

In the following sections, this essay will explore the concept of liberatory alienation in depth, beginning with an examination of Marx's theory of alienation and its limitations. It will then introduce the concept of liberatory alienation, discussing its manifestation in various aspects of life and its potential to redefine the human experience. The essay will also delve into the role of technology in this process, considering the implications of artificial intelligence and robotics for the future of work and human skills.

Furthermore, the essay will explore the educational implications of this shift, arguing for a fundamental reassessment of educational priorities in light of the increasing automation of both manual and cognitive tasks. It will propose a new focus for education, emphasizing the cultivation of uniquely human qualities such as creativity, agency, and the capacity for joy, as well as the appreciation of beauty, love, and play. Finally, the essay will consider the challenges and opportunities presented by this transformative process, highlighting the importance of human control over AI systems and the potential for a more liberated and fulfilling human existence.

1 Marx's alienation

I will initiate the discussion with an examination of Marx's concept of alienation, a theory that is not singular but resonates with various other interpretations. What distinguishes Marx's perspective is its direct linkage between alienation and work. This notion reverberates in other theories that attribute alienation to diverse factors: technological society as in Baudrillard, excessive societal rationalization as in Weber, or the oppressive nature of advanced industrial society as in Marcuse. While acknowledging the nuances and unique contributions of these theorists, my focus will be on Marx's underdeveloped yet influential theory that associates productive labor with human essence.

In his book "Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society," Bertell Ollman provides a detailed analysis of Marx's theory of alienation, discussing how, according to Marx, the worker becomes alienated from the product of their labor, the act of production, their species-being, and other workers under the capitalist mode of production (Ollman 1971).

Marx argued that human creations serve as mirrors reflecting their nature, while simultaneously shaping and transforming their creators. This productive activity establishes a connection between individuals and their collective human identity, or species-being (*Gattungswesen*). In Marx's view, humans not only intellectually but also actively and actually produce themselves through labor. He asserted, "The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of the species-life of man: for man produces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively

and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created".

According to Marx, the way humans engage in production has far-reaching implications for their well-being. He posited that an economic system rooted in private ownership of production means results in alienated labor. The crux of this alienation lies in the distorted relationship between the laborer and multiple facets: the products they create, the act of production itself, and ultimately, their own species-being. To elucidate the concept of alienation, Marx introduces its antithesis: non-alienated labor.

Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have in two ways affirmed himself and the other person. (1) In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also when looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses and hence a power beyond all doubt. (2) In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the direct enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a human need by my work, that is, of having objectified man's essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man's essential nature. Our products would be so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature (Karl Marx 1844).

In *Capital*, Volume I, (Failed 2023) Marx delves into the concept of deskilling and the resulting alienation experienced by industrial workers. He underscores how the capitalist mode of production relegates skilled laborers to the role of mere cogs in the machinery they operate.

Marx contends that the industrial era's division of labor and mechanization led to a simplification of work tasks, thereby diminishing the need for skill and expertise. This deskilling process exacerbated workers' alienation, as they lost both control over the production process and the fulfillment derived from crafting a complete product.

The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the devaluation of the world of men. Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity—and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general (Marx 1844).

Moreover, Marx posited that the worker became merely an extension of the machine, relegated to repetitive tasks while the machine assumed the more intricate aspects of production. This dynamic dehumanized the workers, stripping them of their creative and intellectual faculties and rendering them subservient to both the machinery and the capitalist mode of production.