



## Hiromatsu's Philosophy

### An Introductory Survey

The key motifs of Hiromatsu Wataru's philosophical project were inspired by the thought of Karl Marx and Marxism as well as by the philosophical implications of modern physical science. This research note presents a broad outline of Hiromatsu's philosophy as it unfolded in its major thematic areas: the general philosophical theory of what he calls the "fourfold structure," his innovative reading of Marx with a focus on the idea of "reification," and his interpretive approach to Einstein's theory of relativity. In particular, it seeks to clarify how his arguments in these seemingly disparate fields are in fact closely interconnected through the theme of intersubjectivity and the critique of reification.

**KEYWORDS:** Hiromatsu Wataru—intersubjectivity—fourfold structure—reification—Karl Marx—relativity theory

Hiromatsu Wataru (廣松渉 1933–1994), one of the leading philosophers in late twentieth-century Japan, characterizes his basic philosophical motif as a systematic critique of the “modern worldview” with its premises of “substantialism” and the “subject/object schema.” This motif has its sources above all in his engagement with the thought of Karl Marx and Marxism. From his early school days onward, Hiromatsu took a keen interest in Marxism and engaged in Communist-led political activities.<sup>1</sup> In the course of this pursuit, he came across some theoretical and practical problems of Marxism and started critically examining them, which led him to turn away from the orthodox or “Russian” version of Marxism. Politically shifting to the then rising New Left, he now set out to analyze and newly interpret Marx’s thought, which, in his view, led the way in surpassing the framework of modern philosophy. He specifically focused on Marx’s idea of “reification,” starting to explore its far-reaching philosophical implications.

Hiromatsu’s philosophical project was also inspired by another, apparently disparate field of knowledge, the field of physical-scientific thought. His interest in this area, which also goes back to his early youth, revolved around the conceptions of nature introduced by new physical theories developed in the early twentieth century. Specifically, he began to investigate physicist-philosopher Ernst Mach’s thought and the philosophical implications of relativity and quantum theories with a focus on their challenge to classical physics and, by extension, to the modern philosophical worldview. This effort led the young Hiromatsu to the conviction that these new trends in physical-scientific thought have a crucial philosophical dimension in common with the intellectual innovations introduced by Marx and Marx-

1. For a biographical survey of Hiromatsu’s early life, see Part 1 of KUMANO 2004.

ism. It is precisely where these lines of endeavor in the two different fields converged that Hiromatsu's philosophy took on its full-fledged form.<sup>2</sup>

Hiromatsu's philosophy, with its unique and systematic approach to the themes of intersubjectivity and reification, arguably constitutes one of the most significant intellectual achievements in postwar Japan. His work has remained, however, relatively little known abroad, specifically in Europe and North America, where scholarly attention is still disproportionately focused on the work of Nishida Kitarō and other prewar Japanese philosophers. In fact, while a number of Hiromatsu's major books have been translated into Chinese, translations into Western languages are to date limited to some articles and short texts,<sup>3</sup> and research into his thought is largely yet to be developed. As Raji Steineck critically suggests, this hitherto scant interest in Hiromatsu's work may be largely due to the fact that his thought does not fit into the widespread preconception of "Japanese philosophy" as essentially linked to or rooted in the East-Asian cultural traditions.<sup>4</sup> His philosophy is nothing other than a recent philosophical endeavor pursued in the world-historical context, an appreciation of which will no doubt belie any culturally essentialist notion of Japanese philosophy.

In this research note, I wish to give an introductory outline of Hiromatsu's philosophical thought, an outline that is brief and preliminary and yet covers his important ideas and arguments in the major fields of his work. In the first section, I survey his interpretation of Marx's thought with a focus on the idea of reification, and, in the second, his general philosophical theory revolving around what he calls the intersubjective "fourfold structure." In the third

2. For a brief German-language overview of Hiromatsu's work, specifically his interpretation of Marx's thought, see ISHIZUKA 2004.

3. These translations include "La Philosophie de Marx (pour nous)," translated by Minatomichi Takashi, in *Actuel Marx*, 2: *Le Marxisme au Japon* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1987), 72–84, whose Japanese original is included in 『ヘーゲルそしてマルクス』 [Hegel and then Marx] (HWC 7: 223–36); an English translation by Viren Murthy of a section of 『世界の共同主観的存在構造』 [The intersubjective being-structure of the world] (HWC 1: 38–44) as HIROMATSU 2011; a French translation by Diego Company and Naitō Nobuo of 「意味論研究覚書」 [Some remarks on the theory of meaning] (HWC 1: 471–91) as "Quelques remarques sur la théorie de la signification," *Philosophie* 117 (2013): 79–95; and a German translation by Raji Steineck of the Epilogue to 『物象化論の構図』 [Outline of the theory of reification] (HWC 13: 243–68) as HIROMATSU 2018.

4. See the translator's introduction to HIROMATSU 2018, 314.

and final section, I outline his philosophical approach to Einstein's theory of relativity in connection with the theme of intersubjectivity. In so doing, I especially seek to clarify how Hiromatsu's lines of thought in seemingly distant fields are in fact indissociably correlated to form a systematic fabric.

#### REINTERPRETING MARX: THE CRITIQUE OF REIFICATION

From the early years of his academic career, Hiromatsu Wataru developed a new interpretive approach to Karl Marx's thought. In his view, the novelty of Marx's thought is characterized specifically by his idea of "reification." In what follows, drawing on his 1969 book *The Horizon of Marxism* 『マルクス主義の地平』 and other writings, I will begin with his account of the formation of Marx's idea of reification as distinct from that of "alienation."<sup>5</sup>

As is well known, Marx advanced a critique of alienation in his early works, especially in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, written in 1844. According to the young Marx, "the object that labor produces, its product, confronts it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer." That is, the worker's labor not only turns into an object, but "exists outside him, independent and alien, and becomes a self-sufficient power opposite him."<sup>6</sup> Starting from this "alienation" (*Entfremdung*) of the product of labor, Marx goes on to discuss the alienation of the activity of production from the worker and, further, the alienation of the "species" from the human being. It is based on this conception of alienation that he envisages communism as the abolition of human alienation and thus "the real appropriation of the human essence by and for the human being."<sup>7</sup>

As Hiromatsu comments, this account of alienation by the young Marx

5. Hiromatsu's interpretation of the development of Marx's thought is sustained not least by his detailed textual criticism of *The German Ideology*, Part 1, which helped him bring out a new edition of this text with a new Japanese translation (MARX and ENGELS 1974). For an illuminating account of Hiromatsu's edition of *The German Ideology*, see CARVER 1998, 104–7.

6. MEW *Ergänzungsband* (hereafter abbreviated as Eg) 1: 511–12/134–5. The second page number refers to the English translation in MARX 1971. See HWC 10: 218. Here and throughout this paper, for the sake of consistency, I have adopted American spelling when quoting from existing translations.

7. MEW Eg 1: 536/148, trans. modified. See HWC 10: 223.

revolves around the idea that the human subject externalizes itself into an alien object, and yet eventually overcomes this alienation, turning back to itself. This shows, in Hiromatsu's reading, how Marx's thought here is still confined within the modern subject/object schema, specifically that of the Hegelian school. That is to say, his idea of alienation is "inseparable from a specific concept of the subject" as represented by Hegel's concept of "spirit"—which was subsequently recast by the Young Hegelians into various notions such as "humanity," "self-consciousness," or "species-being"—and it is within such a conceptual framework that the early Marx developed his critique of alienation.<sup>8</sup>

In due course, however, according to Hiromatsu, Marx's thought underwent a radical change. Around the year 1845, in close cooperation with Friedrich Engels, Marx came to break with his earlier philosophical position revolving around the abstract notion of the subject. In his "Theses on Feuerbach," he states that "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual," but that "[i]n its reality it is the ensemble of social relations."<sup>9</sup> As Hiromatsu argues, based on this new, relationist conception of the human being, Marx now develops a new line of critique of society, starting in his 1845-46 joint work with Engels, *The German Ideology* (*Die deutsche Ideologie*). In this work, the authors argue that "as long as the human being remains in naturally evolved (*naturwüchsigen*) society, ... the human's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him." They focus on "[t]his fixation (*Sichfestsetzen*) of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into a thing-like (*sachliche*) power above us." As the authors emphasize, "[t]he social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals..., appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them."<sup>10</sup>

As Hiromatsu stresses, it is of key importance that while Marx had earlier conceived of alienation "in terms of the direct relation between the acting

8. HWC 8: 347.

9. MEW 3: 6/MECW 5: 7, trans. modified.

10. MARX and ENGELS 1974, 36 (MEW 3: 33)/MECW 5: 47-8, trans. modified. See HWC 10: 225.

subject and its object,” here in *The German Ideology* such a “dialectic of subject and object” is no longer maintained. Here it is not the direct relation of subject and object, but “the naturally grown character of the *social cooperative relation* of individuals that accounts for the ‘fixation of social activity.’”

In other words, as Hiromatsu states:

... it is manifestly shown that what appears as a thing-like power or construct (*Gebilde*) independent of human beings is in fact the naturally evolved cooperative power or cooperative relation of individuals.<sup>11</sup>

This new viewpoint is precisely what Hiromatsu characterizes as the logic or theory of “reification” (物象化), although Marx did not introduce the term “reification”—*Versachlichung* or *Verdinglichung*—until later in his life.

In the history of Marxism, Marx’s idea of reification was particularly highlighted by Georg Lukács in the early twentieth century. As Hiromatsu critically notes, however, Lukács did not clearly distinguish between alienation and reification, and “eventually subsumed reification under the logic of alienation.”<sup>12</sup> To be sure, Hiromatsu admits, “there is a certain continuity” between Marx’s early concept of alienation and his later idea of reification. It is also true that the later Marx did not altogether cease to use the term “alienation.” In his later use of the term, however, it no longer functions as a “special technical term.” Thus, partially parallel to, but independently of, Louis Althusser around the same period, Hiromatsu discerns and lays emphasis on a crucial turn in Marx’s thought in the middle of the 1840s. While he does not altogether agree with Althusser’s notion of the “epistemological break,” he does maintain that “there was a dialectical leap in Marx’s thought.”<sup>13</sup> Hiromatsu accordingly characterizes the development of the young Marx’s thought as the transition from “the theory of alienation” to “the theory of reification”<sup>14</sup>—a transition marked by surpassing the modern subject/object schema.

According to Hiromatsu, Marx’s idea of reification was fully developed in his later works, especially in his masterpiece *Capital: A Critique of Political*

11. HWC 10: 225–6.

12. HWC 10: 200.

13. HWC 7: 233, cf. 9: 399.

14. HWC 10: 213.

*Economy* (*Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*). In *Capital*, among other later writings, Marx at times uses the terms *Versachlichung* and *Verdinglichung*, both of which have often been translated as “reification.”<sup>15</sup> As Hiromatsu notes, Marx gives no formal definition of *Versachlichung* or *Verdinglichung*, nor does he regularly or extensively use these terms. However, with the aid of his occasional use of them and such cognate words as *Sache* (thing) or *sachlich* (thing-like), Hiromatsu seeks to reconstruct his thematic of reification. In what follows, drawing mainly on *The Horizon of Marxism* and his 1974 book *The Philosophy of Capital* 『資本論の哲学』, I will survey Hiromatsu's analysis of Marx's *Capital*, Volume I (1867), specifically of its opening chapter, in which his viewpoint of reification is substantively developed.<sup>16</sup>

As is well known, in the first two sections of this work, Marx argues that the commodity has the two factors of “use-value” and “value,” and, correspondingly, that commodity-producing labor also takes on a “dual character,” comprising “concrete useful labor” and “abstract human labor.”<sup>17</sup> Specifically, it is abstract human labor as a physiological expenditure of labor-power that constitutes the “substance” of commodity value, and, in this sense, value is an objectification or “congelation” of abstract labor. This account of the substance of value has indeed been taken by many, especially by orthodox Marxists, as a definitive formulation of Marx's position. In Hiromatsu's view, however, the apparently substantialist account of value given above does *not* represent Marx's final position, but rather is a “provisional” formulation that is to be “dialectically redetermined” in his subsequent arguments.<sup>18</sup> Marx develops a first such argument in the third section on the “value-form,” which thematizes the social relationship of commodities.

Marx begins this section by stating that “the object-ness of commodities as values” is “purely social” and “can only appear in the social relation”

15. To *Versachlichung* and *Verdinglichung*, Hiromatsu assigns two different Japanese terms: 物象化 and 物化, respectively. He follows Marx, however, in *not* contrasting or sharply distinguishing the two in meaning, but treating them more or less interchangeably. See HWC 10: 202.

16. For a more detailed and partly critical survey of Hiromatsu's reading of *Capital*, see KATSUMORI 2016B.

17. MEW 23: 49ff./MARX 1976, 125ff.

18. HWC 12: 383.

between commodities.<sup>19</sup> He then sets out to explore this relation in terms of a series of different forms of value. The first form, or the simple form of value, is constituted by the value relation between two different commodities. As Marx argues, in the relation “20 yards of linen = 1 coat” (20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat), for example, the two commodities play “two different parts”: “The linen expresses its value in the coat; the coat serves as the material in which that value is expressed.” This is restated by saying that the linen on the left side of the equation is in the “relative form of value,” while the coat on the right side is in the “equivalent form.”<sup>20</sup>

Although Hiromatsu offers an elaborate structural analysis of this first form of value, here I will limit myself to giving a broad outline thereof. In Hiromatsu’s reading, Marx’s account shows how a concrete product of labor, say linen, appears as something more than the sensuous use-value, namely, as a value, in its reflexive relation to another commodity. This “twofold” character of the product of labor also proves to be correlative with the dual character of the producer-owner of the commodity, that is, the concrete producer serving as a subject of abstract human labor. What is important here is that this double duality of the producer and the product holds only in the social relation between commodities, which involves as its integral moments the relation between producers as well. Thus it is only in their social relation that products of labor appear as values, and appear to the concrete producers serving as subjects of abstract labor. This structure, in Hiromatsu’s account, is in accord with what he calls the “fourfold structure” in more general philosophical contexts, which we will see in the second section.<sup>21</sup>

The first form of value as seen above is, in Marx’s subsequent discussions, followed by the second to the fourth form of value. In Hiromatsu’s reading, however, the first form is already a “constitutive moment” of the second form, or the total form of value; the third form, the general form of value, represents the “converse relation” of the second form; and the fourth form

19. MEW 23: 62/Marx 1976, 138–9; trans. modified. See HWC 12: 170. Here I have followed Moishe Postone’s modification of the existing translation (“objectivity of commodities as values”) of *Wertgegenständlichkeit der Waren* (Postone 1993, 145). Postone’s amendment is designed to do justice to the difference in German between *Gegenständlichkeit* and *Objektivität*.

20. MEW 23: 63/Marx 1976, 139–40. See HWC 12: 120.

21. See HWC 12: 152.



or “money form” is structurally no different from the third form.<sup>22</sup> For these reasons, Hiromatsu maintains that his structural analysis of the first form as seen above basically applies to the other forms as well, and thus to the value-form in general.

It is along this line of reading that Hiromatsu now proceeds to the fourth and final section of Chapter 1 of *Capital*, Vol. 1, entitled “The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret.” Although the *term* “reification” does not appear until later on in the text,<sup>23</sup> Hiromatsu regards this section as of pivotal importance to the theme of reification. According to Marx, the “enigmatic” or “mysterious” character of the commodity-form consists in the following circumstances: “The equality of the kinds of human labor takes on a thing-like (*sachliche*) form in the equal object-ness of the products of labor as values”; the measure of the expenditure of human labor-power takes on the form of the magnitude of the value of the products; and the relations between the producers take on the form of a relation between the products. In this way, “the products of labor become commodities, sensuous things that are at the same time suprasensible or social.” Marx emphasizes that “[i]t is nothing but the definite social relation between humans that assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things (*Dingen*),” and he calls this state of affairs the “fetishism” of commodities.<sup>24</sup> As Hiromatsu comments, it is through this argument that what seems to inhere in the commodity is shown to be a “reified appearance of certain social relations between humans.”<sup>25</sup> This is also the reason why, in Hiromatsu’s reading, Marx’s account of value-substance in the first two sections *cannot* be considered a definitive formulation of his viewpoint. On the contrary, the characterization of value as the “congelation” of abstract human labor is nothing other than an expression bound by commodity fetishism, the very target of Marx’s critique of reification.<sup>26</sup>

22. HWC 12: 399ff.

23. The first occurrence of the term “reification” (*Versachlichung*) in *Capital*, Vol. 1, is in its third chapter (MEW 23: 128/Marx 1976, 209). This term and the term *Verdinglichung* appear relatively often in the third volume of *Capital*, specifically in Chapter 48.

24. MEW 23: 86–7/Marx 1976, 164–5, trans. modified.

25. HWC 12: 250.

26. See HWC 10: 210.

Based on this reading of Marx's text thus far, Hiromatsu provides a succinct definition of "reification" as it is conceived by Marx:

... the term "reification" refers to the circumstance that the relation between humans (which both mediates and is mediated by material moments as well) appears as a "relation between things," a "property inherent in a thing," or a "self-contained thing."<sup>27</sup>

In Hiromatsu's view, reification is indeed "a misconception" (錯認), but by no means a contingent error or illusion. Rather, it is a misconception that "necessarily" arises under certain conditions, specifically the conditions of commodity society.<sup>28</sup> It is also noteworthy that Marx's terms *Sache* (thing), *sachlich* (thing-like) and *Versachlichung* (reification) —or *Ding*, *dinglich*, and *Verdinglichung*—have often been understood in the sense of a physical or material object, and that the prefix "re" of the English "reification," which derives from the Latin *res* (thing), has also commonly been viewed in the same way. According to Hiromatsu, however, Marx's viewpoint of reification breaks with the modern subject/object schema, and thus the "re" of "reification" can no longer mean the physical object as opposed to the human subject. Rather, "re" is conceived by Marx as opposed to and in contrast to *relation*, specifically the social relation. Marx's critique of reification is a critique of the hypostatizing misconception of what exists only in social, intersubjective relations—relations not separate from, but involving, natural and material factors as well.

In this section, we have surveyed Hiromatsu's interpretation of Marx's thought, especially of his critique of reification as based on his radically "relationist" viewpoint. In Hiromatsu's view, Marx's conceptual innovation is not limited to a turn in "social and economic thought," but rather constitutes a reorientation in "the philosophical understanding of the world."<sup>29</sup> Yet, since Marx "did not systematically present this new worldview,"<sup>30</sup> Hiromatsu seeks further to develop the Marxian project in the general philosophical dimension. In the next section, I will outline such an intellectual endeavor by Hiromatsu, including his philosophical extension of the idea of reification.

27. HWC 13: 101.

28. HWC 13: 102.

29. HWC 10: 234.

30. HWC 10: 9.

## THE FOURFOLD STRUCTURE AND REIFICATION

The general philosophical task Hiromatsu sets himself is to analyze critically and seek to overcome the “modern worldview” (近代の世界観), which he characterizes as ontologically “substantialist” and epistemologically bound by the “subject/object schema.” In his account, this modern worldview—the dominant form of thought in the capitalist period—has come to a serious impasse, but has yet to be replaced by a new worldview. He strives to develop such an alternative worldview marked by “the primacy of relation” and what he terms the intersubjective “fourfold structure” (四肢構造).<sup>31</sup> In what follows, I will outline Hiromatsu’s theory of the fourfold structure, and, closely linked to it, his reformulation of the critique of reification, as presented in his masterwork *Being and Meaning* 『存在と意味』, 2 vols. (1982, 1993), and other related writings.<sup>32</sup> Hiromatsu’s analysis begins with the cognitive dimension of the world and then goes on to the practical dimension, and to these two dimensions he devotes the first and the second volumes of *Being and Meaning*, respectively. Here, however, I will largely treat together these two parts of his theory, because, for Hiromatsu, the cognitive dimension constitutes nothing more than a “structural moment or perspectival cross section” of the practical dimension,<sup>33</sup> and in fact his accounts of the two dimensions are structured in a more or less parallel manner.

The starting point of Hiromatsu’s theory is that all phenomena in the world bear “meaning” or “value,” or, in other words, that they appear *as* something. As he puts it:

The phenomenon always already appears in itself *as something* more than a mere “sensuous” given. The sound that is just heard appears intuitively *as* a car horn; what is seen outside the window appears *as* a pine tree.<sup>34</sup>

In the practical dimension, “[t]he letter opener before my eyes is not a mere material body with a certain shape and color,” but appears as “something for

31. HWC 15: xii–xiii, xvii.

32. This survey is broadly based on the first section of KATSUMORI 2017, which is a more elaborate study on the theory of the fourfold structure.

33. HWC 15: xvii.

34. HWC 1: 33.

cutting paper.”<sup>35</sup> In this way, the phenomenon appears as something more or something other than a “phenomenal given” or “real given.” Hiromatsu designates this something more or something else as “meaning” (or “the meaningful cognized”) in the cognitive dimension, and “value” (or “significant value”) in the practical dimension.<sup>36</sup> Any phenomenon thus consists of two factors, the given and the meaning/value, linked to each other in such a way that the former appears *as* the latter. If we denote the given by *p* and the meaning or value by [*p*], the phenomenon is structured in the form of “*p* as [*p*].”

While emphasizing this twofold or dual character of phenomena, Hiromatsu in no way maintains a *dualism* of mutually independent terms. On the contrary, he seeks to de-substantialize the two moments of phenomena as follows. First, he argues that not only are all phenomena meaningful or significant, but also any meaning or value exists only insofar as it is tied to a given. Second, Hiromatsu points to the differential character of meaning/value: It is not that the meaning/value *A* is distinguished from non-*A* because of *A*’s independent self-identity, but that “*A* is taken... as self-identical insofar as it is distinguished from non-*A*.”<sup>37</sup> In this way, with regard both to the relation between given and meaning/value and to the relation between different meanings or values, he offers a radically “relationist” account, rejecting the reifying notion of meaning/value as self-contained.

Hiromatsu seeks to give a more specific characterization of meaning and value. As he points out, meaning is, if considered as such, marked by its “ideal” character. For example, unlike a dog standing at a particular place, the meaning “dog” “exists anywhere”; in contrast to individual dogs, which grow, change, and finally die, the latter remains unchanged; and the meaning “dog” is “a universal that is not *any* of the individual phenomena, but can be any of them.” In this way, while givens are “individual, local, and variable” and may thus be called “real,” the meaning exhibits a “universal, trans-spa-

35. HWC 1: 98.

36. HWC 15: 39, 16: 5. According to Hiromatsu, values may be grouped into expressive, instrumental, economic, moral, and other kinds of values (HWC 16: 15–16). Among the various kinds of values, he attaches the most basic importance to “expressive values” (HWC 16: 6). As he notes, the world surrounding us is full of expressive values, as illustrated by such phenomena as “huge sturdy rocks” on the hillside, “a gentle breeze caressing my cheeks,” and so on (HWC 5: 14).

37. HWC 15: 26.

tial, and invariable,” in short, “ideal,” character.<sup>38</sup> The same applies to value in the practical dimension. For instance, the economic value of the commodity, to which Marx refers simply as “value,” is marked by its ideal character in contrast to the real use-value.<sup>39</sup> It should be noted, however, that this ideality of meaning/value holds only insofar as one attempts in thought to “isolate” the meaning or value from the whole phenomenon and to “treat it as if it were an independent term.” In this sense, as Hiromatsu admits, his characterization of meaning/value as ideal contains a kind of “reification.”<sup>40</sup> In an effort to avoid this reification, Hiromatsu reformulates meaning/value as “functional,” in the sense of the mathematical function into which specific values—corresponding to the givens of phenomena—are each time inserted. He holds this analogy to be appropriate insofar as the function is not considered in separation from the specific values it takes.

Thus far, while de-substantializing the twofold structure of phenomena, Hiromatsu has restricted himself to their “known” or object-side in a provisional abstraction from the “knowing” or subjective side. As he points out, however, the phenomenon is every time a phenomenon “*for* someone,” and this someone—the “knowing” or “acting” subject—is also twofold in character. To be sure, in everyday consciousness, one tends to think, for instance, that a hammer “has an instrumental value objectively, in itself, and for anyone whomsoever.”<sup>41</sup> Hiromatsu contends, however, that value is “fundamentally correlative with role-taking.” In the above example:

A hammer, which may be used by any living person, has an instrumental significance insofar as someone plays the *role* of striking a nail, and each time for the one who plays this role.<sup>42</sup>

Admittedly, without directly using the hammer myself, I can “imaginatively take the role” of another who uses it, and thereby recognize its instrumental value. In this way, value or meaning can exist not simply for me as myself, but for “me as (taking the role of) another.” This “me as another,” tends, through interaction with others, to be depersonalized into the “stan-

38. HWC 15: 21, 16: 69.

39. See HWC 1: 108.

40. HWC 15: 17.

41. HWC 16: 193.

42. HWC 1: 127.

dard and isomorphic” form of “me as the one (ヒト).”<sup>43</sup> In this way, in parallel with the object-side of phenomena, the subjective side is also structured in the twofold form of “someone (誰某) as Someone (或者)” (P as [P])—or, specifically in the practical dimension, “acting someone as Role-taking Someone.”<sup>44</sup> Hiromatsu characterizes the (Role-taking) Someone in a manner similar to the meaning seen above: While the (acting) someone may be called “real,” the (Role-taking) Someone, if considered as such, exhibits an “ideal” character.

As Hiromatsu emphasizes, the subject- and object-sides of phenomena—or the knower and known in the cognitive dimension—as seen above are not “ontically separate,” but are just the two aspects of a “state of union.”<sup>45</sup> Specifically, the formation of a meaning or value is correlative with the process through which different subjects make themselves “intersubjectively isomorphic” to become an ideal Someone.<sup>46</sup> In this way, “intersubjectivity” (間主観性 or 共同主観性) serves as the essential link between meaning/value and Someone. We can now see how the twofold structures of both subject- and object-sides are combined to form what Hiromatsu terms the “fourfold structure” (四肢構造) of the phenomenon: “a given presents itself as something to someone as Someone” (p as [p] for P as [P]).<sup>47</sup> For example, something outside the window appears as a pine tree to me as a “one” (general knower); or, as in Marx’s theory of the commodity, a product of labor appears as a value to someone as a subject of abstract human labor. As Hiromatsu repeatedly stresses, the above four moments of the phenomenon are not self-contained elements that subsequently enter into relation to one another, but themselves “subsist only as terms of the [fourfold] functional relationship.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, a fourfold-structured phenomenon itself is “not closed in on itself as a four-term relation,” but exists only in relation to other phenomena, that is, to other fourfold formations.<sup>49</sup> Insofar as the phenomenon is thus relationally structured, Hiromatsu names it the *koto*

43. HWC 15: 133–4, 16: 195.

44. HWC 15: 148, 16: 123.

45. HWC 16: 79, 15: 92.

46. HWC 1: 52, 16: 189.

47. HWC 15: 199.

48. HWC 1: 45.

49. HWC 13: 260.

(事)—a Japanese term that defies simple translation, but may roughly be rendered as “state of affairs” or *Sachverhalt*. Hiromatsu counterposes this *koto* to the *mono* (物), namely, the thing that is taken as substantial and self-contained.

In terms of this contrast between *koto* and *mono*, Hiromatsu defines the term “reification” (物象化), broadening Marx’s concept of reification into a concept that covers the whole phenomenal world. That is, by reification he means mistaking a *koto* for a *mono*, that is, a misconception of the fourfold structural relation such that one or more terms of the relation are taken as independent of other terms or of the whole relationship. Reification is thus not a “purely objective change” like water turning to ice, but rather concerns the way phenomena appear differently from different standpoints. More strictly, in terms of the quasi-Hegelian we/it perspectival difference, reification is defined as the circumstance that “a *koto*, which is determined relationally from the point of view of scholarly reflection (*für uns*), appears as a thing-like being (物象) to the immediate consciousness involved (*für es*).”<sup>50</sup> For Hiromatsu, the hypostatization of meaning and value represents a typical mode of reification, and is specifically exemplified, as we have seen in the first section, by the misconception of commodity value as separated from the social relation of commodities and their producers-owners. He also critically analyzes the “institutional reification of the connection of role actions,” in which roles are reified into fixed “statuses and positions.”<sup>51</sup> A continual uncovering and overcoming of reification in this manner constitutes the leading motif of his philosophical work.

#### ON MODERN PHYSICS: RELATIVITY THEORY AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

In his broad philosophical project, Hiromatsu engaged not only with Marx’s thought and Marxism, but also with the philosophical implications of modern physical science, specifically in its historical phase stretching from Ernst Mach’s scientific and philosophical work in the late nineteenth century to relativity and quantum theories in the early twentieth century.

50. HWC 13: 245.

51. HWC 5: 220, 139.

From a point of view that has little in common with the “mainstream” or analytic philosophy of science, Hiromatsu focuses on Mach’s critique of Newtonian mechanics and, more generally, of the substantialism and subject/object dichotomy of modern philosophy.<sup>52</sup> As for quantum physics, he points to the relational structure of what he calls “knowing-known or known-knowing” as revealed by quantum mechanics.<sup>53</sup> Hiromatsu attaches special importance, however, to Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, which, in his view, is directly relevant to the themes of intersubjectivity and the fourfold structure. In this section, I will outline Hiromatsu’s analysis of relativity theory as presented in *The Philosophy of Relativity Theory* (『相対性理論の哲学』, 1981) and other works, in close connection with his general philosophical thematic.<sup>54</sup>

In Hiromatsu’s view, it is of key importance that Einstein’s theory of relativity breaks with substantialist or “reified” notions underlying classical physics. Newtonian physics had, as Hiromatsu succinctly notes, generally rested on the idea that “bodies as [material] substances, residing in absolute space and absolute time, exercise causal effects on one another” to produce a variety of phenomena.<sup>55</sup> However, as he emphasizes, Einstein’s special theory of relativity abandons the concepts of absolute space and time, and shows space and time to be dependent on each other as expressed quantitatively by the Lorentz transformation. While space-time in special relativity is still independent of matter, this is no longer the case in general relativity. In the latter theory, where gravitation is considered another expression for the properties of space-time, space-time is no longer independent of matter, but is conditioned by matter via the gravitational field.<sup>56</sup> In this way, space and time in special relativity, and then space-time and matter in general relativity, are each no longer taken as self-contained in character, but are reformulated as interdependent terms of functional relations.

Here it is crucial to Hiromatsu that these functional relations are not

52. While analyzing Mach’s philosophy, the young Hiromatsu co-translated his major work *Die Analyse der Empfindungen* and other writings into Japanese.

53. HWC 3: 295.

54. This survey has been abridged and adapted from the second section of KATSUMORI 2016A.

55. HWC 3: 536.

56. See HWC 3: 281.



secondary or external to the terms related. In Newtonian mechanics, space, time, matter, and force had been treated as if each of them were a “primary entity,” the relations between them remaining external. In relativity theory, on the contrary, relation is prior to, and constitutive of, the terms related. As regards special relativity, Hiromatsu remarks:

... it is not that there are in the first place two *things*, space and time, which *post factum* enter into a relation to each other, but that their relation is the primary, basic being.<sup>57</sup>

It is with this relationist conception that relativity theory represents a significant shift in the history of physical-scientific thought.

Emphasis on this relationist ontology is not, however, unique to Hiromatsu's analysis. Already among Einstein's contemporaries, Neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer, in particular, focused on the way in which relativity theory replaced the Newtonian substance-concepts with concepts of functional relations. Hiromatsu's approach is distinguished from Cassirer's by the following line of thought regarding the question of intersubjectivity. In speaking of the priority of relation, Hiromatsu has in mind not only the relation between observed objects, but the relation between, and involving, observing subjects as well. In special relativity, as Einstein notes, “two events that are simultaneous when viewed from a particular coordinate system can no longer be considered as simultaneous events when viewed from a system that is moving relatively to that system.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly to the notion of simultaneity, such quantities as length, time interval, and mass also prove to be no longer invariable, but relative to the state of motion of the observing system. By this relativity it is not merely meant that the result of measurement is dependent on the observing system, but also, and more importantly, that the results obtained in different systems are all equally legitimate, none of them being privileged over the others. However, stresses Hiromatsu, this in no way leads to a “sheer relativism.” What is crucial is, rather, that two (or more) different observers, while obtaining different results of measurement, come to view them synthetically in a common meaning. In Hiromatsu's terminology, the observers each grasp the “phenomenon-for-the-self”

57. HWC 3: 388.

58. CPE 2: 282/145, trans. modified.

and “phenomenon-for-the-other” in just one and the same intersubjective meaning.<sup>59</sup>

Such a structure of intersubjectivity is, as Hiromatsu notes, already implicitly constitutive of knowledge in Newtonian physics and also of our everyday experience—as, for instance, when we take what is a triangle for me and a circle for another to be “two different perspectival appearances (*Abschattungen*) of one and the same cone.”<sup>60</sup> Yet this state of affairs had traditionally been more or less concealed by the notion of independent objective reality and that of a privileged subjective standpoint (such as that of the absolutely resting system) from which that reality can be correctly grasped. To be sure, Ernst Mach had rejected this subject/object dichotomy, conceiving the phenomenal world instead as consisting of neutral sensuous elements. Nevertheless, in Hiromatsu’s critical assessment, he had failed to recognize the intersubjectivity of meaning as an integral moment of phenomena. Relativity theory goes beyond Mach’s thought in focusing precisely on the way in which the different experiences of different observers are intersubjectified. It is in this sense that, with relativity theory, the question of intersubjectivity has first been made manifest in the history of physical science.<sup>61</sup> Hiromatsu qualifies this point, however, by saying that the above “epistemological dimension” of relativity theory is an implication found by *us*, and does not coincide with Einstein’s own understanding. Einstein himself, in Hiromatsu’s account, seems to have embraced more traditional philosophical thought, and was not fully free, in particular, of the notion of objective reality independent of the knowing subject. Einstein was thus not fully aware of what his theory actually achieved in the philosophical dimension.<sup>62</sup> Stated differently, Hiromatsu’s account of relativity theory in terms of intersubjectivity is a reconstructive work from his own philosophical point of view, rather than from Einstein’s.

With this qualification in mind, let us look somewhat more closely at Hiromatsu’s analysis, which primarily refers to special relativity and yet, in

59. HWC 3: 284.

60. HWC 3: 285.

61. See HWC 3: 284.

62. See HWC 3: 412–13. For critical comments on this view held by Hiromatsu, see KATSUMORI 2016A, 165–6.

his view, also applies to general relativity. Supposing two observers belonging to different systems, he considers it necessary that both observers begin by carrying out measurement, then report their results to each other. In this way, the observers can proceed through “communication and mutual understanding” and finally set up the coordinate transformation.<sup>63</sup> Hiromatsu goes on to argue that the observers, each aware of a pair of phenomena, the “phenomenon-for-the-self” and the “phenomenon-for-the-other” (or linguistic representations thereof), recognize not only the difference between the two phenomena, but also the fact that the manner in which they differ for one of the observers is “conjugate” with that for the other.<sup>64</sup> This knowledge is gained through each observer’s assuming in thought the other’s observational standpoint, while at the same time retaining her/his own. This leads, as suggested earlier in a preliminary account, to the following situation:

The two observers, who have as givens the immediate phenomenon-for-the-self and the phenomenon-for-the-other..., each posit these two givens in an intersubjectively identical meaning, and thereby conceive them as perspectival appearances of an intersubjectively unitary given....<sup>65</sup>

This “identical meaning” corresponds mathematically to the coordinate transformation equations. Here we can see, stresses Hiromatsu, that each of the phenomena appears to the observers, not simply as an immediate given, but *as* something more or something else, something *meaningful*. Thus, the “known” side of the phenomena is of a twofold character, which is to say that it consists of both phenomenal and meaningful—or both real and ideal—moments.

On the other hand, Hiromatsu continues, the observing subjects or “knowers,” in positing the common meaning, transform themselves into intersubjectively isomorphic knowers. Each of them is “no longer a mere being-for-oneself, but a being-for-oneself as being-for-another or a being-for-another as being-for-oneself.” In this way, not only the known side, but also the knowing side of phenomena proves to be twofold, and these two

63. HWC 3: 288.

64. HWC 3: 401.

65. HWC 3: 403.

sides are bound up with each other to form a “fourfold structural relation”: The observed given is valid as something more (or something else) for the observer as someone more (or someone else).<sup>66</sup> This is Hiromatsu’s final formulation of the cognitive structure of relativity theory, and it constitutes a particular and typical case of the general fourfold structure of phenomena.

In this research note, I have surveyed Hiromatsu’s philosophical project with a focus on the thematic of intersubjectivity and reification as developed in its key interrelated areas: the interpretations of Marx’s thought and relativity theory and, as the theoretical pivot of the project, the analysis of the fourfold structure. This survey is, of course, no more than a brief outline, and does not cover all the aspects of his philosophical thought. Yet it will hopefully serve as a starting point for a more comprehensive exploration of his work, including the theory of role actions, the engagement with Mach’s thought and quantum physics, as well as his critical analysis of the “overcoming modernity” debate in wartime Japan.

---

## REFERENCES

### *Abbreviations*

- CPE    *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987–).
- HWC    『廣松渉著作集』 [Collected works of Hiromatsu Wataru] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996–1997).
- MECW   *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975–2004).
- MEW    *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956–1968).

### *Other sources cited*

- CARVER, Terrell  
1998    *The Postmodern Marx* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press).
- HIROMATSU Wataru 廣松 渉  
2011    “The Subjective Duality of Phenomena,” trans. by Viren Murthy. In James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo, eds., *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press), 973–8.

66. HWC 3: 403.

- 2018 "Entwurf einer Theorie der Versachlichung: Epilog," trans. by Raji Steineck, *European Journal of Japanese Philosophy* 3: 303–36.
- ISHIZUKA Ryōji  
 2004. "Hiromatsu-Schule," in *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (Hamburg: Argument Verlag).
- KATSUMORI Makoto 勝守 真  
 2016A. "Hiromatsu on Mach's Philosophy and Relativity Theory," *European Journal of Japanese Philosophy* 1: 149–88.  
 2016B "Hiromatsu on Marx's Theory of the Commodity," in Takeshi Morisato, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Japanese Philosophy*, *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy* 8 (Nagoya: Chisokudō Publications), 170–92.  
 2017 "Reading Hiromatsu's Theory of the Fourfold Structure," *European Journal of Japanese Philosophy* 2: 229–62.
- KUMANO Sumihiko 熊野純彦  
 2004 『戦後思想の一断面：哲学者廣松渉の軌跡』 [A cross-section of postwar thought: Traces of the philosopher Hiromatsu Wataru] (Tokyo: Nakani-shiya Shuppan).
- MARX, Karl  
 1971 *Early Texts*, trans. by David McLellan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).  
 1976 *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books).
- MARX, Karl, and Friedrich ENGELS  
 1974 *Die deutsche Ideologie*, Neuveröffentlichung des Abschnittes 1 des Bandes 1, ed. by Hiromatsu Wataru (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha).
- POSTONE, Moishe  
 1993 *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).