Here, I would like to introduce and study a few Japanese articles written in response to Sartre’s *Materialism and Revolution* (1946). I refer to Suzuki, Ebizaka, and Urano (1971) as the basic text.

The articles by Hideo Kobayashi (1902‒1983) and Katsumi Umemoto (1912‒1974) focusing on Sartre’s *Materialism and Revolution* (1946) are especially important for the following two reasons. First, both authors criticized Sartre on the grounds of the ego as intrinsic to the consciousness or the ego as the subject of the consciousness. This reveals that they did not understand at all the "intentionality of the consciousness," which Sartre learned from Husserl. Second, Umemoto strongly supported Marxist materialism.

Although Kobayashi was a contemporary of Sartre and both were hostile toward Marxist materialism, Sartre arrived at a dialectical subjectivity, while Kobayashi wrote articles mostly on the objects of hobbies, such as art objects and antiquities, and saw history largely as a matter of "myth" or "memory." I would like to explore the reason for this difference.

Kobayashi did not have the ability to grasp society and others. In his article about a Japanese

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*B* English translation rights arranged with *Jokyo-Shuppan* (Tokyo, Japan).

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“I-novel,” he criticized the narrow-mindedness of Japanese society and wrote that the “Western I is socialized but the Japanese I is not. Today, we should deal only with the ‘socialized I’ and the Japanese ‘I-novel’ has died.” However, his own “ego” had never been socialized and he became a fervent advocate of the national polity before World War II, as a supporter of the fascist movement at that time. According to Fletcher (2011), Kobayashi was not an exceptional case. His friend Kiyoshi Miki (1897–1945) strongly supported the then-fascist movement.

1. Kobayashi’s impression and criticism of Sartre’s *Materialism and Revolution*

Hideo Kobayashi, a key figure of Japanese Jikkan-Shugi-Sha [Actualists], described his impression of Sartre’s *Materialism and Revolution* as follows: “I appreciate Sartre’s accuracy in his critique, but it contains something brutal like a grudge. It lacks love” (Suzuki, Ebizaka, Urano 1971, p. 279). This seems to be from some round-table discussion, but nothing is more useful to clarify the nature of his critique than this statement. Although his critique is praised because of his masterful use of paradoxical logic, his critique does nothing but raise a quarrel without good reason, that is, if his critique is simply opposing Sartre’s accurate critique with the sentence, “It lacks love,” then this is not paradoxical logic. For whom is this love? It does not mean love for Kobayashi. If it is love for the objects that Sartre criticized, then we must say Kobayashi knew little about the discussions in France at that time.1)

In his *Materialism and Revolution*, Sartre sought nothing but the philosophy of revolution, but he found that materialism was worthless in this respect. Kobayashi failed to understand this point and made only odd claims and complaints. He is not a decent critic. We can easily see that Sartre himself treated young people, who were taught the theory of materialism by the French Communist Party, with great affection if we read the first part of *Materialism and Revolution* or know that his open lecture entitled “Existentialism is Humanism” was enthusiastically received.

Kobayashi would, therefore, not be able to understand Sartre’s philosophy of revolution. Sartre completely criticized inner freedom as thoroughly bourgeois and found practical freedom in the struggle with the oppression of labor, while Kobayashi once bowed down to the national polity, later achieved success and fame, and was raised up as a major bourgeois intellectual. Such a person could certainly run down Sartre by creating reasons to attack. In that case, why did Kobayashi say nice things about Sartre, such as “I appreciate Sartre’s accuracy in his critique”?

It would be better for us to investigate his own view of history to understand his paradoxical attitude toward Sartre. Fortunately, he wrote a relatively long article entitled “About History.” This is also the preface to Kobayashi’s *The Life of Dostoevsky* (2001). The article clearly reveals his characteristic view of history.

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1) Sartre had many opportunities to discuss the issues of the day with Roger Garaudy (of the French Communist Party), Pierre Naville (a Trotskyist), and Henri Lefebvre (Cf. Birchall 2004).
First, he describes that a human being has two separate abilities: to objectify nature and to objectify history.

Nature is undoubtedly outside of ourselves. We need to separate nature from our mind in order to think of it as an object. Can we say, however, that history is outside of us? History begins with the recognition of historical materials. And the historical materials, as they are, are all physical matters. They are no more than marks on natural objects by human beings and face the same fate as nature. These marks disappear gradually without any human activity. Historical materials vanish away gradually, as rocks weather. If a human being helps them vanish, it only reduces the burden of nature.... A man who picks up a Kawara [clay tile for roofing] from an ancient temple at once weighs it and thinks of the lives of ancient people (Kobayashi 2001, pp. 105‒6).

After this passage, he distinguishes these “two abilities” in detail and at the end, declares that history is a myth because it is sustained by language. This is apparently his leap in logic and he makes it without embarrassment, but I would like to quote him again to make his point clearer.

These two abilities, i.e., the ability to naturalize humans and the ability to humanize nature, are inseparably mixed together... but they act in opposite directions and are different in their nature. It is more understandable if you exaggerate these natures. The more nature becomes alienated from us, the more it becomes understandable for us. In the world of nature, we can at least distinguish the verifiable from the un-verifiable if we do not know the truth. Thus, we can compare the world of nature to the world of ideal truth. This world is not sustained by language.

On the other hand, the ability to humanize nature is an essentially subtle ability that originates in the biological desire for the biological other. This is an irrational ability as nature is originally unable to be humanized. The humanized nature is, therefore, in its original form, nothing but a myth, i.e., a world sustained by our language.

History is a myth. It is a myth that cannot but be variably defined because of the materiality of the historical materials. History is the world sustained by language called history, not because of the existence of history. All beings, including human beings, belong to nature and our ability to humanize nature means, so to speak, the ability to produce non-existence. Historical materials mean the resistance of nature felt when exercising this ability. If resistance is not felt, anything is possible. For example, we can imagine that we are friends with Nobunaga Oda (1534‒1582), a military commander during the Japanese age of provincial wars (1467‒1615), or that we were born during the Ice Age (Kobayashi 2001, pp. 106‒7).

He compares nature with history and immediately replaces this comparison with that of existence and non-existence. This is his problematic leap in logic. He also makes a problematic remark that history
is a myth because it is sustained by imagination. Such an understanding of history would deny all views of history, philosophies of history, and historical literature that began with Herodotus 2500 years ago.

This is only a part of his argument. The article above was written in the 1930s and would unsurprisingly be under the significant influence of the “myth” of the Nazis. In such context, we can easily understand that his “history” applies only to the past and we get a glimpse of what his “affection” means.

It is often said that ‘history repeats itself.’ This is a favorite phase of historians and we all know that what was done can never be denied. That is the reason why we spare the past. History is like great rancor. If the same event repeats itself, we do not need the word memory. It is a good thing to behold how unrepeatable events are connected profoundly to our unstable lives. Affection, rancor, and respect are directed to the object unique beyond comparison. Standardizing all men would be the best way to make them uninteresting.

... The fact that there are many other mothers who have lost their children does not help the mother who lost her child. An increase in similar cases only enhances the uniqueness of the event. An incomparable event fits with the incomparable grief of the mother.... The uniqueness of the historical event of her child’s death is warranted only by her grief. Human reasoning is in any case powerless compared with the uniqueness of events. Deep grief would make her remember the child’s face clearer than when he was living. If you imagine what happens to the heart of the mother when she sees his little relics, we would be able to understand our fundamental wisdom about history in everyday experiences. It is more the technology of an historical event rather than the cognition of the essence of history. We do not see the historical event here but create the historical event on the basis of the given historical materials. For such an act of mind, the historical event is neither objective nor subjective. Such an act of mind is cognitively vague but as an act, it is also secured as we live (Kobayashi 2001, pp. 108–10).

We need no more citations. However, why does Kobayashi need “the uniqueness of the historical event of the child’s death” to understand history? Is he writing with sound mind and sentiment? Such sound mind and sentiment created the statement, “For such an act of mind, the historical event is neither objective nor subjective,” but this act of mind itself is, philosophically speaking, “subjective.” Even what he refers to as an “act of mind” here is almost religious sentiment.

2) Fletcher explains the reason very well and the Japanese translators of this book criticize Masao Maruyama because he did not criticize the words and deeds of the intellectuals during war time (Cf. Fletcher 2011).
Why did Kobayashi decline knowledge and accept the religious sentiment that he called an "act of mind"? It would have been an intellectual's desire to participate in the 1930s religious movement, *Kokutai-Meicho-Undo* [Clear Evidence of the National Polity Movement].

Moreover, what did Marx say about religion? Kobayashi himself must have read the following passages by Marx in his earlier days (Cf. Kobayashi 2002).

The basis of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being encamped outside the world. *Man is the world of man*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, an *inverted world-consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification. It is the *fantastic realization* of the human essence because the *human essence* has no true reality.

The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the *world* of which religion is the spiritual *aroma* (Marx 1975, p. 175).

As Marx says above, human beings, including Kobayashi, are not "abstract being[s] encamped outside the world." They are already socialized and nationalized beings and the society and state do not exist outside human beings. Kobayashi, however, intends to be "encamped outside the world" and criticizes others. I will explain the reason for this in Section 3 because Kobayashi has the same defect as Umemoto Katsumi, whom I discuss in the following section.

**2. A critique of Katsumi Umemoto’s Sartre critique**

Umemoto also criticized Sartre’s *Materialism and Revolution* as follows. He accuses Sartre of more than Kobayashi’s strange accusations.

Sartre seems to have just replaced materialism with existentialism and remains Marxist in other points. However, did not the replacement of the philosophical foundation change his acts in the real world? Existentialists see freedom from the inevitable simply as fundamental accidentalness. The transcendence that this accidentalness makes possible and the order that this transcendence sets have no objectivity because of their accidentalness and therefore, have a chance to be connected to anything according to every subjectivity. Under some conditions, however, the natural instincts that human beings born and raised in modern civil society have would make it possible to direct these transcendences in some inevitable direction. Although the existentialists’ resistance movement against the Nazi-occupation-regime was nothing but accidental... it was, needless to say, not able to transcend its environment to the communists’ freedom that was
aimed at the fundamental transcendence of modern civil society and the accidentalness made resistance against the real revolution inevitable. Sartre provides no insight on the maturing process of the contradiction in the real world, so he inevitably sees dialectic as a sophisticated argument of transformation into the opposite. The dialectic, however, is actually the appropriate logic for a human who transcends the environment, and he should be dependent on its direction if he wants to become the protagonist of himself (Suzuki, Ebizaka, and Urano 1971, p. 282).

Even Umemoto, who criticized Engels’ side of the Marxists’ materialism in the subjectivity-debate in postwar Japan, sees materialism as a “philosophical foundation” and criticizes Sartre saying that existentialists like Sartre cannot find any “objectivity” in the “order” of the future society. How dare he say that “Sartre provides no insight on the maturing process of the contradiction in the real world?” Umemoto never read Sartre’s Search for a Method, which was published after his remarks above, and never imagined that Sartre fought subjectively in the Algerian War and the May Revolution in 1968. He fought because he “provide[d] the insight on the maturing process of the contradiction in the real world.”

Umamoto says, “The dialectic, however, is actually the appropriate logic for a human who transcends the environment, and he should be dependent on its direction if he wants to become the protagonist of himself.” This remark reveals that he confused dialectic with materialism. More importantly, people who are dependent on the direction of the objective logic of a pseudo-dialectic must never be protagonists of themselves as they will come under the yoke of Stalinism in the end because they are only “physical material” and their existence is denied. In reality, in the 1950s through the 1960s, the university students of Zengakuren (Japanese Federation of Students Association) dismissed the arguments of Umemoto, which worked against Sartre’s Materialism and Revolution, and called for a world-wide New Left Fight without hearing the Japanese Communist Party’s objectives or logical direction. Zengakuren became the byword for the first New Left Movement in the world and Sartre was said to have an intense interest in it (Cf. Ross 2002; Wolin 2010).3)

To read Umemoto’s critique of Sartre clarifies why the subjectivity-debate in Japan ended without an achievement and resulted only in Kan’ich Kuroda’s “philosophy” of “material self-consciousness” as detritus, which became the foundation for a new religious sect. Members of this sect chant “practical intuition from the view of the place” and see the “place” as their sectional party.4) Umemoto says that dialectic is objective logic. This is, as it is called, the “logic of history,” which secret police and soldiers from the Soviet Union used to intimidate prisoners of war.5) Sartre criticized such sophistries like

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3) Unfortunately, few of the former, active members of Zengakuren correctly and historically grasped this fact.
5) On this issue, see Uchimura (2001). The author experienced real Stalinism in Siberia. People who criticize Stalinism in print often prove to be genuine Stalinists after looking at their organization
Stalinism in *Materialism and Revolution*, calling them "myths."

Umemoto criticized Sartre without good reason because he himself was an existentialist hung up on ego. He sat in his shell, like Kobayashi, huddled "outside of the world."

In the next section, I would like to discuss their views of self, selfhood, and ego. These views fundamentally sustain their critique of Sartre.

3. Critique of the “ego” by Kobayashi and Umemoto

The individuals who make up civil society consider themselves independent and subject to their own consciousness, and are far from seeing themselves as objects of consciousness. Intellectuals in this society especially see themselves as subjects of thinking, so they see themselves not only as subjects of consciousness but also as subjects of society.

As an aside, a boy who wanted to be both a poet and a laborer made intellectually threatening remarks in 1871, a year of unrest due to the Paris Commune. These remarks were made in the famous *Lettre du Voyant* [Letter from the Seer] by Arthur Rimbaud, which consists of two letters. First, I would like to cite the letter to his former teacher, Georges Izambard, which reveals the truth of the matter. In this relatively long citation, Rimbaud calls himself “somebody else” and compares himself to a teacher and as one of the intellectuals.

Dear Monsieur,

So, you’re back being a schoolmaster. We owe ourselves to society, you told me; you form part of the teaching body; you’re traveling down the right rut…. Deep down, you only see in your principle a subjective poetry: your insistence on getting back to the university feeding-trough – forgive me! – proves it. But you’ll still end up a self-satisfied man who’s done nothing, not having wanted to do anything. Nor counting the fact that your subjective poetry will always be horribly cloying. One day, I hope… I shall see the objective poetry in your principle, I shall see it more genuinely than you would! [In Paris] so many workers are dying even as I write to you! To work now, never, never; I’m on strike.

Now, I’m encrapulating myself to the hilt. Why? I want to be a poet and I’m working to make myself a seer…. The thing is to arrive at the unknown by a disordering of all the senses. The suffering is enormous, but you have to be strong to be born a poet, and I’ve recognized that I’m a poet. It’s not at all my fault. It’s false to say I think; one ought to say I am thought. Forgive the play on words.

I is somebody else. Tough luck on the wood that finds it’s a violin, and to hell with the people who don’t think, who quibble over things they know nothing at all about! (Rimbaud 2004, p. 236).6

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6) Regarding the relationship between Rimbaud and Sartre, see Hirai (1989). Regarding the relationship
Kobayashi, who studied Rimbaud in his youth, later wrote that he hated Rimbaud (Cf. Kobayashi 2003; Kobayashi 2003a). This fact clearly reveals that he did not understand Rimbaud’s phrase “I is somebody else,” i.e., he did not see himself as the object of consciousness and could not but see himself as the subject of consciousness. He simply wrote “subjective poetries” as Izambard did.7

Next, I would like to discuss Umemoto. He was one of the most important people in the subjectivity-debate in postwar Japan. He raised the issue of the human subject as a lack of Marxist materialism, but his argument was rejected by the materialist Kazuto Matsumura (1905‒1977), and he was labeled a petite bourgeois intellectual. I would like to investigate the reason for this decline.

The following citation from Umemoto’s critique against Marxist materialism clearly explains how he raised such issues.

A moving matter will turn into spirit under certain conditions. The matter, then, gets aware of itself and makes itself beyond itself with this self-consciousness. It stands outside of the system of matters and becomes aware of the matters as objects. A matter becomes an absolute other by its self-consciousness or by transcending itself. It becomes spirit. Why, however, is it possible? Indeed, we experience both the inversion of matter into spirit and the inversion of spirit into matter many times every day. But, this fact presumes that a human being comes out of matter (its birth) and becomes spirit with self-consciousness and finally returns to matter (its death). And such a human being is also a social being. The theme of the inversion of matter into spirit presupposes the involvement of the self-consciousness of the spirit into the other. Such a logical circle cannot be broken by science. It is beyond science. Although the scientific categories that turn contingency into inevitability would be a reflection of objects to subjects, they cannot explain the foundation of the freedom of will that creates human action on the basis of scientific knowledge. If human action is deduced from the inevitable constraint of precedent action, we can no longer call it action. We have no human history. The contingency that turns into inevitability in action is the true contingency. The action toward nature as scientific cognition is in reality the dialectic of nature and ego that is an originally historic and social being but is abstracted from social relationships, i.e., conscious, productive, and daily social activities. Thus, the action of putting ego under certain conditions presupposes the freedom of an active subject in the historical world. The natural-scientific cognition puts such presuppositions in parentheses. Could the self-consciousness comprehend these presuppositions by removing the parentheses? It is often said, however, that known ego is not knowing ego. The knowing ego is in an infinite regress. If we try to ask about the origin of the freedom of will, we must face such an essentially unreachable truth. If the

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7 ) You can understand how Kobayashi was attached to the ego if you read his articles about ego in the collected works.
origin is matter, then it is the known ego, not the knowing ego.

The unreachable truth can be tentatively replaced by a social being. It is the second nature replacing the first nature. However, if the existence is said to determine the consciousness, and the origin of the freedom of will is found in the existence, then this social existence stands on the basis of our conscious practical action. Thus, the object of cognition consists of the subject of cognition. If we call both of them 'existence,' needless to say, they are completely different in nature. As we have already seen, the dialectic to the first nature happens in the second nature. The individual consciousness of the first nature is already a moment of the social being. The genuine history happens in the second nature and it is the individual voluntary initiative that makes the genuine accidentalness inevitable in the dialectic of the individual and the whole. We cannot say anything about the unreachable truth behind this individual voluntary initiative. Nothing makes ego more uneasy than the fact that it cannot grasp itself as a whole and has something unknown in itself. Such uneasiness appears especially in the world of human mutual activities or the world of history. A human being must get out of itself in order to grasp the origin of the individual voluntary initiative, but the infinite regress of the self-consciousness cannot enable such escape. The human being will call it nothingness. It is often criticized that mysticism has tried to reach the origin of the individual voluntary initiative through direct intuition in itself. Kant put forth the idea of thing-in-itself [Ding an sich] for the origin of the individual voluntary initiative; however, it is only one requirement. The dialectic grasps the nothingness in the trajectory of the self-restriction in the object, i.e., nature and society, but it must be, in the end, the interpretation of the shadow of nothingness as long as it remains speculative. The unity of opposites presupposes the transition of matter into spirit or of spirit into matter, and this presupposition itself presupposes self-consciousness (Umemoto 1977, pp. 20–3).

In the above citation, Umemoto interprets the conversion of matter into spirit in materialism as the conversion of object into subject and criticizes it as presupposing self-consciousness. According to him, materialism does not and cannot clarify the self-consciousness. His argument is half true, but only half. His argument is true as long as it indicates that materialism does not think of subjectivity. He does not know, however, that the subjectivity does not mean the knowing subject. He does not understand Sartre’s argument in Materialism and Revolution. Sartre says that ego is anything but subject; it is the object for consciousness and is produced by phenomenological reduction.8)

8) Umemoto criticized mysticism saying “mysticism has tried to reach the origin of the individual voluntary initiative through direct intuition in itself” and this criticism holds true for Kuroda’s mantra “practical intuition from the view of the place.” It also attempts to find the origin of the individual voluntary initiative through “direct intuition in itself,” does it not?
In criticizing Umemoto’s argumentation, Matsumura, a scholar and senior party member, labeled him a petite bourgeois intellectual. Matsumura thought that Umemoto had thrown away his shameful subjectivity in exchange for another subjectivity by becoming a Marxist (in reality, the subjectivity of the Japan Communist Party). Umemoto’s argument, however, reminded him of his subjectivity, which, he thought, was discarded by addressing subjectivity as nothingness. Although Matsumura labeled him a petite bourgeois intellectual, becoming a member of the Japan Communist Party did not mean that he was no longer a petite bourgeois intellectual, nor did Matsumura think that he became a bourgeois intellectual at the same level as Kobayashi.

**Conclusion**

Above, I discussed the ego and in the next installment, I would like to discuss how the ego came to be reduced. It is a long road from Sartre’s development in *Transcendence of Ego to Being and Nothingness.*

**Sixth Installment in the Series: Arthur Rimbaud’s Precursor to Jean-Paul Sartre’s Theory of Ego.**

I have given a lecture on the basis of the first through fourth installments of this series at a conference in the Kansai region (western Japan) and was asked several important questions. As a result, I realized that the core argument of Sartre, i.e., that the "ego or self is the object of consciousness, not the subject of consciousness," is difficult to understand. This is an issue that I feel is difficult to explain, so I would like to address it at length.

By the way, I appreciated the discussions with the conference attendees. I was able to reconfirm my ideas and arguments and discovered some new issues through this lecture. In the case of philosophical arguments especially, I discovered that these arguments cannot develop without collaborative dialogue, as Socrates encouraged in his days.

In the last installment, I reveal that the foundation of the critique against Sartre by Umemoto and Kobayashi was each man’s ego or self; thus, they could not understand Sartre’s theory of ego. He saw ego and self not as the subject of consciousness but as the object of absolute non-reflective consciousness and an object that coexists with the rest of the world. How, then, did Sartre come to such theory of consciousness? Sartre did not come to it independently; he needed the precursor from Rimbaud and the help of Husserl and Heidegger.

**1. The significance of Rimbaud for Sartre**

Sartre says the following at the end of *Transcendence of Ego*:

This transcendental sphere is a sphere of *absolute* existence, that is to say, a sphere of pure spon-
taneities that are never objects and that determine their own existence. With the me being an object, it is evident that I shall never be able to say: my consciousness, that is, the consciousness of my me (save in a purely designative sense, as one says for example, the day of my baptism). The ego is not the owner of consciousness; it is the object of consciousness. To be sure, we spontaneously constitute our states and actions as productions of the ego. But our states and actions are also objects. We never have a direct intuition of the spontaneity of instantaneous consciousness as produced by the ego. That would be impossible. It is only on the level of meanings and psychological hypotheses that we can conceive such production – and this error is possible only because on this level the ego and the consciousness are emptily indicated. In this sense, if one understands the I Think so as to make a thought the production of the I, one has already constituted thought as passivity and as state, that is to say, as object. One has left the level of pure reflection, in which the ego undoubtedly appears but appears on the horizon of a spontaneity. The reflective attitude is correctly expressed in this famous sentence by Rimbaud (in the ‘Seer Letters’): ‘I is an other.’ The context proves that he simply meant that the spontaneity of consciousness could not emanate from the I; the spontaneity goes toward the I, rejoins the I, lets the I be glimpsed beneath its limpid density, but is itself given above all as individuated and impersonal spontaneity. The commonly accepted thesis, according to which our thoughts would gush from an impersonal unconscious and would ‘personalize’ themselves by becoming conscious, seems to us a coarse and materialistic interpretation of a correct intuition (Sartre 1960, pp. 96‒8).

As seen above, Sartre argues that ego is not the subject of consciousness but the object of consciousness and at the conclusion, he picks up Rimbaud’s phrase from his “Seer Letters,” “I is an other” and makes him the precursor of the theory of ego as an object. Sartre explains it simply with the words “[t]he context proves that...” and we will investigate this “context” in detail in the next section.

2. Rimbaud’s “Seer Letters”

In the time from the Franco-Prussian War to the Paris Commune (1870‒1871), Arthur Rimbaud, a boy who lived in Charleville (a commune in northern France) and wrote poems, ran away from home several times, went into Paris, and wrote letters to his old teacher Georges Izambard and to Izambard’s friend and poet Paul Demeny. These two letters are known as the “Seer Letters” and the famous “voyance” appears there. I would like to investigate the first letter more closely again.

Dear Monsieur,

So, you’re back being a schoolmaster. We owe ourselves to society, you told me; you form part of the teaching body; you’re traveling down the right rut. – I, too, am following the principle; I’m having myself cynically kept; I unearth old imbeciles from college; I hand over to them everything I can invent that’s stupid, dirty, wrong, in word and in deed; I’m paid in books and in girls.
Stat[ba]t mater dolorosa, dum pendet filius, – I owe myself to society, that’s right. – You, too, you’re right, for today. Deep down, you only see in your principle a subjective poetry; your insistence on getting back to the university feeding-trough – forgive me! – proves it. But you’ll still end up a self-satisfied man who’s done nothing, not having wanted to do anything. Nor counting the fact that your subjective poetry will always be horribly cloying. One day, I hope – a lot of others hope the same thing – I shall see the objective poetry in your principle, I shall see it more genuinely than you would! – I shall be a worker; that’s the idea that holds me back, when my mad rages urge me towards the battle of Paris, – where so many workers are dying even as I write to you! To work now, never, never; I’m on strike.

Now, I’m encrapulating myself to the hilt. Why? I want to be a poet and I’m working to make myself a seer: you won’t begin to understand, and I almost can’t explain it to you. The thing is to arrive at the unknown by a disordering of all the senses. The suffering is enormous, but you have to be strong to be born a poet, and I’ve recognized that I’m a poet. It’s not at all my fault. It’s false to say I think; one ought to say I am thought [On me pense]. – Forgive the play on words.

I is somebody else [Je est un autre]. Tough luck on the wood that finds it’s a violin, and to hell with the people who don’t think, who quibble over things they know nothing at all about! You’re not a Teacher for me. I give you this: Is it satire, as you would say? Is it poetry? It’s imagination, anyway. –But I implore you, don’t underline it, either with your pencil or too much with your mind (Rimbaud 2004, pp. 236‒7).

I have omitted all three of the poems from the letter because I would like to discuss only the meaning of seer here and the meaning of the poems later in other articles. Rimbaud says, “It’s false to say I think; one ought to say I am thought,” so “I is somebody else.” This is apparently criticizing the ego of modern society. We are, in a modern society, highly encouraged to be independent as individuals and to provide an identity as an individual to ourselves. Rimbaud, however, readily declines such a challenge for the individual and makes the critical remark, “to hell with the people who don’t think, who quibble over things they know nothing at all about!”

Modern society, which consists of individuals, is absolutely not tolerant of such a thought from such a poet. It accuses him of being a dissolute and unruly man and says to him, “We owe ourselves to society,” as Izambard once said. Rimbaud denies “I think” anticipating such accusations from society. We should investigate the other seer letter written for Paul Demeny to understand Rimbaud’s intention. This letter is fairly long and includes three poems; thus, I translated only the part that is necessary to understand his remark, “I is somebody else.”

9) The word “quibble” here is a translation of the French word “ergoter,” which originates from “ergo” as in “Cogito ergo sum.”
Romanticism has never been properly judged; who would have judged it? The Critics! The Romantics, who prove so well that the song is so seldom the work, i.e., the thought sung and *understood by* the singer?

For I is somebody else. If brass wakes up as a bugle, it’s in no way to blame. That I find obvious; I witness the flowering of my thought; I gaze at it; I listen to it; I set my bow moving; the symphony stirs into life in the depths or comes leaping onto the stage.

If the old imbeciles hadn’t found only the false significance of the self, we wouldn’t have to sweep away those millions of skeletons who, since time immemorial, have been piling up the products of their one-eyed intelligence, loudly proclaiming to be their authors!

In Greece, as I’ve said, poetry and lyres give *rhythm to Action*. Afterwards, music and rhymes are games, relaxation. The study of that part charms the curious: several take delight in renewing these antiquities— that’s their affair. The universal intelligence has always thrown out its ideas, naturally; men gathered up some of these fruits of the brain; they acted through them; they wrote books on them. So the process went: man not working on himself, not having yet woken up, or not yet in the fullness of the great dream. Functionary, writer, author, creator, poet— that man has never existed!

The first study for the man who’d be a poet is knowledge of himself, entirely; he seeks out his soul; he inspects it, tests it, learns it. As soon as he knows it, he must cultivate it; that seems simple. In every brain, a natural development is fulfilled; so many *egotists* proclaim themselves to be authors; there are lots of others who attribute their intellectual progress to *themselves!* But the thing is to make the soul monstrous, you know, like the *comprachicos!* Imagine a man planning and cultivating warts on his face.

I say you must be a *seer*, make yourself a *seer*.

The Poet makes himself a *seer* by a long, immense, and reasoned *disordering of all the senses*. All the forms of love, of suffering, of madness he seeks himself; he drains all the poisons in himself so as to keep only the quintessences— ineffable torture in which he has need of all the faith, all the superhuman strength in which he becomes the sickest of the sick, the great criminal, the great accursed, and the Supreme Knower! For he arrives at the *unknown* since he has cultivated his already rich soul more than anyone! He arrives at the unknown, and even though he may be demented and lose the intelligence of his visions, he has seen them! So what if he dies as he bounds through unheard-of, unnamable things? Other horrible toilers will come; they’ll begin at the horizons he has gone under! (Rimbaud 2004, pp. 238–9).

Hitoshi Usami (1942–) sums up Rambaud’s historical significance well, which is worth reading.

The death of Rimbaud stands almost in the middle of the 200 years from the French Revolution to the end of the 20th century. He is a poet who connects modern and contemporary time, i.e.,
steps boldly from the time under the influence of romanticism as a great cultural movement from the late 18th to 19th century in order to devote himself to create a new literal space to draw a conclusion on the problem of modern ego (Rimbaud 1996, p. 484).

3. The significance of “I is somebody else” (Rimbaud)

Now, I would like to address modern ego, which began with Descartes’ “Cogito ergo sum” [I think, therefore I am], through Fichte’s “Ich bin ich” [I am I] as the origin of all knowledge, to Hegel’s self-consciousness that included the world as a whole.

Rimbaud turned over modern ego with the phrase “I is somebody else”; thus, it is important to see how he did so. He describes Izambard’s view as “subjective poetry” and writes in his letter to Demeny, “If the old imbeciles hadn’t found only the false significance of the self,” but these statements have a profound basis in the fallacy of Cogito [I think]. Cogito presupposes that ego and consciousness are parallel and that they are firmly fused. This means that ego as the subject exists in advance and consciousness is produced by the subject.\(^{10}\)

Next, we must understand the meaning of “I am thought” [On me pense]. We can easily understand that here, “I” is not in a nominative case but in an objective case. That is, here, I or ego is not the subject of to think but the object of it. What, then, is the subject here? It is on in French or one in English. Shoshana Felman explains it as follows:

‘I am thought.’ (‘On me pense’). In a twist of the French expression, the traditional subject, the Cartesian subject, here becomes the direct object [me], undergoing rather than controlling his own thought, acted upon rather than acting, passive rather than active, while the grammatical, syntactic subject is the ‘one’ who is no-one, an ‘indefinite personal pronoun’ [‘on’: On me pense] (Felman 2007, p. 86).

Finally, I would like to pick up Rimbaud’s “I is somebody else” once again. The original French sentence is not “Je suis un autre” but “Je est un autre.” This sentence, therefore, is not grammatically correct. Rimbaud cannot allow himself to presuppose “I” as the subject because he must refrain from admitting “Je pense.” We could comfortably use the phrase “Je suis un autre” when someone asks us “Tu es quelqu’un?” However, here he says, “Je est un autre” (I is an other).\(^{11}\) This “Je” is not, there-

\(^{10}\) This point is discussed more closely in Sartre’s Transcendence of Ego and later in the present article series.

\(^{11}\) I would like to make some remarks on the English translations of Rimbaud. First, “On me pense” is translated in two ways: “People think me” and “I am thought.” I prefer “one” to “people,” because the abstract “one” is more appropriate than the concrete “people” to express the impersonality of “on.” On the other hand, the passive form makes a logical relationship with “Je est un autre” unclear. Second, “Je est un autre” is translated in three ways: “I is someone else,” “I is somebody else,” and “I is an
fore, the subject, but is the third person from the beginning, that is, an object and an other [un autre].
Rimbaud was only 16 or 17 years old at that time and as a young person, was still building ego-strength. It is portentous that so young a man came to such a revolutionary thought, but we should not make a glib remark like Norio Awazu (1927–).12) His experiences in the Paris Commune were dwelling in his thoughts.13) Some people remember that the experience of the World-wide Student Power Movement at the end of 1960s brought about nearly the same phrases: “the negation of self” in Japan or “the imagination wrests the power” in France. People who have never been a part of such social movements, however, stick to “Je pence” and never challenge it when they interpret Rimbaud’s “Je est un autre.” They cannot but produce many misguided views about Rimbaud. I will discuss this issue somewhat in the next installment.

4. What is Rimbaud’s seer?
On the basis of the discussions thus far, I would like to discuss Rimbaud’s seer. He says, “Now, I’m encrapulating myself to the hilt. Why? I want to be a poet and I’m working to make myself a seer,” because “[t]he thing is to arrive at the unknown by a disordering of all the senses.” He also says that “the suffering is enormous, but you have to be strong to be born a poet.” He explains this suffering in more detail in his letter to Demeny.

The first study for the man who’d be a poet is knowledge of himself, entirely; he seeks out his soul; he inspects it, tests it, learns it. As soon as he knows it, he must cultivate it; that seems simple. In every brain, a natural development is fulfilled; so many egotists proclaim themselves to be authors; there are lots of others who attribute their intellectual progress to themselves! But the thing is to make the soul monstrous....
The Poet makes himself a seer by a long, immense, and reasoned disordering of all the senses. All the forms of love, of suffering, of madness he seeks himself; he drains all the poisons in himself so as to keep only the quintessences – ineffable torture in which he has need of all the faith, all the superhuman strength in which he becomes the sickest of the sick, the great criminal, the great accursed, and the Supreme Knower! For he arrives at the unknown since he has cultivated

other.” The former two translations have little difference and the expressions are too concrete. Thus, I prefer the latter, which uses “other” corresponding to the original meaning of “autre” (Cf. Rimbaud 1962; Rimbaud 2004; Rimbaud 2005; Rimbaud 2008).
12) Awazu insists that “Je pence” here has nothing to do with Cartesian philosophy and criticizes Rimbaud’s idea as nothing but childish trivia.
13) There are several articles and books discussing the relationship between Rimbaud and the Paris Commune, but they, at best, follow Rimbaud’s activities to confirm if he really was part of the Paris Commune and dismiss the fact that he integrated himself with laborers in the Paris Commune and achieved “I = other.”
his already rich soul more than anyone! He arrives at the unknown, and even though he may be
demented and lose the intelligence of his visions, he has seen them! (Rimbaud 2004, pp. 238‒9).

Some people superficially interpret the letters to conclude that Rimbaud made a great effort to be a
mystic (Cf. Renéville 1947). Is a seer, however, a mystic? Indeed, at the end of the 19th century, some
bizarre mysticism grew rife and found some supporters in the people of the ruling class who had
anxiety about the prevailing imperialism. However, Rimbaud, who appreciated and identified with
the Paris Commune, had nothing to do with those people. “The unknown,” which he wanted to see,
could never be seen by those rich people who were haunted by such anxiety. Rimbaud also says “he
[the poet] drains all the poisons in himself so as to keep only the quintessences,” but such a sophisti-
cated and dynamic technique is not for the rich who grow up with a happy-go-lucky personality.

A seer sees, therefore, the truth that the times provide but societies conceal and prevent the
unknown from being seen directly. In this sense, Rimbaud was, like Marx, the true revolutionist of the
time. This is clear from the words in his letters, for example, “I shall be a worker” or “So what if he
dies as he bounds through unheard-of, unnamable things? Other horrible toilers will come; they’ll
begin at the horizons he has gone under!” If you still do not understood, you should read about Sartre’s
theory of revolutionists in the fourth installment of this article. Marxist revolutionists joined a revo-
lutionary party composed of diverse elements to become revolutionists and thought that an individual
alone could never be a revolutionist or at least no more than an anarchist. That said, have the revolu-
tionists from these Marxist parties ever realized revolution and changed history? All of the Marxist
parties that have ever existed are nothing but religious corporations or parties composed of leader
wannabes and obedient follower wannabes, and the leaders of such parties are the bourgeois indi-
viduals who are the persisters of “Je pense.”

I was going to address only Rimbaud in this installment but I am now thinking that I must cover
more because after reading many materials, I found that the truth of Rimbaud is not well understood.
Moreover, I must clearly explain that Rimbaud’s “I = other” is the same as the objective activities in
the Theses on Feuerbach in order to verify that Rimbaud was a revolutionist. Thus, I will discuss both
Rimbaud and Marx in next installment.

Seventh Installment in the Series: The Identities of Marx and Rimbaud

At the beginning of this serial article, I had no intention of discussing Rimbaud. The fifth install-
ment of this article, where I criticized Kobayashi because of his misunderstanding of Rimbaud’s seer,
reminded me of my encounter with Rimbaud around the year 1972. The slogan of the Zen-kyo-to [All-
Campus Joint Struggle League, an active student group at universities throughout Japan between
1968 and 1969] was “self-denial.” I interpreted this as the “dismantling of the ego” and wrote an article
on “the disjoint of labor and property” (Omote 1974) After writing this article, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of exhaustion without cause. One of the reasons was perhaps the United Red Army Incident in Japan. I finally got back on my feet with the help of Georges Bataille’s acute Hegel-critique in his *L’expérience intérieure* and Rimbaud’s mysterious phrase “Je est un autre.” After that, I faced several issues that needed to be tackled; however, I had no time to study, or worse, to write another article because I was hard-pressed to make ends meet working at a few preparatory schools for university entrance examinations. This is the first time in about 15 years of a zigzag course that I have found time to tackle theoretical issues in full swing. My first job was to reconstruct my style of writing from the beginning. It was difficult to return to my former writing ability. I think this serial article is the first achievement of my newly established studying and writing system.

Now, I must discuss the theoretical identities of Marx and Rimbaud to clarify that Rimbaud was a revolutionist and that this was especially expressed in his seer plan. Both share the monistic view that the subject and the object are identical. However, Marx, on the one hand, devoted himself to studying the objective world (objects) and Rimbaud, on the other, was devoted to self-analysis and self-transformation.

1. Marx’s “becoming other” and communism

Marx left Germany with his newly-wedded wife for Paris where he found asylum and met many revolutionary laborers (including Pierre Joseph Proudhon) providing him with many new experiences. That is, Marx met fundamental “others” and began to transform himself into Rimbaud’s “I as other.” The following passage explains his impression at the time:

> When communist artisans associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need – the need for society – and what appears as a means becomes an end. In this practical process, the most splendid results are to be observed whenever French socialist workers are seen together. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring them together. Association, society, and conversation, which again has association as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies (Marx 1975a, p. 313).

14) I owe a great deal to the articles critiquing subjectivity in Volume 14 of *Kyosan-Shugi* [Communism] (the organ of *Kansai Bunto* [Kansai Communist League]). I could not have written about “the disjoint of labor and property” without these articles and appreciate the work of their authors.

15) I wrote about Marx’s monism for the first time in an article discussing the critique of Tadashi Kato (Omote 2012).
Is Marx's description about the laborers' meeting based on his observations as an outsider? Does he attend the meeting as an intellectual? If so, could he have such great sympathy for laborers? He has surpassed the limit of a petite bourgeois intellectual to become an other [un autre], like Rimbaud. We can detect this from the phrase “the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.” He had no intention to become a leader commanding laborers, but he attended the meeting as a communist, like other laborers there.

The transformation of Marx created a division between Marx and Arnold Ruge who was Marx’s co-editor of Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher [German-French Yearbook] because Ruge belonged to the school of “Je pense” (Cogito) that supported the view of humanism and demanded liberal polity, while Marx had transformed himself into a communist (un autre). This confrontation turned up as an article entitled Critical Marginal Note on the Article: “The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian.” It was written to harshly criticize the article Der König von Preussen und die Sozialreform [King of Prussia and Social Reform], which Ruge wrote under the pen name “a Prussian” and he tried to confuse the readers into mistaking Marx for the true author.

I must confirm when this article was written before I discuss Marx’s article in more detail in the next section. It is an important issue that involves the problem of relating Marx’s studies of economics and his Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844 and also involves the problem of the time when he discovered the proletariat. Marx’s article was written at the end of July 1844 and he was diligently writing his Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844 in July and August 1844. Therefore, he wrote the article in the midst of writing Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844.

Traditional studies of early Marx primarily address two articles in Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher and Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844. These studies argue whether or not the theory of alienation could be supported. The researchers barely considered Critical Marginal Note on the Article: “The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian.” because their “political spirit” was criticized therein.

2. Marx’s critique of “functionaries and writers”

Marx, who found in the laborers’ meeting the future society or “the brotherhood of man,” criticizes the “King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian,” whose author was Arnold Ruge, the co-editor of the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. This article criticizes the king’s cabinet order for the laborer revolt in Schlesien, but Ruge underestimates laborers and argues that they lack “political comprehension.” Marx published his Critical Marginal Note in the newspaper Vorwärts where Ruge’s article

16) Lowy (2005) is an exception. The author correctly says that Marx discovered the proletariat for the first time in his work Critical Marginal Notes on the Article: “The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian” (1975b), not Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law (1975).
appeared and harshly criticized this view of "political comprehension." First, Marx explains the relationship between the state and civil society for the presupposition of the criticism:

The contradiction between the purpose and goodwill of the administration, on the one hand, and its means and possibilities, on the other hand, cannot be abolished by the state without the latter abolishing itself, for it is based on this contradiction. The state is based on the contradiction between public and private life, on the contradiction between general interests and private interests. Hence the administration has to confine itself to a formal and negative activity, for where civil life and its labour begin, there the power of the administration ends. Indeed, confronted by the consequences which arise from the unsocial nature of this civil life, this private ownership, this trade, this industry, this mutual plundering of the various circles of citizens, confronted by all these consequences, impotence is the law of nature of the administration. For this fragmentation this baseness, this slavery of civil society is the natural foundation on which the modern state rests, just as the civil society of slavery was the natural foundation on which the ancient state rested.... If the modern state wanted to abolish the impotence of its administration, it would have to abolish the private life of today. But if it wanted to abolish private life, it would have to abolish itself, for it exists only in the contradiction to private life. But no living being believes that the shortcomings of his existence have their basis in the principle of his life, in the essence of his life; everyone believes that their basis lies in circumstances external to his life. Suicide is against nature. Therefore, the state cannot believe in the inherent importance of its administration, i.e., in its own importance. It can perceive only formal, accidental deficiencies in its administration and try to remedy them (Marx 1975b, p. 198).

Marx wrote about the relationship between state and civil society in previous articles (Cf. Marx 1975; Marx 1975c; Marx 1975d) and he completely criticized Ruge’s “political understanding” both as useless and even poisonous.

The mightier the state, and the more political therefore a country is, the less is it inclined to grasp the general principle of social maladies and to seek their basis in the principle of the state, hence in the present structure of society, the active, conscious and official expression of which is the state. The political mind is a political mind precisely because it thinks within the framework of politics. The keener and more lively it is, the more incapable is it of understanding social ills. The classic period of political intellect is the French Revolution. Far from seeing the source of social shortcomings in the principle of the state, the heroes of the French Revolution instead saw in social defects the source of political evils. Thus, Robespierre saw in great poverty and great wealth only an obstacle to pure democracy. Therefore, he wished to establish a universal Spartan frugality. The principle of politics is the will. The more one-sided and, therefore, the more per-
fect the political mind is, the more does it believe in the omnipotence of the will, the more is it blind to the natural and spiritual limits of the will and the more incapable is it therefore of discovering the source of social ills. There is no need of further argument against the ‘Prussian’s’ silly hope that political understanding is destined ‘to discover the roots of social distress in Germany’ (Marx 1975b, p. 199).

That social distress produces political understanding is so incorrect that, on the contrary, what is correct is the opposite: social well-being produces political understanding. Political understanding is a spiritualist, and is given to him who already has, to him who is already comfortably situated (Marx 1975b, p. 203).

The very “political understanding” here is what the believers of “Je pence,” i.e., “functionaries and writers” (Rimbaud) have and I would like to call the people who have this “political understanding” Cogitists, after Cogito (Je pence). They were formally called “patriots who are concerned for the nation” but today, various media have developed and almost all Japanese people graduate from universities or high schools. They achieve a high standard of literacy and are all Cogitists who have something to talk about regarding our country or the world. Can they understand Marx’s criticism of political understanding? Some do not understand it at all, for example, members of the Kakumaru-Ha [Japan Revolutionary Communist League Revolutionary Marxist Faction]. They advocate anti-Stalinism and believe they successfully criticized Stalinism on the basis of a “young Marx.” In reality, however, they have so little political understanding that they sneak into the labor unions and hatch plots against the world. They could in no way understand that Robespierre in the above-referenced article would be the equivalent of Stalin in our time.

Marx and Rimbaud were both true revolutionists and revolutionists should work hard and maintain far-reaching views (e.g. Marx’s socialism as socialism, Rimbaud’s view of the unknown).

3. What is Marx’s “revolution with a social soul?”

Marx describes how proletariats are plagued by tragedies if they have political understanding:

The more developed and universal the political understanding of a people, the more does the proletariat – at any rate at the beginning of the movement – squander its forces in senseless, useless revolts, which are drowned in blood. Because it thinks in the framework of politics, the proletariat sees the cause of all evils in the will, and all means of remedy in violence and in the overthrow of a particular form of state. The proof: the first uprisings of the French proletariat.

17) Kuroda (1961) does not understand young Marx (Cf. Akai 2008). It is a wretched stupidity as well as regrettable that the members of the Kakumaru-group read Kuroda’s book and are satisfied with his understanding of Marx.
The Lyons workers believed that they were pursuing only political aims, that they were only soldiers of the republic, whereas actually they were soldiers of socialism. Thus, their political understanding concealed from them roots of social distress. Thus it falsified their insight into their real aim, thus their political understanding deceived their social instinct (Marx 1975b, p. 204).

Then, Marx clarifies “the true community of men” as life itself comparing it with Ruge’s political community and believes that laborers who are alienated from such community have the potential to rise up in universal revolt.

The community from which the worker is isolated is a community the real character and scope of which is quite different from that of the political community. The community from which the worker is isolated by his own labour is life itself, physical and mental life, human morality, human activity, human enjoyment, human nature. Human nature is the true community of men. The disastrous isolation from this essential nature is incomparably more universal, more intolerable, more dreadful, and more contradictory, than isolation from the political community. Hence, too, the abolition of this isolation – and even a partial reaction to it, an uprising against it – is just as much more infinite as man is more infinite than the citizen, and human life more infinite than political life. Therefore, however partial the uprising of the industrial workers may be, it contains within itself a universal soul; however universal a political uprising may be, it conceals even in its most grandiose form a narrow-minded spirit.

... 

[A] social revolution is found to have the point of view of the whole because – even if it were to occur in only one factory district – it represents man’s protest against a dehumanized life, because it starts out from the point of view of a separate real individual, because the community, against the separation of which from himself the individual reacts, is man’s true community, human nature (Marx 1975b, pp. 204–5).

We should pay attention to the fact that Marx calls the true community of men “life itself.” We are liable to limit life to the issues of food, shelter, and clothing and reduce them to the issue of money but such a narrow outlook prevents us from understanding Marx’s “life itself.” This means the whole fact that a man is living as man and is why Marx does not simply say life but life itself [das Leben selbst].

Ruge’s “revolution with a political soul” is completely criticized by Marx as follows, but we should keep in mind that “revolution with a political soul” could include all revolutions in the 20th century.

The political soul of revolution consists in the tendency of classes having no political influence to abolish their isolation from statehood and rule. Its point of view is that of the state, of an abstract
whole, which exists only through separation from real life, and which is inconceivable without the organized contradiction between the universal idea of man and the individual existence of man. Hence, too, a revolution with a political soul, in accordance with the limited and dichotomous nature of this soul, organizes a ruling stratum in society at the expense of society itself....

A 'social' revolution with a political soul is either a nonsensical condition if by 'social' revolution the 'Prussian' means a 'social' as opposed to a political revolution, and nevertheless endows the social revolution with a political soul instead of a social one; or else a 'social revolution with a political soul' is only a paraphrase for what was usually called a 'political revolution,' or 'simply a revolution.' Every revolution dissolves the old society and to that extent it is social. Every revolution overthrows the old power and to that extent it is political.

Let the 'Prussian' choose between the paraphrase and the nonsense! But whereas a social revolution with a political soul is a paraphrase or nonsense, a political revolution with a social soul has a rational meaning. Revolution in general – the overthrow of the existing power and dissolution of the old relationships – is a political act. But socialism cannot be realized without revolution. It needs this political act insofar as it needs destruction and dissolution. But where its organizing activity begins, where its proper object, its soul, comes to the fore – there socialism throws off the political cloak (Marx 1975b, pp. 205–6).

The political revolution with a social soul in the above-referenced citation is Marx's true theory of revolution. This theory is clearly the product of Marx's dialectic. Thus, Marx's realistic dialectic begins with having a social soul, i.e., making oneself the other (Rimbaud).

We must understand what it is to have a social soul and Marx explains it in detail in Economic and Philosphic Manuscript of 1844 and in Comments on James Mill, which were written at about the same time.

4. What is Marx's “society?”

In the citation in Section 1 regarding the laborers' meeting, Marx refers to "society" [die Gesellschaft] and this word stands for the "social soul." "Society" [die Gesellschaft] is the germination of "socialism as socialism" at the end of Third Manuscript of Economic and Philosphic Manuscript of 1844. His "society" is very rich in its implications, so we should not compare it with "Gesellschaft," which is compared with "Gemeinschaft," as it appears in Ferdinand Tönnies' theories. Such a thoughtless interpretation suits the empty head of petite bourgeois intellectuals. Marx says the following in the Third Manuscript of Economic and Philosphic Manuscript of 1844:

We have seen how on the assumption of positively annulled private property man produces man – himself and the other man; how the object, being the direct manifestation of his individuality, is simultaneously his own existence for the other man, the existence of the other man, and that
existence for him. Likewise, however, both the material of labour and man as the subject, are the point of departure as well as the result of the movement (and precisely in this fact, that they must constitute the point of departure, lies the historical necessity of private property). Thus, the social character is the general character of the whole movement: just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him. Activity and enjoyment, both in their content and in their mode of existence, are social: social activity and social enjoyment. The human aspect of nature exists only for social man; for only then does nature exist for him as a bond with man – as his existence for the other and the other’s existence for him – and as the life-element of human reality. Only then does nature exist as the foundation of his own human existence. Only here has what is to him his natural existence become his human existence, and nature become man for him. Thus, society is the complete unity of man with nature – the true resurrection of nature – the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature.

Social activity and social enjoyment exist by no means only in the form of some directly communal activity and directly communal enjoyment, although communal activity and communal enjoyment – i.e., activity and enjoyment which are manifested and affirmed in actual direct association with other men – will occur wherever such a direct expression of sociability stems from the true character of the activity’s content and is appropriate to the nature of the enjoyment.

But also when I am active scientifically, etc. – an activity that I can seldom perform in direct community with others – then my activity is social, because I perform it as a man. Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being.

My general consciousness is only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community, the social fabric, although at the present day general consciousness is an abstraction from real life and as such confronts it with hostility. The activity of my general consciousness, as an activity, is therefore also my theoretical existence as a social being (Marx 1975a, pp. 297–9).

From Marx’s words above, we can imagine what Rimbaud calls “the unknown.” Marx’s phrase “at the present day general consciousness is an abstraction from real life and as such confronts it with hostility” corresponds to the modern ego, i.e., the false expression “I think” [Je pence] in “It’s false to say I think; one ought to say I am thought” [On me pense]. Rimbaud names “my general consciousness,” which is universal intelligence or “only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community.”

The universal intelligence has always thrown out its ideas, naturally; men gathered up some of these fruits of the brain: they acted through them, they wrote books on them. So the process
went, man not working on himself, not having yet woken up, or not yet in the fullness of the great
dream. Functionary, writer, author, creator, poet – that man has never existed! (Rimbaud 2004,
p. 238).

Apparently, Rimbaud’s “universal intelligence” corresponds to Marx’s “my general consciousness” and
Rimbaud’s “men” corresponds to Marx’s present-day “general consciousness.”

5. How have Rimbaud’s “Seer Letters” been understood?
I have discussed thus far the identities of Marx and Rimbaud, but how many students of Rimbaud
properly understand his revolutionary nature. Shoshana Felman, for example, explains Rimbaud’s
“On me pense” as follows:

Through the ‘on,’ individuation becomes the result of an impersonal force, or rather, the person
becomes unindividuated. It is an anonymous force that escapes the condition of the person:
whether it be the Freudian unconscious (what Freud calls id and what Lacan would call ‘le ça’:
another indefinite pronoun), or in more general language, the social body of discourse, the scripts
of the culture that bespeak me and that speak through me: ‘I am thought.’ As Samuel Beckett will
later put it, ‘I am of words; I am made out of words, other people’s words... I am all those words,
all those strangers, that verbal dust.’ Thought is not the attribute of self – spontaneous, substanc-
tive, self-present – but rather an effect inscribed on a passive object, who feels that his own intel-
ligence, his own faculty of speaking – through which he learns to say ‘I’ – works in and upon him,
not by no means of him (Felman 2007, p. 86).

The argument of Felman is structuralistic, textualistic, and uncritically applies psychoanalyzation
and finds herself exempt from insanity. She would never have read Sartre’s Transcendence of Ego.
Thus, she cannot reduce phenomenologically I, ego, or self, and must keep her ego as substance,
although it is pursued passively. This is clear in her phrase “a passive object, who feels that his own
intelligence, his own faculty of speaking – through which he learns to say T; – works in and upon him,
not by no means of him.” This would be Sartre’s “materialistic interpretation of a correct intuition”
(Sartre 1960, p. 98).

The Japanese have produced many works on Arthur Rimbaud. All of his works are translated,
including his poems and letters and several articles have been written to interpret his poems and to
discuss his thoughts. The most important researchers of Rimbaud in Japan were Hideo Kobayashi
and Norio Awazu. Kobayashi was discussed in the last installment of this series. He made his ego the
subject and promoted his ego to the national polity because of his lyrical sentiment, originating from
family.

In Japan, due to the educationalism of the Taisho Era, young university students were absorbed in
establishing ego and self because they were expected by their families and society to achieve successful careers. They converted easily from philology or social problems to their ego, if they were persuaded by family issues. The situation in Japan did not change after World War II. The establishment of ego was highly valued in Japanese society after the war because young people were able to get special positions in the division of labor. In the end, each became nothing more than “a self-satisfied man.” You will find examples of such ugly people in “My Personal-History” in Nihon Keizai Shinbun [Japan Economic Newspaper]. Young people today, as ever, frantically make efforts to find jobs and efforts towards obtaining private property are highly encouraged.

Considering this social background, it is not surprising that Rimbaud’s “I is somebody else” has not been understood. For example, Hiroyuki Hirai, whom I value immensely, adds Rimbaud to the symbolist movement and avoids this issue, likely out of consideration for the earlier works of Kobayashi.18)

However, some Japanese researchers put forth significant effort to understand Rimbaud’s “I = somebody else,” such as Yasuo Irizawa, Kazunari Suzuki, and Kei Nozawa. Irizawa has written articles addressing Rimbaud’s “I = somebody else” and clarifies the reason why Japanese poets are so lyrical and do not write logical poems. According to him, the reason is that Japanese poets cannot become others or have weak egos.19)

I have not yet written enough about the relationship between Marx and Rimbaud because I have not written about the relationship between Theses on Feuerbach and Rimbaud. I will try to do so in the next installment and make preparations to discuss Sartre’s Transcendence of Ego.

References


19) Regarding Irizawa, cf. Terada Irizawa and Hashimoto Awazu (1966), Irizawa (1976), Irizawa (1978), and Irizawa (1992). Regarding Suzumura, who translated and published all of Rimbaud’s poetry for himself and traveled to re-experience the creation of Rimbaud’s “Africa Letters,” cf. Suzuki (2000). Regarding Nozawa, cf. Nozawa (1992). Incidentally, the commentary to Rimbaud 2006 completely denies the argument of Suzuki. A professor at the University of Tokyo, who is a “functionary and writer” cannot see Rimbaud as a revolutionist and must pull him back to the realm of a normal poet who must simply be appreciated. To that, I would like to say, along with Rimbaud, “You’re not a Teacher for me.”


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or Rimbaud and “I”), in Kaie [Cahier], September 1978 issue. Tokyo: Toju Sha.


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