Para Bellum

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Si vis pacem, para bellum”, in English: If you want peace, prepare for war. “Why name this book ‘Para Bellum’?”, one might wonder. What is this war against? Why should we prepare for it? What kind of war is it anyway? How do we win this war? Those of you who wonder, know that this war is against ignorance, blindness, irrationality, unreasonableness and the chains of the “old ways” that hinder our growth. We need to be prepared because what we are facing is not easy to conquer and to win is very important to us.

This war is not the kind of war you win with swords and firepower. You win this war by not just educating yourself but by convincing others too. It is all a game of understanding and convincing. “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.” ― Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Our armor shall be objectivity which shall protect us from the blows of strong emotions and the biases we are vulnerable to. Our best weapon shall be our love for advancement, which shall help us cut down the chains we have ignored for long. In unity is strength; more supporters are better than a few. The wisdom of our leaders and the loyalty to those leaders shall guide us to victory. What a wonderful world will people live in, if we are victorious!

This book has been written so that we can better understand what we are facing and to express ideas about how to overcome the enemy, i.e., the “Current System”. The “Current System” refers to the system in place before the “Big Change”, the “New System” then obviously refers to the system after it. The approach taken is this: Explain the importance and goals of a system, explain the current system’s approach and the problems associated with it, explain the new system’s approach and how it deals with the problems of the current system (including the potential short-comings of the new system and how we can deal with them), other considerations explained/asked e.g., how to achieve the new system, other comparisons etc.

This approach will help us know exactly what we want to achieve, where we currently stand and what problems we are facing, how we can solve the problems and deal with the challenges using the new system and finally, how we can actually implement the new system. Focusing on the “whys” is very important because this helps us have a deeper understanding of the underlying causes which makes it easier to get to the root of problems. We need to know exactly why we need to put in all the effort, so that we can be more focused and motivated, without which we are unlikely to win this war. “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.” - Friedrich Nietzsche

Now, I should mention that this book is by no means the final image of the “New System”. Think of it as an initial draft, which will be scrutinized by intellectuals around the world and possibly, the new system will be tweaked so as to bring it closer to perfection. So, I invite you to assess, with an open and creative mind, the ideas presented here and try to come up with even better ones. How can we win if we are not ready to let go of our chains? How can we win if we are ignorant about what others have to say? The time is upon us.

The Philosophy Behind It All

The Most Basic Assumption

“We are all reasonable humans who want the best possible life for as many as possible.” This assumption is important mainly for two reasons: one is that trying to reason with someone who does not listen to reason or is unable to reason logically is just a waste of time so a reasonable audience is very important for any sort of explanation, the other being that if the audience does not value advancement, then all explanation is meaningless because they will simply not want things to improve no matter how strong the arguments are.

The reason for mentioning this assumption is to remind you all that we have to use our ability to reason logically and not let our emotions and biases mislead us. Also, so that we take in to account the wellbeing of all beings, not just humans. This way, we can truly show our humanity by showing that we care about the weak even though we are the strongest. “Show it to whom?”, one might ask. Well, to our own selves. It is time to make ourselves proud of our approach. Let us reason and find the best possible way around this battlefield.

Causality

To put it simply: every event that we see is the effect of one or more causes in the past and will act as a cause for one or more effects in the future. I do not find it necessary to delve deep into the whole Determinism vs Free Will debate for now. The reason for mentioning “Causality” is to help you understand the importance of focusing on the causes rather than the effects as in fact these causes are what lead to the effects that we are dealing with. This way, we can also put in place causes that will most likely have the effects that we want. In other words, we have to develop a system that accounts for “Causality” so that it does not need to rely too much on the integrity of those running it and is reliable enough. If you are in doubt, ask yourself honestly “can any event occur without anything causing it?”.

Evolution

Suppose you compare two systems, and find out that one values peace and maintains a stagnant environment for it, whereas the other values growth and risks disturbance of peace for it, which one is better? If you really think about it, one is focused on keeping you controlled and the other wants to help you reach your full potential. The system I wish to explain has the notion of evolution at its core. A system that pushes you to your limits and helps you find your “true purpose”, that is a true system. Perhaps the best thing we can use this book for is to help bring about the “Ubermensch”.

“Man is something that shall be overcome. Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman — a rope over an abyss. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end.” ― Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra

True Freedom

What is true freedom? If people do something because they want to, purely for the sake of doing that thing, that is when they have achieved true freedom. Of course, not using the ability to reason logically would make this kind of freedom very dangerous for others because then it would just become madness. It is difficult to imagine what level of freedom we can achieve if we actually establish the best possible system. Imagine not even needing anything, just simply being. I wish to free us all to the extent that we only remain slaves of reason, love and whatever needs we have; so that no one has to live a life being a slave of others. However, we have a lot of overcoming to do if we are to get close to achieving true freedom.

Determining perfection

You must have come across Plato’s Theory of Ideas? Reading about it might have caused you to think about the ideal form of something. The important aspect of Plato’s teaching is his emphasis on using the ability to reason. So, how can we determine what the ideal form of something is like? What questions should we ask? Let us use our ability to reason to find out how we can determine the ideal form of something. Please pardon any and all play on words.

Let us call a thing’s perfect version ‘P’. One way to understand what P is like is to understand P's ability to achieve that which it should ideally achieve. Comparing something’s actual performance and specifications with its perfect version’s should help you determine how close it is to perfection. Suppose you had to determine what a perfect computer would be like; how would you approach this challenge? A good start would be to look at what computers do and what each part of a computer does, then to think creatively about the ideal objectives of each part of the computer.

For example, we can say that the ideal computer would compute anything instantaneously, use almost no power, be completely environment-friendly, and be safe in all situations. We can then set objectives like: it should have a certain score in benchmarking, it should have a boot time of less than a nanosecond, it should never crash or fail to boot, etc. We can then compare an actual computer’s performance with the ideal one’s to determine how close it is to perfection.

A genuine difficulty in achieving perfection is that some objectives conflict with others in the sense that achieving one makes it almost impossible to achieve the other. For example, if you focus on achieving a high computing speed, it will make it very difficult to keep the power consumption low. How can we deal with this difficulty? The best way is to rank the objectives according to their importance, then give them preference accordingly. The importance of an objective depends on how much it helps us achieve our long-term goals. Understanding the ways taken in the past and their outcomes can prove helpful.

So, what would an ideal system be like? Let us start with the Economic System.

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Significance

To understand the origin of the word “Economic”, consider this:

**economic (adj.):** 1590s, "pertaining to management of a household," perhaps shortened from economical, or else from French économique or directly from Latin oeconomicus "of domestic economy," from Greek oikonomikos "practiced in the management of a household or family" (also the name of a treatise by Xenophon on the duties of domestic life), hence, "frugal, thrifty," from oikonomia "household management" (see economy (n.)). Meaning "relating to the science of economics" is from 1835 and now is the main sense, economical retaining the older one of "characterized by thrift." ― etymonline.com/word/economic

To put it simply: the better the resources are managed, the better the economy. To think about the ideal version of an economic system, we have to ask ‘what is it that an economic system should ideally achieve?’. An ideal economic system would obviously be able to achieve what it ought to ideally achieve. Let us start by simply defining the goals of an ideal economic system. “Resources be ‘optimally utilized’ by the responsible parties. The standard of living of everyone be ‘good enough’, and the standard of living of those who do 'meaningful' work improve accordingly”, how does this goal sound? Let us try to define “optimal utilization”, “good enough” and “meaningful”.

The word optimal means most desirable. It is really the most balanced solution that considers multiple factors for a given challenge. The optimal dosage of medicine, e.g., would be such that a little more or a little less than it would not be as effective as it. Utilization means the turning of whatever is being utilized to practical use. Combining optimal and utilization, we get “the most desirable practical usage”. To deal with the challenge of subjectivity, we should consider “The Philosophy Behind It All” again. “Desirable” then becomes that which is in accordance with our philosophy. That which helps us realize our full potential the most is the most desirable then.

Let us refer to the standard of living of everyone as the “base standard”. This base standard can be deemed “good enough” if under the circumstances further improvement of standard would require some people to give away their share. Since, the base standard is by definition for everyone, it cannot be improved at such an expense. Another way to look at it is if we were forced to live in the conditions of any random being from any part of the world, would we confidently claim that such living conditions are “good enough”? Everyone having a fair opportunity to grow and “evolve” would be a good indicator that the base standard of living is good enough.

“Meaningful” work is that which helps at least maintain the overall current standard of living if not improve it. Efforts that significantly improves peoples’ lives will obviously be more meaningful than simple box-ticking approach. No effort should go unrewarded but some efforts are worth more than others. This is important for stimulation and for distinguishing between those who have helped us and those who have not. It is also important for setting the environment in accordance with our philosophy, i.e., an environment that rewards those who help us evolve or live a better life.

By the word “resources” I do not mean just ores, minerals or land; human resource and time are perhaps the most valuable resources that must be carefully managed. Keeping the philosophy behind it in mind, it should be obvious that the proper utilization of talent is what differentiates between the best system and an ordinary system. We will know that we are reaching our true potential when we feel like we are being pushed to our limits but we are not being overburdened – “balance in all things”. Time and talent are two things we cannot really buy for ourselves; I do not really need to explain further how invaluable they are, for now.

“The first lesson of economics is scarcity: There is never enough of anything to satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics.” ― Thomas Sowell, Is Reality Optional?: And Other Essays

An ideal system will perfectly account for the scarcity of resources by being fully aware of the availability of all the resources and the demands to be met: supply and demand in other words. For further transparency between the public and the system, it must keep an accurate record of all the findings. This will help the system decide whether to use a resource or save it for later; if a resource is to be utilized, to what extent should it be utilized. This way the public can also know the status of the resources. A significant threat to all beings is the unavailability of resources without which life is not possible, which obviously includes the environment we live in. We can finally become a multi-galaxy specie with the right system. The possibilities are endless.

Just being aware of the resources and the demands is not enough, an ideal system would carefully consider the needs of the future. Think about it this way, suppose in the future we figured out how to build a supercomputer but realized that the material required to build it was already used up in the past because it was very scarce. Another example can be a cure that requires some plants that are already extinct. Would we not be better off if we plan ahead? An ideal system would take the proactive approach and keep the resources secure until the best possible use of the resources is not found. I need not explain the significance of sustainable development further, for now.

To ensure that resources are optimally utilized, an ideal system would restrict access to resources according to the supply, demand and best possible uses of a resource. If everyone was allowed to use all resources, it is obvious what the results would be. Keeping this in mind, an ideal system would also ensure that the best people get access to the relevant resources so that they can utilize them properly. If a scientist who’s at the verge of a breakthrough does not have access to the right resources, can we say that the system is an ideal system? By ensuring that everyone gets the resources they need, an ideal system can greatly help an environment for growth and development.

In order to meet the different demands of people, an ideal system would produce goods/resources as much as possible. In an ideal scenario, all demands will be met easily. In order to achieve this, the system will benefit from automation, creativity and efforts of all the people. Incentives play a big role here; so, people who put in the efforts will be rewarded accordingly to make them feel that they are valuable and meaningful for the world. One thing to note here is that the quantity of goods produced should not adversely affect their quality because that would mean a decrease in standard of living, which is in contradiction with the overall goal of the economic system.

To keep the standard of living as high as possible, an ideal system would need to set standards that it thinks are reasonable, considering the supply, demand and best uses of resources. It must then monitor whether the quality of work is up to the mark. Rewards can be given for conforming to the standards set to ensure people are committed. An ideal system would set such standard that if the standards setters were to live in any part of the world, they would be satisfied with the standards set. Ideally, there would be complete transparency between the public and those running the system, this would allow any and all weaknesses to be highlighted, which should ideally be none.

Once a proper system handles the resources for us, we can then finally focus on actually living and growing rather than just trying to survive. An ideal system would not only utilize the resources optimally, it would also do it very easily. Easily here means with the least disturbance and “noise”. The significance of this feature is that it ensures people do not have to worry about getting the resources they need and so they can focus on their work. Evolution is then more likely to occur at a fast rate, which is really the main goal of all this effort. People can then reach a level of freedom which seems impossible with an ordinary system.

Let us now look into what we have achieved so far.

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Chapter 2: On Communism

The Pros

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it." - Karl Marx

The significance of the above quote is that it urges philosophers to not only interpret the world but to make use of those interpretations to bring about a great change. What good is all that interpretation if it changes nothing? Well, there have been different philosophies which promote accepting reality as it is. However, I do not think they object to development. In fact, the adoption of their philosophy itself is a development, at least according to them.

The main philosophy I am referring to here is obviously "Stoicism". Perhaps people have this idea that demanding change is a sign of weakness. Perhaps, they think it means we are not strong enough to live under the current circumstances. Yet, they would want people to change and be stronger. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to promote and bring about a great change.

Intellectuals can get caught up in the abstract world of thinking, pondering, arguing and dreaming; this can disconnect them from the concrete world and its real problems. If it is difficult to come up with a great idea, I believe it is reasonable to assume that it is even more difficult to bring that idea to life. The point that I am trying to make here is mainly this: let us avoid being caught up in thinking and actually try to solve real-world problems.

To better understand this point, consider this: the most intelligent man in the world thinks about all the problems of the world and he thinks and he thinks, lost in his thoughts he even comes up with amazing solutions but due to his affinity for thinking he never really goes out into the world and actually solves those problems, rather, he just keeps thinking. Compare this man to a man who might not be as intelligent but solves real world problems to the best of his ability. Who is better for the world then?

Now, I do not intend to undermine the difficulty and complexity of certain problems we face. For instance, the challenge to optimize global economy is nowhere near a simple or easy task. Economists and philosophers in general have tried to understand and theorize about it for many centuries now. The reason for emphasizing on this quote is to urge economists and think tanks in general to not just think but actually experiment and test different approaches open-mindedly.

"Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange, and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells." - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto

With all the complex taxation rules, loop holes, hedge funds, cryptocurrency and what-not, optimizing management of resources and keeping advancement sustainable is simply too much to ask of even the best economists. If we somehow reduce the bigger problems into smaller, more digestible problems and introduce more simplicity, it should make it easier for the responsible parties to overcome the challenges we are all facing. Simply put, avoid "Kafkaesqueness".

"The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto

If we think about it, what is the point of all this reasoning and all these efforts for a better life if the majority of us are suffering? The pleasure of a few at the expense of many is evidence of a poor economic system. The emphasis of the Communist approach on individualism, the freedom of the working class and their advancement helps push us to carefully manage this most significant of resources, i.e., "the human resource". What is more valuable than human resource?

If for some reason, those in power choose to ignore the proletarians, they are clearly inviting chaos. If they consider the situation of the proletarians, the enormous wealth inequality and the envious nature of man, they will easily realize the risk they are facing. It is because of this huge risk of chaos and disturbance, that I stress on the better treatment and development of the proletarians. Even Adam Smith urged relaxation of restrictions on the colonies to avoid a major revolt. He also supported certain public works.

The challenge of class antagonism is really a central theme of The Communist Manifesto. Trying to blur the lines or completely get rid of the distinction between the classes might seem as impossible and also counter-intuitive. Why should hardworking and valuable people be treated the same as useless people? The point here is not to treat everyone the same but to deal with and reduce the risk of class antagonism. This can be achieved by promoting equal opportunity and setting a base standard of living. The benefits of this are even highlighted by Adam Smith.

"In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all of these movement they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time." - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto

We cannot deny the corrupting nature of wealth and power in general. Greed, vanity, lust for power, gluttony and laziness are all part of human nature. Without effort, concentration, training and a strong will, one can easily be overcome by one or more of these "evils". Possession of money and property does not make it any easier to overcome them. Even though I disagree with not allowing people to possess property, I think it definitely has the benefit of reducing the chance of corruption.

If we try to imagine a world where no one owns any property, a peaceful and prosperous world does not come to the mind. Instead, if we really think about it, it can be a very chaotic world if anyone stronger than you can take over your shelter and all your hard-earned possessions. There seems to be little point in caring about any property since none of it can really be yours. Yet, paradoxically, it also means that all of it is your property and you should take care of it. It would come down to how much people value harmony and prosperity.

One benefit of abolishing classes and not allowing anyone to own property is that this would bring an end to class-consciousness. When people stop caring about irrelevant details and are not caught up in purely materialistic pursuits, the chance of them evolving to a higher state increases. This is because they can think more purely about what kind of life they should be living and exactly what matters in this finite world. Though this might lead to Nihilism, it can also mean the rise of "Ubermensch". It seems obvious that when people stop worrying about clothes and start thinking about meaning, they will evolve.

Class-consciousness is more likely to be found among the wealthy people; those below the poverty line are more concerned about survival. If in a Communist society their basic needs are given the highest priority, then it is obvious that they will not have to worry about survival. While it is possible that they fall into laziness and an unproductive lifestyle, it also means that they will have more time to think about and solve the problems of the world. As more and more people will have more time to focus on the advancement of technology, the advancement of technology will be faster.

Being free from the concerns of survival and "low-level problems", and with a higher degree of independence, people will be able to think more clearly about what they value and how they want to live their lives. So, I believe a Communist society will promote the re-evaluation of values and philosophy in general - something which is essential for evolution. Without re-evaluation we will be stuck with the cognitive dissonance, falsehood and illusions buried in our philosophy. By rethinking what it means to live, what is true and what we ought to value, it is more likely that we will become purer.

"There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits." - Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production

Thinking, experimenting, analyzing and verifying increases automation, which further allows more time for repeating the activities. Availability of free time improves technology, which increases the availability of free time and the cycle continues. Since no one is dependent on any job in a Communist society, automation is not really a threat; rather, it is promoted so that humans do not have to do any boring, repetitive and disliked jobs. If a Communist society reaches a point where almost everything is automated, then people will be able to focus on discovering and inventing purely for the joy of it, rather than because of need.

Indeed, if we have to gain the "luminous summits" of science, even philosophy and art, we have to set aside our differences, get rid of our concerns about class and luxury, overcome our "animal nature" and focus on learning. This is where I believe we can truly learn from the Communist approach; ask yourself: "do I really care about how big my home is or how many cars I have? Or do I care more about how evolved I am in terms of knowledge and understanding of the universe, life and the 'Self'?" It can prove difficult to answer in a Capitalist society but in a Communist one, it should be obvious. It is not that these summits cannot be achieved in a Capitalist society, it is just that the reasons are different.

The realization of the futility of accumulation of wealth, the limited time we have here and the inevitability of death brings about purity of will. Well, it can bring about depression and can lead to Nihilism but that is part of the process, I think. It is only under immense pressure and heat that carbon turns into diamond. We should burn away our ignorance and embrace reality rather than falling into meaningless pursuits. This purity of will and loyalty to the truth is, in my opinion, the best outcome of an ideal Communist society. Without being honest to ourselves, we are effectively living a lie and deceiving ourselves.

If we wish to bring about a system better than Communism, the new system must:

- Focus on bringing about real change all the time, rather than just being caught up in theorizing.

- Prefer simplicity over complexity; avoid "Kafkaesqueness".

- Value human resource and focus on the development of everyone, including the poor ones.

- Deal with class antagonism so as to deal with the risk of major disturbance and revolt.

- Value freedom and individualism; get rid of "chains" and enable "wings".

- Deal with the corrupting nature of property and the power it brings.

- Help people avoid materialistic pursuits and focus on evolution in a more philosophical sense.

- Free people from the concerns of survival and enable them to think at a "higher level".

- Allow people to have enough free time to think, experiment and bring advancement.

- Promote automation and advancement of technology; for this, it should ensure people are not dependent on any job.

- Promote people to gain the "luminous summits" of science and philosophy in general.

- Bring about a purity of will.

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“The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all exiting social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution.” - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto

Was the "forcible overthrow of all social conditions" and "tremble" really necessary? "Scholars and apologists have debated how much Marx really advocated violence, but followers like Mao, Lenin, Stalin, and Pol Pot seem to have taken 'forcible overthrow' pretty literally, and to have caused a great deal of trembling." Andrew McAfee, Why I Won't Quote Marx. While I have no reasonable grounds to predict what the real intentions of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were, even with the purest of intentions their ideas have led to mass exploitations. Without any property and with only one ruling class, the exploitation without resistance was inevitable.

Dealing with the corrupting nature of property was not the real problem, the core challenge was to deal with the corrupting nature of power. Had they planned how to control the ruling class, the outcome would probably have been better. Not allowing anyone to own any property not only robs them of whatever power and worth they have; it also robs them of a natural motivating factor. People are naturally motivated to satisfy the demands of the market to earn property. This property brings them respect and comfort. Without such a motivating factor, people are at a higher risk of demotivation and laziness. Without any respect and worth, they can fall into degeneracy.

Which system is more likely to work: the one where everyone must be a "saint" or the one where even the "devils" can make it work? If we really think about the assumptions supporting Communism, one of them is that people will be intelligent enough to live in and maintain harmony in the Communist society. It assumes that people will not misuse the power they are entrusted with. It assumes that people will remain productive without any incentive. It assumes that taking control of the means of production will free the oppressed. In other words, it is a system by intellectuals for intellectuals. A system that depends on the intelligence of the people is a flawed system because people can be very stupid.

Who is more likely to come up with the best solution: the objective thinker or the emotional thinker? I believe we can agree that thinking objectively allows us to overcome our personal biases, not fall for illusions and come up with the solution that we might not like for personal reasons but we know it to be the best solution possible. The Communist Manifesto is a book written with blood and is a more emotional book than an objective one.

Can a system work if those in power do not support it? The approach that is not supported by those in power is unlikely to work, simply because they have the means to stop it from working. Obviously, they will try their best to not lose what they have accumulated and owned over generations. A system that rewards or facilitates them is more likely to work because they will use their means, which are substantial, to make the system work.

Which is better: a well-oiled and maintained machine or an old and rusty machine? Factors that push us to evolve are like the grease that makes the "evolving machine" act more efficiently. By getting rid of the very important motivating factor "reward" or property, the Communist approach affects our evolution very adversely. Had the authors planned how to reward effort and advancement, this could have been a viable system.

Even though Karl Marx addressed the issue of laziness by pointing out that the bourgeois don't really need to earn but they are not lazy, then why would people be lazy when they don't need to earn, however, a significant point to notice here is that wealth and respect still motivate the bourgeois to earn more. They compete with other bourgeois. Without any incentive of wealth or property, it will be difficult to motivate people to do difficult tasks.

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible." - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto

Who takes better care of property: the owner or a temporary manager? While highlighting the significance of the human resource is appreciable, little heed has been given to the management of other resources. Ceasing the means of production is not necessarily the best way to manage resources. In fact, it can be argued that production is closer to optimum in private companies than in public ones; simply because the results directly affect the owner.

"For as soon as the distribution of labor comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic." - Karl Marx, The German Ideology

Who do you trust: a doctor who is also a fisherman, a hunter, a herdsman and a critic or a doctor who specializes in a very narrow but complex area of study? Clearly a specialist is more valuable to the customer than a "jack of all trades". The authors of The Communist Manifesto clearly undermine the significance of specialization. One can specialize and still have some hobbies to remain sane. For example, a lady-doctor can make sketches in her free time, an engineer can be a chess player, etc.

If we wish to bring about a system better than Communism, the new system must avoid:

- A violent shift from the old ways to the new ones: consent of the affected parties should be taken to get their support.

- Opposition from those in power: accounting for the self-interest of those in power will make a system more likely to be established, simply because they will support it.

- Emotional and illogical thinking: remaining objective means, we value a proper system more than our personal preferences.

- Losing the benefits of the old system: benefits such as motivation and respect given by property, enhanced productivity by specialization, etc., should be accounted for.

- Giving anyone unfettered power: to avoid the unreasonable exploitation of resources, including human resource, by any being, the new system must balance power distribution. However, I realize that this is more a matter of politics than economics.

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Conclusion

It seems unreasonable to doubt the "purity of will" of the authors of The Communist Manifesto. They honestly analyzed the world around them. They saw how miserable the proletariats were. They realized the huge difference in the living standards of the bourgeois and the proletariat. They felt the invisible chains of the "unlucky ones". They highlighted the significance of class antagonism. It can be argued that it was only humane to try to get rid of the chains and deal with, what they believed to be the root cause of problems, class antagonism.

Perhaps Communism is an approach by the intellectuals for intellectuals to live as intellectuals. It focuses on the significance of a community and brotherhood, freedom from materialistic pursuits, attainment of knowledge for purely the value of it rather than for monetary reasons, advancement of science and technology, automating the boring and disliked jobs, individualism and purity. These, along with the promotion of free education and condemnation of child labor, are clearly appreciable.

We can learn from the book and adopt what we consider good and ignore what we consider harmful or unnecessary. We can promote better public services and more humane treatment of all living beings while allowing people to own property. We can re-evaluate what is true wealth, freedom and being "civilized". We can try to make our will purer and make decisions more objectively, overcoming our "raw instincts". We can listen before we give orders. We can think about the future while enjoying the present. We can bring change peacefully. Let the ruling classes rejoice at evolution.

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Chapter 3: On Capitalism

The Pros

"It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book I

Capitalism is a very practical system, in the sense that it does not require us to be saints or intellectuals; as Adam Smith explains, it works not because of our humanity but our self-love. The laws of supply and demand are evidence of the market being self-regulating. It is because of this nature of the market and humans' tendency to earn a profit that resources are drawn to their most valued application, i.e., wherever there is a demand, there is a possibility to earn a profit and so, resources are optimally utilized for fulfilling demands.

"Future income depends on the extent of our capital, and the only way to accumulate capital is by saving. Indeed, just to maintain capital we need to save, because materials and equipment must be repaired and replaced all the time. If instead of saving, we consume our current revenues on unproductive hands, then we are eating into our capital for the purpose of current consumption. This is prodigality, and if it persists, must lead to ruin." - Condensed Wealth of Nations, Page 36

Capitalism punishes misuse of capital and irresponsible consumption. Those who have excessive wealth can afford extravagance but their extravagance is what improves the condition of their suppliers. Their suppliers may not necessarily be wealthy. So, capital flows from unproductive hands to productive hands. When people who cannot afford irresponsible consumption do not manage their expenses, they generally end up under debt or in much darker corners of life. So, it can be argued that Capitalism promotes responsible management of resources, especially capital.

Uneconomic usage of resources and efforts for low-demand products are naturally unsustainable in Capitalism because people enjoy profits but do not bear losses for long. This means that naturally, resources are utilized by those who can best utilize them for fulfilling the highest demand. This obviously depends on a lot of factors like buying-power, peace, sustainability of what is being demanded, etc. At least in theory, uneconomic activities cannot survive for long in a Capitalist society.

"In general, if any branch of trade, or any division of labour, be advantageous to the public, the freer and more general the competition, it will always be the more so." - Adam Smith, The Wealth Of Nations, Book II

"Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer." - Adam Smith, The Wealth Of Nations, Book IV

Capitalism works best when the level of competition is high. Competition is high when more and more people have access to capital, knowledge and experience. Reducing trade restrictions, facilitating entry into a profession, providing free education and making capital more accessible are likely to increase the level of competition in the market. Not just between employers but also employees and owners. This competition improves the efficiency of the "invisible hand".

Is it not obvious that in a highly competitive market, prices will be lower than if competition was low? Goods, services and labor will become cheaper because of abundance and our natural tendency to give a better deal than our competitors. Where production becomes uneconomic, it quickly ceases to exist because it is exceedingly difficult for it to survive in a more competitive market than a non-competitive one. In a non-competitive market, inefficient production can be compensated by setting higher prices but this is not feasible in a more competitive market.

This need for higher competition naturally promotes better education and more liberty for everyone. The wealthy employers benefit from abundance of labor because this means lower cost of labor. So, this means they naturally promote the advancement of people so that they can provide better goods and services while also increasing their profits. The wealthy get wealthier and the common people become more skilled. This natural increase in knowledge and expertise can be argued to be our evolution.

The competitive and brutal but rewarding environment set in a capitalist society is quite ideal for our evolution. This is because it pushes us to our limits, not just to survive but to win and prove ourselves better than our competitors. The suffering of being penniless and the pleasure of being able to buy whatever we want are both effective factors for making us put in the maximum possible effort. To run a successful business we have to find the right problems to solve and the right way to solve them. This way, our problem solving skills are enhanced.

Companies who keep using and improving latest technologies are normally the ones who have the competitive edge. To keep up with the competition, competitors have to come up with at least similar or preferably better technology; otherwise, they suffer from lower rates of profit or even losses and become unsustainable. So we can say, in a way Capitalism is responsible for the rapid advancement in science and technology. Without the profit incentive and death threat, it seems unlikely that such rapid growth is possible.

"When the crown lands had become private property, they would, in the course of a few years, become well-improved and well-cultivated...the revenue which the crown derives from the duties of customs and excise, would necessarily increase with the revenue and consumption of the people." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V

It can be argued that people perform tasks better when their performance directly affects their own well-being. Companies who take better care of customers' needs generate more wealth than their competitors because customers are more willing to pay them than their competitors. So, we can argue that companies have to perform at a certain level in order to compete with their competitors; which means that our needs are more likely to be better taken care of in Capitalism by private for-profit companies than non-profit organizations.

Without the fear of losing customers and bankruptcy, leaders might not perform at the level they would if they did have this fear. With a proper justice system and a medium for voicing our suggestions, companies who depend on us for their profits perform the best they can to fulfill our desires to maintain a decent reputation. Without a certain level of competition, it seems unlikely that we would have these benefits. The efforts of politicians and businesspeople to diminish competition and freedom should therefore be resisted.

"It is only under the shelter of the civil magistrate that the owner of that valuable property, which is acquired by the labour of many years, or perhaps of many successive generations, can sleep a single night in security. He is at all times surrounded by unknown enemies, whom, though he never provoked, he can never appease, and from whose injustice he can be protected only by the powerful arm of the civil magistrate continually held up to chastise it." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V

With the accumulation of wealth, comes the need for security, law and order and a proper justice system. Since the ruling class directly benefits from a carefully designed justice system, it can be argued that they will use their means to make sure it works to safeguard their wealth. Indeed, they are expected to contribute more to the public purse because they benefit more and can afford to contribute more. So, Capitalism promotes justice and forces people to abide by the laws. When law and order is maintained, people can focus on improving their condition without having to worry about injustices.

"Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V

When war is financed through taxes, rather than loans, private capitals suffer greatly and if progressive taxation is implemented, the wealthy ones or the ruling class suffer the most. Therefore, true capitalists desire to get the war financed through loans or to put an end to the war. So in a way, Capitalism opposes war and promotes safety and security of people who are potential customers, shareholders or employees. This is especially true for multinational organizations, who are arguably powerful enough to end wars together, if not alone.

In a Capitalist society, employees are paid according to the work they do. This means that slavery cannot really exist there. Slaves have to be forced to work; this is primarily because they do not expect any reward for the efforts they put in. Even if it seems cheap, it is the least cost-effective sort of labor. People are more likely to perform better if they see any point in doing so, for example, some bonus, some share in the profits, etc. Therefore, we can conclude that Capitalism opposes slavery and promotes rewarding efforts appropriately.

For the sake of argument, let us assume that all the countries of the world are actually cities of one big country. Then, there is no international trade, because there is only one nation. So, the preoccupation with international trade makes no sense. Is it not true that if a country is producing more than it consumes, it is saving and adding to its capital? Is it not wasteful to produce in one geographical area that which can be bought cheaper from another? Capitalism opposes trade restrictions and promotes free market internationally to maximize economy.

Countries who raise trade barriers against others deny themselves the benefits of competition in the international market. When they try to be self-sufficient, they deny themselves the fruits of mastery already achieved by different countries in different products. By trying to master something that has already been mastered, they effectively reinvent the wheel. Although, more countries mastering a field means more competition, it is unnecessary after a reasonable level of competition. Is it not better to master that which has not been mastered yet? So, Capitalism promotes diversity in mastery.

It follows naturally that the advancement of other nations aids the advancement of each nation. A country who imports and exports to developed countries is likely to benefit from more advanced technology and the quality of products and services is generally going to be high. The interests of commerce have often made it necessary to post ambassadors to foreign countries. Keeping all of the above points in mind, we can reliably assume that Capitalism promotes international trade and opposes war and barriers.

To summarize:

- Capitalism being practical: it works because it relies on our self-interest rather than our benevolence and because the market is naturally self-regulating.

- Wastage of resources being punished: those who best utilize resources to meet the highest demand are the ones who benefit the most, others fail to compete with them.

- Competition and liberty being promoted: consumers benefit from higher quality and lower prices when competition and liberty is higher; this pushes us to think more open-mindedly and become more competent, evolving us in the process.

- Advancement of science and technology being promoted: companies equipped with better technology can get tasks done more efficiently which gives them a competitive edge over others.

- Better user experience being promoted: customer satisfaction becomes a matter of life and death for companies in a competitive environment, which allows customers to voice their concerns and get the best possible treatment.

- Law and order being promoted: without the aid of the Civil Magistrate, owners of property run the risk of losing their property. A safe and secure environment is best for traders to trade without fear of injustices.

- Rewarding being promoted and slavery being opposed: employees normally do their best to earn rewards such as bonuses, promotions, etc. Rewarding appropriately encourages better performance and confidence which means higher efficiency.

- Globalization and diversity in mastery being promoted: countries who benefit from cheaper products and specializations of other countries can focus on their own specializations and cut unnecessary costs. Resources are better managed this way as countries avoid reinventing the wheel.

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The Cons

A profitable business is not necessarily an ethical or sustainable business. Just because a business yields high profits does not mean it is good for us. It can be damaging the environment we live in or our well-being, making it unsustainable and harmful to us. Investors naturally tend to invest in ideas that yeild high profits. Profits is their primary concern, anything else is secondary. The simple fact that the interests of the "ruling class" and the general public are not aligned is definitely a challenge to be overcome.

Where capital is invested, what is being consumed and the rate of consumption would not be points of concern if the key players were "enlightened" beings. It is the corrupting nature of wealth, and power in general, that makes it almost impossible to become and remain "enlightened". We cannot just blame the providers of harmful products or services because their profits depend on consumers' consumption and so, people can influence investors' decisions by demanding more useful products and services.

"For example, it is not the widespread prevalence of alehouses that causes people to drink to excess. Rather, it is the disposition to drink that gives employment to the alehouses." - The Condensed Wealth of Nations, Page 41

Money or cash has some significant flaws which can, and have been, exploited. Money can easily be transferred, it can be stolen, its source can prove difficult to trace and it can be hidden. This means that those with an excessive quantity of wealth can influence decision-making. They can simply transfer a part of their wealth to the officials involved in decision-making; those officials can then hide the money or its source and get away with it. Let us not forget that both parties are simply acting in their self-interest.

The officials are not the only ones affected, anyone who needs money for whatever reason can be influenced if the price is right. This can lead people to do deeds which they do not like but they think they need to if they are to survive or fulfill their goals. In extreme cases, it can also lead to some horrible crimes. After all, "dirty money" is a word in dictionary for a reason. Would people really end up making the same decisions if money was not a factor?

Cash is meant to make transactions more feasible, which means that it flows through many different hands normally; this exacerbates the problem of germs spreading, which can be a real nuisance in a pandemic. Although modern technology has helped reduce the use of cash by replacing it with electronic payments, cash-based transactions for day-to-day needs, especially in smaller businesses, has not helped in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Politicians and organizations in power can demand "their cut" of the profits of local businesses. Businesses who dare oppose them have to face horrible consequences, unless the investors are powerful enough themselves. Blackmail and theft obviously adversely affect economy because investors are normally risk-averse and also because the profits that could have been reinvested or paid to employees end up in pockets of people who might not be concerned with development. Transferability makes it easier to "set up a gang".

"The proprietor of stock is properly a citizen of the world, and is not necessarily attached to any particular country. He would be apt to abandon the country in which he was exposed to a vexatious inquisition, in order to be assessed to a burdensome tax, and would remove his stock to some other country where he could either carry on his business, or enjoy his fortune more at his ease. By removing his stock he would put an end to all the industry which it had maintained in the country which he left." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V

Even without the threat of theft or blackmail, investors can transfer their wealth to some other point in the world where the returns are similar or higher and the taxes are lower. This is not just the downside of transferability, but also of taxation. Not only the rate of tax but the rules can affect economy adversely. I mentioned 'kafkaesqueness' earlier, without doubt, the complexity of a system can be the source of real problems such as discouraging compliance.

A system which makes compliance difficult and the fines for non-compliance high really makes life difficult. Not only can it lead to exploitation and frustration, it can also cause tax evasion and the concealment of wealth. When people do not see the results of the wealth collected from them and realize how well the public officers pay themselves, it really discourages them from sharing their wealth with the government. If it invites fraud, it is flawed.

"There is no art which one government sooner learns of another than that of draining money from the pockets of the people." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V

Adam Smith did not only warn us to be skeptical about the policies suggested by the businessmen, he also highlighted how kings and ministers are the greatest spendthrifts in the society. The investors naturally want to keep the competition, taxes and wages minimized. On the other hand, government officials want to be paid handsomely, so they want to maximize wages and taxes. The general public want lower tax rates, higher wages and higher competition. Clearly, interests of investors, officials and the general public are misaligned.

"The interest of [businessmen] is always in some respects different from, and even opposite to, that of the public ... The proposal of any new law or regulation of commerce which comes from this order ... ought never to be adopted, till after having been long and carefully examined ... with the most suspicious attention. It comes from an order of men ... who have generally an interest to deceive and even oppress the public" - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book I

"It is the highest impertinence and presumption… in kings and ministers, to pretend to watch over the economy of private people, and to restrain their expense... They are themselves always, and without any exception, the greatest spendthrifts in the society. Let them look well after their own expense, and they may safely trust private people with theirs. If their own extravagance does not ruin the state, that of their subjects never will." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book II

The luxuries of life, especially the rarest of all, are not necessarily available to those who deserve them the most, but to those who can afford them or have inherited them. In other words, if you can afford it, you can purchase it. It is possible for a person to accumulate a lot of wealth by lots of insignificant transactions; it is also possible for a person to not be well off even after doing significant things in life. It seems unfair that the former should enjoy the luxuris of life which the latter deserves more, especially if the former is a criminal.

"No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, clothe, and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book I

The lack of a base standard of living is a flaw of Capitalism for multiple reasons. It can be argued that the most significant resource that we ought to take care of is the human resource. After all, why are we putting in all this effort to come up with a perfect system, if not for our own peace and prosperity? All suffering avoidable by better management of resources clearly indicates the failure of Capitalism. According to The Hunger Virus 2.0 report by Oxfam, 11 people are likely dying every minute from acute hunger - need I say more?

Without access to basic necessities like food, water, shelter, education, security, etc., people who can be polished enough to become researchers, doctors, scientists, developers, etc., are dying without being able to contribute to our evolution - contributions which could help deal with currently incurable diseases, climate change, wars, corruption, etc. Kurzgesagt uploaded a video about Egoistic Altruism on YouTube which explains how the development of others also aids our own development. Feed today and get fed tomorrow.

"It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image." - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto

Is it not obvious that you should not have to sell your dignity, your integrity and even your soul to live a "good life"? The lack of freedom, which was also highlighted by Karl Marx, due to dependence on money for access to the basic necessities is also a hurdle in the road to a more evolved state. Would people not live differently if they did not have to worry about survival? How can we evolve if our thinking is limited to survival and materialistic thoughts? It is by attaining true freedom that we can begin to think about evolution.

"The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become." - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, Book V

People depending on jobs that can be automated by AI delays automation. Automating boring and repititive tasks saves time, capital and possibly energy. A system where automation is a threat to humans is clearly a flawed system. Would people still oppose automation if they had access to the basic necessities anyway? This does not mean that automation is not happening in a Capitalist society. However, each automated job is making the system less stable. To achieve Type II civilization status more easily, we should be able to love AI, not fear it.

To summarize:

- Profitability not being equivalent to usefulness: the pursuit of wealth can be damaging to the environment or people affected by the business.

- Enlightenment being difficult to achieve and maintain: many factors such as demands, undue influence, dependence, etc., make it almost impossible to become and remain enlightened.

- Money being transferrable: transferrability of money causes problems like bribe, blackmail, theft, hidden source, transfer of diseases, etc. Key decision-makers being influenced by the "ruling class" is a threat to objective decision-making.

- The interests of investors, public officials and the general public being misaligned: one wants lower taxes but the other's wages depend on those taxes, one wants lower wages but the others depend on those wages.

- The system being very complex: "kafkaesqueness" can lead to problems such as poor understanding of the system, rules being broken and advancement being slowed down. If it invites fraud, it is flawed.

- Rarest luxuries not necessarily being available to the most deserving: rarest of luxuries are only given to those who can afford them; in other words, the source of money is irrelevant as long as the bid is the highest.

- Base standard of living not being set: living beings are suffering because of lack of access to the basic necessities of life. Potential is being wasted. Thinking is limited to survival.

- True freedom not being achieved: dependence on useless or boring jobs and needing to satisfy employers or customers really restrains people.

- Automation being delayed: dependence on jobs that can be automated is delaying advancement of AI and making it a grey area. Each automated job is making the system less stable.

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Conclusion

The ideal form of Capitalism, promoted by Adam Smith, can be argued to be the ideal system for our evolution and we can learn a lot from this system, especially how much it values freedom, competition and rewarding. Yet, it seems this system is no longer sustainable. As more and more people suffer from poverty and the wealthy get wealthier and wealthier, the class antagonism, the sine qua non of Marx, is proving to be a significant risk.

While a lot of effort has been put in to make Capitalism work, for example, through complex tax systems, laws and regulations, standardization and auditing, these efforts are like throwing a bucket of water onto a forrest-fire. Why did the Enron incident happen? Why are people suffering despite the deployment of complex tax systems? Why are we trying so hard to run a flawed system when we can come up with a better system? This system is literally as old as civilization.

We now have the ability to completely get rid of cash, track sources of wealth, measure performance of companies, store very large amount of data, transfer that data easily, provide goods and services from any part of the world easily, automate almost any task and more importantly, learn from the data collected over the millenias. I cannot think of any good enough reason to not utilize our advanced technology to come up with a better, more sustainable and more humane system than Capitalism and Communism.

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