



Universidad Nacional de Catamarca - Facultad de Humanidades
Instituto de Investigación en Teorías del Arte y Estética
Revista Rigel – ISSN 2525-1945.

Awareness of the Value of Work in Algerian Society A Socio-Philosophical Approach

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Received: 05/05/2026

Accepted: 08/07/2026

Published: 04/09/2026

Abstract

Work is considered one of the most important social phenomena that have attracted the attention of philosophers and sociologists, given the central role it represents in the life of the individual, not only in satisfying his needs, but also in realizing his existence as a human being. In addition, work plays an important role in societies, as it is regarded as the fundamental driving force of the economy and livelihood. However, with the major changes and transformations that the worlds in general and Algerian society in particular, have experienced across various fields, work has lost its value, and the individual's perception of it has changed. This change has had a profound impact on the process of economic and social development, as a result of the role played by work values in shaping the individual's professional behavior and determining his relationship with work and his conception of it. Accordingly, and on this basis, this study undertakes a socio-philosophical reading of the value of work among the Algerian individual and the developmental role that work plays in society.

Keywords: Work; Work Values; Philosophy of Work; Sociology of Work; Hegelian Philosophy; Algerian Society; Social Change; Socio-Philosophical Approach.



Introduction

Work is one of the most deeply rooted human and social phenomena, extending beyond the satisfaction of material needs to constitute a fundamental sphere of self-realization, autonomy, and social integration. For this reason, it has occupied a prominent position in philosophical and sociological thought, where its meanings and value have evolved in accordance with changing historical and intellectual contexts.

In ancient thought, work was often associated with hardship and servitude and placed outside the sphere of freedom and citizenship. Modern and contemporary philosophy, however, redefined its significance by linking it to freedom, consciousness, recognition, and human self-realization. This transformation is particularly evident in Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, where work appears as a mediating activity through which consciousness develops and the individual moves toward autonomy. Karl Marx subsequently placed work at the center of his analysis of human activity, production, exploitation, and alienation. From a sociological perspective, Émile Durkheim emphasized its role in social organization, solidarity, responsibility, and integration, demonstrating that the value of work extends beyond its economic function to include broader social and normative dimensions. The meaning and value of work have nevertheless undergone significant transformations with the transition from traditional to industrial and, more recently, technological and digital societies. The rise of automation and artificial intelligence has further transformed the nature and organization of work, raising new questions about human agency, recognition, purpose, and the future of work.

Within Algerian society, awareness of the value of work acquires particular significance in light of the historical and structural transformations that have shaped its social and economic organization. Traditional forms of work were closely associated with solidarity, responsibility, and self-reliance, while French colonialism profoundly disrupted these structures and representations. After independence, the relationship with work was reshaped within the framework of national development and state-building, before contemporary economic and technological transformations introduced new perceptions of its value and status. Accordingly, this article examines awareness of the value of work in Algerian society from a socio-philosophical perspective, focusing on its philosophical and sociological dimensions, the transformations affecting its value system, and their implications for individual behavior, social integration, and comprehensive development.

First :The Concept of Work between Philosophy and Sociology

Researchers in the field of theories of knowledge, despite the diversity of their fields, agree that the subject of work and its profound problematics constitutes one of the most prominent social topics

and one of the most widely present in philosophy and sociology, having taken different forms throughout the history of human civilizations. This has been reflected in the theorizing of philosophers, thinkers, and sociologists, despite the diversity of their cultural and intellectual references ork among the Algerian individual and the developmental role that work plays in society.

1.1 Work as a Philosophical Concept in Hegel's Master–Slave Dialectic

Hegel addressed the concept of work in his various writings, including his treatment of it in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the section on the Master–Slave Dialectic, and in *Philosophy of Right*, concerning the importance of work in the development of the family, society, and the state. He regarded work as the inner force for the achievement of freedom, as exemplified by what the slave did when he achieved his freedom through his continuous work, in contrast to the master, who lost his freedom through his distance from work.

Thus, Hegel brought together work and the demand for freedom and made work a necessary condition for the act of liberation, provided that there exists a constant conditional relationship between them for their actual realization. This made the concepts of work and freedom an essential and effective factor in social movement and everyday life.

Hegel discusses the question of freedom and its relationship to work (action) in many areas within his comprehensive philosophical system, including the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the *Philosophy of History*, the *Science of Logic*, and the *Philosophy of Right*, in several passages. He links freedom to the individual's will when it becomes a will for universal freedom; however, it cannot become so unless the individual has actually become free, which can only be achieved through action, and action can only be realized through work.

Accordingly, Hegel concluded that work is an essential condition for the transition to the world of freedom. This proposition appears again in the thought of Karl Marx, the same truth that later led Marx to call for a reduction in the number of working hours in the working day.

Likewise, Hegel's ideas in this regard extend to the point of arriving at the hidden power of working time and discovering that the difference between slaves in ancient times and the free worker can be expressed through the amount of labor from which the master derives benefit.

Concerning the system of needs and work, Hegel says: Particularity is characterized, in the first place, by its opposition in general to the universal principle of the will. It thus expresses a subjective need and attains its objectivity, that is, its satisfaction, through:

- External things, which at this stage constitute property and the production of needs, or equally through the wills of others.

- Labor or effort constitutes the middle term between the subjective and the objective. The end of need here is the satisfaction of subjective particularity. Yet the universal here affirms and establishes itself through what this satisfaction entails in terms of a relation to the needs of others and to their free wills. The manifestation of rationality within these finite spheres is understanding. This is the aspect that is of great importance in our study of these spheres, and which itself constitutes the element of reconciliation and conciliation within them. (Herbert Marcuse, p. 19)

Needs are multiple: the needs of animals and things, as well as the ways and means of satisfying them, all belong to a limited sphere. Although the human being is likewise subject to this determination, he nevertheless demonstrates, at the same time, his transcendence of this limited sphere and proves his universality, which is realized:

- 1) through the multiplication of needs and the means of satisfying them.
- 2) through the diversification of concrete needs and their division into separate parts and individual aspects, which in turn become different needs that are subdivided and become increasingly abstract.

Thus, needs and means, insofar as they are existing and real things, become something that exists for others, and the satisfaction of all likewise becomes conditioned by their needs and their labor. When needs and means become abstract in terms of quality, abstraction, in turn, becomes a characteristic of the reciprocal relationship between individuals. This universal abstract characteristic is one through which individuals recognize one another, and it is the moment that makes needs and the means of satisfying them concrete: that is, social after having previously been abstract and isolated. Through labor, the raw material that nature directly provides us with is adapted in a particular and specific manner appropriate to the vast number of ends involved in diverse processes. It is this transformation of form that confers value upon the means and imparts to them their usefulness. Hence, in everything that the human being consumes, whatever its kind may be, he is essentially concerned with what human beings produce. For this reason, we say that it is the products of human effort that the human being consumes.

On the other hand, the objective and universal element in labor lies in the process of abstraction, which brings about the division and differentiation of needs and means, and also causes the division of production, leading to the emergence of the division of labor. Through this division, individual labor becomes less complex, and consequently, the individual's skill in the aspect related to his function increases, just as his productivity increases. At the same time, the process of abstraction of one individual's skill and means of production from those of another individual is completed, making

people's dependence upon one another, as well as their reciprocal relations in satisfying their other needs, a necessary process. Furthermore, the abstraction of an individual's production makes labor increasingly mechanical, until, ultimately, the human being disappears and is replaced by the machine (It is clear here that Hegel is referring to the theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau [1712–1778], according to which the human being, in this first state of nature, was solitary in the forest, knowing neither his fellow human beings, nor industry, nor virtue, nor vice, and was able to obtain easily the means of satisfying his natural needs.)

Hegel's discussion of the relationship between the master and the slave is founded upon the concept of labor, which plays an essential role in this discussion Hegel shows that the objects of labor are not inert things, as they may appear to be; rather, they are living embodiments of the essence of the human being. In dealing with these objects, the human being is, in reality, dealing with the human being.

The individual can exist only through another individual, and his existence for himself is confined to his existence for another. However, the relationship is not one of harmonious cooperation among equally free individuals, working for the common good while at the same time seeking to realize their own interests. Rather, it is a "struggle of life and death," and there is no way for the human being to attain self-consciousness that is, to know his possibilities and to realize them freely except by pursuing the struggle to its very end. Here, we may return to Marx, who, in his writings of 1844, deepened the fundamental concepts of his own theory by undertaking a critical analysis of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He described the alienation of labor in light of Hegel's discussion of the master–slave dialectic. Marx saw in it that the greatness of this work lay in the fact that Hegel conceived the self-creation of the human being that is, the creation of a rational social order through the conduct of a free human being as a process of objectification and its negation. More precisely, he conceived the nature of labor and regarded the human being as the result of his labor (Hegel, p. 137).

Here, Marx points to Hegel's powerful insight, which revealed to him that mastery and servitude necessarily arise from certain relations that are themselves produced in a reified world. Thus, the relationship between the master and the slave is neither eternal nor natural; rather, its roots lie in a specific form of labor and in the human being's relationship to the results of his labor.

The fact of the matter here is that Hegel's analysis begins with the experience that the world in which self-consciousness must prove itself is divided into two conflicting spheres. In one of them, the human being is bound to his labor, in such a way that this labor controls his entire life; in the other, the human being takes possession of and appropriates the labor of another person and becomes a master by virtue of this very fact of possession and appropriation. Hegel describes the latter as the

master and the former as the slave For the slave is not a human being who merely engages in labor; rather, he himself is labor, and his labor constitutes his entire existence.

He works with things that do not belong to him but to another, and he cannot separate his life from these things, since they constitute "the bond from which he cannot escape." He is entirely at the mercy of the one who possesses these things. It should be noted here that the dependence of one human being upon another, for this purpose, is not a personal condition, nor are its roots to be found in personal or natural circumstances that is, in the degradation or weakness of the individual but rather, it is a relation mediated by things.

Labor binds the worker to objects in such a way that his very consciousness exists only in the form and configuration of things He thus becomes a thing whose very existence is confined to being used; that is, the existence of the worker is an existence for another (Herbert Marcuse, p. 127).

According to this view, labor is the instrument that transforms this relationship. The worker's act does not disappear when its results appear; rather, it is preserved within them The things that labor shapes and gives their form fill the human being's social world and function within it as objects of labor The worker learns that it is his labor that remains in the world; he sees himself and recognizes himself in the things surrounding him, and at that point his consciousness becomes externalized in his labor and is thereby transferred into a state of permanence. Thus, independent existence becomes, in the eyes of the human being who labors, this human being himself The objects of his labor are no longer inert things that keep him bound by the chains of other people; rather, they are the products of his own labor and thereby become an inseparable part of his own existence. If the product of his labor has become objectified, this does not make that product "something other than the consciousness that shapes the thing through labor," for this very form is his pure self-existence, which becomes actually realized in it.

The process of labor does not create self-consciousness in the worker alone; it also creates it in the master For the definition of mastery is that the master controls the things he desires with complete freedom, without having to work to produce them, unlike the slave He satisfies this kind of need by making another person work in his place, and his enjoyment depends upon his own liberation from labor. The worker, over whom he exercises control, presents to him the objects he desires in a complete and ready form so that he may enjoy them In this way, the worker protects the master from being compelled to confront the negative aspect of things that aspect in which they become chains binding the human being The master receives all things as products of labor, not as inert objects, but as things bearing the character of the subject who labored to produce them. When the master deals with these things as his private property, he is in reality dealing with another self-consciousness, namely, the consciousness of the worker the being through whom he attains the

satisfaction of his need. In this way, the master finds that he is not a being existing for himself and characterized by independence; rather, he is fundamentally dependent upon another existence, namely, upon the effort of the one who labors for him.

The slave's labor is the expression of his self-consciousness. By working to bring things to life, he ultimately fulfills the master's primary desires. Moreover, the things upon which he acts through his own capacities escape his control and pass into the control of the other who confronts him (Omar Mehebel, 2007, p. 232). However, if we consider the slave, we find that he has undergone a bitter existential experience: the experience of fear in the face of the negation of life and the desire to preserve it that is, the experience of dread of death rather than the willingness to confront it. Ultimately, the slave who lost the struggle in order to preserve his life and accepted being a slave because of his strong attachment to nature, in order to provide the things desired by the master and to devote them to the recognition of the master this slave is the one who will become the historical human being and the true human being. In Kojève's words, he subjected the natural world to himself because he preferred life. As for the master, who exposed his life to danger, he triumphed over the natural world and consequently over the slave. The master accepted death consciously, whereas the slave consciously refused it (Alexandre Kojève, 1947, p. 54).

Second: Work as a Social Phenomenon

"Marcel Mauss" considers work to be a human and social phenomenon with biological, social, and psychological dimensions, carried out by the human being in his interaction with nature (George Friedmann, 1961, p. 3).

The concept of work is not limited in its meaning to paid activities only; rather, it extends to include the various activities in which the human being exerts mental or physical effort. It also refers to agricultural work, domestic work, and handicraft and manual work. Work, therefore, is that social phenomenon which takes place within the framework of practicing a particular activity, whether in return for remuneration or without remuneration.

Work may be considered as: "A set of tasks whose performance requires the exertion of intellectual, psychological, and muscular effort, for the purpose of producing certain goods or services in order to satisfy a range of human needs." In this sense, the concept of work goes beyond the narrow meaning of the profession or occupation associated with a wage paid in return for the work and effort exerted, to extend to certain forms of unpaid human activity, represented by the activities performed by men and women without remuneration, such as domestic work, the practice of family agricultural activity, manual handicraft work, and others. These activities constitute important aspects of family life and its economy.

"Georges Friedmann" points out that work constitutes, at the same time, an expenditure of energy, a factor of production, a source of income, and a medium of integration. Whether it concerns the determination of wages, the hierarchy of qualifications, the development of contractual policies, or the arbitration between active life and private life, human resource management includes all these different components and raises several problematics (Gilles Frérot, 2011, p. 178).

"Work has been part of human activity in all societies. There is no doubt that this was Marx's view in Capital, in which work is defined as 'a purposive activity aimed at the production of use-values' and as 'the appropriation of what exists in nature in order to satisfy human needs,' according to Karl Marx" (Tony Bennett et al., 2010, p. 512).

Karl Marx defines work in his Capital as follows: "It is, first of all, a process that takes place between man and nature, a process in which man, through his own activity, mediates, regulates, and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the material of nature as one of its own forces. In order to appropriate the material of nature in a form suitable for his own life, he sets in motion the natural forces belonging to his body: his arms and legs, head and hands. By acting upon external nature through this movement and changing it, he changes, at the same time, his own nature. He develops the potentialities dormant within it and subjects the play of these forces to his own control" (Karl Marx, 1985, p. 256).

Marx also refers, in his conception of work, to that physical effort and energy exerted by the individual in carrying out a particular task, whether this requires the use of his hands, feet, head, or even his fingers. Work, therefore, is that voluntary and conscious human effort exerted by the individual in exchange for the satisfaction of his material or moral needs.

As for Durkheim, he embodied the concept of work in his work *The Division of Labor* through the fundamental values upon which work is based, namely the values of cooperation that arise among the members of society. These values, in turn, create other social values such as responsibility, solidarity, and other values that further strengthen relations among individuals.

Durkheim compares the law of the division of labor in society to the human nervous system, which organizes the various functions of the body and leads them toward harmonious cooperation (Émile Durkheim, 1986, p. 149). This cooperation manifests its positive values for both the individual and society. Durkheim distinguishes between two types of positive cooperation:

The first occurs directly between the individual and society without an intermediary, whereas the second reinforces the individual's attachment to society because, according to him, it concerns the parts that constitute society (Émile Durkheim, 1986, p. 149). The first type of cooperation refers to the work carried out and mastered by the individual as a member of society, whereas the second type

refers to the attachment and complete bond that develops between the individual and society. In the first case, society "is a more or less organized collection of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group. This is the collective type" (Émile Durkheim, 1986, p. 149).

In the second case, society represents "a totality of different and specialized functions, united by definite relationships" (Émile Durkheim, 1986, p. 149).

According to Durkheim, these two forms of society are nothing but two aspects of one and the same reality. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between these two types of cooperation. The strength of the first rests upon the totality of ideas and tendencies shared among the members of society, provided that they are greater than the ideas and tendencies belonging personally to each individual. It becomes stronger as this difference becomes greater. However, given the differences in individuals' personalities and subjective characteristics, this cooperation cannot constitute a force unless priority is given to the sentiments of the group and common interests at the expense of the independent personality of the individual.

Third :The Values of Work and Their Transformations in Societies Throughout History

The values of work have undergone several radical transformations throughout their transition from ancient times to the modern era, which can be represented as follows:

1. The Greek City-State (Slavery through Labor)

Among the Greeks, freedom "was defined through liberation from labor. Whoever had to work, whether a man or a woman, was not only a slave but was not even considered a member of society" (Ulrich Beck, 2001, p. 16). On this basis, labor was associated with slavery, while the individuals who represented society occupied their time with leisure and the art of exchanging opinions.

2. Industrial Society and the Transformation of the Concept of Work

At this stage, the perception of work changed from regarding it as a form of slavery in ancient times to appreciating the working individual. This transformation was associated with the reforms that took place and with the bourgeois revolution. Saint-Simon coined the term *industria*, meaning the "active society" in which all its members work.

Ivan Illich also demonstrated in his studies that the bourgeois elevation of the value of work corresponded to a double invention: the promotion of paid work became a decisive instrument both for combating poverty and for integrating people into the social order at the same time. "The work society is a society of order" (Ulrich Beck, 2001, p. 16). Work therefore protects its holder from poverty and also keeps him away from falling into drug addiction, committing crimes, and other

forms of social deviance. In this sense, the values of work are based on self-responsibility and cooperation.

3. The Future of Human Work

After human beings succeeded in facilitating work through the use of science, this initially represented nothing more than an assisting factor. However, over time, "science replaced the working human being, and the human being came to serve it. Thus, the relationship between labor available in the form of the human being and labor available in the form of science was reversed, and science rapidly appropriated, both inside and outside human minds, an increasing share of value creation" (Ulrich Beck, 2001, p. 16).

At this stage, the individual reached the point of being replaced by technology and of having his services dispensed with. Technology came to perform work with less effort and in a shorter period of time.

4. Consciousness of Work in Algerian Society

Work in Algerian society has undergone various transformations throughout successive historical periods, accompanying the major changes that occurred internally within society as well as externally at the global level.

4.1 Work in Traditional Society (Before French Colonialism)

Members of traditional Algerian society relied entirely on agricultural labor and agricultural production, from which they derived pleasure despite its hardships, as a result of the value that work represented for the Algerian individual at that time. This is confirmed by Bourdieu in his work *Sociology of Algeria*, where he states: "Work is not a means of earning a living, but work is a means of life" (Pierre Bourdieu, 2010, p. 103).

The Algerian regarded work as a duty and a responsibility toward himself, his family, and his society. At that time, the individual was not primarily concerned with the wage he would receive in return for the work he performed, but rather with work itself, which enabled him to satisfy his essential needs and brought satisfaction to both himself and society. This led society as a whole to form a unified entity through diligence in agricultural work, in addition to other occupations known to society, such as blacksmithing, tailoring, and other traditional crafts that fulfilled the needs of individuals for one fundamental reason: work was necessary and essential for life.

This conception of work can be attributed to the culture of society at that time, which valued work and revered the working individual regardless of the nature of his occupation. In this regard, we may cite the old Algerian proverb: "The servant of men is their master." The great social value accorded

to work during this stage, which was characterized by mechanical solidarity, elevated it to a position of reverence, respect, and appreciation for the person who performed it.

4.2 Colonialism and the Transformation of the Concept of Work among the Algerian Individual

Following the stage of traditional society, work underwent several developments that caused it to lose many of its values. The main reason for this was the period of French colonialism, which focused on a policy aimed at erasing the social values of work that were deeply rooted in the culture of society and upon which generations of ancestors and descendants had been raised. This policy sought to divide and weaken society by dismantling the tribal system through the seizure and deprivation of its means of livelihood.

The colonial authorities burned agricultural lands and displaced farmers to the cities. Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, in their work on the crisis of traditional agriculture in Algeria, referred to this phenomenon as "uprooting" (*Le Déracinement*) (Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, *Le Déracinement: La crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1964). It refers to the deprivation of the Algerian individual of his land, his roots, and his identity.

This situation caused the Algerian individual to live lost in a cycle of incapacity, unemployment, and an uncertain destiny, whether in collective camps or in shantytowns. At this stage, he began searching for an alternative that would compensate him for what he had lost, while remaining filled with regret and inwardly broken. Circumstances compelled him to seek employment to which he had not been accustomed, particularly in factories and institutions established by the French colonizer. These conditions led to the emergence of the proletarian class, representing an exploited working class deprived of its rights, in addition to employment in fields and farms that the colonizer had taken from their indigenous owners and turned them into workers on their own lands.

"Peasants without land, workers without work, without a profession or craft, urban dwellers without a city, traditional human beings who were hopeless and deprived of their culture the Algerian worker was merely exploited and, at the same time, was not adapted to the system that exploited him" (Laurent Bazin, 2013, p. 6).

During this period, work lost many of its values, and the individual came to experience humiliation, degradation, and injustice. He felt exploited and enslaved, deprived of his land and homeland, and exploited in his effort, energy, and time. Work itself, and even the values it had previously represented, no longer held the same significance for him. This perception and condition continued until the Algerian people succeeded in liberating themselves from French colonialism.

4.3 Work and Its Values in Light of Contemporary Transformations in Algeria

On the eve of independence, Algerian society witnessed a collective mobilization of efforts to rebuild what colonialism, which had lasted for more than a century, had destroyed. Colonialism had left behind comprehensive destruction, deficiencies in all fields, and a people exhausted but not defeated. The taste of victory filled this people with enthusiasm, determination, and strength to rebuild the homeland, and this could naturally be achieved through work, love of work, and the restoration of the reverence for work. Thus, work regained the social values it had lost, and society began once again to thrive through the solidarity of its members in order to achieve security, peace, and prosperity for all.

However, over time, work in its various forms underwent several transformations. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the transition from agricultural and farming activities to industry and its transformations, and finally to technological development and the radical changes it brought about in the concept of work and its social values.

Conclusion:

Work has demonstrated its central role in the process of the formation and development of societies, as it constitutes the fundamental driving force behind all spheres of life. This is clearly evident in the pursuit of achieving the objectives entrusted to it, despite the transformations and changes occurring throughout the world, which have, in one way or another, affected its concept, values, and forms. The increasing use of information technology has led to changes in the nature of the work performed by individuals.

Furthermore, work has become an end in itself, governed by the degree of satisfaction it provides to the producer. The continuous pursuit of achieving quality and excellence has made work the subject of numerous field studies, the findings of which have contributed to the development of theories of work. These theories, in turn, have emphasized the necessity of raising awareness of the value of work and focusing on human relations, particularly after workers were no longer the ones responsible for making or issuing decisions.

Rather, the only power they may exercise in local centers of production is the power of negativity, namely the ability to obstruct management policies or initiatives, according to Anthony Giddens and other researchers (Anthony Giddens, 2006, p. 89). When a worker's freedom in the workplace is restricted, he or she is unable to perform work in the best possible manner, which may lead to negligence and a lack of commitment in following instructions.

In addition, incentives play an effective role in encouraging individuals to remain committed to their work and to perform it in the best possible manner. Such incentives include promotions and the

provision of job security The latter, in particular, contributes to raising workers' levels of productivity an issue that many global companies have come to recognize.

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