

Review of: "Alienation, Values and the Destruction of the Subject"

Susan Schwartz

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Review of the article: Alienation, Values and the Destruction of the Subject by Aliya Abisheva

This author has brought light to the disturbing and painful psychological and cultural issues of our era. Simultaneously, while being timely it also is an issue that is ages old. The situation applies to current and past refugee crises, displacement of peoples and their communities due to war. The similar result occurs when highways are constructed through established areas upsetting the ecological and personal balance. Therefore, the issue of alienation as choice is questionable as many people are born into situations of enslavement or trapped within family or governmental regimes. For these and other reasons, they are all deprived of freedom. They are subject to forced alienation so powerful there is little room to establish a sense of self. Their suffering is untold and has been neglected to its full personal and cultural extent.

The author by addressing the destruction of the subject faces us with the ramifications. Psychoanalysis is a study of mind and culture, an attitude offering a perspective to reengage being in the world in meaningful ways. Our human existence, the mysteriousness of unconscious processes, and ethical obligations towards social collectives involve our present-day consciousness. Examining the unconscious origins of psychic reality bring awareness to the contradictory nature of our internal lives. A conscious and responsible attitude is the author's position noting how we add to the situation by being unconscious, ignoring the personal and cultural distress and our contribution to it fostering further alienation. We have become complacent, and the author reminds us of this cost to us and to stability of the world.

The alienation resulting within oneself and in one's community and social milieu are significant factors shaping our lives. The article focusing on the complexities of alienation made the points from a range of references to philosophers and Freudian psychoanalysis. I found this range interesting in that it spanned many years including a large smattering of ideas, all making similar yet unique theoretical points accentuating alienation and destruction. Associating philosophy and psychoanalysis reaches into their age-old connection and the contribution each line of thought has brought to the other, thus broadening their relevance. However, the references, although linked together, felt cursory and the article might have benefitted from a more in-depth analysis of a few rather than so many. The ideas link to make the point of the society and its influence whether restrictive or not on the individual's freedom. Much in the article was devoted to the ideas of Karl Marx. The scope did not include the influence of family and the reactions to various early and later emotional ruptures as they significantly contribute to self-estrangement. This seems relevant as the construction of self comes from many sources and is affected in various ways.

The issue of values, both personal and cultural are pertinent to personality development and community acceptance and participation. This encompasses those values we attend to and how we explore and respect the values of others who can seem strange and different from our own. This includes how we learn, absorb, believe, and question them. The ability to reflect and evaluate what and how one lives is part of being a conscious person. Many tend to push away what seems different or foreign and is assumed to be threatening. The fear behind these reactions can recede into the unconscious, remaining unknown and unexplored. This fear of the other, or the stranger represents parts of ourselves we do not perceive, access, and reject. Julia Kristeva, French Lacanian analyst references this in many of her works one of which is entitled *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991). In addition, Albert Camus who wrote *The Stranger* (1942) addressed the plague with many similar reactions causing estrangement from the pandemic recently experienced. The alienation, emotional and physical distancing, and estrangement still linger from this shock and destruction to life throughout the entire world. I mention these as the topic of alienation reaches into many areas with manifold ramifications.

The intriguing concept in this article is the concept of self-estrangement and how it evolves from and into psychological splitting. The damage wrought in self-alienation affects conscious and unconscious existence and the reverberations are apparent in relationships to self, others, and the world. The Freudian perspective and paradigm of the personality is the primary psychoanalytic perspective although Lacan is mentioned. However, again a more detailed exploration would add to the lifelong and transgenerational effects from alienation and its contribution to self-estrangement. One is alienated from oneself when one does not recognize the value of gaining consciousness of the various personality parts. How they interrelate and can help or hinder is an aspect of alienation and the construction rather than destruction of the subject.

The ideas of splitting to subsequently unite is part of personality development and cohesion. As the unconscious aspects are known, they become less disparate and the whole more substantial. This derives from accessing the unconscious and acknowledging and using its effects on consciousness. Unknown aspects cause alienation from self and others. Carl Jung's analytical psychology was mentioned and his concept of the value of dissociation is a key to that perspective (1960). The psyche splits to reform itself, falls apart to become known, and is split to reform with conscious awareness. From this viewpoint, self-estrangement means we become able to perceive ourselves from other integrated viewpoints and the personality can expand and strengthen. On the other hand, it tends to contract with alienation and self-estrangement. In those scenarios one is afraid, often repressed, depressed, and living as if half-dead. The popular terminology is being like a zombie. These reactions are the results of alienation from self, others, and the world. Intimacy suffers, relationships to self and others wither. One is enveloped with despair. This dystopian attitude is also the destruction of the subject.

The psyche is many sided as is the approach of the article. The author takes the reader through many philosophical theories and the Freudian psychoanalytical approach providing background to this historical landscape. I am drawn into this vista and was left wanting more depth and detail. The presentation of a few rather than many aspects of these cultural Western roots influencing our current era would provide this. How we become aware of our own self alienation and self-estrangement will keep us aware of how we value others.

It is this establishing a sense of self that the philosophers and the psychoanalytic approaches to life refer and is presented here from a kaleidoscope of perspectives. This topic is a worldwide concern and the author by focusing on it brings the severity of the problems to the forefront. The philosophical and psychoanalytical approaches seek to understand the issues deeply and thoroughly, without using superficial or quick fixes usually leading nowhere. The wide berth of the article signifies the importance of the topic as well as its roots from the past, effects on the present, and how we can develop a more complete and conscious future. Awareness of alienation and the destruction of subject guides us to the necessity of self and other connectivity, if we value it.

References

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