

Discuss marxs concepts of alienation and exploitation



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Marx concept of alienation and exploitation As defined in wikipedia, alienation (Entfremdung in German), as expressed in the writings of young Karl Marx, refers to the separation of things that naturally belong together, or to antagonism between things that are properly in harmony. In the concept's most important use, it refers to the alienation of people from aspects of their "human nature" (Gattungswesen, usually translated as 'species-essence' or 'species-being. He believes that alienation is a systematic result of capitalism. Under capitalism, the fruits of production belong to the employers, who expropriate the surplus created by others and in so doing generate alienated labour. Alienation describes objective features of a person's situation in capitalism - it isn't necessary for them to believe or feel that they are alienated. Some would say that Alienation itself is a completely subjective state of being, this is debatable at best. His theory relies on Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), which argues that the idea of God has alienated the characteristics of the human being. Stirner would take the analysis further in *The Ego and Its Own* (1844), declaring that even 'humanity' is an alienating ideal for the individual, to which Marx and Engels responded in *The German Ideology* (1845).

According to Karl Marx, there are many ways that people are alienated in capitalism. The workers apparently lose control of their lives and selves in not having any control of their work. Workers, thus, never become powerful, self-realized human beings in any significant sense. Marx attributes four types of alienation in labour under capitalism:[1]

alienation of the worker from his or her 'species essence' as a human being rather than a machine;

alienation between workers, since capitalism reduces labour to a commodity
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to be traded on the market, rather than a social relationship; alienation of the worker from the product, since this is appropriated by the capitalist class, and so escapes the worker's control; alienation from the act of production itself, such that work comes to be a meaningless activity, offering little or no intrinsic satisfactions. Meanwhile, exploitation according to Marx refers to the exploitation of an entire segment or class of society by another. He sees it as being an inherent feature and key element of capitalism and free markets. The profit gained by the capitalist is the difference between the value of the product made by the worker and the actual wage that the worker receives; in other words, capitalism functions on the basis of paying workers less than the full value of their labor, in order to enable the capitalist class to turn a profit. This profit is not however moderated in terms of risk vs. return. In the Marxist view, "normal" exploitation is based in three structural characteristics of capitalist society: [2]

the ownership of the means of production by a small minority in society, the capitalists;

the inability of non-property-owners (the workers, proletarians) to survive without selling their labor-power to the capitalists (in other words, without being employed as wage laborers) [3]

Alienation and exploitation in a workforce are the two ills in industrialized countries because it harms the natural and civil rights of every worker. As described by Marx, it is immoral because it does not facilitate the development of humans to their potential.

1. en. wikipedia. org/wiki/Marx's_theory_of_alienation

2.