ABSTRACT
FROM MODES OF PRODUCTION TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY:
A LABOR THEORY OF REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECTIVITY
& RELIGIOUS IDEAS

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In this dissertation I attempt two needed tasks within historical materialism: first, to reestablish the standpoint of labor as the normative basis for critical theory beyond irrational bourgeois categories, and second, to show that labor’s own self-mediating rationalization, if it is to move beyond these contradictory categories, necessarily requires a certain religious-utopian consciousness. The dominant Weberian and Marxist paradigms for understanding labor and its relation to the religious variously perpetuated irrational bourgeois subsumptions of labor as a bare efficient cause, with religion paternalistically positioned as an inherently idealist or mystifying external form. I argue, however, that the concrete rationality of labor’s revolutionary nature necessarily hinges on a ratio to emergent final causes for which consciousness of such is itself the rational kernel of the religious. Thus I retain the historical materialist primacy of the modes of production as an organizing concept but with a more comprehensive account of its self-transcending movement. Herein the religious arises internally as a non-reductive function of labor’s self-understanding as more than a disposable instrument. I claim any materialist critique of alienated labor implies this religious-utopian consciousness, and therefore any critique of religion must presuppose the normative form of the religious as revolutionary rather than reactionary, reflecting ideal trajectories generated from the productive forces in their basic revolutionizing transformation of nature.

More specifically, I argue that theoretically the one religious-utopian ideal transcendently necessary for grasping the normative standpoint of the laboring body as its own emergent final cause, without external mediation, is the resurrection of the body. I then substantiate this historically. The comprehensive rationality of the modes of production demands that the Marxist distinction between historical periods of formal and real subsumptions yield new assessments of pre-capitalist religious ideology as positively integral to labor’s self-mediating history. I then genealogically trace a Hebraic discourse on bodily resurrection whose revolutionarily demythologized form emerged directly from and for social consciousness of its communal mode of production. I further demonstrate historically that prior to capitalism the laboring body became intelligible to itself as constitutively active without idealist inversions under this certain Judeo-Christian articulation of the resurrection of the body.