

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

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

For a more adequate reflection of the author's research position, it is necessary to turn to the historical logic of understanding the phenomenon of alienation. There are three stages in the formation of the interpretation of alienation from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day:

The classical stage: alienation was presented in a logical-epistemological form, when interpersonal and social relations, as well as the results of human activity, are objectified and transformed into a self-sufficient autonomous force that confronts man and turns him from a subject into an object (Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach). In this sense, alienation was considered irremovable.

Non-classical stage: alienation was presented in a socio-historical form as a consequence of social and class inequality. Unlike the previous stage, in addition to the philosophical interpretation, a specifically scientific interpretation of it was also formed here, in which alienation was presented as a consequence of deviation of human activity from social norms or mental illness. Within the boundaries of philosophical interpretation, two directions can be distinguished — the objective-materialistic (Marx) and the abstract, subjective (Sartre). The scientific interpretation is represented by the concepts of Freud and his closest followers. Despite the variety of interpretations, at this stage it was considered possible to eliminate alienation — through a social revolution or psychoanalysis.

Postclassical stage: alienation is presented as a consequence of the lifting (*Aufhebung*) of the two previous stages and the appearance of their synthesis. This synthesis becomes possible because traditional connections and meanings change over time, changing places and replacing each other imperceptibly for the cognizing subject. In other words, this synthesis is the creation of the space of a new myth, in which not only the usual rational laws of the existence of the world operate, but also new types of relationships, connections and meanings arise. All this breaks the unified view of the world, making it polysemantic and multipolar. At this stage, not only physical individuals and social groups are objects of alienation, but entire peoples, nations and countries. This happens when the results of their collective activity, international politics, and their cultural characteristics are objectified under the influence of external forces and circumstances that turn these results against their subjects, and make the subjects themselves passive objects of their own activity.

The mythological basis of the post-classical stage of alienation is the space of economic and political relations of global capitalism. The global nature deprives these relations of objective unambiguity and rational consistency. As a result, semantic links are constantly being replaced: individual and collective subjects replace each other; the basic concepts and structures of economics and politics are losing their usual contents and their historically formed functions (such is, for example, the transformation of the classical proletariat and the working class into the modern *precaria*).

A. Abisheva's article "Alienation, Values and the Destruction of the Subject" is written from the standpoint of non-classical and post-classical interpretations of alienation. This is indicated by the author's statement at the very beginning of the article: "*Understanding alienation depends on our understanding of the subject, his freedom and values, and his meaning of a human life that is worth living*". As I become more acquainted with the article, I can distinguish two main ideas that the author adheres to:

- 1) The basis of alienation is not a pan-logical God, not a whole of social relations, or even an abstract person as a representative of the Self, but a certain accidental combination of circumstances dictated by the choice of values. Depending on the degree of adequacy of the choice of values, the alienation of a person increases or weakens. Thus, "the subject himself creates alienation in his thinking by choosing and establishing false pseudo-values that are in opposition to and that deny his essential values, such as ontological freedom and self-determination".
- 2) The author agrees with the position of Freud's statement that alienation is a consequence of the manifestation of neurosis — therefore, it is a painful deviation from the norm, requiring psychoanalytic correction: "*For the subject, the conflict between the accepted impersonal values that are incompatible with his own personal values causes 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 an individual's external life and social relations. Alienation generates the destruction of the subject, as the duality of the human himself and his other self develops into his bifurcation*".

It may seem that these statements correlate with each other, since they contain the idea of overcoming alienation. However, in my opinion, these two statements contradict each other, because in the first one, alienation appears as a historical inevitability inherent in hierarchical society; in the second one, alienation is shown as a pathology that has no direct relation to social structures.

I believe that the author mixes philosophical and psychological interpretations of alienation. Accordingly, theoretical (philosophical) and empirical (psychoanalytic) research methods are also mixed, which leads to methodological eclectic. Of course, in the history of philosophy there have been attempts to overcome the differences between psychological and philosophical methods of studying alienation. This was most persistently done by E. Fromm in his concept of "Freudomarxism". As we know, he distinguished five forms of alienation: from the neighbor, from work, from needs, from the state, from oneself. It would be interesting to know the author's opinion on this matter, but, unfortunately, Fromm's position is mentioned in the article very succinctly.

The difference between philosophical and psychological interpretations of alienation is based on a preliminary

understanding of the place and role of the subject in the world and society. In the philosophical sense, alienation is an act — a process and the result of a certain type of a man's attitude to the world and to himself, when a man cannot be a full-fledged subject of action. That is, when he is not free, he cannot take responsibility for what is happening. In the psychological sense, alienation is a fact independent of a man, objective and stable. This is a kind of indifference, on the basis of which a man is able to make a choice that is externally interpreted as right or wrong. In my opinion, there is "an inversion" of meanings in psychology in order to prove the solvability of the situation: one has only to make the right choice, and alienation will be eliminated. However, at the same time, it is shamefully silent about the true reasons and driving forces that motivate such a choice. And these are always specific subjects, communities or social groups as carriers of certain interests.

In other words, it is not choice that generates or eliminates alienation, but the existing alienation between a man and the world encourages a man to look for the right choice to eliminate alienation.

Based on the foregoing, the attempt to link the elimination of alienation with the choice of certain values seems idealized and leads away from a real solution to the problem. Values are not facts, as stated in the article: "...According to his ontological freedom and non-predetermination, a human being can choose not one but two or more values with different meanings, and in some cases, 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 splitting of the ego into parts and instances that conflict with each other. This happens because both opposite values were chosen by the subject as being meaningful for him and his life; he can be deeply rooted in them so that they both are equally valuable and significant for him. The phenomenon of the dividing and splitting of the ego represents the paradoxical picture where in the same individual, two or more personalities — each of them with their own values and motives, vital orientations and contradictions, that is, a few different egos — can coexist".

The history of the formation of the concept of "value" shows that it reflects the subjective, preferred aspect of a man's attitude to the world, but not the property or quality of this world. In other words, the principle of value allows you to choose between different relationships depending on various factors: from the initial goal, from the nature of the social system, from the prevailing type of worldview, etc.

If we put value at the basis of human existence, as the author of the article does, it turns out that it is very simple to overcome alienation: you just need to give preference to the values prevailing in society, and alienation will be overcome. However, the question arises: where is the basis for the dominance of social values? And what if even a conscious choice does not always lead an individual to inner spiritual satisfaction and consent?..

The author's answer is very abstract: *"In our understanding, ontological freedom means the freedom of choice made by a human primarily for himself and the choices made of his values within his Self before their incarnation and before their transition from the due (ideal, that ought to be) into the existing"*.

Thus, ontological freedom as the ability to choose is the basis for the assertion or elimination of alienation. But the abstractness of this idea leads to the fact that the author, following Freud, talks about the connection between alienation

and split personality. The choice made by an abstract, detached person from society, theoretically should lead to a split personality — that is, to a situation beyond the competence of philosophical knowledge.

Thus, the mixing of philosophical and psychological methods leads the author to two mutually exclusive conclusions:

1) Alienation is easy to eliminate if you make the right choice of values.

2) If the choice is wrong, there will be an irreparable split personality.

It turns out that it is not so easy to make real choice so that it does not cause a personal catastrophe.

In order to eliminate this contradiction, society, apparently, must establish strict control over the public and individual choice of values... And it seems rather dubious and dangerous.

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