multiple police stations to handle a single-digit student affair. Although there have been many "invitations to talk" about the Palestine protests, the lack of the Oxford comma in the sentence I quoted from Pomona's 2023 acceptance letter suggests that to be aware is to be creative; therefore, a simple conversation will not suffice. Our creativity is only welcome when we are producing for our university, not against it.

Last year, Pomona College boasted about how the class of 2027 "...is the most diverse in the College's history, consisting of 62.5% domestic students of color." Although Affirmative Action has henceforth been deemed unlawful by the Supreme Court, the decrease from 50 different countries to 44, in which admitted students reside, is evidence of Pomona College's attempt to redo the fuck-up of a truly diverse, outspoken class. One can only imagine this

decrease will become more drastic as the years pass. Stripping us of our education - through suspensions and threats of financial aid for the upcoming year - it is not far-fetched to believe Pomona has accepted a newer class who will be more cooperative, who will play the part of a machine serving to produce and benefit the university. For when “the worker puts his life onto the object...now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object” and I’d go even farther to say this belonging is not held entirely by the object, but by who demands the objectification (72). And the Class of 2028 may be more willing to compromise, to sacrifice their livelihood.

So why stay?

Friedrich Nietzsche describes the relationship of goodness relative to evilness as “large birds of prey,” or eagles, and “lambs.” In fact, the perceived goodness of a lamb in comparison to an aggressive, swooping eagle stems from the fact that if “‘These birds of prey are evil... whoever is least like a bird of prey and most like its opposite, a lamb, – is good...’” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 26). However, “...there is no reason to raise objections to this setting-up of an ideal beyond the fact that the birds of prey will view it somewhat derisively...,” as the goodness of an eagle emanates from their wings alone, with no comparison or grudges held against their counterpart (26). This innocence versus aggression relationship may not be consistent with the comparison of undergraduates and our degreeless population, but this distorted perspective on goodness from a lamb reflects the thinking of our students at Pomona College.

The issue with our student body is not that we have succumbed to mechanization under a false impression, but that we delude ourselves into believing we are still in control. As much as we like to pretend that we are humble and the “same as any other person,” the benefit and consequence which stems from attending a prestigious university is the superiority complex.

Now that we have made this costly trade with our institution, we believe ourselves to be in an inverted hierarchy in which our hooves somehow triumph over another's wings. Although those not pursuing a higher education, or are doing so somewhere that does not have an acceptance rate of 6%, do not tend to equilibrate their worth with respect to another person's university, due to my being enrolled at Pomona College, I am therefore above you. The negative connotation which comes with going to a community college or being satisfied with a high school degree, for us, serves to validate our reasoning as to why we are good and you are bad. Pomona College's lambs are the most opposite to the Eagles plaguing our world, thus making us superior.

Ultimately, I am here because I am no better than the students I write about. Yes, I condemn the institution for its objectification of students and our labor, but I am unwilling to de-mechanize myself. I have validated being in debt over \$40,000 for the chance of graduating with a Bachelor's degree from a hidden Ivy League and found myself not participating in any of the protests out of fear of my half-scholarship being revoked next year. I allow myself to be the machine, the sheep, whatever analogy you deem most fit, because I have conditioned myself into being the superior worker. Marx may have a point about classism between workers and Capitalist establishments, but he fails to acknowledge the hierarchy *within* the working population. This is the true reason the destruction of classes cannot occur. There are levels of mechanization which have a linear relationship with supremacy. As long as I continue to believe myself as being upwardly moving, I fear I will keep the gears going until I die. The academy serves as validation for my own dehumanization and therefore, I will allow this to continue as long as I benefit, making me as low as my institution.