

11144

MAY 8, 1987

Special



Supplement

WHY HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY?

WHY NOW?

by *Raya Dunayevskaya*



Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1771-1831

11145

The Spirit of the time, growing slowly and quietly ripe for the new form it is to assume, disintegrates one fragment after another of the structure of its previous world. That it is tottering to fall is indicated only by symptoms here and there. Frivolity and again ennui, which are spreading in the established order of things, the undefined foreboding of something unknown—all these betoken that there is something else approaching. This gradual crumbling to pieces, which did not alter the general look and aspect of the whole, is interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a flash and at a single stroke, brings to view the form and structure of the new world.

—Hegel, Preface to Phenomenology of Mind

THE MOST DIFFICULT of all tasks that I have confronted every generation of Marxists is to work out Marx's Marxism for its age; the task has never been more difficult than the one that confronts the decade of the 1980s. We often like to quote that creatively great statement of Hegel about the "birth-time of History." What is important to see is that the same paragraph that talks of the birth-time of history and a period of transition is likewise one that speaks about the period of darkness before the dawn.

That is what we all have had to suffer through—the darkness before the dawn. Hegel articulated both the darkness and the dawn in the very same paragraph lucidly enough. Yet, because this appears in the Preface to the Phenomenology of Mind, it looks as if it were written in anticipation of the book, whereas, in truth, the Preface was written after the whole work was completed; thus, we do not realize that the contradictory unity first became that translucent after the work was completed.

It never fails that, at momentous world historic turning points, it is very difficult to tell the difference between two types of twilight—whether one is first plunging into utter darkness or whether one has reached the end of a long night and is just at the moment before the dawn of a new day. In either case, the challenge to find the meaning—what Hegel called "the undefined foreboding of something unknown"—becomes a compulsion to dig for new beginnings, for a philosophy that would try to answer the question "Where to Begin?" This was the reason for a new revolutionary philosophy—the birth of the Hegelian Dialectic—at the time the great French Revolution did not produce totally new beginnings in philosophy. It caused Hegel's break with romanticism. His deep digging went, at one and the same time, backward to the origins of philosophy in Greece around 500 BC and forward as the French Revolution was followed by the Napoleonic Era trying to dominate all of Europe.

¹See "Lenin and the Dialectic: A Mind in Action" and "The Irish Revolution and the Dialectic of History" in Part IV—"World War I and the Great Divide in Marxism"—of my *Marxism and Freedom—from 1774 until Today*.

²See George Armstrong Kelly's *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis*, p. 224, and my answer to his critique of my *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* in the new Introduction I wrote for the 1982 edition (Humanities Press).

In a word, the crucible of history shows that the forces of actual revolution producing revolutions in philosophy recur at historic turning points. Thus in the 1840s, with the rise of a totally new revolutionary class—the "wretched of the earth," the proletariat—Marx transformed Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution. This founding of a new continent of thought and of revolution unchained the Hegelian Dialectic, which Marx called "revolution in permanence."

Just as the shock of the simultaneity of the outbreak of World War I and the collapse of established Marxism (the Second International) compelled Lenin to turn to Marx's deep-rootedness in the Hegelian Dialectic,¹ so it has become imperative to find that missing link of a philosophy of revolution in the post-World War II world.

A whole new world—a Third World—has been born. Just as the East European revolutionaries rose up against Communist totalitarianism from within that orbit, so the Third World arose against Western imperialism. This movement from practice that is itself a form of theory has been digging for ways to put an end to the separation between theory and practice. It is this movement that has rediscovered Marx's early Humanist Essays, as well as the work of his final decade where Marx predicted, in his studies of pre-capitalist societies, that a revolution could come first in a technologically backward land rather than in the technologically advanced West. It has had to struggle under the whip of counter-revolution in a nuclearly-armed world.

Nowhere has this been more onerous than in the 1980s under Reagan Retrogressionism, which has been bent on turning the clock backward—whether that be on civil rights, labor, women's liberation, youth and education of children. At the same time that there is this ideological pollution and the revolutionary struggle against it, even some bourgeois Hegel scholars who opposed the "subversion" of Hegel by Marx and by today's Marxist-Humanists have had to admit: "If Hegel has not literally been to the barricades of strife-ridden cities, or explosive rural foci, he has been in the thick of current ideological combat."²

In its way, this, too, will help illuminate why we are publishing "Why Hegel's Phenomenology? Why Now?" It will have two parts. What follows, as Part I, is a study of Hegel's first (and what Marx considered his most creative) work, *Phenomenology of Mind (Geist)*, written as Lecture Notes for a class I gave in the *Phenomenology* in the 1960s. Part II, which will follow in the near future, will be an essay on the Hegelian Dialectic as Marx critiqued it in his *Humanist Essays* in 1844 and continued to develop it throughout his life. This is seen most clearly in Marx's greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, especially in the final section of Chapter One, which Marx expanded on the "Fetishism of Commodities," in his last decade. It is there that a citation of what first appeared in Marx's 1841 Doctoral Thesis reveals Marx's continued deep-rootedness in Hegel.

May 1, 1987

continued

11146

Notes On Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*(Geist)

THE WHOLE OF THE *Phenomenology*, with its six stages of consciousness, can be divided into two major departments comprising: I. Consciousness, Self-Consciousness and Reason, being the summation of both the relationship to, or rather awareness of, a world outside oneself through feudalism to the beginning of capitalism, i.e., commercial capitalism; and II. Spirit, Religion, and Absolute Knowledge, which takes us from industrial capitalism and its ideological predecessors covering the field from Christianity through the Enlightenment to the Jacobins of the French Revolution, all the way to "the new society" (Absolute Knowledge) with its "predecessor" in Greek art and the Greek city-state.

In the case of Subdivision I, once we have gone from consciousness—whether that's only first awareness of things (sense-certainty) or perception, or actual understanding where the forces of the world of appearance with its laws which "leave out their specific character"—we immediately enter the true relationship between people and not just things. Thus, in self-consciousness we are thrust into a production relationship—lordship and bondage. So that once the bondsmen gains "a mind of his own," he is compelled to see that there is more to freedom than either stubbornness or a mind of one's own. That is to say, if freedom is not "a type of freedom which does not get beyond the attitude of bondage," it must first now confront objective reality. Otherwise, a mind of his own would be little more than "a piece of cleverness which has mastery within a certain range, but not over the universal power nor over the entire objective reality." (p. 240B; 119M; 150H)¹

In the struggle to realize freedom, we confront various attitudes of mind that sound heroic, but are in fact adaptations to one or another form of servitude. Thus, stoicism is nothing more, Hegel reminds us, than "a general form of the world's spirit, only in a time of un-

continued

¹Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, translated with an Introduction by J. B. Baillie, Unwin Publishers, London, 1931. All quotes in the following text are from this edition. The first parenthetical pagination cites refer to this Baillie translation; the second to the translation by A.V. Miller, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977; the third to the German edition by Johannes Hoffmeister, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952. They are designated as B, M, and H.

versal fear and bondage." (p. 245B; 121M; 153H)

Even skepticism, Hegel tells us, which corresponds to some form of independent consciousness, is very negative in its attitude, so much so that it leads to nothing but "the giddy whirl of a perpetually self-creating disorder." (p. 249B; 126M; 157H) That is why both stoicism and skepticism lead to nothing but the Unhappy Consciousness, or Alienated Soul.

The interesting thing about this unhappy consciousness for the Christian philosopher, Hegel, is that it is a description not only of the disintegration of the Roman Empire, but the Roman Empire at a time when it had adopted Christianity to try to save all from the debacle. Of course, the Lutheran in Hegel may have consoled himself by the fact that this Christianity, as the Christianity of the Borgias in Renaissance Italy, was "Catholic," and it really was not until the Reformation, etc., etc. We are not interested in any rationalization, but in the objective pull upon the mind of a genius which describes this individually free person with his unhappy consciousness as a "personality confined within its narrow self and its petty activity, a personality brooding over itself, as unfortunate as it is pitifully destitute." (p. 264B; 130-1M; 168-169H) You will recall that in *Marxism and Freedom*, I have a footnote on this which uses the specific personalities of the old radicals who cannot find a place for themselves in bourgeois society or in the movement as examples of this unhappy consciousness. Be that as it may, Hegel's point is that until this alienated soul has "stripped itself of its Ego," it will not be able to execute the leap to Reason.

Before we proceed to Reason, however, let's retrace our steps back to the Preface and the Introduction which, in a very great sense, also comprise his Conclusions. At any rate, it is a constant paean to "ceaseless activity," "equal necessity of all moments," which constituted the "life of the whole"; which, however, cannot be seen before being seen; that is to say, it is all a question of a process of "working the matter out," on which the purpose depends. This constant emphasis on process, on experience (the experience of Consciousness no less than "objective" experience) of self-development that must have, nay, must go through "the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative," that must not take "easy contentment in receiving, or stinginess in giving"—all of which signify "a birth-time and a period of transition"—amounts to the very reason for being of Dialectics and Absolute Knowledge in his principle that "everything depends on grasping and expressing the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well." (pp. 80-81B; 6-7M; 19H)

The work, the purposive activity, the mediation, the self-corrective process, the subject in the objective movement, and the objective movement in the subject or mind, which Hegel calls Science, is in fact not only a Preface to his Philosophy, but to the entire human spirit as it has developed through thousands of years, his-

torically, nationally, internationally, and as it is going to develop via opposing all contemporary philosophies from mysticism to Kantianism—all this on the day after, so to speak, the French Revolution, which demands the reorganization of all previous thought. With Hegel, "immanent" rhythm and strenuous toil are one and the same thing. And finally, the man puts his faith in the public rather than the philosophers, "those 'representatives' who are like the dead burying their dead." (p. 130B; 45M; 58H) This man was really saying, "To hell with all parties (representatives) who are out to lead." And instead, he was hewing a pathway to Science which would reach "a position where, in consequence, its exposition coincides with just this very point, this very stage of the science proper of mind. And finally, when it grasps this, its own essence, it will connote the nature of absolute knowledge itself." (p. 145B; 57M; 75H)

To return to the last section of this first major division—Reason—we see here the first Hegelian development of actuality, that is to say, the reality of the objective world and the reality of thought. The historic period is the one which preceded his own, or the period before the French Revolution. There is an awakening of the scientific world of thought which sees beyond the empirical, but cannot unify the objective and subjective. He hits out against both Kant's "Table of Categories" and the "Abstract empty idealism" of Fichte. Of Kant's discovery he says, "But to pick up the various categories again in any sort of way as a kind of happy find, hit upon, e.g., in the different judgments, and then to be content so to accept them, must really be regarded as an outrage on scientific thinking." (p. 277B; 142M; 179H)

He, therefore, proceeds to examine the process of observation, both of organic nature and of self-consciousness. The sections on the so-called laws of thought are quite hilarious, and are a perfect slap at modern psychoanalysis, of which he knew nothing then. Indeed, if anyone thinks that the very long section on Phrenology merely reveals the backward state of science at that time, and not our age, he fails to understand that thought or, for that matter, feeling, have no meaning apart from the reality with which thought is concerned, and which builds up "feelings."

Although we are in the realm of the phenomenal, reality and thought are so inseparable, practical reason as well as theoretical combine to show the inadequacies of mere observation, which does not mean that purposive activity can do away with one-sided subjective idealism. On the contrary, the criticism of Rousseau and the whole Romantic Movement, which Hegel makes under the heading, "The Law of the Heart, and the Frenzy of Self-Conceit," apply to the labor bureaucrat and his "earnestness of a high purpose, which seeks its pleasure in displaying the excellence of (his) own true nature, and in bringing about the welfare of mankind." (p. 392B; 222M; 267H) When it meets up against mankind's opposition to this personal interpretation, "the heart-

continued

throb for the welfare of mankind passes therefore into the rage of frantic self-conceit, into the fury of consciousness to preserve itself from destruction." (p. 397B; 226M; 271H)

It is at this point that individualism tried to take refuge in the concept of "virtue." How many windbags, from Castro to some of our best friends, are not included in the following beautiful passage: "The vacuousness of this rhetorical eloquence in conflict with the world's process would be at once discovered if it were to be stated what all its eloquent phrases amount to. They are therefore assumed to be familiar and well-understood. The request to say what, then, this 'well-known' is would be either met by a new swell of phrases, or in reply there would be an appeal to the 'heart' which 'inwardly' tells what they mean—which is tantamount to an admission of inability to say what the meaning is." (p. 410B; 234M; 280-81H)

As Hegel hits out against this form of self-expression, he digs deep into the objective base. We reach here the section which could equally describe Mao's China, Castro's Cuba, and Djilas' counter-thesis to the new class, which Hegel calls "Self-Contained Individuals Associated as a Community of Animals and the Deception Thence Arising: The Real Fact." This section should be studied in detail, especially so pages 434-438B (248-52M; 297-300H); on the "Honesty" or "Honorableness" of this type of consciousness which, actually, since it concerns a reality not involving action, but merely good luck, is summed up simply as follows: "The true meaning of this 'Honesty,' however, lies in not being so honest as it seems." (p. 424B; 248M; 297H) By the time Hegel gets through exposing the deception of himself, as well as of others, his conclusion is an uncompromising one: "The moments of individuality which were taken as subject one after another by this unreflective incoherent stage of consciousness..." (p. 438B; 252M; 300H)

THE SECOND MAJOR subdivision—Spirit—is the cornerstone of the entire work. Since alienation has by no means disappeared with the "realization of Reason," i.e., the rise of industrial capitalism, we get here the really revolutionary impact of the dialectical philosophy which refuses to be confined even where the sciences have been liberated, the individual has been freed, and production "progresses."

Whether it's nation and the family, "law and order" (legal status), or the moral laws and ethical action that proceeds with both guilt and destiny, we find that Personality or the master and lord of the world, the power of destruction, continues. Indeed, Hegel is here dealing with what he calls "utopian excess" (p. 505B; 293M; 345H), not only insofar as his point of reference is the Nero who fiddled while Rome burned, i.e., slave societies, but also insofar as free enterprise is concerned—Hobbes' Leviathan. Thus, not only stoicism, skepticism, the unhappy consciousness, but also Spirit finds itself estranged: "What in the case of the former was all harmony and union, comes now on the scene, no doubt in developed form, but self-estranged." (p. 506B; 294M; 345H)

It is this spirit of self-estrangement which Hegel also defines as "the discipline of culture." That is to say, it is a critique of everything from the Industrial Revolution to the French Revolution, and including what Marx called the "fetishism of commodities," as well as what Hegel calls a spiritual, but factual, "reign of terror"—the intellectual run amok. Throughout, we will be seeing the contradiction between the individual and society or between what we would call petty bourgeois individualism and the truly social individual.

Let us remember also that we will find here what
continued

Marx thought contained the critique, though in still mystical form, of the capitalist state:

Spirit in this case, therefore, constructs not merely one world, but a twofold world, divided and self-opposed. (p. 510B; 295M; 348H)

The self-opposition deepens not only because of its opposition to reality, but the internal opposition which first is "Pure Insight," which completes the stage of culture, which "extinguishes all objectiveness." That is to say, in fighting against faith and superstition, it is Enlightenment, but in trying to be an island of safety for Spirit, it confines it from further self-development. In this critique of 18th century deism and utilitarianism, Hegel writes:

Enlightenment upsets the household arrangements, which spirit carries out in the house of faith, by bringing in the goods and furnishings belonging to the world of Here and Now... (p. 512B; 296M; 349H)

The sphere of spirit at this stage breaks up into two regions. The one is the actual world, that of self-estrangement; the other is that which spirit constructs for itself in the ether of pure consciousness, raising itself above the first. This second world, being constructed in opposition and contrast to that estrangement, is just on that account not free from it... (p. 513B; 297M; 350H)

It is important to keep in mind that by culture Hegel does not mean only the Humanities or the Sciences. He means material wealth and the state, as well as the intelligentsia and their ivory towers. If you keep in mind what Marx meant by super-structure, you will be able to swim along with Hegel's critique of Culture.

In criticizing Empiricism (especially Bacon's idea, "knowledge is power"), Hegel criticizes not only his principles, but the reality on which these principles rest: "The extent of its culture is the measure of its reality and its power." (p. 515B; 298M; 351H)

He then moves from the "power of culture" to the power of state. Here we can see that ordinary psychological or moral terms like good and bad have a very different and altogether profound meaning in Hegel:

...these bare ideas of Good and Bad are similarly and immediately alienated from one another; they are actual, and in actual consciousness appear as moments that are objective. In this sense the first state of being is the Power of the State, the second its Resources or Wealth. (p. 519B; 301M; 354-55H)

Until Hegel reaches the attitude of "thoroughgoing discordance" (p. 535B; 312M; 366H), Hegel has the time of his life criticizing both the Good and the Bad, both the State and Wealth, both the Attitudes of Nobility and Authority in a way that could encompass everyone from Proudhon, whose anarchism had no use for the state, to Mao Tse-tung, who completely identifies himself with this state. This is what is so extraordinary about Hegel, that he catches the spirit of an epoch in crisis, and, therefore, its ramifications extend into both Ages that are marked beyond the one he analyzes, and Personality beyond those that he has known in his own period or in history. Think of Mao and read the following:

The noble type of consciousness, then, finds itself in the judgment related to state-power...This type of mind is the heroism of Service; the virtue which sacrifices individual being to the universal, and thereby brings this into existence; the type of personality which of itself renounces possession and enjoyment, acts for the sake of the prevailing power, and in this way becomes a concrete reality...The result of this action, binding the essential reality and self indissolubly together, is to produce a twofold actuality—a self that is truly actualized, and a state-power whose authority is accepted as true...It has a value, therefore, in their thoughts, and is honored accordingly. Such a type is the haughty vassal; he is active in the interests of the state-power, so far as the latter is not a personal will (a monarch) but merely an essential will. (pp. 526-528B; 306-7M; 360-61H)

Not only is the critique of state power total in its essential respects, but also in its language, for to Hegel speech contains "ego in its purity." The heroism of dumb service passes into the heroism of flattery: "This reflection of service in express language constitutes the spiritual self-disintegrating mediating term..." (p. 533B; 310M; 364H) One doesn't have to think or be too bright to remember, in this respect, expressions that must have been in Hegel's mind, such as that of Louis XIV, "I am the State." No wonder that Hegel added (p. 537B; 314M; 368H) that this was the type of "pure personality to be absolutely without the character of personality." Indeed, on pages 537-545B (314-21M; 368-76H), there is a beautiful description of Existentialists, fellow-travelers, people who break with the "East" to go to the "West" like Djilas, as well as vice versa, like C. Wright Mills. In each case we find that "in place of revolt appears arrogance." (p. 539B; 315M; 369H)

This type of spiritual life is the absolute and universal inversion of reality and thought, their entire estrangement the one from the other; it is pure culture. What is found out in this sphere is that neither the concrete realities, state-power and wealth, nor their determinate conceptions, good and bad, nor the consciousness of good and bad (the consciousness that is noble and the consciousness that is base) possess real truth; it is found that all these moments are inverted and transmuted the one into the other; and each is the opposite of itself. (p. 541B; 316M; 371H)

The perversion is not ended when culture moves over to "belief and pure insight." It has always been a wonder to me how Hegel keeps trying to reassert religion as an absolute and yet at every concrete stage or form of religion, actual religion is criticized. For example, he does not deny that belief or religion has always been a form of alienation which man had to rid himself of in order to face reality; he has been devastating when it was the unhappy consciousness that confronted him, and again in the form of culture, and now as "merely belief"—in the nether world, as pure ego (see Kant: "Pure ego is the absolute unity of apperception") or "pure thought," and finally as Enlightenment. Naturally, Hegel does not deny the good enlightenment accomplished in its struggle with superstition and in its clearing the ground for the French Revolution. But when it is made into something absolute, he feels the revolutionary impulse to overthrow this idol. Note in the following quotation how Hegel moves from a critique of

continued

11150

idolatry to a critique of any "dead form of the spirit's previous state" which would equally be applicable to something like Trotsky's forced identification of nationalized property and "workers' state":

On some 'fine morning', whose noon is not red with blood, if the infection has penetrated to every organ of spiritual life. It is then the memory alone that still preserves the dead form of the spirit's previous state, as a vanished history, vanished men know not how. (p. 565B; 332M; 388H)

That is why Hegel concludes that "enlightenment itself, however, which reminds belief of the opposite of its various separate moments, is just as little enlightened regarding its own nature." (p. 582B; 344M; 401H)

Hegel leaves himself one loophole that this is just an empty absolute. In proof of this, he hits out against what we would call vulgar materialism:

...pure matter is merely what remains over when we abstract from seeing, feeling, tasting, etc., i.e. it is not what is seen, tasted, felt, and so on; it is not matter that is seen, felt, or tasted, but color, a stone, a salt, and so on. Matter is really pure abstraction... (p. 592B; 351M; 409H)

Read this along with Marx's description of the five senses in his "Private Property and Communism." Hegel is hitting out both against Descartes and the Utilitarians.

THE LAST SECTION of the Spirit in Self-Estrangement (that we have been dealing with, Hegel entitles "Absolute Freedom and Terror." It is an analysis of what happened to the French Revolution as factionalism broke up the unity of the revolution so that for "pure personality" the world became "absolutely its own will," so that terror succeeded so-called absolute freedom, since, by being only negative it was "merely the rage and fury of destruction." (p. 604B; 359M; 418H) In a word, Hegel considers that if you have not faced the question of reconstruction on new beginnings, but only destruction of the old, you have, therefore, reached only "death—a death that achieves nothing, embraces nothing within its grasp; for what is negated is the unachieved, unfulfilled potential entity of the absolutely free self." (p. 605B; 360M; 418H). This is where he identifies that absolutely free self with a "faction. The victorious faction only is called the government, and its being government makes it, conversely, into a faction and hence guilty." (pp. 605-606B; 360M; 419H)

It is not only government that Hegel criticizes here, but the philosophic transformation of enlightenment into Kant's "thing-in-itself." In a word, he is criticizing all forms of abstraction, whether in thought or in fact, when fact is narrowed to mean not all reality, but only aspects of it. He, therefore, concludes that this self-alienated type of mind must be driven to opposition:

Just as the realm of the real and actual world passes over into that of belief and insight, absolute freedom leaves its self-destructive sphere of reality... (p. 610B; 363M; 422H)

This very section is cited by Hegel in the Science of Logic, where, in the penultimate chapter on "The Idea of Cognition," in the final section on "The Idea of the Good," Hegel suddenly tells us that the two worlds of subjectivity and objectivity still remain in opposition: "The complete development of the unresolved contradiction, of that absolute end which the barrier of this actuality insuperably opposes, has been considered more closely in the Phenomenology of Spirit." (See Science of Logic, Vol. II, p. 452 in Johnston and Struthers translation, New York, 1929; p. 820 in Miller translation, London, 1969; p. 544-45 in Suhrkamp Verlag edition, Frankfurt, 1969.) In a word, Hegel is saying, in that penultimate chapter of Science of Logic, where we are on the threshold of the Absolute, that the unresolved contradiction between the two worlds of subjectivity and objectivity "has been considered more closely" in his phenomenological study.

This central part of the Phenomenology—Spirit—ends with the section called "Spirit Certain of Itself: Morality," which is just another form of talking about the state and consequently the certainty is by no means peace. On the contrary, it moves from Dissemblance that deals with what Kant called, according to Hegel, "a perfect nest of thoughtless contradictions," through the so-called "beautiful soul" (Jacobi) but which to Hegel is really "self-willed impotence" (p. 666B; 400M; 463H), that can only lead to hypocrisy. And on this note he ends the part on "Evil and Forgiveness." (You might return to the section on "Guilt and Destiny" (pp. 483-499B; 279-89M; 330-41H), and compare the similarity between moral and the ethical action which had previously led us into "Spirit in Self-Estrangement" or the "Discipline of Culture and Civilization.")

In a word, Spirit, as it was on the eve of the French Revolution and developed through the terror to Napoleonic France, has found no harmony either with its culture or its state, its literature or philosophy as enlightenment, or philosophy as abstract absolute a la Jacobi. Therefore, the human spirit has not been able to shake off alienation and reaches Religion.

Religion, which is the second major section of the division into two of the whole Phenomenology, as I have been tracing it through here, is just one step before Absolute Knowledge. Religion is subdivided into three sections: (1) Natural, which takes up both nature, plants, animals, concept of light and the "artificer" (Egyptian religion); (2) Religion in the form of art; (3) Revealed Religion, or Christianity.

In his introduction to this section, Hegel says that religion has, of course, entered before this, i.e., in the four stages of consciousness we have heretofore dealt with: Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, Reason and Spirit, but more or less on a low level. That is to say, when we were at the first stage of consciousness, Religion was "devoid of selfhood"; when we reached Self-Consciousness, it was merely, "the pain and sorrow of Spirit wrestling to get itself out into objectivity once more, but not succeeding." (p. 385B; 410M; 473H) The third stage of Consciousness—Reason—more or less forgot about Religion since it first discovered itself and, therefore, looked to the immediate present—empiricism, science, etc. Even when we reach Spirit, whether of the ethical order where we have to fight fate "devoid of consciousness," or we reached and perished in "the religion of enlightenment," or finally reached the religion of morality, the best, says Hegel, that we accomplished there was to face "Absolute Reality." Therefore, it is only now in religion that we really confront the Spirit of Religion: "But only spirit which is object to itself in the shape of

continued |

11151

Absolute Spirit, is as much aware of being a free and independent reality as it remains therein conscious of itself." (p. 685B; 412M; 476H)

Outside of the little subsection on the artificer, which in fact relates not only to Egyptian religions and pyramids and obelisks, but to what in our age would be called "the confidence man," there isn't much that I can see in the section on Natural Religion, except I see that I wrote down two expressions, "fetishism of commodities," and "Dr. Zhivago" near the following expression of Hegel: "The darkness of thought mated with the clearness of expression." And it is through this clearness of expression that we reach religion in the form of art, which is again subdivided into Abstract and Living and Spiritual Work of Art: Under Culture, Hegel deals with language as still one other form of estrangement (p. 529B; 308M; 362H), as the speech of the ego, of the haughty vassal, of the arrogant monarch: "L'etat c'est moi" (I am the State). Under Art, on the other hand, he traces language from the manner in which the idea presents itself—Epic—through the act, i.e., the drama, so that the language of the minstrel is transformed into that of Tragedy: "In regard to form, the language here ceases to be narrative, in virtue of the fact that it enters into the content, just as the content ceases to be merely one that is ideally imagined. The hero is himself the spokesman..." (p. 736B; 443-4M; 510-11H) He then breaks up the question of language as it appears when it is "double-tongued" in the oracles or via witches, and to that in which it is thought (Hamlet), and finally via action. "The process of action proves their unity in the mutual overthrow of both powers and both self-conscious characters"⁴ (p. 743B; 448M; 516H), action both as in Tragedy and in Comedy.

The last section on Religion, which deals with Christianity, is even more contradictory, for here Hegel is supposed to reach, more or less, the height of his thought, the step before Absolute Knowledge, and has been put by him in a section beyond Greek Art. And yet we know that, to Hegel, Greek Art was certainly a great deal greater than the appearance of One God among the Jews, or even the Christian God as it was with the Catholics; for to Hegel the Lutheran Reformation to make the alleged unity of freedom and Christianity is anything but abstract. I have a feeling that the whole section, as it has been expanded in his volumes on the Philosophy of Religion, will, in actuality, turn out to be a devastating critique of the Church or the Party. But I have no chance to go into this. In any case, to make explicit what is only implicit in Religion, we must turn to Absolute Knowledge.

AS WE REACH THIS APEX of Hegelianism—the consummation of experience, of philosophy—we will confront the end of the division between object and subject.

This takes the form of making consciousness itself the object. Hegel lists three specific aspects: "This knowledge of which we are speaking is, however, not knowledge in the sense of pure conceptual comprehension of the object; here this knowledge is to be taken only in its development..." (p. 790B; 480M; 550H)

Development is of the essence. It is the beginning out of which something arises. It is the middle through which something must be passed. It is the end, "the

⁴Appended to these Notes is a further comment on Hegel's concept of Tragedy in the Phenomenology that I made November 17, 1968, in answer to a question posed to me.

mediated result," which is really not an end of anything but a process of development which is the beginning of another process as much as it is the end of a former one. Therefore, it is development where the question is one of understanding the method of grasping the object, that is to say, confronting consciousness. In confrontation you meet the second aspect—Relatedness; from Relatedness you must go to Action. Therefore, Action, the deed, practical activity, mental activity, spiritual activity, in a word, doing something, is always the only proof there is of the thought, and therefore stands in the center of all Hegelian philosophy:

It is through action that spirit is spirit so as definitely to exist; it raises its existence into the sphere of thought and hence into absolute opposition, and returns out of it through and within this very opposition. (p. 797B; 485M; 555H)

This is the movement towards Science, that is to say, from individual experience through social experience, to a universal generalization of the experience which goes to make up the action: "As to the actual existence of this notion, science does not appear in time and in reality till spirit has arrived at this stage of being conscious regarding itself." (p. 798B; 486M; 557H)

Time is just the notion definitely existent...Time therefore appears as spirit's destiny and necessity... (p. 800B; 487M; 558H)

It is peculiar how Hegel is constantly returning to the simple feelings even when he has reached Absolute Knowledge. He says, in fact, that "nothing is known which does not fall within experience, or (as it is also expressed) which is not felt to be true..." (p. 800B; 487M; 558H)

We reach explicitness here, and have to deal with the transformation of Substance into Subject (not just Things versus Human Beings, but Substance as God into living "gods" or the human and divine merged into an extension of human power).

In a single page (802B; 488-9M; 560H) Hegel sums up the entire development of Philosophy and Science from Descartes to himself. Thus, we move from Observation, which analyzes what is and "conversely it finds in its thought existence" (Descartes), to Substance, that is to say, God as both Thought and Reality, though abstractly stated (Spinoza). The abstraction of this forced unity brings about "the principle of Individuality" (Leibniz). We have entered Private Enterprise, or the first stage of capitalism, only to move to Utilitarianism into which the Enlightenment had "perished." Here the Individual Will (Kant) comes to the rescue of Absolute Freedom, or to put it in more human language, men of good will will yet straighten out this topsy-turvy world of private capital versus labor, freedom versus terror, etc., etc., and since this really doesn't happen, we jump back from Kantianism to the Absolute Ego of Fichte, or Absolute as "intuited" by Jacobi, and finally land into the Empty Absolute of Schelling. In a word, Hegel shows the birth of our modern world as Science rejected theology to strike out on its own, met up with a first statement of the dialectic in Kant, who tried to unify Thought and Science by sheer will, and when that philosophic exertion failed to meet the challenge of the time, the contemporary philosophers—Fichte, Schelling, Jacobi—slid back. To go forward, Substance had to become Subject. This is where Hegel comes in. The last three pages of the Phenomenology are an outpouring of "simple mediating activity in thinking" where the whole process releases itself, History and Science, Nature and Spirit: "born anew from the womb of knowledge—is the new

continued

11152

stage of existence, a new world, and a new embodiment or mode of Spirit." (p. 807B; 492M; 564H)

This new world, which Hegel calls Absolute Knowledge, is the unity of the real world and the notions about it, the organization of thought and activity, which merge into the new, the whole truth of the past and the present, which anticipates the future.

December 12, 1960

Further comments on Hegel's Concept of Tragedy

Don't forget that remembering and recollection—*sich erinnern*—has a very special meaning in Hegelian terminology, based only, in part, that the German expression means to go into one's self, and mainly because, if you remember by "going into yourself," obviously, you have been in the "outside," i.e., the objective world, and now have to communicate with yourself to bring about a new unity of objective and subjective. In the Absolute Idea, recollection is used in the manner in which we would use history and in all of the consideration of Art, Hegel views as a form of the Absolute Idea. Secondly, insofar as language and the epoch is concerned, as a dialectician, Hegel does not consider that you have reached the highest stage when you have expressed yourself in narrative form alone. It has to be a drama, a tragedy, a comedy, in a word a dialogue between antagonists. (In the Greek origin of dialectic, dialect or conversation was always what produced the new ideas, the new being, neither the ideas you came with to the discussion nor the ideas that others came with, but a synthesis of the two which was neither the one nor the other.) Now then turn to page 736B (443-4M; 510-11H), the last paragraph:

This higher language, that of Tragedy, gathers and keeps more closely together the dispersed and scattered moments of the inner essential world and the world of action....In regard to form, the language here ceases to be narrative, in virtue of the fact that it enters into the content, just as the content ceases to be merely one that is ideally imagined. The hero is himself the spokesman, and the representation given brings before the audience—who are also spectators—self-conscious human beings, who know their own rights and purposes, the power and the will belonging to their specific nature, and who know how to state them.

Although Hegel doesn't use the word revolutionary, negation definitely serves that function, and it is because neither the hero, as an individual, nor the chorus, because of its "powerlessness," could possibly succeed in uniting the individual and the universal that Hegel writes:

Lacking the power to negate and oppose, it is unable to hold together and keep within bounds the riches and varied fullness of divine life; it allows each individual moment to go off its own way, and in its hymns of honour and reverence praises each individual moment as an independent god, now this god and now again another. (pp. 737-738B; 444M; 511H)

Turn to page 740B (446M; 513-14H), and note, especially, the brilliant notes by Professor J.B. Baillie, who interprets the various references Hegel had in mind when he wrote the following and which I will include in parenthesis:

He (Oedipus), who had the power to unlock the riddle of the sphinx, and he too who trusted with childlike confidence (Orestes), are, therefore, both sent to destruction through what the god reveals to them. The priestess, through whose mouth the beautiful god speaks, (in the Delphic Oracle) is in nothing different from the equivocal sisters of fate (the witches in "Macbeth"), who drive their victim to crime by their promises, and who, by the double-tongued, equivocal character of what they gave out as a certainty, deceive the King when he relies upon the manifest and obvious meaning of what they say. There is a type of consciousness that is purer than the latter (Macbeth) which believes in witches, and more sober, more thorough, and more solid than the former which puts its trust in the priestess and the beautiful god. This type of consciousness (Hamlet), therefore, lets his revenge tarry for the revelation which the spirit of his father makes regarding the crime that did him to death, and institutes other proofs in addition... (p. 740B; 446-7M; 513-14H)

Shakespeare was an "optimist" (that is outside of being a genius) and, therefore, no matter how many corpses at the end of a tragedy are laid out on the stage, there is always the bugle call and the new arriving, invariably late. Despite all statements to the contrary, including by himself, so is Hegel an "optimist," that is to say, he is sure that somewhere or another, at sometime or another, the individual and the universal will be united so that finally the individual will be free as well as pluri-dimensional, or, as he expressed it in the Philosophy of Mind, "individuality purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e. freedom."

Marx never stopped rereading the Greek tragedies (and Shakespeare) and he brought in those remarkable passages from *Timon of Athens* on gold directly into both the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, not only because they so well described the avarice and fetishism of gold but, also, because the dehumanization of man resulted from a class society.

November 17, 1969

11153