

Sociology 193 (Classical Theory)  
Spring 1999

## Introduction

The two social thinkers I have chosen to critique are Max Weber and Karl Marx. Marxist ideology and Weberian thought center on the argument of conflicts, and why they emerged from the western capitalist system. Primarily, one following the readings of Marx and Weber is inclined to perceive validity in one perception of social phenomenon over another. It is mostly an issue of word choice, and one's individual taste in terms of perceived clarity. Most of the confusion regarding these social-thinkers is rooted in the perceived argument between Max Weber and the so-called Marxist philosophers. What I have set to accomplish in this essay is to briefly explain what conflict-theory is, to provide a concrete epitomizing of their world-view, and the implication of formal institutions on society--considering the individual. And how Marxian dialectic--which he adopted from Hegel (CST pg. 152/G. Ritzer)--has influenced my own ideological perspective of 'dialectic-naturalism.'

## What is Class and Class Conflict?

Conflict is defined as being "a fight, battle, or war based on combative or opposing actions...a mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes" (MWC Dictionary/tenth edition). Conflict-theory, in terms of societal stratification, is a thought system based upon the dehumanizing and alienating aspect of the technocratic development in a capitalist system. Conflict amongst non-owners of the means of production find themselves rationalizing their socio-economic statuses rather than seeking worker solidarity amongst their peers and totally rejecting the main stream ideology of exploitation and oppression--as well as repression of mental vision. This statement is exemplified in what Karl Marx termed the false class-consciousness which is a result of five hundred or so years of conditioning. As in the numerous religious faiths existing within our global society today, the perception of good verses evil is comparative to the oppressed verses all individuals of the collective benefiting from the infrastructure based upon the exploitation of resources and labor. Marx rationalizes the communal system as being not the direct fault of the individual capitalists, but rather the logic of the entity of the capitalist system--that is the devil, vampire, snake, werewolf, etc. Capitalism has been defined as being "...an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, pricing, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market" (MWC Dictionary/ tenth edition). From his definition, we can define capitalism as being an economic system based on the exploitation of the natural resources and labor by the elite capitalists.

## History and Ideology

### Karl Marx

Let us first begin with a brief history of both of their lives. Karl Marx was born in 1818 the son of a Jewish (Zionist) attorney, and died as a social outcast of German-European society in London, England, year 1883. The Marxist sociological view has been characterized as having a dialectic-materialist influence. Primarily, because he thought in terms of economics--mostly. He viewed consciousness as being a result of material conditions in which we live. He also viewed conflict and struggle as a moving force for every age in history. In one of his major works entitled Communist Manifesto, he discussed numerous topics related to alienation of works, and the promotion of conflict and competition amongst the capitalist system subscribers. In a work entitled Economics and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 Marx condemned the capitalist system publicly. He perceived the significance of religion as a capitalist tool of repression of mankind. Religious ideas, to Marx, were an expression of human suffering, and protest against it. When the individual perceives himself not worthy of praise, he puts forth spiritual energy into something held as being benevolent, better, and more beautiful than himself God, to Marx, was a symbolic expression of humanity's alienation.".....

(end of excerpt)