



ALIENATION – FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF MARX AND ROUSSEAU

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ABSTRACT

Marx and Rousseau both belong to figures in history that have philosophized and put into action plans and programs that demonstratively distorted the face of politics and history. Their theory of alienation affixes value to things that advance human freedom, well-being and development. Each deliberate a set of ideology which would guide their various societies to complete political reform, stepping away from established model of political run to new models which they alleged better represents man. Marx believes that alienation depraves us of good genuine lives, It restrictions our capabilities and don't permit us to realize our complete potentials. Marx further alleged that alienation is a negative and unnatural aspect of capitalism and worker exploitation. Rousseau on hand disagrees; he feels that it is the positive product of social order, in a social order which is the good of the people. The paper explores the concept of Alienation from Marx and Rousseau perspective.

Keywords: Karl Marx, Rousseau, Alienation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, Marx and Rousseau both represent figures in history that have philosophized and put together action plans and programs that demonstratively distorted the face of history and politics. Each designed a set of principles which would guide their various locals to complete political reform, stepping away from traditional models of political control to new models which they believed better represented man. Marx fashioned a philosophy that competed not only with customary Russian monarchical rule and social power of the masses but also discarded ideals of capitalism which is believed would uniformly affect the individual and the society as a whole. Rousseau on the other hand developed a system of political thought that challenged monarchical rule in France and replaced it with a self rule through social contract that in theory culminated into a non-representative or direct rule by the people. It would seem then that each political philosopher would have similar conceptions of what it means to be an individual, alone and collectively in the world, yet this is clearly not the case. Both Marx' and Rousseau's political postulations results in combined action and revolution, yet in theoretically different ways. This work will define each man's conception of alienation and further discuss the respective political projects of each through the eyes of each author's conception of alienation.

2. MARX ON ALIENATION

Marx was intensely preoccupied with the problem of alienation. For Marx alienation exists in a social condition where the individual is a tool for the development of profit of another (Bassey, 2016, p. 1552). The individual is removed from the means of production and forced into a social situation that requires a desire for the possession of objects and the objectification, even of his own labor. While numerous philosophers have viewed alienation from the perspective of a religious dimension, Marx secularized it completely. Marx saw any view of the alienation as legitimate only if it addressed a specifically human process. For Marx, that

process was part of the much larger estrangement of men and women from themselves, from the species, and from nature, as a result of the way in which their own labor or productive activity (and its resultant products) become alienated from them. For Marx the social conditions under which alienation occurs are those in which labor is a commodity, the means of production are privately owned, and there is a division of labor (Pouillaude, 2013, p. 190). When these conditions obtain, workers are alienated whether or not they feel dissatisfied. However, the Marxist position does not ignore psychological states. Alienated workers experience themselves as alien to their labor, to the products of their labor, to their fellow human beings, and even to themselves (Bassey, 2016, p. 1552). But how they describe these experiences could reveal an ignorance of causes and a lack of class consciousness. Their work and its products could suffer from what some Marxists call "reification," that is, externalization as "objects" that have lost their proper relations to the self, and the workers may not be aware of this. (Oldenquist & Rosner, 1991, p. 5)

Marx theory is a direct product of the expression of capitalism. Capitalism removes from the people the desire for common good and replaces it with the desire for individual gain, secondary compensation in the form of money rather than collective compensation in the form of objects of need and prosperity, including at the very least a collective conscience of social need.

For 100 years--in the first phase--knowledge was applied to tools, processes, and products. This created the Industrial Revolution. But it also created what Marx called "alienation" and new classes and class war, and with them communism. (Drucker, 1993, p. 52).

When the drive to build one's own monetary and physical prosperity overrides the drive to make sure that the community is well provided for, and that there is a relatively equal distribution of goods the manner in which the world works is similar to the conception of mass self-interest. Self-interest at every level According to Marx drives social destruction, rather than social development. Marx talked of alienation as the product of capitalistic drive, the only originator of class and class struggle, class being the difference between individuals that control and create unequal levels of possession and consequently value of the individual. Marx conceived that if this dispossession was alleviated that the social order would take on a new collective consciousness and that if all individuals had roughly the same possessions and their needs were met then class would disappear with it alienation (Kontio, 2012, p. 34). As labor became an ever-more necessary commodity rather than an expression essential human purpose, it engulfed more and more of the human and social world leaving nothing but the sense of loss and alienation. Marx identified three primary stages of alienation. The first is *economic* alienation, which involves restricting an individual's access to the means of production and subsistence. The second stage is the alienation of *labor*, which comes about when a segment of society is driven from the land and cut off from the means of production and subsistence (Klikauer, 2013). In order to survive, this group must sell its labor on the market to those with the power and control to purchase it. The third stage of alienation occurs when a wage earner has not merely sold his or her labor power to an employer, but has sold the *products* of his or her labor as well. When these products become the property of the employer, the individual becomes alienated from that which he or she has actually created by virtue of their own skill or inventiveness.

However, Marx also saw history as a cumulative progression in which humanity would be able to transcend alienation. He was convinced that not only could it be surpassed in thought and philosophy, but in practical terms through a classless society, free of exploitation and oppression. Naturally, his attitude toward capitalism was fundamentally undecided, because he saw it as being both the most liberated and the most alienated form of human society to date. In Marx's view, self-alienation and alienation from others were also inextricably interwoven, just as liberation and alienation were interwoven in capitalism. To mitigate or abolish the one, a person must address the other at the same time. Marx, perhaps, had one of the best grasps on the concept of alienation, its genesis, and the results of its societal application among any population.

3. ROUSSEAU ON ALIENATION

Rousseau, on the other hand conceived of alienation as a product of collective social contract, a product that ultimately negated itself by virtue of equality. The individual in seeking redress from the oppression of the current political order, (non-representative government) or the state of nature relinquishes his right to be included, i.e. the opposite of alienated, in doing so equally each individual became equal and the collective could rule more representatively. Rousseau assert that the standard of total alienation is the key to social contract as a whole: 'These clauses, properly understood, may be reduced to one--the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community' (Forst, 2017, p. 524). He provides three

arguments for this principle. The first argument proceeds from reciprocity, equality and self-interest: 'since each one gives his entire self, the condition is equal for everyone, and, since the condition is equal for everyone, no one has an interest in making it burdensome for the others.' (Forst, 2017, p. 524). According to this argument, since all members will have alienated exactly the same to the community, namely all their natural liberty, it can be in the interest of member A to limit the (social) liberty of member B only to the extent that A would be willing to have his or her own (social) liberty reciprocally limited by B. (O'Hagan, 1999, pp. 111-112) Rousseau contends that this alienation is a conscious ideal for the collective as if it is created with the intention of offering a better world to live in and with equal intentions it will become the great egalitarian (with regard to men) creation of a social contract that reforms and guides its members to collective good and direct government, i.e. pure democracy. As alienation is made without reservation, the union is as perfect as it can be, and no associate has anything further to claim. For if some rights were left to private individuals, there would be no common superior to judge between them and the public. Each man being his own judge on some point would soon claim to be so on all; the state of nature would subsist and the association would necessarily become tyrannical or ineffectual. (SC I.6.361/138-9)"...Rousseau claims that anything short of total alienation must lead us back to the state of nature, to either despotism or anarchy (O'Hagan, 1999, p. 112). Rousseau additionally recognizes the great leveling feature of self-infatuated and voluntary alienation. Rousseau now maintains that if the individual's alienation is to everyone, then it is to no one. He anticipates the result of the balance sheet (SC I.8), in holding that individuals are better protected by the power of the sovereign than they ever were by their own efforts in the state of nature. (O'Hagan, 1999, p. 113)

4. MARX ALIENATION APPLIED TO PROJECT

Marx conceived of and in many ways developed a blueprint for collectivism. The individual would transcend alienation in an environment where he did not have to possess goods, as everything he needed was provided for him and his work was a demonstrative example of making sure this was so. Marx's venture consequently became the progress of communism, and later the midway into socialism. This was conceived to form in individuals the craving to work for the collective, rather than for money or property. Self-interest was to be left aside, and be replaced by collective interest and social and political health. To build such a place revolution was necessary, and would to Marx become the leveling of the people. The ruling class and the ownership class would step away from or be forced from their pulpits and the people would develop state owned collectives where needs were met for the good of the whole rather than the profit of the dominant class. In Marx's day,... appropriation is supposed to have lost its creative character. Instead of leading to the enrichment of man's powers, capitalist appropriation has become, in Marx's words, 'direct, one-sided gratification -- merely in the sense of possessing, of having'. The human condition reflected in such appropriation is given in Marx's claims that 'man has no human needs' and that money is the only 'true need' produced in capitalism. (Ollman, 1971, p. 94) According to Marx the current state of affairs was demonstratively destructive to human character as possession was the driving force behind human existence and if one has more than they need then they are denying need of the other. Additionally, Marx believed that collectivism would rekindle the innate desire of humanity to experience life, rather than simply trodding through it to get to work.

People no longer feel drives to see, hear, love and think, but only to have, to own what is seen, heard, loved and thought about. Ownership, with all it entails in the way of greed, status, rights to use and abuse, has become the only adequate expression of man's powers at this stage in their development. For Marx, the desire to own is not a characteristic of human nature but of historically conditioned human nature, and the desire to own everything with which one comes into contact is the peculiar product of capitalism. (Ollman, 1971, p. 94)

Marx's principles lead to direct revolution and demands that the state redistribute wealth and power through collective social order. According to Marx those who would benefit most from this collective redistribution would be the masses, the workers. Though conceptually it sounds nice, the reality was that state ownership of the means of production centralized power into one rather than many (privately owned) power structures, opening the door for totalitarianism. Sadly, it seems that collectivity in theory is fundamental, as Marx thought to human social development but it is also an avenue for those who have chosen not to renounce their desire for power or ownership to even more directly direct the very elements Marx wished to give back to the people. Marx's description of man's powers in terms of their lowest common denominator, the power of 'having', applies more or less -- with the necessary reservations made for differences of class -- to all the

people of the capitalist era. Just as capitalism is the 'low point' of appropriation by man's powers, communism is its 'high point'. Comparing the role that money plays in capitalist society with a situation where money does not exist, Marx states:

Assume man to be man and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc. If you want to enjoy art, you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you want to exercise influence over people you must be a person with a stimulating and encouraging effect on other people. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a specific expression corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life. 14 (Ollman, 1971, p. 94)

Marx was not a simple man nor did he have simple thoughts, but the expression of his philosophy of collectivism only worked on a local level. The idea that leveling would erase the human desire for power and possession was disproved in many ways and the collective did not entirely regain its exercise over the finer things in life. One of Marx's aims in the labor theory of value was to get us to see the capitalist as a useless and indeed harmful excrescence upon society, to whom offering compromises made no sense, and in this he succeeded admirably. (Ollman, 1971, p. 247)

5. ROUSSEAU'S ALIENATION APPLIED TO PROJECT

To some degree it can be said that Rousseau, even though he was not a direct presence in government was successful in the long run, with his ideals of alienation in projects. His ideas of social contract influenced the development of constitutional rule and direct representation, though at the price of representation in most cases. Rousseau's argument in *The Social Contract* turned the tables on kings and aristocrats...Instead of defending democracy, he made it seem as if rulers must answer why they should be allowed to rule after having broken the social contract, and in this way performed the same service for liberalism that Marx did later for socialism (Ollman, 1971, p. 247).

Rousseau's thoughts did not reject every traditional form of rule, in context they simply forced the world, and especially the European world to take a second look at the idea of right to rule. Culminating ideas are present in nearly every nation seeking democratic formation and development in the world, both old and new. Rousseau's works shaped a drive in a person to create social contracts which though they came at a price of alienation were matching with political and social revolution and more significantly the industrial revolution (Henning, 2013). One project that Rousseau was directly involved in is, particularly congruent with this concept for change.

The great document of this dramatic shift from skill to technology--one of the more important books of all time--was the *Encyclopedie* (1751-72), edited by Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert. This monumental work attempted to bring together in organized and systematic form the knowledge of all crafts, and in such a way that the non-apprentice could learn to be a "technologist." It was by no means accidental that articles in the *Encyclopedie* that describe individual crafts such as spinning or weaving were not written by craftsmen. They were written by "information specialists": people trained as analysts, as mathematicians, as logicians. Both Voltaire and Rousseau were contributors. The underlying thesis of the *Encyclopedie* was that effective results in the material universe--in tools, processes, and products--are produced by systematic analysis, and by systematic, purposeful application of knowledge. (Drucker, 1993, p. 52). Rousseau's congruence with the concepts that were building the world, at the time of his collective call to action, by the masses drove inherited rule from the consciousness of the people, who systematically strove to redirect rule to a more representative and choice based system. Alienation then became a product of choice, rather than a demand of hierarchical social order. Rousseau's success in political thought is not only testified to in his thoughts driving many of the actions of the French revolution but also in his assistance of the Polish in reformation, by request, which culminated in the work he Government of Poland. (Cladis, 2003, p. 16).

6. CONCLUSION

Both Rousseau and Marx developed theories of alienation that were expounded into political thought that shaped history and permitted each to be active contributor in political and social transformation. Each had a idea of the alienation of the individual by diverse means of either force (Marx) or choice (Rousseau) that demonstratively exaggerated the manner in which political and social thought emerged in their diverse circles. Marx, at the heart of the socialist revolution became a leading figure in Russian Reform, while Rousseau's political ideologies helped grease the wheels of the French revolution, and later reform in Poland. In brief, Marx believed that the individual was alienated as product of being separated from the means of

production, by the force of control of the owner. While Rousseau believed that alienation was a choice made by those who chose to live in and build a society based on his form of social contract theory. (Smith, 2006, p. 270). Marx believes that alienation was an avoidable product of the human situation in capitalism while for Rousseau alienation is easily reckon with side effect of collective thought and development. Marx alleged that alienation is negative and an unnatural aspect of worker exploitation and capitalism (Oldenquist & Rosner, 1991, p. 5). While Rousseau believes that it is the positive product of social order, in a social order that was all-encompassing of collectivism or the good of the people. (O'Hagan, 1999, p. 113)

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