

The nullification of the object or of intuition, but, qua moment, in such a way that this annihilation is replaced by another intuition or object; or pure identity, the activity of nullifying, is fixed...The object is not nullified as object altogether but rather in such a way that another object is put in its place...But this nullification is labor. (Hegel 1979, p.106)

The subject becomes desire and is mediated by labor or activity, which is the nullification of the object or of the intuition; however, it compensates, at the same time, for this annihilation by another intuition or object, but the enjoyment of the object produced by labor is merely the objectification of subject. Expressed in Hegel's words, the product of labor, which is the fixation of the identity of subject and object, is sublated to the subject again, and the subject returns to mere subjectivity. Therefore, the tools that mediate labor as a mediator (i.e., the identifier of subject and object) and that retain its results must appear.

In one aspect, the tool is subjective, in the power of the subject who is working; by him it is entirely determined, manufactured, and fashioned; from the other point of view, it is objectively directed to the object worked. By means of this middle term [between subject and object], the subject cancels the immediacy of annihilation; for labor, as the annihilation of intuition [the particular object], is at the same time the annihilation of the subject, positing in him a negation of the merely quantitative; hand and spirit are blunted by it; i.e., they themselves assume the nature of negativity and formlessness, just as, on the other side (since the negative, difference, is double), labor is something downright single and subjective. In the tool, the subject makes a middle term between himself and the object, and this middle term is the real rationality of labor...

In the tool, the subjectivity of labor is raised to something universal. Anyone can make a similar tool and work with it. To this extent the tool is the persistent norm of labor. (Hegel 1979, pp. 112-113)

In this manner, only the tool makes labor true labor; therefore, this labor can establish the identity of the subject and object. Labor, in the triad of desire-labor (tool), enjoyment is entirely positive and looks similar to labor in the "labor process" of *Capital*; it differs only in that this labor is that of an individual.

As described above, Hegel grasped labor as the relation between the isolated individual and certain objects; he then raised the issue in the interrelation of working subjects, or social relations. Desire is originally very particular, and in this sense, individuals, who work in isolation, realize their own desires and are seen only as a "multiplicity of particulars" (Hegel 1979, p.117); however, this multiplicity is sublated in labor itself. Hegel apparently is thinking of the division of labor, which he learned from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Na-*

tions; here, it is not as systematically as in *The Philosophy of Right*. He describes, however, the development of individuals very vividly: from individuals who are there by labor to individuals who relate to each other through labor and become beings-for-one-self.

The starting point of the social relationship “consists in the purely practical, real, mechanical relation of work and possession” (Hegel 1979, p.117). The division of labor makes the labor of individuals “mechanical labor,” which deaden the character of labor, which becomes “wholly quantitative without variety,” and machines supersede tools. This process also appears in the relationship among the products of labor, which are now “pure quantity so far as the subject is concerned,” and this abstract quantity “is no longer a need of ... [the laborer], but a surplus.” This particular “abstraction of need” posits “universality” among working subjects, and this universality becomes a “legal right,” which mediates “possession” and “property,” or mutually and universally “recognized” relations (Hegel 1979, pp.117–118).

Hegel derives “property” as a universal relation directly from the division of labor among working subjects. This image of society could be criticized as that of a “simple commodity production society,” but I do not wish to trivialize his argument. He grasps “exchange” correctly and defines value and price so strictly that one think of the theory of value in Marx’s *Capital*.

This pure infinity of legal right, its inseparability, reflected in the thing, i.e., in the particular itself, is the thing’s equality with other things, and the abstraction of this equality of one thing with another, concrete unity and legal right, is value; or rather value is itself equality as abstraction, the ideal measure [of things]—but the actually found and empirical measure is price. (Hegel 1979, p.121)

Price and value are expressed in exchange, as Hegel discusses in the following text.

Externally exchange is twofold, or rather a repetition of itself, for the universal object, the surplus, and then the particular element in need is materially an object, but its two forms are necessarily a repetition of it. But the concept or essence [of exchange] is the transformation itself, and since the absolute character of the transformation is the identity of the opposite, this raises the question of how this pure identity, infinity, is to be displayed as such in reality. (Hegel 1979, p.121)

Such exchange is the universal exchange of needs, and it naturally extends to cover the whole society. “So too the active universal exchange, the activity which adjusts particular need to particular surplus, is the commercial class, the highest point of universality in the exchange of gain” (Hegel 1979, p.154). The social relationships of individuals are described in the second level as the system of division of labor and exchange.

The *System of Ethical Life* explores the development of “dominancy (headman) and slavery (slave)” and “family,” based on the two levels above, and these form the government that is constructed from the absolute class (the nobility), the class of honesty (the non-nobles), and the class of crude ethical life (the peasantry). The concept of labor, which is our subject, is discussed in detail in “The First System of Government: The System of Need in Absolute Government,” which is one of the three governments discussed in the *System of Ethical Life* (the third section).

This “system of need” is “a system of universal physical dependence on one another.” Because the labor of the individual loses the certainty to ensure the need of the individual, this system is “an alien power (*Macht*) over which he has no control.” This “alien power” is expressed most severely in the fact that “it is just as little the single contributor who determines the value of either his surplus or his need, or who can maintain it independently of its relation to everything else, as there is anything permanent and secure in the value” (Hegel 1979, p.167). In this system, rulers appear “as the unconscious and blind, entirety of needs and the mode of their satisfaction,” but “the universal must be able to master this unconscious and blind fate and become a government” (Hegel 1979, pp.167–168).

On the one hand, “the ideality of ... displays itself” empirically, but “since possible possession ... and labor have their limits,” “this inequality of wealth is absolutely necessary.” In this way, “the business that is more universal and more ideal is that as such secures a greater gain for itself” and “the individual who is tremendously wealthy becomes a might; he cancels the form of thoroughgoing physical dependence, the form of dependence on a universal, not on a particular” (Hegel 1979, p.170). Needless to say, a power relationship comes into existence here.

Next, great wealth, which is similarly bound up with the deepest poverty (for in the separation [between rich and poor], labor on both sides is universal and objective), produces on the one side in ideal universality, on the other side in real universality, mechanically. This purely quantitative element, the inorganic aspect of labor, which is parceled out even in its concept, is the unmitigated extreme of barbarism. (Hegel 1979, pp.170–171)

On the other hand, “one part of” the same business class is devoted to “mechanical and factory labor and abandons it to barbarism.” This means that “the bestiality of contempt for all higher things enters” into the system of need and that “the absolute bond of the people, namely the ethical principle, has vanished, and the people is dissolved.” The government has to work to “keep the whole [people] without question in the life possible for it” in the face of “this inequality and the destruction of private and public life wrought by it” (Hegel 1979, p.171). The system of needs is sublated by the corporation [*Korporation*] or “the inner constitution of the class” in the *System of Ethical Life*, as later in *The Philosophy of*

Right.

III. Conclusion

In the *System of Ethical Life*, labor itself is very positively grasped and turns into the system of inequality by the extension of needs and the accumulation of wealth. The whole theory of Hegel here looks like Marx's law of capitalist appropriation, but the spirit of law is produced, and it sublates the system of inequality. Hegel does not clearly comprehend the contradiction of labor itself. He finds the abstraction of labor, which relates deeply to the positive chain relation of the division of labor→exchange→contraction→right (justice). In this respect, we can confirm Marx's criticism of Hegel's positive grasp of labor concept, but Hegel also comprehends "the system of needs," or the materialistic interdependent system, as a reification relationship. However, he fails to understand the inner relationship between this reification relationship and labor concept. If Hegel had realized this inner relationship, he would have understood the conceptual relationship between private property and alienated labor.⁷⁾

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7) Cf. Shibata 2013. Later in *the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6)*, Hegel begins his argument in the manner of English empiricism with the waking of consciousness and language, and labor or exercise plays an important role; however, the practical and historical comprehension of objects is not deepened and in that respect, this change does not necessarily mean progress. The negativity which Jameson finds in Marx's dialectic is not yet fulfilled (the self-consciousness that is the objective is the awareness of the thinker's position in society and in history itself, and of the limits imposed on this awareness by this class position—in short, of the ideological and situational nature of all thought and of the initial invention of the problems themselves.). Moreover, in the first "Thesis on Feuerbach," Marx argues that our objects are not "natural beings" but "products of subjective activity" and that we must expand the materialistic perspective to "subjects, human activity, and historical activity" (Kato 2014, p.120).

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