

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

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

Your topic is very interesting: "Alienation, Values and Destruction of the Subject" The beginning of the article is however a bit difficult to read, so I made an attempt to make some of the sentences clearer. You may disagree, or what worse, I may have misunderstood you, so feel free to disregard the following:

**Abstract:** This article concerns the ways in which a subject is destructed through alienation. Alienation is regarded as a definite way of being that is chosen by the subject but at the same time violates the subject's ontological freedom, thereby leading to a decline of his subjectivity. An alienated consciousness generates invertedness of subject-object relations, leading to bifurcation of the personality and loss of individual subjectivity and inner freedom. Unlike other viewpoints where the grounds for alienation are found in external factors, such as society, the state, etc., I claim that it's the subject him- or herself who, first and foremost, creates the alienation of values that conflict with his ontological freedom, generating self-estrangement and irrational actions as the expressions of the conflict. Philosophical reflection and logical analysis of psychoanalytic material are applied as methods to study this phenomenon. To begin with, the mental character of alienation is explained by S. Freud's notion of the splitting of the ego.

The problem of alienation is one of the main themes discussed in philosophy.

Social alienation refers to a specific reality in human life: it's a way of being that represents the rejection of one's own subjectivity and the individual's supposition of his condition as the consequence of a world of objects, social or inexorable natural law. How we understand alienation depends on our understanding of the subject, his freedom and values, and the definition of a human life that is worth living. In this article, we attempt to undertake the philosophical analysis of two oppositions: ontological freedom as the general foundation of human being, and individual's alienation from it, understood as a form of distortion of the human subjectivity and expressed by the loss of wholeness and bifurcation of the personality. From the personal point of view, alienation considers the self-estrangement of a human being in his own mind and thinking. Quite often, the ultimate subject of alienation is the human himself. From such a position, I propose that self-estrangement underlies many of the neuroses, which in the naturalistic sense are explored and explained by Sigmund Freud.

To establish my point of view on this issue, I divide my article into three sections. In the first section, I substantiate that freedom is the general foundation of human beings, the basis on which the ego-subject arises, with capabilities of creation and free choice. Freedom is connected to a multitude of spiritual meanings that compose the meaning of life, or the value with which an individual is identified. Such an identification has a reflective character. Herewith, I am going to show that

this reflection embraces the whole subject, namely, its conscious and unconscious sphere. Insofar the ego-subject functions freely, it cannot disappear when the individual rejects a chosen value. The nature of value is as follows: while the content of a value represents an ideal, that is, a form based on the individual's self-conception, it is realized only by turning it into an existing, definite form of being. However, human beings also choose pseudo-values, the content of which is contradictory to their basic freedom, and therefore, cause alienation and self-estrangement. In that case, the individual's first identification with ontological freedom does not disappear, as, if it did, the subject would disappear. Instead, with the help of self-estrangement, the subject is divided and the ego is split into two or more parts that represent the conflicting values.

In the second section, while considering social alienation in an objective-historical context, I argue that the subject himself creates alienation in his thinking by choosing and establishing false pseudo-values. They are in opposition to, and deny, his essential values, ontological freedom and self-determination. The opposing, alienating pseudo-values are presented to the individual in an impersonal manner. For the subject, the conflicting impersonal values, which are incompatible with his own personal values, cause an ego split and a bifurcated personality. Here, I assert that with respect to internal mental splitting and bifurcation, this self-estrangement is a primary process that generates alienation in the individual's external life and social relations. Prolonged, this alienation generates destruction of the subject, as the duality of the original self and the other self develops into bifurcation. Secondly, the alienation generates reification of the subject and vice versa: an object acquires the status of a subject so that an illusion that withholds irrational logic is viewed as something quite real. The individual doesn't however completely lose his subjectivity, although he creates this type of reality.

Instead of sharing Freud's naturalistic approach to neurosis, I propose in the third section that the phenomena of bifurcation of personality and splitting of the ego have social roots in alienation. The ego, strives to reconcile two or several incompatible motives, in order to keep its wholeness under conditions of alienation. Depending on the level of subjectivity, the ego may find at least two ways of satisfying the personal aspirations, and thereby a certain degree of resolution in the internal conflict. First, by identifying personal interests with the interests of impersonal institutions and norms, and second, by recognizing the personal interests in different degrees, and separating them from the interests of the external dominant sphere. Only in extreme cases, when the individual fails to find an exit from the labyrinth that allows alienated impersonal values to prevail over his personality, the subject loses his internal freedom and quality. I posit that this phenomenon sufficiently corresponds to Freud's description of cases of neuroses, especially compulsion neurosis. In my opinion, Freud discovered the phenomenon of intrapsychic self-estrangement, although he interpreted it naturalistically.

The problem of alienation concerns the human existence, an individual's values, wholeness of subjectivity, and the interrelations between consciousness and unconscious. The different aspects of alienation need to be studied because they are multifaceted and their underlying causes will not lose relevance while the mankind exists.

p. 3. Ego – from this point the text becomes much clearer. A few more comments:

p.1. ".self-estrangement underlies neuroses, which in the naturalistic sense are explored and explained by Sigmund Freud." Well, I'm a bit unsure here, could we say that neuroses may stem from both Freudian naturalistic (sexual abuse)

and self-made causes, of which the later are far more common?

p.5. Right! For example, dreams and series of dreams with definitive psychological development prove that reflection can happen both in the conscious and unconscious mind.

p.6. A value sense returns to itself = A sense of value returns..?

p.6. The human ego is a subject unlike an animal = The human ego is a subject capable of introspection, unlike an animal..

p. 7. Primary identification of the ego (use either ego or the ego all the time)... on this level, the ego is in fusion with freedom and hasn't yet accepted a certain value as the meaning of the life.

p. 7. Secondary identification of the ego... The choice of a particular value or meaning that the human being, or his ego, sees as his destiny and truth should be regarded as *a secondary identification of ego*.

p. 7...if these values can turn out to be (both) mutually opposite in their meanings and even mutually denying, this could possibly lead to (the emergence of a phenomenon of a) split of the ego into parts and instances that conflict with each other.

p. 8. In contrast, the splitting Self... you have been talking about the splitting ego insofar. The split personality or subject could be the compromise...

p. 8 ...we rather define alienation as (rather) a certain personal attitude (of a human with respect) to the world and (the) understanding of one's place and role in it (the world).

p. 9. "Gavin Rae maintains that there is a 'constitutive link between authenticity and alienation' and that the conception of the authentic Self itself represents a definite form or mode of alienation." This is so true! The ego can become totally spellbound by the "authentic" Self it has created, instead of being free.

p.11. Here you present your definition of the ontological freedom. It could be done earlier in the text, but better late than never!

p. 11. (Sartre recognizes the value of the meanings of only positive-moral content, such as, for example, good) = For Sartre, meanings always have a positive moral content...

Peter Goldie writes about the intentionality of feeling, how emotion and the act of feeling are interrelated. Goldie, P. (2002). *The emotions. A philosophical exploration*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Dear Aliya, Thank you for writing this profound and very interesting study and giving us this wise and timely Marxist perspective on alienation! I'm not a native English speaker but I hope that I could help you with some of the most complicated sentences. At least my intentions were good!

If you are interested in my conception of the positive and negative values, Hegel and Marxism-Leninism, or the

relationship between the ego and self, or good and evil, please find my dissertation on-line, in the Academic archives in Finland, by searching “Paivi Alho, Doria”.