

Comparing Philosophies on Industrial Society

Directions: Read the article and then take notes on the beliefs of Adam Smith, Charles Fourier, and Karl Marx in the table below. More information on these [economic systems can be found here](#). After completing the table, [listen to John Lennon's Imagine](#) and take notes on his views based on the lyrics.

Who?	Adam Smith	Charles Fourier	Karl Marx	John Lennon
Philosophy				
Property				
Religion				
Revolution				

Philosophies on Industrial Society

As the Industrial Revolution radically changed society, many philosophies developed on how it helped or hurt society and what should be done about it. Some people felt governments should support business to promote wealth. Others felt the government needed to do more to help the working class against big businesses.

The three dominant economic and political philosophies that developed were Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism.

Capitalism

One of the first people to write about government policy toward industrial society was Adam Smith, from Scotland. In his influential book *Wealth of Nations*, Smith also argued that wealth distribution could work most effectively without any government interference.

This *laissez-faire* “leave alone” policy would encourage the most efficient operation of private and commercial businesses. If the government let people and business do as they pleased, they would act out of self-interest and maximize the economic well-being of society as a whole.

Socialism

Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and other early socialist thinkers saw the need to reform rather than destroy capitalism. Fourier declared that cooperation was the secrets of success in society. He believed that a society that cooperated would see an immense improvement in productivity. This meant that the government would need to pass laws to protect workers. Socialists also sought reforms in the legal system, prisons, and education. Many even began the suffrage movement to extend the right to vote.

Similarly, the factors of production should be owned by the public and operate for the welfare of all. Socialists argued that government control of factories, railroads, mines, and key industries would end poverty and promote equality.

Communism

A German journalist named Karl Marx, however, insisted that capitalism had to be completely overturned in order for society to advance and the “proletariat” to be treated fairly. He and Friedrich Engels, outlined their ideas in *The Communist Manifesto*. According to Marx and Engels, the Industrial Revolution enriched the wealthy and impoverished the poor. He even went so far as to write that religion was “the opium of the people” because the ruling classes used it to give false hope to the working class.

Marx believed that a revolution was inevitable: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite.” He believed that the means of production—all land, factories, railroads, and businesses—should be owned by the people. Private property should cease to exist and all goods and services could be shared equally.

