

## Research Paper



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## THE CHALLENGE OF KARL MARX AND MARXISM TO CHRISTIANITY

Maria Imelda Pastrana Nabor, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor 3, Department of Language, Culture, Humanities and Information Technology, Aklan State University, Banga, Aklan, Philippines

### ABSTRACT

**M**an is a species-being. Man happens to live in society. It is through social engagement that his distinctively human nature is unfolding. Marx embedded how man can be emancipated, liberated from whatever dehumanizes him. He is fundamentally ascribing with determining the roots of institutionalized oppression and structuralized injustices. He is subscribing to history: first, to locate the ground for historical movements discernible in diverging modes of production rather than in the sphere of idealism; second, Marx allusion to the transformation of the social world in the future. Hence, Marx envision a pattern in history and anticipating a revolutionary transformation in the future.

Marx argument is centered on understanding the causes and destiny of the social and economic revolutions of his time and by understanding the process of transformation, to contribute to it. His viewpoint is focused on man's fourfold alienation – from himself, his work, his productivity, and his fellowmen. In the capitalist society, man must overcome that alienation of restraining his own destiny through communism. The paradigm of surplus value is a definitive version of his paradigm of alienated labor. The restraint of one's destiny is fundamental to human freedom. Marx viewpoint is a process of human liberation he called "the total redemption of humanity". He sees total redemption as historically attainable neglecting the insurmountability of the impediments of mortality and egotism. In a society wherein man's fourfold alienation had been transcendent, wherein work had been humanized, and the state abolished the question of God has no possibility to emerge.

**KEYWORDS:** Socialism, Communism, Materialism, Ideology, Capitalism

### INTRODUCTION

The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of Enlightenment occurred at the economic level. It disclosed the conditions of the people by extrinsic economic and social forces. With the rapid development of industrialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the condition of the workers worsened. Marxism stepped into the gap. Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German Philosopher, in 1848 published the Communist Manifesto. His goal was to eliminate the injustices of the capitalistic autocracy and to establish a communist society. He showed how the workers were now alienated

not only from the fruits of their labor but from the historic faith as well. Marx considered religion as an opiate, designed to make them forget their oppressive situation.

Karl Marx was born in Trier, in the German Moselle Valley. He studied philosophy at the University of Berlin. He was greatly influenced by the works of the great German idealist, G.W.F. Hegel. He soon abandoned Hegelian idealism, however, to become a political agitator and revolutionary. Expelled from several European countries for his "subversive" activities, he finally settled, in London in 1849, where he lived the rest of his life. He wrote his monumental work "Capital."

Marx attempted to integrate diverse viewpoint and disciplines in a body of thought. Today, a number of thinkers concur that Marx viewpoints be interpreted as a continuous explication of themes first treated in the year 1844. Marx wrote very little directly on the subject of ethics. His writings on history, economics, and politics offer a perspective on the nature of society that embodies a conception of justice highly critical of the practices as well as most of the theories of modern civilization. His writings have provided the intellectual foundations for social experiments on a vast scale in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which have had profound effects on the quality of life experienced by billions of people since his day.

Marxism could be interpreted in 3 salient ways: first, it is the doctrine of a mass movement fused with revolutionary fervor with a touch of history and the accentuation on the conviction that it constitutes the key to interpreting patterns of social transformation. It is a simplified amalgamation of Marx, Engels and Lenin's viewpoints that became the official teaching of Soviet communism and their allies. Second, Marxism, from Lukacs onwards, is not a body of doctrine but a method that deals on fundamental problems of social existence and transformation practically and theoretically. Finally, Marxism is a corpus of beliefs, a method to a way of life. It is a historically discernible diverse tradition of thought and action. Marx seminal and enduring influence is discernible in the viewpoints of Engels, Lenin and Lukacs, Kautsky and Rosa Luxembourg, Trotsky and Mao, Adorno and Althusser, Gramsci and Sartre, etc.

## **MARX'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Materialism:-**

Marx's atheism stems from his notion of materialism. Marx was not an ontological materialist like Engels and Lenin. Ontological materialism is a repudiation of the existence of anything other than brute physical matter. Marx upholds metaphysically social materialism, the term he identified in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., all is indeed matter. Marx alludes to matter as social relationship. Marx insists that human beings value social engagement. They relate with one another. To be human is to exist in social engagements, and what it is to be human is determined by the specific form of engagement which characterizes a specific historical form of society. There is no absolute human nature, but only the form of human living which men and women have inherited from their history. "Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under

circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>1</sup>

The entirety of the productivity of human consciousness such as art, philosophy, law, politics and religion engenders their life, specific form and shape from the particular character of the society of which they are the ideology. Marx interpreted this as consciousness by life.<sup>2</sup> In Marx's viewpoint, it does not indispensably ensue that all human reflection upon social life is a reflection of it. Marx form of determinism is debatable. Marx, however, solidify that within whatever boundaries imposed circumstantially, men make their history and in subscribing to that history, ideas indispensably constitutes a decisive role. The viewpoints of Marxism is both the generation of a specific level of historical unfolding such as capitalism and an efficacious agency of revolutionary unfolding geared to a new level, communism.

**1. Historical Materialism** – is a combination of history, economics, politics and many other subjects. This paradigm is known as "the materialist conception of history." The key to understand human culture and history was productive activity. It is gaining the means of subsistence by interaction with nature: Labor. Labor is the instrument of human self-creation. Labor is a process wherein man and nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and nature. History is the unconscious creation of human work and is subject to observable laws. In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production, i.e., property relation that correspond to a state of unfolding of their materials productive force.

Marx employed the base-superstructure metaphor. Society may be likened to a building. All buildings have a base- the foundations – and the superstructure – the walls, roof, etc. Society's base is the economy upon which the structure of society is built – culture, politics and military. The base/superstructure paradigm informs us that the cultural, political and social aspects of a society rest upon the economic base. If the economy is capitalist so too are the state, culture and social institutions.

Those who own and control the economy will control the other aspects of society: the state, culture and institutions. The modern society is a capitalist society. For this reason, Marx perceives the history of humankind as the history of different modes of production. It is the mode of production, which is the infrastructure of society, is large. These mode of production are successive “stages” in that the history of humankind with capitalism being the ultimate and because it is so exploitative and alienating it will lead to final mode of socialism.

## 2. **Economic and Dialectical Materialism**

– For Marx, economics was not indispensable. The relations of production were at the heart of any society. It refers to the relationships that human beings enter into in order to produce the economic needs of society. It was not industrialization per se that had brought about modern society. Industrialization is a result of a particular type of relationships of production known as “capitalist,” meaning these new relation of production were dominated by a specific relationship to the production process. He called this capitalism because of the dominant use of capital in this type of society. It is a type of social relationship involving investment such as investment in goods, services and people. This investment has social and political implications far beyond economic life.

Prior to capitalism, the notation C—M—C prevails. A good or commodity [C] is sold for Money [M] in order to purchase another commodity. In capitalism, the notation: M—C—M+. The capitalist begins with Money [M], and then purchases a commodity [C] for some more money [M+]. The money [M] is the capital for it is invested to gain more money (profit}. There is a dual aspect of any commodity. Every commodity is said to have [1] use value and [2] exchange value. The use value of a commodity indicates the value of commodity in use. The exchange of value is a commodity in its value on the market. The exchange value of commodities predominates in a capitalist society.

**Dialectical Materialism** – the general philosophical foundation of the system is the work of Engel’s. It constitutes a link between the Hegelian dialectic and the 19<sup>th</sup> century materialism. Materialism meant the material world, perceptible to senses. It has objective reality independent of mind or spirit. All knowledge is deduced from the senses. Individuals can gain knowledge only through their practical interaction with those things, framing their ideas corresponding to their practice and social practice alone provides the test of the correspondence of idea with reality such as of truth. Dialectical materialism is essentially metaphysics. Its tenet is focused on the belief that reality is a continual transformation in an evolutionary pattern from a physico-chemical phase of the universe to a biological stage terminating in the present sociological era. This evolutionary development is a dynamic, dialectical transformation. The dialectic is a rational principle inherent in nature, responsible for the course or turn of events which history takes. The history of man, particularly social and philosophical history, follows the principle of a predestined plan culminating in world socialism. Communism will be the inevitable outcome of the history of nations or societies. People may accelerate its rate of progress, or they may retard the normal development but never prevents its inevitable outcome. Each stage or period of history, owing to its dialectical character carries within it the “germs of its own destruction.”

### **Ideology:-**

The crucial viewpoints of each age, for Marx, has been the ideas of its ruling class<sup>3</sup> and within the social world of capitalism. This constitutes the “bourgeois” class. The bourgeoisie in its narrowest aspect was the class of capitalists, those who owned or possessed direct power over the means of production and distribution of wealth in a capitalist society

In its entirety, Marx negates the viewpoint of the bourgeois class ruled in a capitalist society by virtue of any conspiracy to impose them by force or by propaganda. The viewpoints of the bourgeois is crucial in a bourgeois society for they are, for that society, “its spontaneous and natural mode of thought”. Briefly speaking, they are that society’s ideology. In capitalist society, social, economic and political transaction are dominated by market forces, by the buying and selling not merely of commodities and goods produced, but also of the means of production, i.e., labor. In such a

society it is natural and spontaneous for capitalist and worker to socialize themselves as individual buyers and sellers. The workers envision himself/herself as the seller of a commodity, labor-power and the capitalist as the buyer of it. Both of them are in concurrence on the price received or paid, wages, as determined by the forces of the market, supply and demand.

Such correlation on the corresponding naturalness and spontaneity on both worker and capitalist accentuates the engagement between them as being free and equal exchange between independent individuals within a market relationship, for the market exchange in its form is interpreted as the exchange of equivalents. Marx conceived this fundamental viewpoint of capitalist society in terms of a structure of market forces as underpinning the ethical commitment of the bourgeoisie to the moral values of freedom and equality. Spiraling away from basic economic perspective are even elevated viewpoints of individual freedom and equality before the law, equality of opportunity, the right of man, the freedom of the press, suffrage, public opinion, the freedom of a property owning democracy and on from there into the transcendent realm of metaphysics and religion where the ethical commitments are proffered absolute, supra-historical value. Such ruling values are interpreted as projection beyond the conditions of historical specificity and class interest of the values of a specific form of society built in the image of its ruling class, the bourgeoisie.

This intricate layering of legal, political, moral and religious presuppositions are the viewpoints of the dominant class not in the aspect that the bourgeoisie engendered than as its propaganda but in the aspect of its lingua franca, the “common sense” shared in common by all in such society in which the bourgeoisie are the dominant class. This ideology is the mirror where the bourgeoisie can reflect its own moral, metaphysical and religious image and likeness.

### **Exploitation:-**

Bourgeois society’s mirror of ideology endorses its commitments to the values embedded in the market mechanism that envisions the most basic engagement of a capitalist society. The bourgeoisie asserted its values to be transcendent, of all society and visualizes society as the free engagement of autonomous individuals in the equal exchanges it transacts. However, Marx sees these central market values, (i.e., individualism, freedom and equality) as fundamentally misinterpreted by the bourgeois ideology on the social world from which it emerges.

Marx exhibited the exchange of labor power for wage as decisively an engagement of radical inequality. The surface representation of such engagement is equality. The worker receives its wage naturally seems to be receiving a value equivalent to his productivity during the previous week. Such appearance of equality, for Marx, is dependent on the false assumption that what the capitalist buys from the worker is the value of the worker’s productivity in the previous week – and it is not, nor could it be. What the capitalist buys is the use for a given period of time of the worker’s capacity to produce value, his/her labor-power. The capitalist buys this labor-power at a price indispensably lower than the value which he can extract from its use, so that the value received from the worker is indispensably higher than the value of the wages given in return.

Without this unequal exchange, there can be no surplus, without surplus value, no profit; without profit, no capitalism. In its external appearance, “naturally and spontaneously” as an exchange of equivalent, the basic engagement of capitalism is an engagement of exploitation, a dehumanization forced upon the worker by virtue of his only alternative, i.e., unemployment. The worker must either impoverish himself by labor for wages, or live in poverty without them.

Consequently, the capitalist mechanism of wealth/economic productivity is inherently alienating for the worker. The more the worker produces, the more the worker produces his own alienation from self, his own powers, from others. Such atomic-individualist perception of self which shapes such efficacious element in the moral ideology of capitalism is a symptom of the worker’s own alienation and a reinforcement of it.

Hence, the capitalists and workers diverged in many ways as classes in a state of compulsion that cannot be resolve within the configuration of a capitalist society. Marx insists that class warfare is constructed in the very framework of capital itself. Class warfare must not be repudiated as moral grounds within the assumptions of capitalism. The structure of capitalism exist only on the ground of engagement between them divided by class antagonism. Moralizing idealism are futile gestures. The very solution provided by Marx is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism for it could shape the possibility of the conditions of man to live in unity.

Actually, the manuscripts contain no mention of his solution to the economic, political and ethical problems of his society; namely, the realization,



following a revolution by the proletariat (workers), of an ideal classless society. Rather, Marx's main concern in the selection is to describe the kind of life lived by workers in the industrial world of his time under the capitalistic system. The key concept in his analysis is the notion of alienation or estrangement. Marx sees the modern industrial worker as being almost totally alienated and, as a result, as living a life that can only be charitably described as human. This deplorable condition, furthermore, is no fault of the worker but the inevitable result of the entire social structure generated and maintained by bourgeois capitalism.

### **Socialization:-**

*Narrow meaning of socialization:* Karl Marx foresaw a progressive socialization, or social ownership in the processes of industry and manufacture through various stages, leading to a classless society and the complete socialization of the productive system. It may be a nationalization of resources with or without compensation to their owners, or a form of public or semipublic ownership rather than direct ownership by the state or ownership of industry and services by public boards or corporations established and regulated by the state.

The form of socialism Leo XIII had in mind in *Rerum Novarum* was Marxist. He rejected the abolition, or socialization of private property. But Leo rejected the socialist solutions proposed by Marx and others. Leo upholds that socialism takes away humans' natural right to private property. Socialism endorses futile solutions, believing that all inequalities can be overcome. It is erroneous to assume that hostilities between classes are natural and unavoidable. It also bestows too much power to the state, risking a complete absorption of the individual and the family by the state. Pope Leo, in *Rerum Novarum*, argued that loss of religion and decline of morality contributed immensely in creating the problem. Pope Leo called for a return to Christian morality and value church teachings. It called on proprietors and workers to accept mutual obligations and duties especially that owners must pay a just wage. He also argued that the state have an obligation to protect the interest of the working class and acknowledges the rights of workers to form labor union.

In *Quadragesimo Anno*,<sup>4</sup> on the economic pole, power and wealth had become concentrated in the hands of a few "who for the most part are not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds which they administer at their own good pleasure. Socialism, too, had shifted with the emergence, alongside

communism and of a more moderate form of socialism. In this encyclical, Pope Pius XI criticized the prevailing capitalist system wherein "immense power and despotic economic domination is concentrated. The pope also condemned Marxist socialism. "No one can be at the same time a sincere catholic and a true socialist"<sup>5</sup>. The Pope alluded to a mitigated form of socialism whose social reforms paralleled those based on Christian principles.<sup>6</sup> The Pope endorses a middle-way between individualistic capitalism and collectivist socialism, a new form of corporation wherein workers would share in ownership and discretion making.

Pope Pius XI directed explicitly in contradiction with atheistic communism in his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). He argued that: first, communism proposes a false messianic idea and deceptive promises about what a new society will be; second, it holds that only matter exists, a viewpoint that rules out all belief in God, the soul, and hope in an afterlife; third, class struggle and consequent violent hate and destruction become a crusade for progress; fourth, there is no recognition for any individual rights in respect to the collectivity; fifth, it rejects all hierarchy and divinely constituted authority including the authority of parents; sixth, the natural right to property is abolished; seventh, marriage and the family are completely undermined; eighth, dominance of the collectivity makes production of goods its only goal and gives unlimited discretion over individuals; ninth, morality is reduced to being a simply a product of the economic order; tenth, the state is given unlimited power through Communists claim that it will "wither away"<sup>7</sup>

In *Mater et Magistra*, Socialization is neither good nor evil. Its moral note depends on the particular forms, which it assumes, and the uses to which these are put. Man in society remains a free agent. The present trend towards socialization is not a product of natural forces, working by some blind instinct. It is the work of man who is free by nature and responsible for his actions.<sup>8</sup>

For John XXIII, the acceptable level of economic and political socialization lay midway between two extremes:

1. The political tyranny that stems from the destruction of personal initiative.
2. The refusal of the state to intervene when the weak need protection.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, socialization is not without its dangers. It brings with it many advantages for the revitalization and betterment of human qualities and for the protection of human rights. The degree of

socialization may vary from place to place depending on a community's economic and social development but in all cases intervention should be for the common good, restrictions should be minimal, and totalitarian methods or dictatorship can never be justified.<sup>9</sup>

Pope Paul VI, in *Octogesima Adveniens* differentiated several aspects of socialism. He noted that Marxism could be considered as: first, the active practice of class struggle; second, exercise of political and economic power by one party; third, a materialist ideology; fourth, a scientific method of examining social reality.<sup>10</sup>

In *Laborem Exercens* (1981) John Paul II said, "one cannot exclude the socialization, unsuitable conditions, of certain means of production".<sup>11</sup> It may be indispensable in order to ensure that the goods of the earth are available for all. The goods of the earth are for the benefit of all, and if individuals or families or groups are being deprived of this case, a higher political body may intervene to protect them; the level of this intervention will vary from time to time or from place to place depending on the circumstances. The purpose of all socialization in political-economic areas must be the common good; but the state, or any organization between individuals and the state, should not do for the individual or for lower groups what they can do for themselves provided they are in a genuine position to meet their just needs. Here the function of the state is subsidiary. Because of its special responsibility for the common good, the state should be alert to ensure justice for individuals, families and groups and if necessary, intervene to remove injustices. Finally, although private citizens, families and groups should be alert to any encroachment by the state, they need to remember the benefits that can come from a socialization inspired by a full acceptance of social mortgage on the goods of the world, that is, that they are meant by God to be used for the benefit of all.

The concept of socialization in education diverged from its use in politico-economic studies. For the educator it is the process by which people, especially the young, become integrated in themselves and into the communities of which they are members. The 1<sup>st</sup> agent of socialization is family. A specifically indispensable agent in the school through teachers, the curriculum, and the influence of other children. The communities in which a child lives and the experiences it bestows are also agents, while the state, because it is a society into which people must be integrated and because of its subsidiary functions in education, has

an indispensable role in socialization. Finally, the church is involved, though its fostering of the basic virtues and values of human living and particularly through its mission of helping all to become full, living members of the community of the people of God.

As a response to economic and political transitions, *Centissimus Anno* (CA) suggests a moral and theological reflection upon the character of the two paradigms (capitalism and democracy) and their failed competitors (socialism and totalitarianism) as well as upon the proper role of the economy and the authority of the state.

1. CA disclosed a heightened aspect of the centrality, continuity (linear), development, and dynamic character of the church's social magisterium. Rooted in the magisterium's authority, vision and principles, it is an application depending upon the judgment and expertise of all the baptized and the willingness to participate into dialogue and cooperation with the larger human community.
2. CA upholds the magisterium a pastoral authority and a responsibility to address social concerns. Not merely a valid contribution to socioeconomic analysis, Catholic Social Thought is part of the evangelizing task of the church.<sup>12</sup>
3. CA is a rereading of *Rerum Novarum* confirming the permanent value of such teaching and builds upon the foundation laid by our fathers in the faith.<sup>13</sup> It is not merely an application to contemporary setting but an enrichment and a construction upon the accumulated tradition of the social magisterium.
4. CA depicted numerous indications of this continuity and linear development.
  - a. The injustice behind the workers problem.
  - b. The errors of socialism.
  - c. The grounds for and demands of a just wage.
  - d. The various rights of workers.

## THE ERROR OF SOCIALISM

It is anthropological in nature. Socialism regards the person merely as an unthinking cog in the larger machinery of the society. Failing to grasp the moral freedom of the individual or the autonomous integrity of various intermediate groups, the socialist state "reduces the person to a series of social relationships, eliminating the subjectivity of the individual and society

and hindering the progress towards the building up of an authentic human community.<sup>14</sup>

The abuse stated incomplete anthropology is grounded in atheism. It negates God's existence, depriving the person of his foundation, and leads to a social order without regard to the person's dignity and responsibility. It is also grounded in socialism's class struggle, an often violent conflict unrestrained by any concern for the moral order or rights of others. Consequently, freedom is cut loose from its moorings to the full, moral, and transcendent truth of humanity.

1. It leads to a negation of the necessity for the divine.
2. Failure to respect the rights of the other.
3. An increasingly inordinate worship of the self.

### **Factors for Socialism Failure:**

1. The collapse of real socialism in Eastern Europe was due primarily to the systemic violation of the rights of those persons it claimed to protect: the workers
  - a. The threshold of the solidarity movement in Poland.
  - b. The oppressive experience of workers throughout the Eastern bloc.
  - c. The rights violated: private initiative, ownership of property and freedom in the economic sector.
2. Violations of rights generated inefficient economic system.
3. The atheism under girding socialism failed to uproot the need for God from the human heart.

The collapse of real socialism affected Eastern and Western powers and the nations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world. Its implications created opportunities and challenges for the altered world it leaves behind.

### **Reactions on the National and International Level**

Individual nations responded to the threat of economic revolution by setting up:

1. Just democratic societies with humane and morally restrained market economies.
2. Rigid 'national security' states whose dictatorial control fought Marxist infiltration in ways that undercut the dignity and rights of its citizenry.
3. Affluent consumerist societies out-producing materialist socialism while ignoring the fuller development of person and culture.
4. On the international level the competition with real socialism and the logic of the power blocs polarized the globe along two axes.

- a. It created a cold war between East and West and a chasm of inequality and dependence between North and South.
- b. 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries suffered greatly from this hostile competition between the blocs.
- c. They were drawn into the increasing global militarization, disenfranchised through the diversion of planetary resources, and forced to choose between inadequate models of development.
- d. Consequently, numerous countries tried with mixed success to forge alternative economic models incorporating a variety of borrowed and indigenous elements.

Disoriented nations experienced new opportunities and dangers. Faced with a postwar economic recovery delayed by 45 years, Eastern Europe confronts the challenge of establishing an authentic paradigm of human and economic development while evading a relapse into 'old forms of totalitarianism and authoritarianism' or a resurgence of regional compulsions and ethnic violence.

CA insists that resources from this amplified development task may be located by redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values on the basis of which economic and political choices are made. In particular,

1. Disarming the huge military machines constructed for the conflict between East and West.
2. Control the international arms trade especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world.

It would release abundant resources for supporting global economic recovery and development.

The failure of real socialism is relevant to 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries in their search for their own path to development.

1. It demonstrates the futility of any compromise between Marxism and Christians. CA alluded to the necessity of an authentic paradigm and praxis of liberation grounded in the social doctrine and Christian anthropology of the church.<sup>15</sup>
2. It is the consequence of an ethical and Christian reaction in opposition to the widespread circumstances of injustice.<sup>16</sup>
3. It is deliverance of the worker movement from its Marxist tutelage and a rapprochement with Catholicism and the church's social doctrine.

In CA 6-10 John Paul 11 reiterates the judgment of *Laborem Exercens* 30 - *Primitive capitalism*

*fundamentally and erroneously reversed the priority of labor over capital, rendering the worker a mere commodity. In Rerum Novarum – Liberalism grounded in an incomplete grasp of human freedom.*

John Paul II visualized this freedom as the root of both liberalism and socialism. He denounced unbridled capitalism for its negation of the universal destination of material goods, its laissez faire attitude regarding the role of the state in economic matters, and its violation of the rights of workers to a just wage capable of supporting their families, noting that such excuses and positions continue to produce devastating effects in some contemporary western societies.<sup>17</sup>

John Paul II denounced **consumerist tendencies** in modern capitalist societies.

“Such tendencies, flowing from an inadequate anthropology centers on ‘human - having’ instead of ‘human-beings’ discloses themselves in a demand for equality that produces and consumes goods and services that meet the lowest and most superficial levels of human needs. Failing to attend to either the higher and spiritual goods of the individual or the common good of the community, consumerism cheapens the person, harms the society, and ultimately poisons the planet.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Strengths of Capitalism**

John Paul II preferred to call this a ‘business economy’.<sup>19</sup>

1. Business economy is grounded in human freedom acknowledges the legitimate rights of persons to private ownership while encouraging them to utilize their resources (subjective and objective elements of work) in a collaborative and creative initiative that responds with foresight and accuracy to the needs of others, thus increasing the wealth of society.
2. Relevant virtues are contained in this process such as diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in discretion making, which are difficult and painful but necessary.
3. On the sphere of individual nations and international relations, the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs.

### **Weakness of Capitalism**<sup>20</sup>

1. The errors of capitalism are grounded in the deeper failure to put the economy and economic freedom in the service of the greater good and truth of the human person.

2. The malice of unbridled or radical capitalism is located in its incapacity to attend to deeper social and human values and in the unwillingness of persons and societies to make it do so.
3. The elevation of an economic tool to an ideology that seeks to adequately explain and govern the totality of human experience has led to countless abuses and injustices.
4. Many of the errors of capitalist societies such as the violation of workers’ rights, two-fold alienation of consumer and laborer, idolatry and profitability, harms to the environment, and the increasing relative impoverishment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world stem from the failure to acknowledge the limits of a market economy.<sup>21</sup>
5. The efficiency and profitability of this paradigm lacks the wherewithal to notice, attend to, or give priority to deeper human and moral values.

John Paul II envisioned **business economy** as:

1. A system wherein economic freedom is circumscribed within a strong judicial framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality, and which envisions it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious.<sup>22</sup>
2. Through the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, the essential and active roles of the state, society, and various groupings in setting the moral boundaries of a just economy: supporting judicial restraint, state intervention, and committed struggle in response to injustice.<sup>23</sup>
3. A just society will safeguard not only the rights to freedom of religion, private ownership, and economic initiative but also the rights to sufficient wage for the support of the family, social insurance for old age and unemployment, and adequate protection for the conditions of employment.<sup>24</sup>
4. A moral international economy will provide from the subjectivity of the person and society, ensuring to both the right to real participation and economic initiative in a just and open market.

### **THE CONTRIBUTION OF KARL MARX**

Karl Marx adopted the atheism of the left Hegelian and made Feuerbach’s criticism of religion his



own. Best known for composing the communist *Manifesto* and *Capital* which became the basis of the communist movement. Marx's criticism of religion took as its incontrovertible basis the humanistic atheism of Feuerbach. The very ground of irreligious criticism is this: ***Man makes religion; religion does not make man.*** Unlike Feuerbach, Marx is bent on grasping man in and through his economic and social conditioning. But the essence of man is not abstracted intrinsic in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships. Man is the human world, the state and society. This state and society produce religion. Human beings are part of the larger social order.

It is in contrary to this milieu that Marx throws down the challenge to Christianity. For the Marxist atheist, Christianity is not so much a body of doctrines, which are false as a social practice, which is ideologically committed to an anti-revolutionary strategy. Theism, for Marx, is both system and reinforcement of that strategy. For so long as human being prolongs its strategy. Theism, for Marx, is both symptom and reinforcement of that strategy. For as long as human beings prolong their concatenations with alien powers, they will be alienated from their own. For as long as men and women project the eschatological resolution of human clash and struggles on to a final kingdom beyond human history; for so long they will fall short to take up the burdens of revolutionary action within history and for so long as Christian ideology of the individual resumes reconciling man and women in the market principle of an atomic individualism, they must essentially be in collusion with the principles of a capitalist society.

In the end Marx followed Feuerbach in viewing Christianity as having placed before human beings the need to choose, between the claims of God and the claims of the human; between an indifference to history and its functions in the name of an individualistic transcendence and an immanentist, God denying, historical humanism; between an other worldly solution and this worldly socialism.

It is certain that, for Marx, Christianity imposes these choices. Such challenge has been met in one or other ways: one response insists that God can be affirmed only through the denial of the human, that the transcendence of God can be affirmed only through the negation of history; that religion itself can be defined only by contrast with the political, the social and the material. The alternative response is, in the name of post atheistic incarnation Christianity, to discard the

need to make these choices at all. Would it be possible to have an alliance with Marxism is a question on which the Christian world remains, for the time, being divided.

Marx prefers to turn theory into practice. For Marx, the chief imperfection of materialism up to now is that it has understood reality only as an object of perception and not subjectivity as human activity and practice. Marx thus moves beyond the previous mechanistic materialism and provides an equivalent for it with a historical materialism. Marx's materialism is simultaneously humanism. Thus, ***man is the Supreme Being for man.*** There is also the query of the concrete person. Thus, humanism is also a naturalism; i.e., the realization of a human world. This realization assumes the products of work; various activities, changing of the environment and producing of our means of subsistence belong to all in common. For this reason, the elimination of private property or communism is true humanism. In the 1<sup>st</sup> analysis, Marx's purpose is a radical and universal emancipation; i.e., the complete restoration of man, a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself. The need is to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, debased, degraded, abandoned and contemptible being.

This concrete economic and political presupposition of man has consequences for the new humanism, which Marx is trying to locate. Marx prefers, "the world's becoming philosophical" in Hegel to be replaced by "philosophy's worldly." Hegel adjusted philosophy harmoniously and the world only in thought, not in reality; philosophy made perfect now intractable to a world that is obstinate. Marx prefers to fulfill and thus cancel out philosophy; he prefers to turn theory into practice. The philosophers have interpreted the world only in various ways. The point is, to transform it.

This practico-political grasp of man is indispensable to modify the criticism of religion that had been taken over from Feuerbach, by distending in terms of politics, economics and practice. Religion is not inverted self-consciousness but inverted world – consciousness. Religion is even "the general theory of this world," its moral sanction, it's very ground of consolation and justification. Religion is the sign of the unjustly severe creatures, the mawkishly emotional utterance of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. ***It is the opium of the people. Opium in a sense that it eases suffering; a spiritual intoxicant that prevents us from seeing the reality. Religion intoxicates the mind of man and prevents man from viewing life as it is.***

Several interesting points are raised: *First, religion is conceived as a projection.* But the starting point for the projection is not humanity as such. Religion is rather perceived as a superstructure built upon relations. Here, Marx talks about a commodity. A commodity is a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. The mystical character it exhibits and the concealed milieu enveloping it are due to the fact that it comes before man as an object and thus reflects back to him his own nature as this produces itself in work. Each person is essentially social. Each person should enjoy and share in all of the fruits of social collaboration. We are divided because of the structure of capitalist societies. The great mass of humankind is alienated or disintegrated from the products of its labors. Instead of expressing themselves through their labor (as in art), most human beings are forced to sell their commodities to some entrepreneur in order to survive. Instead of articulating themselves fully through a variety of activities, they are forced to perform only one monotonous function all day long while someone else performs another (a process Marx called *the "division of labor"*). The solution to this miserable state of affairs lies in changing the economic base on which society is built. It is inadequate to interpret the world but we must struggle to change it. The way to liberate human beings from alienation is to destroy its causes: **private property and the division of labor.** We shall once again enjoy the fruits of our own labors and the labors of our fellow human beings in a society he called "**communist.**" In such a society, each contributes according to ability and receives according to need. When we have all we need there will be no enemy, theft or other crimes against our fellow human beings. It is thus analogous to "the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world." This is why the dismissal of religious alienation is only a presupposition of true humanism. The philosophy, which is fostered by atheism, is only philosophical and abstract. It becomes real only in communism, which eliminates real alienations.

*Secondly, the religious illusion is not simply the work of a ruling caste* of priests who keep the people in a state of stultification. Marx is far removed from any such primitive argumentation. He does not say that religion is an opium of the people because of the wretched conditions in which they live. The religious ideology is not viewed by Marx as something arbitrary but as a kind of essential natural process. Consciousness can never be anything but conscious

existence. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal articulation of the dominant material relationships. If these relationships are transformed, religion will by itself die out and cease to exist. The religious reflex of the real world can only finally dissipate when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowman and to nature. Then there will no longer be any need of religion.

*Third, Marx's judgment on religion is not purely negative.* He sees it not only as a function that sanctions and legitimizes existing relations but also a protest and a sign of the unjustly severe creature. But religion deals in promises of an illusory happiness, in imaginary flowers from the chain. This illusion must be eliminated, so that man may take control of his own history, so that he will think, act and fashion his reality. Criticism of religion, therefore, a presupposition of an earthly, political criticism. It is the task of history, therefore, once the other world of truth has dissipated the truth of this world.

Some theologians such as Karl Barth and Paul Tillich maintained that the impulses of Marxism in the direction of justice and peace were congruous with the Christian gospel and were even in conformity with it. The new political liberation theology likewise took important stimuli from Marxism and Neomarxist thinkers. At least as far as the analysis of social relations is concerned, official Catholic Teaching is likewise not as monolithic as it may seem if one takes into account only the decrees of Pius XI and John XXIII that forbid Catholics to belong to the communist party under pain of excommunication. The *Social Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno* of Pius XI already has important points in common with the Marxist analysis and criticism of capitalism. The criticism of capitalism has persisted down to the very recent social Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* of John Paul II. The Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII, *Gaudium et Spes* and the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* of Paul VI began to make distinctions. This process shows most clearly in the apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of Paul VI where various levels of Marxism are distinguished: Marxism as the active practice of the class struggle; as the exercise of all forms of political and economic power; as an ideology based on historical materialism and the denial of anything beyond the present life; as a scientific method and tool for the investigation of social and political relations.

Marx himself always considered the atheistic criticism of religion as not only a historical but also an indispensable perspective of communism. The humanistic impulses present in atheism locate their true fulfillment only in communion. For this reason Marx did not censure only an un-social and socially backward Christianity. He also conducted an ardent and vehement onslaught upon a socially committed Christianity that was getting entangled in the problem of the workers. Marx's disciples such as Kautzky and Bloch discovered the social emancipatory and even revolutionary conceivable and latent to Christianity. But Bloch remains this possibility and potential for socialism and atheism, since without atheism there is no room for messianism. Only an atheist can be a good Christian. Albeit hope in an absolute future does not exclude a rightly grasped commitment to an intra-historical future but unshackles, gives incentive and inspires such a commitment, it remains a fact that this worldly messianism of Marxism and the eschatological hope of the Christian are evidently incongruous.

The reason for this is to be located in the *Marxist picture of man*, according to which *man or humanity is its own Creator and owes its existence only to itself. According to Marx, man is his own redeemer*. Every notion of a mediator is excluded from the outset. For man, the root is man himself. Such a radical autonomy debar every form of theonomy. The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that *man is the Supreme Being for man*. Marxism is essentially atheistic. It is atheism, which furnishes the radical perspective of the Marxist philosophy of life. Without it, both Marx's plan for a total man and his concept of communism are equally inconceivable. The question of whether it is conceivable to disconnect this atheism from the socio-political and economic thrust of Marxism is one that can be put-at-best to a radically revised Marxism that yields and submits its totalitarian messianism. But would this then be the original Marxism?

Even if we state definitely the fundamental objections to the ideological interpretations proposed by Marxism, we need not deny that Marxism has developed significant and, by now, indispensable tools for analyzing social, economic, and political problems. These methods become ideological only if they are focused into universal absolutes; that is, if religious phenomena are a priori argued only in socio economic viewpoints and no longer in themselves.

*Marxism makes a contribution* of a substantive kind: its demonstration of the fundamental

*significance of work*. The Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* has adopted this viewpoint but in a Christian perspective. It seems work is an ultimate form of human self-fulfillment and thereby *exhibits the primacy of man, the worker over things, even over capital*. The imperfections of Marxist interpretation of religion are due to the fact that Marx nowhere articulately analyses the phenomenon of religion in itself. But a priori shrinks it to economic and political functions. Marx does not himself justify his criticism of religion, but more or less takes this from Feuerbach, the objections against Feuerbach's theory of projection hold against Marx as well. This means that from the fact that ideas of God are influenced by the socio-economic relations of a given time, it does not follow that God is simply a reflection of these relations. If Marx had really explored the role played by religion in the social process, he would have had to ask himself whether in addition to the influence of socio-economic relations on religious ideas, there is also an influence of religion on social ideas and social practice. By allusions he makes, Marx shows his realization that not only does relations give impetus to ideas, but ideas, in the form of utopias, give impetus and can revolutionize relations. This means, in turn, that the spirit enjoys at least a relative independence in regard to matter. The end consequence is that religion is not a function of bad economic and social conditions and that it does not simply die out when these conditions are transformed in a revolutionary degree. *This is why religion has still not died out in the communist countries, despite harsh, discordant and austere persecution and suspension*. It not only survives but also is even revitalized.

The situation is associated with a second point: communism is still unable to offer an answer to the individual person's queries concerning meaning. These queries are asked also, especially in socialist societies because the latter bring new types of alienation of the individual from society. *The question of personal happiness, of a personal destiny, of individual guilt, suffering and death* does not acquiesce as adequate the explanation that these are part of the progress toward a classless society. Here is the decisive point. *Christianity views man* not simply as an ensemble of social relations but *as persons* who, no matter how thoroughly integrated he is into society, *possesses an intrinsic value and dignity* and is, in turn, the source, subject and object of all social institutions. Christianity, therefore, views this as taking the form primarily not of structures and institutions but

of sin, which has its genesis and derivability in the heart of man. The dignity of the person is fundamentally based on the transcendence of the person. Human autonomy and theonomy are, therefore, not connected to each other as competitors. The increase is in direct and not in inverse proportion.

From this Christian view of man and his constitutive connectedness, it follows that every form of intra-historical messianism is debarred from Christians. Because of his constitutive relatedness to God, man can never be completely his own master. Neither therefore, can he completely liberate himself from his history and begin fully anew. Even the revolutionary is caught in the entanglement of history; even he needs forgiveness, redemption and the grace of a new beginning. Finally, revolution can at best furnish a hope to coming generations. But what about the suffering and the oppressed? Are they simply the means to the happiness of others? If hope and justice are to be possible for all, even the dead, this can only be if God is Lord of life and death for consolation in the next world, but when every consolation in the next world is rejected as an empty promise, and then this world, too, is stripped of all consolation.

**Economic liberalism** ignores and breaks the moral law in many ways:<sup>25</sup>

1. ***In its aim***: the most important aim of the economy is to produce more and more to have the greatest possible wealth and material prosperity. The Church does not underestimate the necessity for increased productivity as a condition for the temporal common good. The Church teaches that there is a hierarchy of values: man. Everything else is subordinate to the human person including economic life. Liberalism's concept of man and the social economy is I with Christianity.
2. ***In the motivation of economic activity*** – for liberalism, personal interest is the rule. The Church allows personal interest, profit and the honest growth of the individual and family prosperity. It is a stimulus to man to fulfill his duty as necessary for economic progress and as a return for services rendered. The Church knows man and his deeply rooted selfishness. The Church teaches that the common good will not be assured by giving full rein to individual freedom but that the moral law, which calls for justice and charity must be obeyed.

3. ***In the composition of economic life*** – liberalism demands the complete liberty of the producer and free competition for maximum profit. There is no room for economic and social groups such as vocational organizations or unions, which would limit the liberty of individuals. As an outcome, the door is open to all kinds of abuses in the exploitation of the worker. Individualism is unleashed in business relations and bitter trade war, totally disregarding justice and charity, ensues between competitors. Mammon is worshipped, the common good is systematically ignored and human values and God's plan are contradicted. Such habitual conduct dulls the conscience. The producers become slaves of liberalism. They become hard and insensitive to the sufferings and misery of men. It also makes the economy materialistic and pagan. This contradicts the Christian notion of the social economy.

### ***The Church's social teachings condemns communism for several reasons:***<sup>26</sup>

1. It is essentially materialistic, atheistic, and anti-Christian
  - a. The notion of man, life and society is contrary to Christian truth.
  - b. The true destiny of man is ignored.
  - c. It visualizes everything as depending on matter: neither the soul, nor God exist.
  - d. Society is viewed as being created only for material prosperity.
  - e. Communism is a negation that man's life has any sacred or spiritual character.
  - f. It sees religion as impediment to the liberation of men.
    - 1) Marx prefers a liberation, which would not only free man socially from capitalism, but also spiritually, from God and religion.
    - 2) Marx views religion as the cause of fundamental alienations of man.
    - 3) Marx views religion as directing man from his vital role in the dialectic and thus distorted his true mission.
    - 4) Communism has always and everywhere fought against religion and organized violent persecutions against the church in the countries where it is master.



2. Communism ignores the rights of the human person and dignity as freedom.
  - a. It delivers him defenseless to the communist state in absolute submission in the name of inhuman totalitarianism, which makes man a slave to production.
  - b. Pious XI condemned communism as a social system because of Christian teaching.
3. It refuses to submit to higher authority than that of the individual – to the authority of the moral law, natural right and God, the sovereign Creator, Lawgiver and Judge.
4. It preaches class-welfare as an inescapable law of history and duty, which binds the workers, in violation of the law of universal charity.
5. Communism in Russia:
  - a. Massive repressions were carried out by government machinery.
    - 1) Numerous arrests of officials of the party, of the soviets, of the army often on warrants of arrest issued by Stalin equipped with all the trappings of law and falsified documents.
    - 2) Physical pressure and torture were applied to deprive the accused of his faculties and judgment and take away his human dignity.
    - 3) Mass deportations of millions of people, “entire population” and executions without trial.
  - b. Stalin committed not only errors but also veritable crimes. It violated all the rules of a universal moral law greater than the economy. He did not recognize any authority other than himself – no moral law, no natural right, nor God. He was the absolute master and made himself a superman endowed with supernatural powers equal to God.
  - c. For Stalin, he acted in the interests of the working class, in the interest of the people, for the victory of socialism and of communism. An act is not judged because it conforms to an objective moral law. It is judged good because it is in the interests of the party and for the victory of socialism.

In collective or personal dictatorship the danger is the same once the party interest is placed above all moral rules. According to communism – man is not the source of evil – this comes only from the strictures of capitalism. As soon as these have been destroyed the communist will make a “new man” and a true humanism will be possible.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte in Marx and Engels. *Selected Works*, 1 vol. (London, 1968), 97.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, part 1 ed. C.J. Arthur. (London, 1970), 47.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx. and F. Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. (London, 1968), 51.

<sup>4</sup>See Pope Pius XI Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* 105

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 120..

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>7</sup>See Pope Pius XI Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), 8-14.

<sup>8</sup>See Mater et Magistra 57-58.

<sup>9</sup>See Gaudium et Spes 75.

<sup>10</sup>See Pope Paul VI Encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* 33.

<sup>11</sup>See Pope John Paul II Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* 14.

<sup>12</sup>See *Centissimus Anno*, a rereading of *Rerum Novarum* 5, 54.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid..

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 6-10.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 42, 32, 34.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 34-36.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 42

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 15-16, 40, 48.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>25</sup>Emile Guerry, *The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church*. (NY, London, Boston: St. Paul Publications), 1961.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

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