

Outline and explain 2 criticisms of Marxism to our understanding of society (10)

One criticism of Marxist approaches to understanding society is economic determinism. Economic determinism views economic factors as the sole cause of changes in society. For example, Marxists view the purpose of education being to reproduce inequality in society so that working-class students will be able to be exploited by capitalism, however other approaches would suggest that education helps to facilitate social mobility through teaching students the specific skills and cultural capital they need to get ahead. Functionalists for example argue that students are allocated to their future roles based upon the ability they show in the education system and that education is meritocratic. Furthermore, Marxist views of the family suggest that the main purpose of family is to serve the needs of capitalism by instilling children with the dominant ideology of the ruling class. This can be criticised both by Functionalists, who would argue that the family performs more than merely economic functions, and Feminists, who suggest the family primarily reinforces patriarchal ideals, rather than serving economic interests.

A second criticism of Marxists for our understanding of society today is their structural viewpoint being limited in examining the diversity of contemporary society. Traditional Marxists suggest that society is divided into two social classes, the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. The Bourgeoisie will always look to exploit the Proletariat through employment, false consciousness and alienation. However, this view fails to take into account changes to contemporary society that have often rendered class positions as obsolete. Some sociologists argue that the emergence of the middle class and the decline of traditional working-class communities in the Western hemisphere has led to a complex social order which is not as binary as traditional Marxists would suggest. Furthermore, Post-modernists would argue that social structures such as class are in decline as individuals shape their identity through more than just their economic situation, but rather through media, interactions with peers and education – limited the usefulness of Marxism in contemporary society.

#40DayChallenge Day 33