



A LEXICO-SEMANTIC EXPLORATION OF THE TERM LABOUR AS DEVELOPED IN ADAM SMITH'S *THE WEALTH OF NATIONS*

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Abstract

Great thinkers like Engels and Darwin wrote brilliant essays and books in which they present ideas and points of view on labour. Nowadays, individuals, in their various workplaces, face challenges driven either by labour relations and labour conflicts. But it seems that this term has a wider scope in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) by Adam Smith. Indeed, the exploration of the conceptual areas of the term in virtually all the contexts in which it is used in the book reveals its complex economic flavours. The aim of this research work is to carry out a detailed analysis of the concept in the various contexts in which it is used in the book. Therefore, the research methodology followed is the qualitative paradigm which draws on, and interprets the analytical and cognitive meaning of the term labour. This approach moves away from theoretical approaches such as dictionary approaches which tend to define and connote the word out of any particular context. As a result, the term labour proves to be a highly technical and polysemous one which is presented in various contexts as being the same as work, labourers, a commodity, the real price of a commodity, a means of purchase, the original purchase money, a human activity, etc. The ongoing article explores that concept in the works of several other authors in a bid to compare the different meanings it assumes in different areas.

Key words: labour, concept, corpus linguistics, man

Introduction

Engels declares in his essay titled *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man* (1950) that:

Labor is the source of all wealth, the political economists assert. It is this, next to nature, which supplies it with the material that it converts into wealth. But it is even infinitely more than this. It is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labor created man himself. (1950: 7)

This essay written in 1876 echoes an idea already developed by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Indeed, in this famous book, Adam Smith underlines the significant role of labour, by highlighting the fact that the real wealth of a nation is the annual product of its land and labour. "The reasons and causes that have induced almost all modern governments to mortgage some part of this revenue, i.e. to contract debts; and the effects of those debts on the real wealth—the annual product of the land and labour—of the society" (1776: 2).

This paper takes cognisance of the role assigned to labour by these two authors and undertakes to explore the conceptual areas of the term *labour* in *The Wealth of Nations* with the view to delimiting the contours and the content of the concept. The notion of labour itself needs to be explained and accordingly, this article will clarify and show how concepts should be approached to avoid the traditional way of studying concepts from a purely structural point of view. In connection with this issue, Douglas et al (2000: 122) comment that:

But a little reflection suggests that the notion of kinds of concepts must be evaluated relative to the theoretical work a kind or domain is going to be asked to do. For example, if one is interested in concept learning, the relevant issue might be whether different kinds of concepts are acquired in the same way. Note that this shifts but does not remove the explanatory burden: For the question to be meaningful, criteria are needed for deciding whether concepts are acquired in the same way." In brief, questions about kinds of concepts should be answered by theories rather than intuitions."

The point that is being made in this quotation is that there are differences in concepts. Indeed, a concept like democracy is an abstract one, whereas a concept such as table is a tangible one. The way abstract concepts are acquired is different from the way tangible concepts are acquired. Therefore, criteria are needed to clarify how different concepts are acquired.

It is expected that the methodology and the findings of this research work will make an impact on how concepts should be explored by terminologists. The traditional approach to terminology, i.e. the approach of the Vienna School, has been abandoned and new approaches have emerged. As a matter of fact, the approach adopted in this study is semasiological rather than onomasiological. Indeed, the focus is on every single occurrence of the term labour in the book. The meaning of the term depends entirely on the context in which it occurs. And the sum of the senses of the term from the beginning to the end of the book will provide the contents of the concept. It is mostly a cognitive approach in the sense that the meanings of the term are going to be searched for and structured systematically. The word *labour* is actually polysemous in the context of the book. It means work, workers, labour force as well as factor of production, commodity, price of commodities, etc. The discussion considers the term labour in a historical perspective.

1. Historical perspective and problem statement

1.1. Historical perspective

Engels said that many thousands of years ago during a period that geologists call the Tertiary period, a highly developed race of anthropoid apes lived somewhere in the tropical zone - probably on a great continent that has now sunk to the bottom of the Indian Ocean. Darwin has given us an approximate description of these ancestors of ours.

“They were completely covered with hair, they had beards and pointed ears and they lived in bands in trees. Presumably as an immediate consequence of their mode of life, which in climbing assigns different functions to the hands than to the feet, these apes when walking on level ground began to drop the habit of using their hands and to adopt a more and more erect posture. This was *the decisive step in the transition from ape to man.*” (1950: 7)

Engels noted in his essay that when the apes' hands became free, they could henceforth attain greater dexterity and skills, and the greater flexibility thus acquired was inherited and increased from generation to generation. “Thus the hand is not only the organ of labor, it is also the product of labour.” (Ibid: 9) Only by labour, by adaptation to ever increasing operations and through the development of muscles, ligaments and bones, has the human hand attained a high degree of perfection. The body of the apes also benefited by the law of correlation of growth, as Darwin called it. The mastery over nature, which began with the development of the hand, with labour, widened man's horizon at every new advance. The development of labour helped to bring together members of society. First labor and then after it and with it speech - these were the two most essential stimuli under the influence of which the brain of the ape gradually changed into that of man which for all its similarity is larger and more perfect. What is the characteristic difference between the monkeys and human society? Labour began with the making of tools. These were hunting and fishing implements. The hunting implements enabled the monkeys to feed on meat instead of plants and herbs. The meat diet contained the most essential ingredients required by the organism for its metabolism. Engels (Ibid:15) said that “By the cooperation of hands, organs of speech and brain not only in each individual but also in society, human beings became capable of executing more and more complicated operations.”

In a nutshell, that was how Darwin and subsequently Engels explained the evolution of mankind. That is Darwin's evolutionary theory. It was obvious that the part played by labour in this transition was great.

Later in 1776, Smith declared in *The Wealth of Nations* that “Labour was the first price, the original purchase money that was paid for all things” (1776: 13). That classical conception of the value of a commodity, which ignored demand, was exclusively based on production costs and remained valid for a century until William Jevons in *The Coal Question* (1865), Carl Menger and Leon Walras introduced the concept of marginalism. According to this concept, the marginal usefulness of a commodity increases when it becomes more and more scarce. A commodity's price increases when it becomes scarce. Therefore, it is not only labour that determines a commodity's price.

According to the neo-classical conception, the factors that determine a commodity's price are not only labour but also profit and rent. This point of view contradicts Smith's classical conception of a commodity's price.

On this same issue, Ricardo also stated that "The value of a commodity, or the quantity of any other commodity for which it will exchange, depends on the relative quantity of labour which is necessary for its production, and not on the greater or less compensation which is paid for that labour." (1951: 11) This point of view disputes the idea of the value of labour which is equal to the quantity of labour it can purchase or command. "The wealth of the world was originally purchased not by gold or silver but by labour; and its value to those who possess it and who want to exchange it for something else is precisely equal to the quantity of labour it can enable them to purchase or command. (Smith, 1777: 13)

Karl Marx was against the notion of labour value, saying that labour was the origin of all values. According to him, the labourer sells his labour force (*Arbeitskraft*). It is the variable capital that serves to pay labourers' salaries, which enable them to survive. The rest is what Marx calls fixed capital.

1.2. Problem statement

It is against this background that this paper sets out to discuss the concept of labour in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). In other words, the history of mankind reveals that man is the product of his labour. Thus, what is Adam Smith's position on labour when he declares in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that labour is the source of the wealth of nations? For one thing, labour must be an important historical and topical issue because international organisations have been set up to deal with labour issues. Workers get together and form labour organisations. Everyday hundreds of thousands of people around the world are anxious about labour market problems. What is the content of the concept? This is an important question because labour is not solely an economic concept.

2. Definition of key terms and the theoretical framework

2.1. Definition of the terms labour, corpus linguistics and concept

According to ILO Thesaurus (i.e. the International Labour Organisation's thesaurus), the term **labour** is synonymous with work, which is defined as "Human activities, paid or unpaid, that produce the goods or services in an economy, or supply the needs of a community, or provide a person's accustomed means of livelihood." The labour force is the sum of persons in employment plus persons in unemployment. Together these two groups of the population represent the current supply of labour for the production of goods and services taking place in a country through market transactions in exchange for remuneration.

Prah (2011: 4) says that:

"Labour is purposive or goal-directed exertion to produce directly or indirectly means of sustaining life for the producer. In simple societies, much of this process is aimed at producing immediately useful products for the labourer. As societies become more

complex, purposes of exchange increasingly assume pre-eminence. But even then, its central or primary object remains the sustenance of life. Labour uses means of labour - tools and techniques - in the process of the expenditure of labour power. In other words, Labour-power or the ability to produce labour (value forming labour) is materialised only by its exercise; it is manifested as labour only through work and this is invariably done in concert with other factors or forces of production like land, capital, immaterial inputs and congealed labour or value-adding inputs."

Corpus Linguistics: In this electronic age, we live in, computers are considered to be one of the most important needs as well as practical solutions; from there the idea of exploiting electronic corpora has been originated. Corpus is "a collection of texts in an electronic database" (Kennedy, 1998:3). And corpus linguistics is a merge of technology and linguistics, as corpus linguistics is defined as: "the study of language on the basis of text corpora" (Aijmer & Altenberg, 1991:1). Therefore, corpus linguistics has recently become the reliable source of real linguistics data and statistical information about language.

Concept: An example of concept is stallion which may be understood in terms of features such as animate, four-legged, male, adult, and so on. This concept is easy to describe because it is concrete. However not all concepts are easy to describe, especially abstract concepts. As a matter of fact, Douglas et al (2000: 121) say that:

"Past research on concepts has focused almost exclusively on noun object concepts. [...] recent research demonstrating that useful distinctions may be made among kinds of concepts, including both object and nonobject concepts. We discuss three types of criteria, based on structure, process, and content, that may be used to distinguish among kinds of concepts."

In explaining the difference between these three types of concepts, Douglas et al (2000) indicate that a great deal of research on the psychology of concepts has been directed at their componential structure. "Virtually everyone believes that concepts should be analyzed in terms of constituent attributes or features." (Ibid: 123)

2.2. Theoretical framework of the research

Douglas et al (2000) argue that notions like democracy seem different from things like party or from concepts such as "black-capped chickadee. (Ibid: 122) Then, they wonder whether different kinds of concepts are acquired in the same way? As pointed out above, past researches focused almost entirely on noun object concepts like table, dog, chair, etc. However, there are non-noun object concepts as well.

Abstract concepts, such as truth and justice, seem different from object concepts, such as dogs and boats. Yet little work has addressed how we understand abstract concepts. One suggestion has been that abstract concepts are understood through conceptual metaphors (Gibbs 1997, Lakoff & Johnson 1980). During this process, representations of concrete concepts are mapped onto the abstract concepts to facilitate understanding. For example, justice might be understood through a conceptual representation of a scale, and anger might be understood through a conceptual representation of boiling water. If abstract concepts are understood via a metaphorical representation of an object concept, we might not expect to find structural differences between these two types of concepts. Clearly more work needs to be done on how abstract categories are formed and understood (Douglas, 2000: 128)

Douglas et al. (2000) stress a cognitive approach to the acquisition of concepts and present three types of criteria with respect to the study of concepts, namely structure, process and content; those are the structural, discursive and conceptual criteria.

Regarding the structural criterion, Douglas et al (2000) explain the componential structure of concepts. They say that "everyone believes that concepts should be analysed in terms of constituent attributes or features." (ibid: 123) The above-mentioned example of stallion can be cited as an example. The 1970s were characterised by a shift from the position that categories are organised in terms of defining features (i.e. the classical view) to the view that category membership is more graded and structured in terms of features that are only typical or characteristic of categories, the so-called probabilistic or prototype view.

The discussion on concepts as a process reveals that categories formed through data-driven, bottom-up processes may be different from categories formed through top-down categorical processes. Structure or process cannot be evaluated in isolation; structure-process pairs must be considered. Process may drive structure. There may be multiple processes that operate on the same structure. There are principles of conceptual structure and processing that cannot be generalised across all concepts.

It is fair to say that theories about conceptual structure and processing are based primarily on research with object categories, though the conclusions from Douglas et al.'s work are thought to apply to a different kind of concept. Are object concepts just easy-to-study representatives of all concepts? One may also wonder whether object concepts are themselves uniform in kind. Furthermore, Douglas et al. list candidates for kinds of concepts based on structure, namely nouns versus verbs, count nouns versus mass nouns, isolated and interrelated concepts, object versus mental events, artefacts versus natural kinds, abstract concepts. It appears that the distinction between nouns and verbs is universal. Gentner (1981) and colleagues (Gentner & France 1988) have marshaled theoretical and empirical arguments for the view that nouns and verbs map onto ontologically distinct aspects of the environment. Although the contrast is not without exception, the general idea is that nouns refer to clusters of correlated properties that create chunks of perceptual experience. Languages honor these perceptual discontinuities, as evidenced by good cross-cultural consistency in the presence of lexical entries corresponding to these chunks. In contrast, predicative concepts in general and verbs in particular focus on relations among these entities involving such things as causal relations, activity, or change of state. Given that relations presuppose arguments or objects, it would seem that nouns are conceptually simpler than verbs and, Gentner (1981) argues, more constrained by perceptual experience. (Douglas et al., 2000: 125).

Another point made by Douglas et al. is that the way mental concepts are acquired is different from the way object concepts are acquired. Mental events are more difficult to learn than object categories.

Although some researchers have focused on parallels between object and event concepts (e.g. Rifkin 1985; for social events, see Morris & Murphy 1990), Rips and his associates have demonstrated important differences between objects and mental events (e.g. Rips & Conrad 1989, Rips & Estin 1998). For example, part-whole relations seem to behave differently for objects and mental events. The steering wheel of a car is not a kind of vehicle but a part of planning, such as evaluating competing plans is a type of thinking (Rips & Estin 1998). Evidence from other experiments suggest that parts of mental events (and, to an intermediate degree, scripts) are less bounded (discriminable) and more homogeneous than parts of objects (Rips & Estin 1998). Finally, if the categories that describe mental events are less bounded, then they may be more difficult to learn than object categories (see Keil 1983). (Douglas, 2000: 126-127)

Another list of candidates for kinds of concepts based on process include common taxonomic versus goal-derived categories, social information processing and individuation, stereotypes, subtypes and subgroups. Douglas et al. give below an example of goal-derived categories. Barsalou (1983, 1985) pointed out that many categories are created in the service of goals and that these goal-derived categories may differ in important ways from object categories. Examples of goal-derived categories include "things to take out of your house in case of a fire" or "foods to eat when on a diet." Goal-derived categories may activate context-dependent properties of category members. For example, the fact that a basketball is round is a stable property that should be accessed independent of context, but the fact that basketballs float may only be accessed in contexts where a goal relies on its buoyancy. (Douglas et al., 2000:133)

Candidates for kinds of concepts based on content are related to domain specificity. This is how Douglas et al introduce this idea:

Researchers advocating domain specificity have suggested that concepts from different domains are qualitatively different. Although it is difficult to give a precise definition of domain, the notion of domain specificity has served to organize a great deal of research, especially in the area of conceptual development. For example, studies of infant perception and causal understanding suggest that many of the same principles underlie both adults' and children's concepts of objects (e.g. Baillargeon 1994, 1998; Spelke et al 1992) [...] One of the most contested domain distinctions, and one that has generated much research, is that between psychology and biology (e.g. Carey 1991). For example, Springer & Keil (1989) show that preschoolers think biological properties are more likely to be passed from parent to child than are social or psychological properties. They argue that this implies that the children have a biology-like inheritance theory. (Douglas et al., 2000: 128)

The various features of concepts discussed by Douglas et al will help understand the complexity of the concept of labour in *The Wealth of Nations*. Indeed, though labour is an abstract notion, it is presented in the book as a commodity, a means of purchase and exchange, the real price of commodities, a measure of the value of commodities, a factor of production, a source of wealth, an inherited wealth, an entity employed by the stock.

Of course labour is metaphorically represented when it is referred to as a commodity and we might not expect to find a structural difference between it and an object concept. However, when labour is represented as the real price of commodities, the metaphoric representation is still pervasive except the object concept. Further, when Adam Smith refers to labour as a factor of production, the metaphor is still persistent but this suggests a process rather than a structure. Besides, the statement 'labour is an inherited wealth' suggests that labour is an object concept.

The terminological approach adopted by this paper is semasiological, i.e. the paper focuses on the denomination *labour* and then tries to provide the definition of the concept. The paper presents a brief historical evolution of labour as well. The evolutionary theory developed by Engels in *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man* is used. This historical perspective reinforces the importance of labour in human development and prosperity.

Finally, the concept of labour in *The Wealth of Nations* is complex and takes the reader through the meanders and technicalities of economic thinking. The various conceptual areas of the term make it possible to define specifically its contours and to delimitate its content. Therefore, it will be possible to discuss the semantics of the term in the next section.

3. The semantics of the term labour in The Wealth of Nations

3.1. A taxonomy of the concept of *labour* in *The Wealth of Nations*

It is important to reaffirm that the paper attempts to define the term *labour* in *The Wealth of Nations* by focusing solely and exclusively on the information contained in the book. It is another way of constructing or bringing out the meaning(s) of the concept in the various environments and/or contexts in which the term *labour* has been found. This is a cognitive approach which is used in terminological exploration.

Douglas' theory of the concept, which has been discussed above, provides the basis upon which taxonomic considerations will be dealt with. Indeed, there are three layers to put in place in discussing the concept of *labour* in the book. The first layer is the structural criterion, while the process and the content criteria serve as background to the other two layers.

3.1.1. Labour as a dynamic process

In the following examples, labour is presented as a factor of production as well as something that can be divided, wealth, a variable (especially through the fluctuations of its price). 1)

<p>Labour is a factor of production: If the society were annually to employ all the labour it can annually purchase, the quantity of employed labour would increase greatly every year, and so the product of each year would be of vastly greater value than that of the preceding year. (p.21)</p>	<p>Labour as a factor of production</p>
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In the example above, labour is presented as a factor of production and the process is dynamic. The words and syntagms 'employ', 'purchase', 'quantity', 'increase greatly', 'product' and 'vastly greater value' suggest an action and a value-adding process.

In another context, labour is presented as something that is divisible. (2)

<p>The greatest improvements in the productive powers of labour, and most of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is directed or applied, seem to be results of the division of labour. It will be easier to understand how the division of labour affects society in general if we first look at how it operates in some particular manufactures. It is easy to see the division of labour in small manufactures where the over-all number of workmen is small and all of them can be collected into one workshop and all seen at once. P.3</p>	<p>Labour is divisible</p>
<p>Consider the trade of a pin-maker—a small manufacture, but one in which the division of labour has often been noticed. A workman not educated to this business or acquainted with the use of its machinery probably couldn't make one pin in a day, and certainly couldn't make twenty. [Smith builds into that sentence two asides: that the division of labour •has made pin-making a distinct trade and •probably has led to the invention of the machinery.] But these days not only is pin-making a particular trade but it is divided into branches most of which are themselves particular trades.p.3</p>	<p>Labour is divisible</p>

In the examples above, labour is presented again as a dynamic process. Syntagms and action-oriented words like 'productive powers of labour', 'skill', 'dexterity', 'directed', 'applied', 'results' and 'pin-making' suggest a productive process which is facilitated and enhanced by the division of labour.

In another context, labour is presented as a source of wealth creation and population growth. (3)

The liberal reward of labour, therefore, is not just the effect of increasing wealth but also the cause of increasing population. To complain of it is to lament the necessary cause and effect of the greatest public prosperity. P.35	Source of wealth and population growth
The demand for labour— whether increasing, stationary, or declining— determines the quantities of necessities and conveniences that must be given to the labourer; and the money price of labour is determined by what is needed for purchasing this quantity. Pp.36-37	The demand for labour is a dynamic process
(c) His employers are those who live by profit. The stock that is employed for the sake of profit is what puts into motion most of a society's useful labour. P.93	Labour is put in motion by the stock

In the examples above, labour is depicted as a source of wealth creation and population growth as well as an entity that is put in motion by the stock, and its demand may increase or decline or remain stationary. All these reflect the dynamic nature of labour processes.

As mentioned earlier, the conceptual features of labour do not only reflect a process. A structural/componential approach to the concept is possible.

3.1.2. A structural/componential approach to the concept of labour

This approach is rather static. It simply depicts labour as a sum of features. Indeed, labour is presented as commodities' real price and the original purchase money. (5)

Chapter 5. Commodities' real price (in labour) and their nominal price (in money) (p.12)	Commodities real price
Labour was the first price, the original purchase money that was paid for all things. (p.13)	First price, original purchase money
In this popular sense, therefore, labour may be said to have a real and a nominal price, just as commodities can. (p.14)	- Labour has a real and a nominal price - Labour means work
Because labour itself never varies in its own value, it alone is the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can— always, everywhere— be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only. (p.14)	Ultimate and real standard always and everywhere

Interesting characteristics of labour are revealed in the sentences above. The conception of labour presented here goes beyond the conception of the ILO Thesaurus definition. Labour is a price and has a price. It has a real price and a nominal price. It is the ultimate standard.

These are the components of the concept of labour as designed by Adam Smith. The concept of labour has a considerable terminological density in the book.

In the following context, labour is referred to as a means of purchase. (6)

<p>The wealth of the world was originally purchased not by gold or silver but by labour; and its value to those who possess it and who want to exchange it for something else is precisely equal to the quantity of labour it can enable them to purchase or command. (p.13)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A means of purchase - In this case, labour means work as well
<p>Chapter 6. The component parts of the price of commodities In the early and rough state of society that comes before anyone has accumulated stock or claimed possession of land, the only basis for any rule for exchanging one object for another seems to be the proportion between the quantities of labour needed for acquiring those objects. (p.18)</p>	<p>A component part of the price of commodities</p>

It is clear that the roles played by labour were many in the classical conception of economics. In the latter examples, labour is not described as spearheading a process. It is rather cited as a standard or part and parcel of something. So far two conceptions of labour have already emerged.

In the following examples, another characteristic of labour is presented. (7)

<p>Most of them must come to him from the labour of other people, and he must be rich or poor according to how much of that labour he can command or can afford to purchase. (p.12)</p>	<p>Labour is quantifiable</p>
<p>It is often hard to settle which is the greater of two quantities of labour; it isn't always a mere matter of which took longer. p.13)</p>	<p>Labour is quantifiable</p>

How to quantify labour? How can a quantity of labour be measured and compared to another quantity of labour? Adam Smith has given the answer by saying that some labour requires higher education and dexterity. And one hour of labour requiring higher education may be worth more than two hours of common labour. In any case, the concept of labour emerging from this particular instance is a combination of an abstract notion and an objective category. It must be easier to compare two quantities of water or sand.

There might be a resonant semantic relationship between *quantities* and *labour*. To buttress this remark, let us read what Hanks says about this concept. Hanks (2006: 19-37) says that "*Metaphor is defined as a resonant semantic relationship between a primary subject and a secondary subject.*" Further, he gives the following examples to show the resonant semantic relationship between words.

"Some metaphors are more metaphorical than others.

(6) A desert, that's what it is - a desert of railway tracks.

(7) ... Seeking to bring our awareness of spirituality to those mostly brought up in a spiritual desert.

(8) I walked in a desert of barren obsession"

There is a resonant semantic relationship between the primary subject 'desert' and the secondary subject 'spiritual'. In this context, the person talking has not walked in a desert. 'Spiritual desert' in this context is a metaphor which means a lack of spirituality. Note that a desert is a physical place, whereas spiritual is an abstract notion. The combination of these two words produces a resonant semantic relationship. To come back to the syntagm 'quantities of labour', it should be made clear that labour is not an object category that can be quantified or counted. Therefore, 'quantities of labour' is a metaphor that is used in this case to help understand a particular feature of the concept of labour.

Another combination of an abstract notion and an object category occurs when it is said that the inherited wealth of a poor man is his labour. It looks like a metaphor. (8)

<p>SMITH'S CASE AGAINST HAVING LAWS OF APPRENTICESHIP · The property that every man has in his own labour is the basis of all other property, so that it is the most sacred and inviolable. The inherited wealth of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in whatever way he thinks proper, without injury to his neighbour, is clearly a violation of this most sacred property. P.54</p>	<p>Labour as inherited wealth</p>
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We normally inherit tangible properties but in this case, strength and dexterity are the inherited wealth. On this score, the idea that abstract concepts are understood via a metaphorical representation of an object concept can help understand this aspect of the concept.

In the following example, labour means workers. (4)

<p>In agriculture, the rich country's labour is not always much more productive than the poor country's, and never as much more productive as it commonly is in manufactures. (p.4)</p>	<p>Labour means workers</p>
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3.1.3. Labour as a content-laden concept

So far we can assert that the concept of labour has strong economic flavours in the book. It should be possible to sum up the various meanings of the term labour and present them as its conceptual areas. This will make a difference with alternative uses of the term in other fields of study. By the way, Termium indicates that labour is a concept that is used in the following five areas: work and production, labour and employment, production (economics), pregnancy and perinatal period, cost accounting and foreign trade.

The next thing to do is suggest a definition of the concept as it emerges from the book. Indeed, the definition should encompass the following senses: 1(a) work, (b) workers, (c) labour force. 2(a) Labour is a factor of production. 3(a) It is a commodity, (b) the real price of commodities, (c) the measure of the price of commodities. 4(a) It is a means of purchase and exchange. 5(a) It is a source of wealth. 6. An inherited property. 7. A variable (the variability of the labour price makes it become a variable). 8. A component of the wealth of a nation, which is the annual product of the land and labour of a nation.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to explore the meanings of the term *labour* in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Indeed, the authors such as Adam Smith, Engels, David Ricardo, Karl Marx and others have exposed in their books different points of view on the concept the term refers to. According to Engels, man is the product of his labour. The title of his publication is revealing: *The Part Played by Labor in the Evolution from Ape to Man*. On this same issue, Smith says that 'labour was the first price paid for all commodities' and it is the source of the wealth of a nation. Though Marx did not go against this idea, he challenged the idea that labour was simply a value and described the labourer as someone who sells his labour force. These are different views that have enabled us to present an historical overview of the concept.

The methodology adopted in this paper is analytical in the sense that every single context in which the term has been used in the book has been analysed and its meaning has been interpreted.

As a result, the term labour is polysemous in the book. It is synonymous with work, labourers, a commodity, the real price of a commodity, a means of purchase, the original purchase money, a human activity, etc.

Another important aspect of the paper is the discussion of the notion of concept. The paper has gone beyond the traditional approach to concept, which is mostly structural, and has thrown light on another two conceptual criteria, i.e. process and content.

In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), labour has clearly assumed the dimension of a concept. Indeed, it is a complex concept. Other authors and areas of specialisation also use this term and give it a different content. This will be the subject of further studies in forthcoming papers.

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