

Introduction

In this presentation, we have decided to focus on Marx's concept of alienation, and tackle the research question: **What is alienation and what is its place in Marx's communist politics?** We will analyse alienation in a comparative perspective, first explaining the mechanisms in which this phenomenon occurs in a capitalist society, and then arguing that communism would successfully eradicate it, thus ending class struggle, which is what Marx advocates for. In the second paragraph we will also shed light on why the communist revolution is likely to occur according to Marx. Before diving into our main topic, let's have a look at some key terms and concepts: private property, conflict between capital and labour, wage and profit.

The concept of property had existed even before the industrial revolution, but what makes the capitalistic society and absolutely unique and incomparable to the past is private property, which implicitly justifies an injustice, the hierarchy between the capitalists, owners of capital and property, and the workers, the propertyless owners of labour. Private property exploits the worker, turning into a slave, and we can understand this exploitative relationship by looking at two opposites: wage and profit. In fact, the worker's labor is incorporated into private property, i.e.: final product, whose price will be the sum of wage and profit (surplus value). Concretely, this means that the worker is not able to consume the fruit of his hard work, since he won't be able to afford the object he has produced. Alienation itself is strongly correlated to exploitation.

Part I: The process of alienation of labour in capitalism

Alienation, or estrangement, is described by Marx in the *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844* and features three components.

Estrangement of the product of labour

For Marx the worker is a mere commodity and the product of his labour, i.e.: the final produce sold on the market, is a power independent of the producer (p. 71), "an alien object". The worker loses the object by producing it, and the loss increases as the wealth the worker produces increases, due to the devaluation of labour. In fact, the higher the value of the product, the more unlikely will the worker be to ever afford it. One could argue that in order to work the worker needs capital, therefore appropriates it, and Marx agrees on such statement, but the object in which labor is transformed does not belong to him anymore, which means that that object ceases to be a means of survival for the worker. In other words, "the worker becomes a slave of his object" (73). This quote effectively shows the alienation of the worker from his object: "the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless he becomes; the more civilised his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the duller becomes the worker" (e.g.: machine instead of manual work: worker becomes machine/loses that job and will find a more retrograde job)

Estrangement of the act of production

Marx states that "The direct relationship of labour to its produce is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production" (p. 73), which means that alienation also occurs within the production activity itself. Labour is defined as "active alienation" (p. 75) because it is external to him, it is a burden that deprives the worker of his mental and physical energy, it is something that men accept only when it is not an option, when their alternative is to die.

Estrangement of the species from man