

Hegel's masters slave dialectics & slave rebellion of Spartacus

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Abstract - This paper investigates major points of the Hegel's Masters slave Dialectics & Slave Rebellion of Spartacus. On this case, research has been pointed on the different research points of the Masters slave dialectics & slave rebellion of Spartacus.

Keywords: dialectics, historians, theorists, thinkers; political scientists.

1. INTRODUCTION

Slavery had been one of the key institutions of the societies till few decades back. It was humanized and was accepted. Working of the structure of the society and its institutions was dependent on the slaves. Slaves used to be the people who used to do most of the work and in return they were mostly treated inhumanely, even there are cases in which slaves were beaten to death by their masters even for small mistakes. Life of a slave was that of equal to an animal in that time.

A lot of academic work has been done on the slavery, many historians, theorists, thinkers; political scientists have written and have tried to explain it or to explain how it affected the World. But whenever we talk about a master and slave we can never ignore the master slave dialectic which is work of one of very famous and influential thinker **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel**. Alexandre Kojève in his book introduction to the reading of Hegel has directed that there are two ways to perceive the Master Slave dialectics. According to one view Master –Slave dialectics is a metaphor. And by another view the master Slave Dialectics actually describes the evolution of the history of the institution of slavery describing it thoroughly by this dialectical method.

In this paper we are going to carry the later view and will apply the Master-Slave Dialectics to one of the most remarkable slave rebellion which was led by Spartacus and is known as "Third Servile war". We will observe this rebellion by the view of the master-slave dialectics and will analyze and discuss about the workability and limitations of this dialectics and will observe how relevant master slave dialectics is with the real life rebellion.

To start and continue with our application of master slave dialectics on the Spartacus rebellion we first have to understand what dialectics is, and then what master slave dialectics is.

2. DIALECTICS

According to dialectics everything is in this process of being refined driven by the spirit and everything is the product of spirit. According to this everything has its negation in itself. The mixture of that thing and the negation of it which is in itself, goes in a process and develops a new entity which is the actualization of the thing which had undergone a process or in other words the refined form of that thing. The thing in the above example is the Thesis, the negation or the contradiction of it is the anti-thesis, the struggle between the thesis and the anti-thesis is called the synthesis which produces the end point or the actual supreme reality of anything or thesis. Anything can be seen by this process of dialectics. History can be understood by the process of dialectics as according to Hegel every part of history has its own value and worth and every portion of history holds a specific form of wisdom. The things or the extremes which were witnessed in the history were very important as without them the World cannot move into the direction of the achievement of its reality. It is just in the process of the development of the better form. If we take the example of two systems which are very different from each other or are on two extremes we will see how the contradictions and the learning from the opposites lead to the better systems. Let's look into the systems of the Greeks which did believed in the individual liberty but lacked in the collective discipline on the other hand the system like that of ancient Persians which were good in the collective discipline but did not favored the personal or individual intellectual liberty. Both these systems collided and the human learned from both and synthesized better systems which had individual liberty as well as the sense of collective discipline.

The concept of the contradiction is very central of the dialectical method. According to it everything

contains its contradiction within it. Everything has something to negate it which puts it in the process of unfolding itself which leads to the improvement of that thing. This was called as *Aufhebung* by Hegel which means to sublimate. This can be understood as perishing the old self and the birth of something new which is the actualization of the old self which has been achieved by contradicting the very self and negating it which leads to the discovery of the new potentialities in the very self and the new being is the product of the actualization of the potentialities which were discovered.

Everything can achieve its real form by negating itself and getting into this struggle which is difficult but leads to the refining of very self. The contradiction is not coming from somewhere else but it is present within. For example if we take the example of seed the seed has to contradict its very self and has to get into the process to be developed as small plant. The sun, water and soil play a role in this which can be identified as the agents of the change but the actual contradiction or leaving its previous self was in the seed itself. And undergoing the synthesis the seed can reach its actual form.

3. MASTER SLAVE DIALECTICS

A man is indeed very different from the animals and the thing which distinguishes man from an animal is his desires and consciousness. A part of man's desire is animal which is material in nature, which is merely based on survival or living and another part of his desire is based on his human consciousness which is his desire to be recognized by the equal 'other'. A man has this desire to be desired by the other. This shows that a man needs the world to provide him this recognition and to develop this 'self-consciousness'. This self-recognition is developed when he looks at himself through the eyes of other. This means it is a need of a human consciousness to be desired and recognized by others unconditionally. This desire of being desired is the basis of master-slave dialectics. To describe master-slave dialectics a hypothetical situation is created in which there are two men together in a separate setting. Both have this desire to be recognized by the other unconditionally; without recognizing the other. This led both to break into a struggle to gain this recognition by other. This struggle will lead to a fight where one will overcome the other by putting his life in danger for recognition; valuing his human consciousness more than survival. The one who is being overcome, the very moment when he is about to get a fatal blow from the overcomer requests

him to spare his life and he will be subordinate to him for the rest of his life; valuing survival more than the self-consciousness thus his consciousness is reduced to mere that of an animal and he now has to live by the order of the overcomer as a slave.

Now the master is the one who is being recognized by the slave as a master and he himself sees him as such as he is recognized by the 'other', while the slave is considered as a slave both by the master and the slave as now the slave doesn't have his human consciousness, his consciousness is just the reflection of the consciousness of the master's consciousness. Now the slave is indulging himself into rigorous work to fulfil the requirement and the leisure of his master while the master on the other hand is enjoying the services of the slave and consuming the things his slave is producing for him. The master is just celebrating the fruits of the hardships of the slave while the slave is not allowed to enjoy the product of his hardships he in return is getting harshness and sometimes the punishments and brutality of his master and is living under constant fear of death.

With the passage of time the master will not get fulfilment by the recognition of slave as he will feel he is cheated on, slave is not the equal 'other', he is just equal to an object someone who with the consciousness of an animal. While the slave is on the other hand working with the nature, and through his constant work he is able to master the nature he can get his recognition in the product of his work and through his mastery of his nature. The slave is progressing while for the master there is no room for the progress. The slave is now regaining the human consciousness by his mastery over the nature. While the master is totally dependent on the slaves and his consciousness now is just the product of the slavish work he is devouring on. His recognition as a master is dependent on the slaves as he is recognized as a master just because of his slaves. While the slave has now mastered the nature by his work with it, he has experienced the fear of death which has refined him and he has also observed the human dignity in his master.

The slave will soon realize that the master is actually weak and dependent on the slaves while the slaves are the sources which provide strength and human dignity to the master. Let's look at this at a macro level, let's consider 'a slave' is actually many slaves and they are seeking recognition in their work and fellow slaves have reached their human consciousness. Now they will revolt against the masters in result of which

the master will be overcome and the ex-masters are now at the mercy of the ex-slaves who are now victorious. This is how the master-slave dialectics of Hegel drives this relation to the actual refined reality of it.

4. SLAVE REBELLION OF SPARTACUS & SLAVERY IN ROME AT THAT TIME

Slavery was well established institution of the Roman Society. Slaves were important part of their cities that their population was even more than the free citizens. Slaves used to do most of the work in the city, fields and the households. Apart from slaves conquered in wars there were slave markets as well where the slaves were sold and brought. Slaves were treated just as the objects or the animals they were in most of the cases treated with harshness and brutality and slave's virtue was to obey and fulfill needs for his master. There was this different category of the slaves who were called Gladiators. Whose purpose was to fight in the arenas in the games for the amusement of the Roman people. There they used to fight with each other, face severe wounds, put their lives in danger and in most of the cases when a gladiator was defeated, he would lose his life on command of master or other or on the command of the prime guest of the games. Like this they used to put their lives in danger for amusement of their masters. Gladiators were usually men (some women as well) with a nicely built body.

Spartacus was also a Thracian slave with a well built body. He was a former mercenary and was captured as a slave in war. His well built physique made him a good contender to be a Gladiator. He was sent to a 'ludas' (training home for the Gladiators) in the city of Capua which was owned by Lentulus Batiatus who was a Roman citizen.

Spartacus along with his trainer used to have training here at ludas in Capua. He in 73BC conspired a rebellion to achieve freedom with his fellow Gladiators and he and his people were successful in fleeing away from the house first using the utensils of kitchen slaying the masters and other guards and then taking away the weapons from the weapon stores. 70 men along with Spartacus rebel and fled away that night and then they went from household to household, raided different ludas and freed slaves from there as well. Initially Roman government did not give this matter much importance. Later Spartacus's slave army grew to a number of almost 120000 and this rebellion became matter of concern after failure of some of the notable Romans the task to crush the rebellion was given to the

richest man of the republic Marcus Crassus. He developed a fear in his army by punishing every 10th member of one of his legion which retreated during battle with slaves, by beating them to death. He made his army fear him more than that of death. In one of the battles in 72BC one of Spartacus's Lieutenant 'Crixius' fell while fighting with the Romans and in his honor Spartacus made 100 of captive Roman soldiers made fight with each other to death like Gladiators, organizing funeral games in honor of Crixius.

Spartacus wanted to march beyond Rome where his fellows would be able to live as freemen but most of his companions wanted to continue the pillaging. Most of them wanted to march to Rome to fight for the fall of Rome. Finally in 71BCE Spartacus' rebellion was crushed by Crassus, Spartacus died while fighting in the front rows, many of the slaves were killed and 6 thousand slaves were captured and were crucified and were displayed all along the way from Capua to Rome and their bodies were left there to rot. Doing this Crassus wanted to set an example so no slave will dare to rebel again.

5. IMPLICATION OF MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTICS TO SPARTACUS REBELLION

If we observe the case of rebellion of the Spartacus in the Roman Empire closely we will observe that the most of the parts of the Master-Slave Dialectics of Hegel's are applicable to this case.

The Slaves and Gladiators were kept as a slave and from ages they have accepted their roles as slaves for the sake of survival, submitting to the authority of the master as a being of lower consciousness. While the Master is being recognized as a master because of his possession of the slaves. Master is enjoying all the services of the slave. We here will continue with the example of Gladiators. Masters enjoy themselves with the fights with Gladiators indulge themselves in for amusement of the master and to secure their survival.

The continuous training and the practice of the Gladiators refines them more and more. They seek their recognition in the hard training they do, in the product of their training and by the victories they are achieving. On the other hand, masters are depending on slaves for their daily works and even for amusement. Everything they are consuming is the product of the slavish work and their further progress is hindered.

Gladiators in the process of fighting with each other and putting their lives on stake for the sake of mere survival has made them even surpass the fear of death itself. Their work and surpassing the fear of the death has made them regain the Human consciousness to be recognized as equal free man. Their observation of master having the Human dignity though he is not even putting his life on stake and is being dependent on them has made them realize that they every time put their lives on lines just to survive while they can put it on line for something bigger which is the 'Recognition as a free man'.

This desire made the slaves revolt against the dependent masters of themselves. Slaves overcame masters just by using kitchen utensils this shows that the dependency of master on the slavish work has made them weak.

But later when we closely look at it in the later part of the Spartacus slave rebellion we will observe that later it is not the wish of freedom which is driving the slave army, but it is the 'desire of being recognized'. They instead of marching across Rome towards their freedom wanted to march to more cities, wanting to impose themselves on the freemen, wanting to be recognized. They wanted to topple the Roman City to seek recognition as the superior driven from the Human consciousness/ Self-Consciousness they gained from work and surpassing the fear of death.

Every aspect except the tragic end of this heroic rebellion fits perfectly if we look at it by the lens of dialectics.

6. LIMITATIONS AND CRITIQUE

According to master slave dialectics the rebellion should have reached to point of supremacy of slaves over the masters, it happened for intervals but it was ended and was crushed with force. That I believe happened because the whole construct of the master slave dialectics is in a controlled atmosphere. Where number of things are neglected and one among those is the power of the state to crush the rebellion or any uprising as we have observed that when it was on the level of the household the slaves were able to plan and execute a successful rebellion but when things went on macro level the slaves had to face the massive armies and state strength power. The rebellion of Gladiators is the very ideal situation as the slaves in this case are strong men and learned swordsmen and fighters plus the huge number was their another greater plus point. But even this ideal slave rebellion was not able to overthrow the bigger setup of organized freemen; The

State.

If we talk and think about the rebellion of the slaves who are house-hold slaves and are not good fighters it would have been difficult for them not only to face the state power but also to rebel against the household which also used to have armed guards.

On micro level the Master Slave dialectics is very workable as in this the self-consciousness and desire of being recognized is enough force to drive this whole dialectics but on the Macro level the 'desire of being recognized does play its role but there are other factors as well the absence of which can cause the downfall of the whole rebellion itself.

7. CONCLUSION

Hegel master-slave dialectics do give us a different way of looking at things. If not more it indeed has described a logical reason behind the institution of the slavery and the whole process which develops the slave mentality and a mentality of master and their respective virtues.

His idea is not primitive only but I believe his idea of master slave dialectics is partially universal and can be applied on different aspects of life where the disparity in powers and rights exists. For instance, let's take example of Corporate Slavery. The modern concept from some thinkers according to which a man is a slave without a label to the business corps they work for.

There also a man for the sake of survival (or to get the means to survive) forfeits his freedom to the corporation which is providing him the means to survive while the bosses (masters) have acquired that position by putting their means of survival on stake and gaining profit and developing these Big Corporations. The employee or a corporate slave works hard just to earn the means of the survival while the Boss is enjoying the product of the working of the employee which the employee cannot enjoy.

This great idea of Hegel has its significance and is almost relevant to the structure in which disparity of power and unequal distribution of product is involved. That is the reason we are always able to see the reflection of Hegel dialectics in the works of Great thinker Karl Marx whose influence on World cannot be forgotten similarly it is not wrong to say that Hegel's influence on the World of philosophy and thinking will never fade.

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