

Classical Ethical Systems and Communication Ethics

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Introduction

The 1800's saw many philosophers who brought about many of the ideas that are still prevalent today. One philosopher whose ideas are seen often in today's culture, not just in the United States but across the world, is Karl Marx. Karl Marx came from a large family of nine with parents who were Jewish. Marx was born in Prussia but moved several times throughout his life, due to being exiled (Barry. 2020). The ideas that he came up with and pursued were so radical that many countries did not want him there, because of possible political unrest. Karl Marx is well known for his work with Frederick Engels in the book Communist Manifesto. This book played a large influence on Vladimir Lenin, who led the way for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In this essay, we will be examining three ideas that Karl Marx had and pursued faithfully; these ideas were alienation, exploitation, and morality in the field of labor.

Alienation in the field of labor.

The concept of alienation, as described by the Stanford Encyclopedia, is the separation between a subject and an object that are supposed to be together (Wolff, J., et al. 2020). The subject is usually a person or a group, whereas the object is typically a type of an entity. Karl Marx studied this idea within the field of work. In the book that is a compilation of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Marx and Engels Collected Works. Volume 3," Marx looks at four aspects of the idea of alienated labor in a capitalist society (Marx, K., et al. 2010). The production that is taking place has a control on the workers. The workers have no control of the products and instead the products have a tight control over the worker. This production divides the laborers into strict categories that alienates them from the other individual ideas they may have. Marx has the idea that this production does have the capability of being creative and to

allow for self-realization. However, that creativity and self-realization is being suppressed due to the strict categories' laborers are put into. This alienation continues to do harm because people are not able to see the interests of others (Wood. 2004). Alienation in the workplace and in communication is something that must be avoided. Allowing for people to communicate their ideas will help them to be more creative and to understand those ideas better. This can be both beneficial for a company or simply for the other people around that person.

Exploitation in the field of labor.

Exploitation is a concept that is still being discussed in today's culture. However, today we see exploitation in the field of labor as sweatshops that pay the employees little to nothing. Karl Marx would look at today's concept of sweatshops and connect them to how he saw capitalism as exploiting the common worker. John Roemer is quoted in "Marx and Exploitation," as saying, "Marxian exploitation is defined as the unequal exchange of labor for goods: the exchange is unequal when the amount of labor embodied in the goods which the worker can purchase with his income ... is less than the amount of labor he expended to earn that income," (Wolff. 1999). If a worker at a sweatshop is earning three dollars an hour and goes out and buys a necessity that is twelve dollars but only took two hours to make, that worker just lost two hours of pay. The number of hours the person had to work does not equal the number of hours it took to make the product. The way that Marx sees exploitation is that the person who has been exploited will never get their fair share. The majority of what they pour into the field of labor will not be given back to them. Exploitation, as we already discussed, is still prevalent today. This is an area where in communications we can work to give people an opportunity to speak and give their opinions equally. Following Marx's ideas, this will allow people to be given equal exchange on their ideas.

Morality in the field of labor.

While Marx did much philosophical work in nonmoral aspects such as alienation and exploitation, he rarely discussed moral aspects such as virtue and justice. However, when examining the two previous topics we have to dive deeper into what Marx saw as moral justice. The alienation and exploitation that Marx saw in the field of labor leads to the idea that aspects of capitalism are unjust. However, the Stanford Encyclopedia shares how Karl Marx never said that capitalism was unjust (Wolff, J., et al. 2020). When you look at his beliefs as a whole, however, you see that he did in fact believe that it was unjust. Capitalism allows for sweatshops to exist in order to give consumers what they want. This allows for workers to be put to work in environments that are not safe, and they are not paid for the value of their work. That leads to people being treated unjustly. With the idea of how Marx portrayed alienation and exploitation in the field of labor, we have to examine more of what Marx did say specifically when talking about justice. In his book “Capital,” Marx talks about justice in the area of transactions, “This content is just whenever it corresponds to the mode of production, is adequate to it. It is unjust whenever it contradicts it,” (Marx. 1867). This form of thinking gives the basis that justice is based on the circumstances surrounding the incident, what is moral is based on the social surroundings.

Conclusion

Karl Marx is well known for the philosophical ideas that eventually led to countries such as Russia and Cuba taking those ideas to the extreme. Marx saw capitalism as detrimental to society because of nonmoral aspects such as alienation and exploitation. These were two aspects that he focused much of his time philosophizing over, and through that Marx came up with ideas

that have had much impact on how many countries have been governed and are currently being governed. These nonmoral aspects are also still applicable to how we communicate with the people around us. In this essay we also saw how Marx rarely addressed ideas of morality such as justice. While he did not like the philosophies of capitalism, he never said that they were unjust, but from his work many philosophers do believe that is what he thought. That is where the idea of objective morals came into play. From his writings he saw that justice was dependent on what was happening socially. Karl Marx was brilliant with the ideas that he uncovered, and the work that he did, did in fact change how the world thought.

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