

James Matt Gardner
Dr. Peterson
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Marx v. Hagel

Hagel saw that ideas and concepts are what really creates the material world around us. Marx, on the other hand, saw it the exact opposite in that materialism or modes of production are the direct source that provides the salience to a person's ideas or beliefs, including religion.

Hagel created what's known as the dialectic. The dialectic is a map or a sketching that explains how accepted ideas will inevitably end up competing against another idea. Marx used the dialectic by highlighting the bourgeoisie as the accepted (thesis) known as the "haves." With time an (antithesis), or a new idea rises up and rebels, in which case Marx used the proletariat known as the "have nots." Then, a (synthesis thesis) rises up to support the original thesis while attempting to squelch the antithesis. This pattern continues to repeat itself.

This dialectic between the haves and have nots is found throughout Marx's writings and argues that religion only sustains those in power. Interestingly, Marx is found stating, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness." This statement of Marx has familiar sounds and is reminiscent of Emile Durkheim who asserted that society is more fundamental than the individual. "We speak of language that we did not make; we use instruments that we did not invent; we invoke rights that we did not found." This is very thought provoking because in many respects Durkheim's and Marx's observations ring true.

However, I cannot but wonder if there is an ebb and flow regarding who sets the dial regarding the superstructure regarding societal laws, beliefs, attitudes and ideology? Perhaps at

times an individual can create his/her own ideas without having the aid of society or modes of production. Whereas other times an individual's idea and belief systems are directly linked to societal modes of production, thereby making materialism the main enabler of that particular idea or belief.

For example, as each generation passes away the rising generation directly benefits from the prior generation due to the earlier generation's modes of production. This debate between whether ideas hatch without the support of materialism or vice-versa leads me to reflect and question things that are strikingly odd. For example, was the first human outfitted with clothing before they actually came up with the idea to create clothing? The more I think about it, perhaps it is true if one ironically looks through the lens of religious texts.

Perhaps I'm taking this too far and this isn't something you wanted. However, if one were to follow the Jewish and Christian line of thinking, believing that Adam and Eve were the first to live on earth and were found naked in the garden, continuing down that narrative it appears that Adam and Eve didn't really have fully developed thoughts or beliefs of their own until Lucifer told them that they were naked and needed to clothe themselves. It wasn't until they discovered their nakedness and covered themselves that they began to formulate any sort of ideas or beliefs. In this instance materialism would be the sole originator that provided Adam and Eve with certain thoughts and beliefs systems. Again, I probably have taken this too far, but this is what happens when one really considers the differences between Hegel's and Marx's theories of materialism and ideas involving religion.

While the Adam and Eve narrative appears to follow Marx's theory that materialism determines existence, the story appears to ironically refute Marx's next statement, "To abolish religion and the illusory happiness of the people is to demand their real happiness."

Going back to the Adam and Eve narrative, one could assert that not only did Adam and Eve *not* possess fully developed ideas or beliefs, but much less having the sensibility to experience happiness until after being introduced to the idea of not being materially covered.

Maybe clothing given to Adam and Eve didn't produce happiness in and of itself. Instead, maybe they were more or less happy with what the clothing signified, such as the belief in mystical powers. Perhaps the clothing items that Adam and Eve received were expressions of the belief of belonging, love and self-actualization that first derived from Adam's and Eve's immediate environment, but originated with God himself who stands outside of environment.

Marx doesn't really seem to define what happiness is. Is happiness simply material economic justice? And if materialism constitutes certain ideas, values and beliefs systems then what are they according to Marx? Seemingly, Marx doesn't feel that religion should be a part of an individual's system of thoughts, ideas or beliefs. Therefore, is one to conclude that the total sum of one's belief system is to ensure the needed material welfare for survival creating lasting peace and happiness? Is the cornerstone of happiness and self-actualization solely physiological? I am reminded of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Marx only appears to be covering the most fundamental basics of ones physiological and safety needs. Love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization are different from physiological and safety, according to Maslow's hierarchy. I digress, but I do find Marx to be someone who challenges the status quo, thus keeping people like myself on my toes.