

# Noumenal Alienation: Rousseau, Kant and Marx on the Dialectics of Self-Determination

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## Abstract

This article argues that alienation (as *Entfremdung*) should be understood as a particular form of individual and social heteronomy that can only be overcome by a dialectical combination of individual and collective autonomy, recovering a deontological sense of normative authority. If we think about alienation in Kantian terms, the main source of alienation is a denial of standing or, in the extreme, losing a sense of oneself as a rational normative authority equal to all others. I call the former kind of alienation, where persons deny others equal standing as a normative authority in moral or political terms, first order noumenal alienation, as there is no proper mutual cognition and recognition of each other in such a social context. I call the latter kind of alienation, where a subject does not consider themselves an equal normative authority – or an ‘end in oneself’ – second order noumenal alienation (again, in a moral and a political form). In this sense, alienation violates the dignity of humans as moral and political lawgivers – a dignity seen by Rousseau, Kant and Marx as inalienable: It can be denied or violated, but it cannot be lost.

**Keywords:** alienation, autonomy, dignity, justification, Kant, Marx, normative authority, noumenal power, Rousseau

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But one who makes himself a worm cannot complain afterwards if people step on him. (*MM*, 6: 437)<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Alienation and the Inalienable

In the following, I argue that alienation should be understood as a particular form of individual and social heteronomy that can only be overcome by a dialectical combination of individual and collective autonomy, recovering a deontological sense of normative authority. I discuss

alienation in the sense of the German *Entfremdung*, not in the sense of *Veräußerung* or *Entäußerung*. Kant, Hegel and Marx use these latter terms for the transfer of property or for the objectification of one's labour as a form of property, that is, for certain forms of what we can call externalization. As these philosophers, following Rousseau, emphasize, some of these forms of externalization lead to alienation as *Entfremdung* because they contribute to modern forms of slavery, which is a (or maybe *the*) paradigm case of social alienation. This points towards my main thesis which concerns alienation as a loss or denial of autonomy, thus not relying, as is usually the case in alienation theory, on a particular notion of authenticity.

Alienation as *Entfremdung* has been one of the central concepts of Hegelian and Marxist social criticism,<sup>2</sup> and their debt to Rousseau is often acknowledged. However, the importance of Kant is largely ignored, leading to a particularly one-sided alienation theory that is in danger of neglecting its moral and political point.<sup>3</sup> Detached from its deontological moral and political elements, alienation is primarily understood as self-estrangement coupled with social estrangement or, to use the words of Rahel Jaeggi, as a form of non-relatedness (*Beziehungslosigkeit*) to oneself and others, as a failure to 'appropriate' one's self and one's surrounding world (see Jaeggi 2014). The focus is on certain qualitative aspects of authentic self-identification and ways of relating to others – and on the 'loss of self' or 'loss of meaning' within them and the lack of social 'resonance', as one could say with Hartmut Rosa (2016). The relevant social 'pathologies', to use Axel Honneth's term, are analysed in ethical terms as lack of self-identification or self-realization and ultimately as a loss of certain necessary conditions for the good life. According to Honneth, social philosophy, which begins with Rousseau's question of alienation, does not primarily ask the question of political and social justice but inquires into the 'limitations that this new form of life imposed on human's self-realization' (Honneth 2007: 5).

In this tradition of thought, providing a philosophical account of what it means to live a non-alienated life requires an anthropologically grounded notion of the authentic and good life as truly realizing one's self. But before we follow this path and attempt to articulate substantive notions of the good – or ethical notions of non-alienated personal identity (see Frankfurt 1988; Schroeder and Arpaly 1999; Ferrara 1998) – in order to provide normative grounds for analyses of social alienation, it is useful to reconsider Kant's role in the development of the notion of alienation. Even though he did not make use of the term *Entfremdung*, Kant's moral and political philosophy teaches us something very

important for any critical social analysis of alienation and something highly relevant for understanding Marx as well.

If we think about alienation in Kantian terms, the main source of alienation is a denial of standing or, in the extreme, losing a sense of oneself as a rational normative authority equal to all others. I call the former kind of alienation, where others deny you equal standing as a normative authority in moral or political terms, *first order noumenal alienation*, as there is no proper mutual cognition and recognition of each other in that social context. I call the latter kind of alienation, where a subject does not consider themselves an equal normative authority – or an ‘end in oneself’ – *second order noumenal alienation* (again, in a moral and a political form). As many after Rousseau and Hegel have shown, the first kind of alienation can lead to the second. However, in this tradition mainly influenced by Hegel and following Kojève’s and Sartre’s influential theory (see Kojève 1980; Sartre 1948), many have assumed that social alienation leads to self-alienation and a loss of self-respect (see Honneth 1996: ch. 6). But there is no necessary causal connection here, for otherwise the struggle for recognition would not get off the ground (see Forst 2002: ch. 5.3; Iser 2008).

From a Kantian point of view, moral and political forms of noumenal alienation have to be analysed as forms of heteronomy: to live an alienated way of life is to lack a certain standing as a moral and political normative authority equal to others, meaning that you lack this standing vis-à-vis others as well as (possibly) yourself. To criticize and overcome such forms of alienation politically and morally presupposes certain ideas and practices of individual and collective self-determination – of exercising normative *authority* and *authorship*. This includes qualitative aspects of relating to yourself and others that I analyse under the rubric of *authorization*, but they need not be based on ethical ideas of the good life. Rather, they are based on a reflection of what it means to be an autonomous agent of reason and an active subject of justification: an equal normative authority in the space of reasons and the social realm. Noumenal alienation results from a lack of being recognized or a lack of recognizing yourself as an agent of justification equal to others, as having an equal right to justification (see Forst 2012, 2013a). In this sense, alienation violates the *dignity of humans as moral and political lawgivers* – a dignity seen by Rousseau, Kant and Marx as *inalienable*: it can be denied or violated, but it cannot be lost.

With this analysis I think we can capture moral and political aspects of social and political life where ‘alienation’ does important critical work without making reference to reasonably contestable ideals of what it

means to ‘truly’ realize yourself or to achieve a good or authentic life. In addition, the analysis I suggest highlights the political connection between individual and collective autonomy, introducing democracy as a major practice of overcoming alienation – a dimension often overlooked by ethical theories focusing on self-realization. And for this purpose we must start with Rousseau.

## **2. Rousseau: Overcoming Individual Alienation through Political *Aliénation Totale***

Rousseau had a keen sense for the social forms of alienation that modern life brings with it. Yet the most important point for my purposes is that he suggests a *political* solution to the modern problem of individual alienation.

In his first *Discourse*, Rousseau took aim at the alienating herd character of modern societies in his critique of modern civilization: ‘One no longer dares to appear what one is; and under this perpetual constraint, the men who make up the herd that is called society will, when placed in similar circumstances, all act in similar ways unless more powerful motives incline them differently’ (Rousseau 1997a: 8). Conformity leads to other-directedness, and the ‘refinement’ of knowledge and morals is only the flattening and loss of true emotions and a sense of communal life.<sup>4</sup> Already here, one must note that Rousseau connects this critique of the loss of self-direction, individuality and true moral and communal life with a critique of social stratification, hierarchies and domination: ‘Without men’s injustices, what would be the use of Jurisprudence? What would become of History if there were neither Tyrants, nor Wars, nor Conspirators?’ (16).

This connection is developed further in the *Discourse on Inequality*, where we find the full analysis of alienation. Arguing against Hobbes’s thesis of the ‘natural’ human drive to compete with others and to achieve a power advantage, Rousseau argues for the simplicity and peacefulness of human nature based on the natural interest in one’s well-being and the capacity for empathy and compassion. It is only in the development of more complex forms of social life that hierarchy and an ill-fated and pathological desire for recognition and superiority arise, based on *amour-propre*, a particular form of selfishness. It leads to a constant desire to compete and compare, and it turns into an alienating form of other-directedness even in those who are more successful in this competition:

To be and to appear became two entirely different things, and from this distinction arose ostentatious display, deceitful

cunning, and all the vices that follow in their wake. Looked at in another way, man, who had previously been free and independent, is now so to speak subjugated by a multitude of new needs to the whole of Nature, and especially to those of his kind, whose slave he in a sense becomes even by becoming their master; rich, he needs their services; poor, he needs their help. (Rousseau 1997b: 170)

The slave metaphor serves a double function in this discourse: as signalling the other-directedness and loss of individual autonomy over one's judgements and actions, driven by an exaggerated desire for recognition and success, and as being subjected to a normative order of hierarchies and structural constraints beyond one's control, even if one does well within that order. That kind of socialization makes human beings 'a Slave, and he becomes weak, timorous, grovelling' (138). These aspects of alienation need to be combined, as Rousseau places the critique of *conformity* in a context of social *domination*, given that the desire for recognition is also a desire to rule – and sometimes even a desire to be ruled over (what Kant will particularly emphasize). Loss of autonomy in judgement and loss of social self-determination go together.

Fred Neuhouser rightly stresses that Rousseau's critique of 'sociable man, always outside himself' (2008: 187) can be called a critique of alienation. In being completely dependent on the arbitrary judgements of others and existing 'always outside oneself' (Neuhouser 2008: 84), they lose an internal sense of 'self-affirmation' and autonomous self-worth (see also Ferrara 1993). In my reading of alienation, this kind of dependence on the arbitrary evaluation of others is an important part of alienation because it makes subjects not only vulnerable to the judgment of others without resort to any possibility of self-affirmation but also makes them vulnerable to forms of social domination and submission – what Rousseau calls slavery. Slavery as extreme alienation for Rousseau thus is not just total dependence on others' recognition but also subjection to domination and accepting certain terms of social hierarchy. Thus this is not a mere 'ethical' question of self-realization or self-affirmation, but also one of social self-determination and non-domination.

This becomes obvious where Rousseau introduces the story of the rich and powerful imposing a false social contract in order to preserve their privileges by securing them politically and legally.<sup>5</sup> Here social alienation leads to political and legal alienation, that is, new forms of

slavery: ‘All ran toward their chains in the belief they were securing their freedom’ (Rousseau 1997b: 173). For Rousseau, the resulting political state of affairs is one of institutionalized arbitrary rule, *domination*, the main evil in social life: ‘[I]n the relations between man and man the worst that can happen to one is to find himself at the other’s discretion’ (176). Accordingly, the ‘conversion of legitimate into arbitrary power’ (182) is the highest form of human inequality and, I want to add, alienation, because it truly deprives human beings of their powers of self-determination and turns them into slaves.

Thus for Rousseau alienation primarily has a moral-political meaning: it refers to subjection to a normative order, where (a) an *artificial hierarchical world* of social relations has been set up that the powerless cannot control; (b) this order shields itself from critical scrutiny by *appearing to be justified*, or in any case unavoidable for furthering social goods like justice and welfare, and so is accepted even by the ‘slaves’; (c) the powerless are ruled by the powerful *arbitrarily*, that is, are dominated (within the limits the normative order allows for such rule); (d) those subjected, including the powerful, are driven by *external motives* of economic and social competition and the desire for success and recognition, thus leading estranged lives. In sum, it is an estranged world of slaves – and masters – who deem themselves to be free. Both kinds of noumenal alienation I articulated above are present here: those dominated are not respected as normative authorities, and in accepting that domination they do not recognize their own authority.

Such a comprehensive analysis of alienation can explain the solution that Rousseau puts forth in his *Contrat Social*. For if alienation were mainly a problem of gaining access to self-guided sources of authentic self-realization, a political revolution would not do because it would not guarantee a society of non-conformity. So the solution is not to be sought by looking inward, by gaining access to some ‘true self’ waiting to be realized, but rather in a radical move to overcome the chains of social and political slavery: morally and politically establishing persons as *equal normative authorities* within their society, in both noumenal respects (first and second order) of recognizing others and oneself. But Rousseau does not distinguish between moral and political autonomy, as Kant later would (and to some extent Marx also would not; more about that later). Rather, for Rousseau the political establishment of the new and non-dominated social contract overcoming the false one is a moral act; ‘the moral act as such’, as Habermas calls it (1963: 111, my translation).

To break the ‘chains’ human beings find themselves in everywhere – and to overcome the mentality of slavery, as ‘slaves lose everything in their chains, even the desire to be rid of them’ (Rousseau 1997c: 43) – requires a moral-political revolution, a new grounding of a normative order. For the complete form of alienation is (in the above mentioned sense of externalizing or selling [see Rousseau 1997c: 44–5] oneself) alienating one’s liberty and accepting slavery as justified, which, according to Rousseau’s deontological argument, one cannot morally do: ‘These words *slavery* and *right* are contradictory; they are mutually exclusive’ (1997c: 48). The right to one’s freedom as a self-determining being is thus *inalienable* for Rousseau, for ‘to renounce one’s freedom is to renounce one’s quality as man, the rights of humanity, and even its duties’ (45). It would be an immoral act, as one would no longer regard oneself as an agent and would thus no longer take responsibility for oneself. Further, it is conceptually impossible to successfully authorize another to have complete dominating power over one because on a deontological account such authorization is contradictory: no authorization of another can nullify or destroy the moral authority of the authorizing agent. That would be a perfect form of moral alienation, and the right social contract is exactly its opposite through an alternative form of alienation: the *aliénation totale* of all with all, establishing a new sovereign over their wills that is the collective expression of their own will, if guided by the *volonté générale* furthering the common good.

The formation of the new order, in which no one reserves a privilege for themselves, establishes a form of complete self-determination, where the individuals unite with all without reservation but still ‘obey only [themselves] and remain as free as before’ (Rousseau 1997c: 49–50).<sup>6</sup> The ‘as before’ is misleading, for the new form of self-determination is of a moral and political quality that did not exist before; still, what Rousseau stresses is that the ‘natural’ non-domination is translated and preserved in this new civil state. The major clause of the contract thus is one of ‘the total alienation of each associate with all of his rights to the whole community’ (50). The general will is (by definition) purely general and reciprocal, as it only regulates what concerns all and what is in the common interest.

I will not go into the details of how Rousseau thought to socially and politically guarantee such reciprocity and generality. But the proto-Kantian character of the solution to the problem of alienation is obvious: obeying and being free is the same thing if guided by reciprocally and generally justifiable laws, and these laws express and secure the freedom

of all equally and as equals. Non-alienation is established by the status of being an equal lawgiver, following one's own will as the general will. Being free and being bound by such law is the same, and only such law can establish *non-alienation as non-domination* because you follow no other will than yours. In the *Contrat Social*, Rousseau also modifies his earlier critique of rationality, favouring 'natural' inclinations, and stresses that transitioning into the civil state achieves a 'remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct', where 'the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion' and where a citizen is willing 'to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations' (53). In sum, and anticipating Kant, Rousseau affirms that 'obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself is freedom' (54).<sup>7</sup> Overcoming alienation in the aspects articulated above means establishing a form of moral-political autonomy that overcomes social and political heteronomy and other-directedness by establishing the rule of collective reason – or better, by establishing the status of persons as justificatory equals who determine themselves individually and collectively as autonomous normative authorities. Alienation is the lack of such authority. And with that, we are already on Kantian ground.

### 3. Kantian Alienation: On (Not) Being a Normative Authority

Kant takes over Rousseau's conception of autonomy for the political sphere but grounds it in a conception of moral, noumenal freedom. I focus first on this moral conception of autonomy and highlight the relevant aspects of noumenal moral alienation before turning to the political.

According to Kant, it is characteristic of human nature that human beings regard themselves as members of two worlds, the noumenal and the phenomenal. As beings guided by principles of reason, they consider themselves non-determined by empirical inclinations and interests and as morally free (and responsible). Their moral freedom is a 'practical idea' (A808/B836) that has its practical implications by following the moral law of the categorical imperative which alone enables them to act autonomously, that is, on the basis of universally valid reasons. Thus, human beings express their 'proper self' (G, 4: 457) (*eigentliches Selbst*) by willing freely and rationally according to the categorical imperative. They are not their true or proper self – that is, they are alienated – when they are guided heteronomously, though they might believe that they are most themselves in doing so, following their desires and personal choices. In short, they are most alienated when they think they are at home with themselves. Why is that? According to Kant, heteronomous action is a kind of action that the agent did not rationally *authorize*; more precisely,



where the agent is not the real *author* of the action and where agents are not fully expressing themselves as an *authority* of reason. This needs to be unpacked.

In the *Groundwork*, Kant explains the *inalienable* moral status of human beings as normative authorities in terms that resonate strongly with every reflection on the moral evil of instrumentalizing others as ‘mere means’. Such reflections are as influential for Marx’s analysis of exploitation and alienation as is Rousseau’s social criticism – mediated by the importance of Hegel for Marx. According to Kant, the rational will wills an end, and the only end that does not serve as a means for another end and is thus truly universal (and rationally justified) is the end of the human being itself, as someone rationally determining his or her ends. This is a reflexive truth: if you confer a status of an end on something by rationally willing it, the very agent of such willing is an end in itself (see the argument made by Korsgaard 1996). All other ends serve this very end, as only through rational willing do they become ends. Thus human nature as rational nature is an end in itself, and the ‘absolute worth’ (G, 4: 428) of human beings as self-determining beings of such a nature means that one should respect every person – including oneself – ‘always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means’ (G, 4: 429). This is the categorical imperative of non-instrumentalization, and with respect to the topic of alienation it means the following: moral alienation as first order noumenal alienation exists where persons treat others as a mere means, as an object they can control, use or destroy. They do not respect them as a moral person or as an equal; in the extreme, they treat them as a ‘thing’ (*Sache*) (G, 4: 429). The noumenal aspect in them doing so is that they have a morally mistaken belief about others and violate their noumenal freedom and capacity as well as their own, as they do not understand what it means to be an end like and among others. For you, as the addressee of their action, the alienation is of a noumenal and practical nature because you experience this as a form of disrespect and instrumentalization, as an insult. Second order noumenal alienation appears where you do not even have such an experience but where you disregard your own worth as an end and normative equal to others. Kant discusses this aspect mainly in the context of duties to oneself (which I leave aside here for the moment); he clearly sees disregarding one’s own dignity, and becoming a ‘worm’, as he says in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (MM, 6: 437), as a failure to respect one’s own standing as an end in oneself.

The idea of ‘dignity’ does important work in this context. By this Kant means the basic moral status of persons as lawgivers who are at the same

time subjects to that very law: as autonomous rational beings. Those who are such lawgivers belong to what Kant calls the ‘kingdom of ends’, that is, the ‘systematic union of various rational beings through common laws’ (G, 4: 433). As sovereigns (*Oberhaupt*) in such a kingdom, human beings have an inviolable and inalienable dignity as a being ‘who obeys no law other than that which he himself at the same time gives’ (G, 4: 443). Such dignitaries have no price, which is a relative value based on use value or esteem, what Kant calls market price (*Marktpreis*) or fancy price (*Affektionspreis*, in the sense of sentimental value) (G, 4: 435); rather, they have inner worth or *Würde*. This distinction, in its deontological form, remains central for any further Hegelian or Marxist social criticism.

The idea of ‘dignity’ also refers to a particular exercise of agency for Kant, a form of action based on one’s self-respect as someone with dignity. Acting out of a sense of duty presupposes that one recognizes one’s own dignity and the equal dignity of others in the ‘capacity to give universal law, though with the condition of also being itself subject to this very lawgiving’ (G, 4: 440). Acting out of a sense of duty thus includes the avoidance of causing first order noumenal alienation, that is, disrespect for others whom one does not properly regard as an end and thus is alienated from, and it presupposes the absence of second order noumenal alienation, as failure to respect oneself and one’s own dignity. Both kinds of noumenal alienation are alienation from one’s nature as a member of the kingdom of ends.

Respecting oneself and others as members of the kingdom of ends, one does not bow before a feudal nobleman, but only before someone of supreme moral character (*CPrR*, 5: 76–7). It is the attitude of the upright gait, of an equal among equals in moral terms, whatever the particular social standing is. It is, as Kant says near the end of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, ‘respect for ourselves in the consciousness of our freedom’ (*CPrR*, 5: 161). In an important reflection on ‘servility’ (*Kriecherei*) as a lack of virtue, Kant affirms that the moral demand of respecting one’s own dignity, of ‘moral self-esteem’ (*moralische Selbstschätzung*) (*MM*, 6: 435), requires human beings to avoid a ‘servile spirit’ of disavowing one’s dignity: ‘Waiving any claim to moral worth in oneself, in the belief that one will thereby acquire a borrowed worth, is morally false *servility*’ (*MM*, 6: 435). The value of dignity is beyond any price (*MM*, 6: 462).

Marx will add important complexity to our understanding of the dynamics of moral alienation and the rise of ‘false consciousness’ in the

form of such servility. Here it is important to note that the concept of alienation best captures the two forms of lack and loss of moral authority that Kant analyses: the lack or loss of respect for others and the lack or loss of respect for oneself as a moral authority equal to others in the kingdom of ends. Both are forms of being alienated from that kingdom, in one dimension the lack of respect for or by others, in another the lack of self-respect. Both are intertwined in complex ways; first order noumenal alienation is already a form of self-denial (as an equal to others one thinks to be of lesser value), and a loss of self-respect (second order alienation) can also lead to moral disaster and self-destruction. Analytically, however, it is important to keep the two apart, as not every experience of disrespect leads to a loss of self-respect. As Honneth explains in his interpretation of the struggle for recognition, being disrespected can lead to a loss of self-respect (Honneth 1996: 138). But here we need to distinguish between disrespect that *denies* and *insults* the dignity and self-respect of another and disrespect that *damages* and *destroys* the self-respect of the other. First order alienation implies the former but not the latter, which is second order alienation. The struggle for equal recognition – moral or legal, political or social – *presupposes* that the latter has been overcome to some extent.<sup>8</sup>

In his discussion of virtues and vices, Kant offers important interpretations of first order alienation that connect Rousseau and Marx (see also Wood 1999: 259–65). In the *Anthropology*, Kant discusses social passions that arise as a reflection of hierarchical social orders and which aim to dominate others by different means, such as honour, force or money. They are outer-directed vices to make use of the outer-directed vices of others, namely to gain in honour, dominion or wealth by them succumbing to your power. Thus those who use these powers humiliate themselves as well as others, as both let their passions rule over them and thus fail to be ‘ends for themselves’ (AP, 7: 271). Dominating others is also a case of self-domination, as one conveys one’s ‘slavish disposition’ (*Sklavensinn*) (AP, 7: 272) by that kind of competition for power and influence. Ambition (*Ehrsucht*) (AP, 7: 272), tyranny (*Herrschaft*) (AP, 7: 273) and greed (*Habsucht*) (AP, 7: 274) are its main expressions. Like Rousseau and Marx, Kant thought that modern societies especially produce such forms of slavish mindsets of people deeming themselves masters over others.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note at this point what the deontological conception of noumenal non-alienation can and cannot provide for us. First and foremost, it explains a moral sense of self-respect and self-worth: a sense of

one's 'inalienable' dignity as an equal moral authority who co-authorizes moral norms through reciprocal and general justification. In that sense, a morally autonomous person is the co-author of such norms and authorizes them – they take themselves to be a moral authority for themselves and for others (in a 'kingdom of ends').<sup>10</sup> Second, as remarked above, there is a notion of the non-alienated, 'true' (*eigentlich*) self here but not in the ethical sense of the term relating to the good or 'authentic' life. Noumenal moral authority as autonomy reflects on and reasonably *endorses* and thus *authorizes* (based on the criteria of reciprocal and general justification) one's motives for action morally speaking, and in this sense the morally autonomous person 'owns' these motives. But in so reflecting on one's desires, inclinations and commitments as morally acceptable one does not necessarily overcome alienation in the sense that one no longer considers those desires or commitments that do not conform to morality as one's own as the person one is. That would be too strong a notion of authorship and authorization, as if only our moral self were our 'true' self and everything else was 'alien' because it was heteronomous.<sup>11</sup>

The most promising explanation of the 'wholehearted' identification with one's desires – of the sort that Harry Frankfurt sees as a condition for freedom of the will and self-determination – is as a reflective process of authorization (see especially Moran 2001; Hinshelwood 2013) rather than as a process of uncovering basic 'volitional necessities' (Frankfurt 1999) of one's character. But such processes of authorization, reason-responsive as they are, neither turn one into the autonomous sole 'author' of one's life nor resolve questions of ethical identity (what I 'really want' or 'really am') with exclusively moral answers. Moral autonomy, that is, being the moral authority over one's actions, morally authorizes these actions and their motives, but that seems neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the good life or for ethical autonomy.<sup>12</sup> Whether exercising moral authority over our ethical commitments (for example, partial commitments of love) and ideals (which may run counter to moral norms) is seen as liberating or constraining, that is, as overcoming alienation or rather as alienating in a different way, depends very much on our personal identity in a qualitative, biographical sense. Overcoming moral noumenal alienation is a moral duty towards others and thus also for oneself, as far as one is under a duty to respond to others as equals and as an equal, but it is not a necessary component of the good life. As Kant says, happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) is a thoroughly empirical and indeterminate concept, not one of reason (G, 4: 418). And heteronomy may play a big part in it. From the perspective of morality, such

heteronomy leads to alienation; from the perspective of the good and happy life, morality can be alienating. Moral autonomy is different from ethical authenticity or happiness, and the two notions of non-alienation they refer to are also conceptually different.

So far the analysis of Kant has stayed at the level of moral considerations. But, following Rousseau, in his republican theory Kant provides a political interpretation of his notion of autonomy – and, I add, of the account of alienation implicit in this interpretation. The republican account of alienation starts from a critique of a society in need of enlightenment, where moral and political autonomy does not exist: a state of ‘self-incurred immaturity’ (WIE, 8: 35). In such a state, human beings are alienated from each other and themselves as normative authorities; thus they need to establish themselves as such authorities by using their normative power of reason as a public power, exercising the ‘freedom to make *public use* of one’s reason in all matters’ (WIE, 8: 36). Kant highlights that there is a complex dialectic of social critique at play here, where overcoming noumenal moral and political alienation is intertwined: in a society in which free spirit and free speech are repressed, human beings may ‘gladly remain immature for life’ (WIE, 8: 35). Still, courageous and free minds will emerge at a certain point of social development, conflict and internal critique, and they will ‘disseminate the spirit of rational respect for personal value and for the duty of all men to think for themselves’ (WIE, 8: 36). But such an ‘avant-garde’ (to use Lea Ypi’s term, see Ypi 2012) cannot claim the authority of leadership if they are not supported by a public form of enlightenment and the public use of critical reason (see Habermas 1963). Even a political revolution might not suffice to achieve a ‘true reform in ways of thinking’ if not accompanied by such public freedom (WIE, 8: 36). The public use of reason is the essential means for overcoming noumenal alienation in the political realm.<sup>13</sup> Courage and critique are the main virtues of emancipation in this respect – and like Marx, Kant sees authoritarian forms of religion like authoritarian political rule as a major obstacle on the way towards social emancipation.

The same characteristics appear in Kant’s republican conception of alienation as in Rousseau’s. To live a politically alienated life is to live in an artificial world that does not stand the test of public reason, a world with unjustified hierarchies and forms of domination, and a world in which those subjected (or at least a part of them) feel comfortable in their state of immaturity and being dominated or ‘guided’. Those subjected live an ‘externalized’ or ‘estranged’ life following the authority of persons,

groups or institutions that should have no authority over them, as their authority is unjustified and contrary to reason.

The corresponding Rousseauian-Kantian republican theory of non-alienation implies that there can be no personal liberty without public liberty as political autonomy, and no political autonomy without the free exercise of public reason and the establishment of citizens as sovereign public authorities. The ‘touchstone’ (*Proberstein*) of the justification of laws binding a people, as Kant remarks in the Enlightenment essay, is ‘whether a people could well impose such a law upon itself’ (WIE, 8: 39).<sup>14</sup> In his fully worked out political theory, Kant develops this abstract theory of a general will into a concrete theory of legislation that leaves no room for the formation of that will in the hands of a monarch. In ‘The Common Saying’, Kant takes up the formulation of the touchstone and affirms that the idea of political autonomy (as an idea of reason) must become a practical reality: it is the duty of ‘every legislator to frame his laws in such a way that they could have been produced by the united will of a whole nation, and to regard each subject, in so far as he can claim citizenship, as if he had consented within the general will’ (TP, 8: 297). True freedom is only possible if collective freedom as political autonomy producing a general will is a reality; and this can only be the case in a republican state where every citizen<sup>15</sup> can be a ‘co-legislator’ (*Mitgesetzgeber*) (TP, 8: 294) with an adequate legislative voice and vote. Generally binding public law is ‘the act of a public will’ where ‘all men decide for all men and each decides for himself’ – the true form of public justice, as ‘only towards oneself can one never act unjustly’ (TP, 8: 294–5). This shows, as in Rousseau’s case, that it is only through complete political alienation in the form of subjection under the general will that true freedom as self-government and self-legislation becomes possible – and thus the overcoming of a state of alienation and immaturity becomes possible as well. Republican ‘total alienation’ overcomes dominating alienation in a feudal or otherwise oppressive society.

In the *Contest of Faculties*, Kant calls this Rousseauian ideal a *respublica noumenon*, a Platonic ideal of a constitution based on the natural right of humans saying ‘that those who obey the law should also act as a unified body of legislators’ (*CoF*, 7: 90–1). The natural right he refers to is the ‘innate right’ of every human being to ‘freedom (independence from being constrained by another’s choice), insofar as it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law’ (*MM*, 6: 237). Arthur Ripstein correctly interprets this right to independence as grounded on the inalienable status of human beings as ends in themselves

and as the relational right ‘that no person be the master of another’ (Ripstein 2009: 36). In my understanding, it is a variation of the right to justification as a right to non-domination and as a right to be the co-author of every norm binding on you, a right that grounds all other rights one may have in a normative order, including rights to personal liberty (Forst 2016). It is, so to speak, a noumenally grounded right – the right to be the authority for norms that bind you and to be such an authority together with all bound. That is how freedom and subjection go together – by truly generally and reciprocally justifiable norms governing all equally. This criterion eliminates privileges and unjustifiable hierarchies between moral persons and between citizens, whatever the normative context might be. Being noumenally alienated means to be deprived of such authorship, either socially (first order alienation) or in your own understanding (second order).

On the basis of the innate right to independence and non-domination, Kant makes all rightful law dependent on the general will (*MM*, 6: 264), whether it is in the realm of private or public right. Only the ‘concurring and united will of all ... can be legislative’ (*MM*, 6: 314), as only that will applies to all subjected equally and is authorized by all equally. Freedom under law means that each person is governed by no laws other ‘than that to which he has given his consent’ (*ibid.*) as an equal. This is the meaning of the ‘original contract’ (*MM*, 6: 315), as an idea of reason, that is, the relinquishing of ‘wild, lawless freedom’ for the sake of freedom under one’s own law (*MM*, 6: 316). Kant adds, in line with his deontological view, that overcoming the alienation of the wild form of freedom does not mean that the new form of freedom as self-determination guarantees the ‘happiness’ of the people, ‘for happiness can perhaps come to them more easily and as they would like it to in a state of nature (as Rousseau asserts) or even under a despotic government’ (*MM*, 6: 318).

It might even be the case, as in the above reflection on the possibly ethically alienating power of moral autonomy, that republican non-alienation is perceived as alienating by a collective. This can come in at least two forms. First, if the ‘liberation’ from a non-republican to a republican state is forced upon a people in a colonizing form of liberation. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant is clear that such forms of forced liberation cannot be justified, and in his later work he rejected colonialism, whether liberating or not, thus correcting his earlier positive remarks about colonialization (see Flikschuh and Ypi 2014). Autonomy can only be achieved autonomously. But there could be a second form, even where no

external force is used but where internal criticism leads to new forms of political order overcoming traditional, hierarchical forms of political order (Lu forthcoming: ch. 6). Such new forms of republican order might then be experienced by many as alienating, as a strange, non-fitting, inauthentic form of order. This can consist in the persistent power of religious, patriarchal, nationalist, or other forms of thought, but it can also be a worry about the dangers of corruption that a new regime might bring with it, a loss of stability and trust. Not all of these reflections need to be oppressive or conservative in a non-emancipatory sense (see Lear 2008). They express an ethical worry of alienation, about a new form of life that is not seen as authentic but as artificial. Yet for this critique to be free from the suspicion of harbouring veiled forms of domination, it would have to be the subject of free public reason, and the voice of dissent and minorities must not be silenced in such discussions (see Ci 2014). Likewise, the right to democratically co-determine one's normative order is an inalienable right – yet the form in which this right is exercised is to be determined by the participants alone and need not conform to hegemonic examples. Self-determination goes all the way down and cannot be restricted by 'Western' models, for example.<sup>16</sup> But the authority to be a co-author of one's normative order must also not be denied by dominating justification narratives. They must never subject persons to the status of being mere means for dominant 'values' or 'proven' ways of life. That is where republican non-alienation may come into conflict with communitarian notions of non-alienation.

The Kantian ideal of non-alienation combines a highly individualistic and a highly collectivistic aspect – the full independence of each person as an end in themselves, and the collective exercise of normative authority. The dialectics of self-determination connects the two, as no true personal independence is possible without true commonality in an order of self-government. Alienation is thus always a social phenomenon, that is, a lack of respect of one's membership in a normative order as an equal authority, morally and/or politically. And it is a cognitive phenomenon, either by failing to respect others or being disrespected – or, as in second order alienation, as not respecting oneself as a moral or political equal. The first form of alienation violates the dignity of persons, the second form ignores it. But in a Kantian understanding that dignity can never be normatively destroyed, for even those who give themselves up do not lose their moral right to equal normative authority. No person must ever be reduced to a thing which has a price or lost its value. Their dignity is inalienable, and that notion of inalienability is the ground of the Kantian critique of alienation.



#### 4. Marxian Alienation: Instrumentalization and Lack of Control

One might think that Marx's analysis of social alienation as a state of persons being reduced to a thing with a market price has obvious parallels to Kant's thought but that we cannot find an account of moral alienation, especially in its second order form, in Marx. But that is a mistake. For Marx strongly emphasized the loss of sense of one's own inalienable moral worth – even though, similar to Rousseau, he did not distinguish between the moral and the political-social aspects of overcoming alienation in the way Kant did. Marx is also closer to Rousseau than to Kant in stressing that true freedom requires overcoming class rule. Yet while Kant and Rousseau thought that true freedom can only exist in a republic, Marx envisioned a liberated and non-alienated society beyond a state-like structure of government.

Especially in his early writings, Marx had a clear sense of second-order noumenal alienation, that is, the loss of a sense of one's own dignity and worth as a normative equal to others. The critique of the slavish state of mind of the proletariat, produced by ideological delusion, is a standard topic in these writings – as is the deformed state of mind of the philistines and the bourgeois class. For example, in a letter to Ruge from May 1843, Marx affirms the distance of the philistine from truly human, intellectual beings, in language reminiscent of Rousseau's and Kant's cultural criticism: 'As for human beings, that would imply thinking beings, free men, republicans. The philistines do not want to be either of these. ... The self-confidence [*Selbstgefühl*, R.F.] of the human being, freedom, has first of all to be aroused again in the hearts of these people' (Marx 2005a: 134–7). And with respect to those who are dominated by such philistines, Marx adds: 'On the other hand, people who do not feel that they are human beings become the property of their masters like a breed of slaves or horses' (ibid.). He continues by characterizing the principle of monarchy as 'the despised, the despicable [*verächtlich*, R.F.], the dehumanised man' (138), indicating the connection between social (first order) and subjective (second order) alienation. In a further letter (September 1843), he stresses the programme of radical critique as 'analysing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself, whether it manifests itself in a religious or a political form' (144). The term 'mysticism' is important for Marx's critique of noumenal alienation, both with respect to religion and the belief in private property and its legitimacy. Mysticism casts a spell over the minds of people and make them accept noumenal alienation.

Critiquing religion was one of the most important ways to dispel noumenal alienation for the sake of intellectual and social emancipation – the

work of enlightenment, in Kantian terms (see Ypi 2017). Religious belief is a particular example of an alienated and alienating form of thought because it redirects ideas of individual and communal freedom into an imagined sphere and thus furthers the acceptance of unfreedom and domination in the actual world. Marx often speaks of ‘religious self-estrangement’ (Marx 1976a: 4) that needs to be overcome by materialist critique, as in the theses on Feuerbach. Likewise, a critique of the system of private property and the economy based on it needs to dispel the alienating isolation of the human being who sees in the other ‘not the *realisation* of his own freedom, but the *barrier* to it’ (2005b: 163). Both religion and bourgeois ideology constitute a *Schein*, a mere pretence of freedom that, in its ideological character, veils the true freedom of normative equals and makes humans accept social forms of domination while they deem themselves to be free.<sup>17</sup>

Thus critique needs to take aim at the ‘*holy form* [*Heiligengestalt*, R.F.] of human self-estrangement’ (Marx 2005c: 176). In a nutshell: ‘The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest being for man*, hence with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being’ (182). Such relations are relations of both first and second order noumenal alienation, as human beings are both disrespected (*verachtet*) and disrespect themselves (*verächtlich*) in these social structures and modes of thought. They are under the spell of false beliefs that deny their sense of equal moral and political-social authorship, what Marx calls the ‘real’ or ‘whole man’ (ibid.) – the human being who ought to say: ‘*I am nothing and I should be everything*’ (185). Their claim is the basic human claim to emancipation, not just that of a particular class but that of the ‘general rights of society’ (184). That universal class does not make use of a particular right, ‘because no *particular wrong* but *wrong generally* is perpetuated against it; which can no longer invoke a *historical* but only a *human title*’ (186). Overcoming that kind of basic moral injustice and alienation is ‘the *complete retrieval* [*Wiedergewinnung*, R.F.] of the man’ (186; trans. altered) who have lost themselves in the course of a history of domination. This is as much Kant as it is Hegel, but the Kantian aspect explains why Marx spoke of a *categorical imperative of emancipation* here: it is the imperative of true moral and social emancipation, based on a deontological right to non-domination and to be an equal normative authority.

The famous analysis of the four aspects of alienation in his *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* has to be seen in this light. In whatever form

alienation is analysed – as alienation from the product of one’s labour, from the process of production, from one’s ‘species being’ as a socially and mentally self-determining (and creative) being,<sup>18</sup> or from one another such that persons only regard each other as means and not as ends in social and economic life (see Quante 2013) – the Kantian moral conception of the equal dignity and inalienable authority of persons is not just obviously at work, but also every form of alienation is noumenal because in every one of these forms humans misrecognize each other and themselves as part of a structured social process of reified agents producing and exchanging ‘things’. The analysis of noumenal alienation shows that every social alienation is also ‘self-estrangement’ (Marx 2005d: 275).

Two aspects of this analysis of alienation need further emphasis. First, the development of an alienated society that Marx (following Rousseau to some extent) outlines is connected with a process of growing class domination, as the alien product of proletarian labour becomes at the same time an alienating object, in the way ‘that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him’ (2005d: 278). Being alienated thus also means to be dominated and exploited as an object yourself, to be under ‘the coercion and the yoke of another man’ (279) – another who, in the right analysis, has to be seen as the representative of a class, not as an evil individual. Thus the theme of *Entfremdung* in Marx must never be reduced to an ethical issue of being ‘truly’ and authentically oneself, as it first and foremost addresses relations of *Knechtung*, that is, of social domination in the form of economic exploitation and general political and legal oppression.

The second important aspect of alienation leads to its political aspect rather than its moral dimension. As already noticed, Marx often calls the alienated society one of ‘mysticism’, by which he means the ideological veil it casts over structures of domination. Unveiling this mysticism is an important task of overcoming the noumenal power of the capitalist normative order (see Forst 2017). The most important text of Marx to understand this aspect of first and second order noumenal alienation is the analysis of the fetish character of commodities in *Capital*.<sup>19</sup>

In this central chapter of his work, Marx – in line with earlier criticisms – stresses that in an estranged society social relations become reified relations between ‘things’ that have a doubly dominating or oppressive character because (a) they benefit some while others are exploited and (b) they are not transparent and therefore cannot be subjected to social criticism or control. Social relations assume the ‘fantastic

[*phantasmagorische*, R.F.] form of a relation between things' (Marx 1996: 83), and the result is an artificial world of asymmetry and exploitation that is not intelligible to those who are part of it, and in this sense it is 'alien' even if it seems familiar: it is not really one's own. The emphasis here is not on interpersonal class oppression but on a general and more anonymous form of domination and class rule – an artificial world of things that conceals the real relations between human beings in the process of production and shrouds it in an ideological veil of ignorance: 'To them, their own social movement takes the form of the movement of things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them' (Marx 1996: 85; trans. altered). So, apart from instrumentalization and class domination or exploitation, it is the lack of transparency and control that Marx criticizes here; the foundation of this critique, strongly reminiscent of Rousseau, is a notion of social autonomy as collective autonomy.

In the fetishism chapter, therefore, Marx contrasts his analysis of capitalist alienation with the 'association of free men' in which the means of production are socialized, and hence under collective control. Social relations are accordingly 'transparent' (Marx 1996: 90), a word he often uses to describe the necessary kind of control: 'The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan' (Marx 1996: 90). This notion of social autonomy overcoming alienation is in line with earlier texts, where Marx emphasizes that alienated social orders confront the individual as an alien force which needs to be transformed into something transparent and intelligible that can be brought under control. The injustice to be overcome is not just one which produces palaces for the rich and deprivation and hovels for the workers (Marx 2005d: 273); capitalist society also deprives workers of the ability and opportunity to determine in an autonomous way the basic structure to which they are subject – and to regard themselves as free agents who can change their society in the first place. Their totality of social relations appears to them as part of an 'alien power' (278). This shows that it is the loss of collective power and autonomy in particular that is the political key feature of the condition of alienation – namely, that individuals cannot be social beings together with others in a self-determining collective (Ripstein 1989: 463).

Throughout Marx's work, this political idea of overcoming alienation as an obscure power that dominates social relations is central: 'Freedom in

this sphere can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature' (Marx 1998: 807). The analysis Marx offered shares the characteristics of the republican account of alienation offered by Rousseau and Kant: human beings find themselves within an artificial order of things that is not transparent to them but veiled by the noumenal power of religious, feudal or capitalist ideologies. These ideologies hide relations of domination and thus seal the normative order off from public scrutiny and criticism.<sup>20</sup> Domination here does not just refer to the unjustified exercise of social and political power but also to the moral issue of instrumentalization, of not being treated as an end but rather as a thing or commodity, of having a 'market price', as Kant says (see also Buchanan 1979). The lack of critique manifests itself in the extreme in the acceptance of an order of domination by those subjected to it, thus leading an outer-directed, non-autonomous life where they are not just denied a role as equal normative authority but where they do not even consider themselves to be such authorities with a claim to a social and political standing based on this fundamental moral status. First and second order noumenal alienation are both present: those subjected to such an order do not recognize each other as justificatory equals and they do not recognize themselves as having such standing.

While Marx's critical analysis of alienation is in line with the republican accounts of Rousseau and Kant, his idea of gaining and exercising collective control differs from their republicanism. Whereas in earlier writings Marx uses republican ideas of political autonomy (see Leipold forthcoming), as seen above, in his later writings Marx is guided by a notion of *social* rather than *political* autonomy. The difference is that social collective autonomy is not mediated by political institutions (with the exception of a transitional period), which according to Marx would only be necessary in a society in which there are still fundamental conflicts over questions of production and distribution. Marx thought he had discovered the truth about the contradictions inherent in capitalist society and about the crisis that would eventually lead society beyond this historical malaise. He had a conception of injustice and alienation in capitalist societies and a view of a society beyond politically determined justice – that is, a notion of a society of complete human control and order after the breakdown of the capitalist order. Before that great change, political institutions are more part of the problem than of the solution; after it there would not be any need for them because genuine universality and community would prevail in a 'true realm of freedom'

(Marx 1998: 807) beyond the realm of necessity. This is why the question of the exercise of political autonomy over economic relations as part of a theory of (socialist republican) political justice is absent from the Marxian programme – before the historical turn it is not possible, after it is not necessary. Thus his notion of overcoming alienation is social but also to some extent *apolitical*.<sup>21</sup>

There are many more relevant differences that need discussion in this context, such as the difference between overcoming alienation by revolution, as in Marx (and possibly in Rousseau), and overcoming alienation by the peaceful and piecemeal method of public criticism and political reform, as in Kant (who, despite his argument against the lawfulness of revolutionary change, regarded the French Revolution as a major emancipatory step) (Ypi 2014; Williams 2017). But the commonalities among their social criticism and critiques of alienation ought not to be overlooked. First, all of them require a deontological argument about the moral equality and independence of human beings who are equal moral authorities to each other. That moral status or, in traditional terms, inalienable ‘dignity’ forbids any social order in which humans become mere things or instruments for others.<sup>22</sup> Second, overcoming first order noumenal alienation means to respect others and to be respected as an equal moral-political authority within the normative order to which one is subject. And third, to struggle for such a status presupposes a form of self-respect that is lost in second order noumenal alienation. Therefore the first task is to attack and overcome second order noumenal alienation – by radical critique, the public use of reason and sober social analysis. The ‘mysticism’ of the dominating and alienating normative order must be dispelled and the sense of one’s own worth as a justificatory agent equal to others must be appealed to and furthered.

## 5. Conclusion

The term ‘noumenal alienation’ highlights three central aspects of my analysis. First, it is meant to indicate that the very ground of every critique of alienation as a denial of normative agency is a noumenally ascribed moral status of ‘being’ an equal normative authority – even if that status is denied in practice by others as well as by oneself. The dignity of human beings as equal normative authorities is a moral and in that sense noumenal, not an empirical, idea – though it materializes in a number of ways within a normative order in the status of being a non-dominated legal, political and social equal.<sup>23</sup> This deontological notion of moral status is foundational: there can be no moral criticism of alienation without the *inalienable* right to be respected as a normative

equal authority and author of binding norms. The moral scandal of alienation as denying equal standing requires a moral ground that no historicist or purely ‘immanent’ form of critique can provide (Forst 2017, forthcoming). Marx for one, as shown above, was not a historicist when it came to the ‘categorical imperative’ to overcome *das Unrecht schlechthin* (Marx 1976b: 390): injustice as such.<sup>24</sup> Nor was Rousseau, who believed in an inalienable right to moral and political self-determination – what Kant would later call the ‘innate’ right of human freedom.

The second important meaning of ‘noumenal’ points to the essential recognitional and cognitive dimension of alienation. First order alienation means to not be respected as a normative equal morally and politically, and it also means, from a different perspective, not respecting others as such equals. Hence the term, in whatever material forms such disrespect, domination, exclusion and marginalization arises, refers to a cognitive intersubjective relation. Second order alienation is also a special cognitive relation, namely to oneself as a lack of recognition of oneself as a normative authority.<sup>25</sup> Alienation is much more than a state of mind, as it refers to intersubjective relations, social structures and a whole social order, but it also expresses a cognitive attitude towards others and to oneself. It is of a noumenal nature.

The third aspect is connected to this. We cannot analyse relations of alienation without an understanding of the ‘noumenal’ power complexes that are at work in justifying relations of alienation – with the help of ideological justification narratives (Forst 2017: ch. 3) that veil the asymmetries and structures of domination in place. That is why struggles for emancipation primarily take place on the noumenal power level; without overcoming first and second order alienation, that is, without changing the perceptions of oneself and of others, no social change towards overcoming alienation will be possible. There is a complex dialectical interplay between cognitive and practical emancipation, as the one requires and, ideally, furthers the other. But as Rousseau, Kant and Marx saw, no process of emancipation can get off the ground without a moral understanding of yourself and your own dignity even if – and especially when – it is materially denied to you. That is why struggles for noumenal power are essential, aiming to change the general social realm of justifications. Such struggles have to take a complex intersection of class, gender and race domination into account, going far beyond the limits of the thought of Rousseau, Kant and Marx, not to mention the transnational character of current forms of domination (see Forst 2015). But here, too, the noumenal dimension of social criticism remains crucial.

Let me conclude with a conceptual remark. There are a number of concepts in our moral vocabulary that I call ‘normatively dependent concepts’, as they only gain normative substance by being connected to other normative principles or values. Toleration (Forst 2013b: §3), solidarity and legitimacy (Forst 2017: ch. 8) are examples of such concepts. They are often mistakenly seen as values in themselves, but actually they are not; for example, solidarity can be a good or a bad thing depending on the justifications for it. Non-alienation is another such normatively dependent concept. In my analysis, I have used a notion of moral and political autonomy, of moral and political normative authorship, to give it substance. Alienation generally means that a person is disconnected from themselves, others and their social context in a normatively relevant way, but that normative relevance needs to be explained by other concepts. For the reasons explained in this article, I think that it is important to understand, first, that for Rousseau, Kant and Marx the normative concepts that do that work are those of equal moral and political authority and autonomous co-authorship and, second, that the noumenal aspect of alienation sheds light on the two relevant forms of first order and second order alienation we need to distinguish. In this way, the deontological aspects of a critique of alienation come to the fore.

Given the character of normative dependence, one can also use other values to give the term alienation normative substance. Think, for example, of the many criticisms of ‘alienated’ life-forms because of their commercialized, anonymous, mute, technological, routine-based, ‘herd’-like, monotonous, legalistic, paternalistic, etc. character – criticisms that go back to and combine many strands of critical thought ranging from Rousseauian romanticism to Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and from there to Lukács, Adorno and Horkheimer, and many others. Some of these criticisms, especially those of commercialized reification (see Honneth 2008; Satz 2010) and of a lack of autonomous ‘appropriation’ (Jaeggi 2014) of one’s social relations, derive their normative power in large part from sharing the noumenal deontological account, but some are also based on other values, like an ethical ideal of self-realization, authenticity or ‘resonance’ with one’s environment, including nature (Rosa 2016). Such analyses can be sociologically and normatively powerful. But the analysis of noumenal alienation and its basis in a certain notion of the *inalienable* moral status of persons reminds us of a categorical difference in the validity claims that critiques of alienation rest on. The critique I reconstructed rests on a deontological moral claim and thus requires – with Rousseau, Kant and Marx – a *categorical imperative* of



overcoming the forms of domination that constitute noumenal alienation, while certain ideals of self-realization or social life that do not rest on such moral foundations may still be well-founded but cannot claim the same kind of validity. They appeal to the attractiveness of the ethical vision they express but they ground no strong moral duties – think, for example, of the difference between a critique of capitalist commercialization producing ‘empty’ forms of life and a critique of capitalist exploitation as a form of domination. The duties to avoid or overcome relations ‘in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being’, to use Marx’s (2005c: 182) words, require deontological foundations. They should not be mixed with values of a different normative order and importance.<sup>26</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Parenthetical references to Kant’s writings give the volume and page number(s) of the Royal Prussian Academy edition (*Kants gesammelte Schriften*), which are included in the margins of the translations. English translations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. I use the following abbreviations: AP = *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* (Kant 2007: 227–429); CoF = *Contest of the Faculties* (Kant 1970c: 176–90); CPPrR = *Critique of Practical Reason* (Kant 1997); G = *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1998b); MM = *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1996); TP = ‘On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice’ (Kant 1970b: 61–92); WIE = ‘An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?’ (Kant 1970a: 54–60). The *Critique of Pure Reason* utilizes the customary format of ‘A’ and ‘B’ to refer to the 1st and 2nd edition (Kant 1998a).
- 2 It has not been centre stage in so-called ‘analytic Marxism’, as Arthur Ripstein (1989) notes, which he explains by the conception of human agency and rationality used in these approaches.
- 3 See, for example, the Hegelian accounts in Honneth (2007: ch. 1) or Jaeggi (2014).
- 4 ‘We have Physicists, Geometricians, Chemists, Astronomers, Poets, Musicians, Painters; we no longer have citizens; or if we still have some left, dispersed in our abandoned rural areas, they waste away indigent and despised. Such is the condition to which those who give us bread and our children milk are reduced, and such are the sentiments they get from us’ (Rousseau 1997a: 24).
- 5 This is how Rousseau describes the ideological ruse of the rich: ‘Let us institute rules of Justice and peace to which all are obliged to conform, which favor no one, and which in a way make up for the vagaries of fortune by subjecting the powerful and the weak alike to mutual duties’ (Rousseau 1997b: 173).
- 6 See Neuhouser (2000) and the interpretation by Joshua Cohen (2010).
- 7 For an interpretation of Kant’s political philosophy along these lines, see Maus (1994) and also Shell (1980).
- 8 Honneth is aware of this problem for his strong thesis about the damage of self-respect through misrecognition and tries to account for it by saying that the negative feelings accompanying disrespect harbour necessarily (*unverbrüchlich*) moral and cognitive insights motivating a struggle against injustice (Honneth 1996: 138).
- 9 This stands in a long tradition of moralistic critiques of social vices; Montaigne was a master of this genre.
- 10 On the notion of moral authority here see especially Darwall (2006: part IV).

- 11 This is a tendency in Korsgaard (1996) as well as (2009).
- 12 On different conceptions of autonomy see Forst (2012: ch. 5).
- 13 See Wood (1999: 300–9) on the importance of free public reason for political progress in Kant.
- 14 Though the translation does not use the word ‘touchstone’ (as it should).
- 15 Kant qualified the group of active citizens heavily and restricted it to men with a certain economic standing.
- 16 See Forst on human rights (2012: ch. 9; 2013a: ch. 2) and on progress (forthcoming).
- 17 See Marx (1975: 116): ‘Precisely the *slavery of civil society is in appearance* the greatest *freedom* because it is in appearance the fully developed *independence* of the individual, who considers as his *own* freedom the uncurbed movement, no longer bound by a common bond or by man, of the estranged elements of his life, such as property, industry, religion, etc., whereas actually this is his fully developed slavery and inhumanity.’
- 18 See Marx (2005d: 277): ‘Similarly, in degrading spontaneous, free activity to a means, estranged labour makes man’s species-life a means to his physical existence ... It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his *human* aspect.’
- 19 For the following, see my discussion in ‘Justice After Marx’, including the critique, in Forst (2017).
- 20 For a comprehensive social analysis of fetishism critique, see Rasmussen (1975).
- 21 See, among many, the criticisms of this kind of political alienation in Marx by Habermas (1963, 1976) as well as Claude Lefort and Marcel Gauchet (1976), see also Dick Howard (1984).
- 22 For an important discussion and defence of Kantian socialist ethics, going back to Hermann Cohen, see van der Linden (1988); for a related view, see Pablo Gilabert in this issue.
- 23 See Forst on ‘fundamental justice’ (2013a: chs. 2 and 5; 2017).
- 24 In *Collected Works*, *Unrecht schlechtbin* is translated with ‘wrong generally’ (Marx 2005c: 186) which is misleading.
- 25 For a paradigmatic analysis of the notion of reification along cognitivist lines, though focusing on ethical rather than moral aspects of the relation to self and others, see Honneth (2008).
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