



MARX'S NOTION OF SELF ALIENATION

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Abstract

One essential element of Marx's critique of capitalism is his concept of alienation, which provides a thorough examination of the alienation people feel inside economic exploitation systems. In his early writings, particularly Marx defines alienation in the "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" as a circumstance when the employee is cut off from essential aspects of human existence due to the framework of capitalist production. The paper looks at how, under capitalism, labor – which ought to be a meaningful manifestation of human creativity – becomes an external, oppressive activity.

Marx distinguishes several aspects of alienation: alienation from one's species-being, as productive activity loses its human and social character; alienation from labor's output, which is owned and managed by others; alienation from the labour process, which is determined by outside forces; and alienation from other people, as social relations are mediated by competition and market exchange. The paper highlights that alienation is a structural and material phenomenon with roots in private property and class relations, rather than only a psychological experience.

The article highlights how alienation represents the conflict between human potential and current social relations, placing Marx's argument philosophically within his larger materialist understanding of history. It makes the case that drastic economic system change, rather than personal adjustment, is necessary to overcome alienation. In the end, Marx's concept of alienation continues to be a potent framework for comprehending human freedom, identity, and labour in contemporary industrial and post-industrial cultures.

Key words: Alienation, Labour, Capitalism, Species-Being, Exploitation.

Introduction: Alienation Concept

In 20th-century social theory and critique, the term "alienation" appears frequently. It is defined as separation, disturbance, or fragmentation that is detrimental to society. Estrangement and

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externalisation are the two translations of alienation. The word "alienation" has been used in a variety of ways in daily life. There are differences in religion, sociology, science, psychology, and philosophy. This phrase is a multifaceted phenomenon, making it extremely challenging to comprehend. Every time the word "alienation" is used, it should be evident that it simply implies that we are talking about self-alienation. It is the self which is alienated. Secondly, our analysis leads to an inquiry as to who is alienated and from what?

The alienation process requires two things, a subject and an object, that is, a response and stimulus. Without these two components, estrangement is impossible. Certain subjective experiences and empirical circumstances cause man to become estranged from himself. As a result, an alienated person's behaviour reflects the state of estrangement. He appears to be estranged from both the social structure and his fellow humans at different times.

Self – Alienation:

Self-alienation is an individual's subjective state or internal condition. Others learn about it from his actions. An alienated person is unable to live a regular life. Alienation is a relatively new notion because it is a social occurrence. The previous century has seen an increase in modern man's sense of alienation, which has prompted discussion in a number of academic disciplines. The industrial revolution has depersonalised millions of individuals living in large cities by cutting them off from the natural world.

The term "alienation" refers to a variety of objectively distinct types of disintegration, break, or rupture that occur between people and their objects, whether the items are their own works of art or science or those of other people.

The concept of alienation has a long history, but the increasing secularisation of western thought has obscured its philosophical roots. Although different thinkers interpret alienation differently, it is an undeniable element of modern existence. The philosopher Hegel originally used this expression in his "Phenomenology of Mind." He gave the words "externalisation," "alienation," and "self-estrangement" into a philosophical meaning. The idea then appeared frequently in Marx's classical and sociological writings from the 19th and 20th centuries. Weber, Simmel, Tonnies, Durkheim, etc.²

In modern period a secularized version of the self-alienation has come to assume great importance. In that sense the field discussion is so wide that in order to say anything significant one has to limit oneself in discussion. I therefore propose to discuss only Marx's notion of self-alienation in explaining human existence. Marx's notion of alienation encompasses the expression of "Mans estrangement from nature and from himself on the one hand and expressions of this process in the relationship of man-mankind and man and man on the other".³ Following Feuerbach and Hegel, Marx struggled with the issue as a thinker. Marx took this idea from Hegel, but he changed the notion from a separation between creativity and productivity (idealism and materialism). According to Marx, man is

² Paul Edwards: Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol.1, P. No. 271.

³ Meszaros Istavan: Marx's Theory of Alienation, P. No. 15.

the product of his labour and labour is the essence of creativity. He substituted manual labour for intellectual labour. The worker grows distant from himself as a result of this division of labour. Therefore, Marx's goal is for the worker to return to himself after becoming estranged from himself. However, Marx believed that a proletariat revolution was the only way to achieve this.⁴

According to Marx, human growth has increased throughout human history, but societal class conflict has resulted in a growing sense of alienation. He views society as liberation from alienation and a return to his own self-estrangement. Alienation is the state in which man perceives the universe as unfamiliar to him rather than himself as the active agent within it. Marx has explained it in terms of socioeconomics and the ensuing psychology. He was concerned about worker alienation in an industrial world where capitalists have total monopolistic power. Marx's notion of "surplus value" describes how a worker in a capitalist society becomes a commodity. Workers are deprived of the wealth they generate because of the class structure and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small number of people in a divided society. Once more, the worker finds himself in a situation where he has no opportunity to grow as a person, becomes irritated, and loses all interest in his work when he realises that the output of his effort is not his but rather belongs to someone.

Marx's theory states that alienation occurs when an individual sees his own actions as "alien power to him instead of being related to him."⁵ He is isolated from the real and genuine side of himself. When man is alienated, he feels unworthy. Marx highlighted how man is separated from his true nature, or essence, which is creativity. Marx used alienation in a variety of contexts, such as the dehumanisation of humanity, the loss of human autonomy, and the empowerment of labour that lacks originality.

Marx emphasised the separation of an employee from his or her genuine self. Under a capitalist system, man is depersonalised and loses his autonomy, uniqueness, and inventiveness. The awareness of being cut off from one's own reality is known as self-alienation. An alienated individual is distanced from themselves because they see themselves as a tool. Being cut off from one's own potential and essence is a mental state known as alienation, or simply a human state of being. A person who is alienated is cut off from his or her deepest level of existence. The phrase "inward division" or "inauthentic existence" also refers to self-alienation.

The worker is classified as proletarian due to this situation. All of these outcomes stem from the connection between the worker and the outcome of his labour as if it were an alien thing.⁶ The world created by alienated labour prevents the true producer from identifying himself. Man's primary occupation is work, which separates him from both nature and himself. The visionaries blamed this estrangement on the growing specialisation and rationalisation of life. Marx ascribed this to society, particularly to the exploitation of workers by non-workers, or capitalists.⁷

⁴ Erich Fromm: Marx's Concept of Man, P. No. 44.

⁵ Karl Marx: Economic and Philosophic Manuscript, p. no. 67.

⁶ Karl Marx: Economic and Philosophic Manuscript, P. No. 108.

⁷ David L Sills: The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, P. No. 266.

Marx says, "Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life".⁸ However, consciousness is not necessarily determined by life or economic reality in ways that are in line with human basic abilities. This is particularly true of the current class war among workers, who are viewed as commodities. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small number of people and the class system divided society rob workers of the riches they create. Once more, the worker finds himself in a situation where he has no opportunity to grow as a person, becomes irritated, and loses all interest in his work when he realises that the output of his effort is not his but rather belongs to someone.

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The worker is classified as proletarian due to this situation. The worker's relationship to the result of his work is comparable to an object from space, which leads to all these outcomes. The world created by alienated labour prevents the true producer from identifying himself. Man's primary occupation is work, which separates him from both nature and himself. The visionaries blamed this estrangement on the growing specialisation and rationalisation of life. Marx ascribed this to society, particularly to the exploitation of workers by non-workers, or capitalists.⁹

According to Marx, life determines consciousness rather than the other way around. However, consciousness is not necessarily determined by life or economic reality in ways that are consistent with man's basic abilities. This is particularly true of the current class struggle in capitalism. The concept of human personality cannot be adequately explained by capitalism or its ideology. In reality, man feels alienated from both himself and society since society establishes norms for behaviour through its prevailing ideology while also creating incentives for men to defy those norms. Incompatible passions come in confrontation with one another and with the rules and ideals men are trained to embrace. They consider themselves to be rootless and pushed to choose courses of conduct that are unsatisfying. This alienated state is accompanied by criminal, disobedient, and occasionally destructive violence.¹⁰

Marx goes on to say in his "Paris Manuscript" that when man produces under duress, he is depersonalised. Human labour is reduced to that of a slave or a machine. In another way, man's true state may not align with his fundamental nature, which is his relationship with other men. This is

⁸ Robert N. Beck: Perspective in Social Philosophy, P. No. 280.

⁹ Ibid, P. No. 281.

¹⁰ David L Sills: The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, P.No.266.

because life is authentic in a community with other people; it is not genuinely human until it is social. According to Marx, only until these forms of life are as they ought to be will man's nature be realised.¹¹

Marx's attempt to address the issue of alienation is undoubtedly obvious, yet the suggested remedies are largely ineffective. However, the alienation of modern man is caused by the current state of affairs, the advancement of technology and industry, the expanding demands of modern man, and the repressive circumstances that are rising daily due to the shifting social, political, economic, religious, and ethical systems of today.

Marx seems that human self-estrangement stems from the shape that contemporary civilisation, or industrial society, has given the labour process. He ascribed this dehumanisation to the historical shape of the division of labour under capitalism rather than the division of labour itself. Marx assumed that "in a higher phase of the communist society," the person would no longer be enslaved by the division of labour, and mental and physical work would no longer be in opposition to each other. However, he did not doubt that specialisation was the root of the problem.

The general level of consciousness in our society today is higher than it was in the past. The system or process of labour cannot be forgotten by an artist or a worker. He demands respect, dignity, and acknowledgement since he is more conscious. Compared to earlier days, the rate of responsiveness is higher. He either becomes alienated or revolts to get his wants met. He becomes completely disinterested in both job and life if he cannot find these things.

De-Alienation

I have discussed above the Marxian notion of alienation and self-alienation, what remains is to take up the problem of de-alienation or overcoming of alienation.

According to Marx, alienation is the process of alienating productivity, which leads to the alienation of work and, in the end, class conflict. Based on this premise, Marx defined the history of capitalism as a history of human self-alienation that the proletariat revolution had to overcome. The dictatorship of the proletariat and the totalitarian state that resulted from the proletariat revolution destroyed individual liberty and jeopardised human integrity.

But the solution proposed by Marx proved ineffective for overcoming alienation. In addition to Marx, existentialist philosophers attempted to address man's alienation. They all attempt to free man from his self-alienation. However, the historical alienation of the human spirit cannot have been mistaken for objectification without some legitimate explanations, aside from those that may be found in the economic structure of the time and the stage that the capitalist system has reached. Man alienates himself by objectifying himself in culture, the state, and human labour in general. This objectification reveals an unstoppable deterioration that he must nevertheless attempt to resist, and it has persisted in the core of awareness.¹²

¹¹ Masih, Y: A Critical History of Western Philosophy P. No. 545.

¹² Meszaros Istavan: Marx's Theory of Alienation, P. No. 243.

Marx's assertion that this will be resolved in the relatively near future is hurriedly linked to a specific historical period. It doesn't seem like this concept can be reduced to the idea of capitalism's alienation of man. Objectification is invariably essential, a loss of self, estrangement, and self-discovery at the same time. Thus, objectification and alienation are inextricably linked, and their combination is merely the manifestation of a dialectical conflict that has been seen throughout history.¹³

Conclusion

Man is capable of knowing himself and his surroundings, despite being a creature whose perception of himself and his surroundings is a result of what he does to fulfill his needs. However, his subjective sentiments of self-alienation cause him to turn into a stranger when he is feeling hopeless and frustrated. Therefore, we may claim that alienation will be destroyed when man aligns his passions with his aims and sentiments in reference to the methods that he has complete control over.

Therefore, in the end, we must consider whether self-alienation may be resolved. Various authors have identified the issue and proposed remedies for this problem. Regardless of how Marx is interpreted, it provides a conclusive answer to the issue. Despite this, alienation is still practiced. It is impossible to completely eradicate alienation, which is actually self-alienation. Staying there is a permanent conclusion.

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¹³ Ibid, p. no.244.