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Rough Draft PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION
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PART ONE: WHY HEGEL? WHY NOW?

... Our epoch is a birth-time, and a period of transition. The spirit of man has broken with the old order of things hitherto prevailing, and with the old way of thinking...

— Hegel

Chapter I — Hegel's Absolutes as New Beginnings

Because the transformation of reality is central to the Hegelian dialectic, Hegel's philosophy comes to life, over and over again, at each great turning point in history. It was so in Marx's time which comprised the epoch of the 1848 European revolutions, the 1861-65 American Civil War, and the 1871 Paris Commune. Which is why Marx's discovery of historical materialism was dialectical through and through. With the outbreak of the First World War and the collapse of established Marxism, Lenin rediscovered this truth from a new study of Hegel's Science of Logic.

No such philosophic reassessment developed within Communism when the Second World War engulfed the world. All seemed to preclude any new return to Hegel on the part of those who called themselves Marxists. The very virulence with which Andrei Zhdanov soon after declared that "the question of Hegel has long since been settled" proved what the post-war world was soon to show: new ideological probings had been driven underground. In any case, outside of established Communism, the ideological combatants, following the victory over Nazism, were often professed dialecticians. Sartrean existentialists and theologians alike engaged in a Hegel revival that was at the same time a rediscovery of the now famous Humanist Essays of Marx. New ground was broken in diggering, and elaborating upon, an inner connection between idealist and materialist dialectics

What, in the mid 1940s in Western Europe, were theoretical discussions became outright revolutions in Eastern Europe in the mid 1950's. Nor did what Leon Trotsky once called "the empiricism of a machine gun" end the ideological battle. Only the United States seemed to remain impervious to this philosophic conflict. This luxuriating in the euphoria of an "end of ideology" ended, however, with the rise of a new Third World, including black revolts in the United States.

In the United States in the 1960's, it is true that the second rediscovery of Marx's Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, 1844, remained worlds apart from a new Hegel revival. American combatants were still separating what history had joined together -- Marx's beginnings in a new Humanism from the culmination of Hegelian philosophy in the Absolutes. Neither the shrillness of Communist attacks on Hegel's "Idealism", however, nor academic petrification of Hegel's dialectic could stem the tide of world history which once again made Hegel a "contemporary." This is not to say that we can dismiss out of hand the contention that Hegel's Absolutes are a restatement, if not a throwback, to Plato's concept of the Philosopher-King that reflected Greek society where slaves did all the labor and the intellectual class who philosophized did no labor. But, to this writer, the contention fails to come to grips with the why for the new rebirth.

The very fact that Hegel's concepts of Reason and Freedom are "in the air" points to an objective need for a reinterpretation. Not for the sake of Hegel but for our sakes. We are the ones who are in need of a philosophy that can meet the challenge of our times. Now that a movement from practice is raising philosophic questions of the most profound kind, we can no longer disregard the philosopher who lived at a "birth-time" of history which created the modern industrial world of crises and continuing revolutions and counter-revolutions. The fact

is this: whether or not the Hegelian dialectic is "the algebra of revolution", it was born of one, the French Revolution, and, above all, continues to have something to say to the revolutionaries of our day. Those who claim that Hegel's Absolutes are but a re-statement of Aristotle must answer — why, if this is so, has Hegel remained so alive in our age? The Greek philosophers, on the other hand, remain in academia? Why can't we put Hegel's own theses to the test? If, as Hegel hold, the dialectic is both so fluid and yet so "adamant" as to bow to no Absolute Substance but, remain the continuous process of Becoming, be the self-moving, self-active, self-transcending method of "absolute negativity", how could its discoverer, Hegel, have stopped its incessant motion?

If "nothing is either conceived or known in its truth except in so far as it is completely subject to method"¹ why can we not subject Hegel's Absolutes to it. Why not test the logic of Hegel's Logic? Why not roll the film of Hegel's Absolutes back to their beginning in the Phenomenology and examine that phenomenon in light of the phenomena of today?

Section A -- The Phenomenology of Mind

... The greatness of Hegel's Phenomenology, and of its final result — the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle — lies in this, that Hegel comprehends the self-production of man as a process. ...

— Marx

The Phenomenology of Mind and the Science of Logic — Hegel's "voyage of discovery" and his "system" — are a summons for men "to let the dead bury the dead."² while the living go forth to meet the challenge of the times³ and "give

1. Hegel, Science of Logic, Vol. 11, P. 468

2. Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind. P. 130

3. Hegel, Science of Logic, Vol. 2, P. 35: ... there are no traces in Logic of the new spirit which has arisen both in Learning and in Life. It is, however,

ear to its (the Spirit's) urgency."⁴ But, where the Science of Logic is without "concretion of sense", the feeling that a new epoch has been opened up by the French Revolution is present everywhere in the Phenomenology. Indeed, one hardly feels the tortuous, 2500 year trek of Western philosophy from its birthplace in Greece some 500 B.C. to the time of Hegel. The spirit of the breaking of old bonds, the emergence of a new human dimension is so all-pervasive that history itself becomes but one of the elements of all that is new in life, in literature, in the arts, in philosophy. Throughout its 160 year existence, "the immanent rhythm of the movement of conceptual thought"⁵ of the Phenomenology has cast a spell on critics and followers alike. The discoverer of historical materialism, Karl Marx, who developed his original humanist concepts through a rejection of Hegel's Absolutes, summed it up this way:

The Phenomenology is therefore, the hidden, still unclear even to itself and mystifying critical philosophy. However, to the extent that it holds fast the alienation of Man -- even if Man appears only in the form of Spirit -- to that extent all elements of criticism lie hidden in it and are often already prepared and worked out in a manner extending far beyond the Hegelian standpoint. The section on 'Unhappy Consciousness', the 'Honorable Consciousness', the struggle between the 'noble' and 'base' consciousness, etc., etc., contain critical elements -- although still in an alienated form -- of whole spheres like Religion, the State, Civic Life, etc."⁶

(let us say once and for all), quite vain to try to retain the forms of an earlier stage of development when the inner structure of spirit has become transformed.

4. Hegel, History of Philosophy Vol. 111. P. 553
5. Hegel, Phenomenology, P. 117
6. Marx, Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic: I'm using my own translation which appears in the 1958 edition of Marxism and Freedom, P. 309. Other translations are listed in Bibliography.

That is to say, despite the fact that Man is nowhere present in the Phenomenology and Hegel analyzes the development of consciousness and self-consciousness as disembodied spirits; despite the fact that Freedom and Reason likewise appear only as activities of the mind so that Mind (Geist) actually shields the fact that Hegel's philosophy retains the presuppositions of existing bourgeois society, and despite the fact that Hegel's "estranged insight" has therefore caught only "the abstract, logical and speculative expression for the movement of history", nevertheless the dialectic reveals "transcendence as an objective movement."⁷

Whether one accepts Marx's critique and sees the multitudinous alienations of subject and object, of Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, Reason, and Spirit, as a question of self-development of labor, or see "Other" (all others) existentially as "the enemy", the point is that for every stage of phenomenological development, there is a corresponding stage of objectivity. The repetition of one and the same movement -- the dialectic as a continuous process of development -- not only from sense-certainty to the Absolute Idea, but also mankind's history from bondage to freedom. As early as the Preface, Hegel told us that the Absolute Idea has appeared here and now because "its time has come," that is to say, freedom has been achieved at the time he was writing in the period of the French Revolution.

Because Hegel is dealing with universals, it doesn't matter if one dwells on a single stage of alienation or on the alienations in their totality. How many exegeses -- from Josiah Royce's religious preoccupation with the "Contrite Consciousness" to Herbert Marcuse's concern with "technological reality" and its "Conquest of the Unhappy Consciousness,"⁸ haven't depended on Hegel's Alienated Soul or Unhappy Consciousness. Even if one were to superimpose

7. Marx, Op. Cit

8. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, P. 56-83

a single division upon the whole of the Phenomenology, even this would not be "wrong". A division which placed Consciousness, Self-Consciousness and Reason under the heading "What Happens Up to the Day of Revolution?": all the remaining stages of development -- Spirit, Religion, and Absolute Idea -- would then be titled "What Happens After the Revolution?" even such oversimplification or, if you wish, vulgarization wouldn't be violating the spirit of Hegel providing this was done for the purpose of penetrating Hegel's analysis of development as self-movement. For it is the self-development that is the sum and substance, the soul and spirit of the dialectic in thought as in life, in history as in society, in philosophy as in literature.

When Marx singled out transcendence as an objective movement, he was not merely showing what was "behind" the struggles of consciousness and self-consciousness; he was also arguing against the narrow materialists who didn't understand historic movements and therefore didn't understand that these movements were present everywhere in the struggles of consciousness. It is the self-development, the fact that no outside force propels a movement forward, that allowed the most encyclopedic mind of Europe to see the development of thought as "parallel"⁹ to world history.

The plenitude and suffering of the Self that Hegel has gathered together for his "Science of the Experience of Consciousness" allows for varying interpretations (very often by the same discerning reader upon each re-reading of a passage). But they do so because, and only because, Hegel created his universals through a most painstaking and rigorous examination of the movement of no less than 2,500 years of history. The fact that this long trek in the development of mankind culminated in the period of revolution and counter-revolution that

9. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. 111, P. 547

characterized the age in which Hegel lived, is what drove that genius to break with the introversion of his philosophic contemporaries. Because, in thought, Hegel was a great revolutionary, all of world history was to him a history in the "progress and the consciousness of freedom."¹⁰ It served as the point of departure and point of return of his greatest works.

Naturally, the reader can still object, saying: Isn't it true that all alienations, oppositions, contradictions come to rest in the surmounting of the object of consciousness -- self-consciousness -- and becomes Absolute Knowledge? Although it is true that the end in Hegel is but consummation of the beginning; nevertheless, ontologically, hasn't Hegel spelled out the unity of all opposition in Absolute Knowledge? No doubt he did replace theology with philosophy, but it is an Absolute all the same, isn't it?

There is, of course, no doubt that Hegel himself, using the philosopher as the yardstick, meant to do just that since "knowing" as Marx expressed it, "is his only act". However, because "absolute negativity" is the axis, even the Absolute Idea does not escape negation as anything beyond the present. Let's follow him and see.

Hegel begins and ends the final chapter, "Absolute Knowledge", by stressing that recollection of all these stages of development is one way of transcending the opposition between self-consciousness and its object. He therefore begins his recall with the first section, with immediate "sense-experience" and its relatedness to "Other", partly as perception, and essentially as understanding. However, instead of going on to the next sequence -- self-consciousness, either as it expresses itself as Lordship and Bondage, Stoicism, Scepticism, or the

10. Hegel, Philosophy of History, P. 12

Unhappy Consciousness -- Hegel stops in order to draw out what is the quintessential of the entire Phenomenology; indeed, of the dialectic as a whole and the Science of Logic as well -- not a single word of which had yet been written. Here is what he writes:

The object as a whole is the mediated result (the syllogism) or the passing of universality into individuality through specification, also the reverse process from the individual to the universal through cancelled individuality or specification.¹¹

The deceptive simplicity of this logical conclusion is likely to catch the reader unaware that Hegel is here introducing the three central categories of the Universal. Particular and Individual of the Doctrine of Notion (Geist). It has often been noted that the Phenomenology that has been conceived as an "Introduction" to the Logic had grown to 800 pages and contained in fact many of the major ideas of the Logic which would take nearly a decade to complete. However, this fact is stated in order to explain the difficulties in understanding the Phenomenology. The explanation is also used to separate what Hegel himself had called "the bachanalian revel" from the "system"; as if the Logic had indeed swallowed up, not only the passions in the Phenomenology, but that the vision itself had been lost in "the still spaces of thought."

There is no doubt that the ten years separating Hegel's "voyage of discovery" from his "system" saw a mellowed philosopher. But it is not true, as we shall see later, that the driving forces of history no longer characterize the Logic. In any case, they are the very reason for being of Phenomenology. That is why the whole movement from abstract (the Universal) to the concrete (Individual) "through specification" (the Particular) results from a double negation. This "absolute negativity" is the only way to concretization.

11. Phenomenology, P. 790

Hegel further underscores that the movement through double negation holds true. If the process is reversed and we move from the immediate sense - certainty to the absolute knowledge, that is to say, negation of the negation characterizes also "the reverse process from the individual to the universal." In his summation, Hegel demonstrates that in every single stage of the development it is so, and, therefore, it is this which characterizes the whole of the Phenomenology from the very first section to the last.

It is crucial to grasp this movement from the abstract to the concrete as a self-movement, and not as if it adheres to some sort of static triadic form.

Though it was not Hegel* but Fichte and Schelling who spoke of a philosophy as a development of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, this statement has so often been misread as an expression of Hegelian dialectic that we must tarry a moment longer to show that the three categories mentioned here are not a "triad", and not a synthesis or a synthetic cognition, but a self-development through a double negation. No matter what the phenomena are, thought molds the form of experience in a way that determines both the experience and "the ways in which consciousness must know the object as itself." Nor is the negation of the negation a "Nullity", but the positive is contained in the negative so that we have reached a new beginning. It characterized not only the Logic but life; or more correctly put, it is a movement in the Logic, in the Phenomenology, and in the dialectics in general because it is a fact of history as of life. It is ceaseless movement,

* In the Logic, Hegel laughs at the whole construct of triplicity, insisting that it's really a quadruplicity: If number is applicable, then in the whole course this second immediate is the third term, the first immediate and the mediated being the other terms. But it is also third of a series composed besides of first (or formal) negative and absolute negativity or second negative; now, since the former (the first negative) is itself the second term, the third term may now be counted as fourth, and the abstract form of it may be taken as a quadruplicity in place of triplicity. Logic, Vol. 11, P. 478

a sort of permanent revolution. It is the lifeblood of the dialectic. This is not because Hegel "imposed" it upon his Logic; it is a fact of development, including, as we shall see later, the development of revolution.

Having underlined "this method of grasping the object,"¹² Hegel sends the readers back to the remembrance of things past, at the stage of Reason where he had made his critique of the philosophies based on "pure ego" or the moment that came before consciousness as Pure Insight and Enlightenment. There Hegel had written:

This enlightenment completes spirit's self-estrangement in this realm, too; whether spirit in self-alienation turns to seek its safety as to a region where it becomes conscious of the peace of self-equipose. 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 the Now.¹³

Again, it doesn't really matter whether we stop at the stage Hegel singled out, or the one on the Noble and Base Consciousness to which Marx had referred as containing a critique of bourgeois society itself, its culture as well as its state power: "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." Hegel had written there:

What is found 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 in one into the other, and each is the opposite of itself.¹⁴

The point is that in both these cases, as in all other stages of alienation, no heaven is reached at the end of the highway other than the consciousness that still another negation, another revolution, is needed. Or, as Hegel himself

12. Ibid, P. 701

13. Ibid, P. 512

14. Ibid, P. 541

put it in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy:

All revolutions, in the sciences no less than in general history, originate only in this, that the spirit of man, for the understanding and comprehension of himself, for the possessing of himself, has now altered his categories, uniting himself in a truer, deeper, more intrinsic relation with himself.

The crux of the matter is that this movement through double negation characterizes the transcendence of each stage of alienation as well as the whole "Science of the Experience of Consciousness," not excluding the Absolute. If there is finally to be "a release,"¹⁵ a plunge into freedom, it can come only through the overcoming of internal opposition, and each new unity of opposites reveals that the opposition is within. The overcoming of the opposition can only occur through action.

"Action," writes Hegel, "is the first inherent division of simple unity of the notion, and the return out of this division."¹⁶ And again: "By this process of action spirit has come to light in the form of pure universality of Knowledge."¹⁷ It would appear that this meant action in thought only. Hegel, as Marx put it, "has separated thinking from Subject," from the human being who thinks, and by such "dehumanization" of ideas has created the illusion that the activities of knowledge can transcend the alienated world, whereas it can only be abolished by actions of real man. Nevertheless, even within Hegel's abstractions, one cannot help but feel the drive to introduce actual existence -- time and reality -- into "the last embodiment of spirit -- Absolute Knowledge:" "As to the actual existence of this notion, science does not appear in time and in reality till spirit had arrived at this stage of being consciousness regarding itself."¹⁸

15. Ibid. P. 808
16. Ibid. P. 793

17. Ibid. P. 797
18. Ibid. P. 797

Even though Hegel is still in the realm of thought and idealizes time "as spirit's destiny and necessity" still Time straightaway does things. First Hegel tells us not to forget such tangibles as feelings just because we have reached Absolute Knowledge: "... nothing is known which does not fall within experience, or (as it is also expressed) which is not felt to be true..."¹⁹

No matter which way you look, it is the movement, the self-creating "Subject" which is the principle underlying the Absolute, thereby distinguishing it from "the empty Absolutes" of other philosophers. Over and over and over again, Hegel points out that "It is inherently the movement which is the process of knowledge -- the transforming of that inherent nature into explicitness, of Substance into Subject, of the object of consciousness into the object of self-consciousness, i.e., into an object that is at the same time transcended -- in other words, into the notion. This transforming process is a cycle ---"²⁰

It now turns out that this "transforming process" is nothing short of History: "The process of carrying forward this form of knowledge of itself is the task which spirit accomplishes as actual History."²¹ So that all the shadowy phrases on the following page which seem to have historic philosophers from Descartes on is done against the background of actual history. Nor can the serious reader fail to recall that his present attacks on "empty Intuition"²² were summarized in the Preface (which was actually written after the work was finished) as "the arbitrary caprice of prophetic utterance."²³

In opposition to such "arbitrary caprice," Hegel thrusts us straight against a new negativity: "Knowledge is aware not only of itself but also of the negative of itself, or its limit. Knowing its limit means knowing how to sacrifice

19. Ibid. P. 800
20. Ibid. P. 801
21. Ibid. P. 803

22. Ibid. P. 107
23. Ibid. P. 806-7

itself ... This last form into which Spirit passes, Nature, is its living immediate process of development ..."²⁴

This is certainly an upside-down way of presenting Nature. Some famous commentators have analyzed this literally as if Nature "came out of" Spirit. Wrong as they are, the question of revealing the truth of the statement is nothing as simple as standing Hegel right side up. For one thing, Hegel quickly enough showed that the other aspect of Spirit is History.²⁵ The difficulty comes in that there too Hegel once again seems to shut the door on all reality; since, as we reach the climactic last paragraph, Absolute Knowledge is said to have found "its pathway in the recollection of spiritual forms (Geister) as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their spiritual kingdom... Both together, or History (intellectually) comprehended (begriffen), form at once the recollection and the Gogotha of Absolute Spirit, the reality, the truth, the certainty of its throne, without which it were lifeless, solitary and alone."²⁶

Hegel tries softening the shock of reaching death at the very pinnacle of the Absolute Knowledge as it unites History and Science by quoting Schiller. Theologians, among others, have, of course, not failed to call attention to the fact that Hegel was replacing Christian Theology with his own philosophy. But if we retrace our steps, a page or so back, we hear Hegel speaking about being "born anew from the womb of knowledge -- (is) the new stage of existence, a new world, and a new embodiment or mode of Spirit."²⁷

24. Ibid.

25. Professor J.N. Findlay, (Hegel, a Re-Examination, P. 119) was right to have called attention to the fact that "much of the intense obscurity of Hegel's text is here due to the concealed presence of an historical framework."

26. Phenomenology, P. 808

27. Ibid. P. 806

Indeed the whole chapter has been an outpouring of the "simple mediating activity in thinking" which has led to this "release" of Spirit in History and Science, in Nature and Recollection, and in the birth of "a new world." Now it is true that this "new world" is nothing tangible but will turn into the pure conceptual thought categories of Science of Logic for which the Phenomenology was the "Introduction." But this cannot obscure the fact that Absolute Knowledge was not, after all, the end. As usual, the end is the culmination of the beginning which becomes a new point of departure, ground for a new beginning. The point is that the Golgotha of this manifestation of Absolute Spirit has not ended the movement whose phenomenological form we leave only in order to battle its "pure" logical manifestations. Hegel hasn't stood stock-still and his Absolute Knowledge becomes the foundation for a new level of truth, the development of which he will analyze in the Science of Logic. The movement itself is ceaseless.

Chapter I - Section B - SCIENCE OF LOGIC

The Self-determination in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak... Hegel

The main shortcoming of all materialism up to now (including that of Feuerbach) is that the object, the reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of intuition; not, however, as sensuous human activity, Praxis; not subjectively. Hence, the active side was developed abstractly in position to materialism by idealism...

— Marx

History has its own way of illuminating a book, and so do the individuals who are attracted to it through the ages. During the First World War, Lenin, faced with the task of working out new foundations for revolutionary Marxism now that established Marxism had collapsed, hailed Hegel's description of the Doctrine of the Notion as "the realm of Subjectivity or Freedom." At the end of the Second World War, Jean-Paul Sartre, in the perennial attraction to, and repulsion from, "today's Communists" that he underwent, asked rhetorically: "Can dialectical materialism do without ontology? ... Man is Absolute."²⁸ Some of today's academicians who wish to return Hegel to academia, away from Marx's "subversion" of the Hegelian dialectic, nevertheless themselves treat the Doctrine of the Notion as nothing more than "the place for any leftovers."²⁹

Now, whether one feels that Hegelian philosophy is an impenetrable closed ontology, or the open road from which to view mankind's development as a totality, and the dialectic as "the algebra of revolution,"³⁰ the point is that Hegel himself had not abandoned Reality when he entered the realm of "pure thought". Although, as against the more tangible struggles of consciousness and self-consciousness in the Phenomenology, Hegel, in Science of Logic, deals with abstract philosophic categories, he nevertheless does not depart from the principle of freedom in which his entire philosophic system is grounded.

It is the pull of objective history toward real freedom which makes Hegelian philosophy come to life and accounts for the way in which each age reads Hegel. With eyes of today, then let us look at the structure of Science of Logic, its philosophic categories flowing into the Absolute Idea.

The structure of the Science of Logic shows no straight line to the Absolute. It is a circle in which each realm — Being, Essence, Notion — has its own Absolute. Each starts afresh, with new categories, on new ground since, as each realm reaches the pinnacle, it "perishes," having broken down as it attempted to embrace the concrete totality because of its own inadequacies. Insofar as Hegel is concerned, the acceptance of any category at face value is an "uninstructed and barbarous procedure."³¹ And when the category was examined in one sphere it was found wanting in another. Conceptually, the Absolute that emerges in any specific realm is found to be relative. This is so, not merely because the Absolute, say, in the Doctrine of Being is of a rather lowly kind — Absolute Indifference. And, as such, it does not "attain to Essence,"³² though it is a transition to it. Even when we reach the ground of Essence, are done with Being and its quantitative measurements, turn to such essentialities as Identity, Difference, Contradiction, Appearance, Existence, Actuality, the contradictions only become the sharper. They are not so much synthesized as gathered for a life-and-death struggle.

Whether one thinks of the categories in the Doctrine of Being as early stages of thought-development, or of previous societies in the history of mankind, or separate stages of development within a given society, as, say, Marx thought of the market phenomena under capitalism, those categories simply fall

28. Jean-Paul Sartre, Situations IV, p.

29. Walter Kaufman, Hegel: A Re-Examination, P. 223

30. Maurice Merleau-Ponty expressed the thought succinctly in a different manner: "Philosophy is not an illusion. It is the algebra of History." In Praise of Philosophy.

31. Science of Logic, Vol. I, P. 48

32. Ibid. P. 403

apart as one moves to a different stage of development, whether that be in history, philosophy, or economics. When Marx left the deceptive sphere of market equality, of exchange of commodities and money, to enter the crucial labor process and there meet relation of labor and capital at the point of production, it is true that he more than ever opposed Hegel's restricted view of labor,³³ feeling that Hegel's limitation of the dialectic to consciousness and thought made it an incomplete, exterior, not truly interior dialectic. But Marx himself also did not stop with Essence; not even as it reached the actuality of class battles, but proceeded to "Notion", to the Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation, and the release of "new passions and new forces;" in a word, "to the negation of the negation." Indeed, Marx began with "Notion", the very first chapter in *Commodities* ends with *Fetishism of Commodities*.³⁴

In any case, insofar as Hegel is concerned, he found that it was insufficient to dress the categories of Essence with new clothes, to supplant the old metaphysics merely by examination of philosophic categories, and show their relationship to reality, but had to meet head on traditional logic by a new unity of opposites, a new concept of the unity of theory and practice. Thus, though the final section of the *Doctrine of Essence — Actuality —* begins and ends

33. Nicholas Lobkowitz is about the only theologian who, despite his antagonism to Marx, profoundly pinpoints what it was that Marx criticised in Hegel's analysis of labor: "In short, Marx does not accuse Hegel of having treated labor as if it were a thought activity. Rather he accuses him of having in the *Phenomenology* described human history in terms of the dialectic of consciousness, not in terms of the dialectic of labor. When he shows that the only labor which Hegel recognizes is abstract mental labor, he has in mind the structure of the *Phenomenology* and in fact of Hegel's whole philosophy, not the passages of labor in the *Phenomenology* and other writings of Hegel." (*Theory and Practice*, P. 322)

34. See Chapter on Marx

with Absolute, it is not that Absolute which carries over into "the realm of Subjectivity or Freedom." To understand why this is so, why Hegel needed new categories in which his Absolutes, as against those of his predecessors, could manifest themselves, one has to be as aware, almost oppressively so, of the polemical movement in the Logic as of the movement of the categories. As Hegel let us know in the Phenomenology he has no use for "the conceit of genius" who does not wish to go through "the seriousness, labor, patience, suffering of the negative" who wishes to reach for the Absolute "like a shot of the pistol." What he said, when he, Schelling, Fichte, the romanticists in mind, Hegel, in more temperate terms directs in the Science of Logic against his Absolutes from those of Leibnitz* and Spinoza specifically in the section on the Absolute as it appears in the Doctrine of Essence.

The movement in Essence, it is true, does go through constant determinations and transcendence of determination. Essence, as such, means that it is not in the immediate Being; but through mediation, or in general by a process of distinguishing between the essential and unessential that truth is reached. One could trace through three movements in the Realm of Essence, that (1) truth is concrete; the reality of Show; (2) the antagonism between the Absolute and appearance becomes more explicit with every forward movement; and (3) the self which does the transcending of opposites moved from the abstract principle of doing (Leibnitz) to Absolute Substance (Spinoza). Nevertheless it is insufficient; Hegel accuses Leibnitz of having the absolute barriers of the monads do a sort of disappearing act so that "in determinations only those vulgar ideas appear which are left without philosophic development."³⁵ And he says

35. Ibid

* Hegel lashes out at anyone who thinks the dialectic is reducible to triplicity: "Formalists have seized even upon triplicity, and have held fast to its skeleton; and this form has been rendered tedious and of ill-repute by the shallow misuse and the barrenness of modern so-called philosophic construction." (p. 479)

that Spinoza's concept of Absolute Substance "lacks the principle of personality."³⁶ In a word, neither has, through absolute negativity of a self-developing subject, gone through all the concrete stages of transcendence so that Absolute emerged as the very result of the process of negativity wherein it lost its abstractness and became concrete, total, "self-liberation."

Without understanding then Hegel's separation of his Absolutes from what he called "empty Absolutes" we are not likely to comprehend either the objective pull of history or the logic of the new categories in the Notion to meet both the conceptual and actual³⁷ challenge of the spirit of the times. The fact that he nevertheless ended with still another set of Absolutes is not merely due to his return to traditional logic, the tradition of Western philosophy beginning with Aristotle. Nor is it only -- crucial as this is -- that, being a philosopher rather than a revolutionary, Hegel remained stuck in the realm of thought. Rather, the drive to carry through a thought to its ultimate logical conclusion, that is to say, to something still non-existent, cannot be expressed in any other but an abstract way, even when the dynamic of the dialectic has driven it beyond the confines of traditional philosophy. Marx, for his part, refused to give any blueprint for a new society, but this didn't mean that he didn't see anticipations of the future immanent in the present that demanded theoretical preparations for revolution.

Once Hegel worked out the Idea to its ultimate logical conclusion, it could have no other form but that of the Absolute, the ideal toward which man strove. Surely philosophy as "the thought of its time" wasn't mere reflection

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^{37.} "Free, philosophic thought has this direct connection with practical freedom; that as the former supplies thought about the absolute, universal and real universality...On account of this general connection between political freedom and the freedom of thought, Philosophy only appears in History where and inas far as free institutions are formed." Hegel: Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. I. P. 95.

of the existent. As summation of the past and bearer of the principle of continuity, the present cannot help but project toward the future. Despite the so-oft-quoted statement about philosophy "like the owl of Minerva" coming only at dusk, only after the event, confining philosophy to deal only with the past, the very logic of summing up "unfold" the future.³⁸ Above all, to meet the challenge of the present, one cannot stop at an Absolute that has not suffered through absolute negativity. For the first time in 1915, Lenin caught this, which is why he, too, both politically and logically wanted to move on from "Essence." "When you read Hegel on Causality," he wrote, "it seems strange at first sight why he stops comparatively briefly on this theme loved by the Kantians. Why? Because for him causality is only one of the determinations of the universal connection... It would be very instructive to put alongside of the "travail" of neo-empiricism (respective physical idealism) the decisions, more accurately, the dialectic method of Hegel."³⁹ In confronting the limitations of the scientific method to explain the relationship between the matter and mind, Lenin did not "fear" leaving the realm of Essence, considered by established Marxism to be the main, even the only thing of value to materialists in Hegelian dialectics. For now he saw that Freedom, Subjectivity, Notion were the categories by which to gain knowledge also of the objectively real and thereby "transform" idealist dialectics into dialectic materialism. What Hegel, however, was working the road to the Absolute Idea.

38. Karl Lowith is one of the very few academicians who forcefully recognizes that Hegel "encounters the present in an historic context" and that, therefore, Hegel's "unification of all previous thought" did not mean to exclude the future that... His sharp dissent from the Left Hegelians' interpretation of Hegel notwithstanding, he therefore concludes: "It is no accident that his (Hegel's) immediate successors carried their philosophy into an anticipated future only to view their own period from that point of view as 'history' in the opposite sense of the word." (from Hegel to Nietzsche Revolution in the Nineteenth Century Thought, p. 129.)

39. Lenin, Vol. 38, part VIII, Collected Works.

Let us see how he proceeds toward the Absolute through the Doctrine of Notion.

The Doctrine of the Notion deals with the categories of freedom, of subjectivity, of reason, the logic of a movement by which man makes himself free. Despite the fact that its universals are thought universals, they are concrete, and as such, mean to make the objective world free, or, put differently, make freedom real. Hegel keeps reiterating that even when Notion realizes itself through "otherness," even when "through the transcendence of this reality" it has "established absolute reality" so that the "result is 'truth'", in a word, even when he has "comprehended" it all, even then it has not been "properly comprehended by forms of judgment like 'the third term is immediacy and mediation,' or 'it is their unity' for it is not a quiescent third term, but, as this unity, is self-mediating movement and activity."⁴⁰

The movement has not come to a halt. The dialectic is still at work. It cannot be otherwise: "The beginning was the universal; the result is the individual, the concrete and subject..." Nor is subjective any longer separate from objective, the negation of the negation "is the innermost and most objective moment of Life and Spirit, by virtue of which a subject is personal and free."⁴¹

What enamored Lenin, when he first reached the Doctrine of the Notion, was the feeling of a plunge to freedom one gets with the formation of abstract notions:

Just as the simple form of value, the individual act of exchange of one given commodity for another, already includes in an undeveloped form all the main contradictions of capitalism, so the simplest generalization, the first and simplest formation of notions (judgments, syllogisms, etc.) already denotes man's over deeper cognition of the objective connection of the world. Here is where one should look for the true meaning, significance, and role of Hegel's Logic. This NB. (Lenin, pp. 178-179)

40. p. 479 41. p. 478

The Doctrine of the Notion expresses man's subjective determination, the need to master himself. The real history of humanity is being worked out in thought categories, which, however, enable us to turn back to the objective and prepare for the next stage of freedom. Whether the Hegelian concept of self-relation is being "subverted" as revolution in Marx's "translation," the point is that, to Hegel, too, it is a constant transformation of reality and of thought which prepares for a "new world." This is why from the outset of the Doctrine of Notion we see Hegel constantly trying to set his dialectic apart from Kant's:

It will always remain a matter of astonishment how the Kantian Philosophy knew that relation of thought to sensuous existence, where it halted for a merely relative relation of bare appearance, and fully acknowledged and asserted a higher unity of the two in the Idea in general, and particularly, in the idea of an intuitive understanding; but yet stopped dead at this relative relation and at the assertion that the Notion is and remains utterly separated from reality; so that what is announced to be finite knowledge, and declared to be superfluous and improper figments of thought that which it recognized as truth, and of which it established a Notion.⁴²

For the next 250 pages, Hegel keeps developing from the spot where Kant "stopped dead." In the realm of the Notion the polemic will center against turning the Universal into a fixed particular, let us follow him to the Absolute Idea.

The beginning of the final chapter -- "the Absolute Idea has now turned out to be the identity of the theoretical and Practical Idea"⁴³ -- inspired that most famous revolutionary materialist, Lenin, to sound like the most idealistic of idealists as he wrote: "Practice in the theory of cognition. Alias: Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world but creates it."⁴⁴

42. Ibid. P. 226

43. Ibid. P. 466

44. Lenin, Philosophic Notebook, P.

This ought to inspire even today's materialists to understand Hegel's description of the Logic as the "self-movement of the Absolute Idea": the self-determination therefore in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak.⁴⁵

Our contemporaries may be a great deal more concerned with the self-determination of nations than of ideas, but the goal, Freedom, and how to achieve it, is not as far removed from the self-determination of the idea, Freedom, as may appear at first sight. In any case, what Hegel is driving at is this "having been witness to the overcoming of the opposition between content and form in thought, the only thing that still remains to be done, is to consider "the universal element of its form — the method."⁴⁶

The development of what the dialectic method is is as far removed from the mechanical triplicities of thesis, antithesis, synthesis* (which never were Hegel's formulation) as earth is from heaven. And it is the earthy character of liberation, which is the very bones and sinews of Hegel's universals. Though they are enclosed in thought, these universals are concrete, full of life and development and not single unification, whether of subject and object, or theory and practice, or concept and reality, is merely subjectivist and external — not even the critique of other philosophies whose "truth" he has absorbed — but actually give you an insight into the movement of history itself. Hegel, moreover, is not excluding his Absolutes from the need to be subjected to this dialectic of development. "The method therefore is both soul and substance and nothing is either conceived or known in its truth except insofar as it is completely subject to the method; it is the peculiar method of each individual fact because its activity is the Notion."⁴⁷ Though to a historian of philosophy, thought is the "real",

45. Hegel, II, P. 467

46. Ibid

47. P. 468

the impulse to negate what is before him, the drive to transcend that which is itself a preparation to transform reality.

We now find different types of cognition within the dialectic itself. When Hegel jammed Synthetic Cognition against the Analytic, he wrote: "This 'equally synthetic and analytic moment of the Judgment by which the original universal determines itself out of itself to be its own Other, may rightly be called the dialectic moment."

The dialectic doesn't of course "throw out" the Analytic, or "abolish" definitions which goes with synthetic cognition. These do relate facts to the concept of facts, the universal to the particular. The trouble is that before the "absolute method", the dialectic cognition engaged in battle, those opposites sort of peacefully co-existed; instead of allowing the negation of the negation to transcend the opposition, they were laying alongside of each, or, as Hegel expresses it, they came "before consciousness without being in contact."⁴⁸

The movement of the Absolute Idea, as of the Logic in general, has been from the recognition of opposition and refusal to stop at these opposites as if they were "fixed" to seeing them as transitions "in and for themselves"; from awareness of just how objectively grounded the universals were to the realization that the Absolute Idea is only an "in itself", only a potential which will determine itself through its own dialectical self-development, so the truth that it will first be absolute only "in its completion"; from consciousness that the beginning is not only an empirically "given", that the immediate is itself a mediated result, to the concept of the concrete as concrete totality and therefore itself contains self-differentiation; and finally this, above all: the movement of viewing the dialectic moment as the "equally synthetic and analytic moment:

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of the Judgment by which original universal determines itself to be its own Other" inevitably propelling one, not just to the first, but to the second negation, the turning point of the whole movement: "It is the simple point of negative self-relation, the innermost source of all activity, of living and spiritual self-movement, the dialectic soul which all truth has in it and through which it alone is truth; for the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and the unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone."⁶²

Think of it: here is the man of the Absolute reaching the heights and what does he pound away at? Absolute negativity. And is this negation of the negation just another abstraction? The very opposite; the crux, he says, is not the abstract but the concrete: Each new stage of exteriorization, of further determination is also an interiorization, and the greater extension is also the most concrete and subjective term and that which carries itself back into the simplest depth is also the most powerful and comprehensive."⁶³

Throughout the chapter on the Absolute Idea, Hegel "sums" up the whole Logic by constantly contrasting what the dialectic is here against what it was in the Doctrine of Being, what it became in the Doctrine of Essence, and how it is that a new emerged not only in the Doctrine of Notion in general but in the Absolute Idea in particular for the highest contradiction is in cognition itself. From the very first sentence in this final chapter he stressed that the Theoretical and Practical are each "by itself one-sided and contains the Idea itself only as a sought beyond and an unattained goal."⁵² And now that we have reached "the equally synthetic and analytic moment", Hegel makes us trace our steps to where we first met "Other" in the Doctrine of Being where the dialectic movement was

62. P. 477

52. P. 466

63. P. 483

confined to a transition into something else. In the Doctrine of Essence we found that the "something else" was the very thing we were examining, the something itself, its other. Now that the Doctrine of Notion shows us what was immanent in the objective movement itself was that it was "its own Other." What is its significance, not as ontological idealism's "delusion", to use an expression of Marx's, that thinks it can "absorb" the objective world into itself, be as a self-moving force?

Don't let us forget that, though Marx stated that all the illusions of speculative philosophy lies precisely in this delusion of absorbing Other, he still credited idealism with having developed "the active" side of the object while all "previous materialism", bereft of a historical sense,⁵³ failed to develop "the revolutionary, i.e., practical-critical activity." In a word, once you have broken with the Absolute in the sense that the Idea is its own Other, i.e., the objective world, which remains standing as big as life full of contradictions after idealism has transcended the contradictions in thought, then — and to this writer, only then — the truth is that you can find in the Doctrine of the Notion the ground for theoretic preparation for revolution. Professor Findlay may be right in saying that Hegel's exegeses "can seem arid and false to those who see nothing mysterious and god-like in the facts of human thought."⁵⁴ But it is equally true that those who stand only in terror before social revolution can neither "comprehend" an actual revolution nor the revolution in thought and Hegel did revolutionize philosophy.⁵⁵ Professor Findlay himself admits: "But though Hegel remains within the world of common sense and science, and does not undermine

53. As Marx put it elsewhere: "As far as Feuerbach is a materialist, history does not exist for him, and insofar as he considers history, he is not a materialist."

54. Hegel: A Re-Examination, P. 344

55. Ibid. P. 351

its reality, his approach to it is neither commonsensical nor scientific: he sees the fact of the world in a revolutionary manner, which is not that of any other philosopher.

There is still another sense to "beginning", "new beginnings", even where a dialectic is extended, the result that contains its own beginning, "the beginning of another sphere" where the spirit once again "gathers itself into immediacy," "freely releases itself" and is "absolute liberation". It is ceaseless motion in which the Absolute itself "contains the highest contradiction," contains, therefore, "impulse to transcend." One can hardly escape calling it permanent revolution which likewise doesn't stop for "each has a before and an after." In any case, the urgent sense of new beginnings seems in such absolute contradiction to the other pivot of Hegelianism — totality — that the young Marx, long before he became a Marxist, that is to say when still in school and, instead of thinking either of revolutions or creating a new world view called "the materialist conception of history" was first writing his doctoral thesis) worked out a view of what happens when a great philosophic system — Aristotle, Hegel — has reached "completeness." Where to find "new beginnings" and, instead of prolonging the death agony, the decay, of the old, "realize the philosophy," make freedom real. His answer was "engage the world, become the actor, the participant, making freedom real, not by turning your back on philosophy, but by creating a new unity of theory and practice with a new Subject. It is working out of a new relation of theory and practice to which Hegel himself in the Absolute Idea when he expanded on "the turning point," the second negativity, in the Absolute Idea:

The negativity which has just been considered is the turning point of the movement of the Notion. It is the simple point of negative self-relation, the innermost source of all activity of living and spiritual self-movement, the dialectic soul which

all truth has in it and through which it alone is truth; for the transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality, and the unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone. (p. 477)

It is this overcoming of the opposition between Notion and Reality, this unity of Reason and the World, of Freedom and Society, of Object and Subject to which the Absolute Idea is moving. And because no stages can be "skipped" that Hegel lays so much stress on the movement from immediacy through mediation and return to immediacy and then again mediation for the Logic as a whole and the Absolute Idea in particular. Precisely where Hegel sounds most abstract, seems to close the shutters down on the whole movement of history where he, in truth, shows, in the movement and history of ideas, their self-determination, the lifeblood of the dialectic. It is double negation, the creative element through "absolute negativity." Hegel constantly reinforces this by the polemical movement which runs throughout the Logic, whether that be against Leibnitz and "the absoluteness of abstract individuality,"¹⁷⁵ or against Kant's "think-in-itself." On the other hand, this is exactly where Kant "stopped dead," not to mention those who can be considered to be "the main enemies," that is to say, Jacobi's reactionary⁵⁷ Intuitive and Schelling's manner of getting to the Absolute "like a shot out of the pistol." Indeed, when Hegel reached the climax of the chapter — the second negation which is the "transcendence of the contradiction, but is no more activity of an external reflection than the contradiction is: it is the innermost and most objective moment of Life and Spirit. By virtue of which a subject is "personal and free" but what only can be called revolutionary intransigent attack on all old radical parties from the Social-Democracy (Kant) to the SLP (formalists to Hegel). For what sets him against these men of "abstract understanding" is that "all opposites (which) are taken as fixed, like (for example) finite and infinite, or individual

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and universal, are contradictory not in virtue of some external connection but rather are transitions in and for themselves."⁶⁰

Hegel obviously feels that the turning point of the whole movement of Notion -- the second negativity which will transcend the opposition between Notion and Reality, two "enemies" must again once and for all be "negated" (1) he who sees the particularization of a universal and "stops dead," will not move to the second negativity, to the concrete, the individual; (2) who sees only "nullity" to result from absolute negativity or double negation: Hegel therefore wants to define what exactly is "the most important part of rational cognition." How one must hold on to the positive in the negative: "To hold fast the positive in its negative, and the content of the presupposition in the result, is the most important part of rational cognition; also only the simplest reflection is needed to furnish conviction of the absolute truth and necessity of this requirement, while with regard to the examples of proofs, the whole Logic consists of these."⁶¹

Anyone who thinks that the achievement of this self-relation can be contained by Hegel because he, as philosopher, has attained it in the Prussian state, is, in fact, denying the compulsions of a birthtime in history when, in outline, or as in a flash, we get a glimpse of the future not of a revolution, but the age of revolutions. Even as Hegel consciously thinks only of different spheres, disciplines, sciences, concerned only with the "totality": seeing each as a "fragment" of a chain, each of which "has a before and an after... or rather, each has only a before, and in its conclusion shows its after."⁶⁴ He sees that the "systematic development is itself a realization."⁶⁵ and "as totality in this form, it is Nature!"⁶⁶

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64. P. 484

65. P. 486

66. Ibid.

The red thread that has run throughout this final chapter on the Absolute Idea, the unity of the theoretical and practical idea, to that form of life which is the activity of the Notion, is free creative power. And fantastic as it may sound to those who insist Hegel was talking only of ideas when he himself talks of reality as well, it is Hegel, not Marx, who after identifying Freedom with Idea, wrote: "The Idea is not so feeble as merely to have a right or an obligation to exist without actually existing. (par.6). That is why the chapter of the Absolute Idea is overwhelmingly just about method, the new stage of identity of theory and practice which we have reached, and not just about previous forms of cognition. It is the shock of this recognition which made Lenin interpret the last page as the eve of the transformation of idealist dialectic into dialectical materialism: "This phrase on the last page of the Logic is exceedingly remarkable. The transition of the logical idea is to Nature. It brings one within a hand's grasp of materialism."⁶⁷ Whatever one may think of Lenin's interpretation, it certainly cuts through the fantasies of the neo-Hegelians who philosophized endlessly about "deducing" Nature from thought. That Lenin's statement is not so far-fetched as it sounds will become clearer when we will follow Hegel's transition from Logic to Philosophy of Nature, and from that to Philosophy of Mind, the completion of his Encyclopaedia, not as it sounds when it is merely anticipated in a single paragraph at the end of the Logic, but as it is developed in full.

This author is not attempting anything as foolish as "identifying" Hegel and Marx, nor to fly in the face of the fact that Hegel, the most encyclopaedic mind, the intellectual titan of the 19th century who took such sharp exception to the empty Absolutes of other philosophers and tried so valiantly to extricate himself from closed ontologies, nevertheless end his own writings in a series of Absolutes. In the Phenomenology it is Absolute Knowledge, the unity of History

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and Science, or history intellectually comprehended. In the Science of Logic, it is the Absolute Idea, the unity of theory and practice that has overcome all opposition between concept and reality, and in the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences it is Absolute Mind. Where Hegel writes "The Absolute is Geist — this is the supreme definition of the Absolute." This is exactly where the young Marx broke off his Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and proceeded to build altogether new foundations for philosophy and theory. In turning to the final book of Hegel's System, Philosophy of Mind, we must bear in mind also the sense in which Hegel himself used the expression, "beginnings."

Ch. I - Section C -- THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT (Mind-Geist)

Only that which is an object of freedom may be called an Idea. -- Hegel

The heads which philosophy used for reflection can be cut off later by the revolution for whatever purpose it likes. But philosophy would never have been able to use the heads cut off by the revolution if the latter had preceded it.

-- Heinrich Heine

p. 22 (except last para.) "We have now reached the rarified permanent character."

We have now reached the rarified atmosphere of the system "in completion" and by no means as either thoroughgoing or moving a work as either The Phenomenology or the Science of Logic, nor are the subjects as comprehensively dealt with as in the vast series of Lectures, one volume of the Philosophy of History, three volumes on History of Philosophy, four on Aesthetics and the last complete work from his own pen, Philosophy of Right. Nevertheless, even in the abbreviated "resigned" Encyclopaedia, so heady is the earthy quality of Freedom that it is still built into the very structure of the Philosophy of Mind. Freedom is indeed the construct of the world Hegel built. Though it went by the name of World Spirit and even that was only the "manifestation" of Absolute Spirit, it was always the reality of freedom that created the conditions for the freedom of the mind. Even Hegel's own reconciliation, not with a rational but the unrational state of Prussia, this still could not, in the strictly philosophic development, put brakes on the drive of the dialectic beyond philosophy "as such."

The young Hegel, fired by the enthusiasm for the French Revolution and concerned with "negative labor" wrote: "I shall demonstrate that, just as there is no idea of a machine, there is no idea of the State, for the State is something mechanical. Only that which is an object of freedom may be called an idea."⁵⁹ The old Hegel, in his final system, still cannot resist writing: "the will is the immediate individuality, self-instituted -- an individuality, however, also purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e., with freedom itself."⁶⁰ At the end of the paragraph, determined to stress that this is no free will of the Ego or the Unhappy Consciousness but the free will of a social individual, a world being, Hegel sums up the will to freedom thus "This will to liberty is no longer an impulse which demands its satisfaction, but the permanent character..."

For whatever reason Marx had broken off his manuscript on the Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic at the paragraph (384) where Hegel identifies Geist and Absolute, it is the very next paragraph which identifies it with freedom for Mind Objective and by the time we reach the end of the objective spirit freedom

59. Dokumente zu Hegel's Entwicklung, quoted by Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution. p. 12

60. Philosophy of Mind, para. 461.

as spelled out "in practice," that is to say, in history, thusly: "Then individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength, just because it is the very essence of mind, and that is its very actuality ... The Greeks and Romans, Plato and Aristotle, even the Stoics, did not have it. On the contrary, they saw that it is only by birth (as e.g. an Athenian or Spartan citizen), or by strength of character, education, or philosophy (-- the sage is free even as a slave and in chains that the human being is actually free)... If to be aware of the idea -- to be aware, i.e., to be aware that men are aware of freedom as their essence, aim, and object -- is matter of speculation, still this very idea itself is the actuality of men -- not something which they have, as men, but which they are."⁶¹

Hegel himself used the expression that philosophy was "parallel" with history. The three syllogisms in Absolute Mind which sum up the whole arduous journey are, however, without parallel in history or philosophy. The intellectual titan of his time was looking into the heart and mind of mankind's development and disclosing a forward movement, a vision if you wish, that future generations would attempt to evoke. As usual with Hegel, for whom philosophy is a circle of circles, we no sooner reach the end than he returns us to the beginning -- the Logic. He then says:

"The first appearance is formed by the syllogism which is based on the logical system as starting point, with Nature for the middle term which couples mind with it. The logical principle turns to Nature and Nature to Mind."⁶²

The movement, then, is from Logic to Nature or Practice. This is so, not because Lenin said so, but because Hegel who had a profound sense of history said so. When, in the last section (Free Mind) of Objective Mind he went to history to prove his point on freedom, not as a possession, but as a human dimension, he introduced it as follows: "Remembering that free mind is actual mind, we can see how misconceptions about it are of tremendous consequence in practice."⁶³ Practice in the theory of cognition is of course a pivotal stage in the Logic, but it is here reinforced not only as a development in cognition, but in history even as individuality here is very far from the Kantian Ego (much less than Fichtian) but is "an individuality, however, also purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e., with freedom itself."⁶⁴

This is why our age should be able to understand the movement from practice inherent in the final syllogisms of Absolute Mind for it is after all our postwar world that pulled Hegelian dialectics out of the academic halls and philosophic books on to the living stage of history. It is true that this transformation of Hegel into a contemporary has been via Marx. It is no accident, however, that established Communism's attack on Marx has been via Hegel. Because they recognize in the so-called mystical Absolute "the negation of the negation" the revolution against themselves, Hegel remains so alive and worrisome to the Communist rulers today. The Hungarian Revolution still haunts them. For one

61. Para. 482

62. Para. 575

63. Ibid

64. Para. 482

thing these intellectual bureaucrats sense correctly. Hegel's concept of the Absolute and the international struggle for freedom are not as far apart as it would appear on the surface.

Most academicians of "the West", especially in the United States, have too easily dismissed Marxist interpretation as "subversion." One profound exception is Karl Lowith, who, despite his opposition to Marx, hesitates neither to trace the integrality of Hegelian and Marxian dialectic, nor to point to the petrification of Hegel studies brought on by the Hegel scholars themselves because "The bourgeois intelligentsia had ceased in practice to be an historically oriented class, thereby losing the initiative and impact of their thought."⁶³ What is needed, it seems to this writer, is to be aware, even oppressively aware, of the simple truth that Hegel's categories are not only saturated with reality, but the Idea itself is real, lives, moves, transforms reality.⁶⁴ It was, after all, Hegel, who, at the very pinnacle of the system we are now considering, had pointed to the fact that there was a movement from Nature or practice to Logic. Naturally he wasn't aware of any such movement as the author described. Not only because it wouldn't happen for more than a century, but because, as a philosopher, isolated in an ivory tower, he couldn't have, in his wildest dreams, imagined that masses in motion their self-development rather than that of ideas or the custodian of ideas -- the philosophers -- would humanize, so to speak, "the absolute negativity", unite freedom and reality. Nevertheless -- and here precisely lies Hegel's genius -- Hegel simply couldn't keep himself from carrying through the development of an Idea to its logical conclusion. Let us now follow him as he shows us how to practice sunders itself:

Nature standing between the Mind and its essence sunders itself from them: for the syllogism is in the Idea and Nature is essentially defined as a starting point, the negative factor, and as implicitly the Idea. (para. 585)

Note that is said in Absolute Mind, and not just in Objective Mind where the "cunning of Reason" appeared to make men do its bidding. In a word, though dealing with concepts, with universals, they are now concrete. The sundering of practice has been neither to mount "the extremes of finite abstraction" nor as mere link between practice and theory. The circular development shows that practice is itself "implicitly the Idea."

In the next syllogism (para. 576), Geist, "as mediating agent in the process, presupposes Nature and couples it with the Logical principle. It is the syllogism where Mind reflects on itself in the Idea; Philosophy appears as a subjective cognition of which liberty is the aim, and which is itself the way to produce it."

In a word, on the one hand, philosophy is but a subjective deed, the act of knowing, cognition. On the other hand, it itself is the means by which liberty is achieved. It seems to be easy for academicians, on the one hand, and Communists at the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, to say that Hegel was talking of freedom in development of concepts. The Communist is hoping thereby to still the life opponents who want freedom from Communism.

The academician remains satisfied with such an interpretation because, to him, when Hegel was speaking of History, he was speaking, in the main of history of philosophy. But what one needs to be aware of, even oppressively aware of, is the simple truth that Hegel's categories are not only saturated with reality, but the Idea itself, to him, is real, lives, moves, transforms reality.

No doubt Hegel considered this as mere "unfoldment" of the Absolute or God. Yet so strong is the objective pull of the dialectic of history and not only of thought that one could easily "translate" Absolute Mind as the new society or what Hegel himself in another place called "new world." Let us turn to that final syllogism; which Hegel writes is:

...the Idea of philosophy which has self-knowing universal for its middle term: a middle which divides its self into Mind and Nature, making the former its presupposition, as process of the objectively and implicitly existing Idea... It is the nature of the fact, the notion which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition. The eternal idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as Absolute Mind. (para. 577)

First to be noted is that here, too, Hegel as the philosopher of "absolute negativity" in line with his conception also of philosophy as "a circle, a circle of circles", is the statement that the Idea of philosophy likewise sunders itself so that Mind becomes the presupposition — the interchangeability of presuppositions and mediating agents, thus stressing that the self-movement is ceaseless, and that even "the absolute universal" can play the role of "mediating agent" or what Lenin called "the bacillus" of proletarian revolution when he insisted that the "dialectic of revolution" was such that even a national revolution, such as the Easter Uprising in Ireland, could be the impulse to international revolution. The fact that either the Universal or the Particular or the Individual could be "the beginning" gives yet another facet to the concept of subjectivity when there are real men to carry through "the historic mission" (Hegel's own words in the early works) of transforming reality both in theory and practice. We will develop this further when we come to working out its

* We may also praise him (Hegel) as the philosopher of 'absolute negativity,' the believer in nothing that does not spring from the free, uncommitted, self-committing human spirit.' (p. 354), Hegel: A Re-Examination, by J.M. Findlay). Professor Findlay, whose re-examination of Hegel tries valiantly to re-establish the Hegelian philosophy as something alive and relevant to our day, has, despite both his anti-Marxism and his own "deviations" on the Hegelian dialectic, correctly emphasized that "Hegel sees what is 'absolute' in nothing which lies beyond the experiences and activities of men: the Absolute, he says, is 'what is entirely present' (das darchau Gegenwartige), what is 'on hand and actual', not 'something over and above things or behind them' (etwas druben and hinten)...One might even say, in fact, that there has been a philosopher by whom the Jenseitige, the merely transcendent, has been more thoroughly 'done away with,' more thoroughly shown to exist only as revealed in human experience." (p. 20)

** Lenin, The National Question.

implications for our own age. Here, where we are tracing the self-development of the Absolute as Hegel saw it, it is of the essence to recognize that even at the end Hegel puts the stress on the fact that the whole movement emerges, and that the subjective action of cognition is at one with "the nature of the fact."

This was Hegel's principle from the outset, beginning with the Preface to the Phenomenology where he told us that "The spirit of man has broken with the old order of things... (and set about its own transformation)." It remained his principle throughout, evidenced in the last lecture on the History of Philosophy when he summoned his students "to give ear to its (Spirit's) urgency, when the role that is within, forces its way out -- and we have to make it a reality."⁷⁶

The pluridimensional in Hegel, his presupposition of the infinite capacities of man to grasp through to the "Absolute," not as somethings isolated in heaven, but as a dimension of the human being, reveals what a great distance humanity had travelled from Aristotle's Absolutes. Because Aristotle lived in a society based on slavery, his Absolutes ended in "pure Form" --- mind of man would meet mind of God and contemplate how wondrous things are. Because Hegel's Absolutes emerged out of the French Revolution which put an end to serfdom, Hegel's Absolutes breathed the air, the earthy air of freedom. Even when one reads Absolute Mind as God, one cannot escape the earthly quality of the unity of theory and practice and grasp through to the Absolute Reality as man's attainment of total freedom, inner and outer, and temporal. The bondsman, having, through his labor, gained, as Hegel put it, "a mind of his own," becomes part of the struggle between "consciousness-in-itself" and "consciousness-for-itself." Or, more popularly stated, the struggle against alienation becomes the road to freedom.

In Hegel's Absolutes there is imbedded, though in abstract form, the fully developed of what Marx would have called the social individual, and what Hegel called individuality "purified of all that interfered with its universalism," i.e., freedom itself. Freedom, to Hegel, was not only his point of departure; it was also his point of return. This is what makes him so contemporary. This was the bridge not only to Marx, but to our day, and it was built by Hegel himself. As Lenin was to discover when he returned to the Marxian philosophic foundations in Hegel in the very midst of the First World War, the revolutionary spirit of the dialectic was not superimposed upon Hegel by Marx; it is in Hegel.

The simple truth is that, philosophically, Hegel never did get over the compulsion to comprehend the meaning of that epochal development of his time --- the Great French Revolution. Neither the fact that he himself was so good a Lutheran that he placed the Reformation "after" that event so that Protestantism, "the revealed religion" comes as the "higher" stage, the conciliator of the "self-destructive" nature of revolution; nor the fact that he was himself bourgeois to the marrow of his bones could, however, transcend that event, its development through revolution, revolution and counter-revolution, counter-revolution, not from the outside, but from within. The dialectic is the revolt of the masses, transformed into method.

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The dialectic has rightly been called "the algebra of revolution." That its creator could not "divine" all its implications is proof of only one fact: genius, too, cannot overcome the historic barrier. In this instance, the recognition that alienated labor which the young Hegel so poignantly described was "absolute negativity," was "Subject," the active force who would transform reality. But the fact that the young Hegel put those manuscripts of his First System away, never to return to them, not only could not stop history, it continued to have a pull on him, the pull of future, a future he refused to recognize but one that recognized him. Thus was the monopolist of the meaning of world history himself made "to take in partners." And the self-drive of the dialectic drove through the historic barriers Hegel could not meet. By the time the proletarian revolutions of the 1840s opened a new epoch the philosopher who could hear those voices from below was himself a revolutionary: Karl Marx.

The real question, therefore, is not the one concerning Hegel's specific ontological covering over human relations -- "a mystical veil" Marx called it. The real question is this: is it possible to make a new beginning for the spirit of another age upon Hegel's Absolutes without breaking totally with Hegel? Marx didn't think so. He never made the error of considering Hegel's Absolutes as no more than a return to Aristotle's. This was so not only because Hegel lived in a totally different age, but also because even the "pure" form of the movement of thought, when 25 full centuries are the point of observance, disclose a dialectic so different that objective development and "pure thought" run, to use Hegel's phrase, "parallel." It is precisely because Hegel summed up a 25 century long trek of human thought and development that he continued to be the focal point for Marx's theories, and has that great importance for us today.

In any case, the question is not so much of the need to break with Hegelianism as mysticism. That historic question has, after all, long ago been achieved by the discoverer of historical materialism. That it was no simple "standing Hegel right side up" will be seen clearly enough when we further analyze Marx's works. But already it is clear that the "materialist" adherents of Hegel didn't, by turning Hegel "right side up" instead of letting him remain standing on his head, thereby become "revolutionaries." The more they retrogressed in life, and outlook, the more their perspective was not of revolution, the more, in philosophy, did they return to Kant. It is no accident that Eduard Bernstein, in turning to reformism, struck out against both the revolutionary and the "Hegelianism" in Marx.

The class challenge to the rulers from below -- the development of the class struggles that came into the open during the last year of Hegel's life and developed into full-fledged revolutions in Marx's time -- marked the beginning of a totally new age and, therefore, also of philosophy -- "the nature of the fact and of cognition."

The real question then is not the need for a historic break with Hegel in mid-19th century when new revolutions covered Europe, but why, after the break, there has been a continuous return to Hegel both by the creator of historical materialism and theorist of proletarian revolution, Marx, and by Marx's most famous adherent and "practitioner" of 20th century revolutions, Lenin. We turn to them now not only to grasp their tasks that have already entered history, but for the illumination that they may shed for the new challenges of our age.

September 1968 - 2nd Draft -- Raya Dunayevskaya