

ALIENATION AND REIFICATION

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(a) Alienation

In its original sense, as used by Hegel and Marx, the concept of alienation implies the divergence between human existence and essence. The existence refers to the actual existence of an individual in the world. The essence is what he can be potentially. A man is alienated if his existence is alienated from his essence.

What the essence of man is, what are his human potentialities, represent the subject matter of philosophical anthropology. The Yugoslav philosopher Mihailo Marković voices the widely shared opinion when he determines the essence of man as a free, creative, fully developed and socialized being. Yet this is clearly a normative (philosophical) and not a positive (scientific) statement. Similarly, we could follow Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire and determine the essential difference between men and other species of animal by observing that man can change the world and reflect about the world, himself and his activities in the world. A Marxist would express the same idea by stating that man is a being of praxis.¹⁾ As such, he is free since he can consciously choose among different courses of action that are objectively given. And if he can be free, he ought to be free, otherwise he loses his essential human property. Thus self-fulfilment and self-determination are characteristic for a non-alienated existence. That the man is not what he ought to be and that he ought to be that which he could be²⁾ — is another normative element in the philosophical approach to alienation.

The approach just sketched is often thought idealistic and utopian. Since, surely, man is a somewhat different animal. Yet, serious Marxist social philosophers are far from being that naive. Mihailo Marković points out that man is a contradictory creature. Man has always endeavoured to enlarge his freedom — an also he invented slavery. The most distinctive characteristic of man is his creativity — but man has also proved to be horribly destructive. Man is a social being, a product of society and cannot exist normally without society

^{*)} This essay is a chapter in the book on the theory of socialism the author is presently working on.

¹⁾ Cf. G. Petrović, "Man and Freedom", in E. Fromm, ed., *Socialist Humanism*, Doubleday, New York 1965, p. 273.

²⁾ E. Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, Ungar, New York 1964, p. 47.

— but he can also be selfish, possessive and power-hungry. He is certainly a rational being — but exactly our epoch has demonstrated how frightfully irrational he can become. This makes one pose the question: »Which are the constitutive characteristics of human nature which we should prefer and the predominance of which in the future we should secure by our practical action in the present?»³⁾ The answer, of course, is normative. But once we define our value criteria, the course of action is clear: one should help develop the positive features of human nature and try to control and constrain the negative ones. There is little doubt that a large gap exists between the actual position and the possible achievements in this respect. This is then the root of the »distinction between what man *appears* to be and what he is *able* to be, between the *actuality* and *potentiality* of the human being,« the distinction described by alienation. »A social philosophy which fails to make this distinction, which assumes that man is what prevails in his actual existence is condemned to end as an ultimate ideological justification of the existing order.«⁴⁾

Thus, in an integral approach to social theory, one cannot avoid value judgements. On the other hand, it is easier to reach an agreement if the propositions are cast in such a form as to be falsifiable. It will, therefore, be desirable to minimize the normative component. Scientists are more likely to agree than philosophers. But for an increased possibility of agreement an adequate price will have to be paid.

Apart from its philosophical aspect, the phenomenon of alienation has also a sociological and a psychological aspect. In line with the purpose of this study, we shall concentrate on the sociological aspect. One possible approach is to follow Gajo Petrović and conceive man's essence as his historically given human possibility. In this case alienation will imply that man is alienated from the realization of his historically created possibilities. And to say that man is not alienated from himself will imply that he has reached the level of his potentialities and that by realizing them — without ever having exploited them completely — he constantly creates new potentialities.⁵⁾ Historical, sociological and psychological research may provide us with the knowledge of the possibilities that men wish to realize.

It is clear that such an approach would require a separate study of its own. It would also require an author with a different professional background from mine. Thus it will be desirable to try to find a shortcut. Again, Marx can serve as a guide. The shortcut is provided by using work as the basic analytical category.

A situation in which in order to satisfy their needs as they evaluate them, people have to work substantially more than they would

³⁾ M. Marković, *From Affluence to Praxis*, Univ. of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1974, p. 75.

⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁾ G. Petrović, *Filosofija i marksizam*, Mladost, Zagreb 1965, pp. 110—11, 195. In a later book Petrović insists that alienation is an exclusively philosophical concept. He indicates an interesting possibility of overcoming the dichotomy between »normative« and »positive«: A man is not only what he is but also what he can be and ought to be. Yet, he is not a sum of »is« and »ought to«. Before the decomposition into »is« and »ought to«, a man is already somebody in his essence, and the concepts of alienation and disalienation are used exactly for this Kingdom of »essence« (which precedes the rift between the Kingdom of facts and that of values). *Filosofija i revolucija*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1973, p. 97.

otherwise like to, can be described as one of acute scarcity. In such a situation, and it has characterized the entire history of the human race until our time, the conditions of productive work become existentially important and economic relations determine to a large extent other social relations. Even more than that.

Through work man became a human being. Through his practical activity man changes the objective reality — the nature and the society — and transforms it into human reality, i.e. into a result of human work. In this way man transforms also the conditions of his own existence and so changes himself as a species. The social process of work, becomes a process of self-creation.⁶⁾ And anything that has a negative impact on the process of work, must have a negative impact on its result, self-creation. Man is prevented from realizing his human possibilities. He is alienated. Thus we can undertake the analysis of alienation by exploring the conditions under which productive work is performed in various socio-economic systems.

It is often stated that the concept of alienation is inherently philosophical and that it cannot be used as a scientific concept. This is the position of Joachim Israel who in the already quoted book suggests that it be abandoned and replaced by the concept of reification. Similarly, Ralf Dahrendorf claims that, however much sense the alienation of the industrial worker may make in philosophical terms, »it has no place in empirical social science, since no amount of empirical research can either confirm or refute it.«⁷⁾ Such claims are based on a methodological misunderstanding. First of all, the gap between the actual and the achievable is a matter of observation and positive knowledge. In this sense alienation is a refutable proposition since in principle it can be shown that there is no way of improving upon the actual position. Secondly, the concept of alienation implies a hypothesis about certain important consequences of the observed gap. Here it is good to remember that not all scientific propositions can be proved directly. Very often, they represent theoretical hypotheses which can be refuted or proved only indirectly, by considering the consequences. If a hypothesis turns to be barren, it will be rejected. If, however, it proves fruitful, which means that it makes possible to organize our knowledge about empirical phenomena, that it leads to a consistent explanation of observed facts and generates additional fruitful hypotheses — it will be retained until a more powerful hypothesis is formulated or until new facts which cannot be accommodated within the old theoretical framework, are discovered. In this sense, alienated labour has proved to be an extremely fruitful hypothesis.

The social process of work has three components: men, their activities and the product of their activities. Each of them can be alienated. Thus the phenomenon of alienation can conveniently be analyzed in terms of three different processes: the alienation of

⁶⁾ Cf. A. Schaff, *Marksizam i ljudska jedinka*, Nolit, Beograd, 1967, pp. 98—102 (translation from the Polish original, *Marksizam a jednostka ludzka*, Warsaw, 1965).

⁷⁾ R. Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1968, p. 13.

labour, the alienation of the product of labour and the alienation of the man from other men and the society.

1. *The alienation of labour* occurs when the worker is alienating his labour power by selling it to the employer. The sale normally results in exchange of labour power for money, but need not. The mere existence of the employer-employee relationship is a sufficient condition for alienation. Once the employer disposes of the labour of the worker, labour becomes external to the worker, separated from his personality; he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased.⁸⁾ The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, *forced* labour. It is not a satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying other needs. « This is reflected in one of the fundamental assumptions of the bourgeois economic theory, namely that work is disutility. » Its alienated character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical compulsion it is avoided like a plague.⁹⁾ Alienated labour is treated as a commodity, as a factor of production, on a par with other factors of production. The price for the use of the labour power is determined on the market. The value of a worker is calculated as the value of a productive asset: it represents the discounted value of the income stream during the productive life. The difference between a worker and a slave is that the worker owns his labour power and so can engage in marketing himself, while the slave is a commodity marketed by somebody else. Occasionally, people literally market themselves and not only their labour power. This is true of salesmen and saleswomen, commercial travellers, bureaucratic careerists and prostitutes. They sell their personalities — smiles, personal charm, thoughts or bodies — in order to increase commodity turnover, whatever the commodity involved may be: a new product, obedience or love. If the worker is educated, the value of his «human capital» — to use modern economic terminology — is increased; educated slaves were also more expensive. In short, alienation of labour implies the estrangement of the creative capacities of the worker, their transformation into an object, a commodity, which is then appropriated by someone else. The worker plays no part in deciding what to do or how to do it and that is the fundamental break between the individual and his life activity.¹⁰⁾ This *self-alienation* is the basic aspect of alienation.

⁸⁾ In the already quoted study about American automobile workers Ely Chinoy observes that workers «seek to maintain the illusion that they themselves are still striving by constantly talking about their intention to leave the shop, even though... they admit when pressed that they would probably never do so.» (*Op. cit.*, p. 45.)

⁹⁾ K. Marx, «Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts», translated by T. B. Botto-more, in E. Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, Ungar, New York 1969, pp. 98-99. Robert Blauner claims that the concluding statement of the quotation was disproved by observation and research and that «the need for sheer activity, for social intercourse, and for some status identity in the larger society keep even unskilled workers on the job after they are economically free to retire» (*Alienation and Freedom*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 31). It is true that social isolation is even worse than alienated labour; but that is beside the point. Physical compulsion means the need for close supervision in order to extract labour from the worker.

¹⁰⁾ Cf. B. Ollman, *Alienation*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971, p. 133.

2. *Alienation of the product of labour* is a direct consequence of alienation of labour. «The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object and turned into a physical thing; this product is an *objectification* of labour. The performance of work is at the same time its objectification.»¹¹⁾ Once the labour power is sold, all its products are appropriated by the employer. The products of labour now stand «opposed to it as an *alien being*, as a *power independent* of the producer.»¹¹⁾ By appropriating the product of labour, the employer appropriates also the surplus value, i.e. the difference between the value of the product and the value of the labour power. Accumulated surplus value increases the economic and social power of the employer and creates the conditions for further exploitation of labour. However, the master is not secure either. Once the product is alienated from the direct producer, it tends to escape control altogether, to start living an independent life, to become an autonomous and threatening force. Men produce commodities and create markets and then impersonal forces of the market begin to dominate their social relationships. Men create parties, unions, states, and then these institutions begin to live their separate lives avoiding the control of their creators. Thus in a more general sense, once the first sin of self-alienation is committed, man's creations tend to confront him as alien and threatening powers.

3. When man alienates his life activity and his products, he is bound to *alienate himself from other men*. The product of labour appears as capital, i.e., as command over labour. The society becomes stratified into hostile social classes. Competition and class hostility render most forms of cooperation impossible. The alienated members of a society appear as competing egoistical individuals, as proletarians and capitalists, as workers and bureaucrats, as oppressed and oppressors, rulers and ruled — not as human beings.

Alienation affects both the ruling and the subordinate class. «The possessing class and the proletarian class express the same human alienation. But the former is satisfied with its situation, feels itself well established in it, recognizes this self-alienation as its *own* power and thus has the *appearance* of a human existence. The latter feels itself crushed by this *self-alienation*, sees in it its own impotence and the reality of an inhuman situation.»¹²⁾

According to Marx, three conditions in the capitalist society are partly the cause and partly the consequence and expression of alienated labour. They are: private ownership of means of production, division of labour and exchange. Since this proposition is contained in the *Manuscripts*, which were not intended for publication, one is not surprised by finding it rather imprecise and ambiguous. Thus the following conclusions may be — and have often been — derived: the abolition of private productive property will end alienation; since technological development increases the specialization of work, divi-

¹¹⁾ Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

¹²⁾ K. Marx, *The Holy Family*, quoted from J. Israel, *Alienation*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston 1971.

sion of labour is bound to remain forever and so is alienation; the existence of market exchange of whatever kind implies alienation. These three conclusions, apart from being inconsistent, are patently wrong. Thus conditions for alienation must be determined both more precisely and more generally.

The sufficient conditions for alienation of labour appear to be as follows:

1. Labour power is marketed as a commodity. As long as that is the case, there can be no self-determination, which is the negation of alienation.

2. There is a division between manual and mental labour. This division is determined primarily by the development of productive forces. As long as it exists, some labour will be experienced as forced labour. The present level of economic development makes it already possible to give the majority of the population university education and to eliminate most of the harmful and degrading work.

3. Hierarchical organization of work and political activities which generates great concentration of economic and political power. This may also be considered as a special case of the division of labour, namely the division between professional order-giving and order-taking, between decision making and mere execution.¹³ In fact, this condition is at the same time necessary and sufficient because 1. and 2. cannot obtain without generating 3. as well.

If commodity labour is eliminated, other commodities may remain and the market may be used as an allocational device without at the same time being an institution causing alienation. If education is equally accessible to everybody and the work situation changed so as to make work enjoyable, labour will cease to be a means to something else, it will no longer be experienced as forced labour. And finally, if concentration of power is eliminated, the class alienation will cease to exist as well. That makes possible a gradual establishment of a genuine social control of the products of productive labour as well as of man's creations in general.

The absence of the three conditions is clearly a necessary condition for the elimination of alienation. Whether it is also sufficient remains to be seen. Since it is generally impossible to experiment in the social sciences, it is generally not possible to establish sufficient conditions in advance. Sufficient conditions can be found *ex post facto*, after the historical process has completed itself. One can perhaps consider the negation of the three conditions as sufficient in the sense that once that obtains, the process of alienation will be reversed and the process of disalienation initiated.

¹³ This condition implies that the simple-minded expectations that the abundance of goods will necessarily eliminate alienation — are unjustified. Thus, the Soviet philosopher Oiserman argues: «In a society in which an abundance of material things is operatively available to all, the things will not be able to dominate men.» («Alienation and the Individual», in H. Aptheker, *Marxism and Alienation*, Humanities Press, New York 1965, p. 149.) If hierarchy remains, alienation will not disappear. Party and the state are also things, products of man's praxis, and they clearly can dominate men.

It is easy to realize that all three conditions of alienation obtain in contemporary capitalism and etatism. Labour power is a commodity sold to the employer — private or state — the division between manual and mental labour has definite social consequences and classes generated by unequal distribution of power exist.

(b) Reification

The process of work results in objectification of labour. Man appropriates the objective world, makes it his own, human, by objectifying himself in it. When this objectification proceeds under special, alienating, conditions we encounter the phenomenon of *reification*. The term was first used by the Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács in the early twenties¹⁴ and has only recently gained somewhat wider acceptance, particularly among Marxist Humanists.

Reification denotes a state in which the relations between persons are expressed and experienced as relations between things. Social relations lose their social character and become mystified as technological, exchange or administrative relations. Men evaluate each other as they evaluate objects. «Human beings become means for each other, means which can be exploited for achieving certain ends. But — and this is one of the central points in Marxist thinking concerning reification — the very phenomenon does not appear to the individual as something abnormal, as something 'alien to his nature.' Instead, the process of reification acquires the characteristics of a 'natural' relationship.»¹⁵

The process of reification occurs somewhat differently in capitalism and in etatism. Let us start with capitalism. Here the universalization of market relationships plays the crucial role. If you can sell your labour power, you can sell practically everything. In a vivid description of this fact in his *Poverty of Philosophy* Marx points out that

«everything, which up to now has been considered as inalienable, is sold as objects of exchange, of chaffering. It is the time in which objects, which have earlier been conveyed, but never exchanged, have been given away but never offered for sale, have been acquired but never been bought: virtue, love, conviction, knowledge, consciousness and so on, the time in which, in a word, everything has been transformed into a commercial commodity. It is the time of general corruption, of universal bribery or, in the language of economics, it is the time when each object, physical as well as moral, is put on the market as an object of exchange to be taxed at its correct value.»¹⁶

¹⁴ G. Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, Malik, Berlin 1923. See particularly the chapter on the Phenomenon of Reification.

¹⁵ J. Israel, *Alienation*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston 1971, pp. 59–60.

¹⁶ Translation by J. Israel, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

If everything is marketable, then market begins to play a special role as a universal standard of evaluation. Thus the structure of bourgeois consciousness will be basically determined by the universality of market relationships. Freedom will be measured by the extent that »impersonal market forces« are left to operate without outside interference. Thus bourgeois consciousness confuses *market* freedom with human *freedom*. Economic efficiency (the so-called Pareto optimum) will be derived from the (idealized) market relationships. First-year students of economics are taught the theorem which proves that a free market achieves the best allocation of resources — labour included. *Human capital* (!), calculated as a discounted stream of wages, has already been mentioned. Academic economists analyze the size of the family by treating children as consumer durables and calculate appropriate demand elasticities. *Market* profitability tends to be the crucial criterion for *social* desirability. Enormous differences in income and wealth are explained and justified by differences in marginal productivity. The lack of employment opportunities, business fluctuations and the low rate of economic development, with their concomitant social costs are justified by demand and supply conditions. Demand and supply are seen as objective forces which have nothing to do with the social system and which change market conditions as natural forces change meteorological conditions. The fundamental social relationship between an employer and an employee remains hidden behind the labour market. Private labours appear as components of social labour only through the exchange of products of labour. Consequently, the social relations among producers do not appear as what they are but as commodity relations among persons and social relations, among things. Most social phenomena are traced back to and evaluated on the basis of commodity relationships. In the religious world, the products »of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relations both with one another and with the human race.« In the economic world the products of labour — the commodities — play a similar role. This similarity induced Marx to label the fundamental aspect of reification — *commodity fetishism*.¹⁷⁾

It will be of some interest to substantiate the above analysis by at least one concrete example of reified thinking. For this purpose I select the book by the Austro-American economist F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*.¹⁸⁾ This choice is motivated by the fact that Hayek is an economist of considerable professional reputation, that he has also acquired a reputation as a champion of human liberties by showing much keener interest in social problems than most of his professional colleagues and that his book was well received and his thinking has had a considerable following. It is, therefore, clearly interesting to find out what are the limits of reified freedom. The

¹⁷⁾ K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, Hamburg 1867, ch. 1-D.

¹⁸⁾ Routledge and Kegan, London 1960. The book by the American economist Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago 1962) would serve equally well and so would any book on *bourgeois* freedom. In may be of some interest to note that a few months after these lines had been written, Hayek won the Nobel prize.

argument of this representative bourgeois liberal can be summed up in the following eight points:

1. For some reason the exploited masses are dissatisfied with their position. Alienation is felt as oppression. Hayek does not use this terminology and is unaware of its meaning, but has the same phenomenon in mind when he argues: »It may indeed prove to be the most difficult task of all to persuade the employed masses that in the general interest of their society, and therefore in their own long-term interest, they should preserve such conditions as to enable few to reach positions which to them appear unattainable or not worth the effort and risk« (p. 120). A difficult task indeed!

2. »That the freedom of the employed depends upon the existence of a great number and variety of employers is clear when we compare the situation that would exist if there were only one employer« (p. 121). »If freedom is to be enhanced, the employer-employee relationship must be abolished« — this is an obvious conclusion arrived at by commonsense reasoning. »The number of employers must be multiplied« — is a conclusion of a reified bourgeois mind. In other words, freedom consists in the free choice of the master (see point 4).¹⁹⁾

3. Alienation of labour is, of course, the most natural state of a producer. »There can be little doubt... that employment has become not only the actual but the preferred position of the majority the population, who find that it gives them what they mainly want: an assured fixed income available for current expenditure, more or less automatic raises and provision for old age« (p. 123).

4. The market is impersonal, the unequal distribution of power does not matter and selling one's labour power is an exercise of free will. »It is not power as such — the capacity to achieve what one wants — that is bad, but only power to coerce, to force other men to serve one's will by the threat of inflicting harm. There is no evil in the power wielded by the director of some great enterprise in which men have willingly united of their own will and for their own purposes« (pp. 134—35).

5. While the subordination to the authoritarian rule of management is treated as free will, the insistence on workers' solidarity is conceived as coercion. »It cannot be stressed enough that the coercion which, under the law, unions have been permitted to exercise contrary to all principles of freedom is primarily the coercion of fellow workers« (p. 269).

6. But the really mortal sin of the unions consists in their obstructing the operations of the market. »If the unions have by their wage policy in fact achieved much less than is generally believed, their

¹⁹⁾ The English liberal economist Lionel Robbins expresses the same idea in the following way: »The only sense which the economist can attach to the term exploitation of labour is as a description of what happens where a group of competing workers is confronted by a monopolistic buyer« (*The Economic Basis of Class Conflict and Other Essays in Political Economy*, Macmillan, London 1939, p. 8). The reified mind, enchanted by the market, is unable to comprehend that the very *confrontation of workers and buyer* involves exploitation.

activities in this field are nevertheless economically very harmful and politically exceedingly dangerous. They are using their power in a manner which tends to make the market system ineffective...« (p. 273).

7. If market rationality happens to conflict with human rationality, the latter has to give way. »It may seem harsh, but it is probably in the interest of all, that, under a free system, those with full earning capacity should often be rapidly cured of a temporary and not dangerous disablement at the expense of some neglect of the aged and mortally ill« (p. 299).

8. And finally, quite consistently with our previous analysis of conditions of alienation, Hayek concludes: »The recognition of private property is thus an essential condition for prevention of coercion...« (p. 140).

The reified reasoning encompasses a much larger area than the above example would suggest. The market rationality and strict calculability mould the structure of consciousness in a very specific way. Social consciousness becomes »one-dimensional,« focused exclusively on directly given facts, immersed into and reduced to factual, and unable to transcend it and consider the potential.²⁰⁾ The one dimension left is in fact the economic dimension, the production of commodities evaluated in money. Other dimensions have been repressed.« Western man — writes Walter Weisskopf — has thus become alienated from 'parts' of himself because the multidimensionality of his existence has been reduced to the dimension of technology and economy. Western society requires the individual to choose without values (repression of the normative); to work without meaning (repression of the spiritual); to integrate without the community (repression of the communal dimension). One could add: to think without feeling (repression of the affective) and to live without hope, myth, utopia (repression of the transcendental dimension).«²¹⁾

Much of what has been said about reification in the bourgeois world applies to the bureaucratic world as well. But here the source of reification is different: it is not the universalization of market relationships but the universalization of bureaucratic relationships; man is not reduced to a commodity but to the office he holds. Already Lukács noticed that bureaucracy was a source of alienation. Bureaucracy represents a similar adjustment of the way of life and work, and consequently of consciousness, to the basic conditions of the etatist (Lukács talks of the capitalist) society as was the case with the proletariat in capitalism. The formal rationalization of the law, the state and the administration implies a similar decomposition of the social functions to their elements and similar consequences for the consciousness, as the separation of labour from the individual capacities and needs of the operative in the factory. But Lukács was not aware that the effects generated by the bureaucratic structures in

²⁰⁾ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Beacon Press, Boston 1964.

²¹⁾ W. Weisskopf, *Alienation and Economics*, Dutton, New York 1971, p. 190.

capitalism appear with much stronger force in etatism (which he identified with socialism) where bureaucratic relationships become universal.

Let us again introduce our subject by a quotation from Marx: »Whatever I can do, what the office can enable me to do, what becomes my own by means of the office, that is my Self, myself as the incumbent of the office. My power is just as great as the power of my office. The properties of office are my properties, my essential qualities, since I am the incumbent. Therefore it is by no means my individuality that determines what I am and what I achieve. As regards my individuality, I am halt, but office lends me 24 feet — so I am halt no longer. I am a sinful man, without honour, conscience or spirit; but office is honourable, and so its incumbent must be; office is the greatest good, so its incumbent is good likewise; office allows me to dispense with the efforts of dishonesty, and thus I pass as honest; I am lacking in spirit, but office is the real spirit of all things — how, then should its incumbent be lacking in spirit?«²²⁾

This passage describes in etatism a direct counterpart for the capitalist commodity fetishism. I proposed to label this phenomenon *office fetishism*.²³⁾

Now, the above paragraph by Marx, in which he refers to office fetishism — without mentioning the term — may come as a surprise to someone familiar with the opus of Marx. Had not Marx always been talking exclusively about money, commodity and market relationships as the primary condition of alienation? Yes he had; the surprise would have been a justified one. I played a trick on the paragraph quoted. I simply replaced the original words *money, buy and owner by office, do and incumbent*. The fact that the meaning of the paragraph has been perfectly preserved shows that Marxian analysis of alienation is equally applicable to an etatist society.

Thus, as commodity fetishism represents a tendency to see relations between man and man as relations between commodities, office fetishism means hiding actual human relations behind the veil of impersonal bureaucratic rules, a mystification of the activities of office holders. The judgments of the market are infallible and so are the judgments of an official with respect to his subordinates. The holding of office confers upon the incumbent the quality of being cleverer, more honest, more reliable (politically or otherwise), more intelligent, in short: *superior* to all individuals placed lower in the office hierarchy. The parallelism, of course, goes even further. Both the free market and bureaucratic structures have their separate lives which cannot be brought under a conscious control. The most impressive demonstration of this ultimate alienation is to be found in the

²²⁾ Marx-Engels, *Der historische Materialismus Frühschriften*, Leipzig 1932; translation by Karl Mannheim in *Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning*, Oxford Univ. Press, New York 1950, p. 238.

²³⁾ B. Horvat, *Towards a Theory of Planned Economy*, Jug. Institute of Economic Research, Beograd 1964, p. 83.

historical fact that proletarian revolutions fought for the establishment of socialism and resulted in — etatism.

(c) Some Psychological and Moral Consequences

Since »to be reified« means to acquire or to be ascribed the characteristics of a thing²⁴⁾ and since, whatever his nature, man is certainly not a thing, the divergence between human existence and human potentialities is bound to generate very definite psychological and moral consequences. As a result, the entire society — not only its individual members — becomes sick.

»When all means of production are owned by a small elite« says — Mihailo Marković summarizing the features of reification in the capitalist and etatist societies — »when the aim of production is maximization of profit, when all other possible criteria of evaluation are subordinated to efficiency, when, consequently, the highest possible degree of division and professional specialization of work has been introduced, then individual work loses all human qualities and becomes as repetitive, frozen and stereotyped as that of any animal. Work loses any subjective meaning; the worker is transformed into a living machine, into a thing. One meets the same phenomenon in political life whenever the monopoly of political power is in the hands of a privileged minority and real decision-making takes place behind closed doors. Then massmeetings, elections and public debates become empty rituals, where the ordinary individual is present but does not really count: he is reduced to a mere object.«²⁵⁾

The market in capitalism and the state in etatism destroy human beings and transform individuals into commodity-producers and masses.

Under modern conditions, alienated labour in factories and bureaucratic structures becomes fragmented labour. Individuals perform only minute, repetitive and meaningless fractions of total work, over which they have no control. Work is deprived of any intrinsic reward, it is purely instrumental. The worker does not determine his own work but does the tasks set before him simply in order to exist. Man is reduced to an instrument of his own existence which makes this existence meaningless. The sheer size of modern productive and political institutions makes an individual powerless. He is just a cog in an enormous mechanism; he has no power, no freedom, no autonomy while in society. Only when, in his leisure time, he escapes into the seclusion of his private existence, can he hope to regain some of his human faculties. However, since human faculties are essentially

²⁴⁾ M. Marković, »The Problem of Reification and the Verstehen-Erklären Controversy«, *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 15, 27—38, p. 29.

²⁵⁾ *Loc. cit.*

social, this escape ends in new frustrations. Behind the veil of commodity and office fetishism the market and the state appear as impersonal forces — modern substitutes for divinities — and render the individual completely helpless. Man is thus reduced to an object manipulated by other persons and dominated by impersonal forces. One dimensional thought does not perceive alternative possibilities. Thus diffuse feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness and helplessness appear to characterize capitalist and etatist societies.

These feelings generate three additional second-order effects.²⁶⁾ It is hardly possible for a human being to live a life deprived of meaning, characterized by complete subordination to other human beings and reduced to an object of blind social forces. People will rebel and so there are outbursts of deviant behaviour. Some people will collapse under the stress of their inhuman existence. Thus neuroses of one kind or another are likely to become a characteristic sickness of a deeply alienated society.²⁶⁾ This explains the famous empirical findings of the lack of interest in participation among workers and of the general political apathy among citizens. The former is then used as a proof that the workers really do not want workers' management which, therefore, should not be established. Concerning the latter, it is often argued that political apathy is really an essential precondition for the smooth working of political democracy. If everybody had active political interests, there could not be any orderly government!

A society would not be able to function if everybody were either deviant, or neurotic or resigned into complete apathy. Thus the main escape mechanism is of a different kind. It operates outside the production sphere and outside the political sphere, in the only sphere where man still feels at home — in the sphere of consumption and during leisure time. Thus bourgeois and bureaucratic men are reduced to a species known as *homo consumens*. However, if man is alienated in his productive and political roles, it is rather natural to expect that his consumption activity will appear in an alienated way as well. That, in fact, is the case.

When other avenues to meaningful life are blocked, people try to establish self-respect and self-determination as consumers. In the first place, that implies an acquisition and accumulation of things. People learn to evaluate themselves through the exchange value they possess and »perceive themselves as having use-value as human beings through the exchange-value of things they own.«²⁷⁾ An expensive car or a new model of a car, colour TV, summer houses, yachts, etc. are not bought in order to satisfy real needs — less expensive models or renting when necessary may satisfy the needs equally well or better — but in order to impress neighbours and clients. In the United States, a successful lawyer is expected to drive a Cadillac or the equivalent

²⁶⁾ »Some years ago a shocking calculation was made that, in New York State at least, one person in twenty may be expected to spend some time in a mental hospital during his life...« (R. E. L. Faris, »Contemporary and Prospective Social Disorganization«, in A. and E. Etzioni, eds., *Social Change*, Basic Books, New York 1964, p. 414).

²⁷⁾ Israel, *op cit.*, p. 32.

and so an unsuccessful lawyer is forced to buy a Cadillac, or he runs the risk of losing his clients. An American sociologist tells a story of a manager of a great bank who did not buy the type of car that was then «current». He bought a cheaper car, which he personally liked more, but that caused distrust towards the stocks of his bank.²⁸⁾ Poorer residents of a neighbourhood have TV antennas installed on the roofs of their houses even if there are no TV sets inside. In etatist countries, and in bureaucratic structures in general, the furnishing of the office, official car with or without driver, *dachas* and other consumer durables are a direct reflection of the social status and a measure of the life success. People buy books which they do not read, pianos on which they do not play, jewelry which they do not wear, and paintings which they do not enjoy, sometimes even do not see. Instead of providing one of the deepest human satisfactions, art is becoming a status symbol or a means of capital accumulation. Carefully compiled compendia instruct rich people how to invest in art. The wealthy then buy paintings and sculptures or hire someone to do that for them in an expert way — and lock them in the safe-deposit boxes at their banks.

The accumulation of things which satisfy imposed and not real needs is just one, and perhaps not the most important, aspect of the alienated consumer. The other is consumerism. *Homo consumens* is the man whose main goal is not primarily to own things, but to consume more and more, and thus to compensate for his inner vacuity, passivity, loneliness and anxiety. In a society characterized by giant enterprises, giant industrial, governmental and labour bureaucracies, the individual, who has no control over his circumstances of work, feels impotent, lonely, bored and anxious. At the same time, the need for profit of the big consumer industries, through the medium of advertising, transforms him into a voracious man, an eternal machine who wants to consume more and more... New artificial needs are created and man's tastes are manipulated... The greed for consumption... is becoming the dominant psychic force in present-day industrialized society. *Homo consumens* is under the illusion of happiness, while subconsciously he suffers from boredom and passivity... He mistakes thrill and excitement for joy and happiness, the material comfort for aliveness; satisfied greed becomes the meaning of life, the striving for it a new religion. The freedom to consume becomes the essence of human freedom.²⁹⁾ These behavioural traits are less visible in etatist societies because of their greater material poverty. But competition with the West and the determinateness of the ruling class to preserve power — which requires focusing on consumption to keep the subordinate satisfied — are there bound to generate consumer reification of life too.

In order to function, the society has to mould the character structure of its members so that they want to do that which they have to

²⁸⁾ From H. Aptheker, ed., *Marxism and Alienation*, Humanities Press, New York 1965, p. 139.

²⁹⁾ E. Fromm, «The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory», in E. Fromm, ed., *Socialist Humanism*, Doubleday, New York 1966, p. 236.

do and are satisfied with the conditions imposed upon them. An alienated person likes his alienation. And economic theorists, simpleminded and socially conditioned as they are, make the sovereignty of alienated consumers the cornerstone of their economic theory. But the social character, defined as «that particular structure of psychic energy which is moulded by any given society so as to be useful for the functioning of that particular society,³⁰⁾ is more than simply consumption conditioned. Let us, therefore, explore some of the more important character traits reflecting the modern conditions of alienation.

The displacement of living by consuming leaves a definite imprint on the value structure of the society generates a specific vision of the world. In the West, the world is seen as a place inhabited with competitive little creatures, each carrying an enormous ledger in which he or she carefully records all gains and losses with an aim to maximizing the positive balance. Man reduced to an accountant worrying only and exclusively about his balances — this is the anthropology of utilitarianism which provides the philosophical foundations of modern bourgeois economic, and of the most of social, theory. Because of a much wider divergence between theory and practice, which we shall discuss in a moment, in etatist societies utilitarian hedonism is not so obvious. Here man is visualized as an incumbent of an office, an official who renders his labour and his loyalty to his state and acquires in return access to the pool of consumption goods, honours and power. Here the ledger is more politically coloured, but the principle is the same.

If an equivalent exchange is the basis of all activities, then every individual is isolated from all others and sacred egoism becomes the fundamental motivational principle. Other men are treated as means and not as ends. Concern about other people's lives is proclaimed methodologically illegitimate (happiness or welfare of two individuals cannot be compared) and unnatural (altruism is not realistic). Again, this is modified in an etatist setting where the state decides what is good for everybody, thus keeping individuals apart while solving the problems that must be solved. The well-known psychological fact of identification, whereby one person identifies himself with the position of another person and acts accordingly³¹⁾ — which resolves the contradiction between egoism and altruism — is ignored. Altruism is depicted as requiring self-sacrifice, the giving up of oneself. Yet the book-keeping life — of either private or state accountants — is not particularly exciting or satisfying. «Life is meaningful and valuable», comments on Marxist anthropology the Polish philosopher Marek Fritzhand, «only when it is lived intensely and thoroughly, only when the human being can realize himself during his lifetime by developing all his human abilities and satisfying all his human needs... Man can only achieve real happiness and perfection when he associates his

³⁰⁾ Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

³¹⁾ As the legendary Yugoslav Partisan and American cowboy who fire shots into the villain on the movie screen.

own happiness and perfection with those of others.«³²⁾ Once the present conditions of alienation are overcome, we can expect a new morality to emerge. »The morality of human beings in this new society will not be alienated morality which makes an *obligation* of mutual love, treats love as *self-sacrifice*, as contrary to the real interests of the individuals. According to the new morality, love is a natural phenomenon of human life, it is *self-affirmation* of man in his relation with other people.«³³⁾

In both capitalist and etatist societies »from childhood on, true convictions are discouraged. There is little critical thought, there is little real feeling, and hence only conformity with the rest can save the individual from an unbearable feeling of loneliness and lostness. The individual does not experience himself as the active bearer of his own powers outside of himself, into which he has projected his living substance. Man is alienated from himself, and bows down before the works of his own hands.. before the state and the leaders of his own making.«³⁴⁾ In an illuminating analysis of the modern society — the lonely crowd — David Riesman³⁵⁾ shows how the other-directed man, deprived of personal convictions and values, becomes a dominant type of man. He is a complete conformist, sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others and psychologically guided by feelings of diffuse anxiety. The etatist variety of the lonely crowd is bureaucratically structured collectivity. The collectivistic man also suffers from permanent anxiety, he is not socially integrated into the group but remains alone and thinks and works according to slogans and directives. In both societies people lose the capacity for spontaneous contacts and base their relations on calculated returns for whatever they do.

In several of his book,³⁶⁾ E. Fromm analyses the social mechanisms that produced the observed behavioural characteristics just described. Since the consciousness of one's personality is the product of one's practical activity and since under conditions of reified existence — when individuals are hired by private and state employers — this activity is transformed into a relationship among things, the personality becomes alienated. Things do not have personality. An individual ceases to be an individual and adopts the personality which, in the expectation of others, he has to have. Once the own personality is lost, the only possibility to regain the identity is conformity. In order to be accepted, one has to do what everybody else does; one must not be different; one must not remain outside or go beyond standards and stereotypes; one must not insist on what is correct but only on what is expected, accepted and acceptable. Right is what the crowd feels is right. Right is what the state says is right. As individuals,

³²⁾ M. Fritzhand, »Marx's Ideal of Man«, in E. Froff, ed., *Socialist Humanism*, Doubleday, 1966, pp. 172—73.

³³⁾ *Op cit.*, p. 180.

³⁴⁾ E. Fromm, *Let Man Prevail*, Socialist Party, New York 1967, p. 14.

³⁵⁾ D. Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven 1961.

³⁶⁾ Two have already been mentioned in the footnotes. The other two are *The Sane Society*, New York 1955, and *Escape from Freedom*, New York 1965.

we are minute particles of the crowd and the state; as such we have no power, no significance — no personality. We are completely dependent on the general mood of the crowd, on the orders of the state. Any deviation from the accepted standards, any deviation from the party line, creates a feeling of extreme anxiety which can be relieved only when conformity is reestablished.

If the source of our personal identity is outside ourselves, then we are likely to be dominated by this outside force. In particular, we shall feel strong and secure, relieved from anxiety, even happy, when we identify ourselves with powerful masters and subordinate ourselves to their authority. This is the genesis of the authoritarian character structure, so widespread in our time. As an individual. I am insignificant. But as a part of something big—state, nation, party — I am also big. Thus, in order to prevent any own degradation, I must defend the authority. Fascism, Stalinism, colonialism with its atrocities in Vietnam, Algeria and Portugese Africa — reflect some of the consequences of the authoritarian character structure.

The authoritarian structure of society, characteristic particularly for etatist societies, naturally develops an authoritarian structure of consciousness. The latter develops the personality structure which, according to Rade Bojanović, has the following traits: submissiveness; respect for hierarchical relationships; opposition to subjective and imaginary; respect for power, discipline and authority; rigid reasoning and infection with stereotypes. How far the reification of consciousness has progressed in these societies is illustrated by the fact that in party compendia exactly the enumerated characteristics are said to be distinctive for a revolutionary personality. To realize that, it is only necessary to change the terminology appropriately. Instead of Bojanović's terms, one must use the following terms with the same meaning: responsibility; democratic centralism; petty-bourgeois subjectivism; revolutionary discipline; party line and Marxism-Leninism.³⁷⁾ »Authoritarian way of thinking — continues Bojanović — requires complete inclusion into the collective and the hierarchical relationships, it completely negates independence and individuality, it is characteristic for these people that they are ashamed when they talk about personal problems... Escape from own personality... from any individuality... lies in the basis of an authoritarian personality.«³⁸⁾

Whenever the unity of human personality is somehow destroyed and some »parts« alienated, we observe a special phenomenon which may be called *homo duplex*. The same man is subject to authoritarian rule as a producer and is free as a consumer. The same man is a tender father to his children in his private capacity, and a cruel murderer of other children in his official capacity when he is, e.g. »pacifying the rebel territory.« Private thoughts and official pronouncements often

³⁷⁾ It is hardly necessary to point out that Marxism-Leninism of party compendia has nothing to do with Marxism and very little with Leninism.

³⁸⁾ »Zimski filozofski susreti, Tara 1972«, *Filozofija*, No. 1, 1972; recorded discussion, p. 73. For an analysis of authoritarian personality in etatist society, which Svetozar Stojanović calls oligarchic-etatist type of man, see his *Između ideala i stvarnosti*, Prosveta, Beograd 1969, pp. 163—68.

differ. And so forth. Although he exists in capitalism also, *homo duplex* is particularly characteristic for etatist societies. This is due to the fact that there is an especially wide gap between the socialist ideals, which the ruling class proclaims, and the actual social practices in which it engages. Thus as a rule, and not only occasionally, words and deeds will diverge. One of the results is a curious phenomenon of a language with words which have double meanings: one linguistic and one practical. In order to be able to communicate properly, one has to know both meanings. How translations are carried out was illustrated by the above example where responsibility meant submissiveness, democratic centralism hierarchy and revolutionary discipline respect for power and authority. Nowhere are the official and the private sphere more strictly separated than in etatism, and hardly anywhere are the spontaneous social relations more thoroughly destroyed and the society decomposed into isolated individuals. »Man may be more or less aware of his alienated condition — remarked the Yugoslav philosopher Predrag Vranicki — but the end result is the division of his personality against itself and the formation of the *homo duplex*. As a man, he does not feel himself to be a part of the broader community. As an official being, he does not feel himself a man.«³⁹⁾

We have reached the end of our inquiry. The two contemporary class societies are characterized by profound alienation. As a result human relations tend to disappear and to be replaced by objects and functions. The commodity-man and the office-man are the creatures that we meet in everyday life. These reified creatures think in a reified way, behave accordingly and enter into reified relations. Their life goal is not to develop their personalities in order to enjoy life as fully as possible; in other words, the goal is not to *be* but rather to *have* — things and offices. They are unable to establish spontaneous human contacts: in capitalism money associates with money, in etatism office associates with office, and in neither of them does the person associate with person. »At this stage, the question is no longer: how can the individual satisfy his own needs without hurting others, but rather: how can he satisfy his needs without hurting himself, without reproducing, through his aspirations and satisfactions, his dependence on an exploitative apparatus which, in satisfying his needs, perpetuates his servitude? The advent of a free society would be characterized by the fact that the growth of well-being turns into an essentially new quality of life... Freedom would become the environment of an organism which is no longer capable of adapting to the competitive performances required for well-being under domination, no longer capable of tolerating aggressiveness, brutality and ugliness of the established way of life.«⁴⁰⁾

³⁹⁾ P. Vranicki, »Socialism and the Problem of Alienation«, in E. Fromm, ed., *Socialist Humanism*, Doubleday, New York 1966, p. 303.

⁴⁰⁾ H. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 14.

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ALIJENACIJA I REIFIKACIJA

Branko HORVAT

Rezime

Alijenacija se može definirati kao filozofski ili kao naučni pojam odnosno kao jedinstven pojam s filozofskim, sociološkim i psihološkim aspektima. Autor odabire ovaj potonji pristup što mu omogućuje sustavnu analizu ekonomske osnove alijenacije.

U uvjetima oskudice proizvodni rad je egzistencijski važan, te stoga ekonomski odnosi određuju u velikoj mjeri druge društvene odnose. Radom čovjek postaje ljudsko biće. Svojom praktičnom djelatnosti čovjek mijenja stvarnost — prirodu i društvo — i preobražava je u ljudsku stvarnost, tj. u rezultat svoga rada. Na taj način preobražava također uvjete svoje vlastite egzistencije i tako mijenja sebe kao vrstu. Društveni proces rada postaje proces samostvaranja. Stoga sve što negativno utiče na proces rada mora negativno utjecati i na rezultat, samostvaranja. Čovjek je spriječen da realizira svoje ljudske mogućnosti. On je alijeniran.

Društveni proces rada ima tri komponente: ljude, njihovu djelatnost i proizvod njihove djelatnosti. Svaka od tih komponenti može biti alijenirana. Na taj način fenomen alijenacije se može analizirati u smislu tri različita procesa: alijenacije rada, proizvoda rada i čovjeka od ostalih ljudi i društva. Budući da aktivnost čovjeka može biti duhovna, materijalna i društvena, to i alijenirani proizvodi te aktivnosti pripadaju odnosnim sferama (npr. religija duhovnoj, roba ekonomskoj i država društvenoj alijenaciji).

Proces rada rezultira u opredmećenju radne snage. Čovjek prihvata objektivni svijet, čini ga svojim, ljudskim, opredmećujući sebe u njemu. Kad se proces opredmećivanja odvija pod posebnim okolnostima alijenacije, susrećemo se s fenomenom reifikacije. Reifikacija označava stanje u kom se odnosi među osobama izražavaju i doživljavaju kao odnosi među stvarima. Društveni odnosi gube svoj društveni karakter i postaju mistificirani kao tehnološki, tržišni ili administrativni odnosi. Ljudi vrednuju jedan drugoga na isti način kao što se vrednuju predmeti.

Proces reifikacije dešava se ponešto različito u kapitalizmu i etatizmu. U kapitalizmu tržišni odnosi igraju ključnu ulogu i reifikacija se ispoljava kao fetišizam robe (Marx). U etatizmu birokratska (činovnička) hijerarhija zamjenjuje tržišne i reifikacija se ispoljava kao fetišizam čina. Fetišizam robe znači tendenciju promatranja odnosa između ljudi kao odnosa između roba koje se razmjenjuju na tržištu; fetišizam čina znači sakrivanje stvarnih ljudskih odnosa iza koprene impersonalnih birokratskih pravila, mistifikaciju aktivnosti nosilaca činova, činovnika. Tržište u kapitalizmu i država u etatizmu razaraju ljudske ličnosti i pretvaraju pojedince u proizvođače roba odnosno u mase. Ta reificirana stvorenja misle na reificirani način, ponašaju

se u skladu s time i stvaraju reificirane odnose. Njihov životni cilj nije razvijanje njihovih ličnosti, nije u tome da nešto budu, već da nešto imaju — stvari ili činove ili oboje. A kako akumuliranje jednih znači oduzimanje od drugih, to reificirani svijet implicira klasno društvo i klasnu eksploataciju. U tom smislu samoupravljanje predstavlja mogući izlaz iz začaranog kruga alijenacije i klasne eksploatacije suvremenog svijeta.

THE PERUVIAN SUGAR COOPERATIVES: SOME FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, 1968—1972*

Santiago ROCA**

I. INTRODUCTION

Peruvians have been concerned about an agrarian reform since the beginning of this century. Not until very recently, however, did reform attempts touch the principal private concentrations of agrarian control — the huge coastal sugar plantations. The »Commission for Housing and Agrarian Reform«, established during President Prado's second term, 1956—62, allowed sugar plantations to escape from reform. The law of Agrarian Reform following the military coup of 1962 affected only lands in the Convencion and Lares Valleys in Cuzco. In 1964, when, in response to guerilla pressures, President Belaunde promulgated a further agrarian reform law (N. 15037), the agroindustrial sugar complexes were again exempted (through that law's »Regimenes de Excepcion.«)

The sugar complexes were not fundamentally affected before June 1969, when the revolutionary military government of President Velasco decreed an Agrarian Reform Law N. 17716) which covered all sizeable latifundia as well as minifundia. One of the more important objectives of this Law was redistribution of land and income which guarantees social justice in the agricultural sector, including a better standard of living for workers.¹⁾ The Law affected property rights without forcing changes into the organization of production. The agroindustrial sugar complexes thus changed from private to community tenure, to Agrarian Production Cooperatives.²⁾

* An extensive and most complete version of the original research is forthcoming in Spanish in May 1975, ESAN Research Department, Lima, Peru.

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¹⁾ Agrarian Reform Law N 17716, Title I, Basic Principles.

²⁾ According to the »Reglamento de Cooperativas Agrarias, Cooperativas Comunales y Sociedades Agrícolas de Interés Social« (RCACCSAIS); Article 95: the agrarian production cooperatives are indivisible units of common exploitation in which land, cattle, installations, cultivars, equipment and benefit plants are owned by the workers and property rights are not individualized.