

LABOR AS FREEDOM IN HEGEL AND MARX

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ABSTRACT

This article makes three interrelated points. First, I argue that both Hegel and Marx construct the activity of labor as central to social relations and view the nature of production relations in modern industrial society similarly. Second, despite these similarities, their understandings of freedom differ significantly. Hence and third, I conclude that their respective evaluations of modern society is drastically different from one another. Whereas for Hegel, actualization of freedom requires self's realization of itself as the totality; a moment that takes place at the level of the state; Marx comprehends freedom as the self's being affirmed in its activity. While the political realm becomes a resolution of the tensions of the modern society for Hegel, Marx's social theory not only involves a critique of the modern production relations but also requires their transformation.

Keywords: Marx, Hegel, Labor, Work, Freedom

HEGEL VE MARX'TA ÖZGÜRLÜK OLARAK EMEK

ÖZ

Bu makale birbiriyle ilintili üç savdan oluşmaktadır. İlk olarak, hem Hegel hem de Marx'ın, emek faaliyetini toplumsal ilişkilerin merkezine yerleştirdiği ve modern endüstriyel toplumdaki üretim ilişkilerinin doğasını benzer şekilde ele aldığı iddia edilmektedir. İkinci olarak, bu benzerliklere rağmen, iki düşünürün özgürlük anlayışları önemli ölçüde farklılık göstermektedir. Üçüncü ve son olarak, iki düşünürün modern toplumun değerlendirmelerinin birbirinden büyük ölçüde farklı olduğu sonucuna varılmaktadır. Hegel için özgürlüğün gerçekleşmesi devlet seviyesinde gerçekleşen, benliğin kendisini bütün olarak kavradığı bir an anlamına gelir. Marx'ın özgürlük anlayışı ise benliğin emek faaliyetinde teyit edilmesidir. Sonuç olarak, Hegel için siyasal alan modern toplumun çelişkilerinin çözüldüğü bir alana dönüşür; Marx'ın toplumsal kuramı ise yalnızca modern üretim ilişkilerini eleştirmekle kalmayıp bu ilişkilerin tümünden dönüştürülmesini mecbur kılar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marx, Hegel, Emek, İş, Özgürlük

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Introduction

The contribution of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* to German thought is two-fold. On the one hand, it represents the end of the philosophical tradition in which the political world is comprehended through philosophical freedom. On the other hand, it marks the transition to a theory of society. Many of the elements in Marx's social theory can be traced to Hegel's socio-political writings.¹ In this article, I explore one specific aspect of the intellectual dialogue between the Hegel and Marx: Labor (and work) and its relation to the idea of freedom.

This article makes three interrelated points. First, I argue that both Hegel and Marx construct the activity of labor as central to social relations and view the nature of production relations in modern industrial society similarly. Second, despite these similarities, their understandings of freedom differ significantly. Hence and third, I conclude that their respective evaluations of modern society are drastically different from one another.

Although Hegel constructs labor as one of the stages in the formation of subjective spirit in his early work, he later abandons this framework in favor of a philosophy of consciousness.² In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel conceives the emergence of the state as the process by which spirit is formed. In this process, consciousness gradually perceives itself as the immediate unity of particularity and universality and reaches an understanding of itself as "totality." That moment of "recognition," for Hegel, represents the actualization of freedom, of "being oneself in otherness." Hegel attributes the actualization of freedom to the state, - a level above the civil society in terms of the spirit's process of arriving at the realization of its totality. He recognizes that production and exchange take place within civil society. But, even though these processes create division of labor and mechanization of work, according to Hegel, they do not interfere with individuals' freedom, since freedom is ultimately attained at the level of state.

Marx on the other hand, conceives labor, i.e. non-alienated productive activity, as the driving force of freedom. According to Marx, freedom consists in one's being confirmed in one's activity; it is "self-realization" through labor. Marx observes that the modern relations of production under capitalism interfere with this nature of labor. Labor becomes a mediated activity, a source of alienation. Therefore, the nature of production in modern society must be transformed before freedom can be

¹ See for example Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 1st edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

² Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel, Boston: Beacon Press, 1974, p.142.

actualized. Marx’s theory of labor, then, becomes not only a criticism of the contemporary society, but also a guideline for its transformation.

I first start with an analysis of the *Realphilosophie*, in which Hegel identifies three dialectical processes (language, labor and recognition) as the basis for the formation of subjective spirit.³ I then move on to a discussion of the *Philosophy of Right*, which will shed light on the idea of freedom in Hegel, and the relation of state to civil society. The final section looks at how Marx appropriated the idea of labor and turned it into a critique of not only Hegel but also capitalism.

Labor in Hegel’s *Realphilosophie*

*Realphilosophie*⁴ reflects Hegel’s conviction that “a struggle among subjects for recognition of their identity generated inner-societal pressure toward practical, political establishment of institutions that would guarantee freedom.”⁵ Hegel believed that through this process of mutual recognition, a state of freedom can be attained, where the subjects feel at home in the world.

Hegel starts *Realphilosophie* by developing a theory of the formative basis of the spirit.⁶ The theory extends these formative processes by including “more and more of the necessary conditions for individual consciousness’s experience of itself” in order to arrive at an understanding of the essential experiences that “a subject must, on the whole, have had before it can view itself as a person with ‘rights’ and to that extent, can participate in the institutional life of a society.”⁷ This process involves three fundamental dialectical patterns: language, labor and an initial form of mutual recognition.

Language, at the initial stage, does not suggest communication among self-conscious subjects but rather refers to the activity of attaching names to the things that the self confronts in nature.⁸ Through language, the

³ Although Marx did not have access to this work, the discussion reveals how Marx singled out the dialectic of labor and constructed it as the meta-paradigm, in which all other social relations attain meaning. Avineri goes as far as to suggest that “Marx, in his first confrontation with Hegel, could construct his materialist view out of the Hegelian system itself.” Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, 5.

⁴ The lecture series Hegel delivered in Jena in 1805-06 is known as *Realphilosophie*. The references will be to the following edition: G.W.F. Hegel, “The Philosophy of Spirit,” in *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with Commentary*, First Edition, Detroit: Wayne State Univ Press, 1983, pp. 83–182.

⁵ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson, Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1995, p. 5.

⁶ Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, p.142.

⁷ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p. 34. Hegel takes up the institutional organization of social life in the second chapter and calls it the “actual spirit”.

⁸ Hegel, “The Philosophy of Spirit,” p. 89.

self imposes an order on the external reality – the most basic creativity exercised by the subject since Adam.⁹ Name-giving has a double function. By means of linguistic representation, not only is the thing objectified, but also the self recognizes itself as the producer of symbols. The self comes to its own awareness as a subject in the experience of linguistic representation. Habermas calls this first stage of the formative process, the *name-giving consciousness*.¹⁰

Linguistic representation does not suffice for the formation of subjective spirit because it addresses only one side of the dichotomy between nature and mind. Therefore, Hegel takes up next the discussion of the will. Through the analysis of the individual will, Hegel constructs the second side of the formative process by extending it to practical experience. This move allows Hegel to show the process by which the self begins to conceive of itself as the subject of practical production as well as symbolic. The key to an understanding of the will can be found in the interrelation of labor, tool, and product.

Labor is the specific mode of satisfying drives. Just like language, labor mediates between the subject and the nature, and delays the satisfaction of drives. The tool, like symbol in language, is the category of the middle, by which spirit realizes itself. Laboring activity mediated by tools produces "work." In its work, the subject comes to the awareness of its doings, of its ability for practical production.¹¹ Tool, however, is not an active thing in itself; *I* must put it to use. In doing so, I employ nature's brute power despite itself. Through *cunning*, I make nature work for my own purposes.¹²

At this stage, the self is still at the inner level.¹³ Acquiring consciousness of the self as a legal person requires going beyond the self into the social world and confronting other subjects. Hegel now seeks a form of recognition that will allow for *recognizing consciousness*.¹⁴ One such attempt is love.

Love is a relationship of mutual recognition, confirmation of the self for the first time. It involves reciprocity¹⁵ because it requires both parties to recognize their partner in interaction as a certain type of person. Only if I recognize the other as a certain type of person does their recognition of my subjectivity become valuable. This mutual recognition endows the

⁹ *ibid.*, p.89.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.155.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.102–3.

¹² *ibid.*, p.103.

¹³ Leo Rauch, "Introduction: On Hegel's Concept of Spirit," in *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with Commentary*, First Edition, Detroit: Wayne State Univ Press, 1983, p. 26.

¹⁴ Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, p.155.

¹⁵ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.38.

individual with a sense of basic confidence developed out of one’s being recognized and confirmed as a person. Love, therefore is a part of ethical life; it is the first experiential context in which the reconciliation of the subject with the other becomes possible. However, neither love nor family¹⁶ is enough for the subjective spirit to conceive itself as a person endowed with legal rights. Hegel wants a recognition that can form the basis of legal personhood. This is achieved by the introduction of life-and-death struggle in the state of nature.

Hegel places the single family in confrontation with other families in social life. In “taking possession of a piece of land,”¹⁷ each family excludes others from its possession. This competitive situation is the *state of nature*. Hegel wants to show that the individuals can arrive at an understanding of mutual rights and obligations from a state of nature. To that purpose, he constructs the unilateral seizure of possessions not as self-assertion but as “struggles for recognition.” He thereby assigns a social meaning to the conflict in the state of nature.¹⁸ Reciprocal death threats give rise to intersubjectively acknowledged legal relationships.¹⁹

With the exposition of the formative processes of naming, cunning and recognizing consciousnesses, Hegel’s task of constructing the necessary conditions for the development of the subjective spirit is completed. Now the individual can comprehend oneself as a person endowed with rights, and can participate in social life, the *actual spirit*.

The challenge that Hegel faces with the actual spirit is to understand the construction of social reality. The transition from subjective spirit to the “spiritual actuality” of society is the transition from personal to the interpersonal realm. It involves a transformation of possession into private property and of labor into “universal labor.”²⁰

In his analysis of “universal labor,” Hegel offers valuable insights into the relation between subject and their work. We observed that at the level of subjective spirit production takes place for a specific, concrete human need. At the level of actual spirit, a transformation occurs in production. As human beings become interdependent, work becomes abstract,²¹ which in return entails a transformation of the subject itself, a kind of abstraction.²²

Moving from these points, Avineri claims that Hegel “shows how labor is necessarily connected with alienation...It is fundamental and

¹⁶ Family, according to Hegel, is a form of development of love.

¹⁷ Hegel, “The Philosophy of Spirit,” p.110.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.112.

¹⁹ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.47.

²⁰ Hegel, “The Philosophy of Spirit,” p.119.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.121.

²² *ibid.*, p.121.

immanent in the structure of society: it cannot be dispensed with, and the conditions of alienation cannot be abolished within the existing society."²³

Avineri's analysis is flawed on two grounds: First, he imposes a Marxist understanding of alienation on Hegel's writings. Alienation, for Hegel, does not take place at the level of labor relations, but at the level of ethical life. According to Hegel, alienation takes place when individuals fail to find themselves in "a well-constituted ethical life, which integrates the rights of persons and subjects into an organic system of customs and providing [them] with concretely fulfilling lives."²⁴ If Hegel has diagnosed one thing as immanent, it is not alienation, but objectification. Hegel shows that labor is necessarily the objectification of man's subjective powers. Second, the discussion of abstract labor in *Realphilosophie* is immediately followed by the discussion of property. Since Hegel's main concern is the establishment of legal relations, elevation of production relations to an abstract level constitutes, for Hegel, a progress towards this aim. Avineri fails to see this positive connection in Hegel between abstract labor and exchange.

According to Honneth, Hegel's claim about the abstraction of production relations and need satisfaction presupposes a further concretization of legal relations. For "exchange," subjects must have mutually recognized "property." They must comprehend one another as subjects with rights on the product of their own labor; thereby they must have become property-owners for one another. In this sense, the relation of property and exchange are not only "functional preconditions for the system of social labor," but also "direct results of human relations to reality in terms of relations of legal recognition."²⁵

With the discussion of "coercive law," Hegel completes his discussion of the actual spirit. He has revealed spirit's externalization into the objectivity of social reality. Together with the institutionalization of legislative power, Hegel has demonstrated this development up to the establishment of the state.

There is one important difference between *Realphilosophie* (1805-1806) and the *Philosophy of Right* (1821). In the later work, Hegel introduces a clear-cut distinction between civil society and the state. Whereas the civil society is the realm of private interests and of the system of needs; the state is a spiritual universal entity. Such a distinction is only implicit in *Realphilosophie* and has not yet come to full fruition. I, therefore, now turn to the *Philosophy of Right*.

²³ Shlomo Avineri, "Labor, Alienation and Social Classes in Hegel's Realphilosophie," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1971): 101.

²⁴ Allen W. Wood, "Editor's Introduction," in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. xvi.

²⁵ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.51.

The Philosophy of Right

Hegel starts the *Philosophy of Right* with the "abstract right," the capacity of the individual to be a rights-bearing agent. The discussion of abstract right answers the question of who a person is.²⁶ In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel employs a similar method of exposition to *Realphilosophie*, where he developed a theory of the formative processes of the subjective spirit.²⁷ This time, however, he extends the formative processes to include legal forms of recognition. The "abstract right" comes to refer to the recognition of the individual as a right bearing person -the rights entailed being property and contract. Moreover, he reconstructs these relations so that, the abstract can only be realized within the framework of the state.

The consequences of this move for Hegel's philosophy are twofold: On the one hand, the three dialectical relationships that Hegel had identified as the formative processes (language, labor, recognition) lose their central importance. These dialectical relationships, especially labor, become a derivative of property relations. On the other hand, property and exchange become the necessary conditions for one's integration as a subject into the ethical life. Organization of exchange becomes the fundamental organizing principle of society.

According to Hegel, property rights exist because exercise of agency involves transforming the material world. To exercise one's will, the subject must engage in material exchange with the external reality.²⁸ Social life then becomes an interaction between two or more subjective wills mediated by the world of objects. The definition of property introduces a distinction between possession and property. While possession is a naturalistic relationship, property relations are legal relations. They mediate between subjectivities entitled to a bundle of rights. "Contract" is further concretization of these legal relations.²⁹

While the abstract right denotes the necessary conditions for individuals to recognize themselves as persons endowed with rights, individuals can attain freedom only in ethical life.³⁰ Hegel conceptualizes the ethical substance in three moments: family, civil society, and state.

²⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 69, §36.

²⁷ Avineri argues that "Hegel had not only been persistently preoccupied with the same set of problems, but that in a way he was also trying to write the same book all the time." Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1974, p.81.

²⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p.75, §44.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p.104, §72.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p.189, §142.

Hegel's civil society refers to the realm of anonymous subjects, who pursue their private interests.³¹ Civil society is based on a relationship of interdependence among individuals created through the system of production; an argument similar to the one Hegel developed earlier in his *Realphilosophie*.

Hegel observes that there is no bottom line to need formation. Needs are satisfied through objects, which are created as the result of others' labor. Hence, there is increasing interdependence in civil society.³² Work initially satisfies individuals' particularized needs³³ but in advanced commercial societies, work becomes increasingly abstract under the division of labor. He presents an acute analysis of modern society worthy of quoting at great length, precisely because it sounds as if Karl Marx himself could have written it:

The universal and objective aspect of work consists, however, in that [process of] *abstraction* which confers a specific character on means and needs and hence also on production, so giving rise to the *division of labor*. Through this division, the work of the individual becomes *simpler*, so that his skill at his abstract work becomes greater, as does the volume of his output. At the same time, this abstraction of skill and means makes the *dependence* and *reciprocity* of human beings in the satisfaction of their other needs complete and entirely necessary. Furthermore, the abstraction of production makes work increasingly *mechanical*, so that human being is eventually able to step aside and let a *machine* take his place.³⁴

While both the diagnosis and the terminology are surprisingly similar, the spirit in which Hegel undertakes this inquiry could not have been further from Marx's. Unlike Marx, what interests Hegel in this relationship has less to do with mechanization of work or abstraction of production and more with the creation of "universal and permanent resources,"³⁵ in which all individuals have an opportunity to share based upon one's immediate assets and skills. Hegel claims that particular systems of needs, "with their corresponding means, varieties of work, modes of satisfaction, and theoretical and practical education"³⁶ form the different *estates*. A couple of factors determine to which estate the individual belongs: "natural

³¹ *ibid.*, p.220, §182.

³² *ibid.*, p.231, §195.

³³ *ibid.*, p.231, §196.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.232-233, §198.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.233, §199.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.234, §201.

disposition, birth and circumstances, although the ultimate and essential determinant is the subjective opinion and the particular arbitrary will.”³⁷

The concept of estates in Hegel’s thought is a vapid compromise between the contemporary socio-political situation and his philosophical commitments. While he rejects hereditary estates and brings in personal skills and merit, he cannot completely let go of birth rights. After all, he observes two contemporary social formations. In 1821, the landed gentry had not yet completely dissolved, and existed for Hegel’s theory as substantial estate, whose members belonged in it by virtue of birth right. Yet, it is a period of increased commercial and industrial activity. Hegel wants to account for this section of the society in his social theory as well.

The estates are extremely important for the realization of individual freedom; belonging to an estate is necessary for the actualization of universality.³⁸ Hegel, once again returns to the dialectic of recognition to emphasize the centrality of estates. Self-determination, diligent activity, and skill allow the individual to belong to an estate, and this belonging in return bestows upon the individual “*recognition* in his own eyes and in the eyes of others.”³⁹

Up to this point Hegel only discussed civil society in relation to its positive aspects, as “the immense power which draws people to itself.” Hegel also argues that that belonging in society is associated with not only rights but also by mutual obligations.⁴⁰ How can these mutual rights and obligations be understood?

Hegel addresses this issue in the context of poverty. Hegel believes that, by virtue of being a member of civil society,

“every human being has a right to demand livelihood from society ... It is not just starvation which is at stake here; the wider viewpoint is the need to prevent a rabble from emerging.”⁴¹

But one must exercise caution. Rabble is not created by sheer poverty; it comes into existence when the poverty is accompanied by the loss of “that feeling of right, integrity, and honor which comes from supporting oneself by one’s activity and work.”⁴² This claim is reminiscent of the dialectical conception of labor in *Realphilosophie* as a necessary experience for the subject’s integration into social life. Labor provides the individual with

³⁷ *ibid.*, p.237, §206.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.239, §207.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p.238, §207.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.263, §238.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.264, §240.

⁴² *ibid.*, p.266, §244.

an awareness of its subjectivity, as product of its own activity. Similarly, in the context of the rabble, Hegel draws attention to the aspect of work that is related to human dignity. Hegel believes that livelihood provision is not the only reason why work is necessary. Self-sufficiency through dignified work constitutes a fundamental aspect of human intersubjectivity. Even if needs could be satisfied without needing to work (presumably through charity), it would not substitute for dignified work.⁴³

So, Hegel aptly diagnoses the disintegration of "the ethical" within the civil society - a claim similar to one Marx would later make. How can then the ideals of ethical life be realized? This requires a movement from civil society to the state, to "the actuality of concrete freedom."⁴⁴

For Hegel, "[t]he state is the actuality of the ethical idea,"⁴⁵ the ethically integrated community. It is a normative institution central to one's selfhood and identity.⁴⁶ The highest form of freedom for Hegel is the consciousness of this membership in the state. The realization freedom is then a cognitive process, a state of realization of one's belongingness to this entity.⁴⁷

Hegel assigns three tasks to the state: ensuring the welfare of its citizens, social integration and solidarity. His challenge is to prove that the institutions of the state live up to the task of fulfilling these functions. A comprehensive evaluation of Hegel's theory in this respect is beyond the scope of this article. However, it is worth nothing that Marx thought that the idea of state as the embodiment of general interest endowed with universal values, and superior to the interests of citizens, was, to put it mildly, "an illusion."⁴⁸

I have so far demonstrated how Hegel discerns the transformed nature of labor under modern industrial production relations and points out to the insufficiency of civil society in containing poverty. He perceives the disintegration of the ethical in civil society, yet since he constructs the state as the level of universal, of the actualization of freedom, Hegel's theory does not criticize civil society or the relations it entails. The arena of reform for Hegel is the political. Let me now look at the idea of labor in Marx.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.267, §245.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.282, §260.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.275, §257.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.276, §258.

⁴⁷ For more on Hegel's theory of self-actualization, see Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 30-32.

⁴⁸ Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution Volume 1: The Founders*, trans. P. S. Falla, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, p.124.

Marx and “freedom as self-realization”

Labor constitutes the central category of freedom in Karl Marx’s political philosophy. Both Jürgen Habermas⁴⁹ and Axel Honneth⁵⁰ interpret this as a somewhat reductive move, arguing that in trying to reconstruct the process of the realization of freedom, Marx reduces the reproduction of social life to the dialectic of labor.

According to Habermas, Marx’s aim is “to reconstruct the world-historical processes by which the human species forms itself in terms of the laws of the reproduction of social life.”⁵¹ However, Habermas claims that Marx fails to explicate the relationship between interaction and labor. In Habermas’s terminology, Marx reduces communicative action to instrumental action. As a result, productive activity becomes the all-encompassing paradigm, out of which other categories are generated.⁵²

Honneth’s reading of Marx is more nuanced. According to Honneth, Marx, who had access to *the Phenomenology of Spirit* but not the *Realphilosophie*, narrowed down the struggle for recognition, which is made up of three formative stages demonstrated above, to the dimension of self-realization through labor. However, Marx’s concept of labor, especially as revealed in *The German Ideology*, is so normatively charged that, he is able to construe the process of production as a process of intersubjective recognition.⁵³ This construction enables Marx to take a step further and criticize the capitalist relations of production. Capitalism, in which, a single class controls the means of production, distorts the interpersonal relations of production.

Let’s start with Marx’s critique of Hegel. Marx was fascinated by the “producing principle” in Hegel’s work:

The outstanding thing in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and its final outcome – that is, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle – is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-genesis of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation, and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of labor and comprehends objective man – true because real man- as the outcome of man’s labor.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Habermas, *Theory and Practice*.

⁵⁰ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*.

⁵¹ Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, 168.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 169.

⁵³ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.146.

⁵⁴ Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Revised & enlarged edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978, p.112.

Marx praises Hegel for not only grasping the essence of labor, but also grasping labor as the essence of human beings. However, Marx immediately goes on to criticize the one-sidedness and limitations of Hegel's standpoint. Hegel only knows "abstractly mental labor."⁵⁵ Because Hegel identifies human essence with self-consciousness, "all estrangement of man is therefore nothing but estrangement of self-consciousness."⁵⁶

Where does this leave Hegel? According to Marx, "Hegel's standpoint is that of the modern political economy... he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labor."⁵⁷ The standpoint of the political economy, as Marx notes earlier is to "conceal the estrangement inherent in the nature of the labor by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production."⁵⁸ Hegel's viewpoint is therefore sorely misguided in terms of correctly analyzing the production relations under capitalism.

How does Marx himself conceptualize the relationship between worker and labor? The non-alienated labor, above all, is social labor. In *The German Ideology*, Marx lays out the three moments of history. The first premise of history, according to Marx, is that "men must be in a position to live in order to be able to make history."⁵⁹ Since life involves before everything else the satisfaction of basic needs -eating, drinking, habitation, clothing, "the first historical act is thus the production of means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself."⁶⁰ The production of material life, need creation and propagation of the mankind (family) constitute the three moments of history, the creation of life. With the introduction of interpersonal relations, Marx can construe labor as a social relationship:

"By social we understand the *co-operation* of several individuals ... It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage... Thus it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another."⁶¹

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p.113.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.112.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.73.

⁵⁹ Karl Marx, "The German Ideology: Part I," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Revised & enlarged edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978, p.155.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.156.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.157.

Marx adds a final dimension, language, as the medium of intercourse among individuals with particular needs. Through language individual attains the consciousness of its sociality; language is "practical consciousness."⁶²

How are these production relations transformed under capitalism? The essence of production is that individual works upon the object of one's activity to develop oneself and one's powers. Under conditions of wage labor, however, the worker has no property and is excluded from the instrument and the object of production, which belongs to another. The realization of subjectivity through labor cannot take place in wage relations; labor becomes estranged labor. In *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx delineates four moments of estrangement.

"The product of labor" Marx says, "is the objectification of labor."⁶³ But when the labor which has been "congealed" in an object belongs not to the producer but to another, the worker confronts the object of production "as something alien, as a power independent of the producer."⁶⁴ If the product of labor is alienation, then the productive activity itself must be alienation. If the labor does not realize the essence of being, if "in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind,"⁶⁵ then the worker is also alienated from the activity itself.

In estranging humans from their activity and the object of this activity, the labor alienates human beings from their "species being." It is related to Marx's understanding of freedom. Practical activity is essential for humans to survive as a species in nature. Human beings transform the external world in order to make the matter useful for human needs and purposes. The activity of transforming the objective world by objective activity is the essence of human beings, its realization as a species-being. The estranged labor turns this "spontaneous, free" activity into a means of sustaining human beings' mere physical existence.⁶⁶

The fourth moment of estrangement is the estrangement of human beings from each other. We have already considered the social nature of labor in Marx, the claim that "man's relation to himself only becomes objective and real for him through his relation to the other man." Marx continues:

Thus, if the product of his labor, his labor objectified, is for him alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this

⁶² *ibid.*, p., 158.

⁶³ Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," p.71.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.71.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.74.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.76-77.

object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful and independent of him.⁶⁷

Estrangement of human beings from their activity and the product of their labor appears in relation to the estrangement of human beings from others and their species-being. With this discussion Marx is able to show that the relations of production under capitalism prevent actualization of freedom. Emancipation cannot be achieved within the existing conditions of capitalism based on private property. Private property is not only the source but the also the consequence of alienated labor.⁶⁸ Hence the transformation of the alienating conditions for labor becomes a program for transcendence of private property.

Conclusion

It is beyond doubt that the influence of Hegel's philosophy on Marx's thought is many-fold. This article has focused on only one aspect of the connection between these two thinkers: labor and its relation to the idea of freedom.

Through an analysis of the concept of labor in the works of Hegel and Marx, I demonstrated that although both thinkers construct the essence of labor in a similar fashion, they evaluate the production relations in modern society differently. I argued that the reason for this difference lies in their disparate understandings of the idea of freedom.

Whereas for Hegel, the actualization of freedom requires the self's realization of itself as the totality; a moment that takes place at the level of the state; Marx comprehends freedom as the self's being affirmed in its activity. Consequently, where political realm becomes a resolution of the tensions of the modern society for Hegel, Marx's social theory not only entails a critique of the modern production relations but also requires their transformation.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.78.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.81.

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