

Adam Smith and K. Marx: Concepts on Labour and Work

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ABSTRACT:- This study comments on and investigates Adam Smith's grand narrative on work in early and late modernity. Along with Smith, this study endeavours to explore similarities and differences between Smith and K. Marx on ideas of work and labour. It attempts to further the idea that Smith is one of the key influences on the modern concept of labour. Furthermore, this study attempts to highlight the failures of idealism at work and to provide criticisms of current society. Perhaps in this manner, idealism might be conquered in the future, and the world can be based on material, actual, necessities rather than ideology. Smith and Marx's comparative study reveals that they both perceive the wealth of civilizations as stemming from the human ability to organize work, rather than from the hierarchy, which merely despises effort rather than cherishing it. Smith and Marx obviously share a concept of production and work as a human skill and labour as a character of humanity, our existence as human beings, and our capacities to share understanding. Smith and Marx both believe that labour is a people's social ability to produce. And all of society's wealth is built on this ability to labour. Labour is a feature of the working class that puts itself against the bourgeoisie based on its ability to generate wealth. Marx and Smith have usually been set against one other on these issues, but as Sennett's discoveries indicate, this opposition is exaggerated, and Marx and Smith should be regarded as vivid analyzers of their own contemporary society in their own period.

Key words:- Labour, Work, Idealism, Human Skill, Hierarchy, Wealth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Though labour is the basis of our wealth and happiness in our society, this study demonstrates that this current view of work is inconsistent and founded on a socially constructed historical conviction. It is idealized and hence removed from its true meaning, that labour is the cornerstone of our societal wealth. Understanding the modern, as well as delving into the historical debate on work, is critical, as current notions on work have not always been dominant. This research examines the ideas of Adam Smith, who is regarded as the main authority in the subject of work, by observing facts that led to the modern concept of work. Various convictions on libertarianism, Marxism, and neo-liberalism were advanced as a result of his work. As the liberation of individual human potentiality is at the center of Smith's ideas, these principles affected scholarly debate in his own period, i.e. the liberty of work from the fundamental societal circumstances. According to Smith, worker freedom occurs as a result of the specialization of workers' individual skills, which becomes the potentiality of revolution, and hence the potentiality for workers to grasp their unique capacities to construct society. Smith appears to be a revolutionary thinker of his own period in this conviction.

My study is a historical investigation from a class standpoint, and the center of the debate is the grand narrative on work established by bourgeois ideology, i.e. Adam Smith, and its critics, Karl Marx. I will provide the basis of Adam Smith's and Karl Marx's thinking on work, as well as try to expand additional understanding of their concepts on work in contrast to those of dominant ones, namely libertarian and Marxist conceptions, which have regarded Marx and Smith from a narrow viewpoint (Singer355, 356; and Cleaver23-76).

II. CONCEPT OF CLASS STRUGGLE AS A RESEARCH TOOL:

My analysis is certainly not an impartial one. It proceeds a standpoint. This is the point of view that the current debate on work is largely shaped by libertarian and Marxist ideology, and that this line of thinking has to

be questioned and transformed in order to arrive at a more humanitarian understanding of work, which is the source of wealth in our society. In addition, my paper is a Marxist paper. Many of the sources I consulted in my analysis are Marxist in origin. The most notable is Harry Cleaver and his book 'Reading Capital Politically,' which I frequently refer to in my explanations and discussions of Marx (Cleaver 23-162). His work on the class struggle against the bourgeois, in which he carries out the concept that Marx wrote the capital to be a tool for the proletariat (Cleaver 23-31), has greatly influenced my own thinking.

This, in my opinion, does not diminish the academic quality of my work, nor does it imply that the outcome of my study is biased. On the contrary, I believe that my article enhances academic excellence. For the academic in research, honesty is more vital than objectivity. Because objectivity is intended as a goal for academic debate, it conceals rather than erases the author's personal perspective. In the social and humanistic sciences, interpretation is becoming increasingly important. To raise a debate about truth and to challenge it is an academic virtue; to declare that it is feasible to achieve is scientific banality and tyranny in the social and humanistic sciences. Scientific neutrality is basically a method of maintaining the academic debate in the hands of people who are at the center of the academic debate (Bourdieu 344). Taking a firm stance, on the other hand, is a direct challenge to the existing train of thought. This is what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "scholarship with commitment" (12).

As a result, I see my commitment as sharing the academic struggle with Cleaver and other academics who continue to shove forward ideas where one of the major functions of social sciences need to be prompting the class struggle, as Cleaver and Marx do, in order to serve workers in becoming more class conscious and taking control over their own production.

It is necessary to demonstrate that Marx truly follows Smith in his stream of thought. They both recognize that work is at the core of modern societies and oppose more basic notions in which hierarchy, whether aristocratic or more sophisticated, controls the societal distribution of wealth. Marx and Smith express reservations about conservative aristocratic beliefs about work in a world where work is scorned. By presenting their views, they have had a significant impact on the evolving ideas of work in our societies. (Harisalo and Miettinen, 28-29; Palsson-Syll, 96).

In order to get answers to my questions, I must conduct study and learn about the prevailing historical debate on work established by Marx and Smith, which is essentially the views they have on work. The issue is how Smith and Marx are placed against one other in the traditional debate on work, notably by libertarian and Marxist traditions, despite the fact that both Smith and Marx are obviously for a more humane and affluent existence for workers, i.e. they share a similar aim. Liberation of work and individuality is the process that Marx and Smith envision as leading to a better society, Marx in communism and Smith in the specialization of workers' individuality and self-interest. For both of them, the worker should be able to define his or her own work.

As a result, my study is important for the academia because it demonstrates that, despite the fact that Marx and Smith are products of their respective eras, their objective is the same: the liberation of work. This is in direct contradiction to Marx and Smith's traditional historical debate. My work, however, is not unique. It may be observed, for example, in Sennett's studies, where he observes that Marx finds similarities between his own and Smith's ideas on humane working conditions as a necessary progression for a more advanced society (Sennett 35-40). Against this backdrop, I will attempt to analyze the parallels and contrasts in Marx and Smith's perspectives on work. I also want to grasp how they saw work as a social and civilizing human activity.

III. ADAM SMITH'S AGE AND THE PREVALENT IDEOLOGY

3.1 Shaping Smith's ideology

What becomes important for understanding Adam Smith's contribution to the concept of work is that his fundamental book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, or *The Wealth of Nations* as it is more frequently known to, is primarily two things and should be examined accordingly. First, an analytical argument against the economic tradition prior to Adam Smith, in which the monarchist bureaucracy still retains power over markets and Smith is an active figure analyzing the period in which he lived. Second, the historical approach, in which Adam Smith and *The Wealth of Nations* are analyzed in the historical context of a certain moment, which provides ideas to future generations.

The analytical argumentation of Smith himself, as well as the historical contribution that interpretation of *The Wealth of Nations* has had, demonstrate how profound an impact Adam Smith has had on our contemporary understanding of the concept of work, and how the reasoning behind each and every thought is the logical outcome of the prevailing society. As Smith is obviously a critical voice of his own time, Marx is a critic of the period that follows Smith, with that time's views on work being spurred as a result of Smith's ideas. Smith openly opposes the political structure of his time. This is reflected in his perception of the value that public officials contribute to society;

“The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive laborers. They are servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people. Their service, how honorable, how useful, or how necessary so ever, produces nothing for which an equal quantity of service can afterwards be produced” (Smith430-431).

According to Smith, all men are fundamentally the same, and there is no divine order or hierarchy for mankind. They are born and are placed in the world with the same abilities, therefore it is their responsibility to make the best of it, i.e. to increase one’s capabilities, for example, by educating oneself (Smith120-121). As a result, Adam Smith is a natural-born enlightenment child. Rather than being motivated by revolution, *The Wealth of Nations* is the motivation for the revolutionaries who most likely read and considered the book. Its concepts were then applied in newly formed republics all throughout the world. Smith is therefore a critic of the prevailing political sphere of the eighteenth century, most likely as one of the triggering causes of bourgeois revolutions.

Smith’s ideology appears to be heavily influenced by numerous philosophers. I find an obvious link between David Hume’s and Martin Luther’s beliefs. The enlightened spirit becomes significant, and the person is transformed into a representation of God and human abilities. This is the legacy of humanistic hermeneutics. God creates humans and hence makes them natural and perfect. The relationships between these divine individuals, human beings, are not hierarchical, but are determined by men themselves. As a result, anything a human is resolved to undertake becomes a mirror of his own abilities. All human beings are fundamentally same as long as they work for the greater good and God.

3.2 Smith and Division of Labour

Adam Smith begins his discussion of the division of labour in his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, with the idea of self-regulating markets. Smith believes that accumulation or development of capital/market may be explained by what he refers to as “the self-need and interest” (Smith 119). This suggests that the market is fundamentally based on individual human demands and their interaction. He depicts market formation as follows:

‘Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of. It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.’ (Smith118-19)

Smith also draws this process of self-interest that leads to exchange and market as basically a human gesture, i.e. a distinguishing feature that distinguishes people from animals. This gesture represents the ability to communicate and comprehend the needs of others rather than one’s own. Communication becomes the focal point of civilization. To appreciate this Smithian concept or idealism of individual freedom as obviously a human quality, it is critical to understand the ability to communicate at its foundation. The capacity to recognize one’s own individuality may be observed in the characteristics of others. Thus, markets are designed to represent the pinnacle of individual liberty, the societal space in which each individual might be his or her own master. As a result, Homo mercantius achieves the pinnacle of human culture;

‘In almost every other race of animals each individual, when it is grown up to maturity, is entirely independent, and in its natural state has occasion for the assistance of no other living creature. But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren’(Smith118).

Work determines all humanity, because it is the realization of our individual abilities that we contribute to society in order to govern ourselves. According to Smith, the personal role and objective of each societal human being is to generate commodities in order to trade these commodities for the commodities of other individuals who are masters of their own work. This task is dictated by our abilities, which we have or may improve further via education (Smith120).

3.3 Smith on Specialization in Division of Labour

Individuality is regarded as the primary aspect of men’s activity in *The Wealth of Nations*, and every individual’s self-interest is the form where these self-interests meet. So, there is dire need of a system where this self-interest may be really put forth or idealized. Adam Smith finds this in the formulation and development of industries, which has resulted in a plurality of work and a rise in the productivity of all nations. This instrument for increasing the productivity of newly emerging industries and labour throughout the eighteenth century is what Smith refers to as specialization or the division of labour. It is important to recognize that by division of labour, Smith does not imply some strange hierarchy. It seems more like an organization of the ‘individualities’ of each human being that enters into the division of labour in order to gain a larger proportion of the total societal production.

According to Smith, the separation of the division of labour has progressed the most in industrialized societies. This is rational since industrial societies create more, which is the natural result of more subdivided labour, yielding more output than labour that is not as subdivided to the simplicity of works. As a result, productive societies do not always have a huge population. This is all due to the structure of the division of labour (Smith111-112).

3.4 Concept of Man, Machine and Work

Smith explains in *Wealth of Nations* that this unique kind of subdividing the task into its simplicity is the form of production and division of labour in which the total quantity of work improves in compared to other production modes. Smith identifies three actors who raise the amount of work productivity. The first is the worker's dexterity, or ability. To increase the overall yield of production, the worker's entire potential or dexterity must be put to use. Smith believes that it is possible to attain when the task is reduced to the simplest procedure, which implies that the worker gets highly professionalized in the activity she/he is performing (Smith 112). The second factor is the division of labour. This indicates that all highly professionalized workers undertake their portion of the task in order to contribute to the overall work of the workforce (Smith113). The machine is the third actor. The machine multiplies the output of a single man in a large number of ways. This signifies that one man accomplishes the work of several people (Smith114).

So Smith's argument is not just that highly professionalized or simplified labour is considerably more productive in manufacturing, but that as a result of this production style, each worker becomes master of his own task. Furthermore, man gets control of the machine, which liberates him from the enslavement of the societal structure of Smith's time, in which artisans were still favored in compared to average people. Smith's perspective on each individual is not set or conservative. As a result, the machine becomes the ultimatum of liberal production and industrialized society, in which each worker does have enough capacity to maintain himself, increase his talents, and even educate himself (Smith 120).

The labour's liberation has positive effects into the creation of more developed machinery as well. For the labour's desire in releasing itself from hard work and reducing the amount of time that the worker has to put into production, more complicated and intelligent machinery is developed (Smith115). Thus, in the Smithian idea, the machine as a component of manufacturing and reduced division of labour or high professionalism liberates employees from prevailing societal circumstances and places the tools of freedom, the development of machinery, in the hands of workers.

3.5 Value of Labour, the Idealization of Commodity

According to Smith, the true worth of all commodities created for the market can only be assessed by their usage with other commodities, i.e. through exchange-value. Even though the exchange-value of all commodities is created by labour, since all commodities are products of labour, it is the realization of labour that can be more simply compared, the realization being the commodity. As a result, it becomes reasonable to compare commodities, or labour products, with one another rather than with labour itself (Smith 133-34).

For Smith, the worth of labour is assessed by the severity or quality of the labour in contrast to other labour. As he remarks; "There may be more labour in hour's hard work than in two hours' easy business; or in an hour's application to a trade which it cost ten years' labour to learn, than in a month's industry at an ordinary and obvious employment" (Smith134).

What is crucial to realize is that Smith views the concept of value and commodity from the perspective of the buyer, and because all workers are equally productive, they naturally, in Smith's opinion, join markets from the standpoint of both the producer and the consumer. This is significant because Smith believes that the true worth of labour is always determined by food crops. This indicates that, while the real wage for labour may be modest, if the worker has higher value in contrast to the worth of food crops, it is actually 'dearer' for the employer to hire their work. This is what Smith emphasizes in demonstrating how labour, as the most accurate measurement of all values, is more interested in the value of crops than silver.

'From century to century, corn is a better measure than silver, because, from century to century, equal quantities of corn will command the same quantity of labour more nearly than equal quantities of silver. From year to year, on the contrary, silver is a better measure than corn, because equal quantities of it will more nearly command the same quantity of labour.' (Smith 140)

So even though Smith accepts that labour is the real value of all commodities, he believes that the attempt that the employer tends to put into production by offering the stock or capital into production, thus attempting to take the risk of losing the value which is in the capital, must be compensated with profit for the capitalists, or owners of the stock. Smith proceeds in this manner, propagating against the existing society of his time and arguing for the liberal state, because the liberal state, in his opinion, encourages people to work, whereas the monarchist state's rationalist mentality demarcated work by strict law and order and could not liberate the entire potentiality and opulence of the work (Smith 184).

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 The way of the organization of labour

As previously stated, Marx and Smith share many views on work in common. They both believe that work is the source of all prosperity in our societies. Furthermore, they both recognize that efficiency is a natural objective for work organization. That is to say, the better organized the work, the more valuable it will be. Smith and Marx, on the other hand, argue over who organizes the work. The former reason is that labour organization is naturally conducted by people who employ the work for their own benefit, while the latter reason is that organization of work is the result of workers' ability to organize and reorganize their work in order to provide them with more material, which is required by the workers for individual and societal production and reproduction. Now, Smith and Marx lived at a time when work was seen very differently than it is today. To comprehend this, one must recognize that their work is extremely critical of the elite of their day. Smith, in especially, criticizes the unproductive nobles. His criticism of useless work must be interpreted as a critique of monarchist society in which effort was scorned and not regarded as a source of wealth (Smith 431-33). Smith's writing is a criticism of monarchist society, which does not allow for the usual structure of work. Smith's beliefs are in opposition to the absolutist ideology. As he places the individuality of work at the center of the whole production, he becomes a cornerstone of bourgeois ideology. Specialization of work, according to Smithian theory, leads in the emancipation of employees' individuality and abilities (Smith 112-20).

Similarly, Marx criticizes the governing classes of society at his own time. Furthermore, he accuses Smithian as well as other bourgeois ideologies of idealism (Marx 53). Idealistic in the same way that absolutists and monarchists were for Smith, unable to understand the formation of wealth in our society in its right context, but only in its idealized one. This research contends that Marx's and Smith's ideologies not only criticized the view of work in their own time, but also affected the creation of widespread notions about work today. Both Smith and Marx saw the development of organizing work as the growth of understanding the organization of working time put into the working process and more developed division of labour, both of which were natural outcomes of the development of societies in which each individual's life is dependent on others and individual interests (Smith 109-119). The Bourgeois, having taken control of a society where manufacturing is no longer simple but complicated, imposes its own ideology on the community and thus seizes control of the whole wealth producing process. Marx claims that in capitalism, the natural organization of work, which he refers to as useful labour, is subordinated to capitalist management as social labour. This is the amount of time workers provide to capitalists in exchange for their labour, which is essentially all of the work they do for themselves and the capitalist society (Cleaver 127-34).

4.2 Destruction of work, the Control over Work by Smithian Commodity Idealism

In Marx's perspective, Smith's perception of work and work organization is idealistic, because Smith regards the commodity (money) as a sufficient method of wealth measurement. However, this is only true in bourgeois society, in which the ability to organize and visualize work is an abstraction, with its crystallization in the tangible commodity. The commodity achieves idealization and omnipotence in terms of comprehending societal affluence and function.

It is the bourgeoisie's idea of wealth that requires commodities to depict wealth, which is truly the labour put into society by all of mankind, the working class. This is because work is both a human ability and a daily action through which we become human, by generating and organizing work (Marx 175). It is natural for us to work and organize ourselves; otherwise, we would not be able to support our life. We don't genuinely need a superficial framework of capitalist work organization, which just exploits the innate organization of proletariat activity, to organize work. Thus, the bourgeois conception of work's value, crystallized in the commodity, is an idealization of work derived from the material circumstances of organizing the task, which Marx refers to as the real (labour time) and effective labour, thus the use-value.

Because the commodity is placed above all other values in Smithian theory, and therefore in current capitalism which is based on Smith's bourgeois ideology, it takes control of the entire production, i.e. the organization of work. Essentially, this means that workers must give up their power to work and organize work to capitalism in return for a commodity, which is paradoxically perceived as the crystallization of value under capitalism. Marx refers to this as commodity fetishism. In bourgeois ideology, a commodity is transformed into something greater than it is, an idealization. Marx refers to the alienation of workers who are obliged to provide their labour to capitalists. Alienation is a process in which workers get alienated from their works; that is, workers lose their ability to comprehend the creation of commodities and, as a result, become part of the machine working rather than workers. According to Marx, work takes the shape of machine maintenance, and the machine does all of the work for the employees, allowing the workers to walk away from production. As a result, the manufacturing process becomes inhuman. In the commodity-form, the rule of commodities, workers work and their organization of work is destroyed (Marx 175).

It is paradoxical because Smith, on the contrary, regarded the machine as a liberator of the potentiality of human endeavor and individuality. He envisioned the machine as bringing even greater specialization of work, which would imply a bigger influence on work for the worker repairing the machine, whether professionally or not.

History, on the other hand, reveals a different narrative. Marx's analysis of workers' struggles for a better life and living circumstances was obviously conducted in a political context, but it remains relevant as an empirical study. Workers' capacity to direct their own production in a slave-like manner was a reality in Western countries not long ago. Furthermore, it is important to recall that there are many sweat shops in Europe with poor working conditions, and some commodity production in the modern world is done in far worse terms than Marx could have imagined.

4.3 Class struggle and possibility of change in the society

As Marx notes, in capitalism, the commodity-form constantly signifies the exact reverse for the working class and the bourgeois class; it always has a class perspective. When anything has a use-value for workers, it has an exchange-value for the bourgeois and capitalists, i.e. capitalists benefit off the needs of workers. As a result, the exchange-value for workers, notably their labour power, is a use-value for capitalists, which they utilize by imposing the commodity-form. In this context, it indicates that in order to obtain use-value, which is a worker's basic necessity, the worker must give up his or her labour power to capitalists.

Work alienation or destruction has become a capitalist means of keeping labour power loyal to its own demands. As a result, Smithian or bourgeois ideology is used to justify the implementation of the commodity-form. Capitalists accomplish this by alienating people from their work and, as a result, destroying work organization through bourgeois ideology. Deforming work organization to a hierarchical structure in which division of labour is exploited as a means of putting employees in hierarchies under capitalism. Essentially, this involves discrimination based on gender/sex (chauvinism), ethnic origin (racism), wages (integrated social hierarchy), and age. Workers' ability to transform the system in which they are alienated from their work and seize control over their own production, according to Marxian concepts, can only become a reality via working-class self-awareness. Self-awareness requires the working class to recognize that it is the source of all wealth in society, and that its capacity as a class keeps the entire world running.

V. CONCLUSION

What I've found to be crucial in understanding Marx and Smith is their historical understanding of the concept of work in their own period, as well as the critiques they voiced about those conceptions. They are both defenders of the belief that our society's wealth is created via work rather than through societal hierarchy. In this way, they have both influenced contemporary debates about work. For the most part, today's conventional perception of work regards workers' labour as the source of wealth in contemporary society. This also makes Smith's and Marx's assessments of work essential for modern academic debate, since they both rest on our contemporaneous notions of work, whether incorrect or correct.

This also demonstrates that Smith's and Marx's ideas are more than conflicting when compared to each other's ideologies. They are much more ideological products of their own period, in which they are both critics of the society wherein they lived. The major difference between Smith's and Marx's perspectives on the individuality of the worker and the production of the value that comes from work is in their perceptions of the individuality of the worker and the development of the value that comes from work. Smith considers production to be individual commerce and the capability of each human potentiality. Marx, on the other hand, believes that as long as capitalism exists, the individuality of workers is determined by the class relationship. For Smith, value formulation entails the abstraction of labour through the facility of the commodity, which has value automatically in the form where it is created, to be consumed. This is referred to by Marx as "commodity fetishism." According to him, all commodities are labour products, and their worth is derived from the labour, not the other way around, i.e. from the commodity.

I have demonstrated that the formation of wealth in capitalist society is based on reorganizing the organic or natural organization of the working class to create labour for itself. This entails diminishing the workers' ability to comprehend their own productivity. Smith believes that the process Marx refers to as alienation will ultimately result in the emancipation of labour power. Workers will gain control of production and work as a result of this specialization process. This demonstrates that capitalism is not based on ideology. Ideology is just a social analysis. Capitalism operates in a multiplicity of societies. It is not only liberal democracy. In truth, liberal democracy is not more necessary for capitalism to work successfully than any other societal alternative.

This analysis also demonstrates that Smith and Marx both believe that labour is a people's social ability to produce. And all of society's wealth is built on this ability to labour. Furthermore, this labour is a feature of the working class that puts itself against the bourgeoisie based on its ability to generate wealth. Marx and Smith

have usually been set against one other on these issues, but as Sennett's discoveries indicate, this opposition is exaggerated, and Marx and Smith should be regarded as vivid analyzers of their own contemporary society in their own period.

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