

The Existential Crisis of Meaning and Human Significance Resulting from Global Capitalism and Corporatocracy

A Marxian Perspective

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Many workers across the globe are feeling bored and at the same time are constantly tired with their respective job careers. Many workers in our present milieu are feeling worn-out and burnt-out in their work and with their life in general.

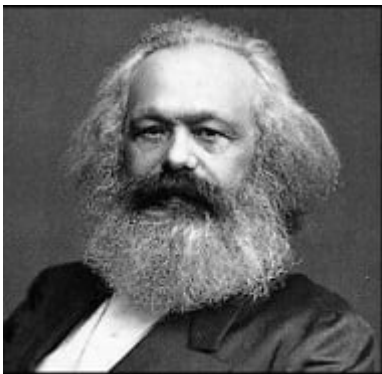
Marxian Politico-Economic Philosophy in a nutshell is a scathing critique of the manner by which global corporatist capitalism spawned and generated our contemporary existential crisis of meaning and of human significance. Reflecting on life and living using the lens of Karl Marx's critique of how extractive capitalism exploits employees, workers, laborers and peasants will allow us to transcend our present extractive consumeristic lifestyle and see what is ahead of life and living—beyond merely working for the sake of money and greed: beyond merely working for wants and for vain luxuries.

Marxian concepts such as “commodification”, “objectification”, “alienation”, “vanity consumption” and “consumerism” are helpful paradigms in unlocking the present existential crisis of meaning and of human significance as experienced by workers worldwide and are beneficial conceptual frameworks in elucidating the psychological, mental, emotive, and existential burdens that laborers and workers face and experience in living their respective careers in the midst of capitalist hegemonic globalism. It is crucial to emphasize that the above Marxist conceptual paradigms are still extremely relevant if we are to truly understand ourselves as *homo faber* (working human) whose goal is to become what the ancient Greek philosophers termed as *anthropos me skopó kai telos* (human person who realizes one's value and significance in the light of humanity's ultimate purpose).

We can look at the boredom and the ennui in our respective careers as the result of commodification: when we are treated as objects to produce commodities that the economic and political “powers-that-be” have unilaterally imposed upon and demanded from us; and we are forced to deliver these commodities even though we are being

depersonalized and dehumanized in the process of production. Commodification happens when we are treated as objects or as things in the process of our work—to the point that we feel that we are like the proverbial goose that is forced to lay golden eggs for the consumption of the goose’s extractive and greedy master.

Our career paths follow a triple movement of labor-consumption-fulfillment, so on and so forth, following a dialectical cycle. We labor (work or employment) in order to satisfy our needs (consumption), and we seek to satisfy our needs to have some sense of fulfillment or happiness (goals for working) in our lives. We work because we want to be purposeful, to be fulfilled, and to be happy in our life. Alienation happens when we simply work, work, and do more tedious work; yet not being able to find fulfillment, satisfaction and happiness in our life. We work hard and work ourselves unto sickness and death only to find out that our bosses, our employers, and our superiors are becoming richer and happier but we have become poorer, sicker, and more unhappy with our self and with our condition. This is what Karl Marx termed “alienation”.



In our consumeristic and capitalistic society, those economic and political “powers-that-be” are the ones who are reaping the fruits of our blood, sweat and tears; while the workers’ lives are miserable famished and impoverished. Marx calls this situation “exploitation” or “oppression”. Objectification, dehumanization, depersonalization, oppression, exploitation, alienation, marginalization—for Marx, these are just synonymous malevolent terms brought about by international corporatist capitalism, extractive consumerism, and exploitative imperialism. Dehumanization and exploitation are the results of our being commodified by this consumeristic society bent only on the monetization of human worth, marketability of human existence and economic profitability of human life. Once we are commodified by our consumeristic and capitalistic society for its own utilitarian and pragmatic interest; we feel used, abused, worn-out, and alienated from our work and from our very own self—and we do not anymore find fulfillment, satisfaction and felicity in what we do and in what we are: in short, we are burnt-out from and traumatized by our work.

There is an inherent monstrous problem with global corporatist capitalism that Marx clearly saw—this is the “profit motive” that will deform and mutate itself into a ravenous and insatiable Beast, making humans its helpless slaves in order to satisfy this voracious Beast’s greed for power, profit, influence, money, and market. When one subjects the whole value of human existence into mere “economism”, “marketability”, “money-fetishism” and look at our human significance and worth solely in the language of consumption and monetary consideration, then the human person becomes only an instrumental and utilitarian tool in the hands of an extractive, exploitative and oppressive capitalistic society. As a tragic result, the human person is not treated as a value in itself, not treated as having intrinsic worth, and treated only as animal-of-burden in a capitalistic and consumeristic society!

We are bored with our work and we feel oppressed by our respective jobs because our contemporary society values things more than people. Our present society values money more than relationships. Nowadays, even schools, churches, and so-called humanistic organizations as well as philanthropic foundations are not immune to the cruel tentacles of global extractive capitalism spreading its rabid virus even upon these so-called humane, spiritual, educational, and charitable institutions, foundations and organizations. We see a sad and gloomy state-of-affairs as of the present: universities and educational institutions are now offering courses solely for global marketability, offering courses that caters to the economistic demands of the consumerist and capitalist world-out-there.

It is scandalous to observe that even contemporary universities all over the world are now succumbing to the demands of consumerist globalism and neglect the university's real role in society: that of critical thinking and of making persons proper human beings—more human and more humane! How sad life would be if our minds and hearts are simply brainwashed by our consumeristic society to think that success is all about raking and hauling money for ourselves, and working only to satisfy our wants and caprices! How subhuman life is, when we simply live for things, money and commodities dictated by cleverly engineered media propaganda and brainwashing advertisements paid for by greedy capitalists, when in fact these trivial commodities and artificial products are not truly needed in our lives but are projected and propagandized to be necessities by aggressive advertisement and consumerist conditioning and capitalistic social engineering.

One ought to realize that Marxian Thought is not just dealing with collective praxis—it also converts us from within our innermost being. Marxian praxis of societal engagement requires us to reform ourselves by fighting with all our might and strength against all the false consciousness and the overt as well as covert conditionings that global capitalism have nested for a long time in our mind and heart—making us alienated of who we truly are as persons of intrinsic worth as human existents. It is an implicit presupposition in Karl Marx's philosophy of the revolutionary struggle that before one can fight the insidious malevolence of capitalism in our consumerist society, one must face and struggle against our greedy, exploitative, vain, and selfish consciousness. Before one could ever attempt to liberate the society from the shackles of greedy capitalism, we need to aggressively resist and strive against all forms of greedy, extractive, egotist, vain, and selfish propensities lurking within our very own being.

Individual liberation and collective societal liberation against this oppressive consumeristic society are inseparable.

One cannot stand without the other. One could not fight extractive capitalism within the collective struggle if one's heart and mind is not yet liberated and weaned-away from the heavy tentacles of capitalism buried and hidden in our false consciousness of created wants, vanities, greed and caprices fanned by consumerist propaganda and capitalist advertisements. Our collective struggle against the false consciousness of capitalism must go together with our personal disavowal of our own consumeristic, slave-driving, and exploitative behavior. The value of our individual struggle must not be pitted against the value of our collective struggles against exploitative and oppressive capitalism. We equally need the "power of one" and the "power of the collective" to win our battle against alienation, commodification, objectification, marginalization, and dehumanization brought about by greedy commercialism, reductionist corporatocratic capitalism and extractive consumerist economism in our present world milieu.

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