



Hiromatsu's Analysis of the Practical World Role Action and Reification

Hiromatsu Wataru analyzed the structure of the practical world with a focus on the thematic of role action and reification. In Hiromatsu's view, although roles do not exist prior to "role action," but are produced and reproduced each time they are played, roles often become fixed and tend to appear as "ready-made" positions or statuses. Characterizing this state of affairs as the "reification" of roles, he further investigated the reification of the norms of action as well as of the whole organization of roles. Examining Hiromatsu's analysis of reification thus developed in the practical dimension, the present paper seeks to show how this idea of reification diverges from his general synchronic conception of reification and pertains to a dynamic movement through which social relations restructure themselves. Specifically, his notion of reification as the "becoming ready-made" of roles and norms is a temporal notion that paradoxically tends to conceal its own temporality.

KEYWORDS: Hiromatsu Wataru—practical world—value—fourfold structure—role—role action—cooperation—norm—reification—becoming fixed—becoming ready-made

Hiromatsu Wataru (廣松 渉, 1933–1994) set for himself the general philosophical task of critically analyzing and seeking to overcome the “modern worldview” (近代的世界観), which he characterized as “substantialist” and bound by the “subject/object schema.” He strove to replace this modern worldview with a new worldview marked by “the primacy of relation” and what he termed the intersubjective “fourfold structure” (四肢構造). While he pursued this endeavor in his analysis of both the cognitive and the practical worlds, in the present paper I focus on his theory of the practical world, which, despite its profound importance, I have not hitherto extensively addressed as compared with his work on the cognitive world.

It is mainly during his later years that Hiromatsu concentrated his efforts on the philosophical analysis of the practical world. While he started his intellectual career as a theorist of Marxism and Marx studies, a large part of his general philosophical work until the 1970s revolved around cognitive, and especially epistemological, problems—themes not directly bound up with Karl Marx’s thought. Yet, in and after the eighties, he largely and increasingly devoted himself to practical philosophy, particularly to the themes of role action and reification, in such a way as to inherit and further develop the philosophical implications of Marx’s work and Marxism.

In the present article, I will survey and examine Hiromatsu’s analysis of the practical world with a focus on the thematic of role action and reification—as presented in part of his earlier work, *The Intersubjective Being Structure of the World* 『世界の共同主観的存在構造』(1972),¹ his later essay, “For a Reconstruction of the Theory of Roles” 「役割理論の再構築のため

1. Included in HWC 1: 3–282.

に」 (1986–1988),² and the second volume of his masterpiece *Being and Meaning* 『存在と意味』 (1993),³ among other writings. In the first section, I outline Hiromatsu's basic theory of the practical world revolving around the “fourfold structure.” In the second and the third sections, I survey his analysis of role action and of reification concerning role action, respectively. In the fourth and final section, I reexamine his approach to reification regarding role action in comparison with his general synchronic formulation of reification. In so doing, I seek to show how Hiromatsu implicitly reconceives reification beyond the synchronic framework as a movement of restructuring of social relations.

THE FOURFOLD STRUCTURE IN THE PRACTICAL WORLD

In the systematic presentation of his philosophy, notably in *Being and Meaning*, Hiromatsu places his theory of the “practical world” *after* that of the cognitive world. This does not mean, however, that Hiromatsu considers the practical world—defined as “the world as it unfolds in relation to the practical attitude”—to be secondary in significance to the cognitive world. On the contrary, as may reasonably be expected from his Marxist orientation, he attaches no less, or rather even greater, importance to the practical world. Hiromatsu also emphasizes that the practical world, or the practical dimension of the world, does not exist separately from the cognitive world. Admittedly, his texts might at times give the impression that the cognitive and the practical worlds stand side by side. Strictly speaking, however, he maintains that the cognitive world constitutes nothing more than an “aspect” or “structural moment” of the practical world.⁴ The world is basically of practical character, and thus it is the practical world that encompasses the whole world, while the cognitive world is that aspect of the world which is methodologically abstracted from its practical moments and factors.

To start with, Hiromatsu calls attention to the fact that all phenomena in the world appear *as* something. For instance, “[t]he letter opener before my

2. “For a Reconstruction of the Theory of Roles: Expressive Phenomena, Personal Response, Role Action” is a long essay that was originally published as a nine-part serial in the journal *Sbisō*. It was later included in HWC 5: 3–425.

3. HWC 16: 1–484.

4. HWC 16: 5, 15; xvii.

eyes is not a mere material body with a certain shape and color,” but appears as “something for cutting paper.” The river over there is not a mere current of water, but appears as “a place where we swim or fish.”⁵ In this way, phenomena in the practical world appear as something more or something other than a “mere cognitive given” or “real given” (実在の所与). Hiromatsu designates this something more or something else as “value” or “significant value” (意義の価値), corresponding to “meaning” in the cognitive dimension.⁶ Any phenomenon thus consists of two factors, the given and the value, inseparably linked in such a way that the former appears *as* the latter. If we denote the given by *p* and the value by [*p*], the phenomenon is structured in the form of “*p* as [*p*].” As Hiromatsu stresses, not only are all phenomena value-laden, but also any value exists only insofar as it is tied to a given. He thus de-substantializes the two factors of phenomena, rejecting the reifying notion of value as self-contained.

Hiromatsu’s concept of significant value may be seen as partially comparable to what Martin Heidegger calls “readiness-to-hand” (*Zuhandenheit*). As is well known, Heidegger refers to the entities we encounter in concern (*Besorgen*) as “equipment,” which is “something in-order-to (*um-zu*)...,” and designates the mode of being of this equipment as “readiness-to-hand.”⁷ Hiromatsu more or less positively assesses this Heideggerian notion of readiness-to-hand as a basic ontological characterization—more basic than “presence-at-hand”—and himself at times employs the term “the ready-to-hand” (用在態) to characterize phenomena in the practical dimension.⁸ At the same time, however, he critically notes that phenomena in the world have values that “cannot be confined within the instrumentality of ‘in-order-to.’”⁹ Significant values include, but are much broader than, Heideggerian readiness-to-hand, which is limited to instrumental values.

In Hiromatsu’s view, while there are various kinds of significant values, the most basic and ubiquitous is “expressive value” or “expressivity.” By “expression” (表情), Hiromatsu does not mean an “outward manifestation of the

5. HWC 1: 98f.

6. HWC 16: 5.

7. HEIDEGGER 1927, 68f./97f.

8. HWC 16: 5.

9. HWC 5: 16.

internal psychological state”—a notion based on the mind/body or inside/outside dichotomy of modern philosophy.¹⁰ Rather, phenomena bearing expressivity means that “they are grasped as bearing a certain emotion-arousing and action-inducing character.”¹¹ Accordingly, expression or expressivity is by no means restricted to the facial expression or bodily gesture of humans or animals. As Hiromatsu stresses, all kinds of phenomena surrounding us—such as “huge sturdy rocks” on the hillside, fresh green leaves above the rocks, “a gentle breeze caressing my cheeks,” and so on—bear expressive values, and thus “the phenomenal world of experience is full of expressivity.”¹² He also rejects the conventional notion that there first takes place purely “perceptual cognition,” which then gives rise to “emotional excitement.” Drawing in part on Ernst Cassirer’s view of expression, particularly on the primacy he grants to the apprehension of expressivity over the perception of things, Hiromatsu argues that “perception and emotion are not separate,”¹³ and that phenomena “always already ‘contain emotional moments’ and are originally *expressive*.” Phenomena in the world are thus “expressive phenomena that are primordially ‘pregnant’ with emotional values.”¹⁴

According to Hiromatsu, all phenomena in the world thus bear expressive values at the most basic level, but, in addition, take on a number of different kinds of values. These include the “Heideggerian instrumental value” and “Marxian economic value” as well as moral, artistic, religious, and

10. HWC 5: 53.

11. HWC 16: 6.

12. HWC 5: 14.

13. HWC 5: 14. According to Cassirer, “[t]he understanding of expression is essentially earlier than the knowledge of things,” and “[t]he expressive meaning attaches to the perception itself, in which it is apprehended and immediately experienced” (Cassirer 1929, 74/63, 80/68). Hiromatsu surveys and largely favorably assesses Cassirer’s approach to expression in his 1989 book *Expression* 『表情』 (HWC 4: 453–611, on 478–87). For comments on Hiromatsu’s analysis of expression, including his account of Cassirer’s views, see UEHARA 2019, 266f.

14. HWC 4: 466. In this connection, Hiromatsu also favorably refers to James J. Gibson’s theory of affordances. Defining “affordance” as what the environment “*offers* the animal,” Gibson claims that “an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property,” but rather “cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective” (GIBSON 1979, 119, 121). In Hiromatsu’s view, this conception of affordances is “worth considering in various contexts,” while it does not do full justice to the “emotion-arousing and action-inducing character” of phenomena (HWC 4: 469, 476).

other kinds of values.¹⁵ In parallel with his account of the cognitive world, Hiromatsu points out that the twofold given/value formation at one level may “stand in the position of a given in relation to a higher-level value,” or, conversely speaking, that the real given at one level may be “a given/value formation at a more basic level.”¹⁶ At the most basic level, there is no value-free “bare” given presenting itself, but there are phenomena already laden with expressive values, and such expressive phenomena may serve as givens in relation to a series of higher-level values.

While, in modern philosophy, value has often been regarded as something subjective, specifically as an “emotional psychical state,” Hiromatsu argues against this “subjective value theory.” As he contends, what is called the emotional psychical state is already a twofold formation comprising given and value. Value here is not a mere emotion or feeling, but rather is “something more” (*etwas Mehr*) than the “material conscious content” of emotion or feeling, that is, the “structural moment” *as* which this content is evaluated.¹⁷ To this extent, Hiromatsu might seem to side with the “objective value theory,” which posits the objective ideality of value. Also in parallel with the case of cognitive meaning, he does maintain that value is, if considered as such, marked by its “ideal” character. While real givens are “individual, variable, and local” in character, value exhibits a “universal, invariable, and trans-spatial,” in short, “ideal,” character.¹⁸ For instance, the Marxian economic value of the commodity, which is characterized by Marx as “supra-sensible” (*übersinnlich*) or “supra-natural” (*übernatürlich*),¹⁹ is marked by its ideal character in contrast to the real use-value. Hiromatsu cautiously notes, however, that this ideality of value holds only insofar as one attempts in thought to “isolate” the value from the whole phenomenon and to treat it as if it were an independent term. In this sense, the characterization of value as ideal contains a kind of “reification,” and thus cannot

15. HWC 16: 15f. This formulation in Hiromatsu’s later work is terminologically different from his earlier formulation in *The Intersubjective Being Structure of the World*, where he classifies various kinds of “significance” (有意義性) into “instrumental, regulative, and value significance” (HWC 1: 111).

16. HWC 16: 16f.

17. HWC 16: 23f.

18. HWC 16: 69.

19. MEW 23: 86, 71/Marx 1976, 165, 149. See HWC 16: 41.

ultimately be upheld.²⁰ In this way, Hiromatsu subscribes to neither the subjective nor the objective value theory—or neither value nominalism nor value realism—but proceeds with a double critique of the two opposing standpoints in the Western philosophical tradition.

Thus far, in discussing the twofold given-value structure of phenomena, Hiromatsu has provisionally restricted himself to what may be called the object-side of phenomena. He proceeds to point out, however, that phenomena bear significant value each time *for* someone, for the “acting subject.” 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.”²¹ Yet, Hiromatsu contends, value is fundamentally correlative with someone’s “role-playing.”²² 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.²³

Admittedly, without directly using the hammer myself, I may see someone else use it or “imaginatively take the role” of someone using it, and thereby recognize its instrumental value. In this way, value 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 “standard and isomorphic” form of “me as the one (世人).”²⁴ In this way, in parallel with the object-side of phenomena, the subject-side is also structured in the twofold form of “someone as someone more (or else)” or “acting someone (能為的誰某) as role-taking Someone (役柄者或者)” (P as [P]).²⁵

20. HWC 16: 69.

21. HWC 16: 193.

22. In his critical comments on Heidegger’s conception of readiness-to-hand, Hiromatsu points out that the usefulness of equipment depends on “what roles are played” in using it. For lack of this viewpoint, Heidegger’s notion of readiness-to-hand remains “a relation between individual self and object that hardly leaves the bounds of the modern ‘subject-object’ relation” (HWC 13: 192/ HIROMATSU 2022, 160, trans. mod.).

23. HWC 1: 127.

24. HWC 16: 195.

25. HWC 1: 54, 16: 123. The Japanese words 誰某 (someone) and 或者 (Someone) can hardly be distinguished in their intrinsic meanings. Here I have formally distinguished the two by capitalizing only the latter.

Hiromatsu characterizes the role-taking Someone in a manner similar to the value as 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 as seen so far are not “ontically separate,” but are just the two aspects of a state of union. Specifically, the formation of a value is correlative with the process through which different subjects make themselves “intersubjectively isomorphic” to become an ideal Someone.²⁶ A bank note, for instance, assumes a certain value insofar as people recognize and “practically treat a certain slip of paper as money” in an intersubjectively uniform manner.²⁷ In this way, “intersubjectivity” (間主観性, 共同主観性) serves as the essential link between significant value and role-taking 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: “the given is valid as ‘something more’ to someone as someone more (or else)” (p as [p] for P as [P]).²⁸ For example, 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.”²⁹ Insofar as the phenomenon is thus relationally structured, Hiromatsu names it the *koto* (事)—a Japanese term that defies simple translation, but may roughly be rendered as “state of affairs,” *Sachverhalt*, or *Angelegenheit*. Hiromatsu counterposes this *koto* to the *mono* (物), namely, the thing that is taken as substantial and self-contained. A systematic critique and overcoming of the modern *mono*-based worldview in favor of a *koto*-oriented worldview constitutes the basic motif of Hiromatsu’s philosophy.

26. HWC 1: 52.

27. HWC 16: 189.

28. HWC 1: 54.

29. HWC 1: 45.

ROLE ACTION AND COOPERATION

In *The Intersubjective Being Structure of the World*, Hiromatsu introduces his viewpoint of “role-being” through critical engagement with Jean-Paul Sartre’s account of “being-for-others.” In Sartre’s well-known example in *Being and Nothingness* (*L’être et le néant*), while I am peeking through a keyhole out of jealousy or curiosity, I am seized with a sense of shame as soon as I hear footsteps in the hallway.³⁰ According to Sartre, thus being exposed to another’s gaze, I become conscious of myself as seen by the other, as an object for the other, as an I that has become “in-itself” (*en-soi*), while the other appears as a subject who looks at me. If I return the gaze to the other, however, things will drastically change: The other is no longer a subject, but becomes an object. In Sartre’s view, either the “other-as-subject” looks at me and I become an object, or I as a subject look at the “other-as-object.” No synthesis is possible between these two modes of the relation to the other, so that “conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others.”³¹

To question this Sartrean view, Hiromatsu modifies the scene as follows: While serving as a guard, I am carelessly about to doze off, but, “suddenly feeling someone’s gaze, come to my senses.”³² In this situation, he claims, what I am aware of is not simply the self as actually seen by another, but rather the self as a “role-being” (役柄存在) that is supposed to play the role of a guard. Unlike Sartrean “seen-being” as a real perceptual phenomenon, role-being is “the manner in which the self *ought to be*” and ought to behave.³³ From this point of view, Hiromatsu further suggests, Sartre’s example of the voyeur should also be reconceived: When I am seized with shame on hearing footsteps, I am not simply aware of myself being seen, but rather of myself as someone who ought *not* to peek.

Did not Mr. Sartre primarily become conscious of his “role-being” that is negatively prescribed *against* peeking, rather than of his bodily self qua “seen-being” awkwardly clinging to the door? Incidentally, if he were a guard, he

30. See SARTRE 1943, 359/347, 360/349.

31. SARTRE 1943, 489/475. See HWC I: 165f.

32. HWC I: 166.

33. HWC I: 168.

would not reflexively leave his eyesight from the keyhole when feeling someone's gaze.³⁴

Thus, in Hiromatsu's view, even Sartre's voyeur becomes aware of himself as a role-being, and this is a crucial point lacking in Sartre's account of being-for-others.

According to Hiromatsu, being-for-others thus cannot simply be characterized as seen-being, but should rather be reconceived in terms of the "dual structure of 'seen-being' and 'role-being.'"³⁵ The seen-being does not simply appear "as such," but as someone more, as a role-being who is expected and called on by others to play a certain role. As we saw in the previous section, Hiromatsu more generally formulates this dual structure of the subject as the twofoldness of the real "acting someone" and the ideal "role-taking Someone." This twofoldness may also be formulated in terms of action: Human action generally takes place as role-playing or role action, "as something more or something other than mere bodily behavior," and here roles "exhibit an unreal-ideal character" in contrast to real bodily behavior.³⁶

By "role action" (役割行為, 役割行動) Hiromatsu means an action that, at least seen "from the scholarly point of view," is expected by others and performed "in response to such expectations."³⁷ Most human actions, including everyday acts of eating, walking, greeting, making facial expressions, and so on, may be considered role action as expected by others—others directly concerned as well as "envirning third persons." Accordingly—and also inspired by Karl Löwith's analysis of roles in interpersonal relations³⁸—Hiromatsu characterizes individuals as "role-beings" who are expected to play a certain role in various relations to others. For example, I am a child

34. HWC 1: 169. See UEHARA 2019, 265.

35. HWC 1: 170.

36. HWC 1: 113, 117.

37. HWC 16: 100. Hiromatsu's more strict definition of "role action" is (in literal translation) as follows: "response-performing of action expected by another—response-performing of action toward the involved other who is manifesting (*vorkommen*) in a triggering (*auslösend*) way—this praxis in intersubjectively conjugate relationality" (HWC 5: 139).

38. See HWC 5: 171, 273. Hiromatsu's viewpoint of role-being has one of its key sources in Karl Löwith's idea (in LÖWITH 1928) of the role of the "fellow human" (*Mitmensch*) in the personal I-thou relationship, which is surveyed with favorable comments by Hiromatsu in HWC 4: 429–42.

to my parents, “a teacher to students, a patient to a medical doctor, a customer to a salesperson,” and so forth.³⁹ In this way, I exist as a role-being in my various conjugate role-relations to others. This does not mean, however, that the roles of action rest on ready-made “statuses” or “positions.” While, in everyday situations, role action is often carried out in accordance with existing statuses and positions, Hiromatsu, on the fundamental level, rejects the notion that statuses or positions exist prior to role action. Rather, as we will see in more detail below, he reconceives statuses and positions as forms of the “reification” of roles.

According to Hiromatsu, people’s various role actions form a social nexus he calls “cooperation” (協働)—cooperation in the broad sense of “the intersubjective performance of ‘conjugate roles.’”⁴⁰ Cooperation or “cooperative action” is such that, seen from the reflective point of view, the actors “share goals” to be achieved by means of the cooperation.⁴¹ Even when a farmer is plowing a field alone, for example, we can see how this “solitary farm work” is actually a part of “many people’s cooperation”: The land was not originally cleared by the farmer her/himself, nor were the farming tools produced by her/him; nor was the farming method devised by her/him; all such factors relevant to the farmer’s work may be attributed to her/his relation to others.⁴² If we take into account such indirect and latent forms of cooperation, we can say that “all human actions are kinds of cooperation,” and role action may be redefined as “partial share of cooperation.”⁴³

In Hiromatsu’s view, cooperation may be traced back, on the developmental level, to a series of interpersonal behavioral mechanisms. To begin with, the mechanism of “resonant tuning” (共鳴の同調) is at work when two or more persons’ actions are isomorphic, but at least one of the persons

39. HWC 16: 161.

40. HWC 1: 177.

41. HWC 16: 343. Hiromatsu defines the term “goal” (目的) in distinction from and connection with the term “aim” (目標): The goal is the value “to be achieved in the realization of the aim,” or, in other words, it is “the significant value as which the given aim is valid” (HWC 16: 61, 319). In terms of these concepts, he characterizes role action as an action that, conditioned and motivated by perceived expectations, orients itself to “realizing aims” and therein “achieving goals” (HWC 16: 309).

42. HIROMATSU 1988, 161.

43. HWC 16: 300, 310.

is not aware of the isomorphism. Exemplified by the infant tuning itself to the mother's dandling rhythm or "smiling back at the mother's smile," this mechanism is based on what is called "entrainment" in physical and biological science, namely, the synchronization of two interacting oscillating systems or organisms.⁴⁴ Next, Hiromatsu speaks of "imitative adjustment" (模倣的調整) if at least one of the persons involved consciously adjusts her/his action so that it becomes isomorphic with another's action. Here another's action is taken as a model (*Vorbild*), and the adjustment is oriented to an "anticipatory perception," rather than a present perception, of the action adjusted to.⁴⁵ It is through this imitative adjustment that the child learns many modes of action such as standing up, walking, eating, and, of course, speaking. Further, cooperation is also mediated by "reactive adaptation" (對抗的即応), namely, adjusting one's action not isomorphically, but reactively to an "anticipatory representation" of another's action.⁴⁶ For example, in response to the other's giving gesture, the child learns to make not a giving, but a receiving gesture, and vice versa. An important form of reactive adaptation is "the transmission and reception of signals," which is constitutive of "linguistic communication."⁴⁷ It is at a certain stage of the development of imitative response and reactive adaptation that "the perception of role expectations and adaptive role-performance" self-consciously arise.⁴⁸

Mediated by the above developmental mechanisms, there arise different forms of cooperation, which Hiromatsu classifies into the following three types. The first type is designated as "parallel cooperation" (並行的協働), that is, the cooperation in which "acting subjects pursue a common goal in a uniform mode of action" such as singing in unison, joint chase of game, and so on. The second type is "confrontal cooperation" (拮抗的協働), in which acting subjects carry out such reciprocal role actions that while their direct goals differ from or conflict with each other, "they share a single higher-level goal."⁴⁹ This type of cooperation may be exemplified by combative sports,

44. HWC 5: 97.

45. HWC 16: 365.

46. HWC 16: 374.

47. HWC 5: 117f.

48. HWC 16: 375.

49. HWC 16: 378.

competitive games, and the like. Hiromatsu attaches great importance to the third type, “division-of-labor cooperation” (分業的協働), in which “acting subjects each take partial share of work so as to achieve a unified goal,” where their modes of action and their immediate aims are not uniform. More or less self-conscious division-of-labor cooperation is “carried out in almost all fields of social activity,” including children’s plays, choruses and ensembles, ceremonies and festivals, division of labor in industrial production, and so on.⁵⁰ Even if the people involved are not conscious of any shared higher-level goal, insofar as common “functional purposiveness” can be supposed from the reflective point of view, most cases of cooperation may be treated as kinds of division-of-labor cooperation.

As Hiromatsu also notes, people’s role actions in a cooperative relation generally take on the character of “rule-following” and of “normative regularity.”⁵¹ He emphasizes that this rule-following and normative character is mediated by the mechanism of interpersonal “sanctions.” Here the term “sanction” is understood in the broad sense of the action by others that “exerts an encouraging or suppressing influence on the concerned person’s subsequent action.” Sanctions thus include simple “laughter,” facial expressions, and the like, which can serve as either a reward or a punishment without necessarily being so intended.⁵² In fact, a majority of sanctions applied in actual life are such unintentional sanctions. Here not only sanctions directly applied to the person concerned, but also sanctions applied to others can function as sanctions. That is, one can imaginatively take the role of receiving a reward or a punishment given to others and thus indirectly experience sanctions. In this way, acting subjects have their actions “evaluated in accordance with the norms of the community,” and receive sanctions from others based on an intersubjectively more or less uniform value assessment.⁵³ These sanctions tend to be “internalized” by the persons concerned so that they come to regulate their own action in a self-sanctioning manner.

50. HWC 16: 380.

51. HWC 5: 194.

52. HWC 16: 175f.

53. HWC 16: 177. As Hiromatsu critically and self-critically notes, however, it is an inverted way of description to speak of the “community” (共同体) as if it preexisted its members’ value conformity or isomorphism. Strictly speaking, the interpersonal range in which people are homogenized or isomorphized in their value attitude is *called* a “community” (HWC 16: 188).

Through this mechanism of sanctions, people's actions are controlled and regulated in such a way as to conform to the norms of the community.⁵⁴ Acting subjects are thus “intersubjectively isomorphized,” so that my action or “*facio* (I do)” assumes the character of “*facimus* (we do).”⁵⁵

THE REIFICATION OF ROLE ACTION

In developing his theory of role action, Hiromatsu attaches special importance to the problem of “reification” (物象化). An analysis of reification concerning role action constitutes a principal part of his project of expanding Marx's idea of reification—a key motif running through his overall philosophical work. Hiromatsu already discussed this theme of reification regarding role action in *The Intersubjective Being Structure of the World*, but most extensively in his later essay, “For a Reconstruction of the Theory of Roles.” Conceiving social relations in terms of “the nexus of role actions,” he investigates the “institutional reification” of the nexus of role actions, specifically the reification of (1) roles, (2) the norms of action, and (3) the whole organization of roles.⁵⁶ In what follows, we will take a look at each of these forms of reification.

(1) According to Hiromatsu, it is not that roles exist prior to, or independently of, role action. Rather, “roles exist only insofar as they are played by living persons,” and “are ‘produced and reproduced’ each time they are played.”⁵⁷ To be sure, in everyday contexts as well as in some sociological theories, people tend to suppose the “priority of the status” over role action. The relation between mother and child, for example, might seem to be a status relation that is biologically predetermined the moment the child is born. Hiromatsu contends, however, that the mother-child relation is not

54. Also in his analysis of the cognitive world, specifically concerning judgment and truth, Hiromatsu argues that ought-consciousness or the notion of normative necessity involved in judgment derives from “sanctions in intersubjective interchange.” That is, the judging subject is regulated through sanctions by others in such a way as to conform to “the one” (HWC 15: 373f.).

55. HWC 16: 180f.

56. HWC 5: 230.

57. HWC 1: 118, 5: 270. In his analysis of the cognitive world, Hiromatsu makes a parallel point about language: “language is produced (reproduced) each time it is expressed in speech and understood in hearing” (HWC 1: 82).

a predetermined status relation, but rather a “practical role relation” that is continually constituted through role action. It is people’s role actions that give rise to and “sustain statuses and positions.”⁵⁸

However, as Hiromatsu points out, “people’s roles can be fixed” and in fact often become more or less fixed.⁵⁹ As the little child in a family becomes aware, for example, mom prepares meals every day, dad does gardening on days off, the mail carrier brings mail to the home, and so on. In this way, mom, dad, the mail carrier, among others, are recognized as those who each “take charge of certain regular kinds of works” or a regular set of roles. In this way, roles appear to belong to the respective persons, who are expected to play certain fixed roles.

While, continues Hiromatsu, roles may thus once appear as personal, these roles can also paradoxically become “depersonalized.” For instance, “the mail carrier remains a mail carrier even if he or she is replaced by some other person.” In this way, “the same roles can be played by different persons,” and thus roles become “disembodied” in a form that may be likened to “costumes that various people can wear.”⁶⁰ What seems essential here is “the structurally articulated whole of roles,” to which the living persons may appear irrelevant. This system of roles “exhibits a functional character” in the form of “ $y = f(x)$, into which arbitrary numbers can be substituted.”⁶¹ Roles thus conceived as “ready-made” are called “positions” (部署) or “statuses” (地位).⁶² As Hiromatsu emphasizes, status and position are nothing other than “a reification of the functional organization of role actions.” In his later work, including *Being and Meaning* and “For a Reconstruction of the Theory of Roles,” Hiromatsu introduces a terminological distinction between the two terms 役割 and 役柄: While by 役割 he means “role” in general, he reserves 役柄 for the role that has already “become ready-made” (既成化) as status or position.⁶³ Insofar as this terminological distinction is relevantly made, I hereafter render 役割 and 役柄 as “role” and “Role,” respectively.⁶⁴

58. HWC 5: 174.

59. HWC 1: 117.

60. HWC 5: 234f.

61. HWC 1: 118.

62. HWC 5: 238.

63. HWC 5: 139.

64. On the other hand, I largely use the non-capitalized “role” where Hiromatsu, as in his

As we have seen, in Hiromatsu's view, what is prior is not ready-made Roles, but "role action" carried out each time in response to perceived expectations. However, he continues:

If Roles become conceived as something ready-made, in the direct consciousness of the people involved, there often arises an inverted notion (倒錯視): It appears as if role expectations derived from positional Roles.⁶⁵

That is, one tends to think that one can expect of someone such and such an action *because* he or she is "such and such a Role-being." For instance, someone is expected to behave as a teacher *because* he or she is a teacher.⁶⁶ In people's everyday consciousness and to some sociologists who uncritically follow this consciousness, a ready-made position or status thus seems to entail certain role expectations or even assume a certain "authority" (権限). In Hiromatsu's view, this notion of ready-made positions and statuses with their authority may be characterized as the "elementary form" of institutional reification.⁶⁷

(2) As noted earlier, in Hiromatsu's account, role action generally takes on a rule-following and normative character. On the fundamental level, he stresses, "norms do not exist in themselves," and still less do they possess "external binding force or authority."⁶⁸ Rather, "[w]hat really exists is nothing other than action taken in a certain manner," and it is the manner of people's actions that "each time produces and reproduces norms (規範)."⁶⁹ As we have seen, however, people's actions are subject to the mechanism of interpersonal sanctions, and, through this mechanism, tends to conform to a certain regular manner more or less shared by the members of the com-

earlier work, makes no conceptual distinction between 役割 and 役柄, or such a distinction does not seem relevant to the context.

65. HWC 5: 238.

66. As Hiromatsu notes, this kind of "inverted notion" is what Marx critically illustrates in *Capital* by the following dictum: "one person is king only because other people behave as subjects toward him. They believe conversely, however, that they are subjects because he is king" (MEW 23:72/MARX 1976, 149, trans. mod.). See HWC 1: 116, 5: 173.

67. HWC 5: 239.

68. HWC 5: 253.

69. HWC 5: 219. Hiromatsu provisionally defines the term "norm" as "the standard for action that commands (or forbids) one to act in a certain manner under certain circumstances" (HWC 16: 458).

munity. That is, people's modes of action tend to "be fixed and stabilized into a certain regular pattern."⁷⁰ Once such a regular pattern of action takes shape, the maintenance of the pattern usually—except in a revolutionary situation—constitutes a condition for people's stable life. For this reason, the mode of action thus habitually regularized and stabilized is often conceived as bearing a "normative ought-value." Conversely speaking, "action deviating from the habitual regular way" is regarded as going against the normative standard, thus incurring negative sanctions. Under these circumstances, the habitual regular way tends to appear as something like a pre-given, "preestablished line."⁷¹

As Hiromatsu further suggests, particularly in situations involving serious interpersonal conflict, the norms of action tend to become "reified" to such a degree that they are conceived as "self-contained beings" with an external binding force. If some member or members of the group deliberately violate the habitual norms of the majority, thereby giving rise to conflict, other members are likely to punish these offenses not simply out of a personal grudge, but driven by a consciousness that "they *ought* to do so."⁷² In this way, to the consciousness of those involved, norms tend to appear as rigid and self-identical despite their "plasticity." Although norms are produced and reproduced each time, there arises the "reifying misconception" that norms exist in themselves and as "ready-made givens" prior to each occurrence of an action. The notion of "the binding force or authority of norms" is also a product of reification on which people's mutual expectations and sanctional regulations are projected.⁷³

(3) As Hiromatsu points out, while acting individuals can take turns or be replaced by others, the whole organization (機構) of roles often seems to "remain the same." The organizational system of positions and statuses thus tends to appear as a self-contained, ready-made reality, "as if it existed prior to the participation of individuals."⁷⁴ This state of affairs is what Hiromatsu characterizes as the reification of the "institutional organization." Cor-

70. HWC 5: 246.

71. HWC 5: 241f.

72. HWC 5: 251.

73. HWC 5: 253.

74. HWC 5: 255.

relatively, the individual actors tend to be “disembodied” of personal substantiality, thus becoming “impersonal and anonymous.”⁷⁵

Further, Hiromatsu continues, the cooperative nexus of roles often requires a specific role action of “command” (指揮) and “gives rise to the position of command.” In this case, the organization appears as “a hierarchical order revolving around the command system.” Although the commander does not essentially differ from other members in engaging in role-expectations and sanctional regulations of people’s actions, he/she seems to assume special authority: The commander’s expectations take the form of “injunction” and her/his negative sanctions the form of “reprimand.” Hiromatsu designates this right of compulsion by the commander as “power” (権力) built into the organization.⁷⁶ In this way, the reified notion of the self-contained organization becomes associated with the notion of power that is also conceived in a reified manner as belonging to the position of command.

Starting from his analysis of reification concerning role action as surveyed so far, Hiromatsu further strove to investigate various forms of reification in the practical dimension—including the reification of institutions and social power, the reification of technology, art, and religion, among other practical constructs—in terms of “the reification of structural-functional moments of role configuration.”⁷⁷ A large part of this project, however, which he intended to carry out in the unwritten part of *Being and Meaning*, is left unfinished owing to his untimely death in 1994.⁷⁸

75. HWC 5: 228.

76. HWC 5: 255f. In his 1982 book coauthored with Yamamoto Kōichi 山本耕一, *The Materialist View of History and the Theory of the State* 『唯物史観と国家論』, Hiromatsu presents his seminal account of power: Power is “a kind of possible and potential force that compels a person to act in a certain way.” Power “does not, however, exist in itself, but consists in a *relation* between people.” It is a “reifying notion” to hold that someone *has* power. What actually exists is, rather, nothing other than “the intersubjective relation in which one’s being and action force another into a certain action.” Hiromatsu further reconceives power in terms of roles: Power in its most general structure lies in “a compulsion, based on role-expectations, of another to take a certain role” (HWC 11: 527f.). See WATANABE 2018, 187.

77. This is quoted from Hiromatsu’s book *The Schema of the Theory of Reification* 『物象化論の構図』 (1983), included in HWC 13: 9–268, on 267; Eng. trans. HIROMATSU 2022, 224, trans. mod.

78. See HWC 13: 266/ HIROMATSU 2022, 223; cf. HWC, 16: x. See also KUMANO 1996, 474f.

REEXAMINING HIROMATSU'S ANALYSIS OF REIFICATION

Hiromatsu's philosophy, revolving around the theory of the four-fold structure, is largely presented as a "synchronic" structural analysis of the world. As he notes with regard to the cognitive as well as the practical dimension, while he at times has recourse to "developmental arguments," these arguments basically serve as "an auxiliary means for a theory of being-structure."⁷⁹ As I have suggested elsewhere, however, Hiromatsu's work contains some lines of thought that differ from, and stand in latent tension with, his overall synchronic structural approach.⁸⁰ In fact, he at one point suggests that the synchronic fourfold structure of the historical world is nothing other than "a cross section of the diachronic fourfold structure" and is "developmentally mediated by the latter."⁸¹ As he also remarks, he is not content with the analysis of "static being-structure," and, more specifically, he seeks to develop a "dynamic theory of reification" from the viewpoint of role theory.⁸²

It seems to me that, in his analysis of reification concerning role action as surveyed in the previous section, Hiromatsu does take steps toward such a dynamic theory of reification. It is noteworthy that his account of reification here does not fully accord with his general conception of reification, which is largely formulated within the framework of synchronic structural analysis. In what follows, I will briefly look back on his general formulation of reification, and then seek to show how his analysis of reification regarding role action partially diverges from this general formulation.

As we saw in the first section, Hiromatsu designates phenomena in general, which are relationally structured, as *koto* (事) or states of affairs, and counterposes the *koto* to the *mono* (物) or things that are taken as substantial. It is in terms of this contrast between *koto* and *mono* that he defines the term "reification," broadening Marx's concept of reification into a general

79. HWC 15: 36; cf. 16: xv.

80. KATSUMORI 2017.

81. HWC 1: 130.

82. MARUYAMA and HIROMATSU 1993, 119. In *The Ecological Conception of History and the Materialist Conception of History* 『生態史観と唯物史観』, Hiromatsu goes so far as to remark, without elaborating, that "what is called 'synchronic structure' consists in the reification of 'role' action (or the organization of roles)" (HWC 11: 186). See WATANABE 2018, 236.

philosophical concept. That is, by reification he means mistaking a *koto* for a *mono*, that is, a hypostatizing misconception of a relation such that one or more terms of the relation are taken as independent of other terms or of the whole relationship. While the hypostatization of meaning or value represents a typical mode of reification, Hiromatsu is no less critical of the reification of the phenomenal or real given, or of the reification of the subject or the object as a whole.

As Hiromatsu notes, the suffix “-ification” (化) in the term “reification” (物象化) might seem to mean simply an “objective process”—like water turning to ice—-independent of being known by the subject.⁸³ What he calls reification, however, is not such a “purely objective change,” but rather concerns the way phenomena appear differently to different—involved and reflective—standpoints. That is, in terms of the quasi-Hegelian we/it perspectival difference, Hiromatsu states:

[Reification] means 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 consciousness immediately involved (*für es*).⁸⁴

As we can see, Hiromatsu is here formulating the concept of reification within the framework of synchronic structural analysis—without reference to a dynamic process or movement. His general concept of reification is thus a synchronic difference in the way phenomena appear to two different standpoints—the way in which relations from the scholarly-reflective standpoint appear as substantial things to the involved standpoint.

It turns out, however, that Hiromatsu’s analysis of reification in the practical world, and specifically of reification concerning role action as surveyed earlier, diverges in part from his general formulation of reification just outlined. When he notes, in particular, that roles can be fixed and conceived as ready-made or that the way of action tends to be “fixed and stabilized into a certain regular pattern,” he no longer simply means a difference between the ways in which phenomena appear to different standpoints. His idea of reification here does not confine itself within the synchronic framework,

83. HWC 13: 244/ HIROMATSU 2022, 202.

84. HWC 13: 245/ HIROMATSU 2022, 202f. trans. mod.

but rather concerns a dynamic movement through which social relations structure and restructure themselves.

Let us start with what Hiromatsu calls the reification of roles and consider how it may be understood in dynamic terms. A series of actions a_1, a_2, \dots , in which roles $[a_1], [a_2], \dots$ are produced and reproduced each time they are played, can be schematically expressed as:

$$a_1 \text{ as } [a_1], a_2 \text{ as } [a_2], \dots \quad (1)$$

As we have seen, however, Hiromatsu argues that roles may become disembodied like “costumes” and take the form of ready-made positions or statuses, to which living persons may appear irrelevant. If this happens, we can conceive this state of affairs as a structure in which actions are functionally subsumed under a fixed, ready-made Role $[a^*]$. That is, the dynamic series of actions (1) is stabilized into the structure:

$$a_1, a_2, \dots \text{ as } [a^*] \quad (2)$$

What Hiromatsu characterizes as the reification of roles pertains precisely to the structural change or restructuring of the nexus of actions from (1) to (2). We can likewise consider Hiromatsu's account of the reification of norms as well. If we now denote the norms of actions a_1, a_2, \dots by $[a_1], [a_2], \dots$, a series of actions whose norms are each time produced and reproduced may be expressed by the same formula (1) above. As Hiromatsu stresses, however, the norms of action tend to appear as fixed and ready-made givens. If we denote by $[a^*]$ such a ready-made norm under which actions are functionally subsumed, this stabilized structure can be expressed by (2). In this way, the reification of norms may also be conceived as the restructuring of the nexus of actions from (1) to (2). As we can see, with regard to the reification of roles as well as norms, the above restructuring process is in a way analogous to the transition from the total to the general form of value (from the second to the third form) in Marx's analysis of the value-form in *Capital*, where $[a^*]$ corresponds to the general equivalent or money.⁸⁵

85. See MEW 23:77–84/MARX 1976, 154–162. This analogy is rather limited, however, in that our discussion here is not elaborated in terms of a notion corresponding to the “equating” (*Gleichsetzung*) of commodities in Marx's analysis. It is also noteworthy that, in his reading of Marx, Hiromatsu considers the transition from the total to the general form of value, not as a dynamic process of structuring, but as a change in expression “corresponding to a change in the

Of pivotal importance here are Hiromatsu's notions of "becoming fixed" (固定化) and "becoming ready-made" (既成化). The notion of reification as becoming fixed obviously has a temporal character, that is, the sense of a temporal change through which roles or norms become fixed. At the same time, however, once roles or norms have been fixed, it appears as if there were no temporal change, and precisely this is what "becoming fixed" means. The notion of becoming fixed is thus a temporal notion that paradoxically tends to conceal its own temporal character.

This is also the case with Hiromatsu's notion of the "becoming ready-made" of roles and norms as well as the whole organization, but the paradoxical character of this notion goes further than that of the notion of becoming fixed. For reification as becoming ready-made implies that it not only appears as if there were no longer any temporal change, but as if there had *from the outset* been no temporal change. From an ordinary logical point of view, "becoming ready-made" might be seen as a self-contradictory notion: If something "becomes," it is by no means ready-made, and if something is ready-made, there is no room for its "becoming." Thus, given the literal sense of "ready-made," nothing can become ready-made. In my view, however, this highly paradoxical character of "becoming ready-made" may be considered an inevitable consequence of the following circumstances.

As we have seen, according to Hiromatsu, roles played by human action, if considered as such, "exhibit an unreal-ideal character," namely, a universal, trans-spatial, and invariable character. This also arguably applies to the norms of action with its ought-values. Thus, to the consciousness involved in the stabilized structure expressed by (2), roles and norms seem to be ideal—in particular, invariable or trans-temporal. On the other hand, in the series of actions (1), there are no roles or norms existing prior to each role action, but there is only the movement of "becoming" of roles and norms. This being the case, if we reflectively direct our attention to the transition from (1) to (2), we can say that roles and norms "become" in such a way that they seem invariable, thus from the beginning ready-made as if they existed prior to each occurrence of a role action. In other words, roles and norms retrospectively come to appear as if they were ready-made in advance. In this

point of view" of theoretical consideration (HWC 12: 400). I have elsewhere critically examined this part of Hiromatsu's interpretation of *Capital* (KATSUMORI 2016).

way, the nexus of role actions restructures itself in such a way that roles and norms *post factum* appear as ready-made.⁸⁶

We can thus see how Hiromatsu's notion of roles and norms becoming fixed and ready-made pertains to a temporal process or movement that paradoxically tends to conceal its temporality. While, in the framework of a synchronic structure, he defines reification as the hypostatizing misconception of a relation, his account of reification regarding role action concerns the apparent reduction of dynamic movement to a synchronic structure. To be sure, the distinction and contrast between the involved and the reflective standpoints are still at work here as a pivotal conceptual setting in his idea of reification. Yet it is no longer the question of a *synchronic* difference in the way phenomena appear to the two different standpoints. Rather, the two different standpoints are associated with two different modes of temporality: What appears as being fixed and ready-made to the involved standpoint is reconceived from the reflective standpoint as "becoming," yet as paradoxically coming to appear as if it were ready-made in advance. In this way, the notion of becoming fixed and ready-made—a key notion of reification in Hiromatsu's practical philosophy—is characterized by a kind of double temporality or, more precisely, a paradoxical link between the two heterogeneous modes of temporality. While Hiromatsu did not formulate this dynamic conception of reification in explicit distinction from his general synchronic notion of reification, we can thus see how he implicitly enlarges and shifts the idea of reification beyond the synchronic framework. Here reification is reconceived as a movement of restructuring of social rela-

86. This seems, to a certain extent, analogous to the following notion of temporality as suggested by contemporary philosopher Nagai Hitoshi 永井均. With reference to Maurice Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird*, Nagai conceives the temporal structure of the story as follows: "Neither the bird was originally blue, nor did it become blue at a certain time, but it came to be the case at a certain time that it had originally been blue." According to Nagai, this temporality, in which "two originally incompatible temporal series are forced to coexist with each other," characterizes what he calls the "genealogical" viewpoint in distinction from the "hermeneutic" and the "archeological" viewpoints (NAGAI 2001, 198f.). This analogy with Nagai's ideas remains partial, however: Nagai's genealogical temporality is suspended between the two conflicting temporal series, with neither one privileged over the other, whereas, for Hiromatsu, the appearance of ready-made roles or norms is to be criticized as a reifying misconception.

tions, yet of a paradoxical movement that on the surface disappears in its seemingly static result.⁸⁷

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87. It seems to me that this line of dynamic notion of reification was already prefigured in Marx’s idea of fetishism in *Capital*, notably in his remark on “money fetish” that “[t]he mediating movement vanishes in its own result, leaving no trace behind” (MEW, 23: 107/MARX 1976, 187).

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