

seen to be so in other cultural contexts. This cultural dimension of aggression has led experts to consider the nature of aggressive feelings, i.e. whether they are inborn and primary or stem from social conditioning and education. Theories which focus on the ethological and instinctual nature of aggression have often been used to justify violent and aggressive behaviour. This is why many scholars prefer not to consider aggression to be an inborn drive, but see it as the outcome of an individual's relationship with the environment, and consider the drive towards love to be the only true essence of human beings (Gindro, 1993). [S. G.]

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**ALIENATION** (It. *alienazione*; Fr. *aliénation*; Ger. *Entfremdung*) The term 'alienation', which comes from the Latin *alienus* (other, estranged, hostile), is widely used to describe people who experience separation or estrangement within modern society and is instilled with both sociological and psychological meaning. Indeed, the term is used to describe the feelings of modern human beings who are unable to influence the social mechanisms and functioning of a capitalistic society and is thus connected with any condition of deprivation of power – especially in the sociological sense – and the related psychological feelings and emotions.

Any attempt to reconstruct the history of the use of the term in Western culture must consider the juridical, religious and philosophical connotations of the term and the religious debate which preoccupied German philosophers of the nineteenth century. Since this period, the term 'alienation' has been used to describe a special condition of powerlessness. The nineteenth-century use of the word offers a clear explanation of why the term is so often used to describe the social and psychological conditions of migrants and marginalized people (MARGINALIZATION) today and to identify the reason for such phenomena. Yet economists and sociologists have failed to explain why some people migrate and others do not, given equality of economic and social conditions, and the fact that MIGRATION is not just a matter of poverty or demographic pressure but also includes an individual dimension (PUSH FACTORS – PULL FACTORS). This dimension can be described as a condition of detachment (or alienation) from the migrant's original world. In the English language, the connection between the

**ALIEN:** see FOREIGNER

condition of alienation and the condition of being a migrant is evident in the use of the term 'alien' to indicate a foreigner or migrant.

#### **EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT: FROM JURIDICAL AND RELIGIOUS ORIGINS TO PHILOSOPHICAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The term 'alienation' has its origins in the field of jurisprudence, where it signifies the giving up of an object, either in exchange for compensation or gratuitously, or the cession of a person considered to be an object, if the laws so permit and SLAVERY is legal. The modern meaning of the word also has theological antecedents. According to St Augustine, the greatest pain of eternal punishment was precisely the fact of being alienated from God. According to Calvin, man's alienation from God was the most serious consequence of original sin. With Rousseau the term takes on a more philosophical sense. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau used the term to define the yielding of individual rights to the community as part of the constitutive process of a society (Camporesi, 1974). Contrary to this, the proponents of natural law theorized about the existence of 'inalienable' rights, that is to say, rights which human beings cannot yield. Later some of these were solemnly proclaimed in the declarations of rights issued during the French Revolution, and most recently in the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

In classical German philosophy, *Entfremdung* denotes the process of exteriorization of the Spirit from nature and, generally speaking, exteriorization of the Other from the self. This use, which is already present in Fichte, was later taken up and extended by Hegel,

though not without being influenced by the philosophy of ancient idealism (Plato had already represented matter, nature and life as being other from the pure Idea) as well as the Protestant pessimistic theology and the contractualism of Rousseau. In Hegel's philosophy the term indicates the process through which the Spirit initially posits precisely what, for it, appears to be other or strange. Feuerbach uses the word in a quite the contrary, materialistic sense. He no longer makes reference to Humankind. In his view, divinity is only a human creation which alienates its own qualities in God, emancipating them . . . estranged from humankind and dominates it. In 1844 Marx (1963) applied a rigorous critical analysis to Hegel's conception starting from Feuerbach's materialistic positions. According to Marx, 'in the conditions described by political economy' (namely, in capitalist society) the object which is produced by labour appears to the worker as an 'extraneous entity', like a 'power independent from the producer'. Labour becomes attached to an object and the accomplishment of labour, its objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) takes on the character of a loss or enslavement to the object; its appropriation by the capitalist as estrangement (*Entfremdung*) or alienation (*Entäusserung*). Marx stresses the difference between objectification and alienation. Objectification, or human work and its results, is only alienation in the conditions described by political economy, within capitalist society, and more generally the society of classes. This distinction allows him to conceive of alienation as a historical or social fact, and not as having come about as a result of an original fall, or a metaphysical condemnation or a natural destiny. Thus, in Marx's view, redemption from alienation is possible. It should be remembered that since the 1930s

German existential philosophy has formulated a conception of alienation even more radical than that of Marx. Alienation is described as the condition of people, mortals thrown into a flimsy world which they do not, or cannot control and in which they are destined to live for the most part an inauthentic life. [U. M.]

Camporesi, C. (ed.) (1974) *Il concetto di alienazione da Rousseau a Sartre*, Sansoni, Firenze.

Marx, K. (1963) *Opere filosofiche giovanili* (1844), Editori Riuniti, Roma.

Marx, K. (1970) *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, London, Lawrence & Wishart.

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of alienation in one's native environment is perceived as a cause of migration. Consequently, the condition of being mentally alienated and that of being estranged from one's own native community tend to overlap, providing an interpretation of the migration process and related feelings of distress. The psychiatric conception of the migrant as alienated has contributed to host societies' transformation of the complex phenomenon of the presence of foreigner-migrants into a psychiatric problem. This latent concept of the migrant as mentally ill, or already alien from their own native society, has even entered our social unconscious (UNCONSCIOUS) and has contributed to intensifying discrimination and PREJUDICE against migrants.

## SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MIGRATION

Alienation, because of its wide range of application (separation or estrangement from the product of one's work, from oneself, from one's society, or from one's own culture) has become a concept which increasingly belongs to the discourse of the social sciences. In particular, in the field of migration studies, alienation has long been viewed as both the cause and result of migration.

### *As the cause of migration*

Migration, as well as being approached as an economic, political or social phenomenon, has also been explored from a psychiatric perspective and from this perspective it has long been interpreted as the manifestation of a psychiatric pathology (Frigessi/Risso, 1982). Psychiatry uses the term 'alienation' for any type of mental disorder which renders the individual 'incapable of behaving normally in society' (Pieron and Poirier, 1978). Thus, the precondition

### *As the result of migration*

The psychiatric model described above – which treats alienation as a cause of migration – has gradually shifted emphasis, and the condition of alienation has more and more been perceived as the outcome of migration. The causes for the distress felt by migrants and foreigners have been increasingly sought for in the social, cultural and psychological rootlessness that came along with their condition. Handlin (1951) wrote that the history of immigration is the history of alienation. Solitude, isolation, estrangement, lack of available help, separation from the community, desperation as a result of the loss of meaning are the features of alienation which characterize the condition of immigrants. According to this viewpoint, immigrants live in a state of crisis because they have been uprooted. In this state of rootlessness, the old links have been lost while the new ones have yet to be established, and immigrants

experience extreme distress. More recently, Cornell West has analysed the reasons for the detachment or alienation of African-Americans. This author suggests that the proper starting-point for the crucial debate about the prospects of black America is an examination of the nihilism that increasingly pervades black communities:

*Nihilism is to be understood here not as a philosophical doctrine that there are no rational grounds for legitimate standards of authority; it is, far more the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness and (most importantly) lovelessness. The terrifying result of all this is an unwitting detachment from others as well as a self-destructive attitude towards the world. A life without sense, without hope, without love generates a cold merciless vision of things, one which is destructive of the self and of others. In black America nihilism is nothing new. The first contact of Africans with the New World was marked by the Absurd. (West, 1994: p. 14)*

From this perspective migrants can be seen as prisoners of two worlds and alien in each: they are estranged from their past and estranged from their present and future: they are lost in a hostile world, and may feel intense longing for the old and distant way of life, something which may become the object of agonizing idealization. Thus migrants are viewed as often afflicted with a particular kind of pathology: NOSTALGIA or homesickness (nineteenth-century psychiatry used the terms *lipomania* or *melancholia delirante*) which can be cured only when the migrants return to their place of origin.

Not all scholars agree or recognize that a major cause of alienation is the condition of being a foreigner *per se*: their position is that the prime cause of alienation is the extent of discrimination and marginalization present in the host society. Having studied the relationship

between alienation as a result of work and other phenomena, Seeman (1959) found that ethnic hostility (ETHNICITY) contributed very little to the alienation of black Americans, which was more likely to be based on their lack of power. Seeman suggested that an analysis of alienation should be based on five factors. The first was lack of power, the impossibility of an individual to influence the outcome of events through their own behaviour; the second factor was lack of meaning, that is, difficulty in predicting the results of one's behaviour; the third was a lack of norms, or a situation in which norms and rules have been broken; the fourth was isolation, the attribution of low-level values to goals and beliefs cherished by society; and the fifth was self-estrangement, that is, becoming estranged from oneself. Indeed, it is not surprising that K. B. Clark and M. P. Clark (1947) in their celebrated and controversial 'doll study', found that African-American four- and five-year-olds were showing aversive reactions to the colour of their own skin (DIVERSITY-SIMILARITY).

The concept of estrangement or alienation as one of the consequences of the history of slavery is closely related to Franz Fanon's interpretation of the concept of alienation in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). He treats alienation as being the particular condition of those who have been colonized (COLONIALISM). [M. B.]

Bastide, G. (1971) *Anthropologie appliquée*, Payot, Paris.

Clark, K. B., Clark, M. P. (1947) 'Racial identification and preference in Negro children', in Newcomb, T. M., Hartley, E. L. 1958, *Readings in Social Psychology*, Holt, New York.

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function had already been attributed to 'social constraints' (*contrainte sociale*), which Durkheim (1893) considered indispensable to the development of 'mechanical solidarity' and not – unlike 'organic solidarity' which was based on the division of labour – the result of egoistic considerations.

Altruistic behaviour is widespread both in humanity and in many species of animals. Among the 'social insects' (bees, ants and termites), it is a rule for sterile members of society. The phenomenon of altruism is so important that even Darwin (1871) had cause to think that his theory of evolution through natural selection (EVOLUTION) was fatally flawed. Evolutionary biologists seek to attribute aggression, male dominance, selfishness and other similar phenomena to genetic biological causes. Altruism is treated as an expression of latent self- or group interest. When evolutionary psychological explanations take an extreme reductionist form in which the gene is the prime actor and the organism is simply its carrier, altruism becomes incomprehensible. Social scientists recognize a complex relationship between human biology and CULTURE, rendering altruism understandable both in terms of human values and human need. Altruism is also a problem for rational choice theory action. Learning theories state that altruism is learned through reinforcement and imitation. According to cognitive development theories, however, it is the development of cognitive structures which leads to altruistic choices. With the discovery of the UNCONSCIOUS, psychoanalysis showed that all humans' actions, gestures, words and thoughts are supra-determined, i.e. the result of many stimulations, often contradictory with regard to one another and the chosen gesture of behaviour, thought or word. Moral and social values have not

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**ALTRUISM** (It. *altruismo*; Fr. *altruisme*; Ger. *Altruismus*) The term derives from the French *altruisme* (from the spoken Latin *alter*, other), and was first coined by Auguste Comte, as a contrast to 'egoism'. He also put forward the maxim on which it was based: 'live for others', and used the term to describe an action which brings an advantage to a person other than the performer of the action, at some cost or risk to the latter.

With regard to the social and cultural heritage left by humanity throughout the course of evolution, much mention is made of AGGRESSION but little of altruism. As Hinde (1974) put forward, this is not related to the scarcity of altruistic behaviour in animals (altruism in this case having exactly the same connotations as when referring to humans), since altruistic behaviour is far more common than aggression among members of the same species. It is connected to the ideological position of the study as is often the case in the social sciences. In sociology, the same