

Nietzsche and Marx

PHIL 375, UBC

Philosophy and Literature

June 5, 2018

Some Terms

dialectical materialism materialism: explanation in terms of material things (not ideas) – the explanatory primacy of economic production; dialectic: explanation always depends on history (note Engels' "doubt as to the eternal validity of that which exists")

realism contrasted with dramatizations, idealizations, class distortions (Engels insists that realism is sufficient and pedagogy unnecessary); Manifesto: "man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind" (2)

bourgeoisie the class between the aristocracy and the proletariat

In Marxism, **reification** is a process by which objects (such as commodities) turn into subjects and subjects (such as people) turn into objects (means of production). What once was an object becomes by reification active and determining, while the subject becomes passive and determined. My namesake György Lukács says in *History and Class Consciousness*

Just as the capitalist system continuously produces and reproduces itself economically on higher levels, the structure of reification progressively sinks more deeply, more fatefully, and more definitively into the consciousness of man.

Reification may be the consequence of a simple fallacy: **hypostatization**, where an abstraction is treated as if it were concrete. For example, you may for a moment mistake the map for the territory it represents. Reification leads to **alienation**, for example the alienation of the worker from production.

What the Bourgeoisie Has Accomplished

The bourgeoisie has

- resolved personal worth into exchange value
- reduced the family relation to a mere money relation
- made itself dependent on permanent revolution
- rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life
- agglomerated production and concentrated property in a few hands
- has undermined itself by creating the proletariat (“what the bourgeoisie produces is its own grave-diggers”)

Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis. (10)

Law, morality, religion, are to [the proletarian] so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests. (6)

The Fable of the Bees

Here is an interesting precursor to Marxian and Nietzschean ideas about morality: Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*.

- virtue and morality have as their primary function to lubricate the economy (Mandeville therefore insists that they are necessary)
- vice and immorality are also necessary for the economy, for example in inducing us to more spending and consumption

Rather than being opposed to each other, virtue and vice are carefully balanced and conditioned on each other by the requirements of a functioning economy.

The aim of communists is

- the formation of the proletariat into a class
- the overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy
- the conquest of political power by the proletariat
- the use of accumulated labour to widen, to enrich, and to promote the existence of the labourer

The abolition of existing property relations is a consequence of the historical process, not unusual in other epochs, and not an explicit goal of communists. Communists seek to abolish private property, i.e. bourgeois property (just as the bourgeois French revolution sought to expropriate feudal property).

Just as for Nietzsche, morality and its metaphysical manifestations (freedom, law, responsibility) is based on a historical psychological development; it based on a historical economic development in the Communist Manifesto:

the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. . . . are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property

Aristocrats in their reactionary and charitable support for the cause of the proletariat (having the bourgeoisie as a common enemy) stoop to “barter truth, love, and honour for traffic in wool, beetroot-sugar, and potato spirits.”

Communist Manifesto

consciousness and material existence

man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society, by means of schools? (9)

The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.
(9)

Marx and Engels address the following fears of the bourgeoisie with respect to communism.

- abolition of property → abolition of private (bourgeois) property
- abolition of monogamy → abolition of public and private prostitution
- abolition of home education → abolition of bourgeois social intervention in education
- abolition of countries → bourgeoisie and proletariat both abolish nationalism, the proletariat will do so achieving peace
- abolition of eternal truths → class antagonisms have indeed been a permanent feature of social relations, the communist revolution promises the most radical rupture

Here is the Communist Manifesto's political action plan:

- ① raise the proletariat to the position of ruling as to win the battle of democracy (contra Lenin)
- ② use the proletariat's political supremacy to wrest, by degrees (!), all capital from the bourgeoisie (this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property)
- ③ centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organized as the ruling class
- ④ increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible

The Communist Decalogue

- ① Abolition of landed property
- ② A heavy progressive income tax
- ③ Abolition of rights of inheritance
- ④ Confiscation of rebel/emigrant property
- ⑤ Centralization of credit in the hands of the State
- ⑥ Centralization of communication/transport in the hands of the State
- ⑦ Extension of State production
- ⑧ Equal liability of all to labour (establishment of industrial armies)
- ⑨ Combination of agriculture with manufacturing, more equitable distribution of population
- ⑩ Free education (abolish children's factory labour, but combine education with industrial production)

In the last two paragraphs of Section II, Marx and Engels predict that class distinctions will dissolve, “public power will lose its political character,” and “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” This prediction strongly clashes with the descriptive projects of Nietzsche and Foucault (and certainly with Nietzsche’s normative ideas about power differentials).

Communist Manifesto

Marx and Engels reject other communist/socialist literature mainly on a Nietzschean basis: those other communists/socialists seek to improve the lot of every class, not just the lot of the proletariat. Sometimes they do so (perhaps subconsciously) in order to further the ends of their own class ("the old feudal coat of arms on their hindquarters").

reactionary socialism the feudal aristocracy using the proletariat in its resentment against the bourgeoisie

petty bourgeois socialism Bernie Sanders type socialism

German socialism "not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy" (compare Taylor's critique of existentialism)

bourgeois socialism they wish for a bourgeoisie without proletariat (and got it in the developed world, didn't they?)

A Trump Prophecy in the Manifesto

They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages. (5)

Themes from Manifesto of the Communist Party

- freedom vs. free trade; “in bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality” (8); “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (11)
- the bourgeoisie is self-undermining (4) because it depends on unlimited growth

Themes from Manifesto of the Communist Party

- freedom vs. free trade; “in bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality” (8); “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (11)
- the bourgeoisie is self-undermining (4) because it depends on unlimited growth

Choose from the following options. This item will be graded.

iClicker Question

[8170] Who, according to Nietzsche, has made the only attempt so far to write a history of the emergence of morality?

- A ▶ Russian anarchists
- B ▶ Italian revolutionaries
- C ▶ English psychologists
- D ▶ Austrian aristocrats

Choose from the following options. This item will be graded.

iClicker Question

[8183] What do the bad (i.e. the powerless) feel towards the good (i.e. the powerful), which by the priestly creation of values then turns those who are good into those who are evil?

- A ▶ chutzpah
- B ▶ resentment
- C ▶ panache
- D ▶ transference

iClicker Question

Choose from the following options. This item will be graded.

iClicker Question

[4790] Both Nietzsche and Marx, as philosophers, lived in the shadow of the idealist philosopher GWF Hegel. They were significantly influenced by him and defined themselves in contrast to him. What, according to Love, is a distinguishing feature of Hegelian philosophy to which both Marx and Nietzsche object?

- A ▶ its view of animal-human continuity
- B ▶ its moral claims
- C ▶ its scientific results
- D ▶ its teleological explanations

Choose from the following options. This item will be graded.

iClicker Question

[9296] Which of these names occur in the Love reading?

- A ▶ Althusser, Kaufmann, Foucault, Deleuze
- B ▶ Chomsky, Russell, Wittgenstein, Popper
- C ▶ Arendt, Levi-Strauss, Bergson, Derrida
- D ▶ Anscombe, Taylor, Husserl, Einstein