

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q4(a)

What characterizes degradation of work in capitalist society according to Marx ?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- What characterizes degradation of work in capitalist society according to **Marx**?
- Keep the answer within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Marx's degradation of work is alienated labour under capital, not only a low wage.

- **Four moments:** product, process, species-being, and other persons.

Manufacture and machinery split craft; **Braverman** named deskilling.

Gig ratings, garment lines, and home-based piecework illustrate the form today.

Unions and associated production are the counter-tendency in the same theory.

Introduction

For **Karl Marx**, capitalist work is degraded when the labourer is separated from the means of production and from control over the product and the process. Degradation is not only low pay. It is a loss of species-life in alienated labour, later sharpened as deskilling on the factory and platform.

Body

Alienation as the core characterisation

- **In the 1844 Manuscripts**, alienated labour has four moments: from the product, from the act of production, from species-being, and from other persons.
- The product stands over the worker as capital. The more he produces, the cheaper he may become as a commodity.
- **The act is external:** it is not free creation but a means to a wage, often under a stranger's eye.
- Species-being, conscious life-activity, is reduced to animal survival. Relations with other workers become competition.

The labour process in capital

- Capital buys labour-power. The working day is a struggle over **surplus value**, as in Capital.

- Manufacture and then modern industry split the craft into detail operations. The worker becomes an appendage of the machine.
- Harry Braverman restated this as deskilling and managerial appropriation of conception, leaving execution to the worker. That is a Marxist characterisation of twentieth-century offices and shops.

What the degradation looks like

- Loss of knowledge of the whole product.
- Intensification and surveillance of time.
- Replaceability of the person, which weakens bargaining.
- A fetish of commodities that hides the social relation in the thing.

Contemporary files

- Informal and gig work in Indian cities show piece-rates, app ratings, and no product the worker owns, a digital putting-out system.
- Garment lines and electronic assembly repeat detail labour with a largely feminised shop floor.
- SHG home-based piecework can look like self-help and still be degraded putting-out for a merchant.

Limits of the sketch

- Marx also wrote of struggle, unions, and the possibility of associated production. Degradation is the tendency of the wage relation, not a claim that skill never exists.
- Weber's rationalisation and Durkheim's forced division of labour name overlapping harms without Marx's surplus-value core.

Flow diagram

Capital buys labour-power -> Alienation
Alienation -> From product
Alienation -> From process
Alienation -> From species-being
Alienation -> From others
From process -> Deskilling Braverman

Conclusion

- Marx characterises degradation as alienated labour: separation from product, process, species-life, and others, under the extraction of surplus. Deskilling and the machine or the app complete the picture. Pay can rise and the work still be degraded if control and meaning are gone.

Facts & figures

1844 Manuscripts

Set out the four moments of alienated labour.

Surplus value

Value produced beyond the value of labour-power; the working-day struggle in Capital.

Braverman

Labor and Monopoly Capital: conception is seized by management; execution is degraded.

Gig work

Platform control of time and rating without worker ownership of the product or the algorithm.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2022/what-characterizes-degradation-of-work-in-capitalist-society-according-to-marx/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com