

Notes on Karl Marx
February 11, 2005

Selections from the *Communist Manifesto* (1848)

- Class conflict has evolved
 - beginning – complicated society with graduated social rank
 - now – strong (bourgeoisie) vs. weak (proletariat) – the epic battle
 - can be related to the evolution in manufacturing
 - “every class struggle is a political struggle”
- Bourgeoisie
 - broke feudalism but failed to reform society; now the oppressors
 - draws everyone to civilization, “even the most barbarian”
 - “resolved personal worth into exchange value”
 - not purposefully holding down the working man, just ignoring things
- Proletariat
 - was the weapon used by the bourgeoisie to fell feudalism
 - now turned against bourgeoisie – “organised like soldiers”
 - becoming parts of a machine, only worth is in flipping a switch
 - unions are important because of their numbers
- Need for Change
 - bourgeoisie is not fit to rule; it has become outdated
 - proletariat has been allowed to sink to a level unfit for humans
- Class’s Reaction
 - stirred people into action, resulted in labor rights
 - scared factory owners (bourgeoisie) into appeasing proletariat
 - true Marxism is impossible to obtain when dealing with humans
 - communism is a cop-out
 - Marx wouldn’t be surprised by the present, things haven’t changed much
 - some change has occurred thanks to unions (e.g. auto workers)

Selections from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844)

- worker is not free
 - only has freedom in animal instincts – “eating, drinking, and procreating”
 - has lost human identity
- worker controls nothing of work – different from craftsmen
 - what is created is not the worker’s, has no control over sale
 - told how to produce good
- worker is estranged from people
 - works only on a machine, has little contact with co-workers
 - does not deal with members of society like a craftsman would