

Quiz1

'Agora'

Watch the movie 'Agora' (2009). A) Explain the difference in 'paradigms' according to the movie and its impacts on the society. B) Analyze the phenomena in the movie with some paradigm frameworks in social sciences. (10 points)

Answer:

From the movie 'Agora' (2009), it shows a lot on the social system, government system and people's belief, during the Roman Empire. Christianity has influenced people in the Roman Empire a lot. Many cultures have constructed and interpreted from the influential of people's beliefs. Due to the interpreted social construction, the system is more based by deductive reasoning and does not have an empirical evidence to prove the conclusion statement, it makes a lot of people do not stand for the system during the Roman Empire. For instance, from the movie, we can see a lot of conflicts and wars between different believers in the society. During the Roman Empire, people were strongly believed in the social constructed cultural and ignored all other different thoughts. For instance, they see man as a more powerful gender. But, for women, people see this gender as a creature secondary to man. Moreover, in that period, it was a rising of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Christianity was very powerful. According from the movie, they believed that female Jew believers are witches and needed to be killed as it shown in the last scene of the film, where Hypatia was killed by Christianity believers. This is clearly shown the sexism issue due to social construction, during the Roman Empire. The power of many people with different beliefs reconstructed the idea and culture of the Roman Empire. Therefore, the interpreted social belief due to social construction is not accurate and could create a conflict in the society. Because, there is no empirical evidence that can be proved that the thoughts are right or wrong. In my opinion, I believed that people were being deductive reasoning because the technology was not as advance as it is right now. Science was not a compulsory skills or knowledge to have during that period. Things cannot be proved empirically. During the scene that there was a debate between Christian and Jew on whose god is a true god, it showed that people tend to believe that Christian god was a true god, because the

representative of Christian did not burn why walking on fire. People did not use scientific reasons to conclude on why the fire has burned Jew but not Christian.

Unlike positivism, this type of paradigm believes that reality existed and driven by natural laws and mechanism. The positivist framework should be supported by empirical evidence. During the Roman Empire, there were many famous mathematicians. In this film, it focuses on the story of Hypatia, the main character of this film, she was a philosopher, teacher, mathematician, astronomer who live in the Roman Empire. From the beginning part of the movie, she shares her scientific research to her students. She does not really believe in religion but more on scientific belief. Her interpretation on the movement of objects and planets is an example of inductive reasoning. As in the film, she drops the object to the ground from the top of the boat while the boat was coasting on the sea, she has observed and found out that the object did not dropped under the dropping point, but it dropped further back. Moreover, she was the first one to make an assumption that the world did not orbit in circular around the sun by using her observation of stars, solar system and object movement to make an implication. She later established her own physical/motion paradigm that the earth is orbit in an elliptic movement around the sun.

In conclusion, with the lack of technology issue as I have mentioned, some assumptions are true but there is no empirical evidence to support the statement. Therefore, many thoughts and assumptions of Hypatia are just critical paradigm, not positivism paradigm. Social construction paradigm still played an important role in the society, during that era.

Szirmai and 'Where to invade next'

Read Szirmai (2015) [chapter 1] and watch the movie 'Where to invade next' (2015). A) Explain how the discourse of 'development' had been constructed differently in different societies and what the common definition of 'development' (in your own interpretation) should be. B) Explain which hypothesis [from the class] could explain best the determinant of development level in each society. C) Discuss do you believe that development is conceivable without economic growth? (10 points)

Answer:

'Where to invade next' (2015) is the sarcastic comedy film to show the U.S. on the improvement that can be made by applying the concepts, systems, and structures from other countries. Michael Moore is a filmmaker. Moore visited many representatives from many countries to discuss on the social issues and successful improvement social model for a better solution.

The development in each country may not pace at the same level. Some might develop faster than the others, and some might not be able to improve. This is because there are different circumstances in each country. The size of endowment that the country has is one of the major factors. The country that has a big size of endowment can use it to gain a competitive advantage than others. But, endowment is not the only thing that will help the country to develop. The government system and its management are important as well. There are always trade off for each government decision. Therefore, the result might not be the same.

From my interpretation, I believed that measurement of development can be viewed and based from many aspects. But, importantly, it is the quality of livings of people. By the term 'quality of livings of people', I referred to human rights, income per capita, inequality, headcount of people in poverty and more. It is important that poor people should be able to improve their living standards or at least receive the rights that they should receive. For instance, in the U.S., health care services are very expensive. There are some people die because they cannot afford the compulsory healthcare service, which is unfair. Personally, government intervention is needed at some point to stand for human rights. From the film, Moore emphasized on the labor rights and workers' well-being. In Italy, workers receive

welfare from the company and government. Thus, it creates high incentive for people in the country to work. The economy turns out to be more productive. Moore also address the education is needed to be structured. As he has learned about education systems in France, Finland, and Slovenia, he learned that the education system can improve the society and living standards of people in the country. From Szirmai (2015), urbanization in the rural area is also important. By doing so, it will reduce inequality in the society. People in the rural area will receive more income. Thus, the country's aggregate consumption will increase. Since, there is fewer poor people, there are more people that have excess money to buy more goods and services. Furthermore, they can also afford their children's education. This leads to greater economic growth and makes the country to be more efficient. The technology will be faster developed. In short, I believe that if the government can escalate the living condition of people in the country, it means there is a development.

The determinant of development level in each society is sustainability. There are three main factors: economy, environment, and social community. The country should develop in sustainable manners. By the term 'sustainable development', it means to develop without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs as stated by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).

On the question, whether development is conceivable without economic growth, I think that it depends. In my opinion, the development can be made in terms of human rights as well, which might be unrelatable in monetary value or could be convertible in terms of approximated monetary value sometimes. The aims of development do not have to be just for economic growth. The most important point is to raise the standards of living in every social classes. For instance, by subsidizing the tuition fees for students, it gives an opportunity for lower social class to access education. Therefore, we will have more quality people in the society. There will be more people that are capable to develop new technology. Moreover, there will be less crime rate. As you can see, the action enhances both social development and economic growth. There are more actions that can be made. This was just an example to give an idea on the development that we can make to improve the society. More importantly, as I have mentioned, the development should be developed in sustainable manners. According to UN's sustainable development goals, the committee has categorized into 17 goals. The goals concerned on human rights, needs, economic growth, stability, and

environment. This claims that there are multi-goals that we need to concern. The economic growth is not the only measure of the society development.

‘American Factory’

Watch the documentary film, ‘American Factory’ (2019). Explain the debates between Adam Smith and Karl Marx portrayed in the movie regarding these concepts of 1) division of labors 2) labor union and 3) technological development. (10 points)

Answer:

From the documentary film, ‘American Factory’ (2019), it shows a lot of economic and social issues by Fuyao, the Chinese auto-glass maker company expand its plant in Ohio, USA. The plant was owned by General Motors company (GM), the automotive manufacturer. GM’s factory was closed, due to the great recession between 2007-2009. Fuyao has created tremendous number of jobs. Things have changed a lot. Fuyao has organized and treated their workers in the other way. The wage is lower than ever before. The working condition is more dangerous. The film aims to show the differences and issues of different ideas, cultures, thoughts, systems and etc.

In USA, the economic system is quite laissez-faire. Americans prefer to have free market and free economy. They support Adam Smith’s idea, that by having competitive market in the country, it would create the most efficiency to the economy. The free market will increase the competitiveness in the market. People will have self-interest. Thus, with highly competitive market, people will have an incentive to try to develop the technology to be able to gain its competitive advantage higher than its competitors. He did not support the government intervention. But, in the U.S., there is labor union. The government aims to support human rights as well.

From the film, it has shown that Fuyao has tried to minimize the wage. The company did not support the labor union because it will increase its ability to maximize the profit. Moreover, the company was not that innovative. As it has shown in the movie, there were many defected glasses made. Fuyao focuses on the minimization of cost rather than developing the highly technological production that can produce high quality products, make the production to be economy of scale, and safe for their labors. From the film, we can see that Fuyao has a common characteristic with Adam Smith’s theory. Fuyao is a capitalist.

Meanwhile, Karl Marx does not support the idea of capitalism. According to Karl Marx, social classes are permanent. Because, once wealthy people have higher capital, they would have higher advantage to gain more than the lower social class. Poor people will be even poorer because they have less capital. Therefore, it will create bigger social class gap.

There are advantages and disadvantages on either using Adam Smith's system or Karl Marx's system. Both systems have different aims. In my opinion, Fuyao is a capitalist. The company tried to seek for a profit. As Karl Marx has mentioned class struggle issue can be occurred with capitalism system. The labor union system is supported Karl Marx theory that it would eradicate the social class gap and human rights issue to be smaller.

Technology has been developing a lot in the recent decade. It creates an efficiency in production of manufacturer by lowering the cost of production and increasing production capacity. Nowadays, there are many manufacturers that changed to use robot and machine instead of human. In my opinion, I think that in the upcoming future, many jobs will be replaced by robot and machine. Referring from the movie, in USA, it has a high wage. Moreover, the country has strongly supported the labor union. Thus, the company has less incentive to use human to produce goods and services. Although, machineries and robots have a high fixed cost. The company has to lose a lot of cash flow in the year of purchasing machineries and robots. But, in the view of long-run, it might reduce the expense of the manufacturer company. With a highly innovative and technological machines, job loss issue might be a major problem that a lot of countries have to faced, since it might be efficient than human production.

‘Baker and Phongpaichit’ and ‘Paradoxocracy’

Read *Baker and Phongpaichit (2014)* [chapter 6-9] and watch a Thai documentary movie: ‘*Paradoxocracy*’ (2013). Write a short synthetic essay how applicable the framework of ‘Marxist historical development’ [keyword: class struggle] could be in the context of Thai modern history. Draw a conceptual timeline if necessary. (10 points)

Answer:

Formerly, Thailand used absolute monarchy system (Somburanayasittiratch) to govern people in the country. This system gives the monarch to hold all the power in the country. Monarchy has the rights to establish laws and legislations. Until the year 1926, Khana Ratsadon was established. It was the first political party in the country. The party was leaded by Pridi Banomyong and Plaek Phibunsongkhram. The aim was to change Thailand’s governing system from absolute monarchy system to be constitutional monarchy. The new system (democracy) helps to decentralize the power to people in the country and to be more standardized. It gives people the rights to elect the representative to manage the country. On June 24th, 1932, the system has finally changed to constitutional monarchy. Later in the year 1933, there was a coup d’état by Phraya Phahonphayusana. Coup d’état happened again in the year 1943. It was made by Sarit Thanarat. He was the first one to eradicate the constitutional laws.

Karl Marx, a German philosopher, and economist, he does not support capitalism. He is a communist and believed in socialism. According to the Marxist theory, it aims to decentralize the power to people in the society. He saw that capitalism will create further social class gap.

In Thailand, the absolute monarchy has common idea with Marxist theory. Since, the power was centralized to the monarchy. People do not have the right to govern and choose the best for their economy. In my opinion, as an economic student, I think the absolute monarchy is inefficient. Since, there are a lot of government intervention and regulation. It limits the competitiveness. Even though, Karl Marx has mentioned the benefits of the system to the society that it can eradicate the social class gap. The system is not working that well as Karl Marx has thought. Nowadays, in communist countries, there are still a lot of social class gap. Later, they might have to change themselves to be capitalist to be able to compete with

other countries. Moreover, there are a lot of disadvantages. The system benefits leaders and their companions of the country a lot. Since, the monarchy has an authority to bound the limitation for their companions to invest, export and import. This uncompetitive market benefits companions of the monarchy or the rulers of the country. They can charge high price to maximize their profits, since the competitiveness is bounded. Furthermore, the system is not transparent. Because, the citizen does not have the rights to supervise the leaders of the country. It is easy to make corruption in communist countries.

After Thailand has changed from absolute monarchy system to constitutional monarchy system, we can see that it has driven the competitiveness in the market. Even though, our country's system is not completely capitalism system, we can see an improvement in many ways. It expands the economy of the country. Even though, it creates high social class gap. But, the technology has developed rapidly, which improve overall living standards, comparing with an absolute monarchy that limited competitiveness. The economic system is not that efficient and well-managed.