

Work as Humanity in Marxism

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Abstract

Academics bring to their efforts the concepts of method and methodology, the base of which lies in Marxism. Philosophers contribute to knowledge based on logic which are both formal and dialectal, the foundation of which is also Marxism. A worker does his or her work which is based on a mental and a physical energy or labor. Karl Marx analyzed this concept as a dialectical relationship, and interpreted work as a culture of humanity. According to him, humanity lies only on work and usually the value of work is discarded among the mindset of capitalists who always long for resource accumulation without humanity. To understand Marxism, one needs to know the concept of economic classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Marx himself was not interested to divide the class as the middle classes, working class and upper class. He looked the class that existed during Industrial Revolution in Europe from the perspective of the working class. Marxist philosophy at large analyzes classes of the society in terms of how the economic activities influence the way we think and what we can accomplish as a society. Marx interpreted society from the perspective of the proletariat who believe in work and where lies humanity. This humanity is silent unless we create the feelings of revolution in them. Only such revolution can bring result in their favor. For this the first condition is to abolish capitalism which is inevitable in different phases of the society and establish socialism which is argued to be the first step towards

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communism.

Introduction

This discussion paper synthesizes some of the ideas of Karl Marx to argue that work is humanity in Marxist sense of the word. To draw this conclusion, the notion of method and methodology, types of logic, and the definitions of work are discussed. Marxists argue that every work, that is, mental or physical, must entail humanity. For teaching of Marxism, this notion comes as a pedagogical dimension. A part from this, the paper also highlights work as a culture of humanity, value of work and the basic commodities.

Method and Methodology in Marxism

Marxism believes in struggle which is the universal language of the working class. Continuous study on Marxism is essential for political and human independence. Such study should be able to analyze the current society; for this, we need the idea of method and methodology. A sound understanding of method and methodology is important to understand and contextualize Marxism in society. Whereas method involves historical and dialectical materialism, methodology establishes facts and contextualizes the ground reality. Without understanding this difference, mere Marxism becomes a dogma (Rich, 1976). Method in this sense is a process, systemic approach, collection of laws and formulas. It is an approach to teaching Marxism and learning the relation between theory and practice (Kilminster, nd). Method is a consciousness of doing something that says there is a process in almost everything we do. Method is how to produce knowledge, that is, theory. Method has to do with thinking and building consciousness of what we are doing.

Method must always come from the possibility of revolution, and the categories to understand things. So, Marxists believe that historical and dialectical materialism is a method. A method has two presuppositions/premises, which are principles of determination and are classified as idealist and materialist. The major debate Marx initiated is the debate of 'idea' or 'matter', that is, which precedes. According to Marx, this depends on the context. Initially, there is a need for an axe; it is real material. Almost everyone looks towards the idea first in a classroom, that is, idealist

position. This debate is also a matter of 'class consciousness' (Munro, nd). Karl Marx himself did not coin the concept of class consciousness. This notion can be reflected in his literature that explains the characterization of working class. According to Marx, workers are the primary forces to sense themselves the issues of grievances which emerge due to the suppressing mentality of the capitalists. This creates class in a society. The working class understand the feeling of "we are suppressed" which is the outcome of the behavioral activities of the capitalists.

Class consciousness has historical evidence born out of the long past struggle of the working class. The concept has nothing to do with ideality. Marx defined the term "conscious human practices" and the purpose was to "emphasize the conjunction of subjectivity and objectivity in history" (Munro, nd). Another debate prevails over the definition of idealist or materialist. An idealist simply works for an idea or a dream. What is a materialist then? It seems very selfish, narrow and is interested in the physical being only. However, in the production of knowledge, an idealist world is a product of ideas. This comes from the notion of Hegel who said the world is a will of a human (Pippin, 1997). For a materialist, on the other hand, the world moves on mechanical principles, and laws of nature as Feuerbach, a left-wing Hegelian claimed (Marxists Internet Archive, nd).

Marxian views explain that idealism and materialism can be intertwined to produce knowledge; and it relies on some level of research and rationality. So, ideal or material world is dialectics. Hegel related dialectics with thought, that is, he said all thought has a thesis and anti-thesis. For every element, contradictions arise, but if you negate the anti-thesis, it becomes a new synthesis, that is, new idea or affirmation which carries some elements of the old thesis with a new thought. This is how knowledge is produced. For Marx, this process does not happen in thought, but in matter. It is argued that our territory of observation is in the field of history. When we look at "context", we must look at historical processes. In this sense, context is not static which has deeply rooted historical evidence.

Formal Logic and Dialectical Logic

Logic is an area of knowledge which teaches one not to make mistakes with one's reasoning. It helps to conclude that one is clear and transparent in his/her thinking process. Two types of logic prevail in the discourse of

philosophy: formal logic and dialectical logic. A formal logic is something that is not contradictory of itself which is often treated as Aristotle's method (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023). A formal logic helps to organize one's thoughts to get to the truth. As for example, in a reasoning of "A" = "A", "A" does not equal "B". Being clear on what one is categorizing/identifying, it's either "A" or "B". This cannot be both in a formal logic. A formal logic is highly inductive (therefore subjective), and it does not highlight contradictions. Formal logic views that the world is finite. Everything is already known, but just needs to be defined or redefined.

Dialectical logic, on the other hand, highlights history and science that says, based on the theory of relativity, our definitions are wrong sometimes when we talk about formal logic (Hirsch, 2004). There is no absolute truth in things because things change over time. Formal logic is static in essence. Marx redefined it and said everything is 'dialectic' (de Meij, 2016) that does not say how things are, but how things are being. This notion of reasoning sees the motion or destiny. Dialectical logic in this sense believes that everything changes in a permanent process of change. As for example, feminism today we discuss is not the feminism of yesterday. New elements have been added in it. Hence, what yesterday was, what today is, and what tomorrow will be are relational. In this regard, we are interested in trends, that is, historical movement of capital, work, value, and other material beings. Dialectical logic, unlike formal logic, must capture the motion, applying historical/dialectical materialism. To Marx, real theory is not just memorizing things, or to just understand things, but to apply dialectic method to schools/political education. There are levels to this and it has to be founded on solving the needs and problems of the people. Part of it is to help people understand the totality of their problems. The first level is to explain the principles and theory behind the organizational structure. The second level is a space for reflection of militants, and train to organize courses for base level, and carry out basic encampment tasks. And, the third level is a cadre level training.

Work as a Pedagogical Dimension

A work in Marxism is a mental and physical energy or labor (Burkett & Foster, 2006) that has a dialectical relationship. A work has both thinking and

doing in two aspects. The first aspect of interaction is between physical, concrete, that is, interaction between humans and nature/matter which is a material condition. The second aspect of interaction involves mental, abstract, that is, interaction of social relations. Work in this sense is the combined relations of mental energy (abstract) and matter (concrete) that has dialectical relationship. This relationship defines humanity. We need to be critical of the way we look at social relations. This argument justifies that history is not linear (that is, primitive communalism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism...and so forth); time is only linear. If we fall into the trap of history being linear, then we are being determinist. In this sense, Marx says, "History doesn't repeat itself." Part of our exercise is to understand how work has changed humanity, and what the future of work should look like when history ends, that is, when class struggle ends. In Anthropology, the bourgeois science was used to a) justify colonialism and b) artificially separate nature and culture (Mafeje, 1976). According to Claude Levi-Strauss (1975) a functionalist scholar, the nature of human beings is culture. How were human beings before culture? They were not human beings, as Lévi-Strauss claimed.

Work as a Culture of Humanity

There is no humanity without work. The way we produce matter, concrete or physical object, and the way we organize ourselves to produce social relations, abstract, mental efforts all deeply associate culture. Similarly, the way in which work is organized will change through time that is also embedded with culture (Henseler, 2021). The necessity of humankind grows as we interact with nature, and it will always go up. Our capacity to meet these necessities via resources which always lags behind.

Culture has direct link with the study of economy. Culture, in fact, helps to segregate the concept of Bourgeois conception of economy, that is, to manage "scarce resources." and Marx's conception of economy, that is, to manage exploitation (and productivity) via oppression/violence. It is interesting to note how work is organized in a capitalist society. This is, in fact in other words, how exploitation and oppression/violence are organized. Capitalists do so by increasing amount/accumulation of surplus value (capital continues to and need to grow) to which they term with the popular concept:

“profit”. Capitalists take surplus value/profit as their private and workers are confined with passivity. This is their private property of means of production.

Value of Work and the Basic Commodities

In capitalist mode of production, the value of work is absolutely discarded. This sort of resource accumulation mindset of the handful minds of the capitalist's plunge workers in the platform for rebellion and this is needed in order to survive/reproduce the working class. In the capitalist system, work is a dehumanizing process (Sraffa, 2016). In this respect, the pedagogical dimension of work is how to (re)humanize the work process. Such a dimension needs to contextualize, that is, setting methodology to identify who likes to work, who works with pleasure or who feels hardship and why. In capitalist mode of resource accumulation, work is considered a form of punishment. The socialist thought of work highlights, "I want to work without a boss".

Conclusions

Work that does not lead to production is not a work itself. Practically, in Marxist concep, work is all time awake, and humanity lies there. Common sense is that work is not pleasurable. Free time is where you do what you want. Capitalism creates social relations to give undue burden and not compensate for the necessary time of rearing children, cooking, and housework. When we look at our organizations, we reproduce the capitalist system based social relations. When we say we have no “free time”, we are really saying we are not prioritizing time. We are not organizing time. How to organize the “free time” is the real challenge we need to think of in a material condition. Meetings, discussions, seminars or any types of gatherings, in fact, do not turn out to be our 'work' unless they pave the way for production. Every work should be able to link with production and this is to humanize ourselves. To humanize ourselves is to reeducate ourselves, particularly our senses. This understanding in the context of socialism-oriented society needs to be widely developed; and this is the right time. The existing debate on work from the Marxist perspective needs to be redefined and retrained from the perspective of pedagogical dimension to which Paulo Freire (2000) calls “epistemological curiosity”.

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