

Germinal essay



Cola demonstrates the desperate need for compassion by rapidly showing us the extent to which oppression, exercised by the bourgeoisie, can affect the individuals in the working-class as well as their community, as a whole. Marx pushes for extremely radical ideas, which would completely revolutionize the social, political, and economical aspects Of a nation. Marx believes that genuine change can only be achieved through a revolution. Cola disagrees; he believes that a revolution can be avoided if compassion becomes a universal practice. Both revolution and compassion are relevant to the concepts of human colonization, class division, and evolution.

Marx and Cola share similar ideas about human colonization. Both of them agree that the causes of the lack of human colonization are demutualization and alienation. In *Germinal*, Cola demonstrates this through the lack of compassion and humanity in the relationships of the workers. For example, the lack of humanity becomes apparent when we witness the relationship the workers have towards their labor.

Although the condition of the mine is very hazardous, the workers continue to labor relentlessly. “ They were now tapping away harder than ever in their single-minded determination to fill a decent number of tubs. They became oblivious to all else as they gave themselves up to this furious pursuit of a reward so dearly won” | This demonstrates the alienation of the worker from his labor and the demutualization of the worker because he becomes enslaved by his labor. Marx says, “ The more the worker by his labor appropriates the external, world, sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of means of life”. This means that the amount of time a worker

spends on his labor is inversely related to his humanity. In other words, as the worker labors longer, he loses more of his humanity.

Furthermore, the only thing that the workers want from their job is the “reward so dearly won”, not the product of their labor or the labor itself. The reward in this scenario is money. Marx says, “Money is thus the general overturning of individualistic which turns them into their contrary”.³ Money has the power to do something, which a person, as a human, cannot do. However the need for it becomes so essential that people are no longer validated by their humanistic attributes, rather we validate ourselves based on how much money we own.

This need for money leads to errors laboring longer and, in turn, causes them to become more euthanized. Another relationship the workers have that demonstrates their demutualization is the relationship between their families. For example, Mayhem and La Maude do not seem to hold much importance in compassion, concerning their relationship to each other and their family. While Estelle lay in her crib crying from hunger, La Maude pulls her sheets above her head in an attempt to muffle the scream and Mayhem casually continues to get dressed for his day, unfazed by the choking coming from the crib.

When the crying gets too loud, Mayhem snaps. He grabs his daughter and violently throws her on the bed, commanding La Maude to feed her. This shows the objectification of Masher’s family members from himself and the lack of compassion practiced by his family. Mayhem sees his family merely as tools for a means of survival.

La Maude also objectifies children. When talking to M. Gooier, she finds herself surprisingly baffled when the topic of conversation shifted to her children. “ It wasn’t something you thought about, a child just came along, naturally. And then when it was grown, it brought it some money and generally kept things going. 4 This shows that La Maude holds precedence on what a child can do, rather than his humanistic individuality. Furthermore, she would always refer to a child as “ it”, rather than “ him” or “ her. ” This is another indicator of the objectification of family.

Marx and Cola have different opinions concerning the solution to the division of classes. While Cola believes that the main problem is the Groupie’s and the lack of compassion they practice to the working-class, Marx believes the problem is the nature of a properly working Capitalist society. The essence of Capitalism calls for the division of classes.

However, the system will not change if the people are compassionate. The people’s decency is not going to solve the problems that are results of Capitalism. The only thing that could possibly change the class division is through the abolition of private property. This is the abolition of “ the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man’s own labor”. 5 By abolishing private property, individuals would be able to become independent and achieve emancipation from the division of classes. Cola demonstrates the extent to which the classes have divided by showing the lack of compassion and empathy demonstrated by the bourgeoisie, awards the working-class.

For example, when La Maude was trying to get money from the Groupie's, the difference between them becomes very apparent. La Maude was attempting to convince M. Gooier to give her some money by telling him the severity of her living conditions. Throughout her conversation, La Maude remains very humble, even in the end when she asked M.

Gooier for the money directly. Despite her politeness and dire need of it, M. Gooier declines her request. Cola attempts to convey the importance of compassion by evoking a feeling of pity for La Maude.

Cola believes that an increase of wages for the workers can help them sustain themselves.