

Labor

Division of labor has been a feature of production from the earliest times. In simple societies, men hunted, trapped, fished, and fought; women managed their households and tended crops. As civilization developed, a division of labor took place on a vocational basis. Different economic activities were performed by separate groups of producers. With the development of tools and productive techniques, handicrafts and agriculture were carried on by separate groups. The growth of cities fostered a wider specialization of artisans. Vocational division of labor became more widespread during the Middle Ages due to the development of the guilds.

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Caste System

The caste system is one where one's parentage determines one's place in society. If your parents are street-cleaners, then so are you. If your parents are merchants, that's what you are. If your parents are nobility, then you are as well. Your status is determined at birth, and there's nothing you can do to better it. One may advance within one's caste, but that's as far as it goes. Marriages between castes are taboo. There is little advantage to the caste system, except to the people whose parents are on the top of the heap. Merit and initiative are useless: if the most intelligent and wise person in the culture happens to be born a street-cleaner, then he'll be an intelligent and wise street-cleaner. He'll never have a chance to become a priest, philosopher, or leader.

Guilds

A guild is an association of people who practice the same trade. The guilds seek to protect their members' incomes, maintain standards of performance, and train new workers in the trade. Guilds have often built hospitals, orphanages and schools to serve their members. Guilds seek to expand their membership to include all who practice their profession. Such monopolies allow guilds greater control over the fees their members can charge for their services. Many of the earliest guilds - Roman professional organizations, for instance - had strong religious components. One of the earliest known Muslim guilds were formed by the "waraqeen," or "those who work with knowledge." In the ninth century these professional writers and printers worked together to ensure the quality of published material and to stop other printers from making illegal copies of the material. The European guilds came into being around 1000 AD. They included a rigid hierarchy of skilled workers - apprentice, craftsman, journeyman, master and sometimes grandmaster. The higher in the hierarchy a member was, the more the payment he could demand. This structure greatly increased the guilds' memberships, since one could not attain the higher statuses without belonging to a guild.

Serfdom

Serfdom is a more "enlightened" form of slavery in that the power of the master is not absolute and the serfs are accorded a certain number of rights. The specific rights and

obligations of masters and serfs vary significantly over time and from place to place. In some societies, the master had the right to control every aspect of a serf's life except that he couldn't kill the serf without just cause; in others, the serfs had the rights to marry and to inherit wealth and to a certain amount of self-government, but they could not leave the land without their lord's permission. The basic premise of serfdom is that one group of people are superior to another, and that they have the political and god-given right to control the other group's destiny. Thus serfdom only makes sense if one agrees with the group currently in power about who is superior to whom.

Slavery

Slavery is a system whereby some people are judged far inferior to others and are treated as objects or possessions, with no more rights than those afforded to chairs or cattle. Slavery has existed as long as human history, from the earliest primitive times to the enlightened days of Greece and Rome and right up until today. Sometimes convicted criminals were made into slaves. Sometimes captured enemies of the state were enslaved. Sometimes people of a specific race or coloration were enslaved. In some civilizations a person could purchase their freedom or were allotted it after being enslaved for a specific period of time. The advantage of slavery is that it allows people to be forced to do jobs that they would otherwise refuse to do without adequate compensation. Cheap labor results in concentration of wealth and thus the creation of great buildings and temples or the maintenance of large professional armies. Aside from its basic moral repugnance, the disadvantages of slavery are numerous: it corrupts both slave and master, it badly underutilizes the intelligence and creativity of the subject people, and it almost inevitably leads to revolts and internal strife.

Tribalism

Tribalism is a form of organization which emphasizes the tribe as the sole unit of importance. Individuals have no rights; each man, woman and child exists only to support the tribe. Tribalism is a fairly useful form of government for a small group of people who exist on the edge of catastrophe. In a tribe everyone knows everybody else; who is strong and who is weak, who is intelligent and who is not, who is skilled and who is unskilled. Leadership in the tribe is usually determined by merit, according to the tribe's needs: if the tribe is hungry, the best hunter becomes the leader. If the tribe is surrounded by enemies, the best warrior is chosen. And so forth. A tribe must quickly learn how to pick successful leaders; otherwise it will perish. Tribalism tends to break down when the tribe becomes overly large. People no longer know everyone in their tribe. Groups (or factions) appear, and everyone no longer share the same objectives. The tribe must find a more sophisticated system of government or fracture into smaller squabbling units.