

How Woolf and Marx want the same goal by means of different methods

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The *Communist Manifesto*¹ by Marx and Engels is a world famous text about their revolution against the bourgeois. While Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*² is equally influential, with the important in feminist freedoms, and equality. Both of these texts discuss the need for equality among people, but the texts go about achieving this equality in two fundamentally very different methods. These two texts have a few similarities, as the authors want similar goals of having equality between two currently unequal groups of people. However, beyond this concept, and a few points that each author makes, there is much more that these texts disagree on. These texts have some cross over in their most general of ideas, but beyond that there is very little to no correspondence between the ideas of the two texts.

In the *Communist Manifesto* the main idea is to have a revolution against the bourgeois by the proletariat, the claim is that this revolution will mean everyone will be equal, and there will be no classes in their society. This idea be simplified to the idea of taking all the upper class people, and bringing them down to match the class and life of lower class people, or in this case brining the bourgeois down to the level of the proletariat. This is contrasted with the view from Woolf *A Room of One's Own* where the same premise of make equality among society is present, but for Woolf, this is done is a very different way. Instead of the bourgeois and the proletariat, for Woolf there are men and women. Her solution to the problem of the differences between these groups, is to bring women up to the freedoms of men. Where Marx wanted to bring the powerful

1 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, [trans. Samuel Moore] (New York: Signet, 2011).

2 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ed. Susan Gubar (New York: Harcourt, 2005).

down to the level the proletariat, Woolf wants to bring women up to the level of men. These two strategies have the same end goal of everyone becoming equal, but they go about it in very different ways. In Marx's case this leaves everyone with little power, or control. While for Woolf everyone is left with equal power, and everyone has power.

Woolf says that for a women writer to be successful, she needs a few specific things. She says that a women writer needs a room of her own, and an income of enough money to sustain herself. "a women must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction"(Woolf, 4) This concept for Woolf means that a women does not need to worry about any little things about everyday life, and is able to just focus on their writing. However this idea for Marx would be completely against his entire manifesto. Marx clearly states that he thinks that private property should not be a thing. He want everything to be owned by the state, because private property can lead to a separation of classes. He also thinks that money should not be important to a person, because that means that people who makes more money than someone else would become a new bourgeois. This means that Woolf's desire of women having a sizable income and a private property to stay goes against everything that Marx is arguing for. Marx's clearly states that he wants to remove money, and property from the people, and that this would cause everyone to be equal, as there is a lack of any indication of what would make some one better than anyone else. "1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes."(Marx, 92) Here is one example where he wants to limit ownership of land specifically. Later in this list Marx provides other examples of limiting property. However, for comparison with Woolf's statement that a women needs a room of her own this is all that is needed. As a room would be considered as ownership of land, then Woolf is advocating for the singular person to own their

own land, where the *Communist Manifesto* clearly states that all land should be held by the state, and no single person should have control over property. Further in the list Marx says; “5.

Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly”(Marx, 93). This centralization of credit would be taking money away for the people, and placing it all in the states control. This once again is contrary to Woolf's statement that a women needs money to write. These two examples from Marx clearly contrast Woolf's statement on the necessary things a women needs to write effectively. However they both end at the same result. Woolf says that a women needs money, so that they don't have to worry about paying small bills, or the daily tasks that are necessary, but they can just focus on their work. And having a room of ones own gives them privacy, and a place to work without distractions. Similarly Marx's idea of removing money for the working class and centralizing it in the government, would also remove the worry about paying bills, or daily tasks, as the government manages all of that, and they provide rooms for everyone. Both of these two methods end with the same goal solution, but one is where the woman is providing for her self, and the other everything is given to her.

Both of these texts show their opinions on the current states of women, and they appear to line up very closely. Marx shows that the bourgeois views women as nothing more than tools. “The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production”(Marx, 88). Marx comments that this is a terrible way to view women, and says that the bourgeois abuse women and treat them as nothing more than things that can be traded around. Woolf, being a women herself, always is looking for more respect, and comments that the women are not treated as equals to men. This is a large problem, and women need to be treated equally to men, and that way they

can be as productive in society as men. This is the end goal for both Marx and Woolf. They want women to become a productive portion of society.

Both of these texts have the same end goal, of creating equality for every group of people, and not having anyone that is considered better than anyone else. These two ideas agree on the most broad spectrum, where they want equality, but with any closer inspection the many differences between the two methods of achieving this common goal is revealed. Woolf wants to provide money and property to women, while Marx wants to remove money and property from the bourgeois. This difference can be thought of in one simple way. Woolf wants to bring everyone up to be the same level of society, while Marx wants to take everyone down to be at the same level of society. This major difference would not allow these two ideas to correlate. Because so much of the *Communist Manifesto* is about taking away property, and credit, Woolf's idea of giving more people property and money would not be agreeable. However, both of these authors are searching for a goal of equality for all parties, just through extremely different methods.