Trân duc Thao’s attempts at solving the problems that arose out of his interactions with French and Vietnamese institutions, as well as those that emerged from the development of phenomenology in France, defined his philosophical trajectory. Like Husserl, he continuously sought to begin anew his own philosophy as well as the philosophical enterprise itself. And like Merleau-Ponty, who was his tutor (caînon, or agrégé-répétiteur) and published some of his first texts in Les Temps Modernes, he found inspiration as much in Husserl as in the Marxist canon or in the contemporaneous developments of psychology and the social sciences. Yet unlike them, and like Jan Patočka, Thao spent most of his career at the margins of the philosophical establishment. The contexts in which his research took place inflected his thought – especially since he chose to uproot himself on three occasions to pursue philosophy in the manner that was the most relevant to the problems of the moment. In light of the studies published in the context of a recent revival of studies focusing on Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism and Investigations into the Origins of Language and Consciousness, Thao’s contribution and relationship to phenomenology can best be understood through a study of the presence throughout his work of phenomenological themes and approaches.

59.1. French colonialism and the French philosophical tradition

Thao was one of the first Vietnamese students to undertake studies in France and the first to study philosophy. Following the French curriculum in Hanoi through high school, he entered preparatory classes in Paris and was admitted to the École Normale Supérieure (ENS). He thus gained entry into the metropolitan system of higher education, a path that until then had not been open into the ENS or studies in the humanities. Through his participation in French colonial education, Thao developed an intercultural phenomenology, as Hwa Yol Jung (2011) would do in the following generation. Already a result of cultural transfers (Espagne 2013) and of the experience of cross-cultural interactions and migration and remigration, Thao’s philosophy also explicitly tackles the question of coexistence in a context of cultural difference and colonialism.

Among his first publications are three articles dealing with the war France was waging in Indochina, and more generally with the reality of colonialism that this war continued. Supported, although with some caution, by Merleau-Ponty and the rest of the editorial team at Les Temps Modernes, Thao argued that the fundamental conflict between the French and the
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Vietnamese is existential and emerges from two manners of defining what is effectively possible for social existence. It is a conflict of horizons, in the phenomenological sense: Vietnam is an existential horizon, one that is necessary for the Vietnamese, has yet to be created, and is made impossible by French colonialism. In contrast, the French horizon includes only Indochina as a colony able to fulfill metropolitan needs and as part of what defines the French as such. No solidarity is possible between the two communities as a result of these incompossible horizons. Because the opposition takes place on the level of the fundamental meaning of social existence, no discussion can resolve it and no reform is possible until members of the French community transform their horizon – that is, until they learn to adopt the perspective of the members of the Vietnamese community (Thao 1946, 1947a). His reply to Claude Lefort's Trotskyist analysis of the Vietnamese conflict follows the same aim of explaining the Vietnamese perspective. Since the fundamental conflict in colonialism has to do with the horizon within which each community lives, all classes are united within each horizon. This shared internal horizon means that Vietnam is able to achieve a classless society through a national independence movement led by the proletariat. However, it also means that Vietnam cannot follow the European conception of a revolution that begins with class conflict since such a path would undermine the capacity to adopt a common perspective, which the Vietnamese proletariat and elites had already developed (Thao 1947b).

This focus on coexistence helps understand the publication of an introduction to Western philosophy in Vietnamese, titled Where Is Philosophy Now? (referred to in French as Où en est la philosophie?) (Thao 1950a). According to Trinh Van Thao, in this short book published in 1950, Thao presents the main ideas of the Western canon using Vietnamese and Chinese neologisms and explaining their relation to European culture and class systems. Thao thus synthesizes and communicates his experience of European culture and his study of European philosophy to other Vietnamese expats in France. Yet his goal is not solely didactic, as he criticizes the dualism between nature and humanity that characterizes Western thought in favor of the monism of the East. Marxism is also leading Western philosophy toward monism by unifying human consciousness with social and natural life through praxis (Trinh Van Thao 2013). Consequently, the Asian and communist perspectives here again allow for coexistence and an understanding of the West – even as those set within the Western, capitalist perspectives are incapable of reciprocating. Thao had described this opposition of horizons between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the incompossibility of two classes whose conditions of existence are antagonistic: the proletariat only sees what capitalist society demands of it, while the bourgeoisie finds values in this society that must be preserved and, at most, reformed. The bourgeois intellectual feels misunderstood by the proletariat, because it attempts to destroy that which gives his existence meaning rather than attempt to understand him. As a result, he cannot and does not seek to understand the proletariat or be understood by it (Thao 1949). In both cases, conflict is a matter of divergent relationships to economic reality, from which different possibilities for action as well as different ideas and horizons of meaning emerge: class interests define a horizon. The concept of horizon then serves to account for cultural difference as well as for class character.

Thao's introduction to Western philosophy is the result of his close study of the tradition and especially of the authors related to the phenomenological canon then studied in the preparatory classes and at the ENS. In 1942 he completed his graduate thesis [mémoire d'études supérieures] on Husserl under Jean Cavaillès's supervision and, following the latter's recommendation, he visited the Husserl Archives in Leuven during two three-week trips in the winter of 1944 (Courtine 2013). Thao and Merleau-Ponty would each bring to Paris a series of Husserl's manuscripts and comment on those they had read, thus opening new pathways for French phenomenology. Indeed, while Merleau-Ponty had not indicated clearly which aspects of Husserl's phenomenol-
ogy he rejected or took on, Thao’s critical relationship to Husserl offers a path through his work toward non-Husserlian forms of phenomenology.

59.2. Phenomenology, dialectical materialism, and Paris

In his reading of Husserl in *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* (Thao 1986b), Thao uses the same method he had developed in his critique of existentialism and specifically of Alexandre Kojève’s reading of Hegel (Thao 1948). In seeking the “real content” of the work, Thao distinguishes between ideas and philosophical intuitions; the method, analyses, and descriptions that developed them; and the conclusions Hegel and Husserl drew from the product of their method. As a result, he is able to take on the core ideas and intuitions of the Hegelian and Husserlian phenomenologies, all the while refusing their methods and their results. This refusal is justified by the impasse to which their work leads, but also by the promise of dialectical materialism.

Thao engaged with Marxism at the same time as he undertook his critique of colonialism. Here too it was phenomenology that drove his exploration of Marxist themes, which he sought to translate into the phenomenological framework. Defining Marxism as focusing on appropriation as the enjoyment of productive work rather than on the generalization of private property through the state, he reorients it toward the problem of the capacity of human consciousness to recognize itself in the objects it produces, a recognition that creates this enjoyment. All human sensations, from perception to love, rather than being passive reflections of the world, are active behaviors of appropriation of objects and of the world itself. As human consciousness is tied to objects and to the world through the organs at play in productive work, it also produces the meanings of its objects on the basis of the meanings passed down from previous generations to language. The experience of the world is thus structured by economic activity – that is, productive work and class struggle – which forms an infrastructure that is reflected in nonetheless autonomous ideological and cultural superstructures. This experience, which is action, is broader than the sentiment of action that phenomenology proposes to describe, even as it cannot be understood in isolation from the intuitions and ideal objects that accompany that sentiment.

These definitions of Marxism and attempt to study the lived experience of economic relations led Thao to criticize the tendency to see the economic infrastructure as primary instead of as dialectically linked to the superstructure. Marx’s assertion of the primacy of economic life was merely strategic, Thao argues, a result of the impossible living conditions of the proletariat of the nineteenth century (2009c). Three years later, he positions Marxism once again as an ideological weapon meant for the proletariat and not for the bourgeoisie (2009a). The bourgeois intellectual can, however, learn from Marxism, which emerges from the same culture as phenomenology and existentialism and seeks to respond to the same problems, all the while seeking to “retrieve total and effective man” and to return to concrete reality. Reality, according to phenomenology, is what has meaning; it will thus be best understood through the study of processes of creation of meaning in consciousness. Yet this focus means that phenomenology can only understand that part of consciousness that deals with meaning and cannot find it as it is active in the world. Phenomenology – which Thao equates with Husserl’s philosophy – consequently sacrifices the relation of mutual envelopment of consciousness and of the world to the elucidation, made possible by the reduction, of the manner in which consciousness constitutes the meaning of the world.

This critique of the reduction was already present in an article written in 1944 but submitted to Jean Wahl in 1949 (Thao 2009d). Thao retraces the origin of the reduction in Husserl’s 1907 and 1909 lessons: it is meant to protect the lived experiences of consciousness from psychologism, that is, from an interpretation that would be limited to personal history and to particular,
individual experiences. Husserl seeks this protection in order to safeguard the absolute data found in the evidence of the subject and of its lived experiences of objects, “the certainty that consciousness forms of itself in its accomplishment.” The wealth of this absolute data extracted from real experiences, the universal character of essences, must be protected from a tendency to fall back into naturalism. We find another criticism of Husserl at the outset of this close study of his then-unpublished manuscripts: in this theory of essences, “judgment is analytical and is limited to make the contents of the concept explicit. We do not see any advance in the knowledge of the thing” (2009d, 130, 139; my translations).

Thao instead embraces naturalism, which he seeks to wed to this intellectualism: dialectical materialism as he understands it presents the self as natural and as giving the world meaning. The self is entirely conditioned – it is a milieu, a set of structures and conditions, a member of a class and of a nation – but it is free when it defends not what conditions it, but what makes it be a subject, a consciousness: class and national interests. Humanity consists in living and existing as a subject, all the while placing the meaning of life above life itself. Being and projects are not chosen; they are sedimented out of past experiences into a direction for future actions, that is, into adaptation of institutions and common life to fit with lived evidence – that which Husserl had sought to understand. Here we find the question that drives Thao’s philosophy and distances him from the existentialist tradition and its relationship to both Marxism and phenomenology: rather than the authenticity, freedom, or coexistence central respectively to the work of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, his question is that of humanity.

In *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* Thao undertakes a patient, precise critique of Husserl that takes as its starting point the failures of the phenomenological reduction: as a method it not only suspends beliefs and judgments about the existence of the world, it also suspends the existence of the world itself by separating it from philosophical analysis. As Thao interprets it, Husserl’s question deals with the manners in which consciousness works and relates to others in giving a sense of being and a character of evidence to the world and its objects. His criticism of Husserl thus takes aim at the very nature – or naturality – of consciousness. Arguing that the perspective of consciousness can be absorbed within natural reality, Thao presents a materialism that focuses on the mediation that is made possible by activities of production between consciousness and its environment. Husserlian phenomenology, he continues, shows consciousness at work on cultural objects, functioning on the basis of already acquired and idealized meanings. Dialectical materialism can provide the setting for this ideal dimension of existence by beginning with matter and moving to the labor it makes possible, thus taking into account the meanings that are acquired through labor. Truth can correspondingly be grounded in economic life and reality: truth is what expresses this reality and the authentic subject is “the self as a reality among other realities” (Thao 1986b, 129). Subjectivity is “a movement that envelopes the opposed kinds within a dialectical totality that is identical with respect to its actual content to the historical movement of reality itself” (Thao 1986b, 129). History is then outside of humanity, in the world, as the natural setting for the history of humanity and of consciousness where matter is already a movement that elevates thought to consciousness.

This natural world, as the world of production, is not the world of the natural attitude. Rather, it is part of a radicalized lifeworld within which meaning emerges biologically and productively as well as through perception and social interaction – a lifeworld that finds its genesis in the animal relationship to the sensible world. Thao refers to §36 of *Ideen II* where Husserl indicates a need for a phenomenology of material nature that would be able to account for the animality of human beings, separate from the phenomenology Husserl develops and which focuses solely on individual and psychic human reality, and separate still from yet another phenomenology that would study higher-order objectivities (custom, right, the state, the Church) (Hua IV, 152–154).
Taking on a dialectical approach that resembles Merleau-Ponty’s *Structure of Behavior* (Merleau-Ponty 1983), Thao indicates that these phenomena are reciprocally linked and recasts the intuitions and ideas Husserl provides as presenting different stages in the history of consciousness. At one end of the development of humanity, the study of kinestheses appears as the study of animality. At the other end of this history, he unveils the pure consciousness that is the result of the reduction as an abstract consciousness, a consciousness that has had its material characteristics and mediations abstracted, removed, in an attempt to justify the class position of those who have no direct relationship to material production and exploit that of others. The object is nothing but a synthesis of adumbrations and the external world is reduced to intentionalty: they are constructed, rather than pre-existing as objects of possible work and production (Thao 2009b).

Thao’s central operation on Husserl resides in a series of conceptual shifts: “materiality” becomes synonymous with “nature” and replaces it; “materiality” as the physical operations of the body on materials becomes the foundation and the origin of consciousness and thus the essence of all phenomena; “materiality” as the physical labor of the body-consciousness becomes the foundation and origin of sociality as the arrangement of the physical operations of many body-consciousnesses – in other words, as the division of productive labor (Thao 1986b, xxiii–xxv). Since materialism focuses not on what exists and has meaning, but on what is done, the constitution of meaning will not originate in consciousness but in its productive relationship to objects: “In the real process of production man is homogeneous with matter, and it is in that material relation itself that the original relation of consciousness to the object that it perceives is constituted as ‘constituted meaning’” (Ibid., xxviii).

59.3. Consciousness, language, and Vietnam

The publication of *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* was rushed, leaving Thao with little time to develop the dialectic of human societies that concludes the book. More pressing matters were calling him to Vietnam: dialectical materialism demanded to be put into action in the service of revolution. The pure consciousness of capitalism and colonialism, being the result of material conditions and class struggle, would not be replaced with books of philosophy but rather with a change in material conditions and engagement in the class struggle. Finding his way to North Vietnam at the beginning of 1952, he worked as a researcher and then as a teacher, discovering the shape of the Vietnamese communist ideology. Thao thus set aside his expertise on Hegel and Marx and his project of moving phenomenology beyond Husserl in order to translate the Vietnamese General Secretary’s Maoist writings. Thao was sent for ideological re-education in 1953 and tasked with re-educating local party members and peasants. He probably participated in the denunciation campaigns, in the attacks on “class enemies” and at the very least witnessed the violence that accompanied them (Papin 2013, 64–69).

Following the success of the struggle for independence, Thao taught at the University of Hanoi and at the University of Pedagogy. During this period, Thao published ten texts in Vietnamese but none in French. According to Papin, most are typical of the ideological publication of the moment; the two articles that continue his earlier work and commitment to humanism cost him his position, his reputation, and his health. Following the opening of the Chinese Communist Party to internal critique (The Hundred Flowers Campaign), Thao published an article in the dissident journal *The Humanities* and another in *Masterpieces of Winter* (the third in its series after Summer and Fall). In these texts he defends freedom as the freedom to criticize, the freedom of the individual in relation to the collectivity, freedom from the control of an authoritarian democracy. When the regime, following China’s lead, cracked down on its critics, Thao was used as a scapegoat for the “Humanities and Masterpieces Affair” [Nhân
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Văn–Giai Phạm] and presented as the mastermind behind the attempt to undermine the party: having studied and lived abroad, with few connections in Vietnam, he was the perfect victim (Ibid., 71–73). His trial ended, his spirit broken, he was assigned to a fictitious position as a contributor to the local party publication and received little to no salary and coupons, a situation that placed the necessities of life beyond his reach. Only a few out of date publications from the West could reach him, and he only received some of the publications he requested from communist countries.

It is in this context that Thao, without any other clear occupation, resumed writing in French and picked up where *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* left off. Already seeing the conclusion of that book as a failure, he sought to begin anew in the study of the materiality of consciousness. Starting with a study of Hegel which recasts some of the ideas of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in a materialist framework and presents a sketch of a non-idealist, non-transcendental theory of consciousness (Thao 1970), Thao asserts that the question of consciousness, which is central to phenomenology and rarely tackled by Marxists, demands to be addressed by dialectical materialism. Perhaps because the importance of the question of consciousness in these texts was played down by Marxist commentators at the time (e.g., François 1974) and because the reach of his work was limited outside of communist circles, his *Investigations into the Origins of Language and Consciousness* did not receive significant attention. While the lack of popularity of the question of the origin of humanity may also be blamed for this neglect from philosophers – Marxist or otherwise – it is worth noting that the study of paleontology might have been a result of Thao’s difficult situation. With the disciplines of philosophy, politics, and history being central to communist orthodoxy, he would have been greatly if not completely limited in his access to their contemporaneous and especially Western production. Thinking in a vacuum, cut off from the French and Vietnamese intellectual worlds, he was able to access materials from a relatively unthreatening discipline with few possibilities for extrapolation regarding points of ideological orthodoxy or contemporaneous developments: paleontology. Rather than developing an art of writing, Thao found an alternative path to pursue the question that already occupied him – that of the origins of humanity.

In this second major work, which takes up the contents of articles published in France between 1966 and 1970, Thao continues to transform the categories and concepts of phenomenology, doing to Husserl what he perceives Marx to have done to Hegel: not merely turn his philosophy on its head, but recreate it entirely. This use of phenomenological insights and concepts is, however, not a work of, or on, phenomenology, as Thao would later present his 1965 article on Hegel as an act of complete rejection of the phenomenological tradition. Throughout the *Investigations*, Thao continues to use a phenomenological vocabulary, setting it in a materialist context rather than in relation to ideas and meaning. Sedimentation appears as a process in which the subject’s sporadic consciousness of others’ reflection of his actions back to him and of his repetition of their repetition of his actions becomes available as a way to orient his own action and work (Thao 1984b, 134); and in which the subject’s sporadic consciousness of others’ capacity to repeat his actions becomes available as a way to orient and motivate their actions (Ibid., 12–13). Furthermore, various forms of consciousness appear as a result of increasingly complicated collective processes of production – consciousness of the capacity to orient oneself and others, to direct oneself and others’ work, to recreate past situations and anticipate future ones, to name objects – and each becomes sedimented and serves as a foundation for the emergence of the next.

The concepts of situation and horizon – respectively favored by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty – are also at the heart of his analyses. Thao speaks of a biological situation, where objects that satisfy biological needs are present and motivate collective action; an immediate situation, defined
by collective interactions and the actions that are possible for the group taken as a single work unit with a larger perception than that of the individual; and suggests a symbolic situation, as the functional phrase allows the group to recall or anticipate actions that have taken place or might take place and act in their immediate situation, in view of this future situation. His treatment of the concept of horizon is closer to what we can find in phenomenology. A horizon appears once a group of subjects learn how to indicate the location of objects only they can see to another group: the object is out of the perceptive frame of the latter group, but remains as a motivation for action through the directions given to follow and find it. Imagination is the beginning of thought: an image is created based on the typical characteristics of the object. The sedimentation of this capacity to imagine beyond the perceptive field creates the horizon as a permanent structure of consciousness, that is, as an ever-present possibility of having others indicate something that is present beyond the immediate field of perception.

He also offers a solution of his own to the question of alterity. Consciousness is always a relation not only to production, but also to other people. Reciprocity and collective existence pre-date the formation of self-consciousness as an individual and make it possible. Other people are not perceived; rather, they are always already present in sensorimotor interactions: reciprocity precedes consciousness (Ibid., 9) and the question that occupies Thao is the emergence of individualized consciousness in the midst of this collective existence. The subject begins to be conscious of himself as others reflect his actions as in a mirror and repeat his noises and words as in an echo. Transforming the insight that consciousness is always consciousness of some thing, Thao suggests instead that consciousness is always consciousness of practical, material actions on objects and of relations to others in view of those objects. Likewise, the Husserlian injunction to go “to the things themselves” becomes an injunction to understand how we put our finger on things, how we indicate them to others and to ourselves, in the pressing contexts created by the production of tools or in the hunt. All consciousness is sporadic at first, then collective, and only then can it become individual (Ibid., 133).

This collective production structure demands solidarity among the members of the production group and a complementarity between the group and the family. Productive work is able to make individuals move beyond jealousy and general indignation can work to reduce individualism. In passages that focus heavily on marriage as the possession of women by men and reproduce colonialist presuppositions about Indigenous peoples, Thao seeks the original community – the source of primitive communism and appropriation. This communism is present in the replacement of relations of force by relations of production, which display their advantages by allowing for peace, unity, and comfort through more efficient production (Ibid., 166–167).

59.4. Renovation in Vietnam, The Formation of Man, and the return to Paris

Thao would quickly dismiss aspects of his Investigations as overly formalistic and as remaining caught within the subjective method and attempting once again the impossible through a recourse to psychoanalysis that was to transform its intuitions into positive knowledge (Thao 2009b). Redefining his approach, he sets the lived acts on which phenomenology focuses against the background of the social image. Lived acts and experiences, on the one hand, are images that are projected onto objects, after being created in the process of sensing an object as external, but before the subject recognizes itself in the social image. The social image is an internal image of the social environment and of the self as similar to others. Lived experience only has meaning – is only possible – through these two dimensions of materiality and of sociality (Ibid.).

The Renovation process, through which Vietnam sought to modernize its economy without the liberalization chosen by Deng’s China, opened a space for theoretical innovation in order
to redefine socialism. Thao took the opportunity to publish the book *The Philosophy of Stalin* (1988), which appears both as a continuation of his attempts at understanding economic and productive life and as a subtle criticism of past economic policies in Vietnam through the criticism of Stalin’s ideas, and suggests criteria for a truly socialist system. In 1991, shortly following the publication of this book in France in 1988, the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party allowed (or forced) Thao to visit Paris. The accounts of those who met him and spent time with him then agree on the presence of a strong persecution complex and a complete disconnection from a France that looked nothing like the country and intellectual milieu he had left forty years earlier. In spite of such concerns and of his difficulties at expressing his ideas, he nonetheless prepared the manuscripts for *Dialectical Investigations* (1992) after self-publishing a short book, *The Formation of Man*. This latter book is a renewed attempt at finding the origins of consciousness in relation to language and production, this time by creating a clearer line between animality and humanity and using a more deliberate, deepened dialectical method.

Schematically, production creates the language of real life, which leads to an internal language, which becomes conscious linguistic language, which finally makes it possible for the self to experience itself and to name itself. Each time, the previous reality is taken up through a series of reflections between the subject and the other producers in relation to their collective productive tasks. Lived intentionality, in such a context, is constituted “as aim of the object of social work in the internal image of one’s own body, which image duplicates itself by returning upon itself, which defines the intrinsic form of the movement lived as such” (Thao 1991, 34; my translation). Sociability, as the psychic energy at the source of values as well as of the repeated attempts at cooperation, is the origin of production and of each transformation of the intersubjective relationship. As soon as the capacity to name objects appears, producers move from a collective possession of the tools built through cooperation to a collective possession of the world, understood not in Husserlian terms, but as the whole of the means of production. Self-consciousness thus becomes the consciousness the self has of itself as a member of the group and of the group as collective owner of the world. It is only against the background of this appropriation and prior belonging that self-consciousness can appear as a self who is reminded of its tasks and role, who has an obligation to fulfill these tasks. It is only through religious and artistic representation that a consciousness of self-consciousness will emerge: as two groups meet for exchanges, *I* emerge as the subject who is performing or offering on behalf of *us*.

### 59.5. Conclusion

Throughout his publications Thao was able to give a partial view of the historical and material development of consciousness. We can find this thread through the first use of an instrument (“La naissance du premier homme,” 1986); the shift from labor and the use of instruments to production and the creation of tools (*Investigations*, 1973); the first appearance of exploitation (*La philosophie de Staline*, 1988); the birth and development of slavery (“The Rational Kernel in the Hegelian Dialectic,” 1956/1965); feudalism and the transition to capitalism (“La dialectique logique dans la genèse du ‘Capital’,” 1984); imperialism and colonialism (in his 1940s texts on Vietnam); and humanity and socialism as historical horizons (*Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, 1951, and *La philosophie de Staline*, 1988). He also sought to develop dialectics as a method in relation to economic life in *La philosophie de Staline* – in response to the process of Renovation – as well as in his articles on Hegel and on *Capital*, and in his unpublished manuscript *Recherches dialectiques* (1992).
Thao's last philosophical efforts were focused, as always, on correcting his past analyses and on perfecting his method to include a wider range of phenomena. However, another endeavor preoccupied him in 1991 and 1992, echoing the intellectual autobiography presented in “From Phenomenology to the Materialist Dialectic of Consciousness.” In his introduction to The Formation of Man, which became the first of three Dialectical Investigations, he presents his itinerary in such a way as to explain his position and help his readers understand the philosophical, political, and material context and underpinnings of his latest essays at defining humanity and tracing the path toward a fully human future.

Notes

1 De Warren (2009) offers a brief biography and overview of Trần Đức Thao’s work. While De Warren uses the patronyn Trân, the use of Thao here reflects the Vietnamese custom of referring to a person by their first name, even eminent ones and in formal settings. We also use Trần Đức Thao’s own francized spelling of his name in his Recherches dialectiques.

2 Thao would give a similar course in 1955–1957, which was published posthumously in 1995 as The History of Thought before Marx [Lịch Sử Tư Tiểu Trước Marx] (Trần Đức Thao 1995).

3 Published in French in 1965, but in Vietnamese in 1956.

4 This role of “The Rational Kernel in the Hegelian Dialectic” is discussed in Thao 1991.

References


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