

June 2020 Entry (on alienation)

“Alienation is defined as the social-psychological feeling of estrangement from work, from our fellow human beings, and from the self. Marx believes that this alienation is rooted in the capitalist mode of production itself. Work becomes an enforced activity, something done for the paycheck alone; a place where the individual must deny the self, separating physical activity from mental life – not living as a full human being. The worker becomes alienated from all aspects of labor beginning with the product that they are producing.” – Frank Elwell, Macro Social Theory (2009), pp. 37-38.

“With the discovery of a new instrument of warfare, the firearm, the whole internal organization of the army was necessarily altered, the relations within which individuals compose an army and can work as an army were transformed, and the relation of different armies to another was likewise changed.” Marx [1891] 1902, 35, quoted by Frank Elwell, Macro Social Theory (2009), p. 28.

The military, even from ancient times, has been the greatest source of alienation; the soldier in the ranks must necessarily be alienated from the imagination of the operational commanders. And to suffer the consequences of the vagaries of luck and lack of imagination. I have personal experience in this in the Marines.

World War 1 is considered the first industrial war and the processes of the industrial war pushed the existing alienation described by Marx to the fullest extent, as described by [Lynn Montross](#) in War Through the Ages (see quote in GGDM, [5 Combat](#), p. 1008). Thus, the alienation and sacrifice of the ordinary soldiers in the trenches is the defining aspect of World War 1 historiography. The thread is also there in WW2 histories, but has a different feel, possibly because of the mechanized speed and technological changes in warfare, or because the allies won in such complete fashion (as opposed to the futility of WW1) or because tactics in WW2 had shifted from human wave attack to small unit maneuver warfare which involves the imagination of the soldiers in the execution more so than human wave models.

This alienation has also always been true of crew and passengers on ships, who are at the mercy of the captain and the elements, as discussed in Naval Combat, [5 Combat](#), p. 1009.

Continuing Thoughts, October 2020

I have heard it often said that Germany's holocaust of the Jews was an industrial genocide. Most people take this (perhaps rightly) to mean that Germany used the benefits of modern technology (e.g., trains for transport) to commit racial genocide on a scale not seen before in the world. Others may also think of the 'machinery of state' (and

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people like Eichmann) or of the death machine processing extermination camps set up on the Polish-Russian frontier ([Operation Reinhard](#), [Sobibor](#), [Trablanka](#), and [Belzec](#) extermination camps) as the industrial genocide of the Jews.

All of that may be a true image, but within Marx' conflict theory in sociology, another meaning emerges. The industrialization of genocide was the essential [alienation](#) of the German nation's civil and political society from the atrocities, the alienation of each individual soldier, police officer, and civil servant or employee, and their industrialist masters, from the final result of the process (excepting those hand-picked few who directed and/or carried out the actual executions). The essential core of [Marxian social theory](#) (according to Professor Elwell), is the alienation of human creation and problem solving (and labor) from the final product, by dividing and subdividing the labor into small repetitive steps, and the alienation of workers from capital ownership and profit of their labor. From this, it can be seen the 'real' sense in which the Holocaust was industrialized genocide.

The same can be said of modern war, World War I is commonly referred to as the first industrial war. People commonly imagine this to refer to the enormous national armies, supplied with technological weapons and logistics, backed by the industrialized, mechanized production of a nation (consider for example the appalling amount of ammunition expended). All of this is true, but as armies become larger and command becomes more remote from the combat – the relationship of each participant to the whole, to the operation, to the outcome desired by the creative minds in the command far to the rear, becomes less and less significant, until, as happened in WWI, the soldiers on the front couldn't see the point of it all, what they were dying for daily (in the words of Lynn Montross quoted [5 Combat](#), p. 1008, they were being thrust into battle instead of led into battle). This particularly plays into the time element, since in previous centuries, armies lined for battles that were decided in a few hours, but beginning with the latter-part of the American Civil War, the time of combat operations had expanded until labeling a period and geographical location of conflict a 'battle' was a convenience of historians, journalist and propagandist later trying to make sense of it all.

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