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Chapter 2: Karl Marx (1818–1883)

Test Bank

Multiple Choice

1. According to Marx, the people who hold power in a capitalist system are the _____.
A. proletariat
B. bourgeoisie
C. academicians
D. propertied class
Ans: B

2. Marx defines classes as groups of individuals who share a common position in relation to _____.
A. their religious affiliation
B. how they interpret the world
C. the forces of production
D. how they consume products
Ans: C

3. For Marx, which of the following is the primary driver of social change?
A. forces of production
B. bourgeoisie
C. alienation
D. class struggle
Ans: D

4. Marx refers to wage earners and unpropertied laborers as the _____.
A. proletariat
B. bourgeoisie
C. capitalists
D. working class
Ans: A

5. Marx uses the term “class consciousness” to refer to _____.
A. the workers’ awareness of their conditions
B. the alienation of the working class
C. the false ideology of the working class
D. the bourgeoisie’s sense of entitlement
Ans: A

6. Karl Marx’s basic theoretical orientation would fall under the category of _____.
A. nonrational, collective

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B. nonrational, individual
C. rational, individual
D. rational, collective
Ans: D

7. According to Marx's materialist conception of history, a person's consciousness stems from _____.
A. the fetishism of commodities
B. one's level of authority
C. one's class position
D. the ownership of property
Ans: C

8. When Marx argues that consciousness comes from one's class position, he is challenging whose theory?
A. Antonio Gramsci
B. Friedrich Engels
C. Georg Hegel
D. Thorstein Veblen
Ans: C

9. Marx defines _____ as the separation of workers from the products that they make.
A. class struggle
B. forces of production
C. alienation
D. proletariat
Ans: C

10. According to Marx, what is the "supreme good" that gives people power?
A. capitalism
B. money
C. authority
D. alienation
Ans: B

11. Marx states that the capitalist class will produce its own "grave-diggers," which refers to the _____.
A. bourgeoisie
B. capitalists
C. class-conscious proletariat
D. owners of capital
Ans: C

12. When considering labor, Marx argues that the essential relationship to consider is that of _____ to _____.
A. the bourgeoisie; the proletariat

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B. the worker; production
C. consciousness; alienation
D. intelligence; labor
Ans: B

13. According to Marx, what will happen when the productive forces yield too many goods and products?
A. The proletariat will improve their living conditions.
B. The proletariat will need to work fewer hours.
C. The bourgeoisie will continue to become wealthier.
D. The bourgeoisie will risk being overthrown.
Ans: D

14. How are the communists different from other working-class groups?
A. They aim to peacefully replace the bourgeoisie.
B. They understand that workers of all nationalities face the same problems.
C. They want to include the bourgeoisie in the new political structure.
D. They do not want to abolish private property.
Ans: B

15. The difference between what workers earn for their daily labor and the value of what they make is known as _____ value.
A. use
B. surplus
C. exchange
D. private
Ans: B

16. Marx argues that fetishizing commodities results in _____.
A. the emergence of class consciousness
B. workers becoming critical of technology
C. viewing goods as capable of transforming us
D. increased surplus value of those commodities
Ans: C

17. According to Marx, the value of commodities is determined primarily by _____.
A. the usefulness of the commodity
B. how long it takes to make the commodity
C. the level of exploitation experienced by the worker
D. how many are needed to exchange for private property
Ans: B

18. The cycle of exchange for the typical wage earner as outlined by Marx resembles which pattern?
A. M—C—M
B. M—C—M—C

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C. C—M—C
D. C—M—C—M
Ans: C

19. Marx considers raw materials, machinery, and money to all be examples of _____.
A. commodities
B. goods
C. capital
D. surplus
Ans: C

20. Why did Marx frequently move to new countries?
A. o escape anti-Semitism
B. to accept better jobs
C. because his friends asked him to
D. because governments disliked his beliefs
Ans: D

21. Extensive revolts by workers and peasants occurred in _____.
A. 1840
B. 1845
C. 1848
D. 1851
Ans: C

22. How did Apple respond when *The New York Times* exposed the poor working conditions of overseas laborers?
A. They implemented new policies to ensure worker safety.
B. The CEO received a raise.
C. They promised to raise laborers' wages.
D. The CEO stepped down in protest.
Ans: B

23. Which theorist offered a critique of the leisure class?
A. Friedrich Engels
B. Karl Marx
C. Antonio Gramsci
D. Thorstein Veblen
Ans: D

24. According to Gramsci, the ideas of the ruling class play a significant role in establishing _____.
A. capitalism
B. materialism
C. hegemony
D. alienation

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Ans: C

25. Hegel defines _____ as the ongoing conversation between opposing ideas.
A. the dialectical process
B. consciousness
C. ideological ownership
D. alienation
Ans: A

True/False

1. Marx believed that capitalism was morally good but economically untenable.
Ans: F

2. Marx believed that capitalism was a necessary stage in the transition toward socialism.
Ans: T

3. The superstructure refers to all noneconomic institutions in a society.
Ans: T

4. Marx argues that it is the struggle between classes that leads to change in society.
Ans: T

5. The dominant economic class controls only a society's means of material production.
Ans: F

6. From Marx's perspective, the "grave-diggers" of the bourgeoisie are a class-conscious proletariat.
Ans: T

7. Capitalists derive their profit from the surplus value workers earn for them.
Ans: T

8. Marx wanted his theories to be used to interpret and to change the world.
Ans: T

9. Competition in a capitalist market allows for wealth to be distributed across many owners.
Ans: F

10. The proletariat consists of far more people than the bourgeoisie.
Ans: T

11. According to Marx, under capitalism, workers become commodities.
Ans: T

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12. Private property is a primary cause of estranged labor.
Ans: F

13. The proletariat can recruit members from shopkeepers and tradesmen.
Ans: T

14. Once established, the value of a commodity does not change.
Ans: F

15. After receiving his doctorate, Marx began an academic career.
Ans: F

16. According to Marx, the first example of property is found in the nuclear family.
Ans: T

17. *The Communist Manifesto* supports public education for children.
Ans: T

18. A worker can become estranged from her work but not from herself.
Ans: F

19. According to Marx, money allows a person to take an idea and make it a reality.
Ans: T

20. For Marx, the critical division of labor is that between mental and material labor.
Ans: T

21. “Species being” refers to the capacity of individuals to be creative.
Ans: T

22. One example of alienation is the social distance between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.
Ans: F

23. To gain a profit, one would want to be in the M—C—M cycle of exchange.
Ans: T

24. Marx argues that the idea of freedom stems from the development of capitalism.
Ans: T

25. Workers generally hold capitalists accountable for changing the speed of production.
Ans: F

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Essay

1. What role does private property play in Marx's discussion of the inevitable communist revolution?
Ans: A strong answer must discuss the role of private property in a capitalist system versus community property. For example, private property accumulates in the hands of capitalists, who use their land and their factories to exploit workers for their own gain, whereas community-owned land benefits everyone and not just those who own it. Marx also mentions that in each economic system (e.g., feudalism), property has been concentrated among those who have the most power. Ideas play a role in that the proletariat are taught to accept that they are propertyless workers and to believe that if they keep working, they too could eventually gain property of their own. Over time, however, the proletariat will become aware of their oppression and will overthrow the propertied bourgeoisie.

2. What role does class consciousness play in the evolution of society, according to Marx?
Ans: Class consciousness refers to an awareness of the shared position that workers hold in relation to the means of production. According to Marx, workers currently do not have that shared awareness. However, once they develop that awareness and realize their exploitation, they can revolt against the bourgeoisie, leading to a new communist society that is not grounded in private property. Therefore, class consciousness plays a critical role in motivating and leading to social change.

3. According to Marx's materialist conception of history, what is the relationship between property and ideas or consciousness?
Ans: Owning property affects how one views humanity, what one sees as right, and how one values different types of labor (i.e., mental vs. physical). Furthermore, understandings of property have changed over time in response to major historical changes--for example, the French Revolution resulted in the eradication of feudal property, but this then gave rise to bourgeois property and the owning of the means of production. Finally, when one has property, that shapes what they think is right--for example, the bourgeoisie are horrified to think that private property could be abolished, whereas the proletariat (who own no property) have already been stripped of their ability to own private property.

4. Explain the following types of estrangement under capitalism, using concrete examples: worker from production, worker from products of labor, and worker from himself or herself.
Ans: The worker does not own her own labor, and that work does not directly contribute to her subsistence; she is forced to do the labor to address basic needs. For example, being paid an hourly wage in a factory does not result in what the worker needs to live; instead, she is paid the bare minimum, which she then must use to pay for her shelter, her food, her clothes, and more. The worker is further estranged from the products of labor because those products have power over the worker; again, in the example of working in a factory, the worker ends up making even more products, but she must

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keep making more and more to keep up with the speed while still earning the same wage. Finally, estrangement from self connects back to the reality that the work is not done for the worker herself; she pursues this work not out of interest or desire but out of need.

5. Explain the three factors that constitute the alienation of labor.
Ans: First, the work is external to the worker. It is not something the worker is interested in but rather something that is necessary for survival. Second, the labor is forced. It does not directly address needs but rather provides the means (wages) to do so. Third, someone else owns the person's labor. An outside force (the capitalists) compels this type of labor.

6. What does Marx mean when he writes that "money is thus the object of eminent possession?"
Ans: Money is able to buy or to appropriate all material and immaterial things. Marx argues that money allows people the freedom to present themselves a certain way, whether that is as beautiful or as honest. Money also allows people to go beyond imagining something to achieving it; someone without money can have the desire to study, but they are less likely to make that a reality than someone with a desire and money.

7. Discuss Marx's concept of "the fetishism of commodities" from *Capital*.
Ans: This concept refers to the fact that people tend to see commodities and specific products as somehow existing outside of the process of human production and as having "magical" powers that can shape who we are. He argues that this fetishism helps hide the fact that people are directly involved in the production of these commodities. We become too focused on what a commodity can offer us that we do not think about the people behind the product. Furthermore, workers themselves will come to blame the technology (itself a commodity) that is speeding up their work stations, rather than the capitalists running the factory.

8. Think about how you've heard people discuss Marx in everyday conversation. Are common understandings of Marx's works correct? Be specific.
Ans: Varies, but most students have probably heard people describe Marx as very "anti-capitalist." They are also likely familiar with the line "religion is the opiate of the masses." In their responses, students should use examples from the Marx excerpts in the chapter to analyze these thoughts. For example, they could say that Marx saw capitalism as a necessary step toward a more egalitarian society and could outline some specific critiques he offered. Although these excerpts do not include his arguments on religion, students could extrapolate that religion serves as an idea that keeps workers content with their status.

9. Define Hegel's dialectical process. Explain its significance in relation to Marx's theory of history and to Marx's basic theoretical orientation.
Ans: Hegel saw change as the motor of history. For Hegel, change is driven by a dialectical process in which a given state of being or idea contains within it the seeds of

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an opposing state of being or opposing idea. The resolution of the conflict produces yet a new state of being or idea. This synthesis, in turn, forms the basis of a new contradiction, thus continuing the process of change. Furthermore, he argues that consciousness comes first and that what we think shapes society; Marx's theory of history inverts that by saying our consciousness and our thoughts are directly shaped by our location in society and our relationship to the means of production. Marx did draw on many concepts from Hegel, such as alienation, but he took as his starting point the material conditions of society to understand change, rather than ideas.

10. Define Marx's concept of "species being." Discuss its significance in relation to his concept of alienation.
Ans: Species being refers to humans' beliefs that they are free beings and that they are conscious actors using nature and what is provided by nature to sustain their lives. For the wage earner, work is alienating because it serves solely to provide the means (i.e., money) for maintaining her physical existence. Instead of labor representing an end in itself--an activity that lets us shape our lives and our relationships with others--private ownership of the means of production reduces the role of the worker to that of a cog in a machine. The worker is an expendable object that performs routinized tasks. Put in another way, for Marx, working just for money--and not for the creative potential of labor--is akin to selling your soul.

11. Explain in detail Marx's general formula for capital. In your explanation, define and relate the connection that commodities and surplus value have to the general formula.
Ans: Marx labels the general exchange of capital as "M—C—M." By definition, the capitalist enters into economic exchange already possessing capital (raw materials and machinery for production) or, more generally, money (M). Seeking to expand her business and profits, the capitalist converts her money into a commodity (C) by purchasing additional machinery, raw materials, or labor. The capitalist then uses these commodities to produce other commodities that are then sold for money (M)--hence, the meaning of the slogan "it takes money to make money." For the proletariat, the cycle of exchange takes an inverse path. They being with a commodity (which is their labor), which they sell to receive money; that money is then used to purchase commodities necessary for survival, and there is little chance of gaining surplus value.

12. Explain Marx's line "a commodity is therefore a mysterious thing simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour."
Ans: Commodity fetishism refers to the distorted relationship existing between individuals and the production and consumption of goods. In fetishizing commodities, we treat them as if they have "magical" powers. We lose sight of the fact that *we* create commodities and, in doing so, we give them more power of us and also ignore how "men's labor" made these commodities possible. Instead, we see these commodities as "objective," existing outside of us and not necessarily resulting from people's work.

13. Explain how the forces of production shape social classes.

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Ans: By forces of production, Marx means the different materials and resources that go into the production of commodities. One's relationship to those forces of productions shapes one's social class. For example, the bourgeoisie are the private owners of land, factories, and so on, which enables them to generate surplus value by producing and selling lots of commodities. In contrast, the proletariat have only their own labor, which they sell to the bourgeoisie by working in the factories.

14. According to *The Communist Manifesto*, what must happen for the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie? And what will be the consequences of that revolution?
Ans: Society will continue to split into two classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie currently holds the power, and through that power, exploitation of the proletariat expanded in the name of free trade and capitalism. The bourgeoisie continues to expand the means of production, which results in the ongoing alienation of the proletariat from their labor and the products of their labor. As a result, Marx and Engels theorize that the proletariat will come to recognize this exploitation and, in recognizing this shared experience, they will develop a class consciousness and revolt. The theorized consequences will be the abolishment of property, greater freedom for individuals to choose their work, and more equality between children and their parents and between men and women.

15. According to Marx, how did the division of labor develop, and what are the consequences of that division?
Ans: The very first division of labor, according to Marx, began in the family under tribal ownership, when families took on different work all for the survival of the family. The division of labor started with dividing industrial/commercial from agricultural labor. Then, within those two branches, people became further subdivided in what they did. He also notes that division of labor also consists of separating "material" and "mental" labor from each other. Additional consequences of the division of labor include that people become more focused on their own needs (or their family's needs), rather than the needs of society. Also, people get trapped doing one particular kind of work, which can become boring, repetitive, and unfulfilling. Finally, the relationship between different societies or nations rests, Marx argues, upon how labor is divided in those different places.

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