

he conclude that Marx also demands that materialism be applied to history? I argued above that this conclusion is the only possible meaning of the thesis. Mr. Hunayama interprets “conceiving things in the form of the object and of the subject” as a way of recognition or as the subjective attitude toward objects in the recognition process. We must question why Mr. Hunayama has come to the right conclusion, although he starts from the wrong premises. I would like to examine his interpretation of the second and third sentence and especially the word “objective activity” to clarify the problem.

Mr. Hunayama says, “Objective activity premises an objective being independent of consciousness, so only the materialists, who accept “objective being independent of consciousness,” can understand it. This objective being obviously premises the sensuous subject. Marx, therefore, writes, “Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was set forth abstractly by idealism—which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.”¹⁹⁾ According to Mr. Hunayama’s interpretation of the second thesis, idealism thinks of activity without considering objective reality; it thinks, therefore, abstractly and does not understand sensuous activity (active subject). Can we elicit from this interpretation a materialistic understanding of history and human activities? Does he not, on the contrary, share the dogmas of earlier materialism that allows as objects of activity only natural beings independent of human beings? Does he not forget that practical human activity itself is independent of human consciousness and, therefore, objective being and the object of recognition and activity?

“Objective activity” in the third sentence does not mean activity directed to objects or to other beings but rather directed to real objects or human activity that are independent of human consciousness. Thus, Mr. Hunayama believes that the subject must be sensuous and act on objective real beings. In fact, the thesis does not conform to this interpretation. It does not endorse the expansion of materialism into history and human activity. Mr. Hunayama understands human subjects as simple sensuous beings, natural beings, who act on nature with their innate force or the human as an intuitive object (Marx). The subject is a sensuous human being in so far as it acts on objective being, but to grasp human activity as a whole, as sensuous and objective activity, is quite another story. Earlier materialism understood the sensuous human subject that acts on objective nature. Many economists who have recognized production, labor, and nature at the base of society also grasp “objective activity” as understood by Mr. Hunayama.

However, Marx would say that it is only the “instinct of civil society” (the ninth thesis). In Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 7, Section 1 of *Capital*, Marx states, “We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labor that reminds us of the mere animal”²⁰⁾ and “we presuppose labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human.”²¹⁾ Thus, “the elementary factors of the labor process are 1. the

19) *Yuibutsuron Kenkyu [Studies in Materialism]*, No. 18, p.44-45.

20) Marx, Karl. 1996. *Capital, Vol. I*. Vol. 35 of Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers, p. 187.

21) Marx, Karl. 1996. *Capital, Vol. I*. Vol. 35 of Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers, p. 188.

personal activity of man, i.e., work itself; 2. the subject of that work; 3. its instruments.”²²⁾ According to Marx, this labor process is “the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence”;²³⁾ however, even so, the labor of a human being is not that of an animal but has a purpose. Previous materialism also knows intuitively activity with purpose as a natural principle. The thesis means that human activities with purpose and all forms of human life are grasped concretely in the real world: they are understood not as products of nature but as those of human activity.

Mr. Hunayama’s explanation of objective practice reminds me of Kiyoshi Miki’s (1897–1945) observation that the “human-being must be sensuous being so far as he stands in an organic link with nature. He constantly acts on nature with his material force, and he comes to know his sensuous being directly. Labor makes the human-being understand that nature and he himself are sensuous beings at the same time.”²⁴⁾ I cannot deny the material dimension of Miki’s philosophy, but its materialism is limited only to the labor process, which is “the (metabolic) process between nature and human.” When it speaks about innate human activity outside the natural process, it becomes idealistic, fails to recognize the really human and to speak of social reformation, and becomes nonsense. In the labor process, human-beings produce not only consciousness but also the human itself, and historical materialism should recognize the human-being as the product of this process. Mr. Hunayama discusses only human activities that act on nature and produce recognition (and consciousness in general) and nothing about human activities that produce human activities, although he attributes the thesis to philosophers, such as Seishiro Ohë, who understand human activities only from an idealistic perspective. Why does Mr. Hunayama not contrast human activities from the idealistic perspective with those from a materialistic one? Why does he not argue materialistically that human activities themselves are realistic processes that are independent of human consciousness and realistic objects that can be recognized and reformed? Some would say that he does not need to do so. They would contend that his materialistic argument affirms that objective beings exist independently of activities and point to the fact that he criticizes Mr. Ohë, who twistedly argues that “activities precede objects and material” and that “all objects are practice and no objects are possible without activities.”²⁵⁾

However, this is a clumsy excuse. Mr. Ohë wants to recognize human activity only in consciousness,

22) Marx, Karl. 1996. *Capital, Vol. I*. Vol. 35 of Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers, p. 188.

23) Marx, Karl. 1996. *Capital, Vol. I*. Vol. 35 of Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers, p. 194.

24) Miki, Kiyoshi. 1928. *Shiteki Yuibutsuron to Gendai no Ishiki* [*Historical materialism and modern consciousness*]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, p.44.

25) Ohë’s main argument summarised by Hunayama (*Yuibutsuron Kenkyu* [*Studies in Materialism*], No. 18, p. 45).

the hidden essence of idealism, which allows philosophy only to interpret and not reform the world. This intellectual stance cannot perceive human activity objectively and denies its practical and critical reality. It embodies an ontology that regards human activity only as consciousness and, in the end, limits or denies the significance of objective being, especially of objective activity. Why does such an idealistic philosophy assume to protect materialism? Is it not because earlier materialism grasps objects as entities independent of human activity, which is seen as the labor process from the perspective of the principles of nature? Idealism obviously knows the material as the objects of human activity; however, Mr. Ohë himself states that "Material explains only a part or one side of the world." Thus, idealism wants to explain human practice, against materialism, as independent of human activity, which is the important topic of the thesis. Mr. Hunayama defends objective being against such idealism. He stands in an oppositional relationship to Mr. Ohë, whom he never tries to overcome. This incomprehensible relationship is the secret of Mr. Hunayama's philosophy. Mr. Ohë argues that human practice is beyond objective being, while Mr. Hunayama speaks of objective being as independent of the human and of the possibility of its recognition. Moreover, Mr. Hunayama misunderstands the first sentence of the thesis, saying that to "conceive objects sensuously, as human activity, subjectively" means that recognition should be regarded as sensuous human activity and that the recognizing subject has practice as its foundation, although the sentence has nothing to do with epistemology. This approach fails. The sentence signifies that the object should be regarded as human activity. Objects have practice as their foundation, as does their recognition. To conceive of practice not in the recognizing subject but in the object is the starting point of a materialistic understanding. Therefore, Mr. Hunayama reveals nothing more than the fact that objective being is not denied in the thesis. Put another way, he recognizes the objects of recognition only in the objective form, independent of the human, and he sees practice only as a constituent part of the recognizing subject and as completely excluded from objects; thus, his epistemological position makes it impossible to understand properly the thesis. Mr. Hunayama, who underscores the role of historical materialism in the theory of knowledge, does not, in fact, materialistically understand history. Marx, in comparison, emphasizes the necessity of seeing objects as practice, in practice, in and as the products of human activity, and not as entities beyond practice (the first sentence). In this regard, Marx converges on the position of Mr. Ohë, who regards objects as practices and recognizes the priority of act to object. The difference is that Marx does so materialistically and Mr. Ohë idealistically.

The German Ideology speaks of human sensuous activity as "unceasing sensuous labor and creation" and as "the foundation of the whole sensuous world as it now exists."²⁶⁾ Mr. Hunayama and his ideological colleagues try to solve the problem with the following sentence²⁷⁾: "Of course, in all of this

26) Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels (1976) *The German Ideology*, in Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels (1976) *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 5, p. 40.

27) For example, Mr. Nakajima (*Yuibutsuron Kenkyu [Studies in Materialism]*, No. 24, p.221) and Mr.

the priority of external nature remains unassailed.”²⁸⁾ However, they should have read ahead. Nature outside of human activities, as the human being in Book of Genesis who faces nature itself, is suddenly obtainable only when the human is considered as distinct from it. Nature in “the priority of external nature” is not independent of human activities of which it is the object, or so Marx explains in *the German Ideology*.

Indeed, Mr. Hunayama tries to fulfill his materialist obligation by acknowledging the existence of objective being from a non-idealistic understanding of human activity. This attempt does not, however, impede him from distorting the meaning of the first thesis. The object in the first sentence (i.e., reality and sensuousness) is not objective being that is independent of the human. To recognize the object in such a way is quite intuitive; however, the object is, in reality, the product of human practice, as long as it is an object. This is the subjectively conceived object. To conceive the object as reality and sensuousness and not as a thought-image is materialism. To see the object as human practice is to see the latter materialistically. To see human practice idealistically is to not discern practice in the object —practice as the object or objective activity—but to regard it abstractly as subjective activeness, willingness, passion, and reflection that is independent of objective being. Disconnected from the subject, the object, reality, and sensuousness pass beyond intuition into the pure objective world. Therefore, the materialism which recognizes the object only in an intuitive form has collusive, hidden ties with practical idealism. Mr. Hunayama overlooks this point and talks only about objective being and the practical copies of it and then explains objective practice not as real activities in the sensuous world but rather as the labor process that stands between humanity and nature. This position, as intuitive materialism, disconnects practice from the object. Moreover, he makes practice integral to the recognition of the subject and the object’s image in the intuitive world. The proper interpretation of the thesis that proves the reality of nature itself distills practice as reality from the consciousness of the knowing subject, finds it in the object, and makes it the object of consciousness. By not explaining practice by the knowing consciousness, it must be explained as reality. Nature is thus recognized as independent from the human and objective side of the world that human practice has produced. The border between the objective and intuitive side of the object and its practical side is not absolute; rather, it is constantly moving according to the development of the recognition of practice and its products. What was once understood as the product of human activity could be understood objectively, and what was once understood as natural and super-human could be understood as the product of human activity, since human practice does not mostly constitute the human recognizing subject but the object of recognition. Practice can be the criterion of recognition, and the understanding of objective practice (the materialistic understanding of human activity or historical materialism) can

Nagata (*Yuibutsuron Kenkyu [Studies in Materialism]*, p.64).

28) Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels (1976) *The German Ideology*, in Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels (1976) *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol. 5, p. 40.

contribute to epistemology. The first thesis suggests that human activity should be conceived as objective (reality), and it implies that nature is the objective and intuitive side of this objective reality. In this way, nature has a materialistic meaning that eschews idealism, which represents nature as non-reality. Materialism deals with the reality of the objective world, not its non-reality.

Section 3

So far I have discussed Mr. Hunayama's argument in order to show that he is too intuitive as a materialist and too idealistic in his understanding of practice. My criticism seems a trivial attempt to offend him, especially because as a philosopher he is no more than a imitator of the Mitin school, although well-acknowledged in Japan for "his deep understanding" of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. However, the idealistic character of his epistemology appears very clearly in the analysis of his recognition of social practice. Why did Mr. Hunayama and his like-minded comrade oppose me when I emphasized that the practices of class and party should be conceived in reality? They seemed to believe that practices should be regarded as components of the recognizing subject rather than as aspects of reality. This is the reason why they thought that I denied practices, when I said that they should objectively comprehend them.

Only a year after the party-identity debate, a more detailed criticism about me appeared. Mr. Tatsuzo Yamagishi (born Sakaji Yamada, 1908–1987) stated, "Mr. Kato's opponents have failed to criticize Mr. Kato for not realistically denying the party-identity; rather, he automatically disconnected and excluded it from theory."²⁹⁾ He cites my phrase, "the recognition of proletariat is not the product of the recognition activity of proletariat, but the product of a consciousness that recognizes the proletariat as object" as an illustration of a "typical case of conversion to idealism." I appreciate Mr. Yamagishi for his effort to grasp the problem more accurately, and I am sorry his inability to reflect on his philosophical position. I did not "exclude party-identity from the theory" but included it. He wishes to include party-identity in theory, theoretical method, and the process of recognition. However, I make it the object of recognition and try to understand the contents of the theory as a product of recognition. What should the recognizing subject do when it wants to grasp every practice not in the boundary of subjectivity but as objective practice in reality? What else can we do but grasp objective practice, objects given as whole products of human-beings, products proven in practice—i. e., experienced and proven facts—in proven and experienced relationships so as to make our concepts, affirmations, and estimations accord with such relationships?

"It is no longer a question of inventing interconnections through our brains, but of discovering them in the facts. For philosophy, having been expelled from nature and history, there remains only the realm of pure thought, so far as anything is left of it: the theory of the laws of the thought process itself,

29) *Yuibutsuron Kenkyu* [Studies in Materialism], No. 24, p.208

logic, and dialectics"³⁰): Only pure thought is left to grasp objects when we try to comprehend all real objects. This thought is the theoretical recognition process that follows the principles analyzed by formal logic and dialectic and grasps the objects (practices and their elements) given by the human practices as they are.³¹

Thinkers who want to set up something independent between pure thought and realistic objects should earn Engels' displeasure. The practical copy theory of knowledge, which calls itself materialism, excludes practice from the object and includes it in consciousness; it is, according to Engels, the very philosophy of practicing consciousness and retains practice in the recognition of subject or consciousness. It is no materialism but mere idealism. I called this perspective "Engels' viewpoint."³² Those who do not agree with Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* spontaneously give proof of the fact that they hold onto something idealistic and not objectively grasped, something belonging to consciousness, and something other than pure thought. Mr. Nakajima says, "Mr. Kato has never understood the significance of practice in epistemology, and he preposterously calls that entire decline of 'Engels' viewpoint' Lukacsian."³³ Indeed, I have characterized the essential thoughts of Hukumoto and Miki as a "Lukacsian viewpoint" because of their similarity to Lukacs' theory and said that other people, including Mr. Hunayama, develop their materialistic philosophy. However, I find no difference among them, as far as I know their arguments about practical epistemology. Lukacs once argued that specific provisions appearing in the subjective consciousness obsessed with socialist ideas and independent from empirical observation of objects in reality (for example, the interaction between subject and object, the integration of theory and practice, and the historical change of categorical substances that create the foundation for altering arbitrary categories) are "Marx-like (not Marxist)"; he thus declined to grasp the dialectic as a principle in the objective world in order to defend his philosophy of "class consciousness" and criticize Engels, saying that the dialectic allegedly proven in nature is the dialectic robbed of its revolutionarily force and secularized. He did not mean to deny the existence of the objective world with some built-in principles. He did not conceive of objects as practice and subject but as intuition, as objective practice. This is why he had no choice but to make practice belong to the subject (instead of the object) as class consciousness. He did not know that the practice of class should

30) Engels, Frederick (1990) *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in: Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels (1990) *Collected Works*, Vol.26, London, p.397.

31) The further implication of this thought of Engels: remaining non-objective subject or process of pure thought should be grasped as an objective process in order to stay constantly faithful to materialism. Logic and dialectic should become positive science, like other sciences that objectively grasp pure thought, working in the real recognition process as it is. However, I would like to argue this theme of "philosophical problems in materialism" in other articles.

32) *Yuibutsuron Kenkyu* [Studies in Materialism], No. 6.

33) *Yuibutsuron Kenkyu* [Studies in Materialism], No. 29, p. 104.

be conceived of objectively as a moment of the dialectic development of the objective world in nurturing class consciousness. He found, however, the practical dialectic only in the class subject. Lukacs set the “Engelsian dialectic,” i.e., practical idealism, against Engels. In comparison, I have criticized “Lukacs’ viewpoint” to defend that of Engels. Mr. Nakajima says, however, that my argument is also not exempt from some bias, although in the opposite direction from that of Lukacs and Mr. Ohé.³⁴⁾ He means that the true viewpoint by which to know the world is neither “Lukacs’ viewpoint” nor “Engels’ viewpoint of Kato,” but that of the practical copy theory of knowledge. Moreover, Kato does not know this fact and regards thoughtlessly all opposition to “Engels’ viewpoint of Kato” as “Lukascian” (the philosophy of idealistic practice). Before I offer rebuttals to this criticism of me, I would like to make clear what, I think, is common knowledge.

The philosophies that once much attracted us and referred to themselves as derivatives of the “materialistic dialectic” mostly understood human practice abstractly and idealistically. They created pictures of practice as struggle for the realization of proletariat’s historical mission by glancing at European history or Marxist writings, extracted some fundamental essence from these pictures, and presented the essence of practices as “materialistic dialectic.” Dialectic is not in objective reality but in the practical subject, the activities of the proletariat. Objects outside of this practical activity are in themselves meaningless, until they are prescribed as dialectical within it. Each social group has its essential practice according to its historical significance; for example, the practice of the modern bourgeoisie finds its essence in formal logic. Each person has its own way of recognition, according to his practice. Theoretically, the superiority of practice means the superiority of the way of recognition of objective reality. I inevitably had to oppose to this type of thought.

I have emphasized the following points in two articles.³⁵⁾ First, scientific human consciousness should be seen as the gradual reflection of objective truth in the mind. Second, this reflection will continuously broaden and intensify in and through human practice. Third, the practice in and through which objective truth reaches human consciousness forms as a whole all the relations in historical and social life that should be conceived as objective truth. Fourth, scientific human consciousness (theoretical thought) develops as far as it contains in itself realistic relations that are proven in objective processes. Needless to say, I have been stubbornly attached to this thought. Those who have sound reading comprehension can hardly understand Mr. Nakajima’s assertion that “Mr. Kato has never understood the significance of practice in epistemology.” We shall return to this point later.

The foundation of the Society for Materialistic Study induced me to review recent development in philosophical studies in Japan, and I was relieved to find that objective truth and the copy of it to human thought has become a central theme. In vain, I expected that studies of the copy theory of

34) *Yuibutsuron Kenkyu* [Studies in Materialism], No. 24, p. 221.

35) Cf. The foreword by translators for the Japanese translation of *Dialectics of Nature* (trans. by Tadashi Kato and Yujiro Kako in 1929); *Puroretaria Kagaku* [Proletarian Science], vol. 2, No. 8.

knowledge would contribute to the recognition of real, concrete, objective truth. They argue, however, abstractly about nothing but objective truth in general. They do not understand that objects are the products of practice and only conceive objects intuitively and separated from practices. They have, therefore, more interest in recognizing the subject than the analysis and recognition of real objects.

Recognition is restrained historically and socially, since it develops only with practice. This proposition is implied in the four above points, and I have explained it in an afterword to the *Dialectics of Nature*.³⁶⁾ Mr. Nakajima's critical observation that "Mr. Kato has never understood the significance of practice in epistemology" comes from the following conflicts. By restraint on the object of recognition, I have meant historical and social curbs. All human practices are developing continuously. Those of some historical era have, therefore, their own fetters. Objects can be recognized only through human practices, without which they could exist, at most, in potential. As long as objects or empirical facts that are grasped by theoretical consciousness are restrained by the development of human practices, any theory has its historical limits, which are not modifiable, no matter the notions of recognition or the methods of study. In this case, we must distinguish the limit on the whole sediment of empirical and positive facts, which is attributed to historical restraints on human practices, from the inability to conform thoughts or concepts, judgments, and deductions to objective realities, which stems from idealistic prejudices in the mind of each scholar; this idea is what I stressed in the afterword that is mentioned above. However, my critics barely care for the objects of recognition, since these are "not conceived of as human historical practices, subjectively" but are rather seen abstractly and intuitively as beyond practices. Practices which are separated from the objective world are related to the recognizing subject, which is then problematized as the practice of recognizing the subject. Mr. Nagata has well summarized this development as follows: "We argue a great deal about the historical and social restraints on the recognizing subject, just because we find the essence of the recognizing subject in practices. The recognizing subject is neither a priori nor abstract man squatting down outside history. He is an historical and social being and has his own party and class-identity. The party-identity of theory is the inevitable product of the party-identity of practice or the recognizing subject."³⁷⁾ The argument that the recognition is the reflection of objective being (activity) to thought is rejected, and objective activity is conceived as the recognizing subject. Practice is not the essential part of recognition but of the recognizing subject, to whom practice belongs. In this way, this "practicing recognizing subject" identifies this truth and sensuous perception through objective truth. Here begins the classification and characterization of the recognizing subject. Mr. Nakajima says that "conservative and narrow-minded practice confirms the truth of one-sided recognition, and progressive practice develops recognition in all directions." He adds, "some standpoint for synthesizing or directing

36) Cf. The afterword by translators for the Japanese translation of *Dialectics of Nature* (trans. by Tadashi Kato and Yujoro Kako in 1929).

37) *Yuibutsuron Kenkyu* [Studies in Materialism], No. 6, p.27.