

The Rousseau ones and the first few were done by Anisha

Rousseau

Does a commitment to democracy require accepting the decisions of the majority regardless of the content of that decision?

1. Introduction
 - Litch no lol
 - Reject if
 - o Majority decision reflects private interests, selfish aims, or factional adv (bc not legitimate general will)
 - o The decision interferes with individual liberties
 - o The decision interferes with the democratic process itself
 - Should kinda have majority rules for every other domain tho pzlpspl
2. Rousseau's General Will vs Will of All
 - General Will – collective will of the citizens aimed at the common good
 - o It is not merely the majority opinion
 - o Citizens must subordinate their personal interests to the general will to be truly free
 - o Obeying the general will is, paradoxically, a form of self-rule
 - Will of All - aggregates individual preferences, which may not align with the common good
 - Schwartzberg (2008): once people consent to a sovereign assembly, that sovereign must also conduct votes to best assess and act in accordance with the general will
 - o Common good > Majority support
 - Jones (1987): only the general will (the collective interest of all) can create legitimate law
 - o This is harder in larger groups tho
 - o Homogenous subgroups form to oppose other subgroups
 - If the majority acts from private interests rather than seeking the general good, its decision is not binding and does not express true sovereignty.
3. First Domain Beyond the Reaches of Majorities: Individual Liberties
 - Levitsky & Ziblatt (2008)

- Individual liberties: basic civil and political rights (such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, press, association, assembly, and conscience, and equality before the law)
- Jones (1987): Rousseau claims that's when people possess will, it cannot be alienated, because will is inseparable from being human, you can't alienate it without losing the very thing that makes you capable of forming a social contract in the first place
 - o Ppl cannot consent to constricting their own freedoms
- Also restricting stuff is NOT general will :[
- 4. Liberal Democracy should be maintained via protected civil liberties w/institutions
 - Countermajoritarian institutions - limit power of electoral majorities, usually to protect the rights of interest of minorities
 - Democracy-enhancing countermajoritarian institutions - those necessary to sustain liberal democracy
 - o To protect individual liberties democracy-enhancing countermajoritarian institutions should be used, which go against majority decisions for the sake of preserving the general will and liberal democratic principle
 - o E.g. Justice Jackson (a justice of the US Supreme Court), when he says, "The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them *beyond the reach of majorities*"
 - o E.g. of the e.g. 943 case West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette (1943), where the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendment of the US Constitution) was used to protect students from being forced to salute the American flag or say the Pledge of Allegiance in public school
 - Democracy-subverting countermajoritarian institutions - those that undermine competition by granting political minorities unfair advantages
 - o E.g. US filibuster
- 5. Second Domain Beyond the Reaches of Majorities: Democracy Itself
 - Levitsky & Ziblatt (2008)
 - CORRUPT GOV ALERT CORRUPT GOV ALERTTTT - temporal electoral or legislative majorities to entrench themselves in power by changing the rules of the game in ways that weaken their opponents or undermine fair competition
 - E.g. Venezuela Hugo Chavez used his overwhelming majority to rewrite the constitution in 1999, enabling him dramatically expanded executive power, weakened checks and balances, and reduced judicial independence
 - o All of this was done through formal democratic procedures (elections, votes, plebiscites), he used his constitutional power to sideline political opponents, restrict media freedom, and undermine opposition parties

- Over time, this erosion of democratic norms created a system where elections continued - but real competition, accountability, and civil liberties were increasingly hollowed out
- 6. A Defence of Accepting the Decisions of the Majorities in Most Cases
 - Levitsky & Ziblatt (2008) -> specific domains where there should ALWAYS be majority decisions:
 - Electoral majorities (provided they don't violate civil liberties or undermine the democratic process)
 - Legislation
 - Schwartzberg (2008) explains that's Rousseau believes that someone who is outvoted, is encouraged to reflect that they might have misjudged the general will, promoting humility and civic trust
 - This assumes ppl are competent -> yeah its not always true... but:
 - The collective statistically should be capable, balancing out potentially incompetent people
 - If you call the rightness of collective decisions into question by questioning people's judgement without a healthy suspicion of your own competence, that can lead to tyranny
- 7. Conclusion

In what senses are individual citizens in Rousseau's state 'free'?

1. Introduction

- Yeah like some freedoms but not all bc u have to like give it up lowkey
- Contextualize Rousseau historically: briefly note that The Social Contract (1762) was written in response to political inequality and arbitrary monarchy
- **Thesis:** Rousseau redefines freedom as moral and political autonomy within a collective body governed by the general will. However, this model also limits personal liberty, particularly where individual interests conflict with the common good

2. Moral & Civil Freedom: Self-Governance under the Law

- **Moral freedom:** expand on Rousseau's idea that freedom is not just the ability to choose, but the ability to choose rationally and ethically
 - "The mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law we prescribe to ourselves is liberty."
- **Civil freedom:** include property and equality here
 - He sees property not as natural but as a right created and protected by civil society
 - Rousseau thinks real freedom requires relative equality—too much wealth disparity corrupts the general will
- Civil and moral liberty – freedom in civil society
 - Moral freedom allows ppl to act they reason (the general will) not instinct

- Civil freedom -> legal protection & security of property (not available in chaotic state of nature)

3. Loss of Natural Freedom

- Natural freedom – freedom in the state of nature
 - Give this up for moral & civil freedom
 - “To obey the law one has prescribed for oneself is freedom.”
- “What man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything he tries to get and succeeds in getting.”
- In the state of nature, individuals have total personal autonomy, even if insecure
 - You can take whatever you want - but you’re also constantly vulnerable to having it taken from you
 - You can contrast this with Hobbes’ more negative view of the state of nature, to show Rousseau’s unique take (Hobbes: war of all vs. Rousseau: peaceful but isolated)
 - State of nature not terrible but not very human
- In civil society, this kind of unbounded personal freedom is sacrificed for civil and moral liberty
- If one equates freedom with the absence of constraints, then Rousseau’s citizen is not free in this natural or libertarian sense
- BUT maybe this freedom is worth sacrificing for moral and civil freedom?

4. Political Freedom

- If you participate in the general will (collective will of the citizens aimed at the common good) -> political freedom
 - Not just to do with majority/numerical outcomes
 - Decision procedure needs to GENUINELY reflect general will
- NOT will of all (a mere aggregation of private interests)
- True political freedom = active participation in deliberation (where citizens pursue the public good over private interests)
- Schwartzberg (2008): how voting is done matters -> certain procedures are better at reflecting the general will
 - Majority rule alone may not reflect the general will unless it’s properly designed (e.g., deliberation before voting)
 - Is this realistic to expect citizens to suppress self interest?
- PARADOX: ur litch forcing ppl to be free that’s crazytown
 - “[Citizens] must be forced to be free.”
- Individuals must act according to the general will if they are to be truly free—not coerced by others
 - Liberated from their own self-interest when it threatens the common good
- So ppl allowed to be free to pursue the general will -> but cannot pursue selfish interest so not free

5. No freedom to Disobey the General Will

- “This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free.” – Rousseau
- Here, Rousseau says that if someone resists the general will, society has the right to compel obedience
- While Rousseau insists this is a form of true freedom (since the general will expresses what one should will), many critics argue this justifies coercion and suppresses dissent
- W. T. Jones (1970) and others have noted the danger: if the general will is interpreted by a small elite, it could lead to authoritarian enforcement in the name of freedom
 - E.g., if the general will says everyone must practice a certain civil religion (Book IV, ch. 8), the individual cannot refuse without becoming “an enemy of the state.”
 - Who decides what the general will is?
- Once laws are made in accordance with the general will, there is no legitimate right to disobey them.
 - Unlike liberal thinkers (like Locke or Mill), Rousseau does not defend freedom of conscience or speech in the same way
 - Locke – natural rights as inalienable
 - Mill – freedom of thought/speech fundamental
 - Schwartzberg (2008) points out that Rousseau’s model leaves little room for pluralism or minority dissent, because disagreement is seen as an error in judgment, not a difference in principle
 - The lack of pluralism and warns that dissent is framed as irrational or mistaken
 -

6. Conclusion

- Is it a richer form of freedom, grounded in autonomy and equality? Or does it mask coercion beneath the language of civic virtue?
- Rousseau's vision speaks to the promise and peril of democracy: that genuine freedom requires both self-rule and collective restraint—but it also risks silencing those who dissent from the “common good.”

Is Rousseau’s social contract impossible outside of a state larger than Geneva? (Long Vac, 2024)

1. Introduction

- Lowkey where he lives

2. Rousseau’s own view: The Ideal State Must Be Small

- Rousseau explicitly suggests that only small political communities can maintain the kind of direct, participatory democracy that his social contract requires
 - “A state too extensive in territory cannot be well governed.”

- General Will – collective will of the citizens aimed at the common good
- The general will can only emerge in a polity where citizens know one another, deliberate directly, and are tied by shared civic values
 - o Geneva, Rousseau’s own city, is often held up in his writing as a model.
 - o He admired it for its relative equality, shared religious and civic identity, and compact size, which allowed meaningful citizen participation
- His model is deliberately designed for small, cohesive societies, not sprawling, diverse nation-states
- For general will to function:
 - o Citizens must be well-informed, active, and oriented toward the common good.
 - o There must be minimal factionalism, economic inequality, and diversity of interest
- In larger states, where people don’t know each other and where interests are plural and often conflicting, the general will may break down into competing private wills (what Rousseau calls the “will of all”)

3. Decision Rules & Voting in Scale

- Schwartzberg (2008): Rousseau’s model assumes deliberative and cohesive decision-making, not just aggregation of preferences.
 - o In larger societies, the kind of face-to-face deliberation Rousseau idealizes becomes impossible
 - o Without it, majority voting risks becoming mere arithmetic — not a reflection of the general will but will of all
- Rousseau’s theory is ill-equipped for modern, large-scale representative democracies, where complex procedures are needed to translate dispersed preferences into coherent laws.

4. The Danger of Representation

- Rousseau insists that “the moment a people allows itself to be represented, it is no longer free” -> NO representative democracy, direct democracy only
- Freedom = direct participation
- In large states, however, direct democracy is infeasible — meaning Rousseau’s model either fails to scale or becomes vulnerable to elite capture, where a ruling minority claims to “know” the general will
- W. T. Jones (1970): this is a fundamental tension -> either the social contract collapses in scale, or it turns authoritarian when intermediaries enforce the “true” will of the people

5. Modern Democracy Requires Institutions

- Levitsky & Ziblatt (2025): modern democracy cannot rely solely on majority rule or presumed unity
 - o Must include minority protections, institutional checks, pluralism, and rights — all things that Rousseau either downplays or rejects

- The ideal of a unified general will is dangerous in large, pluralistic societies, where disagreement is normal and legitimate
- Countermajoritarian institutions - limit power of electoral majorities, usually to protect the rights of interest of minorities
- 6. Conclusion
- In conclusion, Rousseau's social contract seems unworkable in large, modern states for three key reasons:
- It depends on face-to-face, participatory democracy, only possible in small communities.
- It presumes a level of social and economic homogeneity that large, diverse societies rarely have.
- It lacks the institutional mechanisms (representation, minority protections) that are necessary in complex democracies.
- So while his ideas remain influential, Rousseau's model was never meant for large-scale societies, and trying to apply it outside of contexts like Geneva risks either failure or authoritarianism masquerading as collective freedom.

What, if anything, does Rousseau's Social Contract teach us about the desirability of civic and political unity? (Trinity, 2024)

1. Introduction
 - Desirable but not realistic for bigger states.
 - Rousseau's Social Contract presents civic and political unity as essential to genuine freedom. In his view, only by acting as a unified body — the general will — can individuals escape domination and participate in true self-rule. However, this ideal of unity comes with risks: namely, the suppression of dissent and the impracticality of achieving such cohesion in modern, pluralistic societies. This essay will explore both the appeal and limitations of Rousseau's account of unity, drawing on key critiques and historical context.
2. Unity as the Foundation of Freedom
 - General Will – collective will of the citizens aimed at the common good
 - It is not merely the majority opinion
 - Citizens must subordinate their personal interests to the general will to be truly free
 - Obeying the general will is, paradoxically, a form of self-rule
 - TRUE FREEDOM IS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH UNIFIED POLITICAL COMMUNITY GOVERNED BY THE GENERAL WILL
 - “To be governed by the general will is to be free.”
 - Ppl are NOT free when they act on impulse/private interest
 - Ppl ARE free when they act collectively and pursue the common good

- Civic unity enables moral and civil freedom, which replaces unstable natural liberty with laws individuals give themselves
 - Without unity, there is no general will, only competing private wills — and thus no common good, only factionalism or domination
 - Rousseau teaches that political & civic unity is not just desirable — it is essential to justice and freedom
3. Unity Requires Shared Values and Participation
- Civic unity must be based on active participation, shared civic identity, and equality
 - Schwartzberg (2008): how voting is done matters -> certain procedures are better at reflecting the general will
 - o Majority rule alone may not reflect the general will unless it's properly designed (e.g., deliberation before voting)
 - o Is this realistic to expect citizens to suppress self interest?
 - Citizens must be educated to prefer the common good over private interest.
 - Unity involves not just agreement, but the internalization of civic virtue — a sense of shared fate and mutual obligation.
4. The Danger of Enforced Unity – Suppression of Dissent
- What happens when individuals disagree with the general will? What if unity is imposed rather than chosen?
 - o “This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free.”
 - W. T. Jones (1970) argues this opens the door to authoritarianism:
 - o If the general will is interpreted by elites or enforced through coercion, dissenters may be punished in the name of freedom.
 - Rousseau leaves little room for pluralism or principled disagreement.
 - o As Schwartzberg (2008) notes, disagreement in Rousseau's model is often viewed as an error, not as a legitimate alternative
 - If someone is outvoted, they are encouraged to reflect that they might have misjudged the general will, promoting humility and civic trust
 - o This undermines the possibility of minority rights or ideological diversity.
 - In Section 4, you might briefly note that Rousseau rejects the idea of party politics (factions), seeing them as distortions of the general will — this further limits pluralism
 - Rousseau teaches us that unity can easily turn into coercion, unless carefully constrained
5. Rousseau's Model and the Limits of Scale
- Schwartzberg (2008): Rousseau's model assumes deliberative and cohesive decision-making, not just aggregation of preferences.
 - o In larger societies, the kind of face-to-face deliberation Rousseau idealizes becomes impossible

- Without it, majority voting risks becoming mere arithmetic — not a reflection of the general will but will of all
- Rousseau's theory is ill-equipped for modern, large-scale representative democracies, where complex procedures are needed to translate dispersed preferences into coherent laws.
- The general will can only emerge in a polity where citizens know one another, deliberate directly, and are tied by shared civic values
 - Geneva, Rousseau's own city, is often held up in his writing as a model.
 - He admired it for its relative equality, shared religious and civic identity, and compact size, which allowed meaningful citizen participation
- Levitsky & Ziblatt (2025) argue that modern democracies need managed disagreement, not total unity
 - In large, diverse states, people will disagree about the good life.
 - Institutions must protect dissent, minority rights, and free expression — values Rousseau's model does not fully accommodate
- In Section 5, you could explicitly mention Rousseau's remarks in Book III, Chapter 15, where he discusses the "limits of the size of a republic"
 - He argues that only small states can be truly free, because only they allow real participation

6. Conclusion

- Rousseau's Social Contract offers a compelling vision of civic and political unity as the foundation of true freedom. For Rousseau, individuals are only free when they participate in a collective governed by the general will — a unified body that seeks the common good over private interest. This unity enables civil and moral liberty, replacing the chaos and insecurity of natural freedom with a rational, self-imposed law. However, as critics like Schwartzberg and W. T. Jones have argued, this ideal comes at a cost: disagreement is treated not as a legitimate alternative, but as error; dissent is marginalized in the name of freedom. Moreover, in large, diverse societies, Rousseau's model struggles to accommodate pluralism, sustained disagreement, or the procedural complexities of modern democracy. While The Social Contract teaches us that unity can empower and liberate, it also warns — perhaps unintentionally — of the fine line between civic cohesion and coercive conformity. The challenge today is to preserve the spirit of Rousseau's vision without sacrificing the diversity and dissent that make democratic freedom possible.

‘Without good laws we will lack good citizens; without good citizens we will fail to produce good laws.’ Critically assess how far, if at all, this poses a problem for Rousseau’s account in the Social Contract. (Trinity, 2023)

How convincing is Rousseau’s attempt in The Social Contract to reconcile freedom with authority? (Long Vac, 2022)

Is Rousseau’s theory in The Social Contract capable of adequately addressing minority dissent? (Trinity, 2022)

In The Social Contract is Rousseau the friend or the enemy of personal freedom? (Long Vac, 2021)

Is Rousseau’s theory of a free political society doomed by its unrealistic expectation that citizens will agree on what laws to make? (Trinity, 2021)

Marx

Assess Marx’s claim that the capitalist state is ‘but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie’.

1. Introduction
 - Not really but like valid criticism tbh
2. Context behind the quote -> state created by the bourgeois
 - Historical materialism - material conditions of a society - especially its economic structure and modes of production - fundamentally shape its social, political, and intellectual life
 - o Political change comes about when there is technological change (change in the production power of people), since technological change effects economic change, which in turn structures political society
 - o Wolff (2002): no economic structure (apart from communism) can last, since eventually it will start to impede further growth
 - o Dialectic – each point in history
 - W/dichotomies - “oppressor and the oppressed” and having each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

- Rn its proletariat & capitalism
- “Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class... conquered for itself, in the modern representative state, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”
- The state was formed due to this technological change under historical materialism, by a revolutionary bourgeois
- 3. How the state advanced the interests of the bourgeois
 - Protecting private property
 - Marx want 2 abolish this bc it increases inequality between classes
 - Labourer can only create capital from their work, rather than property
 - “that kind of property [capital] which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labour for fresh exploitation”
 - State protects private property thru police and military power etc etc
 - Facilitating capital accumulation
 - Thru advanced tech -> which they control
 - E.g. colonisation of America shows the bourgeois “must establish connexions everywhere.”
- 4. Too simplistic view
 - Elster (1986): critical of Marx’s simplistic view of the state as simple a tool of bourgeois class domination
 - Possible views Marx has of the state:
 - **Instrumental Model** (Early Marx) – *the state is a direct tool or instrument of the bourgeois (they control the state and uses it to enforce its interests)*
 - **Abdication Model** (Post-1848) – *the bourgeoisie may abdicate political power, allowing another class (like the aristocracy or monarchy) to govern, as long as their economic interests are protected.*
 - **Class balance Model** (Late Marx) - *The state might act against the short-term interests of capitalists in order to preserve the long-term stability of the system (the state bureaucracy or ruling elites may pursue their own agendas)* (Wolff and Leopold, 2003)
 - First one abandoned bc “how poorly it captured contemporary political realities—in particular, the stable existence of states which were not directly run by the capitalist class, but which still in some way served their interests.”
 - Only the third model accounts for what Elster (1985) calls ‘explanatory autonomy’ (when “its structure and policies cannot be explained by the interest of an economically dominant class”)
 - Elster (1985): state has its own internal dynamics, not just bourgeois
 - Eg. Welfare programs post 1945 to maintain social stability

5. Dictatorship of the proletariat as an alternative
 - Dictatorship of the proletariat - transitional state in which the working class holds political power and dismantles the structures of bourgeois rule, including private property
 - o Withers away with class distinctions and when communism is achieved (no state then)
 - Wolff (2002): criticises the concept as deeply problematic from a liberal-democratic perspective but emphasizes that for Marx it was a necessary phase of historical transformation
 - Elster (1986): sceptical of Marx's assumption that this new state would truly represent the general interest or avoid repressive and authoritarian tendencies
 - o Marx underestimated the dangers of centralized power, even when wielded by the proletariat
 - o Marx did not offer a clear institutional model for this dictatorship and relied too much on faith that the right class would govern morally
6. Conclusion

Is Marx right to think that the state could wither away?

1. Introduction
 - Lol no
2. Historical materialism
 - Historical materialism - material conditions of a society — especially its economic structure and modes of production — fundamentally shape its social, political, and intellectual life
 - o History develops through class struggles driven by changes in the economic base (like feudalism, capitalism), which in turn transform the social and political "superstructure" (laws, culture, ideology).
 - o Different historical 'dialects' thru history
 - o Material (economic) forces drive historical change, not ideas alone
 - Marx believes current state is 'but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'
 - o By protecting private property & facilitating capital accumulation
 - The state is seen as a tool of class domination. It exists to maintain the power of the ruling class over others
 - o E.g., bourgeois over proletariat in capitalism
 - Once class divisions are abolished in a truly classless, communist society, there would be no need for the state as an instrument of repression. The state, no longer needed, would "wither away."
 - This is not an overnight event but a gradual process, occurring after the dictatorship of the proletariat, during the transition from socialism to full communism.

3. Class Domination as the Core Function of the State

- If the state primarily exists to manage class conflict, and if class conflict ends, then the state may no longer be necessary
- Gerald A. Cohen (1988): historical materialism holds that social and political institutions are shaped by material (economic) conditions — especially the “relations of production.”
- Protecting private property
 - o Marx wants to abolish this bc it increases inequality between classes
 - o Labourer can only create capital from their work, rather than property
 - o “that kind of property [capital] which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labour for fresh exploitation”
 - o State protects private property thru police and military power etc etc
- Facilitating capital accumulation
 - o Thru advanced tech -> which they control
 - o E.g. colonisation of America shows the bourgeois “must establish connexions everywhere.”

4. The State Serves More than Class Interests

- Modern political theorists argue the state also manages coordination, provides public goods, resolves disputes — not just class domination.
- Jonathan Wolff (2002): Marx’s claim rests on the idea that the state is fundamentally linked to private property and economic inequality. Without these, the functions of the state as we know it become obsolete
- Jon Elster (1986) argues that Marx oversimplifies the role of the state. Beyond enforcing class dominance, states also coordinate social cooperation, resolve conflicts, manage infrastructure, and respond to emergencies. Even in a classless society, some form of central coordination may be necessary — meaning the complete disappearance of the state is unlikely
 - o State has its own internal dynamics, not just bourgeois
 - E.g. Welfare programs post 1945 to maintain social stability

5. Practicalness of no state

- Martin and Farr/Ball (in The Cambridge Companion) point out that Marx provides little institutional detail about how the transition to communism would work
 - o This vagueness contributed to later Leninist and authoritarian interpretations of Marx, where the “withering away” never occurred — instead, the state became more centralized and repressive
 - o Historical attempts to achieve communism (e.g., USSR, Maoist China) did not produce stateless societies, but regimes where the state intensified control in the name of the proletariat
- Wolff (2002) and Elster also question Marx’s optimistic view of human nature

- Even in a classless society, people will disagree about values, priorities, and resources
- This suggests the continued need for political structures to manage difference — perhaps not a coercive state, but some institutional framework for adjudication and governance

6. Conclusion

Marx's belief that the state would wither away reflects his deep commitment to human emancipation: the idea that social and political coercion are not natural or permanent, but rooted in economic inequality. As Cohen and Wolff show, it's a powerful critique of the status quo and a radical aspiration for a future beyond domination. However, as Elster, Farr, and historical experience reveal, this vision is overly optimistic. The state performs functions beyond class repression, and pluralism, disagreement, and conflict persist, even without class. The complete disappearance of the state is neither likely nor necessarily desirable. In the end, Marx's theory teaches us to question the permanence of political authority, but not to assume it can or should entirely vanish. The challenge is to democratize the state — not abolish it — in ways that promote justice, participation, and equality

Why is it important, for Marx and Engels, to understand that wage labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers? (Long vac, 2024)

1. Introduction
 - For Marx and Engels, understanding that wage labour is rooted in competition between workers is key to grasping the mechanics of exploitation under capitalism. This competition, they argue, fragments the working class and sustains capital's dominance. Yet later critiques question whether Marx overstates the divisive power of competition, especially in light of modern labour institutions and solidarity movements.
2. Competition Among Workers Sustains Capitalist Exploitation
 - Capitalism is structured around competition
 - Not just between capitalists but also among workers
 - Capitalists benefit from workers competing for jobs, because it allows them to drive wages down to subsistence levels
 - This weakens workers' bargaining power, making them more easily exploited
 - Cohen (1988): wage labour under capitalism is governed not by free exchange between equals, but by the power imbalance built into the relations of production - and competition between workers keeps them disempowered
3. Division Prevents Class Solidarity
 - Marx and Engels emphasize that competition fractures the working class:

- Workers are pitted against one another (e.g., skilled vs. unskilled, local vs. migrant, employed vs. unemployed).
- This prevents collective action and solidarity — which is the very thing needed to overcome capitalist exploitation.
- As Jonathan Wolff (2002) Marx believed that the working class had the power to overthrow capitalism, but only if they unite
 - Understanding the divisive effect of wage labour competition is therefore key to overcoming it

4. Revolutionary

- Understanding the role of competition among workers is not just a theoretical point — it has revolutionary implications:
 - Marx and Engels believed that as capitalism develops, workers will increasingly recognize their shared interests and begin to overcome divisions.
 - This process leads to the formation of unions, parties, and class consciousness.
- As discussed by Leopold and Panitch in The Cambridge Companion to the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels see the end of competition between workers as a necessary step toward building the unity required for revolutionary change.

5. Limits of Marx's Account: Is Worker Division Inevitable?

- While competition can divide workers, it doesn't always prevent solidarity:
 - Unions, worker co-ops, and collective bargaining show that workers can and do unite, even within a competitive system.
 - Shared identities (e.g., class, race, gender) can override competition and generate strong solidarity.
 - Marx underestimates human capacity for cooperation within capitalism.
- Farr and Ball (in The Cambridge Companion) point out that political movements for change have often emerged within liberal democracies, not only through revolutionary class struggle. This complicates Marx's idea that capitalism inevitably fragments workers

6. Conclusion

- Marx's insight into the role of worker competition remains powerful, especially in explaining capitalist control and worker disempowerment. However, the persistence of worker solidarity — even under competitive conditions — complicates his claim that competition always prevents unity. While Marx may have underestimated the resilience of collective organisation, his framework still illuminates the systemic pressures that make that unity difficult to sustain.

How can we explain that Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto are both enthusiastic for and critical of bourgeois society? (TT, 2024)

- Thesis: I will argue that one can explain Marx's and Engels's enthusiasm for bourgeois society through their theory of historical materialism and because of the revolutionary role they played in history. It must be noted that enthusiasm should not be confused with approval as Marx and Engels are very critical of bourgeois society as they own the means of production and suppress the proletariat.
- Explain historical materialism. Historic developments are the result of changes in the forces of production, Cohen. These changes in the forces of production then cause the relations of production to change (the sum of which is the economic structure, base) from which the legal and political superstructure is the result.
- Marx and Engels are enthusiastic about bourgeois society because they believe that society first has to go through capitalism before it can turn into communism. The bourgeoisie changed society from feudalism to capitalism, which makes them enthusiastic about them. A good example is China, some of the communists initially sided with the bourgeoisie because China had not yet sufficiently developed.
- The second reason is that in capitalism because the bourgeois capitalist are competing against one another, there is a constant incentive to innovate and improve the means of production. They are, as Panitch argues, a constant revolutionizing force. As a result, eventually capitalism 'produces their own gravediggers' (explain this point). This way, their admiration for the bourgeoisie is dialectical; they are praised for creating the conditions for their own destruction. Maybe explain more the mechanisms in which they are constantly revolutionizing:
 - o Globalization
 - o Technological innovation
 - o Efficiency through like production band/manufacturing line
 - o Explain how these lead to:
 - bigger and bigger booms and busts through Marxian economics and thereby allow for revolution
 - The creation of class consciousness as the proletariat comes together in factories
- However, one must not confuse enthusiasm with approval. Marx and Engels see all the awfulness that the bourgeoisie does to the proletariat by repressing them.
 - o Maybe talk about alienation and exploitation

- Maybe talk about the counterargument that if marx and engels are so optimistic about the deterministic future, what role is left for the individual and agency (contrast early marx with later marx).
- In the penultimate paragraph maybe use Martin's essay in Cambridge companion to explain the rhetorics of the communist manifesto. It tells a narrative, it starts off with paragraph after paragraph celebrating the achievements of the bourgeoisie: building architectural wonders and creating "whole populations...up from the ground" (CM).

What's distinctive about Marx's account of social change? (Trinity, 2023)

- Of course just explain historical materialism. I think its very good here to bring in functional explanation, as that is specifically relevant for social change. What else is distinctive:
 - o The change comes from material changes and changes in productive forces rather than changes in ideas or something like that.
 - o It is structurally deterministic, Marx argues that every society will eventually transition to communism.
 - o The mechanism of transformation is revolutionary. Rather than gradual change from one economic structure to another, the changes happen through revolution.

For Marx, what are the key factors that drive social change? How plausible is his analysis? (Long Vac, 2022)

- The key factors that drive social change are:
 - o Changes in productive forces result in changes in economic structure and the legal and political superstructure. (historical materialism) with contradictions and crises.
 - o Class conflict and revolution (class struggle)
- How plausible?
 - o Empirical: explain that this has clearly not happened yet. Though communist societies may have failed because they had not yet achieved late stage capitalism.
 - o His analysis is deterministic, and leaves little room for individual agency.
 - o Political changes come from the economic changes, is this realistic? Many current social changes come from political changes.

