

SOME USES OF THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION IN SOCIAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with various concepts of alienation before and after Marx. Calvin, the Romantics (including Rousseau, Friederich Schiller, Ludwig Féuerbach), and Hegel, all came before Marx and used alienation as a philosophical metaphor describing man's essence and existence.

Marx and his immediate followers (Ferdinand Toennies, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Karl Mannheim and George Simmel) viewed man's alienation as a condition of sociological discontent.

Modern social theorists have largely departed from Marx's macro-sociological perspective on alienation and favor a micro-social-psychological orientation.

Finally, the paper discusses some of the conceptual and empirical problems invloved in dealing with alienation. One of these problems is the difficulty of establishing a precise definition which will embrace the various dimensions of alienation. Another problem involves the difficulty of subjecting alienation to adequate psychological diagnosis and measurement.

The concept of alienation has a lineage traceable back to Calvin, who saw man alienated from God by his sin. Hegel imbibed the concept of alienation from the pessimistic Protestant theology: and the early Marx, like his fellow Hegelians, regarded man's history as one of alienation.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the concept of alienation expressed the striving of the Romantic movement in Western Europe for the recovery of spontaneous emotional life. Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) in his Letters, "Ueber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen" succinctly described man in modern society (in Josephson, 1962:239):

Man portrays himself and what a form is presented in the drama of the modern age. Barrenness here, leisure there, the two extremes of human decay and both united in a single period.

As Rousseau before him, Schiller indicted civilization itself. It was culture which inflicted on man the evils of the division of labor. Says Schiller: (in Josephson, 1962:239):

Gratification is separated from labor, means from ends, efforts from reward. Eternally fettered only to a single little fragment of the whole, man fashions himself only as a fragment.

Schiller contrasted the "polynus nature" of the Greek states in which the individual could enjoy an independent existence with modern society, which is one of hierarchical division of labor. Modern society, says Schiller, produces a fragmentation not only of social functions but of man himself who, as it were, keeps his different facilities in pigeonholes: love, labor, leisure, and culture.

Other German intellectuals fastened on different aspects of modern society which obstructed spontaneous emotional life. With the rediscovery of physical pleasure, there was a concomitant revulsion against sexual asceticism. German philosophy, with its heavy theological overtones, had negated the human body. Accordingly, the "philosophical archrebel", Ludwig Feuerbach, (1804-72) maintained that, the key to alienation lay in sexuality. For Feuerbach, the alienated man was one who had acquired a horror of his sexual life and whose whole way of thinking was determined by this repressed sexuality. The critique of religion was so important to Feuerbach precisely because religious dogma

was the manifestation of sexual alienation. The denial of the reality of the material world was the consequence of the religious alienation from sexuality. In his words (in Stein and Vidich, 1965:129-130): "Separation from the world, from matter, from life of the species is the essential aim of Christianity." To overcome alienation, for Feuerbach, signified the overcoming of the Christian heritage of asceticism and the emotion and thoughtways of celibacy.

Feuerbach's philosophical archenemy Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) developed his conception of alienation for the first time in the *Theologische Jugendschriften*. In his draft entitled "love," he defines love as the "whole," as a "feeling but not a single feeling." In it, life finds itself, as a duplication of itself and its unity. But this love is frequently shattered by the resistance of the outside world, the social world of property, a world indeed which man has created through his own labor and knowledge but which has become an alien, dead world through property. Man, says Hegel, becomes alienated from himself.

In *Phenomenology of the Mind*, Hegel develops the concept that separation and estrangement are at the heart of every form of reality. What later so greatly impressed Marx was Hegel's idea that estrangement is a phase of the dialectical process, and that by experiencing and revolting against it man creates his own self, thus fulfilling himself as a man. Hegel conceives of alienation chiefly in metaphysical terms and general human conditions. In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel writes of "Spirit" (or human mind) as "at war with itself." As a consequence, it has to overcome itself as its own most formidable obstacle.

According to Hegel, "Spirit," in striving for the realization of its ideal being, hides that from its own vision and "is proud and well-satisfied in the alienation." Man's own intellectual creations become independent of their creator and hence alien to him. Human achievement is a dialectical process in which man can advance to higher forms only by mastering himself and the cultural forces that he creates. Therefore the history of man, says Hegel, is a history of his alienation and frustration and of his self-realization through conquest of these frustrations.

Hegel poignantly describes the tragic fate of those who, chosen by history to become the executors of its will, have fulfilled the task that was their destiny:

When their object is attained, they fall off like empty hulls from the kernel. They die early like Alexander, they are

murdered like Ceasar, transported to **St. Helena**, like **Na-poleon**. (in Josephson, 1962:21-22).

Having achieved their missions, says Hegel, political leaders are often alienated from the historical processes that they had served.

Karl Marx's (1818-1883) writings on alienation show the probable influence of Feuerbach, Schiller, Bauer, Kierkegaard and, in particular, Hegel. Lewis Feuer attributes the sexual meaning of alienation in Marx's writings in 1884 to Feuerbach (in Stein and Vidich, 1965:130). Marx's original contribution to "alienation" was his extension of the Hegelian metaphysical concept of alienation to all realms of reality in its economic, political, and social forms. While Hegel viewed alienation as a metaphysical problem, Marx gave it a sociological reference. Unlike Hegel, Marx was concerned with alienation not as a universal principle but with its role in a capitalist society. Marx agreed with Hegel that man alienates his freedom in many ways, but his own great discovery was that the key to loss of freedom is alienation through work. Unlike Hegel, Marx did not see the possibility of a reconciliation and realization of the "spirit."

In his writings on alienation Marx borrowed from Hegel the philosophical metaphor that estrangement is a phase of the dialectical process. He was sympathetic with Schiller's indictment of modern society. He acquired from Feuerbach a romantic tinge and from the German idealists their stern ethical, philosophical judgment.

Students of Marx differ as to the significance of the alienation thesis in his theoretical and conceptual framework. Their controversy has crystallized into the yet on-going debate between the classical and neo-revisionists schools of Marxism. Following Lukac's interpretation of Marx, the neo-revisionists reject the doctrine of historical materialism (Bell, 1960). They turn back to the young Marx and especially to his writings on alienation to develop a more humanistic approach to socialism. Marx is read not as an economist or political theorist, not as a founder of dialectical materialism, but as a philosopher who first laid bare the estrangement of man from an oppressive society.

Sociologists and historians do not agree as to why the older Marx extirpated the alienation thesis from his writings and made the concept of struggle central. Even in his later writings Marx continued to reveal a deep concern with man and his self-estrangement. Perhaps Marx's shift of emphasis from alienation to exploitation should be considered as a change in strategy and not in principle.

Marx utilized the concept of alienation in two different ways. Polemically, he employed it to express his condemnation of capitalism. Analytically, he used it to describe the social structure of capitalist society, particularly the forces which shape man's existence. In his polemical usage of "alienation," Marx's central concern was to show how man should be free and whole. As Karl Lowith (1954) says:

Marx emphasizes that Hegel's philosophy of spirit reflects man only in a particular function, and not as a complete human being. Marx is interested first of all in man as such, and as a whole, his concern is to lay bare that particularity in its total consequences. He wants to show the shaky formation of modern existence, which pretends to be human while it is only bourgeois.

The class structure, Marx believed, was alienating, and the history of capitalism was that of man's alienation.

The sources of alienation, according to Marx, were the working conditions created by technology and the division of labor. The unalienated man, said Marx, is the creative one who can do many different things. Division of labor threatens man's self-image, and leads to the separation between society and community. This separation is aggravated by commodity exchange which centers around money. Money, says Marx, is seemingly neutral but is really the most impersonal form of value. "The product of labor can easily be abstracted with money and through the exchange system be alienated from him [the worker]." Similarly, Marx foresaw the trend towards bureaucracy as an alienating factor, for the bureaucrat "related himself to the world as a mere object of his activity."

Marx believed that alienation was a social fact rooted in a specific system of historical relations. Consequently, he felt that alienation could be overcome only by changing those social relations. Notwithstanding Marx's analytical approach to history, most empirical sociologists feel that, by assuming the homogeneity of the bourgeois structure, Marx tended to overlook the diversity within the structure. This explains why Marx's prophetic tendencies proved at times stronger than his scientific detachment.

To analyze the Marxian perspective on alienation, one should consider his historical scope, macro-sociological approach, and deductive

reasoning. Related to Marx's historical scope is his macro-sociological perspective. Marx was aware of how social structure penetrates the individual consciousness and crucially affects his sense of identity. Fromm (1965:30) believed that "Marx underestimated the human passion, Marx was not willing to recognize the fact that while man is shaped by the forms of social and economic organization, he also molds it." His greatest intellectual shortcoming was his "inability to fathom, or his indifference towards man's dimensions of depth and complexity." (Hook, 1955:18) In a somewhat different vein, Tucker (1961:240) argues that while "Marx recognized man's egoistic needs, he failed to locate them within the personality of the individual person."

To recapitulate, "alienation," in the philosophical sense was first used by Fichte and Hegel at the beginning of the nineteenth century, though its influence at that time was confined to a small group of their disciples. It was incorporated into sociological theory in the 1840's when Marx centered his interpretation of the capitalist society around the concept of self-alienation. Alienation did not survive in the writings of the mature Marx and it became almost forgotten in the period which followed. A hundred years later the concept returned to the foreground and has since become almost a catchword, even among intellectuals having little sympathy for Marxian thought.

Alienation since Marx

The writings of the German sociologist Ferdinand Toennies (1855-1936) have contributed much to the understanding of man's alienation from society. Toennies' classic work *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* introduced concepts which made it possible to analyze social structures without isolating them from the historical reality in which they were embedded. Toennies distinguished between two which are contractual and deliberately established by individuals for essentially different bases of human association, "Gesellschaft" mutual benefits impossible in isolation and "Gemeinschaft," a social unit not necessarily consciously formed. Individuals in "Gesellschaft" enter in with only a fraction of their being; it is a loose connection in which members are essentially remote from one another. In "Gemeinschaft" members are bound to each other as whole persons rather than as fragmentary individuals. In its historical development, say Toennies, society has moved away from an age in which "Gemeinschaft" was predominant

toward an age in which "Gesellschaft" prevails. The movement of society in time has meant, on an individual basis, a shift from opportunities for self-realization to alienation.

Toennies distinguished between two forms of human will, "Wesenwille" and "Kurwille." "Wesenwille" or "natural will" is spontaneous, expressive of man's desires and drives. "Kurwille" is primarily shaped by deliberate processes of the rational mind and lacks qualities of spontaneity and impulsiveness which sustain "Wesenwille." In the technical age, work is not done for its own sake, but for ulterior ends, such as money, prestige or power. Work of this kind requires a society in which man has learned to differentiate between means and ends which have no inner relationships to his life and its goals and which he chooses to use because he has figured out the advantages they are likely to offer. This work can be performed only where man's activities are directed by calculations of "Kurwille." In Toennies' words, "Wesenwille" carries the condition for "Gemeinschaft" and "Kurwille" develops "Gesellschaft."

By connecting the change from "Gemeinschaft" to "Gesellschaft" with the transition from "Wesenwille" to "Kurwille," Toennies' work combines psychology and sociology in an original way. One of his fundamental contentions is that the forces of society and the individual's will act and react on one another; they are two interrelated parts of one whole. In describing the role of "Kurwille" in the life of modern man and in developing the theory of "Gesellschaft," Toennies has used as his point of departure the socio-economic processes dominating contemporary capitalist society.

There is great affinity between Marx's analysis of commodity production and Toennies' conception of "Gesellschaft." The strongest likeness between the two men lies in their treatment of the structure of modern society which generates alienation. In such societies individuals have become so separated and isolated that they establish contact only when using each other as a means to a particular end. The bonds between human beings are supported by association not of whole persons but of particularized individuals (Toennies, 1940).

Marx, like Toennies after him, envisaged contemporary man as living in a society without human community in a world in which he is barred from human fulfillment. This is the plight of the dehumanized alienated man which was Marx's deepest concern.

Marx's analysis of the new conditions of labor under capitalism were complemented by Max Weber's classic studies of bureaucracy written a half century later. Weber (1889-1920) saw bureaucracy and alienation as two sides of one trend in modern capitalism. The distinguishing characteristics of bureaucracy, says Weber, have enormously increased the power of alienating forces over man. Bureaucracy, he says, has become particularly appropriate for capitalism because the more bureaucracy depersonalizes itself, the more completely it succeeds in achieving the exclusion of love, hatred and every personal, especially irrational and incalculable, feeling from the execution of official tasks.

Weber extended the concept of alienated labor to all organized and institutionalized work situations in which soldiers, scientists, and civil servants are all separated or alienated from their respective means of production or administration in the same way that capitalist enterprise had separated the workers from them (Girth, 1958:5).

French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858-1909) introduced the term "anomie" and later developed it into an explanatory concept in analysing several concrete social problems. By "anomie," Durkheim refers to a condition of normlessness, a situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behavior. An underlying preoccupation of all of Durkheim's works is that of a crisis which threatens the existence of modern man. Durkheim had witnessed an age full of what many observers have since called moral anarchy as it enveloped large sections of the French Republic.

One of the major premises underlying Durkheim's sociology is that the individual personality is a product of society. It was logical, then, for Durkheim to believe that any circumstance threatening the fabric of society was equally destructive of the individual's well-being. In his classic study of suicide, Durkheim elaborates his ideas on the relation between society and the individual. Among the various types of suicide that he identifies, he singles out anomic suicide as a regular and statistically normal factor in the sphere of business and trade. Anomic suicide results, says Durkheim (1951:241-276), when there is an abrupt, unforeseen growth or diminution of an individual's power and wealth.

In contrast to Marx who emphasized the powerlessness of workers in modern industry and foresaw a solution to alienation in restoring "control" over conditions of work, Durkheim saw anomie and the breakup of integrated communities as the distinguishing feature of

modern society. The massive social pressure of industrialization and urbanization had destroyed the normative structure of a more traditional society and uprooted people from local groups and institutions which had provided stability and security.

This state of anomie, says Durkheim, has two complementary aspects. At the individual level, the hedonistic approach to morality, stressing eudaemonism, leads the individual to forget his obligations to society, and it tends to weaken solidarity and collectivity. At the societal level there is a lack of collective forces of groups constituted to regulate social life. This has produced a sort of polarization of society. On the one hand, says Durkheim, the state absorbs more and more functions; on the other hand, all other traditional groupings have been weakened or broken up, leaving individuals without social bonds, and without feeling solidarity with something superior. To liberate the individual is to abandon him to his unlimited wants: to demoralize him and to lead him to despair. What the individual should feel more acutely than ever before, maintains Durkheim, is the need for moral rules. Durkheim's sociological diagnosis of the moral crisis focuses upon the deregulation of society: the **social forms** which formerly provided a framework for the individual and **formed the skeletal structure of society** have either disappeared or are **losing force**. Without the appearance of new forms all that remains is a **fluid mass of individuals** (Tiryakian, 1962:31).

Regarding a solution to anomie, Durkheim feels that if man is in a **solidaristic society**, he will no longer find that the only aim of his conduct is himself, and understanding that he is the instrument of a **purpose greater than himself**, he will see that he is not without significance.

For German sociologist, Karl Mannheim (1891-1947), the crisis of contemporary Western society was due to the increase of "organized insecurity" inherent in an industrial society. By "organized insecurity," Mannheim describes the way in which modern man, caught up in some segment of a great rational organization, comes to regulate his way of thinking in rather strict accordance with the rules and regulations of the organization. Mannheim sees meaninglessness emerging in bureaucracies as a result of the tension between "functional" and "substantial" rationality. Functional rationality in a modern organization is geared to the highest efficiency. The rationale of the technical and social organization is **understood** by only a few top managers while the substantial rationality of **the individuals** who make up the system declines. As the **division of labor increases in large scale organizations**, says Mannheim, the **individual roles**

seem to lack any connection with the whole structure of roles, with the result that the employee may lack understanding of the co-ordinated activity and sense of purpose in his work:

The organization of insecurity has above all the advantage that there is no longer a feeling of object-loss and as long as the system function and an emotional and symbolic atmosphere overlies its rigid military order people will willingly obey and subordinate their individual preferences to the dictates of the central machinery. Those who formerly lacked direction enjoy the inescapable automatism of the machine. To them it does not matter that in certain fields freedom has gone. Most men have their roots in the older types of traditional society and lack the habit of personal initiative and the capacity to enjoy responsibility. They crave rather for subjection to a rule. (Mannheim, 1960:51-60, 117-120, 124-143).

Some of the current views about man's alienation go back to ideas developed fifty years ago by the sociologist and philosopher George Simmel (1858-1918). In his essay "Der Konflikte der Modernen Kultur," Simmel expresses the mood of skepticism and the growing fear in his day that man cannot be himself, that he is destined to remain a stranger in the world in which he lives.

According to Simmel an inner conflict stemming from the antagonism between life and form can be seen in the development of most civilizations. The creative movement in a civilization, he says, tends to express itself in law, technology, art, science, and religion. The purpose of such expressions is to implement and to protect the life which engendered them, yet they reveal an immanent tendency to follow a direction and rhythm of their own independent and divorced from the energies of life. Inevitably, the energies of life gnaw at every cultural formation which creates a perennial opposition between life and form, which Simmel believes is intensified and enhanced in his day. Life, he says, "is now against form as such, against the principle of form."

To substantiate his thesis, Simmel analyzes important cultural trends of the period between the turn of the century and the time of World War I. In art he describes how the tendency of the Expressionist painters to break away from specific and objective content reflects the struggle of life to be its own authentic self. Similarly, he shows how, in the prevailing philosophical thinking of his period, the pragmatist revolts against tradition, and insists that no abstract and timeless system of reason but only

the forces of life can provide us with the criteria for truth. In the realm of religion, Simmel notices a trend to divorce the religious experience, not only from traditional forms and cults, but also from revelations of the absolute and the divine. Finally, he describes the criticism advanced by a movement called New Ethics against the predominating pattern of sexual relations – modern marriage and prostitution. Both have a tendency to direct sex life into channels which destroy its true meaning and degrade it, instead of protecting and enhancing it (Wolff and Bendix, 1950:293,414f). All the images which Simmel presents reflect man's fear that his individuality will be destroyed, that he is living under conditions which compel him to become estranged from his own self.

Simmel, says Pappenheim (1959:114), hit on a problem which was taken up by existential philosophy:

Existential philosophy is essentially a revolt against the belief, deeply rooted in the development of modern thought, that truth can be ascertained only through detachment, that the cognitive act requires a radical separation between the known, represented as the object. There is no question that this idea has greatly advanced our knowledge especially in the realm of natural science... Yet there has been a considerable protest against the tendency to isolate man's cognitive function from the rest of his being and to destroy his unity and his universality by divesting him of all but his intellectual qualities, thus reducing him to a mere epistemological subject.

Simmel specifies one form and cause of self-estrangement in "The Metropolis and Mental Life." The urban culture he describes is a money culture, that is money stamps its character. Monetary interests, he maintains, lend urban society its essentially impersonal character and make man a mere cog in a giant machine. To survive as individuals in this calculating world, man must use, in Toennies' terms, his "Kurwille" or rational will more than his "Wesenwille" or heart. The result, as Simmel (1950:409,424) shows, is a blasé attitude in which nerves and feelings are blunted. If the individual does survive, it is only at the most terrible cost, "the price of devaluating the whole objective world, a devaluation which in the end unavoidably drags one's own personality down into a feeling of the same worthlessness." Most, says Simmel, are overwhelmed by the splendor and pressures of the metropolis.

Contemporary Perspectives on Alienation

The concept of alienation dominates both contemporary literature and the history of sociological thought. Alienation, says Nisbet (1962:IX), is one of the determining realities of the contemporary age; not merely a key concept in philosophy, literature, and the social sciences (making obsolete or irrelevant many of the rationalistic premises descended from the Enlightenment), but a cultural and psychological condition affecting ever larger sections of the population.

Largely because of the many references made to alienation both as a concept and a condition, "alienation" lacks a precise and universally accepted definition. Those who utilize the concept of alienation in their diagnosis of modern man, culture, and society use it to "refer to an extra-ordinary variety of psycho-social disorders underlying loss of self-anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, ruthlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, and the loss of beliefs or values." (Josephson, 1962:12).

Contemporary theorists have largely departed from Marx's macro-sociological perspective on alienation and favor a microsocial-psychological orientation. While contemporary conceptions of alienation tend to overlap, several major ones can be identified. First, alienation is viewed anthropologically as the pervasive cultural climate of our time. Alienation is seen as a cultural malaise associated with a particular cultural configuration. Observation, description, and intuition constitute the methodological approach for this viewpoint. Second, the psycho-social conception delimits alienation as a syndrome of personality disorder which is basically societal in origin. This approach is diagnostic, clinical and introspective.⁽¹⁾ Somewhere in between is the social-psychological conception of alienation which places an emphasis not on alienated cultures but on alienated individuals or groups within a given culture. Social scientists who favor this latter conception of alienation normally pursue it through the "piecemeal approach" employing abstract generalizations backed up by an empirical, inductive method. They aim to particularize various aspects of alienation into seemingly separate compartments:

The philosophical perspective on alienation does not neatly fit into any of the three conceptions mentioned, owing largely to the fact that "alienation" is generally couched in philosophical and polemical terms. Hence, the philosophical perspective pervades the other viewpoints on alienation.

The social-psychological perspective is widely used in contemporary writings on alienation. Two major assumptions underlie this approach. First, alienation denotes not an objective condition, but refers rather to the subjective feelings and beliefs about specific aspects of man's social environment. Second, a person's feelings and beliefs are distinguished from their attitudinal and behavioral consequences (Seeman, 1959:383-391).

Representatives of the social-psychological school are sociologists Melvin Seeman and Robert Nisbet. Seeman's contribution to the meaning of alienation was to isolate five separate, if at time overlapping, variants of the concept: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement.

Seeman's aim is to remove "the critical, polemic element in the idea of alienation and to translate what he has to say into the language of the psychological theory of learning." Lewis Feuer sees the will to criticize and polemicize as being essential behind the idea of alienation. Hence, says Feuer (in Stein and Vidich, 1965:140), "Seeman's efforts to categorize fail, the life history of the concept 'alienation' suggests that what it says can be better said without it":

Human self-destructive behavior is better dealt with without this metaphor. Some writers indeed seem to have a "will to alienation" and to revel in their perpetual alienation.

"Alienation" in Feuer's eyes hardly provides an adequate basis for the definition of human good. "Alienation", he says, remains too much a concept of political theology which "bewilders rather than clarifies the direction for political action."

While Lewis Feuer is representative of those who deny the utility of the concept, many sociologists would leap to its defense. Social philosopher Eric Hoffer (1964:25-29) utilized alienation in his "interchangeability hypothesis." According to this hypothesis, the modern fanatics and "true believers" are prone to "lose themselves in any political movement and can switch without qualms from political right to political left in order to alleviate their great sense of self-alienation."

Robert Nisbet stresses that the "community is the essential context within which alienation has to be considered." Alienation, he says, is not so much a state of mind as a matter of the individual's relation to social function and social authority. In every community there always will be alienated persons. The alienated individual in the political community who feels no sense of belonging to the community is a partially disloyal person (De Grazia, 1948).

Two schools of thought are predominantly occupied with self-estrangement and with its opposite, identity. These are existential philosophy, and humanistic psychoanalysis. Each has its own approach, neither of which is compatible with the sociological one. However, a possible integration between each and the sociological one is foreseen. Tiryakian advocates "the use of the phenomenological method employed by many existential thinkers to explain the social actor orientation to the social world." Marx and Feuerbach, he considered, were the true precursors of social existentialism. Its connection with "alienation" can indirectly be seen in Tiryakian's words (1962:76):

Existential thought can be viewed as a reaction or protest against the negation of integral man in dominant philosophical circles. It may also be viewed as a protest against the negation of integral man in the modern urban-industrial world... Existentialism represents an attempt to describe and prescribe a place to the existing individual in mass, technological society. Its extraphilosophic problem basically is to give an authentic status to the person in an impersonal world.

Eric Fromm and Erik Erikson are representative of the contemporary school of humanistic psycho-analysis which expresses a deep concern with modern "alienation." Erikson's detailed study of the development of ego identity and Fromm's more extended treatment of self-estrangement emphasize the crucial significance of socio-political factors in the formation of one's identity. Whereas Erikson focuses on psychotherapy, as distinct from social analysis, Fromm goes beyond the individual to examine the obstacles of self achievement seemingly inherent in modern society. Men may surrender themselves and even embrace tyranny when freedom becomes meaningless. In *The Sane Society*, Fromm analyzes the conditions under democratic capitalism which deprive man of freedom or encourage him to escape from it. "By alienation," says Fromm, "is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself." The estrangement from human essence leads, in Fromm's words, to an "existential egotism (In Josephson, 1962:56).

Forces of Alienation in Modern Society

Briefly, what are the alienating forces in modern times which make an impersonal world? Singled out as major contributing factors are technology, the modern social structure (with the advent of mass society,

loss of community, lack of primary groups, increase of bureaucracy, etc), the decline and degeneration of religion (where the object of faith is not God, but rather the utility of belief as a tool to achieve personal happiness), and finally, the decay of public and political life into totalitarianism, extremist politics, etc. Lewis Feuer (in Stein and Vidich, 1955:137) distinguishes six different principal modes in which, from the sociological standpoint, alienation is said to characterize the experience of modern people. The modes of alienation are as follows:

- (1) the alienation of class society
- (2) the alienation of competitive society
- (3) the alienation of industrial society
- (4) the alienation of mass society
- (5) the alienation of race
- (6) the alienation of generations

For those who blame the machine for every evil, technology did not fulfill the promise. The giant machine, which man has created, confronts him today and stands high over him. The quality of life on this planet has been threatened, and man's work has become depersonalized, routinized and dull (Mareson, 1970:479). Man's devastating power over his fellow man is now beyond control. Becoming the lord of creation on earth, man will eventually eradicate himself.

There are some who still believe that man has lost himself when he lost his God. When modern man alienated his God he became an alien to himself, and a cry to return to religion is echoed as the only way to reassure himself. Whether the object is faith in God or merely the utility of faith does not matter as long as it achieves personal happiness (Pappenheim, 1959:119-120).

Somehow the feeling of alienation is seen as relevant to the rise and fall of mass movements, political leadership, charisma, political apathy, political involvement, totalitarianism, political knowledgeability, political manipulation, extremist policies, protest voting, and civil rights movements. In spite of the centrality of the alienation theme to the thinking of many political scientists and political sociologists, some concur with Pappenheim (1959:60) that "to state that there is a link between man's estrangement from his political community and the present decay of our public life does not establish a causal relationship, and does not prove that political development has engendered man's alienation." Furthermore, some even argue that "alienation remains too much a concept of political theory which bewilders rather than clarifies the directions for political action." (Feuer, in Stein and Vidich, 1965:146).

Much contemporary interest is directed to the alienated intellectuals. The advent of the alienated man, and all the themes which lie behind this advent now affect the whole of our serious intellectual life and cause our immediate intellectual malaise. "Certain measures of alienation seem to be the perennial lot of the intellectual.... Criticism and detachment will always mark him, so he will always be in the society without feeling being part of it." (Molnar, 1961:79). Intellectual alienation is enhanced, not only by self-emancipation from popular standards but also by social isolation, exclusion or self exclusion. Alienation among intellectuals is primarily a consequence of their intense attachment to and elaboration of abstract values. A classic in the sociology of ideas is Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*. Mannheim (1964:285) says that "the position of intellectuals presented no problem as long as their intellectual and spiritual interests were congruous with those of the class that was struggling for social supremacy." Feuer attributes the feeling of powerlessness characteristic of the American intellectuals to their ambiguous position, in which they have no social class with which to work. Intellectual feeling of normlessness is due to the decay of their Socialist ethics. Feuer also attributes the American intellectual experience of a state of meaninglessness to their lack of social goals (Feuer, in Stein and Vidich, 1965:144).

The sensitive relationship between the man of knowledge (the intellectual) and the man of power (authority) has received attention. Alienation is viewed as a phase in the dialectic relationship between the intellectuals and the class of power. The role of ideology is recognized as relevant to the alienation perspective. Political sects are believed to provide the intellectual with a fellowship of like-minded men. Intellectual alienation is seen to be intensified with the practice of censorship and mass production. The popularity of the mass media, the mass culture, and the increasing bureaucratization plus routinization in modern society are factors associated with increasing the intellectual alienation.

The intellectual is believed to be not only more alienated, but he also projects his alienation onto the society. "Because of peculiar intellectual experience, alienation is more than a favorite dramatic metaphor for his perception of the social world." (Feuer, in Stein and Vidich, 1965:138).

The feeling of alienation is said to inhibit social learning; however, to many intellectuals as well as writers and artists, separation from the larger society seems to be a desirable state of affairs. Detachment, objectivity, and even the spontaneity of artistic creativity blossom with some feeling of alienation. Freedom is confused with alienation. The classical slogan which reads, "Alienation is the negation of freedom," is obscured.

An assumption widely held among many empirically oriented scientists is that the alienation perspective can be used scientifically rather than polemically to elucidate the complex reality of present day life. Our present knowledge of alienation and the social structure remains, however, vague, and provides no solid basis for treatment purposes.

Social scientists are not clear concerning the risk of intensifying alienation in one dimension, if an attempt is made to reduce it in other respects. When social scientists shifted their conception of alienation to view it as primarily a state of mind – cognition – they turned their emphasis from the structural objectives toward the subjective personal experiences. Another reason for the reluctance of social scientists to promote solutions to alienation is that many of them are convinced that alienation is a relative phenomenon. Social scientists who are inclined toward a structural interpretation of alienation are reluctant to accept or even seriously consider Marx's revolutionary ideas of overcoming alienation.

Alienation: Conceptual and Empirical Problems

As a concept, alienation has no clear conveyable meaning. Its protean nature remains a challenge to many observers. Reactions and responses to the concept seem to be conditioned according to past experiences. In this respect, one doubts if the meaning of alienation is more conveyable through feeling than understanding. In spite of this vagueness, the concept is widely employed in the contemporary perspectives of the social and behavioral sciences.

Alienation is widely conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon. It is seen as "a general syndrome made up of a number of different objective conditions and subjective feeling states which emerge from certain relationships between the individual and his socio-cultural setting." (Blauner, 1964:4). Feuer went to the extreme when he described the complex dimensionality of alienation. He said, "alienation has a way of eluding a fixed set of dimensions because it is as multi-form as the variety of human existence." (Feuer, in Stein and Vidich, 1965:140).

The inability to solve satisfactorily the multidimensionality of alienation poses two sets of problems; one is theoretical and the other is empirical.

As far as theory is concerned what is alienation in the contemporary social sciences? Is it a theory with certain assumptions and interrelated verifiable propositions? Is it a theme which is a little more than common sense? Is it a doctrine with adherents who are engaged in perpetuating its

principles? Is it a hypothesis which relates certain variables and advances specific relationships under controlled conditions? Or is it an empirical generalization? And, finally, is it a concept or a perspective?

Much of the efforts of the students of alienation have been directed toward (1) seeking a precise definition of the concept and distinguishing between alienation and other social psychological concepts which overlap in meaning and use (Robert K. Merton's work on anomie, Dewight Dean's on apathy, and Erik Erikson on the loss of identity are examples); (2) conceptually separating and/or identifying the alienation dimensions. In this respect, Seeman's separation of the five variants, and Davis' conceptualization of eight components seem challenging.

Melvin Seeman's celebrated article "On the Meaning of Alienation" paved the way for operational definitions of several dimensions of alienation. Since the publication of Seeman's article, a growing number of social scientists have utilized the alienation perspective in their writings. The proliferation of research reports which inject alienation as an explanatory variable for extremely diversified phenomena deserves a pause. A question concerning the use and misuse of the alienation perspective might be in order.

Contemporary students of alienation seem to fall into one of the following three categories: The first group clearly knows the meaning of alienation in both classic and contemporary writings, and use their knowledge accordingly. The second group misunderstands Seeman's attempt as a manifesto for indiscriminate application of the alienation variable. The last group seems to be engaged with alienation in what Abraham Kaplan aptly described as the "process of hammering."

Not only is the problem of dimensionality reflected in the lack of conceptual clarity but also in an apparent inadequacy of operational definitions and precise measurements.

Relevant to the conceptual level, there are two sets of problems which have not yet received adequate investigation. These are: a) problems related to the stability – instability of alienation as a phenomenon as well as the consistency – inconsistency of its dimensions, and b) problems related to the subjectivity – objectivity components and conditions of alienation and their reciprocity.

The problem of stability deals mainly with the question of whether alienation is a personality characteristic created in early childhood, or largely a situational product which is subject to change. The problem of inconsistency in the dimensions of alienation poses the possibility of qualitative as well as quantitative inconsistency. Differences exist in the

contents as well as the forms of alienation profiles at a point in time (Josephson, 1962:47). The expressed idea that "alienation of man is not change of degree but of kind" is in line with the previous argument.

Alienation in today's social-psychological perspective is mainly recognized as a subjective experience. The distinction between the social condition which creates alienation and the individual subjective feeling is widely accepted. Thus, the different devices which presumably measure alienation depict only the subjective phase of it. It is not the predisposition to act in a certain way which these scales are measuring, rather it is the individual cognitive component of certain ideas and beliefs. The attitudinal aspects of the individual structure are not tapped considerably by these devices nor is the propensity to react in an identifiable manner. This explains why such devices possess a limited predictive value as indicators of potential action, as well as scrutiny for alienated potential. Also, it is not clear whether man's cognitive components, i.e., his beliefs and ideas, as indicators of his alienative experience are reflections of real or reconstructed conditions. Furthermore, the subjectivity - objectivity problem and the concomitant question concerning the degree of reciprocity are apparent in the dilemma of the choice between two equal and possible alternative interpretations, i.e. the motivational and the structural interpretations. This problem usually poses difficulties in the face of a precise intervention in the chain of causality.

The inadequacy of measuring the variant of self-alienation constitutes a real deficiency in current research. Self-alienation, which was the heart of Marx's idea of alienation, is a variant which appears immune to empirical testing. Because of the proliferation of meanings involved in this variant, any attempt to operationalize self-alienation makes it empirically futile. On a theoretical level, Ernest G. Schate (in Josephson, 1967:74) proposes a similar argument. He writes, "I can only state here my belief that self-alienation, the doubt about and search for identity, always goes together with alienation from others, and from the world around us." It is worth noting in this regard that the empirical chronic ailment from the "self concept" in sociological analysis, along with the inadequacy of the popular statistical techniques in probing the subjective realms of man's experiences, constitute a real difficulty. The recent trend to treat alienation in a clinical and psychiatric fashion is probably an outcome of some of the above mentioned inadequacies.

As a vague idea and/or feeling, alienation seems to be as old as social man himself. On alienation, many ideas have been entertained, each of which seems to have equal, but different, interpretations. In the socio-

logical writing of Marx, alienation was a controversial concept; today it is still the same.

Contemporary social scientists have departed from Marx just as he departed from Hegel. Recent definitions of alienation have in some respect clarified, and in other respects obscured and changed the classical meaning of the concept. The sociological transformation of alienation makes a lively chapter in the history of ideas, for the differences between classical and contemporary definitions show how much sociological thought is affected by the particular historical position of the writer.

In the work of Marx and his predecessors, there are no simple operational definitions of alienation on either a purely psychological or sociological level; contemporary theorists invented many. The impetus to conceptually and/or operationally define concepts, characteristics of contemporary social and behavioral scientists, "dehumanized" the concept (Horton, 1964:283-300). New definitions of alienation led not to the emergence of value free concepts, but to the transformation of values embedded in the concept.

Marx's predecessors used alienation as a philosophical metaphor describing man's essence and existence. Marx and his immediate followers viewed man's alienation as a condition of sociological discontent. Contemporary theorists link alienation with a more psychological diagnosis.

The survival of the concept, however, remains so compelling that the question of why is in order. The will for alienation on the part of the intellectuals ingrained the concept in the literature of social sciences.

Furthermore, the fading optimism of the early twentieth century which was associated with the disbelief in the idea of progress left a vacuum in the intellectual mind. The same mind, in a pessimistic mood, found in alienation a satisfactory substitute.

FOOTNOTES

1. Representative of the anthropological approach to alienation is: Gerald Sykes, *Alienation, the Culture Climate of Modern Man*, (ed. by George Brazillier), New York, 1964; and representative of the psychological approach is: «A Symposium on Alienation and the Search for Identity», *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1961.

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