The concept of alienation: its application to emergent African states.

Benson Kaguongo Wambari

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1

Recommended Citation

https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/2162

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION:
ITS APPLICATION TO EMERGENT AFRICAN STATES

A Dissertation Presented
By
Benson Kaguongo Wambari

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in Partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

June 1973
PHILOSOPHY
THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION:
ITS APPLICATION TO EMERGENT AFRICAN STATES

A Dissertation
By
Benson Kaguongo Wambari

Approved as to style and content by:

Felix Oppenheim
Professor Felix Oppenheim

V.C. Chappell
Professor V.C. Chappell

Ann F. Brentlinger
Professor Ann F. Brentlinger

Lawrence Foster
Professor Lawrence Foster

June 1973
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my deep appreciation to the members of my Dissertation Committee Professors Felix Oppenheim, Ann Brentlinger and Lawrence Foster.

I especially thank Professor Oppenheim who, as chairman, laboriously read everything I handed him promptly and made constructive criticisms and suggestions which helped make this dissertation what it now is. Professors Brentlinger and Foster were both very helpful all along and especially in the beginning when I first presented my ideas concerning the topic to them. Without their encouragement I might have given up.

Finally, I thank all the members of faculty in the department of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, for getting me started in my pursuit to better understand myself and the world around me.
THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION:
ITS APPLICATION TO EMERGENT AFRICAN STATES

abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse a contemporary social situation in emergent African states. I claim that most of the social, political and economic problems facing the Africans are those of alienation. It is my view that examining these problems from the point of view of alienation provides not only an insight into the problems but as well embodies an implicit moral demand for change. I suggest that national independence, political institutions, economic structures and the culture itself should constitute a means to self-realization and restoration of dignity of the Africans as a people.

Chapter one sketches the use of the concept of alienation in the historical writers who have popularized it. These are G.W.F. Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx.

In order to use alienation to analyse a social situation, I have first attempted to clarify "alienation" in more precise ways than the historical thinkers
did. This I do in chapter two defining "alienation" as a feeling of estrangement or separation of one person (or group of persons) from other people, from oneself or from something with whom or which one has previously been (or should be) unified. I contrast this definition to those offered by Erich Fromm, C. Petrovic', Arnold Kaufman and Lewis Feuer among others.

In chapter three, I point out that the colonial era marked in Africa a period of alienation of the Africans from their culture, their land, their religion, from their way of life in general, and worst of all from self-determination. The African struggle for political independence was a struggle for de-alienation. I observe in this chapter that political independence, though necessary for overcoming alienation, it is not sufficient.

Chapter four points out that a state may be ostentatiously politically independent though in fact it is economically alienated. When the economic system of a state is in the hands of outsiders, the political policy as well will be influenced if not determined outright from outside. Recent happenings in Uganda will be repeated by other African states fighting economic alienation.
In chapter five, I suggest that greed and blind imitation of the West, caused by lack of imagination and feeling of inferiority, have much to do with contemporary social and cultural alienation in Africa. The discussion points to the fact that such happenings like the authenticity campaign in Zaire, aimed at reviving or creating genuine African culture, are only reactions to feelings of cultural alienation among the Africans.

In chapter six, I put forth the view that capitalist economic system, and the prevalent one party political system, are the main causes of social and political alienation in Africa to-day.

Finally in chapter seven, I suggest that if alienation is to be overcome or minimized, the above causes (among others) must be rooted out. Socially acceptable democratic systems (unlike the one party system) must be adopted to minimize feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, and social isolation among the citizens. Democratic socialism as idealized by Yugoslav Workers' Councils, Israeli Kibbutzim and Tanzanian Ujamaa Villages, seems to offer a hopeful promise to combat alienating influences of capitalism and its consequent materialism.
CONTENTS

Chapter

I. SOME HISTORICAL REMARKS...................... 1

G.W.F. Hegel
Ludwig Feuerbach
Karl Marx

II. DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION ...... 23

Alienation in General
Self- alienation
Can the Concept of Alienation be
Operationized?
Relevance of the Concept of Alienation

III. ALIENATION UNDER COLONIALISM ......... 54

IV. ECONOMIC ALIENATION IN INDEPENDENT AFRICA..66

V. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ALIENATION IN
INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES............... 79

African Socialism
The African Leader
Cultural Conflicts
Class Consciousness

VI. ALIENATED MAN IN MODERN AFRICAN SOCIETY....102

VII. OVERCOMING ALIENATION...................... 114

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................130
CHAPTER 1
SOME HISTORICAL REMARKS

The concept of alienation gained its currency largely from G.W. F. Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx.

G.W. F. Hegel

Hegel took the concept over from Protestant theology in which alienation is exemplified by worship of idols (idolatry) or eternal separation from God by original sin (in John Calvin).

Hegel discusses two levels of alienation. Firstly, he sees nature as a self-alienated form of absolute mind. According to him, whatever is, is in the last analysis Absolute Idea (Absolute Mind or God). The Absolute Mind is a dynamic self engaged in a process of alienation and its negation. The view that nature is a self-alienated form of Absolute Mind may be influenced by Plato's view that the natural world is an imperfect picture of the sublime world of ideas.1 This aspect of Hegel's doctrine of alienation is part and parcel of his idealism. It emanates from his a priori conceptualization of the Absolute Idea, a metaphysical abstraction of little interest here, since it has no application to social problems.

---

1 See G. Petrovic', "Alienation", Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, I, p. 76.
A more interesting aspect of Hegel's doctrine of alienation from the point of view of our topic is his portrayal of man as self-alienated in his production of things, there being a disparity between his actual conditions and his real nature, and men being separated or estranged from other people. A section of his *Phenomenology of Mind* entitled "Lordship and Bondage" has an obscure discussion of this form of alienation. Here Hegel focuses on the subordination of oneself to another in servitude. The laborer's work is his own self-expression. But the objects that he produces belong not to him but to his master. Since the laborer sees himself in the products of his labor, his consciousness is exhibited in the things that belong to another.

Hegel conceived the nature of labor as the process of reification. By this he meant that the laborer's action of production and creativity is at the same time a process of estrangement whereby what was produced becomes independent of the producer. As Hegel saw it, the laborer's action is preserved in the things he produces. This preservation Hegel also calls "objectification". He identifies objectification with alienation. The reason for this identification is for Hegel that before any worker produces anything, the idea of that thing is produced in his mind initially.

---

thing is produced in his mind initially. However, Hegel's theory does not apply to modern large scale industrial systems since the producers may initially have no notion of what the finished product will be. The part the worker handles on the assembly line is usually not seen in relation to the complete product. The worker's productive activity is alienated, but for different reasons, as we shall see below.

As Marx was to point out later, Hegel's identification of objectification with alienation is also mistaken because some products of labor are the means of self-expression and therefore self-realization, not alienation. Circumstances attending the act of production must be taken into consideration. Whether the productive activity is free or coerced and whether the products belong to the producer or not are among many factors in social relations that determine whether objectification becomes alienation or not.

As for the relationship of master and bondsman, Hegel sees the process of labor as creating a self-consciousness in the master but a consciousness which is dependent upon the work of the bondsman.

There is thus interdependence in this relationship in that both the laborer and the master experience their
self-consciousness in each other. There is a reciprocity of alienation that affects both. On the whole, Hegel, like existentialist philosophers, sees alienation as part and parcel of human nature and therefore as permanent.

Ludwig Feuerbach

Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity*³ emphasized the aspect of Hegelianism that turned into an analysis of man and society. He was critical of Hegel's idealism and presented its antithesis. For Feuerbach, philosophy must begin not in abstractions but with life, especially all its concrete wants and needs. This philosophy is especially distinguished from Hegel's in that it corresponds to the real, complete nature of man. But for that very reason, it is antagonistic to minds perverted and crippled by a superhuman i.e., anti-human, antinatural religion and speculation. It recognizes as the true thing, not the thing as it is, an object of the abstract reason, but as it is an object of the real, complete man, and hence as it is itself a real complete thing.⁴


⁴Ibid, pp. xxxiv-xxxv
For Feuerbach, reality was in the world, not in the mind. He was critical of Hegel for regarding as concrete things predicates and attributes of man (i.e., his ideas) and converting them into self subsisttent subjects. As Sidney Hook puts it, "he attempted to show that the whole of traditional philosophy represented the same arbitrary isolation of a local and limited feature of experience from its context in social life, and its subsequent erection into an absolute principle whose validity was independent of all space, time and society." It was on this basis the Feuerbach rejected Hegel's doctrine of alienation and in its place produced his own that was a complete reversal of Hegel's, turning him "upside down". For Feuerbach, God is nothing but the idealization of the state of affairs for which a religious man yearns.

Feuerbach in essence rejected Hegel's view that nature is the self-alienated form of Absolute Mind and that man is Absolute Mind in the process of de-alienation. Instead, God is for Feuerbach, self-alienated man. God is a man-made concoction of what is best in men in an idealized form. Man is alienated from himself when he creates an imagined being and elevates it to a position of worship. Abolition of that estranged picture of man

amounts to de-alienation of man. Both philosophy and religion represented for Feuerbach a dehumanization of man which Feuerbach's new philosophy based on the principle, "only a sensible being is real, true being", was meant to alleviate.

The concept of alienation for Feuerbach as for Hegel is essentially religious. This is so because German philosophy was a product of theological studies. In Christian religious circles, material things, human bodies among them were to be denied. Feuerbach's new philosophy was meant to rehabilitate the material world to its rightful place as he saw it. Man's keeping away from worldly goods and attempting to become supranatural is for Feuerbach the root of alienation.6

Hegel and Feuerbach thus advanced antithetical theories of alienation. The former viewed man and nature as alienated forms of Absolute Mind; the latter saw God (Absolute Mind) as self-alienated man and those who denied the

---

6In his article, "What is Alienation? The Career of a Concept," in New Politics Vol. I, No. 3 (Spring, 1962), pp. 116 - 34, Lewis Feuer has pointed out, mistakenly I believe, that the root meaning of alienation for Feuerbach was sexual, that an alienated man was for Feuerbach the man who acquired a horror of his sexual life. Contrary to Feuer's view that religious dogma is for Feuerbach the manifestation of "sexual alienation", it would seem that sexual asceticism is the manifestation of religious dogma. It is on the basis of religious beliefs (for Feuerbach) that ascetics alienated themselves from nature.
reality of material world as the self-alienated ones. For Feuerbach object produced thought, not the thought object as was the case with Hegel.

Karl Marx

Both Hegel and Feuerbach influenced Karl Marx in his intellectual development. Marx used Feuerbach's inversion of Hegel's system throughout his life. It was from Feuerbach that Marx inherited materialism. The beginning of Feuerbach's philosophy, "man, a real, sensuous material being" was Marx's central preoccupation. For Marx, it is only with Feuerbach that positive humanistic criticism begins while Feuerbach's writings are the only writings since Hegel's Phenomenology and Logic to contain a real theoretical revolution. The theoretical revolution was turning Hegel's speculative philosophy "upside down" in order to reach unconcealed truth. Feuerbach had discovered that Hegelian philosophical fantasy was a "fantastic reflection of reality of man's self-alienation in religion" as Tucker puts it. In Marx's Holy Family, Feuerbach is identified as the one who revealed the mystery of Hegelian system.

---

Marx was not overly critical of Feuerbach's method, but he criticised his concept of man because it was abstract and unclear. For Marx and Engels, what man is, is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble (aggregate) of social relations. Marx's analysis of man's social life is historical, concrete and based on the application of the dialectical method inherited from Hegel. According to the dialectical method, historical progress is seen in series of epochs in which antithetical social forces clash and from which emerge a new social force, which, while different from the opposing ones, retains some aspects of both. The new social force defines a new epoch.

Marx was also critical of Feuerbachian approach to alienation. According to Marx, Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-estrangement and attempts to reduce the religious world to its secular basis. Marx observes that one has to understand the cleavage and self-contradictions within the secular world to understand how secular needs are alienated and reinterpreted by religious concepts. To do so one has to completely divest Hegelian dialectic of all its idealist and speculative content and replace it with real
relations of real men in concrete social interactions. Marx felt that Feuerbach had not moved far enough in his flight from Hegelian idealism.

Marx and Engels developed their own ideas on dialectical materialism, not simply in reaction to Hegel and Feuerbach, but also out of their own sensitivity to and acquaintance with developing economic and social movements of the time which gave them deep sympathies for the workingmen. Engels, for instance, had a firsthand experience of the conditions of workers while living in Manchester.

Marx's analysis of alienation begins with an examination of actual economic conditions. These conditions as he says take the form of opposition between proletariat and capitalist, between the necessities of production and needs of consumption, between expansion of industry and the contraction of purchasing power. All these oppositions and their outcoming resolutions exemplify the dialectic.

Marx begins from empirical premises, not ideas. The premises are based on real individuals, their activity and material conditions under which they live. It was Marx's firm belief that one can tell what people are by

---

8 See Hook, op. cit. p. 67.
the kind of life they lead. What they are coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce it. The nature of individuals and their development thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.

Marx's earliest discussion of the doctrine of alienation occurs in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844. It also appears in *The German Ideology* (1846) and *The Holy Family* (1845). In those writings, Marx exhibits a genuine moral concern about the actual effects of capitalism upon human relations. Alienated labor becomes for Marx the focus of the analysis of society. According to the manuscripts, emancipation of society from private property, from servitude, takes the political form of the emancipation of the workers; not in the sense that only the workers' emancipation is involved, but because this emancipation includes the emancipation of humanity as a whole. For all human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and all the types of servitude are only modifications or consequences of this relation.

The claim is that capitalist mode of production causes division of labor and private appropriation which in turn cause conflicts among people. This is
because division of labor causes a cleavage between the particular and common welfare. It denies every individual an opportunity to develop and exercise all their faculties. Under the laws of capitalist commodity production, individual interests are ignored while the product of labor determines human activity. Man's labor under this condition is not voluntary and his productive activity becomes alien power opposed to him instead of being controlled by him.

The work that the laborer does belong to another, for the objects that he produces are appropriated by his employer. The product of his activity therefore, is alienated from him. According to Marx, the worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity, the more goods he creates. The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value of the world of things. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as alienation that the more objects the worker produces the fewer he can posses and the more he falls under the domination of his product, capital.
Conditions of production in a capitalist society dehumanize the worker. In a situation where the products of the worker's creative and potentially self-realizing activity are separated from him, the productive activity is not his own spontaneous activity. It is external to him. At work he does not belong to himself. As long as he cannot produce spontaneously, the spontaneity that is left in him is only that of biological functions like those of any brute animal. A man whose physical and mental energy, whose personal life and activity are directed against himself and are independent of him is self-alienated.

According to Marx, man ought to make his life activity itself something that he controls and is conscious of. His activity is thus distinguished from the activity of animals in that he has a conscious life activity. He acts intentionally. Only for this reason is his activity free activity. Alienated labor reverses the relationship in that man, who is a self-conscious being, makes his life activity or his being only a means for his existence. For Marx, man properly produces when he is free from physical need and only produces freely from such a need. There is in Marx a distinction between real (unalienated) production and mere production in order to survive.
It is in his work upon objective world that man really proves himself as species being, that is, identifies himself as a human being. This production is according to Marx, man's active species life. By means of production, nature appears as man's work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the objectification (or making concrete) of man's species life; for he no longer reproduces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his reflection in a world which he has constructed. Once a man is alienated from the products of his labor, from his productive activity and from his species life, he is alienated from other men.

Students of Marx's thought disagree as to whether Marx held the theory of alienation only in his youth or throughout his life. On the one hand are those like Erich Fromm who deny that Marx's fundamental opinions and emphasis underwent any significant change throughout his career. On the other hand are those like Lewis Feuer who claim that Marx and Engels did abandon the

---


10What is alienation? op. cit. p. 135.
concept of alienation in their later writings and instead made central in their political philosophy the concept of struggle. While it is accurate to say that the concept of struggle is central in their writings, it is a struggle of the working man against alienating relations in the society. Emphasis on struggle, a means to de-alienation in no way amounts to abandonment of the concept of alienation.

Marx put more emphasis on social and psychological forms of alienation before 1847 than after. His emphasis later was upon economic and political forms of alienation. Such alienation was a central concern of the working class whom he believed would bring about the required social revolution. Although alienation remained important to Marx, he always felt that economic exploitation was its main cause and his later works concentrate on economic factors. In his Critique of Political Economy, he declares that with the change of the economic foundation, the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. 11

Perhaps the difference between early Marx and the older Marx is the difference between Marx's philosophical communism and his later proletarian communism which was a matter of strategy rather than of principle as

11Karl Marx and F. Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, Ed. by L. Feuer, (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor 1959) p.44.
Hodges points out. Initially, communism was a theory about emancipation of society at large. This doctrine was however, later found to be impracticable. As long as the proprietary classes did not feel the burden of their own conditions of alienation, and strenuously opposed the struggle of the workers to abolish exploitation, the social revolution would have to be fought by the working class alone. In his concern about self-alienation and dehumanization of man, Marx in his earlier writings was depending on the nature of man for his revolution. He then believed that appealing to the condition of alienation in both worker and capitalist would bring about the emancipation of both from the laws of estranged labor. It didn't work. As a matter of fact, contrary to Marx's predictions, the living standard of industrial workers improved and this reduced the revolutionary potential of the working class, at least of the labor aristocracy in advanced capitalist countries.

The theme of emancipation of labor as the goal of revolutionary socialism is reiterated by Marx throughout his historical and political works as Hodges points out. This them rather than the slogans of a "classless society" or the "abolition of private property" is central to a correct understanding of the political foundation of

---

12Donald C. Hodges, "The Unity of Marx's Thought," in Science and Society, xxviii, (Summer, 1964) p. 317
Marxism. It is repeated in Class Struggles in France (1848-1850), and in the Critique of Gotha Programme (1875). As Marx wrote in his inaugural address to the First International, "the economic emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to subordinate as a means".  

Hodges's observation that the significance of the divergence in emphasis between Marx's early and later writings has to be sought in the difference of strategy rather than principle seems to me accurate. The principle of the abolition of exploitation, formulated in terms of wage-labor or surplus value or class struggle, is the thread that runs through all Marx's writings. Confusion of strategy and principle has led to misinterpretation of Marx. Marx advocated political and economic reform as a strategy to achieve a society that would be free of all forms of alienation; political, economic, social and psychological. Only such a society could allow for self-realization for everyone.

Hodges however, points out that Marx's ethics of humanism and progress are merely strategical, only a means, whose end is emancipation of the workers; that Marx "was a humanist and progressive by convenience only," committed neither to the dignity of man in general nor to

---

the progressive ethos of the enlightenment.¹⁵

Hodges is mistaken on two counts. First, he confuses logical distinction with causal distinction. That two things are logically distinct does not imply that they are causally unrelated. Emancipation of the workers, though logically distinct from the overcoming of social and self-alienation is the means by which the latter is to be achieved. In Marx's way of thinking, emancipation of the workers, that is, resolving problems of alienated labor, is the sufficient means of self-realization. It does not seem to me that Marx's commitment to the emancipation of man was for any other goal than restoration of the dignity of man, something that Hodges in effect denies.

In the second place, Hodges seems to suggest that one cannot be opposed to a moral code or systematized morality in general and yet be morally motivated in such an opposition, something that seems to me too absurd to need refutation. There is no contradiction involved in being morally motivated to oppose a moral system or code the way Marx opposed capitalist morality. Marx saw dehumanization in alienated labor and committed himself to changing the state of affairs.

¹⁵Hodges, Unity of Marx's Thought, p. 321.
It is in this change wherein his moral commitment consists. Karl Popper has sensed this moral commitment to freedom in Marx.

Marx's condemnation of capitalism is fundamentally a moral condemnation.... The system is condemned because by forcing the exploiter to enslave the exploited, it robs both of their freedom. 16

Shlomo Avineri17 has pointed out that Marx's harsh remarks in the Communist Manifesto about the "True Socialists" and their usage of the term "alienation" does not constitute a critique of his own earlier stages of intellectual development. Marx criticizes the heavy handed use of the term by the "True Socialists", not the term itself. As Avineri observes, the analytical argument of Das Kapital is meaningless if not understood within the context of the debate about alienation.

It is true that the word "alienation" hardly appears in Capital, something the proponents of the early/later Marx dichotomy are quick to point out. But in Capital, Marx does speak of reification, that is, transformation of social relations into things or objects, which is nothing but extension of the theory of alienation. Mandel18 points out that the major work of Marx Grundrisse der

Kritik der Politischen "Chonomie (Fundamental Outlines of Critique of Political Economy) Written in 1857-1858 is a kind of laboratory in which all the major ideas of Capital were first elaborated. In this work the word 'alienation', the concept and its analysis are explicit.

In Das Kapital Marx uses not only reification but also "commodity-fetishism". The latter refers to the situation in which owners of commodities are transformed into property of property. Instead of them controlling what they own, it controls them--which is in essence alienation. Money worship is commodity-fetishism. Man is dehumanized in capitalist production because commodity-fetishism changes the values of production. Instead of production serving men and his goals, men both use themselves and are used as commodities to serve productivity process.

Marx's description of labor and its alienation accounts largely for the early industrialization and fails to envisage modern industrialization in which standard of living of the workers has improved owing to increase in wares which is a credit to the modern powerful labor

unions. Ford Motor Company for example, will not make major decisions affecting the workers' wages without consulting the labor unions. In other respects, dehumanization of man at workplace is by and large the way Marx saw it.

Schacht points out that Marx, though basically concerned with the disassociation of labor from the workers' interests and personality, tends to regard submission of labor to the direction of another man as the necessary and sufficient condition of its alienation from the worker. Submission of labor to the direction of another, however, need not entail this disassociation, nor is it invariably presupposed by it. Consider a member of an orchestra. His labor is neither self-directed nor spontaneous. It is directed by another man - a conductor. Yet, as Schacht points out, this "other-direction" by no means precludes self-fulfillment and as such need not be alienated-activity. The concept of alienated labor is too inclusive in Marx.

At the same time one can think of cases in which one's labor is disassociated from one's interests and personality even though it is not under the direction of another. An independent trader who spends all of his

\begin{footnote}{Richard Schacht, Alienation (London:George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1937) p. 134.}

20
life and energy working because he must to maintain him-
self and his family does so not freely but by necessity.
Yet he works for no other man. The concept of alienated
labor need not be understood in terms of surrender to
another as Marx seems to render it.

The problem of alienation of labor was so important
in Marx because he believed that overcoming of this kind
of alienation was a sufficient condition for the over-
coming of all other forms of alienation. For Marx, all
human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker
to production, and all types of servitude are only modi-
fications or consequences of this relation.

The accuracy of this view seems to me in doubt.
This is because there are forms of alienation that are
not entailed by alienated labor. The kind of person who
gains respectability through dubious means is self-ali-
ennated, yet his problem need not be a consequence of alie-
nated labor. That alienated labor has much to do with
alienation in general connot, however, be overemphasized
as will be evident when alienation in Africa is examined.
Marx had contempt for gradualism and compromise where overcoming of alienation was concerned. In his belief that the source of alienation was private property he was utopian in predicting that abolition of private property by means of proletarian revolution would mean immediate freedom for man.
CHAPTER II
DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

Alienation in General

In order to use the concept of alienation to help analyse a contemporary social situation, it is important to clarify alienation in more precise ways than the historical thinkers did. The present chapter attempts to do this.

Alienation has been used mainly by Marxists as a central explanatory concept. In our day, it seems to be applied to any form of ill in society but without much clarity regarding its meaning.

For many writers who use the term, "alienate" means at least "separate", "make strange" or "estrange". The term does therefore denote an act of separating someone or something from somebody. Most users of the term "alienation", however, refer to the feeling in someone estranged from something or someone else or even from oneself.

"Alienation" is thus a two place relation. A is alienated from B. A may be a person, a group of persons, a tribe, a political party, a social class, an employer, an employee or a community at large. B too may be an individual or a group of individuals or B may be identical with A. Frequently, B may be an object e.g., one's product.
of labor or nature. B may even be an activity (productive activity, for instance). It is important to specify from whom or what A is alienated. To simply say, "A is alienated" is to make an incomplete statement.

To say "A is alienated from B" is to call to mind A's background or nature. It implies either that A was formerly a part of B, that A is disassociated from B where he was an associate or that A is in a situation where he is unable to experience the kind of satisfaction, an unrealized potential, he might experience in a different situation. An American cannot be said to be alienated from Ugandan culture, though the culture is alien to him. With respect to American "straight" culture, however, an American hippy is appropriately said to be alienated. The American culture is something the hippy has parted with after its having been his own. That A is alienated from a political leader B implies among other things A's disenchantment from B whom A previously admired. This element of separateness after a state of togetherness is basic in the understanding of alienation. Separateness that does not follow previous unity is not alienation.

The major weakness of the attempts to define alienation as we shall see below is that most analyses pick an aspect of alienation and emphasize it as though
this were all "alienation" meant. In some writings, the emphasis is on the psychological aspect, in others, the moral, still in others the sociological aspect. This approach, it seems to me, tends to reserve the term "alienation" for the specific aspect in which the writer in question happens to be interested. By so doing the term is fragmented to such an extent that each definition offered excludes any other, yet all of them purport to define the same concept.

A more satisfactory procedure is to define the concept broadly enough to accommodate most uses of the term but at the same time require that each specific use of the term (to account for a specific aspect of the concept), be identified preferably by a specific definition. I suggest the following definition:-

Alienation = df. "A feeling of estrangement or separation of one person (or group of persons) from other people, from oneself or from something with whom or which one has previously been (or should be) unified."

A consequence of this definition is that by merely feeling separated or estranged from other people (or from something), one is thereby alienated from them (or it). A paranoiac is for instance alienated from everybody of whom he is afraid in his mistaken belief that they are out to get him.
Modern currency of the concept of alienation has been highly influenced by Karl Marx. In his manuscripts of 1844 is a passage entitled "Alienated Labor" in which Marx summarizes what he means by "Alienation". "The alienation of the worker from his object finds expression as follows according to the principles of political economy: the more the worker produces, the less there is for him to consume; the more value he creates, the more he loses value and dignity; the more his product is shaped, the more misshapen the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous the worker; the more powerful the work is, the more powerless becomes the worker; ....... the more devoid of spirit and slave of nature the worker."

According to Marx, the concept suggests man's unrealized potential as an actor and controller of his destiny; a state in which man is prevented from achieving this potential. Marx worries about production relationships that give rise to the paradox that what should be a satisfying and liberating human activity is turned against the producer, distorts his whole experience and relationship to nature and other men. Marx's suggestion that all types of alienation are consequences of the relation of the worker to production is however dubious. It is not obvious that alienation of a racial group from another is necessarily a consequence of the relation of workers to
production. The use of the concept is therefore restricted when alienation is viewed as a consequence of the relation of the worker to production.

One of the recent authors who have made the concept a central explanatory device in their writings is Erich Fromm. Man's alienation is for example the theme of his book *The Sane Society*.¹ He considers alienation one of the major psychological effects of capitalism. According to Fromm, an alienated man does not experience himself as an active bearer of his own powers and richness; instead, he experiences himself as an improverished "thing" dependent on powers outside himself.

In *Escape From Freedom*² Fromm's theme is that an alienated man will surrender his disposition to choose for himself and embrace tyranny when he cannot live with freedom. As Fromm understands it:

Alienation=df "A mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become estranged from himself".³

---


³Fromm, Sane Society, p. 111
Fromm's definition is circular. "Alien", a part of the definiendum appears in the definiens in violation of a requirement of satisfactory definitions. The definition offered by G. Petrovic' suffers the same defect.

Alienation=df . "The act or result of the act, through which something, or somebody, becomes (or has become alien (or strange) to something or somebody else."^4

This definition also has the consequence that a thing may be alienated from another thing -- a dubious consequence as the interest in the concept arises from its socio-psychological aspect. The definition I suggest avoids this consequence.

In another book, Fromm defines alienation as "essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively as the subject separated from the object". Fromm thus defines alienation in terms of a person experiencing himself as an alien; a person not experiencing himself as the centre of his world; a person out of touch with himself. It is evident that Fromm's discussion centres around self-alienation.

---

4 Petrovic', Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, I, p.76.
5 Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961) p.44.
As Schacht\(^6\) has pointed out, Fromm's actual discussion is concerned with the absence of certain types of experience. Fromm is for instance concerned about the fact that a self-alienated man lacks the proper "sense of self". Furthermore, Fromm's talk about the self-alienated man experiencing himself as an alien is unfortunate in that it implies an awareness on the part of a self-alienated person that his "sense of self" is not the proper one. The suggestion that the self-alienated be aware runs counter to Fromm's intentions since Fromm says that while the self-alienated is "under the illusion of doing what he wants, he is driven by forces which are separated from his self"\(^7\). Similarly, Fromm wants to say that "automaton conformity" is accepted without any "sense of plight", \(^8\) without any feeling that something has gone wrong.

In Fromm, therefore, one finds two seemingly conflicting views (1) that the self-alienated have a feeling that their sense of self is improper and (2) that illusory consciousness of the self entails self-alienation. The two positions, it seems to me, need not be contradictory. The feeling of the self-alienated that

\(^{6}\) Schacht, Alienation, p. 131

\(^{7}\) Fromm, Sane Society, p. 114.

\(^{8}\) Ibid, p. 145.
something to do with their sense of self is improper need not be the feeling that they are actually self-alienated. Once the illusory nature of consciousness of self is detected by the individual concerned, he has made the first move towards overcoming self-alienation. Self-alienation (which involves false consciousness of self), like self-deception, can exist only so long as it is undetected as such by the person in question.

Even though Fromm admits that a self-alienated man may be under an illusion that the experience of his self is veridical he suggests no way of distinguishing veracity from illusion. Yet his own analysis of self-alienation requires that an individual be not self-alienated only if he has a genuine "sense of self".

In another place, as pointed out by Arnold Kaufman, Fromm tells us that the alienated man is under the illusion of doing what he wants while actually he is not doing what he wants. To make sense of this characterization of an alienated man, it seems to me that we would have to have a way of distinguishing "thinking that one wants" from really writing. This Fromm does not provide. As

9 This problem is similar to that of Descartes, namely, distinguishing dreaming from wakefulness.

Kaufman points out, to claim that a person's belief that he wants money-success is illusory -- that he does not really want it -- does not entail that he does not want money-success in the more familiar sense of "want". Possibly the distinction sought is that between want and need. An individual may want drugs while what he needs is food.

According to Kaufman, Fromm's social philosophy is "at root defective" because Fromm fails to tell us what this distinction amounts to. In an attempt to clarify the distinction, Kaufman interprets the want/really want distinction in terms of satisfaction. According to him, that we do sometimes "want and pursue objects which once achieved, fail to satisfy us", is an indication that we do not know what we really want and to that extent we do not know ourselves.\footnote{Ibid, p. 156.}

That a person pursues an object which, once achieved fails to satisfy the yearnings which originally impelled his striving seems to say no more than that he miscalculated the means to his satisfaction. He did not want these objects for their own sake. What one wants is satisfaction of one's yearnings. One may be said to be
estranged from reality (i.e., to have lost touch with reality) because one wants satisfaction where no satisfaction is possible; not merely because one miscalculated the means to possible satisfaction. Kaufman's analysis sheds no light on the supposed want/really want dichotomy, a dubious dichotomy in my opinion.

Kaufman accurately points out that alienation might be defined in such a way as to refer to a feeling, a belief or an objective social condition. He proposes to define alienation as follows:

A person is alienated if "his relationship to something else has certain features which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction." 12

Even though Kaufman claims to be clarifying the concept of alienation as generated by Marx, "self-realization" is replaced by "want/satisfaction", the fact that the two concepts are independent of each other notwithstanding.

Kaufman has himself recognized that his definition is unsatisfactory but for a different reason -- it yields some very dubious results. "It strictly implies that if someone suffers sunburn, his relationship to the sun is such that he may be properly be called alienated." 13

He amends his definition as follows:

A person is alienated-if "his relationship to something else has certain features which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction; the relationship is an instance of a chronic condition in his society; and it can be remedied only through the formulation and implementation of social policy." 14

Suppose A suffers hardships as a result of inflation. Inflation has features which result in avoidable discontent and loss of satisfaction on the part of A. Let us suppose that this relationship is an instance of a chronic condition in A's society which can be remedied only through a change in social policy. A's relationship to inflation satisfies Kaufman's amended definition; that is, A's relationship to inflation is such that he may properly be said to be alienated in that respect. But this consequence is no less dubious than the previous one. As pointed out by Diesing and Piccone, Kaufman's definition is so broad as to cover almost all avoidable discontents. 15

Furthermore, contrary to Kaufman's suggestion, being avoidable is not an essential feature of the concept of alienation. Sartre's and other existentialists' understanding of alienation include unavoidable feelings. Alienation from nature, as well, is considered by some writers, as like Hegel, unavoidable.

14 Ibid., p. 213.
Kaufman argues that the concept of alienation, though useful in the context of moral discourse, is a source of much needless sociological confusion as it is not scientific. As such he recommends that it be abandoned in sociological contexts. I have no sympathy with this view. It seems to me that moral and sociological aspects of alienation go hand in hand. A fruitful discussion of the moral aspects of alienation must also take into consideration the sociological aspects. As Diesing and Piccone have pointed out, "alienation is simultaneously a sociological and a moral concept. It is sociological in so far as it depicts a historically determined type of social relation; it is moral since it embodies an implicit demand for change. According to Kaufman, the fact that alienation is a sociological concept does not imply that it can be put to use in the effort to develop a science of sociology. By the same token, one might answer Kaufman, the fact that a concept has moral roots (something Kaufman accepts) does not imply that it cannot be put to use in a scientific technique.

16Ibid, p. 210
Whereas Kaufman advocates doing away with the concept of alienation in sociological contexts, Lewis Feuer would like to legislate the concept out of existence altogether. It will be evident later in this discussion that Feuer reaches this conclusion after narrowing down the concept to such an extent that what he ends up with is not what we usually mean by "alienation." No wonder he is convinced that what the concept refers to (for him, self-destructive behavior) can be better said without it. For him:

Alienation=df."The emotional tone which accompanies any behaviour in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively." 18

Feuer's argument for doing away with the concept is a polemic directed against the intellectual "who has left the garden of Eden and projects his experience as the examplar of all human frustrations." According to Feuer, it is this intellectual who uses the "metaphor" to misdescribe a small section of society of which he (the intellectual) is part. "The intellectual," adds Feuer, "projects his alienation upon every facet of discontent in the social universe." As Feuer sees it,

18Ibid, p. 143.
the term expresses the mood of disaffiliation, its dominant overtone is social defeat. Feuer's argument is clearly ad hominem.

Intellectuals of the New Left, to be sure, attach a special interest to the concept of alienation. This is especially so when they express the need for the masses to realize themselves by acquiring mastery over their "social destiny". But the use of the concept is by no means a monopoly of this small group. Whether or not the intellectuals' use of the concept is accurately presented by Feuer is one thing. It is quite another matter to use this concept in such a narrow sense.

What Feuer calls modes of alienation, i.e. alienation of class society, of competitive society, of industrial society, of mass society, of race, and of generations are really situations or circumstances of alienation rather than meanings of alienation. They are circumstances which accompany, cause, modify or influence modes of alienation as classified by writers like Seeman,

19 For Feuer, the will to criticise and polemicise is precisely the essential intent behind the idea of alienation.

20 Ibid, p. 137.
Finifter and Dwight. Such modes are for example, powerlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation, etc. The latter are manifestations of alienation. Thus someone in some of these situations will indicate his state of affairs by feeling powerless, isolated etc. Furthermore, the list given by Feuer os by no means exhaustive. Alienation of the colonized is quite different from those listed by Feuer. Moreover, these circumstances are not exclusive of each other. Sometimes class division lines coincide with racial lines. This was the case in colonial African period.

In Feuer's analysis of alienation, any behaviour in which a person is compelled to act self-destructively is a manifestation of alienation. But as I see it, self-destructive behaviour is neither sufficient nor necessary for alienation. Tobacco smoking is self-destructive behaviour but surely we do not consider all smokers


22 See also Feuer, What is Alienation? p.138 and especially his claim that alienation of race is distinct from any other.
alienated simply because they smoke. On the other hand, many individuals are alienated even in the absence of engagement in destructive behavior. Schacht points out, for instance, that since one cannot participate in all groups to which one might belong, one has to make choices in which group one wants to participate. Alienation from group B may be the price one pays to belong to C. There need be no "emotional tone" on the part of the alienated in this case, contrary to Feuer's belief. Marx who wanted to get rid of alienation did not consider it a totally destructive state of affairs. It is rather, a historical necessity, a possible means to the golden age of socialism.

Self-alienation

Both Hegel and Marx have discussed a subspecies of alienation they call "self-alienation." To both Hegel and Marx, "self-alienation" denotes loss of personal identity in the sense that a self-alienated man is not in fact what he is in essence. It is thus a separation from one's essential or real nature. In Hegel, "self-alienation" is used to refer to a disparity between actual conditions and essential nature owing to loss
of some element in the essence of man. Self-alienation is therefore a mode of alienation that involves loss of personal identity. It is an essential feature of self-alienation (like that of self-deception, as pointed earlier on) that while self-alienated, the individual is not aware he is in that state. It is marked by mistaken consciousness of oneself. Realization that one is self-alienated marks the first step towards overcoming the situation. This is the role of "class consciousness" in Marx -- a move towards overcoming alienation.

According to Marx, when I give another the use of my labor, the "self" which is mine becomes the property of another and this constitutes an act of self-alienation. Alienated labor, according to Marx, alienates from man his spiritual life, his human life. Marx is concerned about dehumanization of man. Man's loss of independence, his involvement in what is devoid of any originality, spontaneity or creativity, are indications of man's estrangement from his true nature, the perversion of his productive life.

It is not clear what one is to understand by man's essence and how one's actual existence deviates from this essence or true nature. If a man's essence is vie-
wed in Platonic sense as something in which all men
participate, so that it is by virtue of this something
that men are men, then one who deviates from this esse-
ence will not be a man at all. If on the other hand man's
essence is the ideal towards which all men do strive or
ought to strive, then it is only an approximation, which
no man actually attains. To that extent, all men are
self-alienated to varying degrees.

To hold that being human is an ideal essence, a
state toward which we ought to strive, raises epistemo-
logical difficulties. How is knowledge of this state
to be acquired if no man can be fully acquaintaed with
it, since no man can achieve it?

Petrovic's 23 suggests that a man being alienated
from his human essence means that a man is alienated
from the realization of his historically created human
possibilities. There is however, no clear way of testing
this. On the other hand, to say that a man is not ali-
enated from himself would mean that a man, is realizing
his potentialities, creates new and higher ones. But
this suggestion is not without problems either. One

23Encyclopedia of Philosophy, I, p. 79
still wants to know in what way for instance, these possibilities exist and how we discover them. One would still want to know on what basis man's real possibilities are divided into human and inhuman possibilities as Petrovic observes.

Among contemporary writers who consider self-alienation to be man's separation from his real nature or essence are Erich Fromm, Karen Horney and Ernest Schachtel.

According to Fromm, a self-alienerd man "suffers from a defect of spontaneity and individuality which may seem incurable."24 By conforming to standards set by society, an alienated man "adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns".25 The individual ceases to be himself by means of "automaton conformity" and loses himself. One gets the impression that Fromm is concerned with the disparity between what man is or should be and man's existing condition. Fromm's characterization of the essence of man, however, dispels this impression. For Fromm,26 "the essence of man consists

24 Fromm, The Sane Society, p. 24

in the contradiction inherent in his existence, that he is part of nature and yet transcends it”.

It is unclear to me how the "essence of man" can consist of a contradiction. Moreover, even if one could understand what this essence is, how could a person be separated from it when he is self-alienated? We must either change the definition of "self-alienation" or reject Fromm's explanation of it.

Karen Horney also considers that stifling of spontaneous individuality constitutes self-alienation. In her book, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*, she expresses the view that a non-alienated individual apontaneously asserts his individual initiative, feelings, wishes and opinions. Once self-alienated, this personality is warped and the individual feels the world around him to be potentially hostile. To cope with this situation, the individual develops trends such as self-inflation and overconformity to standards. His spontaneous assertion diminishes. While expression of one's true identity or individuality may be closely connected with non-self-alienated personality, it is unclear how spontaneous assertion is an expression of non-self-alienated personality. Contrary to

---

Honey's view, it seems to me that a self-alienated man can spontaneously manifest "self-inflation" or "overconformity to standards".

In her book, Cur Inner Conflicts, Horney expresses the view that one becomes self-estranged after suppressing or eliminating from oneself what is essential to oneself. "The person simply becomes oblivious to what he really feels... what he really is." There is a gap between his idealized image and his real self. Horney tells us that a person builds up an idealized image of himself because he cannot tolerate himself as he actually is. The kind of person who "becomes respectable through dubious means" and whose "pride in his respectability alienates him from his unsavory past" is the kind of person Horney is describing.

I question Horney's claim that a person can have feelings and yet be oblivious of them. How does one attribute feelings to someone and at the same time claim that the person is "unmindful of them" as Horney puts it? "Unfelt feelings" seems to be a contradiction in terms. I find no way of distinguishing unconscious feelings and

---


29Ibid, p. 115

no feelings at all! If Horney is using "feelings" in a special way she should at least provide her special definition of it.

For Earnest Schachtel, self-alienation is doubt and search for identity. The self-alienated are thus (for him) conscious that at least something is not up to par. His analysis is primarily concerned with those individuals who, unable to achieve a sense of self, accept other than their own personality as a substitute, yet remain dissatisfied and unhappy. Self-alienation, according to Schachtel, always accompanies alienation from others and from the world around us. A self-alienated man lacks a sense of identity and feels like an imposter. While in Horney, the self-alienated have an idealized image of themselves, in Schachtel they feel that they travel "with a forged passport under an assumed name" something Schachtel calls "reified personality".

While elaborating on the assumed identity of the self-alienated, Schachtel stresses the felt aspect of self-alienation. It is not clear whether Schachtel means to

---

imply that the self-alienated while feeling "they travel with a forged passport"; that "compared with others, one is not fully a person"; that "this particular feature unalterably determines the course of their lives"; and that "they are thereby doomed to unhappiness", they are also aware they are self-alienated. Nowhere does Schachtel indicate he recognizes the possibility of false consciousness of self on the part of the self-alienated. Karl Marx, aware of the possibility that the self-alienated may not identify their feelings as those of self-alienation, suggested that the "bretinized" be awakened to the awareness of their fate.

Can the Concept of Alienation be Operationized?

Recently, social scientists have made an effort to identify, define and test various modes of alienation. Helvin Seeman, for instance, identifies five alternative meanings: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. In each case, he provides test conditions to help measure an individual's

32 Ibid, p.75.
33 Ibid, p.77.
34 On meaning of Alienation
35 See Lewis Feuer, What is Alienation? p.140.

Feuer observes, correctly I believe, that alienation has a way of eluding any fixed set of dimensions. This is because alienation is as multipotential as the varieties of human experience. No fixed set of dimensions can be given once and for all.
degree of alienation. As is commonly done by other social scientists, the list of formulations or questions is supposed to pick specific feelings. All it requires of those tested is assent or dissent. By making appropriate responses to those questions a person is considered alienated or not and to a certain degree.

Seeman, instead of defining alienation as such operationally, he defines his chosen modes. For instance:

Meaninglessness=df." A mode of alienation characterized by low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about the future outcomes of behavior can be made".36

This definition fails because as many contemporary theories have it, people can be alienated even when they believe the future is predictable.

Again as Feuer points out, Seeman equates self-estrangement with the notion of other-directedness made famous by David Riesman in the Lonely Crowd. But here too, one finds that inner directed and other directed people may all be self-alienated. A child, according to Riesman, is conditioned to other directedness when it learns that whatever it does must not be valued for its own sake. But as Feuer shows, a Calvinist inner-directed person, who serves his conscience and not public opinion, can be every bit as alienated as the other-directed person. The distinction inner-directed/other-directed is not the same as the distinction non-self-estranged/self-estranged.

36Seeman, On the Meaning of Alienation, p. 786.
That the former distinction is incapable of clarifying self-estrangement becomes clear once an attempt is made to account for the intention or motive in acting the way one acts as well as for the emotional source of alienation. The motive or intention has much to do with whether inner-directed or other-directed behavior becomes alienated or not. Other-directed behavior motivated by genuine concern for others will not signify alienation. If, however, the motive for other-directedness is hatred and aggression meant to humiliate others, alienation will result.

Seeman's attempt at operationizing "alienation" fails precisely because his tests of the dimensions of alienation do not pick all those and only those factors that are relevant. There are alienated people on either side of the supposed dividing line. The alienated may be found among the inner as well as the other-directed; among the powerless as well as among the powerful. Feeling that one is in power possession does not necessarily indicate absence of alienation though it is implied in Seeman's formulation. Furthermore, since Seeman's list of modes of alienation is not exhaustive, even if he were successful in defining each one of them, his definitions would not define alienation as much.
In his article, "Alienation: Its Meaning and measurement", Dean Dwight has also made an attempt at operationizing" alienation". He believes that "Seeman has brought order out of chaos with his five-fold classification". In this spirit Dwight devises formulas to measure what he considers major components of alienation: powerlessness, normlessness and social isolation. But alienation is more pervasive than he seems to appreciate. It will be present "among the powerful as (well as) among the powerless, the normful as the normless, the socially involved as well as the isolated".38

Dwight's formulae to measure powerlessness include the relative strength of the belief that:

(i) There is little or nothing I can do to prevent a major "shooting" war.

(ii) We are just so many cogs in the machinery of life.

In the first instance, the facts of modern warfare would tend to make any respondent to (i) assent. Take the case of the middle East situation, each of the heads of state involved in the conflict would assent to the formular unhesitatingly. Yet these are the powerful.

37Dwight, op. p. 753.
38Feuer, op. cit. p. 142.
Implicit in the idea of society, is the fact that all the members are parts of the social machinery, cogs if you like. Different people take different places in the society to ensure its running smoothly. Since no one individual can be everything, the large as well as the small cogs will be alienated according to formula (ii). Every member of society will assent to the formula thus putting its usefulness in question.

Some examples Dwight gives for testing normlessness are:

(iii) The end often justifies the means.
(iv) I often wonder what the meaning of life really is.

It is unclear how one's belief that the end often justifies the means constitutes normlessness. In a state of war, the combatants' lives acquire direction from the very belief. As for formula (iv), it is hard to see how anyone can seriously fail to assent for at one time or another, all of us are at a loss what life is all about.

Both formulae again fail to do the intended job.

For measuring social isolation Dwight uses:

(v) Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.

Presumably those who assent to this formula are the alienated ones in this respect. But this ignores the other side of the formula, that conformity
to socio-cultural institutions may lead to alienation. Overidentification, for instance, leads to substantial limitation of one's individuality. In such a situation, one craves for the right to privacy. Some inhabitants of communal dwellings (e.g. Kibbutzim) have been known to exhibit this craving at times. Unlimited individuality as well as overidentification will lead to alienation.

It seems to me that any consideration of the social aspects of alienation must bear in mind that people, qua human beings, are in a basic social need for a community. So long as the feeling of community is in one way or another disrupted, the need is dissatisfied, and (as the last chapter of this thesis indicates) alienation will be present among the individuals of the society, other factors (like being powerful or normful) notwithstanding.

Not enough work has been done in the attempt to test the presence of alienation empirically. On the basis of the preceding discussion the effort to operationize "alienation" has been less than successful. But in my opinion, the failure is due to the way the testing formulae are formulated. Take, for instance, "we are just so many cogs in the machinery of life," or "there is little
or nothing I can do to prevent a major 'shooting' war". These formulae are of the kind that anyone at all will give assent to -- whether or not we would normally take him to be alienated. The formulae suggested thus fail to separate the alienated from the rest. Yet the formulae imply that those who respond negatively are free from alienation. The formula for testing powerlessness, for instance, implies that the powerful are free from alienation which is clearly incorrect.

Alienation is in principle an operational concept. As the definition suggested has it, alienation refers to a feeling which can be empirically tested. Indeed, whether or not a given individual has a certain feeling can be objectively ascertained.

It may be objected that such a definition is narrow and as much limits the broad use of the term "alienation" which (it will be urged) generally applies even to cases where feeling is absent. Persons who have false consciousness of their proper relationship to commodities and who view commodity as a force opposed to them are said to be alienated even though they may not feel alienated. But the specific feeling sought in order to determine whether a given person is alienated or not need not be
the feeling or awareness that one is alienated. A feeling of powerlessness with respect to an object which an individual has made but is then removed from his control is sufficient for instance, to indicate that the individual is alienated from what he has produced.

There are identifiable specific feelings which indicate presence or absence of alienation. A paranoiac who has suspicion of everyone in his belief that they are all out to get him is ipso facto alienated from them. The suggested definition does have a way of determining alienated cases in such a way that an alienated person, though unaware he is alienated, will testify to having certain feelings which will indicate his situation at least to others.

Relevance of the Concept of Alienation

After having provided an explicative definition of alienation, I shall now use this concept (in the sense defined) to point out some salient features of emergent African society.

I shall show the importance of the concept of alienation to the understanding of recent African history beginning just before colonial era up to the present.
It will be evident that African social, political and economic problems are those of alienation. European scramble for Africa resulted in cultural, political and economic alienation of the African people and prevented them from obtaining self-determination as a people.

With the help of the concept of alienation, I shall examine economic dependence on the economically developed world, personalization of authority, legitimacy of leaders (or lack of it) and one party system. Above all, suggested solutions of these problems will be seen as means to overcoming alienation.
CHAPTER III
ALLEGATION UNDER COLONIALISM

The colonial era in Africa marked a period during which alienation experienced by the colonized people was a blatant fact. This is because colonialism is a condition characterized by either political or economic and sometimes cultural domination of one people upon another. The consequence of this domination is a state of powerlessness on the part of the colonized in which self-determination is stifled to the extent that the colonized have no role to play in making major decisions that affect their lives.

Clearly, people's own personalities have no chance to flourish where there is no freedom for them to develop themselves. There is no freedom for self development where self-determination has been cut off. The Colonial era in Africa is therefore to be seen as a period during which the African people lost their identity when development of their personality was stymied.

To the colonizers, the time of colonial conquest marked the beginning of the history of Africa -- something that the African people find rather amusing. As though Africa did not have a past, as though Africa was
a *tabula rasa*, they wrote the story of their adventures in Africa and called it "African History". They saw what they wanted to see in Africans and wrote it in such a way that whoever sees Africa through their eyes inevitably gets the impression that the Africans had nothing worth the name of history at the advent of the Europeans. The partition of Africa at the Berlin conference of 1885 licenced these Europeans to exploit Africa’s wealth for the metropolitan economies. To this end they were determined to use *any* means.

To achieve their goals unhindered, the colonialists found it necessary to render the African people powerless as far as posing a threat in any way was concerned. The colonial administrators, settlers and missionaries worked hand in hand setting up a pattern of subordinating and dominating the Africans. Opposition to any of these segments of the colonial power was interpreted as opposition to the others. The education system, both lay and clerical was designed to enhance this transformation. Africa started to be referred to as British, French, Belgian, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. She became a projection of Europe without her own personality. The Africa people became severed from themselves and were no longer able to determine their own destiny.
Colonialism was the sole hindrance to the development of the indigenous people of Africa as such. Yet, despite the whetting of their appetite for education, health and general welfare, very little attention was paid toward meeting these needs. As late as 1960 in Kenya for example, Europeans had compulsory education while for the Africans, education was neither compulsory nor free.

The British colonial government spent $89.60 per year for each European child's education and only $14.00 for each African child1 lucky enough to be in school, even though it was the Africans that needed the aid more. The African student satisfied his yearning for formal education at great sacrifice, determination of will and effort. Some African students, in the words of Nkrumah, had been hand-picked and in a way carried certificates of worthiness with them. These were considered fit to become enlightened servants of the colonial administration. The process by which this category of student became fit usually started at an early age, for not infrequently they lost contact early in life with their traditional background.2


Jean Paul Sartre describes the process by which the European elite undertook to manufacture this native elite.

They picked out promising adolescents, they branded them as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of the Western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, whitewashed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam, we would utter the words "Parthenon! Brotherhood!..."and somewhere in Africa or in Asia lips would open "...thenon!...therhood!"

As for the missionaries (majority of them at any rate), they joined the colonial fraternities and for all the Africans could tell seemed to operate for the same goals as the colonialists. Many had a superior attitude in which no fruitful cultural contact could thrive. They started spreading vicious rumors about African culture and religion that they were primitive and savage. It just is not true that the African religions were as much animistic. Most Africans did not believe that there were spirits in trees, rocks and rivers leave alone worship them. There were Africans (like the Gikuyu of Kenya) at the advent of the missionaries whose concept of deity was misunderstood largely because of the missionaries' wish to generalize. The Western world has rendered ignorant of what to an African, religion is all about.

3Jean Paul Sartre, Preface to The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon, (New York: Grove Press Inc.1968)p.7.
Religion is a whole way of life, a way of looking at the world, or experiencing human living. As a matter of fact, there are no African words for religion as such. It is so much part of normal life that people cannot see it from the whole of their life. People have not felt that it was something apart from what they did, what they thought, how they reacted to situations, and as such they have not systematized it into a different category of existence. 4

Religion to most Africans was a way of life, not merely something to be preached. Professor Mbiti clearly points out that it is religion more than anything else, which colors the African understanding of the universe, and his activity in that universe makes it a profoundly religious universe. This is the philosophical understanding behind African myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions and social relationships. Up to a point in history, this traditional religious attitude maintained an almost absolute monopoly over African concepts and experiences of life. 5 The African attitude toward life, and his view of the universe were based on a religious anthology centered around man. That was long ago.

Then came Christianity from Western Europe and North America and with it demands on the lives of the converts that have persisted up to this day. It seemed as though

Christianity could thrive only on the Western cultural soil. The Africans had to be alienated from their roots to qualify as Christians. As Christianity was presented to the Africans, "being a Christian" and "being civilized" (adapting Western way of life, that is,) were synonymous. A "Western pagan" was a contradiction in terms.

Two indigenous practices that Christianity abhorred were polygamy and initiation rites (circumcision) for females. Any convert who happened to have more than one wife was forced to give all of them up except the first married. These women were made to live the life of widows and their children fatherless lives. There were to be no more initiation rites for the converts or their daughters. Cimmoumcision for boys was to be done Western style. The Western world has always overemphasized the physical aspect of circumcision disregarding all its other aspects. Boys and girls were for instance, deprived of an invaluable psychological and learning experience provided during the initiation rites concerning family life, marriage and sex, that formal schools chose to ignore.

A direct consequence of this neglect may very well be break up in the family ties unheard of in pre-colonial days but prevalent in modern African societies.
Identification of Christianity with Western culture and colonialism has amounted to a devastating blow to Christianity. Under the garb of Western culture, Christianity has not proved to be a satisfactory substitute for African traditional religions. In the colonies especially, the discrepancy between the content of the creed professed by most of those who spread Christianity and their activities amounted to a contradiction that the colonized noticed at once. Religion became a colonialist tool to tame the African people so that they could be easily exploited. One hears it said among the Africans that the colonizers came with the Bibles in their hands and daggers in their pockets; or again that the Africans were asked to close their eyes in prayers only to find out when they opened them that the Bibles were in their hands but their land (and way of life) gone.

Christianity was used to degrade African culture and way of life. Gradually colonialism and its missionary run schools forced and conditioned the Africans to reject what was African in favor of the European. The European way of life became the standard of the "good life". For about all of the Africans, however, the good life was only a dream since it involved financial assets they lacked. The result was an estranged life where they
neither belonged to the traditional way of life nor to the Western. They became alien to both.

The Europeans took it upon themselves to determine the destiny of millions of Africans mercilessly and with incredible inhumanity. Those Africans who resisted the takeover were brutally slaughtered and their villages burned down. Others were taken prisoners, driven out of their lands and forced to labor for their European masters. In the rural areas, Europeans controlled the Africans indirectly through African chiefs who thus became further alienated from their own people. The colonized people developed a feeling of incapacity (powerlessness) to change their condition.

The past of the oppressed people was distorted, disfigured and destroyed. The colonialists tried to convince the Africans that colonization came to save them from their darkness. That the pre-colonial period was the darkest night of humanity. In the words of Fanon, "that if the settlers were to leave, they (the natives) would at once fall back to barbarism, degradation and bestiality."6 In effect, it was being impressed upon the Africans that they had no culture. Colonialism consciously attempted to empty the natives' brains of all form and content. The Africans found themselves in

6The Wretched of the Earth, op. cit., p.210
a cultural conflict, when they were forced to abandon their own cultures. They became estranged from their ethnic roots and were unable to assimilate the culture of the occupying power in any meaningful way. In their cultural estrangement, the Africans lost a past without gaining a future.

The myth that Europeans came to Africa to spread civilization must be dispelled. No nation ever invades another for the purposes of civilization. The real purpose for the occupation of Africa by Europeans was economic gain. Capitalist colonial regimes were set up to carry out the systematic exploitation of Africa's wealth. Desire for economic material wealth is responsible for the oppression of the African people. The traditional means of livelihood having been usurped from the people when the land was taken away, they were forced to sell their labor for money as a means of subsistence. The remuneration for their labor was, however, barely sufficient for their needs which were no longer the same as before.

A completely new class of people who owned nothing and who had to be employed to live was created. Being so forced to work, they did not enjoy it and were in
Marx's terminology alienated from their labor since they were not in a position to appropriate all what they produced.

Many families were forced to move to settlers' farms and live lives of squatters separated from their people. This class was alienated not only from their own people but as well form the class that owned the land. Introduction of capitalism in Africa marked the beginning of the process of dehumanization. Capitalist social relations came into being. People begun seeing each other not as human beings but in terms of material things they possessed or lacked -- a betrayal of the African value system and of the humanist value system in general.

Alienation of colonized people thus had many components. It was political, religious, economic and cultural. It is significant to note that in Africa, political, economic, religious and cultural domination was fused with racism. The takeover was arrogantly under-scored by the presupposition that the colonialists' presence was morally justified by the need to bring "civilization" to a race of people that lacked it. At no time did the question arise whether the Africans wished to be civilized. People who toyed with the destiny
of so many human beings in order to safeguard their material interests had no business assuming a moral posture in the first place!

It is only on the basis of these multiple forms of alienation that African struggle for independence must be understood. It was in search for self-realization or de-alienation that the struggle was forged. The proverbial declaration of Dr. Nkrumah, "Seek ye first political kingdom and all the other things shall be added unto you", was a result of realization that without political independence, that is, without political de-alienation, none of the other forms of alienation can be overcome.

As long as people are politically dominated by others no economic determination or program can be carried out. There is no freedom in the total alienation that colonialism breeds. It was for this reason that President Sekou Touré of Guinea chose total political independence instead of multinational confederation with France. Touré declared in the presence of General De Gaulle in Conakry that poverty in liberty was to be preferred to riches in slavery. It is true that all other former French colonies of West Africa did remain under the French metropole after their political independence and thus accepted limited sovereignty. In contrast, however, I believe Touré
did make the right choice for his country in his belief that it was only by so doing that he and his people would most freely determine the future of their country the way they saw fit and express their own aspirations unfettered by former colonial France. The realities of the twentieth century demanding this position, he, at a great price placed his country in a situation where he could freely choose whom to directly associate with internationally. It was essential that the new nation break the paternalistic attitude of its former colonial power in order to gain complete sovereignty. Algerian struggle for independence waged against France; the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya against the British can correctly be viewed only in the perspective of political de-alienation.

It is evident that political freedom is a prerequisite for self-realization. It is a necessary condition but not sufficient.

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC ALIENATION IN INDEPENDENT AFRICA

Instead of usual colonialism, political independence may sometimes be followed by a new form of colonialism whose essence is in the words of Dr. Nkrumah that "the state which is subject to it is in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."¹

Nkrumah sees the methods of this direction to be various. In an extreme case, the troops of the foreign power may garrison the territory of the neo-colonial state and control its government. Sometimes the new state depends upon a foreign power for its external or even its internal security. South Vietnam is a case in point. The usual control is, however, exercised through economic means. A state may be obliged to import its manufactured goods from one foreign power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. This is sometimes done to pay national debts incurred by the former colonial government to run the colony. Sometimes the state is forced to import from the foreign power this being the

condition of so-called "aid". Developing countries are learning the hard way that there is no aid without bait. Very often the economic activity generated by this economic aid for the benefit of the people in the receiving country is negligible. Surely money given to a former colony and earmarked for compensation to colonial settlers and pensions to former colonial civil servants and therefore never leaves the donor country, does not aid the given state very much. Sometimes the "aid" is earmarked to pay expatriate civil servants in positions where they can influence policy-making.

Monetary control over foreign exchange is sometimes gained through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the foreign power. The developed countries of the world thus use capital to dominate instead of helping develop the developing countries. This investment, ostentatiously called "aid" only widens the gap between the rich and the poor nations. The dangers of this situation come alive when one realizes that economic power and political power go hand in hand. As President Nkrumah has put it, for those who practice this new form of colonialism, it means power without responsibility and
for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. Any state in these financial entanglements cannot truly be master of her destiny.

Economic activity in a country does not necessarily mean better life for the citizens. If uncontrolled, it may very well mean oppression for the masses as the participants may turn out to be only a minority of citizens or non-citizens. Take a country like Kenya whose economy is almost exclusively agricultural. It is surprising to note the amount of control in agricultural industry exerted by monopoly groups international or national five years after political independence.

Sisal is an important cash product in Kenya. The largest sisal agents are Ralli Brothers (Kenya) Ltd. Since independence they have bought a number of sisal estates largely in Taita-Taveta area worth at least K£ 2,000,000. Ralli Brothers make the capital available for producing companies while they themselves play the role of agents for purchasing, transporting, warehousing and shipping the sisal.

Ralli Brothers (Kenya) Ltd. is a London company, Ralli Brothers Ltd. with some 36 subsidiaries. This London company is owned by General Guarantee Corporation

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ XI.\]
Ltd. which in turn is owned by Drages Ltd. another London company which has 85 subsidiaries. Drages Ltd. is in turn owned by the Wolfson Foundation which controls the great Universal Stores Group, a monopoly that owns about 120 separate companies and with a capital of £163,450,000 sterling. This company was 25th in The Times 1967 list of Britain's top 300 companies. In the same year, Ralli Brothers (Kenya) Ltd. shared 30-40 per cent of Kenya's sisal export.

Ralli Brothers (Kenya) Ltd. exemplifies the concealment from the masses of the extent of ultimate foreign control by means of chains of subsidiary companies. Much of Africa's economic activity is controlled by a complex network of foreign companies. Not infrequently, locally operated foreign owned companies take local names for the purpose of concealment. Kenya Bus Service owned by Overseas Touring Company, based in London, is a case in point.

The future of the sisal industry, vital as it is to the economy of Kenya, is thus determined to a large extent by its profitability to foreign owners who exhibit no interest in the long range life of the industry. This lack of interest is shown in terms of the small percentages of profits ploughed back into the development of the
industry. The lives of the workers engaged in the industry are also determined by the profits made by the foreign combines — a very serious problem in a country where neither social security nor unemployment benefits are in existence.

The most important cereal crop in Kenya is maize. In 1965, according to a Commission of Inquiry into the maize Industry, there were 79 registered millers in Kenya. The two biggest millers, Unga Ltd. and Maida Ltd., bought more than 50 per cent of the maize sold by the Maize Marketing Board. Both Unga and Maida were wholly owned and therefore controlled by a single holding company — National Mills Ltd. This company, by the way, also controlled about 90 per cent of Kenya National Mills and thus virtually had the monopoly of the wheat/maize industry.

The chairman of the Kenya Farmers' Association, a co-operative that is the main agent for the Maize Marketing Board, was the chairman of at least eight companies in the grain milling industry including Kenya National Mills Ltd. His vice-chairman in Kenya Farmer's Association also chaired two milling companies and held directorships of at least nine other milling companies. This
raises the question of conflict of interests and in a way points to the monopolistic tendencies characteristic of business in many emerging African states. This is an interesting fact considering that milling is a vital industry in Kenya since it provides the main staple food for local diet just as bread does in Europe and North America. The decisions that are made by a single capitalist concern therefore affect the citizens considerably.

These large companies tend to diversify their interests too. Brooke Bond, an internationally known tea company, for example, operates in Kenya through Brooke Bond Equitorial Ltd. It has a subsidiary, Kenya Tea Company Ltd, owning a tea plantation at Kericho almost eleven thousand acres large, and another subsidiary, Nabroukie Tea and Coffee Company Ltd. with a 696 acres plantation at Limuru. The company owns a factory run by Brooke Bond Kenya Ltd., a company that also handles tea and coffee sales. The Kenya Coffee Co. which processes and exports coffee, is also owned by Brooke Bond. In 1968, Brooke Bond merged with the Liebig's Extract of Meat Co. Ltd. into the Brooke Bond Liebig Group and through this connection have a stake in the Kenya meat
industry. Thus Kenya's main agricultural products, coffee, tea, sisal, cereal and meat products were to a large extent controlled by foreign interests in 1968 and still are in 1973 even if some improvement has taken place since.

Many boards of companies which were European or Asian have opened their doors to Africans, because of pressure exerted upon them to africanize. One notes however, that the Africans accepted by these boards are almost always politically influential people in government or ruling party. Who Controls Industry in Kenya? points out that Mr. C.W. Rubia, the first African Mayor of Nairobi, for example was at the time of its publication the chairman of the Development Finance Company of Kenya Ltd. which invested Kf 175,000 in ordinary shares and Kf 77,593 in 81/4 per cent loan in Kenya National Mills Ltd. He is also said to have held directorship of sixteen companies of Kenya industry among them National Mills Ltd. as well as Unga Ltd. How anyone can effectively direct sixteen different large companies and simultaneously be mayor of

3 Much later this was reported in Africa and the World, January, 1970.
a big city is a mystery. Ostentatiously, these companies hire African directors to participate in the process of africanization but in reality, they are surreptitiously serving their own interests. No wonder they prefer influential politicians! This token africanization in private sector does much harm to the very people it is supposed to help.

The working party of the Christian Council of Kenya\(^5\) reports to have been told that overseas companies invest in Kenya not expecting an annual return of any less than 20 per cent on their capital. They thus expect a return of all their capital in no longer than five years and continue making the profit at the same rate. This is possible considering the availability of cheap labor caused by high unemployment.

Industrial development in many African countries is mostly carried out by private enterprise largely foreign dominated. Tobacco and cigarette manufacturing industry in Kenya at the time of the report was for example totally monopolized by British American Tobacco Company (Kenya) Ltd., a subsidiary wholly owned by British American Tobacco Company (BAT) which is the biggest tobacco

\(^5\)The party that investigated foreign control of industry in Kenya and produced the report in footnote 4.
company in the world owning over 100 factories in 50 countries. Whereas in the past British companies dominated Kenya's economy, to-day, United States of America and West Germany have their private firms sharing in the domination.

As of the time of the publication of the report, the petroleum business in Kenya, as in many other countries, was entirely controlled by the big international oil companies -- Shell, Esso, Agip, Mobil, Texaco, and Total. The oil refinery at Mombasa was built by Shell/BP in agreement with the other companies that they would have access to its services. East African Oil Refineries Ltd. owned the refinery. Even though locally available personnel could direct the refinery, its directors at the time were eleven British, five American, and one Dutch. With effect from January 1, 1971, the Kenya Government acquired a fifty per cent shareholding in East African Oil Refineries Ltd. as was announced by the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning. With fifty per cent share, the Government's plan is to have the control of the oil industry which is so vital for the development of the country. It is encouraging to note that under the agreement, the management of the refinery will be answerable to a new Board of Directors half of whom,
including the chairman, are appointed by the Government.

In the area of book publishing, foreign domination is very much the rule. In East Africa, British firms such as Oxford University Press, Heinemann, Longman, etc., dominate the industry. These firms do hire Africans to participate in africanization as required but decisive positions are occupied by Englishmen. What is made available for the African readership is thus largely determined by foreigners. Largely, because East African Publishing House, which is Kenya owned has been established to meet this need. It is only that the competition warded by these entrenched foreign firms is formidable.

The newspaper publishing is also foreign owned in Kenya. The main publishing groups are: The East African Standard and the Daily Nation. They both publish in both English and Swahili. The Standard group is owned by Consolidated Holdings Ltd. which is in turn controlled by Lonrho, a London based international giant firm, highly diversified. Aga Khan is the principal shareholder in the Nation group. There is a great need for a press owned and staffed by Africans to provide different viewpoints. The advertising carried out in these papers, and there is a lot of it, can and does only inculcate the capitalist values of self aggrandisement, the very values Africans
should be working hard to uproot in my opinion. Most of the advertizing is done by foreign owned agencies largely British (e.g. S.H. Benson Ltd.) and American (e.g., Skyline Advertizing Co.).

The intentions of the Kenya Government concerning vital economic enterprises in the country have been made clear. The President has said that it has been his intention that certain provisions or enterprises of fundamental importance to the people or the State should be placed in public ownership or under public control. It is in the spirit of this contention that the Kenya Government has taken over control of the Oil Industry, East African Power and Lighting Company and is now engaged in taking control of the major banks in the country. This is only a small step towards full economic control that the Kenya Government and underdeveloped countries as a whole must make their final objective.

The question of timing of this public control of ownership arises. It concerns the period between political independence and economic independence as it were. It would seem that the sooner the transformation is carried

---

out the better. For continued presence of and domination by the same institutions that the people fought during the struggle for independence undermines the people's confidence in their regime and in themselves as a self-determining people. After all, independence has to be felt as a living reality by the majority. Nowhere can it be felt more than in the economic activity of the country. The annual rise of the Gross National Product will not mean much to a citizen who is jobless especially when he knows that the job he might be holding is held by a non-citizen. The economic activity must be geared to benefit the citizens. The way what is produced is distributed among the citizens as well as control of economic activity, will indicate whether the citizens remain economically alienated or not.

A government may have the best of intentions regarding the welfare of its people, but when alienated from piloting the economic activity of its country, it is powerless as far as effecting these intentions is concerned. The gradual takeover of control over the economic activity has the advantage of continuity and growth of production without interruption. But this advantage is outweighed by the betrayal of the citizen's confidence when in the process, self-realization is inhibited. Besides, foreign
firms know all along that they cannot exploit the African state concerned indefinitely. In the meantime, their policy as that of any profit motivated organization is to make the maximum profit possible. They therefore hire the minimum number of employees thus creating the high percentage of unemployment. Cheap labor practices ensue as a consequence. Without unemployment benefits, unemployment may mean either cheap labor or starvation.

Current events in Uganda as she struggles in her "economic war" point to the need for economic de-alienation. Before 1972, Uganda's more than ninety per cent of all commerce and industry (agricultural or otherwise) was in the hands of non-citizens (Europeans or Asians). (Let this indicate that there is nothing unique concerning Kenya's economy that could not be said about other African states' economies). The Europeans and Asians in Uganda's economic activity had no interest in the development of the country that continued to enrich them. In the words of President Amin, "they did not feed the cow that they milked dry". Even though Uganda was ostentatiously politically free since 1962, she has been economically alienated all along as other African emergent states to a large extent still are.
CHAPTER V
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ALIENATION IN
INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES

As observed earlier, colonial emancipation, though a necessary condition for self-realization is not a sufficient one. In the words of Senghor,

A people is not really independent when, after its accession to nominal independence, its leaders import without modification institutions -- political, economic, social and cultural -- that are natural fruits of the geography and history of another race.¹

Senghor correctly points out that a purely nominal political independence does not amount to self-realization. It may satisfy national pride but it does not eliminate the awareness of alienation, the frustration, and the inferiority complex, since it cannot by itself solve the concrete problems confronting the underdeveloped countries whether formerly colonial or not, housing, clothing, feeding, curing and education the masses.² A people that has just emerged from the colonial era, must bear in mind that foreign political domination is only part of complex alienation that colonialism entails for the colonized. Colonial political emancipation has many

²Ibid. p. 21.
ramifications which the nation in question must bear in mind. In the end, success or failure in overcoming the sequels of colonialism determines to a large extent whether or not a people becomes really free.

Aime Cesaire\(^3\) has distinguished de-colonization per se from what he calls "good de-colonization". The latter hastens the maturation of self-awareness. In its independence, good de-colonization takes as its task a definite break with colonial structures: it rejects as models those countries liberated from a colonial yoke which yet maintain colonialist structures. Such nations though politically free have yet to capture their own identity and realize themselves as free.

The period immediately following political independence is very crucial indeed. The citizens have high expectations to improve their lives, especially those who sacrificed all that they had during the struggle to bring about the collapse of the colonial regime. At this juncture, political independence means different things to different people. To the surviving freedom fighters, living in hiding all through the struggle, it means compensation, the forms of which are as varied as individual fighters.

To the landless squatters living on the colonialist settler’s farms it means taking over these farms and never again having to sell their labor cheaply to foreigners for substandard subsistence. Some people look back to pre-colonial days when the evils of colonialism were unknown and dream of retrieving that past.

The changeover from the colonial era to the independent era in many a former colony did not turn out to be what the people expected. They had looked forward to living the sort of lives the colonialists lived when they were overthrown, but there was no way these high expectations could be realized. It must be realized that those people who experienced all kinds of frustrations in their colonial powerlessness, looked upon political independence as panacea. Disappointment in some quarters was therefore inevitable since many people could feel no tangible change personally. This tended to perpetuate rather than alleviate frustration.

In many instances, the new regimes replaced the colonial personnel with the local elite (persons superior in education or otherwise) in the government offices, schools, and public services but did not change the actual proceedings and relationships in these places. When this happened,
it reinforced the fears of those who viewed the change-over as nothing but the "exchange of guards". To
many people it seemed as though the new regime, though
denouncing the colonial regime, was copying its mode of
conduct as an example in its attitude toward the citizens.

Frantz Fanon has observed that the national govern-
ment, before concerning itself about internation prestige,
ought first to give back to all the citizens their dignity
and create for them a human prospect. Problems for the
new regimes in underdeveloped countries of the world are
formidable. While funds are highly limited, there are
domestic problems of survival of the citizens most of
whom are in dire need for basic necessities of life.
Abroad, the new state is expected to play its role inter-
nationally as a sovereign nation legally co-equal with
any other including its former colonial power on which it
may still depend for financial aid. Like that of any other
country, its domestic programs are affected by its foreign
policy. When a newly independent state sets up embassies
in world capitals, it means a considerably substantial
fraction of its budget must be set aside for the purpose.
The more emphasis the new regime puts in its international
image, the more adversely its domestic programs are affect-
ed. African leaders are beginning to realize that a sound

4The wretched of the Earth, p.315.
international image can be based only on a firm domestic foundation.

In the early days of independence, nationalism, heretofore directed against the colonial regime, serves the nation better by being transformed into social consciousness among the people. There is a common purpose, that of improving the quality of life for all as they see no other justification for their own government. They compare and contrast their regime with the former colonial regime and talk in terms of what political independence has brought them. There is always the danger of the citizens being unrealistic and expecting more than the new regime is capable of delivering. But social conditions are of foremost importance when the citizens evaluate their government. Unsatisfactory social conditions are often responsible for the disenchanting state of affairs in many African states. People who have a high rate of unemployment in the midst of illiteracy and the resulting poverty can hardly be expected to admire their regime.

Immediately after political independence, the explicit or implicit mode of social and economic development that the government opts for sets a pattern that is hard to deviate from in later years. It is for this reason
that the formative years in the life of a state are so crucial. Before Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika became independent it was widely hoped that a federation among them would take place immediately after independence. However, the British colonial government set each of these territories free at a different time. Each set out its own way by itself with different personalities wielding power. The economic development in Tanzania has followed quite a different path from that of Kenya. Every effort to merge since independence has been defied even though the leaders of these states believe that a political federation would be in the best interest of all concerned. President Nyerere was aware of this problem when he offered to delay independence for Tanganyika until the other countries were ready to take the move together.

These countries of East Africa to-day, though members of the East African Economic Community, compete for economic favors internationally as different nations which in fact they are. Nationalism in each tends to be divisive so that a Kenyan is a foreigner in Uganda and vice versa. Before independence, all East African countries operated as a unit with common currency, no immigration or customs control among them and with free labor market. It is no longer so. National rivalry based on national pride
has brought about rifts between people originally of the same community but now split by national borders.

African Socialism

In spite of many avowed political ideologies in different independent African states (most of which claim to be African socialist), in practice many are perpetuating the same economic and social patterns established during the colonial era. They emphasize individual gain and free enterprise. Yet free enterprise in a state where only a small percentage of citizens have education, commercial sophistication and the necessary capital for competition is a nightmare to all others. The masses are condemned into a quagmire from which it is almost impossible to extricate themselves. The spirit of individualism and the competition exhibited in free enterprise do not enhance social consciousness. On the contrary, it has harmful alienating effects among the people.

In 1962, President Senghor of Senegal convened a colloquium at Dakar on African Socialism. The purpose of the colloquium was to attract the attention of African leaders "to the importance of development and the need to choose the most efficient ways and means to this development". An attempt to define the concept of African Social-
at this colloquium was a failure. Different leaders interpret it differently though they all find its basis on the African past. In the words of President Nyerere:

Modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage, the recognition of "Society" as an extension of the basic family unit. But it can no longer confine the idea of the social family within the limits of the tribe, nor, indeed of the nation.5

For Kwame Nkrumah, socialism is based on science and as such is universal. One cannot therefore, talk about African Socialism any more than one can talk about African Mathematics. Nkrumah however, agrees with the other African leaders that "when socialism is true to its purpose, it seeks a connection with the egalitarian and humanist past of the people before their social evolution was ravaged by colonialism."6

In an essay, African Socialism Revisited, Nkrumah argues that the African spirit of "individual well-being, seen in terms of group welfare must be developed in a modern technological setting. The aim should be remolding the African society in such a way that the humanism


6Consciencism , p. 106.
of traditional African life will reassert itself in a technological community. He is for a synthesis of modern technology with humanistic values aimed at promoting social well-being. Nkrumah castigates those Africans who call themselves socialists in a "charismatic effort to rally support" for policies that do not really promote economic and social development. They are those who put forth documents containing socialist proposals but who never implement them. They thus create credibility gaps that help alienate them from the citizens.

The Kenya Government's Session Paper no 10 also indicates a general agreement as regards the statement for the basis of African Socialism. "It is meant to convey the African roots of a system that is itself African in its characteristics". The emphasis on the need for a political and economic system of development which is not a blueprint of any foreign ideology but one that draws on the best of African traditions and is adaptable to new and rapidly changing circumstances.

Generally speaking then, African Socialism is taken to be a synthesis of African socialist traditions with modern borrowed technological methods to foster economic,
social and political development. Leopold Senghor, in an essay *The African Road to Socialism* emphasizes the humanist aspects of African socialism. The communal spirit afforded by traditional African life from the societal base is to be developed through the common understanding of historical roots which provide a sense of total being both with oneself and with others. Senghor differs from Nkrumah largely because he does not believe one single scientifically devised model for economic planning is possible whereas for Nkrumah, the single structure for any economic development must be the dialectic of historical materialism. It is in this sense that Nkrumah sees universality in socialism.

Several African governments do agree that African socialism is an ideology to help them in their development. It is meant to combat alienation of the Africans from their traditional roots. The concept of African Socialism like that of African personality being however, interpreted differently by its different proponents, it remains a source of confusion and suspicion. Many proponents of African Socialism have not committed themselves to equal distribution of economic resources even though this is the aspect that gives African socialism its appeal.
Tanzanians take exception to this. 8

President Kenyatta once addressed Mr. Bildad Kaggia (a well known politician) publicly as follows:

We were together with Paul Ngei in jail. If you go to Ngei's home, he has planted a lot of coffee and other crops. What have you done for yourself? If you go to Kubai's home, he has a big house and has a nice shamba. Kaggia, what have you done for yourself? We were together with Kung'u Karumba in jail, now he is running his own buses. What have you done for yourself? 9

Kenyatta was arguing ad hominem against free distribution of land to the poor landless citizens. Here a public figure is being discredited because he has not accumulated much for himself. He is being evaluated solely on the basis of personal wealth rather than national service. This is contrary to the ethic of African Socialism, according to which lack of material possessions is not to be equated to lack of ingenuity and initiative or laziness. This method of evaluation clearly ignores the traditional African respectful attitude toward men as men, regardless of possessions.

8See "Ujamaa in Practice", in African Development, (December, 1970). Socialism (Ujamaa) as understood in Tanzania is a strategy for development as well as an ethic of distribution. It is the basis of self-help communities known as Ujamaa villages. More about these later.

In a situation where people are moved by a consuming hunger for accumulation of things, human life becomes a means to that end. In many African countries, people are resorting to traditionally adhorrent antisocial behavior such as armed robbery and violent demands as a means of acquiring things. Kenya's newly passed capital punishment for armed robbers; Nigeria's public executions of armed robbers and Uganda's "shoot kondo on sight" campaign testify to an attempt to control effects whose causes are to a large extent ignored. Marx once observed that men would not behave according to truly human standards until they lived under truly human conditions.

On Violence

Professor Ali Mazrui estimates that the most fundamental problems confronting African countries are (1) the crisis of national integration and (2) the crisis of political legitimacy. The first crisis comes about because different clusters of citizens do not as yet accept each other as compatriots. The sense of shared nationality has not been fully realized. Its prime manifestation is tribalism. The Biafran situation is a case in point.

10Violence and Thought, p. 192.
The second crisis is "because significant numbers of citizens are not convinced that their government has a right to rule them."\textsuperscript{11}

Lack of national integration causes alienation of neighbour from neighbour; doubtful legitimacy causes alienation of the ruled from the rulers. The two aspects of alienation are not independent of each other. A country afflicted with tribalism (crisis of integration) may find itself in a crisis of legitimacy simply because the rulers come from a nonrepresentative tribe. On the other hand, rulers undergoing a crisis of legitimacy may by aligning with a segment of society cause a crisis of integration by polarizing the society and using divide and rule tactics. Colonial governments are known for this kind of tactic.

Violence perpetrated by Africans seems to have increased with the advent of independence. Mazrui points out that political assassinations and military insubordination are usually symptomatic of the two crises above. He explains the increase of violence by pointing out, correctly I believe, that in a post-independent situation getting rid of a prime minister or president has a better chance of causing more significant change in a country's

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
orientation than getting rid of say a governor in a colonial situation. \(^{12}\) Behind a governor is a whole institution that he found there and that will continue independently of him. African leaders on the other hand, tend to personalize the office of the head of state so that when the leader goes the "institution" around him goes as well.

The African Leader

The advent of nationhood is frequently accompanied with deification of African leaders in the early days of independence. This is sometimes a result of search for eminence for one individual. In some leaders, it tends to be a cult of personality. The former chairman of the Convention People's Party wrote the following about Nkrumah:

To us, his people, Kwame Nkrumah is our Father, teacher, our brother, our friend, indeed our lives, for without him, we would no doubt have existed, but we would not have lived; there would have been no hope of a cure for our sick souls, no taste of glorious victory after a lifetime of suffering. What we owe him is greater even than the air we breathe, for he made us as surely as he made Ghana. \(^{13}\)

When Ghanaians called Nkrumah "the Osagyefo", he was to them a Savior, a Superman. In fact some of them claimed that Nkrumah would never die. He encouraged them

\(^{12}\text{Ibid., p. 195.}\)

to erect monuments in his honor and name streets and public places after him. In many African countries, the currency bears the image of the ruling head of state. Streets and public places that are not named after him will sometimes be named after the members of his family, his wife particularly.

It is not uncommon in Africa to see the seat of power so personalized that people cannot think in terms of the office as opposed to the individual occupying it. The head of state tends to run the state as though it were his private property while the people immortalize him in their thinking. The leader in turn may use the adulation for self-perpetuation. In these circumstances, a leader may make himself a life president. Kamu u Banda of Malawi is a case in point. 14

A leader accorded such a super-human position tends to manipulate the citizens who in such a situation identify with the leader and become uncritical of him. Such a leader is self-alienated when he assumes a super-human identity. Criticising such a leader is deemed almost sacrilegious.

President Nyerere of Tanzania, unlike many African leaders, has resisted the temptation for such adulation. He has discouraged every attempt to name public places after him. When a newspaper in Zanzibar in 1965, suggested that Nyerere be made President for life, Nyerere discouraged the move warning against the dangers of citizens' excessive surrender to any leader.
Cultural Conflicts

Consciousness of the alienation of the African from his culture and the conflict between his culture and the western culture seems to be more evident in post-independent Africa than it was in the colonial days. Perhaps in their belief that the African people are now in a position to revive or create their own culture, they now dramatize this more than ever before. The concept of *Negritude* in its heyday was a manifestation of the same consciousness. "Negritude" was understood as "the sum total of the values of the civilization of the African world" as opposed to the western world. Fanon points out that "the concept of *Negritude* was an emotional if not the logical antithesis of that insult which the white man flung at humanity." Negritude was a result of the people's awakening to the degradation of the African culture by the colonial system.

Modern African literature has used the cultural conflict as a theva emphasizes the confusion caused when the Africans were uprooted from their culture but not firmly established in the western culture. Writers have pointed out the conflict between the young educated generation and their elders who have a different and always complex
values. The elders tend to cling to the traditional ethic which served traditional society but is no longer wholly adaptable to the new mode of urban life. Professor Mbeki has expressed the new culture as follows:

It is a culture of the alphabet and comics, of pop music and transistor radio, of television and magazines with pictures of semi-naked women, of individualism and competition, of mass production and ever accelerating speed of life. Men and women are forced to live in half cultures which do not unite to form a single culture. Those who bring the foreign culture give it to Africans only in part while withholding the other part; and they kick away part of their traditional culture while retaining the other part.17

The African has his cultural heritage, his extended family ties, his connection with his ancestors, his concept of mutual social responsibility, his values toward human relations, his code covering relations between young and old, his attitude toward life and death. All these have a deep meaning to the African regardless of his clan or tribe. Yet they are now so eroded that our youth are willing to copy blindly anything they come across -- hippyism not excluded. They adopt foreign ways of life that they do not understand and that conflict with what should be their own. They are alienated from African culture.18

17 African Religions and Philosophy, p. 221
18 The Sunday Nation, (April 2, 1972) has a Commentary in which Anene Onahby examines influences of Western civilization on African culture and traditions.
Contemporary African writers have awakened their readers' consciousness to the dehumanization that has taken and is taking place in many areas of African life, just as Charles Dickens awoke his people's consciousness to the inhumanity of his day.

Chinua Achebe in his *Man of the People* portrays a grossly corrupt, self-seeking Nigerian politician who has no qualms getting involved in a graft. His name is chief Nanga but Nanga could be any politician or civil servant in any one of the emergent African states.

Cyprian Ekwesí portrays greed and corruption in a formerly idealistic African upon entry into politics. In many independent African states entrance into political life is a sure step into instant wealth, power, and glamorous life. In it, they seem to live in a world of their own.

She was thinking how ordinary people she knew became transformed by this strange devil they called politics, when so transformed a man placed no value on human life, all that mattered was power, the winning of seats, the front page appearance in the daily papers, the name read in the news bulletins.  

Ayi Kwei Armah has written about modern westernized Ghanaians who after independence have busied themselves  

preaching socialism but who seem never able to accumulate enough property to satisfy their greed. Lust, power, money and prestige have so infested the ruling group that Armah, after observing the situation, is at last desperately forced to conclude that the beautiful ones are not yet born; many citizens have dispaired with Armah. They face a crisis of legitimacy that alienates them from their leaders.

Class Consciousness

That there are class distinctions in Africa is a fact as has been shown by Kwame Nkrumah. Class struggle, in a way the struggle between those in power and the ruled, was a fact all through the colonial era and its remnants still exist though they have taken different forms.

Class division in modern African society became blurred to some extent during the pre-independence period, when it seemed there was national unity and all classes joined forces to eject the colonial power....and after independence class cleavages which had been temporarily submerged in the struggle to win political freedom reappeared, often with increased intensity. 21

During the colonial days, the class cleavage was more or less along racial lines. The European colonizers who had both political and economic power formed the privileged class that oppressed the Africans as a class. In those countries where a third race was prominent like that of the Asians, it formed an intermediate class as was the case in East Africa. Privileges were accorded to these classes in that order.

There were, however, exceptions to this classification. For some Africans, chiefs and civil servants in particular, enjoyed privileges not available to the rest of the African masses. They enjoyed these privileges as a reward because they were used by the colonial system of indirect rule as agents to enhance the domination.

Nkrumah has correctly pointed out too that this class which thrived under colonialism is the same class which is benefiting in the post-independence period. Its basic interest is in preserving capitalist social and economic structures.

Economic and social patterns of traditional Africa were based on communal or extended family ownership of the means of production especially the land. It is true that even under communalism all people did not own things
equally. However, social distinctions were not clearly defined by what individuals possessed or lacked. When Europeans took the land away from the Africans, the means of production was taken, and the former also acquired political power. Since the Africans no longer owned these means of production, they were forced to sell their labor for subsistence thus forming a powerless working class.

It was thus during the colonial period that the two main categories of class, the ruling class and the subject class were distinctly defined. Those Africans who formed the class of the petty bourgeoisie were those in the professions, teachers, civil servants, officers in the armed forces and the police. Their western educational background and position of privilege inclined them to capitalism. This group formed a tiny fraction of the African population.

In the independent African states, where class distinctions among the Africans are clearly pronounced, the bourgeois class is made up of such people as the heads of state, their ministers and members of parliament, large land owners, traders, top civil servants, professional and managerial people. It is in general the ruling class. It is in many ways like the former colonialists in that
they live lives of privilege among vast masses of exploited people.

In the underdeveloped world, this ruling class stuffs itself with wealth, paying itself fat salaries that the economies of their countries do not warrant. The standards of life they adopt cannot be supported by their economies either. It is not unusual in some African states for the head of state, his ministers and members of parliament to exempt themselves from some taxation. In the words of Fanon, in these poor underdeveloped countries, where the rule is that the greatest wealth is surrounded by the greatest poverty, the army and the police constitute the pillars of the regime. Scandals are numerous while ministers and members of parliament grow rich. The whole government service, from ministers down to the simple policeman and the customs officer, all join in corruption.22

In many African states, one sees numerous politician-businessmen and politician-landowners. Since they are the most highly paid group in the country, politicians have access to funds that no other group has; they also use their office for their personal advantages. Knowing the present situation will not last indefinitely, they make the best of it and in the meanwhile alienate themselves from the poor masses.

--- The Wretched of the Earth, p.172
A Brazzaville newspaper, The African Weekly, addresses the princes of the regime as follows:

You who are in good positions, you and your wives, today you enjoy many comforts; perhaps a good education, a fine house, good contacts, and many missions on which you are delegated which open new horizons to you. But all your wealth forms a hard shell which prevents you seeing the poverty that surrounds you. Take care.
Western colonizers have left indelible marks in the countries once under their influence. In Africa, for instance, social, political and economic development have been patterned after the colonialists' model. This is not surprising since almost all African leaders have received their education and training from their former colonial masters (to be use in colonial administration).

In spite of verbal repudiations of the West, in practice the way of life in Africa is an emulation of the West. Africa's people are suffering from the same forms of alienation as the people of the Western world. African cities like Nairobi, Kampala, and Lusaka are fast catching up with New York, Chicago, London, and Paris in crime and materialism.

It is the Western standards of the "good life" and values that the African elite struggle to copy without seriously considering the realities of Africa. Those values tend to be those of the capitalist ethic of the survival of the fittest, ignoring human dignity and social justice. What material acquisitions a man has made, his car, his home, his mode of dressing etc. are what
confer status on him. The manner in which the acquisitions are made seems not to matter at all. Nor does satisfaction of basic human needs seem to be basic purpose of wealth. These attitudes exhibit alienated acquisition and alienated consumption.

The elite control the media of communications (radio especially) and are therefore able to influence tastes and opinions of the masses to the extent that the masses also acquire this materialistic attitude towards possessions. Advertising and salesmanship form the link between production and wants. As Kenneth Galbraith1 and many others well point out, these cannot be reconciled with the notion of independently determined desires to bring into being wants that previously did not exist. Their central function is to create desires. Production to some extent fills a void that it has itself created by advertising. Standards of real needs and judgements as to what is necessary or luxurious are set by the advertisers, not by the consumers.

A person who accumulates wealth to satisfy his passion for power and prestige is estranged from himself since it is this passion that drives him. His relationship to himself is warped as his sense of self stems from

his "socio-economic role" as Fromm would put it. By and large, the man who possesses wealth in this manner sees himself as a commodity and as such loses the dignity and value that he should have as a human being. Just as commodities are objects without a sense of self, people who have become commodities have lost their sense of self. They are alienated from themselves.

Western capitalism is a mode of economic development that most emergent African states are perpetuating as a colonial legacy. Even when an African government nationalizes banks, insurance companies, mining companies, oil companies etc., it is not because of the general belief that private ownership is not to be tolerated. Rather, it is because these companies happen to be in foreign hands. When Zambia nationalized foreign assets, insurance companies etc., President Kaunda announced that for Zambians, as far as private business enterprise was concerned, "the sky is the limit". The same is true in Uganda where most of the business, large tea, coffee and sugar estates taken from expelled non-citizen individuals and groups, have been transferred to individual Ugandans. Kenya's actual economic development is capitalist (with some government participation) even though the declared policy is that of African socialism.
Even though it does not appear to me that any one factor is the cause of alienation in Africa, capitalism is clearly a contributing element. According to President Nyerere, capitalism went wrong when it divorced wealth from its true purpose. The purpose of wealth is to satisfy basic needs: the need for food shelter, education etc. The true end of wealth is banishment of poverty. But the moment individuals in any state begin to use wealth, not for the satisfaction of these needs, not for the abolition of poverty, but for the purpose of acquiring power and prestige, then wealth misses its goal and tolerates poverty. Any socio-economic system that makes a few people rich and the majority poor, creates a state of affairs in which wealth exists side by side with poverty. This holds true even in the developed world. The United States of America, the richest nation on earth, the most technologically developed and therefore the most powerful, sets a monumental example of greatest wealth existing side by side with poverty.

---

It does not seem to me possible that a capitalist economic system can avoid alienation of man from others and from himself. This need not imply that a socialist economic system is entirely free from alienation either. Any advanced industrial society, whether capitalist or socialist, will have some measure of alienation. The effects of working in a factory where machines set the pace are felt equally in both systems. Productive methods are equally impersonal. As someone has commented, "fitting nuts and bolts in a soviet factory is no less soul-destroying than in a Western factory."\(^3\)

In a socialist set up, however, the worker's life is not constantly under the threat of redundancies or unemployment. The worker is not entirely at the mercy of the impersonal and fluctuating market. It is lack of relatively decentralized decision-making (as exists in Yugoslavia), lack of job security and presence of capitalist materialism that make alienation more intense under capitalism than under socialism.

For an individual to be politically alienated is for him to be in a situation where he feels he has no stake in a political process in which he is supposed

to participate. Such an individual may feel that even if he were to participate in the political process, say by means of voting, his vote would make no difference. He may believe that his community is controlled by a minority of powerful individuals using public office for their own good.

Different modes of political alienation may be identified. Following Helvin Seeman's typologies of forms of alienation, Ada Finifter⁴ has identified four: political powerlessness, political meaninglessness, political normlessness and political isolation.

"Political powerlessness" is defined as an individual's feeling that he cannot affect the actions of the government, that the "authoritative allocation of values for the society" is not subject to his influence. Finifter has in mind the feeling of lack of political efficaciousness, a manifestation of political powerlessness. In many emergent African countries one finds a widespread belief that political decisions are not influenced by the voters but rather controlled by a minority of individuals who remain in power in one way or another.

regardless of the election outcome.

"Political meaninglessness" is said to exist to the extent that political decisions are perceived to be unpredictable. As Finifter accurately observes, this mode of alienation is distinguished from political powerlessness in that in the case of the latter, decisions may be clear and predictable, but are simply not subject to the influence of the individual. In the case of meaninglessness, the individual perceives no discernible pattern. The unpredictability of political decisions is only one form of political meaninglessness. Meaninglessness may be present because there is no real difference between the candidates so that the voters have no real choice. It may also be caused by lack of clarity in or familiarity with the issues involved. Unfamiliarity with the issues has much to do with political meaninglessness in Africa since majority of the African people is illiterate.

"Political normlessness refers to the fact that the individual's perception that the norms or rules intended to govern political relations have broken down, and that departures from prescribed behaviors are common. When social and legal rules regulating political activity are
conveniently ignored, this is a sign of political normlessness.

"Political isolation" refers to the rejection of political goals that are held widely and shared by other members of a society. It differs from normlessness in that in the latter the individual implicitly accepts the norms which are ignored for convenience. An individual who rejects a political system that he finds normless, meaningless and in which he finds himself powerless, becomes politically isolated and therefore politically alienated from the system. The one party system, prevalent in African politics, is a major cause of political isolation in Africa to-day. Former leaders of banned opposition parties find themselves in this state of affairs when they cannot in good conscience support the only party in the country. Oginga Odinga of Kenya is one case in point; Simon Kapwepwe of Zambia another one. Both these men were Vice-Presidents in their respective countries until they were disenchanted, resigned, formed and led opposition parties. These parties were soon banned and the leaders jailed only to be released when those in power decided these men were politically neutralized.
As observed by Pappenheim, 5 politically alienated voters generally believe that those who choose a political career are driven solely by the desire for power and are without sincere concern for the people they pretend to serve. That even though they profess an interest in the general welfare, they are really divorced from it and are only using it for their own personal ends and political careers. The practice of electoral politics in many parts of the world confirms this belief. After the electorate vote a candidate into office, he assumes personal power and prestige. In Africa it is almost expected that such elected leaders will use their office for self-perpetuation, thereby deviating from their original purpose of serving their constituencies.

In many emergent African countries, election into parliament is a means to instant wealth. Salaries, allowances and privileges are enormous. What M.P.'s are elected to do seems not to matter much. Parliament debates have had to adjourn on several occasions in Kenya because the quorum could not be made. It is common knowledge that many M.P.'s fail to attend the parliament's meetings because of their private business interests.

The feeling that representative democracy is a fraud is getting more and more widespread in Africa. This is largely because of the failure of civilian governments to demonstrate that democratic procedures can be relied on for the good of all. Of the forty-one independent states of Africa only a handful have not experienced non-democratic military rule in their short period of independence. Ghana has gone from civilian government to military government, to civilian government and back to military government. A military dictatorship that is sensitive to social and economic needs of the masses will be preferred by the majority to a corrupt civilian government based on parliamentary institutions. Nigerian present military government is a case in point. It enjoys more popularity than the previous civilian government. In some countries like Uganda to-day, the general attitude towards politicians is that of suspicion and distrust; and given the previous civilian government's activities of harrassing and arbitrarily detaining citizens without trial, this is understandable.

Africa is going through a stage in which a popularly elected government, once it has lost confidence with the citizens, will "voluntarily" hand over full government powers to the military if the latter is relatively free
from corruption. Madagascar is a case in point. In May 1972, President Philibert Tsiranana granted full powers to Major-General Gabriel Ramanantsoa to form a military government and head it.

The main reason why large segments of society in many African states become politically alienated is the changeover to a one party system. This is particularly so when the changeover is imposed upon the citizens by the ruling party. "The single party", Fanon has remarked, "is the modern form of dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical". Often such a party becomes divisive because it is run on ethnic lines. The imposition of one party is often a desperate move on the part of the regime when it has failed to bring about harmony in social relations and its very survival is threatened. Frequently, the one party system amounts to a license to carry out the wishes of those in power unopposed. The excuse often given is that an underdeveloped state cannot afford the "luxury of an opposition". Yet many citizens are aware of the real motives and suspect that political activities in a one party state are less efficacious than in a multiparty state. The effect of voting in a one party state is, for instance, that of a

6 The Wretched of the Earth, op. cit., p. 165.
rubber stamp endorsing the wishes of the party bosses, especially of the president who also is the head of state. There are those who support the party for no other reason than their desire to get their share of fruits of independence.

Clearly in such a state, voters are politically powerless as they can hardly influence the course of events by means of political action. As there is no real choice between candidates or parties, political action (like that of voting) is ineffective. Citizens who reject such a political system are politically isolated and thereby alienated from the political system and its adherents.

It is thus evident that a combination of a single party political system and capitalist economic system is to blame for much of the alienation (political and social) in emergent African states.
CHAPTER VII
OVERCOMING ALIENATION

There is no agreement whether or not alienation can be overcome. There are writers who see it as a permanent aspect of human existence. Sartre, for instance, in his *Being and Nothingness* as well as in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* expresses the view that alienation befalls one from external sources over which one has no control. On the other hand, are those who believe that alienation can be surmounted. Karl Marx is among the latter. For him, capitalist industry and its division of labor[^1] are the causes of alienation which can be overcome by means of abolition of private ownership of the means of production. Marx was too optimistic in believing that de-alienated labor is a sufficient condition for wiping out all forms of alienation once and for all. However, I believe there is every possibility of overcoming some crucial forms of alienation and of minimizing others.

As we have seen, alienation refers to such attitudes as feeling politically powerless on the part of individuals because they believe their community is controlled by a selfish minority; feeling that voting is meaningless.

[^1]: See chapter on historical remarks: Karl Marx.
because there is either no clarity of issues involved or no real choice between candidates; and the feeling that the whole political process is a sham because socially acceptable norms are deviated from. All this can be alleviated by a return to socially acceptable political procedures. Where political powerlessness, meanlessness and norlessness are surmounted, there too is political alienation surmounted or at least minimized. The chances there too are improved that the majority of the citizens will accept the political system and participate in it.

Even though de-alienated labor can not eliminate alienation of man in its totality, it can produce a better quality of life at workplace and elsewhere. A man who enjoys his work is more likely to enjoy his life than a colleague who does not. The moral interest in the problem of alienated labor demands that transforming conditions be effected to bring about de-alienated labor. Satisfaction in man's relation to the condition of his labor is, for instance, the objective aimed at in Yugoslav workers' councils. This satisfaction may be brought about by individual participation in decision-making rather than merely following orders passively.
In Yugoslavia, Workers' councils are self-governing bodies elected communally by members of a factory or co-operative society. Each council organizes social and cultural activities of its working community and elects delegates who represent it on the management boards of its enterprise. The decisions reached by the board, such as those of production or recommendation of the manner of distribution or reinvestment of profits, must be accepted by the workers' council.

The decentralised character of Yugoslav economy has the merit of lessening the bad effects of bureaucracy or red tape. The right to run a firm is in the hands of the workers. They elect the workers' council which is turn decides the rate and quality of output, the amount of investment, level of employment and the criteria for hiring and firing workers. The workers' council also decides the wage rates of which the take home pay depends on the size of firm's profits. The state owns the means of production allowing workers its use for nominal charges.

The Yugoslav model will recommend itself to underdeveloped countries in their economic planning as it has the capacity to avoid many alienating conditions. It tends to remove competition from individual level to
group level (i.e., level of firms). Within a firm or co-operative community, one expects co-operation among the individual workers to maximize profits that are allocated to wage fund, business fund (reserve fund, investment fund, collective consumption fund for recreation halls, workers' apartments, vacations, etc.). Instead of having bureaucracies run firms, co-operatives and communes, workers participatively run them here again increasing chances for minimizing alienating conditions.

Another model of social and economic development that would seem to eliminate alienating relations is that of Kibbutzim in Israel. These are voluntary agricultural collective farms characterized by communal living, collective ownership of property, and communal rearing of children.

A number of writers\(^2\) have indicated that in a Kibbutz, the entire community becomes a large extended family. Members of a Kibbutz see each other as comrades, not merely as fellow citizens, co-residents or co-operators. The welfare of one is felt to be closely bound up with the welfare of the others. If spiro's appraisal of life in

a Kibbutz is accurate, then it would seem that alienating conditions are overcome or at least minimized in a Kibbutz. The communes are governed by the principle of mutual aid, thus eliminating petty rivalries and destructive competition. Every member contributes to the settlement according to his working capacity and has his needs satisfied communally, thus ensuring absence of exploitative mentality prevalent in a cash nexus. Unlike in the Yugoslav co-operatives, hired labor is proscribed in a Kibbutz. The idea is to have participating only those who own the undertaking. That each member be his own boss is the idea behind the collective settlement which need not be only agricultural. In some Kibbutzim factories and some medium sized workshops have been added for the production of building materials, machinery and all sorts of food products.

In a Kibbutz community, an individual is valued as a member of a family. As a result he does not regard himself with feelings of unworthiness or of self-abnegation. He does not have to feel debased before a bureaucratic machine or a party. Since his relationship with

\[ \text{Wilford E. Spira, Is the Family Universal? pp. 833-44.} \]

\[ \text{A shortage of labor in certain seasons has however, forced the Kibbutz to employ labor thus contradicting an important principle.} \]
others is that of respect as a human being, he reflects the same attitude toward himself. In the Kibbutz economy, there is need for every member; each person finds his own place. It is the condition for high consideration of every individual. Society has no hostility toward the individual and he in turn does not hate himself. The very refusal to hire labor is supposed to exclude the possibility of exploitation of hired labor which results in social stratification and alienation of man from man.

There is an egalitarian aspect in the Kibbutz community life. No type of work is considered as more important than any other. Each is considered equally necessary and as such equally dignified. With respect to distribution of funds for maintenance, all members are equal. Even though factory specialization is necessary, as members of a Kibbutz, differences in specialization do not count. All members share equal responsibilities and equal rights. Members of these communities are committed to their goals towards which they exercise their individual initiative.

There are no special classes in a Kibbutz. Children are raised together as though they belonged to one family. This has the benefit of avoiding heterogeneity in social status. Kibbutz membership is completely voluntary. One can leave a Kibbutz and move to the cities.
or join another one. Young people may leave a crowded Kibbutz and form a new one of their own. There is a complete absence of authoritarian leadership.

Lewis Feuer⁵ has pointed out that even small egalitarian, co-operative agricultural societies like kibbutzim of Israel contain some nodes of alienation. The Kibbutz life, according to Feuer, involves people who when they become desperate, flee to their tents to shut out the world, "petty, noisy, full of shadow and darkness".

He points out as well how people in such a situation will react to communitarian by going off by themselves; how pettiness and selfishness creep in, even in the midst of their community based on equality and fraternity. Feuer's point is well taken. Those things will happen even among members of the same family. One must not forget that it is possible to exchange unbearable sense of powerlessness and isolation for spurious togetherness. Overidentification is a node of alienation. There is nothing inherently identifiable with kibbutzim however, that entails overidentification. There are times for most people. When togetherness must give way to being alone. A matter of the Kibbutz, like any one else, will at such a time feel that it is his right to be alone. One can have this need without necessarily being alienated. For the Kibbutz itself

⁵Feuer, op cit, p. 114; idem, op. cit., p. 12.
family flats and tents for single people in a Kibbutz is to cater to this need.

It may be argued that the Kibbutz life is too ideal to recommend itself to many societies; that only people who have experienced the cruelties and persecution the Jews have, will find a haven in a Kibbutz where an individual can find strength from those who have suffered like himself. But economic democracy modelled after kibbutzim, which would allow the factory worker as big a voice as the manager, in a general meeting on the running of the factory (except where expert opinion is needed), recommends itself to any society.

Kibbutzim combat alienation by maintaining the individual's sense of direct participation in the organic life of the community. Unlike any bureaucracy, the General Meeting, rather than any leaders, is the supreme governing body of the Kibbutz. It meets about once a week with a two-thirds of membership forming the quorum. Members have the chance to participate actively in the debates and thereby determine their own life as well as lessen chances for ambitious politics to thrive. The social-economic problems of a Kibbutz have much to teach the rest of the world, particularly the case for the under-
Professional political classes are avoided in a Kibbutz because political leaders have close connection to collective communities. They are members who happen to have expertise in political affairs. Unlike other political leaders, they are not motivated by personal ambition for wealth or power to dominate others. A political leader in a Kibbutzim has no more special place than a factory expert. Kibbutzim produce cabinet ministers who continue to share with the rest of the people in their day-to-day experiences.

It may be objected that even in Israel the system of Kibbutzim is shrinking if not disappearing. Shrinkage of Kibbutzim, however, cannot negate the usefulness Kibbutzim have served the nation of Israel in its formative years. The system is largely responsible for transforming a desert into a fertile land. There is no reason why a system has to be permanent to be useful. Different periods in any nation's history may be suited by different systems of development. It seems to me that a typical emergent African state, poor, underdeveloped, largely agricultural, yet having little experience in modern agricultural methods, stands to gain in adopting a system like that of Kibbutzim. The spirit of community necessary
for such a system is still very much the way of life in rural Africa. An ideal Kibbutz is an "organic community" that has attained social justice, economic equality and individual freedom. Tensions in such a community are minimized. It seems likely that shrinkage of Kibbutzim has to do with the capitalist overall form of government in Israel as well as increasing materialist values and individualism which breed attitudes that are incompatible with communal living.

The counterparts of the Yugoslav and Israel collective communities in Africa are the Ujamaa villages (self-help communities) of rural Tanzania. 'Ujamaa' means socialism. These villages are voluntary, socialist communes whose members have expressly agreed to live together, produce together and share the fruits of their toil. Ujamaa villages have economic growth as their main objective but they are based on basic moral principles: the preservation of human dignity, promotion of social and economic justice and fostering of the spirit of self-reliance. In these communes, social justice is expressed by means of equality of opportunity, a more egalitarian society, and diffusion of economic and political power among many people.

Ujamaa villages, while improving the standard of living for individual members, play an active role in developing the economy of the country as a whole. The communities produce more than individual peasants produced when they were scattered all over the country engaged in subsistence agriculture and using primitive implements. The villagers market their products collectively.

Collective Ujamaa farming has done much in correcting the trend whereby the urban areas develop more rapidly than, and at the expense of, the rural areas. More and more people are occupying their time usefully right in the rural areas instead of flocking into the cities in search of hard to find jobs. Ujamaa villages, by helping develop the rural areas are helping bridge the social-economic gap between the rural and urban citizens, something that any attempt to combat alienation must not ignore. This is part and parcel of the bigger war against maldistribution of what resources are available—a problem that concerns all nations.

Ujamaa villages are patterned after traditional African communities whose solidarity ensured security for all. Every grown up has a say in the running of business on the farms as well as in the villages. The central government has authority over taxes administration but
there is relative absence of bureaucracy to impose its will on the communities. The communal spirit in Ujamaa villages based on extended familyhood is worth cultivating especially in connection with overcoming alienation.

Alienation is prevalent in modern society where sense of community has been so seriously weakened. Yugoslav, Kibbutz and Ujamaa communities exemplify what Robert P. Wolff calls "rational community". A rational community, according to him, is the reciprocity of consciousness which is achieved and sustained by equals who discuss together publicly for the purpose of social decision and action. It is an activity, an experience among morally and politically equal rational agents who freely come together and deliberate with one another for the purpose of concerting their wills in the positing of collective goals and in the performance of common actions. Effective community, according to Wolff, is the reciprocal consciousness of shared culture, the mutual awareness that there are many together, not many alone.

Self-reliance, a strategy of social, economic and political development would suit an emergent African state as it (the strategy) encourages a rational reorganization of the state and its internal relations by its

---

own people. A self-reliant state seeks self-determination and some control in its interactions with other states.

Without control as an equal, the association of a poor underdeveloped state with international capitalism or any other international self-interested groups makes it difficult for the poor state to develop. The advanced group's or nation's domination of economic activities accompanied with the group's or nation's centralized decision-making power at its headquarters deprive the underdeveloped state of self-determination. If the poor state does not watch out it will always have a subordinate role. An unbalanced partnership involving a national or international firm and a poor state will give rise to dependence on the part of the poor state and lack of control in economic development since the poor state is in no position to direct her economic activity to suit her needs.

Nationalization of major industries and other major commercial concerns or placing them in the hands of cooperatives after the Yugoslav model is desirable. Collectively owned home capital is to be preferred to privately owned, domestic or foreign, capital as the former can benefit more people. If African states nationalize, they will be able to carry on without privately owned foreign capital. Slower though the development may be,
there will be less alienation. Nationalization must however, be accompanied by reorganization of society and its economic and social institutions to reflect the local realities and remove the distortions and blind imitations caused by too reliance on the outside. This has the advantage of bringing the majority of the population into the national economic activity as well as fostering cooperation and a greater degree of unity in national life.

Dependence on great powers, economic or otherwise, should be curtailed gradually. Political interests of great powers are as global as their power. They are more likely than other states to ignore (or not be interested enough in) the affairs of small states wielding no influence. Frequently, great powers become patronizing and manipulative of economic and other relationships hence the poor state's independence.

Receiving aid from such medium range states as Canada, Sweden, and Switzerland with advanced economies but not preoccupied with dominating other nations is desirable so long as the poor nations must have external aid in one form or another. The aid so received should be aimed at promoting self-reliance by means of developing innovative skills that will enable local people to adopt technology
to local conditions and resources.

For effective utilization of science and technology in small poor nations, self-reliance must replace subservience. The natives must put their ability to control and direct their affairs into practice even if some borrowing of techniques and skills from abroad is unavoidable. The present situation in the laboratories of African universities and research establishments which are dominated by foreign experts and scholars, who often do not bother to adopt their research to local needs and conditions should be rectified. Self-reliance should give local people a chance to be imaginative and assume responsibility, thereby restoring their pride and self-respect.

Evidently, Yugoslav, Israeli and Tanzanian communities are experiments to put democratic socialism into practice. It may be argued that modern communities which tend to be large in numbers and national in scope do not allow direct democracy to be practiced. But the ideals of the communal life we have examined can be approached as a limit, difficult though it is to attain them the larger the society involved. The principles on which well socially integrated communities can be founded are the best suited to combat alienation.
A self-reliant, self-determining and socially well-integrated community has the atmosphere conductive to free expression of creative potentialities. Such a community enhances its chances of being effective in Wolff's sense (i.e., having reciprocal consciousness of shared culture). For in the words of Fanon, a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself in existence. A culture involves a shared consciousness of values, of social relations and of the conception people have of their future objectives. This consciousness may be expressed in music, dance, folk roles and in creations of artists, writers and technicians. Reciprocal consciousness of shared culture also gives a people an identity needed by any nation for self-awareness.

That certain forms of alienation will always be with man cannot be denied. Man must however, distinguish those forms of alienation which can be overcome or at least minimized, and do what he must to that effect if his life is to acquire meaning.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Articles**


Hodges, Donald C. "The Unity of Marx's Thought". *Science and Society*. (Summer 1964), pp. 316-323.


Petrovic, G. "Alienation". *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, I.


