"A favorite device of social critics has been to construct model societies to illuminate the problems and the shortcomings of their time and to project a possible blueprint for the future. Describe and compare the utopias of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx. What were the chief faults they found with their own societies and how were their utopias designed to correct them?" (1975, #4)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx were two of the most recognized social critics ever. Both were able to break down the issues in their own societies and develop feasible solutions. Although Rousseau and Marx came from completely different backgrounds, both had sympathy for the lowly working class and based much of their thinking upon ways to help the people whom the upper class continued to abuse. Both strove to get rid of the inequality caused by ownership of private property and the different social classes. However, Rousseau and Marx differ greatly in the respect that in the case of Rousseau, there was a lot of emotion factored into his ideas to fix societal injustice. As a result, he did not include a detailed layout of exactly how his utopia would be run. Marx on the other hand, utilized his higher-end education to analyze problems, drawing on examples from other countries and people. Marx gave a detailed description of his utopia, giving it a more magnetic sound.

“All attempts at establishing Utopias have failed. Man has only been able to make society fairer in some ways.” Anonymous

I. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
   A. Background
         a. Rousseau was born into a Protestant family.
         b. His mother died a few days after he was born.
         c. His father, a watchmaker and dance master, apprenticed him to many masters, but he was not particularly skilled at any one trade
      2. Neglected as a child and ran away at age sixteen.
      3. Traveled through Europe with next-to-nothing
         a. To survive he took on different odd jobs including giving music lessons and being secretary to a French diplomat.
         b. At times he changed religion if it would suit him financially.
         c. Along the way he was taken care of by various women and never forgot their kindness and belief in him.
      3. Never felt at ease in French society.
         a. Always felt like an outsider
         b. Felt he could trust no one.
            i. Thought any “friend” would betray him.
            ii. Was afraid of being used.
         c. Possibly was paranoid.
a. Lived also with Therese's mother.
b. Had five children by Therese.
   i Gave all five children to an orphanage.
5. Did not write successfully until age forty.

6. Rousseau was religious by temperament.
   a. Though he did not believe in church or clergy he respected the
      Bible.
   b. Was in awe of the cosmos.
   c. Believed in a God of love and beauty.

B. Ideas Rousseau Held About Society
1. Felt society was artificial and corrupt.
   a. In society a good person could not be happy.
   b. Believed that society relied too heavily on reason.
      i Said reason was a false guide
      ii Thought that impulse was more reliable than judgment
   c. Expressed the opinion that civilization caused much evil and
      stated life would be better in a "state of nature".
      i This idea presented in two discourses.
         (a) Arts and Sciences (1750)
         (b) Origin of Inequality Among Men (1753)
      ii Best human traits stem from nature. Ex: kindness,
         honesty, unselfishness, etc.
   d. Did not glorify civilized refinement and thought of it as a sugar
      coating for the true sinister intentions people had.

2. Disliked the idea of luxurious living.
   a. Saw correlation between luxury, expanding needs, and the rise of
      art and science.
   b. Used ancient history to support his theories.
      i Athens to demonstrate how the influx of elegance, luxury,
         wealth, art, and science corrupted it and led to its downfall.
      ii Rome to demonstrate how successful it was while it was
         poor and plain but then how it failed after becoming
         concerned with riches.

3. Rousseau was skeptical of philosophers.
   a. Said that philosophers tried destroying everything that was good
      with their perverse thinking and reasoning.
   b. They undermine patriotism and religion.

4. Said children needed to be raised differently.
   a. In his first discourse he spoke of the inadequacy of the education
      of children.
      i Education was too vocational
      ii Important moral virtues were not being taught.
      iii Thought some education was too specialized because
children were learning more about other languages than their own.

iv “We have physicists, geometricians, chemists, astronomers, poets, musicians, and painters in plenty; but we have no longer a citizen among us.”

b. Through his Emile (1762), Rousseau brought new ways of child rearing to attention in order to have a well-rounded child.

5. Rousseau also disliked inequality.
   a. Believed in natural inequality, which is evident in things such as age and health.
   b. Thought there was also political inequality, which was brought about by power and money.
      i This only comes about as a result of corrupted society.

C. Rousseau’s Utopia

1. Most of the aspects of Rousseau’s utopian society come from his Social Contract (1762).
   a. Many of his views in this document are contradictory to what he said previously.
   b. He began to lean more in the direction of Hobbes’s theory of natural life being brutish.

2. He used General Will to protect and represent all people.
   a. He was the first to truly represent the petite bourgeoisie, or the poor workmen and uneducated peasants, in his reforms.
   b. He wanted to establish a sovereign power, the people, without taking away complete liberty and equality.

3. All people are free and equal
   a. Set up so that no one will have so much that he can buy another man and no one will be so poor that he will have to sell himself.
   b. No one person could own vast amounts of property while another does not have anything.
      i Rousseau knew that enforcing this would be difficult because the people who had an abundance would be less willing to comply.
         (a) Said that if someone refuses to obey, he may be forced to.

4. If it is best for the community, then it is good enough.
   a. The choices of some would be overruled if the General Will went in the other direction.

5. Although he began in saying that liberty should be preserved, it ended up seeming like the opposite.
would prevail

B. Marx's Ideas About Society

1. Dialectical materialism
   a. Marx believed that man's life revolves around and depends on material objects.
      i. Material objects depend on their production and distribution.
   b. Society's laws, religion, politics, and morals are affected by this.
   c. Material changes in people's lives will affect many other aspects

2. History had provided five types of society.
   a. Primitive or tribal society
      i. There is no private property.
      ii. Everything is accessible to anyone.
   b. Slave owning society
      i. Means of production, or private property, belongs to the slave owner.
      ii. Society is divided into different social classes.
   c. Feudal system
      i. Means of production belong to the feudal lord.
      ii. Society is divided into different social classes.
   d. Capitalist system
      i. Means of production belong to the capitalist.
      ii. Society is divided into social classes.
   e. Socialist system
      i. No one owns the means of production.
      ii. End of class distinction

3. The common worker was being exploited wrongly.
   a. The lower class did all of the difficult work and yet got the least out of it.
   b. The bourgeoisie and capitalists were taking advantage of the poor workers.

4. Struggle of the classes.
   a. Marx noted that there have been class struggles throughout much of history.
   b. The class that controls the means of production has the most power in society.
      i. This ruling class sets up systems to keep its power.
      ii. They create governments which protect its place in the hierarchy.
      iii. The ruling class invents religion and morals to support to legitimize their system.

5. Marx thought that conflict would rise between the ruling and working classes.
   a. The proletariat could upset the power with a communist
C. Marx's Utopia

1. Marx projected a society in which the proletariat would rule, called the dictatorship of the proletariat.
   a. The laborers take complete control and private property is done away with.
   b. Should any of the capitalists refuse to give up property they would be forced to by the workers as they are vastly outnumbered.

2. Abolition of organized religion.
   a. Religion was considered a dangerous instrument of the upper classes and so is cleared from society.
      i. Religion was only to pacify the workers.
      ii. If they were invested with religion it would be like a drug making them not care about how they lived as long as they were rewarded in the after-life
         (a) Not being included in decision-making.
         (b) Not having the same rights.

3. The proletariat controls the means of production. In consequence everyone's needs are taken care of.
   a. People can take what they want from public storehouses which contain the goods that everyone produced.
      i. Crime disappears
         (a) Men no longer have to steal because they are provided with all they need or want.

4. People work because it makes them happy to contribute.

5. The final shape of his plan would be a society without government.

In conclusion, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx had the same basic wish for a non social discriminating society. They favored a society in which everyone benefits equally. Both Marx and Rousseau felt that as long as there were people with more money, power, and who lived in luxury, that there would be problems. They also believed in doing everything for the greater good. Both acknowledged that in order to achieve such things, violence or force might be necessary. Another similarity is that they each drew on the past to evaluate and resolve current issues. However, Rousseau did not put much stock in reason while Marx did. Rousseau leaned toward being religious while Karl Marx did not see the need for it. In the end it seems that Marx's utopia was more likely to be realized than that of Rousseau. Though neither of their plans for utopian societies panned out, some of their beliefs are alive today. Thanks to Rousseau the art of parenthood was greatly improved. Marx's notion of economic analysis still helps today's world leaders to improve their countries' financial position or to make vital predictions. The work of these men paved the road for reformers who followed them and for those whose time has not yet arrived.