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# Studies on MARX and HEGEL

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# STUDIES ON MARX AND HEGEL

Jean Hyppolite

*translated, with an Introduction, Notes,  
and Bibliography, by*

JOHN O'NEILL



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PREFACE  
to the  
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*Jean Hyppolite*

In 1907 the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce published an essay entitled "What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel." The time had come, it seemed, to make a final reckoning of Hegel's influence (which was considerable everywhere in Europe except France) and what might survive of his legacy. Croce could not envisage a Hegelian renaissance; he was unable to foresee that by a strange paradox Hegel would become associated with the existentialist current whose precursors had been critics of the Hegelian system. Kierkegaard and Marx had both taken their stand in opposition to Hegelianism. Hegel's absolute idealism transcended history, which it judged, and synthesized all past philosophies in a system which was equally vast and profound. But in that system the individual thinker and the historical individual disappeared. They were vanishing moments in a monumental history which represented the progressive realization of the Absolute. The individual goals and concrete projects of man were not completely ignored; they were recognized as moments, judged and absorbed by a cunning of reason which made use of them in order to concretize its own reality. Man's liberty, its adventures, its risks, its failures or its partial successes, were all contributory to this theodicy.

But there has appeared in France, in Europe, and even in America a philosophical movement, often acknowledging its origins in Kierkegaard, and sometimes in Marx, which attempts to vindicate the rights of existence, the freedom of man in situation, committed to a history whose meaning is ambiguous and without any absolute

guarantee however the risks are calculated. The names associated with this movement in France are those of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, the movement being no enemy of Marxism. What it kept from Marxism was only the analysis of concrete historical situations, reflection upon the economic bases of human existence, and especially the necessity of the liberation of mankind through the proletarian suppression of its own historical alienation. About this time the early works of Hegel and Marx were discovered. The genesis of the Hegelian system from the *Theological Writings* (a very questionable title) to *The Phenomenology of Mind*, 1807, and the origins of Marx and Engel's dialectical materialism from the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, through the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 1844, to the *Critique of Political Economy* of 1859 (the germ of *Capital*) constituted a genuine revelation for an entire generation. Before developing his system Hegel had described an unhappy religious and historical consciousness reminiscent of themes in Kierkegaard or Feuerbach.

Jean Wahl published *The Unhappy Consciousness in the Philosophy of Hegel*, 1929. The present author translated *The Phenomenology of Mind* into French for the first time and attempted a historical commentary<sup>1</sup> upon its puzzling description of the saga of the human mind as a terrestrial repetition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Even though this work culminates in an absolute knowledge which seems to swallow existence, it remains of value for the concrete detail and diversions in the journey of consciousness. It reveals the relations between individual consciousness and nature and especially with other individual consciousnesses. It provides a description much more than a deduction of the concrete bases of a history constituted by the encounter of individuals in a struggle to the death for recognition, an absolute war which, as in Clausewitz, is conceived as the extreme limit. Indeed, such a struggle would bring human history to an impasse; the war would have to end for want of combatants. That is why at first recognition is not reciprocal; there are masters and slaves, but the slave who works ends by dominating the master because he actualizes his negativity in a product which subsists rather than through the nothingness of death. The product, instrument, tool, machine, indeed, every means becomes a substantial end. History is the work

of each and of all; it provides its own spectacle and representation in religion, in art, and finally one day in philosophy. But the element of tragedy does not disappear; it survives in the relation between consciousness engaged in action and contemplative consciousness. In this *phenomenology*, as Marx understood it, Hegel often described with great fidelity some of the fundamental characteristics of the human condition, in particular, those of the alienation of man through his conditions of work and existence. Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* are nothing else than a commentary on *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

A. Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*,<sup>2</sup> contains lectures, given in the 1930's, that were extremely influential at that time. Going beyond a literal reading, Kojève spoke of Hegel's atheism and Hegel's interpretation of the Napoleonic Empire which at that time (1807) he saw as the fulfillment of the French Revolution.

The discovery of the early writings of Hegel and Marx has enabled West European thinkers to understand in terms other than those of the systematic *Encyclopedia* and the schematic dialectic of Engels what was the meaning of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Marx's *historical materialism*. It has enabled us to raise in a fresh way the problem of the relation between Hegel and Marx. The much too simple idea of a dialectical reversal leading from the monism of the Hegelian Spirit to the materialist monism of Marx has perhaps been revised. It is the theme of alienation and the conquest of alienation which is now at the center of our attention. Actually it had been the inspiration of Marx's early works. But there is an ebb and flow, and the generation which is succeeding the existentialist generation is also taking notice of the great problems of structure that are dominant in Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*. Moreover, on this issue, which is closer to the interest of East European commentators, it seems that recent analyses will allow us to pose the problem of the relationship between Hegel and Marx somewhat differently than hitherto.

Having discovered the paths followed by the young Hegel and Marx, we are presently engaged in reflection upon the consequences of these exploratory journeys and upon the great works of their maturity, namely, Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Capital* (with

its very important first phase in *Critique of Political Economy*, 1859). The tide of existentialism now yields before the rise not of essentialism (displaced forever) but of structuralism. At the moment there are only a few instances of this approach to the structuralist features of Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Capital*; so that we shall draw upon two essays of Louis Althusser published in *La Pensée*,<sup>3</sup> which in our opinion state the issue quite clearly. Marx's conception of the dialectic is not the same as Hegel's if we consider its actual role in his analysis of human society and capital. It is not a case of the same method applied to a system which is just the reverse of the other. Hegel is indeed an idealist and a monist. For him there exists a *single principle*, an indivisible genetic totality which experiences self-division and self-opposition in order finally to be reintegrated with itself (a process which Lenin in his notes on Hegel rightly found very obscure). It involves an *absolute subject* that alienates itself and becomes its own phenomenon in order to reconquer itself. The spirit loses itself and finds itself. The journey of absolute spirit is such that it has already returned at the time it starts out. What we have here is a *theology*, and when East European commentators substitute matter for Hegel's absolute spirit and retain the dialectic of the One which negates itself and recovers itself in the negation of the negation, like Hegel, they are also *theologians*. They preserve in Hegel what Marx felt obliged to reject. They entrench themselves in a dogmatism similar to theological metaphysics.

What deserves admiration in Hegel and even in his *Logic* is his unfaithfulness to this monism, particularly in the doctrine on Essence. There he describes structures in which the essential and unessential are reflected in one another, in which the existential conditions of a dominant contradiction are an element in the contradiction itself. In Marx there is never any question of an absolute subject, Matter or Spirit, which might follow a continuous dialectical development. There are never anything but concrete pre-existing structures. There is no indivisible genetic Totality, but many totalities; for example, human society in the capitalist phase. These totalities are not essences but structures in which, as L. Althusser has shown, the dominant contradiction, for example, between the relations and the forces of production is

reflected in its existential conditions, which are no longer contingent superstructures arbitrarily tied to their infrastructure. The dominant contradiction can shift, can appear in various aspects (Marx was not insensible to these characteristic features of history, as can easily be seen from reading what he wrote on the class struggles in France and the emergence of Napoleon III where the explanation is far from simplistic). Structure is not the appearance of a unique subject but an original ensemble, a totality of a quite different type from Hegel's spiritual principle. It is within its totality that development takes place, whether in phases where antagonism is still only a difference or where it appears as an overt struggle or as an explosion which involves the Totality in a mutation. If one were to return to the often remarkable commentary<sup>4</sup> by Lenin on Hegel's *Logic*, one could rediscover concepts of this order when, for example, he shows the relation between a natural development and a spiritual development, or where, in a typical image, in connection with the logic of Essence he insists upon the importance of the position and movement of every drop in a river.

On turning their attention to these studies of structure—and of strategy—Western students are perhaps in closer rapport with East European commentators on the Hegel-Marx filiation. On one point, however, they keep their distance. They reject Engels' dialectical schematism, the monism and determinism that are more Hegelian than Marxian. We may add that these studies of structure—and strategy—which make a science of Marxism, and undoubtedly correspond to Marx's own thinking, seem to us to be lacking where they eliminate the youthful impulses and the existential reflection upon alienation. Indeed, what would be the meaning of history and the significance of the revolutionary movement if it were not clarified in existence through the awareness of alienation and the resolves to surmount it? Jean-Paul Sartre might ask how the for-itself can emerge from the in-itself or from an existence antecedent to consciousness. Marx, who at the time of the Paris Commune had thought the revolt premature and ineffectual, immediately took its part once it had broken out and he was able to see in it the basis of a new revolutionary tradition. There is a universal value for us in reflection upon the re-

lationship between Hegel and Marx. It is not just a historical legacy. It involves a problem that can always be re-examined and which can acquire fresh meaning at any given time in history.

## NOTES

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- 2 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, edited and with an introduction by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1969).
- 3 Louis Althusser, "Contradiction et surdétermination," *La Pensée* (December 1962), pp. 3-22; "Sur la dialectique matérialiste (De l'inégalité des origines)," *ibid.* (August 1963), pp. 5-46.
- 4 V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic*," *Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961).

## INTRODUCTION

# Hegel and Marx on History as Human History

*John O'Neill*

The rediscovery of the concept of alienation by Marxists in search of a framework for the interpretation and critique of socialist reality has been challenged as an attempt to refurbish a speculative Hegelian notion which Marx abandoned for the more precise concept of exploitation. The "historical Marx," that is to say, Marx of the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, whom Marxists themselves have given to history, is now to be forsaken for a history made out of the revolutionary event of Marx's discovery of alienation in the property system and the utopian suggestion that the collectivization of property would end alienation and the prehistory of man.<sup>1</sup> These events might be taken to indicate that here at any rate Marx's critique of Hegel appears to have backfired and that Hegel's original concept of alienation as an ontological experience is the more general concept that Marxists now need for the understanding of the unhappy socialist consciousness.

I think it can be argued that what is usually set forth as Marx's redefinition of the Hegelian concept of alienation is nothing else than a progression to be found in *The Phenomenology of Mind*. If this is indeed so, then the "existentialist" version of Hegel's concept of alienation is not wholly true to Hegel's account of the relation between the individual and society and cannot be em-

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ployed to revise Marx. The attempt to correct late Marx with early Marx appears to be a correction in favor of Hegel only if Hegel himself is corrected in terms of a reading of the early phenomenological description of the "Unhappy Consciousness." But if this discussion is followed through to the historical description of self-estrangement and culture then

experience of alienation is neither individual nor social in origin but the historical mediation of society and the individual through the process of work as self-expression or culture (*Bildung*) in which alienation is ultimately suspended. Now I admit that this more complete account of Hegel's concept of alienation is closer to that of Marx than perhaps Marx himself understood in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844*. But if we must consider Marx's philosophical and economic thought as a unity,<sup>2</sup> as I think we must, then our Hegelian trends must do the same for Hegel. We may then proceed in agreement, as Marx was fond of saying to Engels.

I am dealing with the convergence between Hegel and Marx and I want to show that the "existentialist" version of this phenomenon is not properly grounded in either Hegel or Marx. The consequences of this may be seen in Sartre's struggle in the *Critique de la raison dialectique* to unite the ontological alienation involved in the dialectic of recognition of the other with a concept of intersubjectivity as the necessary ground of political action and organization.

The ultimate goal of self-consciousness is to recover the unity of the self and the world which it discovers abstractly in the unity of the mind and its objects. The recovery of the world is mediated by desire which reveals the world as my praxis. But this is still only abstractly a world until my interests are recognized by the other. The dialectic of recognition appears as a life and death struggle because of desire which binds consciousness to the world of things and simultaneously reveals its transcendence as the negation of things and the Other. But the categories of subject and object, negation, self, other and recognition are not a priori categories of experience. They arise in the course of the self-interpretation by consciousness of its modes of lived experience which involve consciousness in a dialectic between intentionality and an irreducible ontological dif-

ference which generates the world and the recognition of the Other. For if consciousness did not encounter the resistance of things and others, it could only know things perceptually and others by analogy and it would have no organic or social life. But this means that consciousness can never be satisfied in a desire for objects and the Other. For in this it would only consume itself whereas it needs a common world in which things and others reflect consciousness back upon itself. "Selfconsciousness, which is absolutely for itself, and characterizes its object directly as negative, or is primarily desire, will really, therefore, find through experience this object's independence."<sup>3</sup> Desire then is not the actuality of self-consciousness but only its potentiality for actualizing itself in a common world and intersubjectivity. Hence the struggle to the death which originates in desire is exteriorized in the relation to objects established between the Master and the Slave which preserves their independence in the form of a living dependency. "In this experience self-consciousness becomes aware that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness."<sup>4</sup>

With respect (fear) for life that is born from the struggle to the death there is initiated a further dialectic in which the Slave's apprenticeship to things makes possible the practical observation of the laws of their operation. Though he works for another, the Slave learns to work with objects whose independence now submits to his production though not to his consumption. By the same token the Master's independence of things mediated by the Slave becomes his dependence upon the Slave's cultivation.

Labour, on the other hand, is desire restrained and checked, evanescence delayed and postponed; in other words, labour shapes and fashions the thing. The negative relation to the object passes into the form of the object, into something that is permanent and remains; because it is just for the labourer that the object has independence.<sup>5</sup>

Thus from the recognition of the value of life and the fear of death, expressed in submission to things for the sake of life, the experience of domination and servitude opens up the cycle of culture as the objective mediation of self-expression and the world.

It is through work that the world is revealed as conscious *praxis*, as a field of individual interests which are in turn opened to the interests of others and hence to a common measure of good and evil. As a field of practical intentions the world is the element of consciousness, its "original nature" which the activity of consciousness molds to its purposes. Hegel is quite explicit that there is no room for the experience of estrangement in the act whereby the self externalizes itself in the world of objects. It is the very nature of consciousness to act to externalize itself in the deed, or work.

The act is something simply determinate, universal, to be grasped as an abstract, distinctive whole; it is murder, theft, a benefit, a deed of bravery, and so on, and what it *is* can be *said* of it. It *is* such and such, and its being is not merely a symbol, it is the fact itself. It *is* this, and the individual human being *is* what the *act is*. In the simple fact that the act *is*, the individual is for others what he really is and with a certain general nature, and ceases to be merely something that is "meant" or "presumed" to be this or that. No doubt he is not put there in the form of mind; but when it is a question of his being *qua* being, and the twofold being of bodily shape and act are pitted against one another, each claiming to be his true reality, the deed *alone* is to be affirmed as his genuine being—not his figure or shape, which would express what he "means" to convey by his acts, or what any one might "conjecture" he merely could do. In the same way, on the other hand, when his performance and his inner possibility, capacity, or intention are opposed, the former *alone* is to be regarded as his true reality, even if he deceives himself on the point and, after he has turned from his action into himself, means to be something else in his "inner mind" than what he is in the act. Individuality, which commits itself to the objective element, when it passes over into a deed no doubt puts itself to the risk of being altered and perverted. But what settles the character of the act is just this—whether the deed is a real thing that holds together, or whether it is merely a pretended or "supposed" performance, which is in itself null and void and passes away. Objectification does not alter the act itself; it merely shows what the deed *is*, i.e., whether it *is* or whether it is *nothing*.<sup>6</sup>

Only if we abstract the moments of purpose, means, and object can we speak of the transcendence of consciousness over its accomplished deeds or works. But apart from the process of work,

consciousness would remain an empty project and its freedom a pure negativity without a world. It is in the process of work that consciousness experiences the identity of freedom and nature. The externalization of consciousness is a natural experience through which an objective culture and history is created which in turn gives shape to the individual who acquires through it his essential or generic humanity.

It is often remarked that Hegel spiritualized action where Marx materialized it. Marx himself believed this to be the substance of his critique of Hegel. But I think there is some evidence for the argument that Hegel and Marx are engaged in a similar critique of alienation as estrangement from action as expression; and thus there is a continuity between Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* and Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

In his remarks on physiognomy Hegel argues that the externalization of consciousness is not contingently related to its purpose but is essential to consciousness as embodied being. Thus the human hand and human speech are essential organs of conscious expression and it is by means of them that we establish a common world of artifacts and meanings. It is through the body that we give to our immediate surroundings "a general human shape and form, or at least the general character of a climate, of a portion of the world," just as we find regions of the world characterized by different customs and culture. It is through the expressive organs of the hand and speech that we realize a unity of purpose and object which conveys our presence in the world and to others. human body is thus the expressive instrument of spirit and not its simple objective alienation; it is the instrument whereby there can be culture and history which in turn shape human sensibility, thought, and perception.

For if the organs in general proved to be incapable of being taken as expressions of the inner for the reason that in them the action is present as a process, while the action as a deed or (finished) act is merely external, and inner and outer in this way fall apart and are or can be alien to one another, the organ must, in view of the peculiarity now considered, be again taken as also a middle term for both. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Thus self-consciousness is not estranged by its natural being, for the human body is an expressive organ through which meaning is embodied in speech and the work of human hands which together articulate the nature of man.

That the hand, however, must exhibit and reveal the inherent nature of individuality as regards its fate, is easily seen from the fact that after the organ of speech it is the hand most of all by which a man actualizes and manifests himself. It is the animated artificer of his fortune; we may say of the hand it is what a man does, for in it as the effective organ of his fulfillment he is there present as the animating soul; and since he is ultimately and originally his own fate, the hand will thus express this innate inherent nature.<sup>8</sup>

The expression of the human spirit is not the abstract confrontation of a pure interiority with a simple exteriority but the reciprocation of intentionality, gesture, and the deed through which joy, sorrow, and nobility delineate their own meaning in the eyes, the voice, and the hands of man.

The growth of human culture is the growth of human sensibility. So long as culture is dependent upon the class domination of Resources or Wealth then the judgment of Good is identified with the Power to command wealth and Bad with the wealth that always threatens to be lacking but for power over it. But the universalization of culture implicit in the expressive activity of work is progressively made explicit in the power of the spoken word to express the intellectual, political, and economic ideal of action as self-expression, of which the supreme prerevolutionary expression is Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau*. The liberal identification of self-expression with the organization of society as a system of needs results in a hybrid political economy. And it is the critique of political economy begun in Hegel which provides the bridge to Marx. The nub of Hegel's critique of liberal society is that it rests upon a confusion of a law discovered in the workings of the passions, the invisible law of the market, with law in the ethical sense of a law embraced by rational self-consciousness. This distinction is the basis for Hegel's transition to his philosophy of the State which Karl Löwith, for example, considers as an apparent

dialectical transition within liberal society, or rather only its "suspension through the ideal of the *polis*."<sup>9</sup> We might then understand Hegel's critique of liberal society not as a recommendation that the "State" supersede "Society," but that the liberal subordination of law to an empirical law of the passions as a criterion for the organization of society be superseded in favor of a society organized about a conception of law based on the sublime need of self-consciousness to achieve self-expression in its objects and activities.

Whatever the nature of the differences between *The Phenomenology of Mind* and the *Philosophy of Right*, it is perhaps fateful that Marx began his critique of Hegel with an attack on the Hegelian conception of the State. Marx attacks the Hegelian State as a cultural universal on the ground that it only abstractly mediates the separation between the private interests of the bourgeoisie, summarized in the doctrine of Natural Rights, and the nature of Man supposedly outlined in the doctrine of Rights. "Here man is far from being conceived as a member of a general class; rather the life of this class itself, society, is conceived as a framework external to the individuals, a restriction upon their original independence. The only bond holding them together is . . . need and private interest."<sup>10</sup> Marx concludes that bourgeois society cannot be transcended politically, for the state rests upon and is nothing else than the legitimation of an individualistic society. The critique of bourgeois society can only be grounded in a re-examination of the process through which the totality of human life and expression is reduced to a set of needs defined by the impoverishment of labor.

It is not necessary to trace Marx's economic and historical analysis of the institutional preconditions of alienation.<sup>11</sup> This is the aspect of Marx's work which, though not lacking in Hegel, separates Marx from Hegel. The differences, however, seem smaller once attention is given to Marx's conception of the universal nature of work and the human world and sensibility which is its product. I have tried to show earlier that Hegel did not regard man as pure self-consciousness. His treatment of consciousness as embodied being in which the organs of hand and speech are the naturally expressive and creative agencies of a human world should at least modify the criticism that Hegel's concept of alienation

confused the two processes of externalization and estrangement. Insofar as Hegel's conception of Man is that of an embodied consciousness, then I think Hegel could well have concurred with the anthropological concept that Marx thought he was opposing to Hegel in the following remark.

To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being full of natural vigour is to say that he has real, sensuous objects as the objects of his being or of his life, or that he can only express his life in real, sensuous objects. To be objective, natural, and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature, and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature, and sense for a third part, is one and the same thing.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, there are several aspects of Marx's concept of alienation among which there is, I think, a central notion where again Marx and Hegel share a common conception of action as self-expression. For Marx alienation is a fact of political economy not of phenomenology. That is to say, in the first place, under capitalism man is estranged from the product of his work which in turn estranges him from his own nature as a sensuous and social being. Under such conditions the meaning of work becomes merely a means of subsistence for the satisfaction of purely animal needs and loses its nature as a human need which is to work creatively even in the absence of physical needs. Man and Nature are thus involved in a cultural matrix in which the natural history of man is interwoven with the humanization of natural history.

Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form—in short, senses capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of man) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses—the practical senses (will, love, etc.)—in a word, human sense—the humanness of the senses—comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of humanized nature. The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present.<sup>13</sup>

The evolution of human nature proceeds in terms of the interaction between man and nature and the technology and social relations of production which mediate that process. In this sense the potentiality of human nature may be regarded as a function of the means and relations of production.

Because of this simple fact that every succeeding generation finds itself in possession of the productive forces won by the previous generation which serve it as the raw material for new production, a connection arises in human history, a history of humanity takes shape which has become all the more a history of humanity since the productive forces of man and therefore his social relations have been extended. Hence it necessarily follows: the social history of men is never anything but the history of their individual development, whether they are conscious of it or not.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, I think, it is possible to conclude that neither Hegel nor Marx separated Nature from History and that both regarded world history as a history of culture in which human needs furnish a primary structure open to a multiplicity of cultural forms which in turn shape the existential character of need but directed toward the truly human needs of creativity and sociality.

Toronto

January 1969

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- 3 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 221, translated by J. B. Baillie.
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- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 238.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 349-350.

- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 343.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, translated by David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), p. 242.
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PART

I

THE CONCEPT OF  
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# I

## The Concept of Life and Consciousness of Life in Hegel's Jena Philosophy

### Consciousness and Life

The chapter on "Self-consciousness" in *The Phenomenology of Mind* constitutes one of the principal moments of the Hegelian dialectic. Consciousness comes to the discovery that its object is no longer alien to it. The "internal structure" or "essence of things" ceases to be an "object in-itself" apart from all relation to consciousness.<sup>1</sup> In its immediate form self-consciousness is Desire and the object which it confronts is nothing else than the object of its desire. Consciousness in this case is identical with life, and the creature moved by desire does not consider the object of its desire as something essentially alien. As a living creature he experiences the character of "being other" only as a moment within an encounter that is virtually resolved in satisfaction. The living creature appropriates the object and assimilates it with his own substance so that it becomes flesh and blood. In this way he affirms the identity in-itself of the object and himself. In his writings at Jena, some years prior to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel repeatedly refers to this relation between the living creature and the inorganic environment: "The organic is unmediated power, the act which, so to speak, grounds the inorganic in an organic flux."<sup>2</sup> In another passage Hegel remarks that "Eating and drinking make of inorganic things what they are in themselves or in truth . . . it is their unconscious conception."<sup>3</sup> Here we see how Hegel understood the act of conception, that is, as the penetration of the object through a mode of knowledge that coincides with the development of the object. This notion of a consciousness

identical with the living experiences of man leads us into Hegel's earliest meditations. While he was at Bern and at Frankfurt he was less interested in philosophical speculation than in a *description of the human condition*. Indeed, it is hardly possible without a knowledge of the early writings on Abraham or on Love to attempt an adequate interpretation of Hegel's more difficult reflections upon Consciousness and Life.

There is, however, an important difference between Hegel's early works and the first *Jenenser System* or the *Phenomenology*. In the latter works Hegel intends to *conceptualize* life whereas earlier he was content to describe it.<sup>4</sup> Thought and life are no longer to be separate domains, where life always outstrips thought and thought never comprehends life. The two terms are to be identified so that life is conceptualized as life and thought breaks with its traditional forms in order to grasp and express life itself. This conception of life is, of course, a common theme throughout German romanticism. In *Faust*, Part One, Goethe contrasts living thought with moribund speculation:

Instead of living nature  
in which God created man,  
you're surrounded by smoke and rot,  
animals' skeletons and dead men's bones.<sup>5</sup>

Schelling broke with the *Critique of Judgment* in order to conceive nature as a living whole. In his Jena writings Hegel, basing himself upon his friend's *Philosophy of Nature*, organized and systemized this conception of life. Nevertheless Hegel's speculations upon life differ from those of Schelling. Hegel is less concerned with life as a biological concept than as the life of mind and spirit. Hegel's concept is less an intuition of nature than of the development of human consciousness. He is more concerned with human desire than with biological drives. If one were to characterize Hegel's philosophy as a whole, to express its origin and basic intuition, one would have to say that *it seeks to be the thought of human life*. "To think life, that is the problem," Hegel remarks in an early fragment, adding that "the consciousness of life in itself would be the same thing as the consciousness of what is man."<sup>6</sup>

Schelling's philosophy of nature is absorbed into Hegel's system to the extent that it contributes to a better understanding of the spirit which is the "truth of nature" and which presupposes nature. In the earliest sections of the *Metaphysik* Hegel regards nature as an inferior moment of the Idea and not as a complete manifestation of the Absolute: The spirit of nature is a hidden spirit. "It does not develop itself in the same form as spirit; it is only spirit for the spirit who is conscious of it, it is spirit in-itself, but not for-itself."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, "Hegel's philosophy of nature is in no way a metaphysics of nature but it is certainly a metaphysics of natural science, that is to say, a metaphysics of the whole of man's knowledge of nature."<sup>8</sup> Hegel, then, owes to Schelling the conception of nature that he worked out in the writings at Jena. But the basic experience upon which he reflects is human experience in all its ranges. Hegel lacks that "cosmic sympathy" which is the original characteristic of Schelling's thought. On the other hand, the understanding of spiritual relationships lacking in Schelling is present in Hegel. Numerous passages from *The Phenomenology of Mind* on infinity and self-consciousness illustrate the essential role of the development of the consciousness of life through thought and reflection. The development of consciousness has a creative and dynamic role in the Hegelian dialectic because, as he says in his Jena writings, spirit is "that which discovers itself,"<sup>9</sup> and nature is only the scene of the self-discovery of spirit.

### **Life, Infinity, Relation**

The object confronted by self-consciousness ceases to be an abstract being or the "thing" of perception viewed *partes extra partes*, but a living being considered from the standpoint of the totality of life, so that self-consciousness possesses in its object an image of itself. In Spinozan terms, self-consciousness discovers itself in the relationship between life and the living creature, the genus and the individual, substance and mode. This relationship forces the understanding to break with its categories. For the understanding always grasps parts in an external relationship to one another, and when it posits a totality it conceives it as an entity apart from multiplicity. Exteriority, spatiality, and mech-

anism are the defining characters of the attitude of perception which is consequently a much more abstract attitude than it would pretend. "The omnipresence of the simple in a multiple externality"<sup>10</sup> is a mystery for the understanding. But it is just this inseparability of the whole and its parts in a vital immanence which constitutes infinity. *The concepts of Life and Infinity are identical.* In the *Jenenser Logik* Hegel conceives infinity in terms of a dialectical relationship between the One and the Many, but within this dialectic one can discover the concept of Life. Reciprocally, life is itself this dialectic and it is life which leads the spirit or mind to think dialectically.

One should not, however, believe that it is this notion of life, considered as a totality, that is the source of what is original in Hegelian thought. In his volume on Hegel's *Realphilosophie*, J. Hoffmeister has shown clearly that this notion was common to all German romantic thought. In a famous monologue of *Faust* Goethe summons the source of life:

Eternal nature, where shall I grasp you?  
Where are you, breasts, you springs of life  
on which hang heaven and earth,  
toward which the parched heart presses?  
You flow, you suckle—must I do without you?<sup>11</sup>

Herder, Goethe, and Schelling used Spinozan language to contrast *natura naturans* with *natura naturata*, and nature as "infinite productivity" with nature as a "conditioned and limited product."<sup>12</sup> In romantic philosophy the concept of Ether is the counterpart of the world-soul in which spirit, force, and matter are reconciled. This is, in fact, the supra-sensible substratum of nature which Kant declared to be unknowable.<sup>13</sup> The concept of the world-soul is the first form assumed by Schelling's concept of Identity, that is to say, "the highest unity from which everything comes and to which everything returns,"<sup>14</sup> much like Spinoza's Substance.

The originality of Hegel's thought, then, does not lie in its concept of Life but in the philosophical attempt to conceptualize life by means of a dialectic which permits "finite determinations" to be engulfed in "the indifferent." Thus, as early as 1802, in a

study of the category of Quantity, Hegel criticizes Schelling's "forces" for failing to discriminate the qualitative features of being.<sup>15</sup> Schelling sees all finite reality as simply a deviation from the Absolute produced by a number of oscillations in the vicinity of "Identity." This mode of thought may very well be adequate for the intuition of nature, but it is deficient for conceiving spiritual life in which the oppositions are essential and qualitative. "Opposition is qualitative and since there is nothing outside of the Absolute, *opposition is itself absolute*, and it is only because it is absolute that it can transcend itself."<sup>16</sup> Reflection and opposition should not be conceived outside of the Absolute but within the very heart of the Absolute. Unlike Fichte, Hegel does not conceive of the infinite as beyond knowledge. Nor does he think of reducing the world of oppositions to simple deviations so that differences become merely external effects, as in Schelling. Hegel's view is that quantitative differences reveal the very nature of the concrete thing (*die Sache selbst*). The infinite, affirmed as "productivity" but emptied of all concrete opposition, only offers an abyss in which all differences disappear. An intuition of development which remains a pure intuition and does not conceive of the obstacle in all its actuality and as something internal is not the intuition of "the spirit that never ceases to negate." If the Absolute is to be truly productive, it must be conceived as a negative power, an internal activity which posits division and opposition within itself in order to negate it. We have here the mystical image of an Absolute which divides and tears itself apart in order to be absolute. But in Hegel this mystical notion is transformed through a dialectical philosophy which is validated by the intensity of the intellectual thrust that it brings into being.<sup>17</sup> Hegel's creativeness lies not in the mystical image but in the *conceptual* translation of it which he effects. What strikes one upon reading the *Jenenser Logik* is the interrelation between a mystical intuition and a system of thought which grasps the living reality of logical relationships.

The infinite does not lie beyond finite oppositions; on the contrary, the latter are conceived as infinite. In Hegel's conception the infinite is no less "restless" than the finite: "The disintegrative flux of the infinite only actualizes itself through the existence

which it disintegrates. The transcended, for all that, remains an absolute. It engenders itself in the very process of disintegration, for the latter presupposes a being that destroys itself."<sup>18</sup> Despite its apparent obscurity, there is an underlying thought in this passage which is clear enough. As he remarked in 1800, Hegel was to think through "the bond between relation and non-relation." The key concept which enables him to think through the relation (*Beziehung*) and not simply to live it in an unreflected way is the concept of *Infinity*. It is this concept which provides the foundation of the dialectical logic of 1802 in which we have the genetic framework of the Hegelian system.

From Descartes to Kant the problem of relation had been the central problem of the theory of knowledge. The Cartesian *cogito* represents an intuition which grasps in a pure act of mind the most profound unity of thought and being originally questioned by the Cartesian doubt. Kantian philosophy is a philosophy of law or of the relations between finite determinations. Hegel continues this reflection upon the nature of laws in his proof that all knowledge of astronomy presupposes a relation between time and space. He is not concerned simply to reflect upon the empirical relations between the two quantities but to show how the concept of time presupposes the concept of space and is in turn presupposed by the concept of space. But it is particularly in the conceptualization of life that the need appears for the categories of unity and division. Infinity is the living principle of relation, that is, the dialectical principle by which the development of each term of a relation may be conceived. To take a finite determination as infinite is to grasp it according to its restless capacity for self-transcendence or "becoming other than itself": "As such the determinate particular is essentially the absolute restlessness of not being what it is."<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless it will not suffice to posit a transcendent entity which is forever beyond each particular determination. Each determination negates itself through *its* correlative but at the same time discovers itself in the latter since *its* correlative negates itself through it. Consequently, the Infinite, or the totality of this two-fold movement, should in no way be postulated as an unattainable transcendent. The unity expressed in a relation presupposes the distinction of the terms that it relates. For this unity is "the act of

transcendence and not a transcendental entity,"<sup>20</sup> in which the distinction of terms disappears. Thus everything is life and movement through the relation insofar as it is infinite.

The life of the relation is to be found in the Hegelian dialectic, which is not to be thought of as a formal technique which can be applied indifferently to any object. The dialectic is the life of the object and dialectical thought is in no way an abstract categorization. *Every living relation has its own particular structure which must be conceptualized as such.* To achieve this it is necessary to grasp each of the terms and the relation itself under the category of infinity. *Infinity is therefore the middle term which makes it possible to conceptualize life and the living relation and the means whereby the problem of knowledge and the problem of life are identifiable.*<sup>21</sup> Hegel's first treatise of logic is the reply to a question he had posed to himself as a young man: What are the intelligible conditions of human life? However, the dynamism of the relation only possesses its true significance once there appears an active consciousness of life. It is only the spiritual relation that is a dialectic "for-itself." That is why Hegel speaks of nature as "only a concept in-itself," so that biological life can only end in death or a radical dissolution of the universal and the particular. But in Hegel death is the beginning of the life of the spirit.

### The Dialectic of Life and the Living Agent

How does this infinite life that is the mirror of itself appear to self-consciousness? In reflecting upon life one can equally well start from the unity of life (*natura naturans*) and proceed to the distinct individual, or one can begin with the separate individual (*natura naturata*) for whom the whole is an external unity, and then discover that unity as the immanent nature of the individual. The two procedures may indeed be complementary in a cyclical fashion exemplary of a dialectical relation.<sup>22</sup>

Let us start from the point of view of the separate individual, or what Hegel calls a living form or an individual structure. This entity detaches itself from the whole and declares itself to be independent. It is what Spinoza calls a mode. But whereas the

Spinozan mode is purely negative, the Hegelian mode is a negative force in itself or an activity like the Leibnitzian monad.<sup>23</sup> It constitutes itself by separating from the universal and attaching itself to being as a "being-for-itself." Hegel's philosophy of life of the Jena period is the description of this *biological dialectic*. The individual life posits itself as force over its "inorganic world" or "negation of itself." It is opposed to the whole external to itself inasmuch as it is a "synthesis of multiplicity" against which the individual is a "negative unity." The relation between the universe and the organism, the universal and the individual, is presented in the biological form of the relation between the environment and the organism. Here one can hardly suppress the comparison with Hegel's description, in his early works, of the experience of Abraham.

Abraham isolates himself as a stranger on the earth. He asserts himself and thereby conceives a totality outside of himself since he makes it the object of his satisfaction. But the negation is not effectively realized, the satisfaction remains in the future, and the individual lives in a present always directed to a future that is the negation of the present. This is the source of an internal contradiction which in the very heart of desire is experienced as sorrow. Sorrow is this contradiction as it is lived. It is the dialectic as a biological experience. Nevertheless, being-for-itself (*Fürsichsein*) thrives upon the universal and dominates it . . . "by being in its own right, or by its being in its determinate shape an infinite substance, it comes forward in opposition to the universal substance, disowns this fluent continuity with that substance, and insists that it is not dissolved in this universal element, but rather on the contrary preserves itself by and through its separation from this its inorganic nature, and by the fact that it consumes this inorganic nature."<sup>24</sup> As such, being-for-itself identifies itself with the universal or genus. It is a purely negative force and in its absolute self-assertion it negates its very self. "It consumes itself . . . transcends its own inorganic nature . . . feeds upon itself . . . organizes its own identity. . . . It is the very process that occurs within it."<sup>25</sup>

The individual, as a living being, is himself that fluidity in which the moments are ceaselessly negated and transcended. His growth

is by means of his own negation and maturation. The individual is life and therefore identical with temporality which is a perpetual self-negation.<sup>26</sup> The life of the individual belongs to the category of action and not of "thing." Through action the individual negates what is fixed in himself (his internal inorganic nature) and transcends himself. This inherent internal contradiction of life is externalized in the development of the species and in the division of the sexes. The individual sees his opposite member outside of himself and identical with himself. Desire is no longer directed toward an object but upon another self. This description derives from Hegel's early reflections upon love in which "life senses life."<sup>27</sup> But the relation between the sexes is still a relation of immediacy and it lacks the consciousness that would make of it an infinite "for-itself." Actually, in the relation between the sexes the biological individual disappears as an individual. The individual dies and becomes another being through which the cycle of life is repeated. The life of the child is the death of the parent. Thus the cycle closes upon itself. The endless cycle of life, Hegel says, "is just as much a formation of independent individual shapes, as it is a way of cancelling a shape assumed."<sup>28</sup> The living being in positing himself negates himself. His development and fulfillment are implicitly his death, or, considered more positively, the creation of a new individual. Life and death are two indissoluble aspects of the lived moment or time that shares in both being and non-being. The postulation of a universal consequently appears to the isolated individual under two aspects, as a universe external to himself and as a totality immanent within himself: "We have, then, here a connected system, where one extreme is the universal life *qua* universal or genus, the other being the same life *qua* a single whole or universal individual."<sup>29</sup>

In the cycle of life the universal and the individual interpenetrate one another and this phenomenon is translated into the logical notion of the power of the principle of negativity. As a totality life is identical with the activity of transcending its differentiations and thus its conceptualization presupposes structures that are separate and external. Conversely, each one of these structures is a living form and therefore contains the power of absolute negativity whereby it may negate itself as a subsistent form, effecting

a negation of the negation and a return to totality. *Here we have an instance of the concept of infinity, though it is as yet not realized for itself in the living vortex and lacks the consciousness which alone is capable of the effective realization of infinity.* The development of such a consciousness is the source of the dialectic of Absolute Spirit, which makes its first appearance in the *Jenenser Metaphysik* and is referred to in the following passage: "For the monad essential being exists only as a transcendental unity. In reality, for us (the philosopher who conceives of spirit as such) this transcendent is the immanent reality of the monad."<sup>30</sup>

### **The Consciousness of Life and Spirit as History**

In the chapter on self-consciousness and life in the *Phenomenology* Hegel writes that "the former is the unity *for which* the absolute unity of differences exists, the latter, however, *is only this* unity itself, so that unity is not at the same time *for itself*."<sup>31</sup> The process of life which scatters and disperses itself in the false infinity of the multitude of living beings fails to achieve consciousness of its infinity, of the infinite relation as a "bond between the relation and the non-relation" except in the case of self-consciousness. "[Life] is neither what is expressed to begin with, the immediate continuity and concrete solidity of its essential nature; nor the stable, subsisting form, the discrete individual which exists on its own account; nor the bare process of this form; nor again is it the simple combination of these moments. It is none of these; it is the *whole* which develops itself, resolves its own development, and in this movement simply preserves itself."<sup>32</sup> However, life can only be a whole for the consciousness of life. In the case of biological life this simplicity is only realized through death. In a conscious being death is conceived as a positive phenomenon. We may then understand Hegel's remarks on death in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*. Death is not something before which we should tremble or an idea that we should suppress. The true life of the spirit "endures death and in death maintains its being. . . . This dwelling beside it is the magic power that converts the negative into being."<sup>33</sup> These remarks perhaps illuminate the famous dialectic of the *Logik* and remind us that the con-

consciousness of life is quite different from life itself. It constitutes the truth of life, but a truth that can only be realized in human experience. The moments of life, when integrated in human consciousness, develop in the form of *History* and human consciousness is the Absolute Subject which discovers its identity in the course of time.<sup>34</sup>

"Spirit is time,"<sup>35</sup> Hegel had said in his Jena writings, and illustration of this enigmatic formula is to be found in the *Phenomenology*. For it is only in the temporality of a consciousness that the whole which "develops itself, resolves its own development, and in this movement simply preserves itself" can be present to itself. That is why only the spirit is history, a history, moreover, that is always oriented toward the future since the spirit is the absolute principle of negativity.<sup>36</sup> This is perhaps a clue to the general orientation of the Hegelian system. When reason observes nature it finds no real middle term between life as a totality and the living individual. Between the genus and the individual there is, of course, the articulation of the species. But the species is not for-itself, and the individual who embodies the species is modifiable by his relation to the universal individuality, the earth, the climate, and infinite variations of environment. By contrast, "consciousness takes as the middle term between universal spirit and its individuation or sense-consciousness, the system of shapes assumed by consciousness, as an orderly self-constituted whole of the life of spirit,—the system of forms of conscious life which is dealt with in this treatise [*The Phenomenology of Mind*], and which finds its objective existential expression as the history of the world. But organic nature has no history."<sup>37</sup> In the biological individual, as Hegel says, the totality is not truly present "and the whole is not there because the whole is not as such here for itself."<sup>38</sup> The true infinity is in the consciousness of the totality that is the heart of each individual moment. Now history is the concrete self-development of such consciousness and the realization of the life of the spirit in a profound unity of the individual and the universal. This is a dynamic conception of unity, not an intuition, and a unity which expresses the dialectical conception of the infinite as set out in the *Logik* of 1802.

The conception of the spirit as history, from the first drafts

of the Jena period through a series of essays which play upon the contrast between concept and intuition, receives its developed expression in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Through this contrast between concept and intuition Hegel expresses philosophically the contrast between life and consciousness of life. For Hegel the concept is the very act of cognition, inseparable from its content; it is the intuition which is an axiom of consciousness. In the Jena period Hegel grew to a full awareness of his philosophical ideal. He began by opposing Fichte's idealism on the ground that it was incorrigibly abstract. Fichte's system contains only the pure reflexive act of will. Consequently, the ideal remains forever unattainable and, for all purposes, in conflict with lived reality. Schelling, by contrast, completely identified the concepts of life and knowledge. His system is grounded in the "identity" which it discovers at the core of all reality, that is, nature as spirit. The identity of knowledge and reality is achieved through intuition or "total indifference toward the subjective and objective."<sup>39</sup> In his work on the *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems*,<sup>40</sup> Hegel appears to have adopted the position of his friend Schelling. However, we have seen that in the *Logik* of 1802 he develops a dialectic of the infinite quite different from Schelling's conception.

Nevertheless, the *System der Sittlichkeit*, Hegel's first draft of his *Philosophie des Geistes*, which is contemporary with the *Logik*, gives no indication of the dialectic of the infinite. The first philosophy of mind lags behind the *Logik* and *Metaphysik*, and this has struck the commentators all the more as the philosophy of mind is Hegel's own domain.<sup>41</sup> However, there is an answer to this problem. In 1802 Hegel was primarily absorbed in a concrete philosophy of spirit. He takes sides with Schelling against Fichte and thus he *at first identifies the Absolute with the life of a people*.<sup>42</sup> The various moments in the life of the spirit, such as labor, the machine, the family, language, and law, which Hegel studied in depth, constitute the determinate aspects of life in society. The ideal realm and the everyday world are not to be separated but are to be thought of together in the organic totality of the nation in which the concept is subsumed in the intuition. For "the intuition is the indifference of indeterminables" and dis-

covers the totality as an objective reality. Thus we do not find in this work of Hegel's the realization of the "Absolute Spirit" which seemed to be the implication of his *Metaphysik* written about the same time. The life of a people does not achieve reflection by itself. Nor does the conscious life of the spirit transcend and modify its living reality. A true awakening of consciousness would introduce anxiety and instability into the heart of this intuition. But the intuition transcends the concept just as the organic reality of social life transcends individual consciousness. For in intuition the spirit becomes absorbed in its object. Consequently, intuition is not dynamic, even when it pretends to grasp life itself as such or as pure productivity. And as early as 1802 Hegel had understood the powerlessness of intuition. The dialectic of the infinite in the *Logik* is a critique of Schelling's Absolute for the very reason that it locks within itself all oppositions and so fails to come into contact with real developments.

But from 1802 to 1806 Hegel worked continuously upon the development of his philosophy of mind. *The System der Sittlichkeit* is followed by an essay on "Natural Law."<sup>43</sup> Then we have the two drafts of *The Philosophy of Mind*<sup>44</sup> which precede *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Thus we are in a position to reconstruct the development of Hegel's thought or rather his own intellectual biography. *We witness the subordination of intuition to the concept, the development of a creative consciousness and the realization of the spirit solely through the medium of its own history.* Already, in the essay on "Natural Law" Hegel shows that "the spirit is superior to nature"<sup>45</sup> because it is capable of turning back upon itself to reflect upon itself. But in that essay Hegel has not yet conceived of the internal power of development introduced by this conception of consciousness. He is obsessed by the Platonic vision of an organic city which is the immanent structure of every historical city. He seeks to translate Schelling's aesthetic intuition into moral and social life. *By putting the concept before intuition, Hegel introduces historical development into the center of the life of the spirit.* Thus it will be remarked in the *Phenomenology* that the spirit alone is history because the development of consciousness is at the same time a historical process.

In *The Philosophy of Mind* (1803-1804) the development of

consciousness clearly has precedence over intuition. Hegel abandons the possibility of an objective, immanent intuition that does not involve self-reflection. "Intuition is now posited by consciousness."<sup>46</sup> It is possible to study *subjective mind* independently of the study of spirit as social reality. In the draft of 1805–1806 Hegel has discovered himself once for all as the philosopher of the spirit. Spirit is historical and moves in a dialectical progression from the ancient city to modern forms of social organization. World history or the spirit of the world transcends the spirit of a people as its moments.<sup>47</sup> The task of the philosophy of spirit as a concrete dialectic is to surpass intuition and to become a philosophical history of the spirit as a process of self-development.

In *The Philosophy of Mind* of 1805–1806 Hegel has a full-fledged conception of the Absolute Spirit, partially envisaged in the *Metaphysik* of 1802. Spirit transcends both nature and the life of a people and grasps its universality in Art, Religion, and Philosophy. Christ's religion surpasses the religion of a people because it is in it that the spirit achieves self-consciousness.<sup>48</sup> From this point Hegel is in possession of his own creative philosophy of the spirit, and in the Preface of the *Phenomenology* he will later confront Schelling's philosophy of intuition with his own philosophy of the concept, and to a philosophy of the Absolute as substance he will oppose a philosophy of the Absolute as subject.

It is clear that Hegel's philosophy is a philosophy of human life, of the life of consciousness, and not a philosophy of nature like that of Schelling. On the one hand, the descriptions of life only become intelligible through Hegel's early writings, for example, on Abraham or Love, and, on the other hand, the consciousness of life is the realization of infinity, having become truly "for-itself." The complementarity of these interpretations is borne out by the development of Hegel's Jena philosophy of mind. We have already remarked that, after his arrival at Jena, Hegel wanted to develop a philosophical concept of life and that he identified the relation (*Beziehung*) and life. In turn, through the concept of infinity he transformed the relation into a dialectical relation, in other words

he conceived it as a living relation. His use of every term involves a dynamic contrast and reconciliation. Thus synthesis and analysis are simply aspects of a relation which entertains division and reconciliation within itself. But, above all, a dynamic and living relation is a spiritual relation, that is to say, a relation *lived* by a consciousness. The dynamism of the elements within a totality is only possible in the instance of a consciousness which overcomes immediacy and brings about its mediation.

From Hegel's early writings we have tried to show a remarkably creative attempt to give a philosophical account of spiritual relations and to describe the human situation, in the course of which we believe we have found the source of Hegel's dialectical thought.<sup>49</sup> *To Hegel what is fundamental in experience is the experience of spiritual relations and their development:* the relation between man and man, between the individual and society, God and man, between master and slave. That is why, in the chapter of *The Phenomenology of Mind* on "Self-consciousness" we find the immediate relation between living beings transformed by consciousness into a spiritual relation between two self-consciousnesses. We refer to the well-known dialectic of the master and slave.<sup>50</sup> In the dialectic of recognition the immediate relation of domination and servitude is transformed, the master becoming the instrument of his own enslavement, while the slave, as a producer of objects, shapes<sup>51</sup> his own self and *becomes* master of the master. The enslaved consciousness "does in fact contain within itself this truth of pure negativity." It has known anxiety not for this or that moment of time but "for its entire being; it felt the fear of death, the sovereign master."<sup>52</sup> The consciousness that comes to know fear and enforced service in this way moves from the state of immediacy to a mediated condition which is the foundation of a spiritual relationship. The awareness of such a relation on the part of a consciousness such as Epictetus is the foundation of the Stoic experience. In the course of its development the spiritual relationship becomes a "for-itself," that is to say, the apparently fixed and independent elements of the relationship are involved in a real movement in which life and the dialectic coincide. At this point we have entered human history, and it was for the

understanding of that history and of the life of man that Hegel constructed the dialectic. Finally, it is in the cultural sciences that the dialectic remains a fruitful method.

## NOTES

- 1 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated, with an Introduction and Notes by J. B. Baillie (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 218.
- 2 G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, edited by J. Hoffmeister (Leipzig, 1931), p. 118.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 4 The difference between the early works and the first *Jenenser System* appeared as a "mystery" to Ehrenberg, the first commentator on the *System*. Prior to the latter work Hegel had lived the transition from the finite to the infinite; he then struggles to conceptualize it. Religion yields to philosophy. Cf. Ehrenberg's Preface to *Hegels erstes System*, edited by H. Ehrenberg and H. Link (Heidelberg, 1915).
- 5 Goethe, *Faust*, Part One, translated by C. F. MacIntyre (New York: New Directions, 1957). [Trans.]
- 6 G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, translated by T. M. Knox, with an Introduction and Fragments translated by R. Kroner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 254. A similar conclusion is drawn in a study of the "fundamental significance of the future" in the Hegelian conception of time, by A. Koyré, "Hegel à Jéna: A propos de publications récentes," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse de Strasbourg*, No. 5 (1939), pp. 420–458.
- 7 G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenenser Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, edited by G. Lasson (Leipzig, 1923), p. 113.
- 8 J. Hoffmeister, *Goethe und der deutsche Idealismus: Eine Einführung zu Hegels Realphilosophie* (Leipzig, 1932), p. 65.
- 9 *Jenenser Logik*, pp. 184–185.
- 10 *Science of Logic*, translated by W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers, Vol. II (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 403.
- 11 *Faust*, Part One, translated by C. F. MacIntyre. [Trans.]
- 12 "Einleitung zu dem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie," *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by K. F. A. Schelling, Vol. I, Part 3 (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J. G. Cotta, 1856–1861), p. 284.
- 13 "Schelling is related to Goethe as Kant is to Newton." Cf. E. Cassirer,

*The Problem of Knowledge* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 145.

- 14 J. Hoffmeister, *Goethe und der deutsche Idealismus*, pp. 34–37.
- 15 Ehrenberg correctly observes that in his discussion of the category of Quality, Hegel is attacking Fichte, and when he discusses the category of Quantity, he is criticizing Schelling. Hegel's own system is built upon the category of Infinity which supersedes the other categories. Cf. *Jenenser Logik*, pp. xiii–xxiv.
- 16 *Jenenser Logik*, p. 13. That "opposition is itself absolute" means that opposition (*Gegensatz*) becomes contradiction (*Widerspruch*) and that opposition is internal to the Absolute; in other words, the Absolute is Subject or *the actualization of the Self*. It should be noted that Hegel distinguishes *diversity*, grasped through an act of reflection external to the things themselves; *opposition*, which is a relation between two terms that are correlatives and thus related through contrast; and *contradiction*, in which opposition has become internal to each term (each term contains its opposite within itself). Contradiction is thus *contradictio in subjecto*, and that is why the subject *develops*. The relation is consequently no longer the result of a comparison between two pre-existing and independent terms. The three Hegelian theses become identical: the Absolute is Subject, Opposition is Absolute, Reality is Development. We may then understand why Hegel resists the notion of a subject that pre-exists its predicates. It is the life of the predicates that creates the subject. An Absolute posited apart from its development cannot be anything but an empty intuition.
- 17 Hegel grasps the movement of thought engaged in an endless union of distinct terms and distinctions between terms that are correlatives. In this process abstraction (the power of negativity) is an essential moment. Relative to the distinction between terms that are correlatives, union is only an abstraction, and vice versa.
- 18 *Jenenser Logik*, pp. 33–34.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 Hegelian thought is structured through the equivalence of these three terms: human life which must be given philosophical expression; the relation, which is thought itself; and infinity, which is the condition of conceptualizing life and the relation or the adequation of thought and life.
- 22 "[The individual] exists only inasmuch as the totality of life is divided into parts, he himself being one part and all the rest the other part; and again he exists only inasmuch as he is no part at all and inasmuch as nothing is separated from him." From "Fragment of a System," in *Early Theological Writings*, p. 310.

- 23 Leibnitz strongly influenced Hegel in his Jena period. But the Leibnitzian monad is closed to the outside. Hegel's criticism of the monadology is that it is transcendent in relation to the activity of a single monad.
- 24 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, pp. 222–223.
- 25 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 116.
- 26 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 221.
- 27 "Love," in *Early Theological Writings*, p. 305. [Trans.]
- 28 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 224.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 324.
- 30 *Jenenser Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, p. 177. We shall deal later with the evolution of the Jena philosophy of mind and its relation to the concept of Absolute Spirit.
- 31 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 221.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 93. [Trans.]
- 34 In the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel conceives the Absolute as Subject and not as Substance.
- 35 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. I, 1803–1804, p. 4.
- 36 The dialectical *method* assumes an infinite principle of development, an endless negativity into the future. But the totality is immanent in each moment and this totality must be conceptualized as a *system*. The system and the method do not have the same conditions.
- 37 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 326.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 "Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie," *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. I, Part 4.
- 40 Cf. *Erste Druckschriften*, edited by G. Lasson (Leipzig: Verlag Felix von Meiner, 1928). [Trans.]
- 41 Cf. Ehrenberg's introduction to *Hegels erstes System*, and J. Hoffmeister, *Goethe und der deutsche Idealismus*, pp. 102–103.
- 42 Religion is the religion of a people, or of a city, as in the case of Greek religion. Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, edited by G. Lasson (Leipzig, 1923), p. 466.
- 43 "Ueber die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, 1802," in *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*. [Trans.]
- 44 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. I, 1803–1804; *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806. [Trans.]
- 45 *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 392.
- 46 J. Hoffmeister, *Goethe und der deutsche Idealismus*, p. 107. The Marxian idea of class-consciousness has its origin in Hegel inasmuch as in

Marx the appearance of class-consciousness is a constitutive element in the development of history.

47 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 273.

48 Here Hegel resumes his early study of the evolution of religion from folk religion to the religion of Christ, from the *System der Sittlichkeit* to the Absolute Spirit. But in Hegel's later system the problem remains of relating world history as the history of nations to Absolute Spirit in the forms of Art, Religion, and Philosophy.

49 J. Hyppolite, "Les Travaux de jeunesse de Hegel d'après des ouvrages récents," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, XLII (1935), pp. 399–426 and pp. 549–578.

50 On the Hegelian dialectic, see N. Hartmann, *Die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, Vol. II (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1960), pp. 324–338.

51 Hegel is playing upon the word *Bildung* (culture). Cf. *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 238.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 237. Here we can see the concrete significance of the Hegelian principle of negativity. Hegel's system, far from being a logomachy, is a logic of the life of thought.

## 2

## The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology

The term "existence" was introduced into philosophy by Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard criticized Hegel on the ground that in his vast philosophical system he gave no place to existence. It was a system that surveyed the various "world visions" but did not dwell upon any of them. Certainly, Hegel always gives the impression of introducing conflict into philosophy, but it is always in order to resolve it in a higher synthesis. Hegel deepens the various conflicts that are present in life and philosophy, for example, those of Art and Religion, of the external and the internal, of man and God, but he transcends the conflicts and reconciles the contrasts. It is possible to ask whether Hegel had not forgotten his own existential nature, for it disappears within his system. But the system also reflects the disappearance of the very notion of *existence*, whereas Kierkegaard spent his whole life in reflection upon existence and the paradoxes that it creates. Thus Kierkegaard does not construct a system that excludes existence. On the contrary, his thought is grounded in existence and seeks only to illuminate its originality and irreducibility. Furthermore, a man's existence is unthinkable as the expression of an essence that is prior to it. Indeed, it is not thinkable as such but emerges gradually in thought through the insurmountable contradictions within thought itself.

The contrast between Kierkegaard and Hegel is too well known for us to dwell upon it once more. Moreover, there is little doubt that in general Kierkegaard is right against Hegel, and it is not our purpose here to enter a defense of the Hegelian system

against Kierkegaard's attack. What interests us is to reveal in Hegel, as we find him in his early works and in the *Phenomenology*, a philosopher much closer to Kierkegaard than might seem credible. The concrete and existential character of Hegel's early works has been admirably demonstrated by Jean Wahl in his work on *The Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel's Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> The early works all lead up to the chapter of the *Phenomenology* on the "Unhappy Consciousness." Before discovering the reconciliation and synthesis that culminate in the place of ideas in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel was himself conscious of the tragic opposition between the finite and infinite, of man and the absolute; in Judaism and romanticism he had studied existential forms of this conflict. The conclusions of these studies are to be found in the *Phenomenology*, which Hegel finished upon the eve of the battle at Jena. We shall ignore the fact that the *Phenomenology*, which describes the itinerary of consciousness, or the cultural adventure of human consciousness in search of a final concord and reconciliation, culminates in Absolute Knowledge, that is to say, in a system which transcends diverse world visions. Instead we shall inquire whether there is not in this work a conception of existence which is kin to certain contemporary existentialist notions.

The *Phenomenology* is the history of human consciousness in its progression to Absolute Knowledge. This history is much more a description than a construction of the experiences of consciousness. Moreover, by the term "experience" we must understand not only theoretical knowledge, but also human notions of Religion, Ethics, and Art. The philosopher in this instance describes the entire compass of human experience, and though he never loses sight of the goal of his work, which is to elaborate a system, he is nevertheless not afraid to stop at each stage of his experience and describe it for its own sake. At each stage of this voyage of discovery he seeks to grasp the *essence* of a particular world vision; occasionally this method of unfolding an essence suggests modern phenomenological descriptions of essence. When Hegel speaks of the Renaissance or of the Terror, when he evokes Antigone or Creon, one feels that his thought grasps their very nature and that he penetrates to the heart of experience as lived by man. It is impossible to analyze these experiences one by one.

The *Phenomenology* possesses such a wealth, and often such an obscurity, that we must confine ourselves to choosing certain aspects which illustrate in a special way what one could already describe as a concept of existence.

We shall therefore consider the chapter on *self-consciousness* and the conflict which Hegel found between self-consciousness—or what we would call human existence—and life in general. It is in this conflict that the “unhappy consciousness” emerges, and it is the latter which best illustrates the conception which Hegel had of man’s existence.

In the final paragraph of his analysis of self-consciousness Hegel writes, “Consciousness of life, of its existence and action, is merely pain and sorrow over this existence and activity.”<sup>2</sup> The consciousness of himself that man realizes, and which, as we shall show, is consciousness of life too, results in the unhappy consciousness. To become conscious of universal life is necessarily to oppose oneself to it and at the same time to rediscover oneself in it. In man life comes to the knowledge of itself, but this occurs precisely at the moment where man’s existence emerges from life and seizes in itself the most tragic conflict. Consciousness of life is, of course, no longer a naïve life. It is the knowledge of the *Whole of Life*, as the negation of all its particular forms, the knowledge of true life, but it is simultaneously the knowledge of the absence of this “true life.” Thus in becoming conscious of life man exists on the margin of naïve and determined life. His desire aspires to a liberty that is not open to a particular modality; and all his efforts to conceive himself in liberty result only in failure.

The emergence of self-consciousness is thus something other than life, pure and simple, and human existence, as knowledge of life, is a new mode of being that we are justified in calling “existence.” Indeed, what characterizes man’s self-consciousness is the break that it involves with naïve and immediate life and its elevation above the static determinations of being. This existence emerges from the womb of the world as the perpetual negation of every particular modality of being. To become conscious of life in its totality is to reflect upon death, to exist in the face of death, and that is how authentic self-consciousness is experienced by us.

We shall perhaps improve our understanding of the conflict be-

tween immediate life and consciousness of life if we look back into Hegel's works, for example, to his study of the Jewish people and their ancestor, Abraham. For Hegel the Jews are the unhappy people of history and are to be contrasted in this respect with the Greek people. Whereas the Greeks understood how to harmonize thought and finite life, Abraham strives for such a radical conception—one might say, a total conception—that he alienates himself from all particular forms of life. He leaves the land of his fathers, he wanders in the desert and seeks to live by himself, but this thought drives him beyond immediate life: "Abraham no longer knew how to love." He was incapable of an attachment to a finite and limited object. Life was reflected in him but as a totality, the negation of all its determinate forms. This is why Abraham conceives God beyond determinate living creatures, an infinite God who can find no expression in any concrete figure. The Jewish people made representations of their God (in the form of an absolute transcendence); they sought to elevate themselves to his level, though this was an impossibility, since every determinate expression of such a God or Universal represents a form of idolatry. Here Hegel attaches upon a conflict between what we today would call vital values and intellectual or even spiritual values. In their reflections upon life the Jews only succeeded in opposing themselves to life as something naïve and limited. They did not embrace that limited, though spontaneous, enthusiasm which leads historical peoples to attach themselves to a particular land and to lose themselves in a determinate enterprise. The Jew conceives the Universal, the whole of life, but at the same time this conception removes him from life. We have here a dislocation that Hegel chose to study in his early works, which he returned to in his *Jenenser System*, and to which he gave a philosophical formulation in the chapter of the *Phenomenology* on "Self-Consciousness."

One might add that this self-consciousness of life is characterized in some way by the thought of death. Though this may seem a strange connection, it may easily be justified if one analyzes further Hegel's conception of life and of self-consciousness. We should not forget that each is simultaneously identical and absolutely opposed to the other, as may be seen clearly from the following text: "the

former [Self-Consciousness], is the unity *for which* the absolute unity of differences exists, the latter [Life], however, *is* only this unity itself, so that the unity is not at the same time for itself."<sup>3</sup>

Hegelianism developed against the background of romanticism. Like Schelling or Hölderlin, Hegel wished to express in philosophical form the infinite life which expresses itself through a multitude of determinate living forms. Without doubt, this life is in sum a unity but its manifestations are diverse. Each particular living being is indeed within itself the expression of the totality of life, the Universal, just as the Spinozan mode is a modality of the infinite substance; but it is only a particular expression of that life, and that it is why it dies in giving birth to other living beings. The movement of universal life manifests itself in this ceaseless and monotonous "Death and Birth." But the particular living being when it dies is not yet conscious of this infinite life, of the Self, for it is only a partial realization of it. The organism is not aware that it dies, and yet death is the negation of the determination and the limitation of fleeting lives through which the absolute power of life achieves infinity and unity. The infinity of life is reflected both in death and reproduction, but this negation of the negation (the infinite negativity, the negation of the negation which truly announces the affirmative) is ignored by the living particular. Organic life is not *existence* because it is not consciousness of death.

The situation is no longer the same when we advance toward self-consciousness or man. In the animal sickness is the visible trace of negativity, that is to say, it is the moment in which it negates itself insofar as it is a particular. As Hegel puts it in a passage from his *Jenenser System*, man is the sick animal; he is aware of his death and to the degree that he is conscious of it he becomes *for himself* what life is unalterably *in itself*. We see now in what sense human existence rises above animal life. The animal is unconscious of the infinite totality of life in its wholeness, whereas man becomes the for-itself of that totality and internalizes death. That is why the basic experience of human self-consciousness is inseparable from the fundamental experience of death.

Human self-consciousness is in the first place *Desire*, but this desire is never satisfied. What it aspires to through the destruction of every form of diremption is its own absolute self-command.

Man begins by desiring to live but life in him appears at once as something identical and alien to himself. He is alive but his own life is alien to him, and to the extent that he is conscious of it he continually estranges himself from it and in some sense negates it. The negation of every mode of diremption is always revived in the negative principle of desire. It is what moves desire, although desire has as its distant limit the state of absolute self-possession. The supreme end of desire is to rediscover itself in the heart of life, that is to say, to find itself as the unity of universal life or the being-for-itself of this life which scatters itself endlessly through particular living forms.

This goal is only attainable on the condition that the *life before the self* confronts it as *another self*. The self only finds its expression in the heart of life where life appears outside of it in the form of a self. Thus self-consciousness, or man's existence, is possible only where two self-consciousnesses meet each other. In this encounter the self gains an objective knowledge of itself through the other self, while the other remains itself. In love, for example, the meaning of one's whole life appears in the other who is loved; the other is the self and the self outside itself. But Hegel does not idealize the dialectic of love; indeed, he writes in the *Phenomenology* that "The life of God and divine intelligence, then, can, if we like, be spoken of as love disporting with itself; but this idea falls into edification, and even sinks into insipidity, if it lacks the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative."<sup>4</sup>

That is why self-consciousness or desire of the self only emerges from universal life in the encounter with another self-consciousness. Life appears to it in the form of this other consciousness, yet to the extent that it is an external manifestation of itself it must negate his diremption. The concepts of *being-for-itself* and *being-for-another* are current nowadays. It is in the conflict between these two that human self-consciousness arises. On the one hand, it is reflected in the other in whom it nevertheless sees itself as an external and determined being, a being-for-another. On the other hand, that is how it appears to the Other, and this is why consciousness intends the death of the Other, which means simply that it tends to suppress and negate the estranged mode of existence in which it

appears to itself as Other. What is insupportable is to be both one-self or pure being-for-itself and at the same time an Other, a determinate form or a living object; and yet this is the circumstance in which self-consciousness emerges since it is a pure self-consciousness incarnate in a living form. Inasmuch as it is a living being, the self is unavoidably a determinate object for another in whom it is reflected as an object. This condition of being-for-another is unbearable and yet it is the condition of the self's being-in-the-world at all. The conflict, which in the case of the animal's death occurs beneath its awareness, is in man a negativity that pervades his existence inasmuch as he too dies but is at the same time his being-for-himself. The fundamental role of death in annihilating the particular forms of life becomes the principle of self-consciousness that drives it to transcend every disreputation and its characteristic being-in-the-world, once this being-in-the-world is its own.

We may now understand how it is that human self-consciousness emerges in the struggle between self-consciousness. Each seeks the death of the other because each one wants to suppress his limited representation for the other and demands to be *recognized* by the other as pure being-for-itself. This struggle to the death is a condition of history, and though it appears to have its roots in contingent factors, its true source is the necessity of self-consciousness proving to the other and to itself that it is not merely a living object, a simple organism. Thus being-for-itself, or what we would call simply existence, realizes itself through this struggle as pure being-for-itself, as *absolute negativity*. The following passage from Hegel bears comparison with contemporary existentialist formulations: "And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; only thus is it tried and proved that the essential nature of self-consciousness is not bare existence, is not the merely immediate form in which it at first makes its appearance, is not its mere absorption in the expanse of life. Rather it is thereby guaranteed that there is nothing present but what might be taken as a vanishing moment—that self-consciousness is merely pure self-existence, being-for-itself."<sup>5</sup>

Man cannot exist except through the negativity of death which he takes upon himself in order to make of it an act of transcend-

ence or supersession of every limited situation. Yet he can never completely renounce his being-in-the-world, or the mode of diremption without which he would lack the power of negation in general and over himself. That is why the struggle to the death which is the source and permanent foundation of history can only result in an impasse. The renunciation of life in order to prove that one is a pure being-for-itself simply results in being removed from the scene like an animal. It is necessary at once to conserve life and its diremption and yet to negate the latter. Another death than biological death must be discovered through the internalization of death. It will be recalled how the dialectic of this struggle is transformed into the famous dialectic of the *master and slave* that became the inspiration of Marxian philosophy. The slave is the one who saves himself by preferring life to liberty but finds another way to express himself as self-consciousness. He becomes the master of his master in knowing what it is to fear death, by rendering a practical service and shaping himself through labor. Through labor, in particular, he shapes being-as-other, or the objective world, in the form of self-consciousness. He makes out of it a human world, *his* world, and, conversely, he gives the permanent negativity of his own being-for-itself the consistency and stability of being-in-itself. The conflict occasionally remarked between being-in-itself and being-for-itself is here resolved by an individuality that assumes its being-as-other and reconstitutes it in the form of being-for-itself.

We shall not indulge the reflections upon a theory of spiritual individuality that are suggested by this concrete unity of the for-itself and the in-itself in the human product. We shall instead return to the theme of the sentiment of death that seizes the slave and offers him the possibility of becoming conscious of the infinite substance of life by detaching him from any tie to a particular being. It is through this very consciousness of death, through anxiety in the face of death, that human existence becomes its own origin. Let us take a few passages<sup>6</sup> from Hegel himself: "For this consciousness (of the slave) was not in peril and fear for this element or that, nor for this or that moment of time, it was afraid for its entire being; it felt the fear of death, the sovereign master."

Death is indeed the principle of negativity—as such it is not present in animal life—that haunts man's being-for-himself and raises his limited being to the level of free being. The effect of this principle of negativity is to dissolve completely the bonds with animal life. "It has been in that experience melted to its inmost soul, has trembled throughout its every fibre, and all that was fixed and steadfast has quaked within it." The significance that *death* possesses for biological life has its counterpart in the meaning of *being-for-itself* in human life. "This complete perturbation of its entire substance, this absolute dissolution of all its stability into fluent continuity, is, however, the simple, ultimate nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity."

This last text contains the notion of a *freedom toward death* which is to be found throughout the *Phenomenology*. Thus it is through the Terror that a revolutionary populace reconstitutes itself and is, so to speak, reborn. It is in war, where their whole determinate life is at stake, that cities and nations rise to the level of spiritual life, or what Hegel calls true Liberty, and thereby avoid wallowing in the unconscious beatitude of private economic and family life. In 1807 Hegel wrote—as only a German could—"In order not to let them get rooted and settled in this isolation and thus break up the whole into fragments and let the common spirit evaporate, government has from time to time to shake them to the very centre by War. By this means it confounds the order that has been established and arranged, and isolates their right to independence."<sup>7</sup> Only in this manner can a nation resist the centrifugal forces that work to destroy it from within and aspire to Liberty.

We have cited a sufficient number of passages to show how, in becoming self-consciousness in man, universal life becomes a conscious principle of negativity. Insofar as man internalizes this negativity—which reveals itself in life through death—and negates every determination of being within himself and beyond himself, human existence is no longer a given, like animal life. However, we have seen that Hegel does not stop with this liberty toward death. Man struggles with himself to *assume* or take upon himself every determination, and although he negates them as death negates every living particular, he also conserves them and endows them

with a new meaning. Thus human existence generates a history, its own history, in which the partial moments are continually negated and at the same time always resumed in order to be surpassed. The true life of the spirit is not only in the one who recoils from death, or becomes conscious of it so as to confront it authentically, but in him who internalizes death "it is the magic power that converts the negative into being."<sup>8</sup>

The latter power is identical with what Hegel calls the *Subject*; that is, the subject which contains human history in its development and is not limited to the historicity of a particular being. Individual existences are interrelated in the history which they make and which as a concrete universality is what judges them and transcends them. When we consider this unity of transcendence and immanence, this God that dies in man while man raises himself to the divine through a history that is his judge, this transcendence of all existences that is the climax of the *Phenomenology*—we may well ask whether it is not, as Kierkegaard thought, the very contrary of an existentialist philosophy. But that is not our task here. We have simply tried to show the relationship between certain Hegelian themes and some contemporary theses by drawing attention to Hegel's descriptions of the conflict between life and self-consciousness of life, in other words, the knowledge of death, and his study of being-for-itself as pure negativity and its conflict with being-for-another by whom it cannot but be affected. But this is only one aspect of the *Phenomenology*. Numerous other aspects of this marvelous work, which is the entrance to the nineteenth century, are even more likely to arouse the interest of contemporary philosophers.

## NOTES

1 *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951). [Trans.]

2 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 252.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 81. [Trans.]

5 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 237. [Trans.]

7 *Ibid.*, p. 474.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

PART

III

THE CONCEPT  
OF HISTORY  
IN HEGEL



## 3

## The Significance of the French Revolution in Hegel's *Phenomenology*

In the Preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel characterizes his age as a period of transition to a new age. As a supra-individual reality, spirit is, of course, never in a state of rest; rather "it is here as in the case of the birth of a child; after a long period of nutrition in silence, the continuity of the gradual growth in size, of quantitative change, is suddenly cut short by the first breath drawn—there is a break in the process, a qualitative change—and the child is born. In like manner 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 its 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."<sup>1</sup> From Tübingen Hegel had passionately followed the stages leading up to the French Revolution. Under the influence of the Platonic vision he thought he had seen the collapse of the ancient world and entertained great hopes for the new spirit that was to emerge from the ruins. That is why he is fiercely critical in the *Phenomenology* of that individuality who "by his act . . . takes his place in, or rather as, the general element of existent actuality; and his act is, even in his own regard, intended to have the value of a universal

ordinance."<sup>2</sup> He himself had experienced both systematic disparagement from his opponents (for example, from his father, who was a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Finance at Württemberg) and the naïve enthusiasm of the protagonists of change for the sake of change, those ultra-revolutionaries to whom he alludes in the Preface of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>3</sup>

It will be no surprise, then, to find how much attention is given in the *Phenomenology* to the French Revolution and the profound transformations which it brought about. Indeed, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel undertakes to investigate all the sources of the culture of his time and to conceptualize them in their original form. In general the ideas of an age are not consciously present to those who live by them; they are too familiar for anyone to take the trouble of analyzing them. Hegel saw the need for rediscovering the path by which the human spirit had reached its historical present and to explain the latter in terms of its earlier development. Spirit is what it is only through "what it has already come to be,"<sup>4</sup> in other words, through its own history

However, it is by no means easy to interpret relevant passages in the *Phenomenology*, for they present an inextricable weaving of concrete and particular events along with general or universal notions. According to one's temperament, Hegel might be criticized equally for having constructed a logomachy in which every event of history is reduced to a play of logical opposites or for having contaminated his logic with the accidents of history.<sup>5</sup> But either reproach implies a neglect of what is truly original in Hegel's work as one of the greatest attempts to relate the singular and the universal which in ordinary consciousness are juxtaposed without reconciliation. Before proceeding to a textual exegesis it may be advantageous to consider what we know directly of Hegel's attitudes toward the French Revolution.

### **Hegel's views prior to the *Phenomenology***

In a remark from his Jena writings Hegel speaks of the practice of reading the newspapers as "the morning prayer of the realist."<sup>6</sup> It is from our information about the world situation at a specific moment that we adopt a given orientation toward reality.

Hegel's remark is far from being that of a mystic but reveals a mind deeply concerned with events and sensitive to every idea and process of change in which it finds itself.<sup>7</sup> This is the great advantage of studying Hegel's early thought before entering into his vast philosophical system. We are acquainted with a Hegel who as yet makes no attempt to force reality to fit his own pre-conceptions, whose ideas are experimental and do not presume to be more than tentative essays in their field.

As a theology student at Tübingen, Hegel came into contact with the religious mind of his age, with Schiller and Lessing, as well as with eighteenth-century French thought. He knew the "immortal"<sup>8</sup> writings of Montesquieu. Along with his friend Hölderlin he drew inspiration from Rousseau who seemed to provide a source for understanding the passage of events in the French Revolution, which were followed with passionate interest by Hölderlin, Schelling, and himself. The history of the fount of liberty may have been a legend, but it captured the imagination of young German minds frustrated by the artificiality of politics and religion in their own society and who hoped to see the neighboring revolution promote the radical changes which they believed necessary in their own country.<sup>9</sup>

These new ideas began to take root in the conservative city of Württemberg. The journalist Schubart is a typical representative of the vague enthusiasm for freedom that was then current. He spoke of a reign of Liberty and announced the advent of "great events." He was also full of praise for the enlightened despotisms of Frederick the Great and Joseph II.<sup>10</sup> Even with his staid temperament, there is hardly any doubt that Hegel allowed himself to be caught up in the popular mood. In the margins of his notebook one finds scribbled by his friends such expressions as *In tyrannos*—death to tyrants. A few years later, in a letter to Schelling, Hegel describes the ideal they shared as "Reason and Liberty."

In Hegel's writings from the time when he was in Tübingen and Bern we may distinguish two rather different conceptions of freedom. Nowadays, we speak of *freedom within the State* and *freedom from the State*. On the other hand, Hegel exalts the *polis* in which, as he believed, the citizen freely realized his

destiny without seeking beyond it. On the other hand, he saw in Christianity a private religion which offered the individual the possibility of union with the Universal and of raising himself beyond the level of society. The contrast may be framed in terms of the problem of the relation between Church and State. "Hegel fights the Church in the name of the State and the State in the name of the Church."<sup>11</sup> But we should avoid any hasty formulations, for when posed in terms of such antitheses the problem assumes vast proportions. Indeed, in view of the indecision of the early Hegel and the ambiguity of some of his propositions, it is likely that we shall simply find two irreconcilable notions of liberty. According to one action, the individual is truly free when he realizes himself in a State which is his own State. In such a State there is no transcendental spirit but what is immanent in the earthly enterprise. The individual will is realized in the general will of the nation, and of a particular nation because the love which unites the citizens is incapable of infinitude without self-destruction.<sup>12</sup> Here man is uniquely a *citizen*. According to the other notion, the State is not the fullest expression of man and the individual must reserve for himself a private liberty outside of the State. In the first case, Religion tends to disappear in the earthly city that is the creation of men who are not "in flight from the world" and do not seek to "save what is private to them." In the latter case, the State is only a means to the individual's end and he alone is capable of attaining the Universal.

These two conceptions of Liberty, the one communal, the other individualist, are not clearly distinguished in these early Hegelian writings, and it is possible that we shall be open to the criticism of having read into them problems which belong properly to our own age. In a well-known passage from the period at Bern, when he was studying the transition from the ancient to the modern world, Hegel dwells upon the liberty of the ancient citizen as a liberty within the State. "Freedom to obey self-given laws, to follow self-chosen leaders, to carry out plans in whose formulation one had one's share."<sup>13</sup>

Then, the Absolute for the citizen was his terrestrial city. By contrast, in the modern world the citizen has become a private individual, his God is no longer within the *polis*, and he displaces

not only the ancient gods but the ancient State itself and the absolute ideal of a "free people."<sup>14</sup> Yet from the same period at Bern, in the *Life of Jesus*,<sup>15</sup> although not a unique expression of Hegel's thought at this time, we find a quite different conception of liberty. Now it is man who is the measure of the State and who in his solitude finds within himself the Universal. Man's dignity—a word used by Schiller and Hegel to translate the French Rights of Man—consists in "refusing to revere the statutes of the Church or to obey the laws of the State." Man is "reason whose laws are internal laws and to whom no other authority on earth or in heaven can provide a more rational standard of Justice."<sup>16</sup> Hegel's Christ says, "I do not call you pupils or disciples—the latter follow the will of their teacher often without understanding the reasons for their actions; you have raised yourselves to independence, to the freedom of will."<sup>17</sup> In these early writings the two conceptions of liberty are not clearly distinguished and this in part explains Hegel's ambivalent attitude toward religion. But the practical consequences so far as the criticism of the contemporary situation were hardly affected. Hegel is a constant defender of the rights of man and the citizen.<sup>18</sup>

Hegel is no revolutionary. By temperament he was primarily a reformer, though the reforms that he demanded under the influence of events in France were essentially radical. In a letter to his friend Schelling, dated April 16, 1795, Hegel denounces down to the last detail the failings of the small state of Bern where he was living.<sup>19</sup> He goes behind its virtuous façade and examines critically the social infra-structure and the injustices in it which should be swept away by the new ideas. Modern philosophy is a philosophy of the idea, of what *ought to be*, by opposing what ought to be (*sollen*) to what is, it awakens those minds that have become trapped in the present: "by revealing how everything ought to be, it will sweep away the indolence of those who confer eternity upon everything as it is." Knowing how fiercely Hegel will later criticize the notion of "*sollen*" and the ideas of the utopians in general, one cannot be anything but amazed at Hegel's radicalism at this earlier date. The same belief in the liberating power of ideas is evinced in a translation Hegel made of the letters of the French lawyer Cart.<sup>20</sup> Cart was a Girondin who had been

forced to flee from his country after the victory of the Montagnards. With great eloquence he denounced the exactions enforced by the unprincipled oligarchy of the Bernese patricians in the region of Vaud which they had conquered. He describes with what cruelty the patriots of Vaud are treated and how their most elementary freedoms are suppressed. In his passion for the ideal, Hegel puts at the head of his translation the phrase *Discite justiciam moniti*.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Hegel writes a commentary upon these letters in order to expose a situation the facts of which were so thoroughly familiar to him. As Vermeil has observed, "Here one sees the indignation of the poor theological student who sees around him young people, half-educated, acquiring effortlessly what no effort of his can gain."<sup>22</sup> Hegel's indictment of the Bernese oligarchy appeared too late. The intervention of the French troops put an end to these injustices and restored the liberty of the Vaudois.

Certain of Hegel's general comments upon Cart's letters, which occasionally remind one of phrases from Montesquieu, are particularly revealing of Hegel's political thought at this period. He despises the citizens of Bern for preferring the loss of liberty to the payment of a tax, contrasting their civic sense with that of Englishmen. "The Englishman is free, he enjoys the natural rights of freedom, in short, he makes his own demands upon himself."<sup>23</sup> And in connection with the American Revolution he has the following profound comment: "The tax imposed by the English parliament upon tea imported into America was minimal, but the belief of the Americans that by accepting the payment of that sum, however insignificant in itself, they would be yielding at the same time their most precious right, made the American Revolution."<sup>24</sup>

The same mood of protest is to be found in the pages left to us from Hegel's first study on Württemberg.<sup>25</sup> He denounces the oppression of existing positive law on the ground that its positivism is a dead thing within a living body. If a violent revolution of the French sort is to be avoided, then every basic reform must be instituted without delay. He sees the people of Württemberg torn between fear and hope. "It is time to end this alternation between

expectancy and disillusionment," and to do this all the injustices of a worm-eaten constitution must be overthrown. Hegel's mood is that of *Quo usque tandem*.<sup>26</sup> Men's patience must at last turn to courage and audacity in order to change their circumstance; otherwise they will take flight into dreams, the eternal solution of the German mind.

The reflection that the reforms demanded in the name of reason were perhaps dreams after all seems to have concerned Hegel from the end of the Frankfurt period and throughout his stay at Jena. He no longer wants to reform existing conditions but prefers to try to understand them and discover in them a necessary *destiny*. Later, in his lectures on the philosophy of history, he will remark that "Philosophy escapes from the weary strife of the passions that agitate the surface of society into the calm region of contemplation."<sup>27</sup> From this rather general remark we may be permitted to disengage a more specific development whose historical causes we must examine. It is not a development peculiar to Hegel. Many German minds who at first welcomed with enthusiasm the French Revolution later failed to understand its course. By the end of 1794, Hegel had already expressed to Schelling his disgust with the bloody tyranny of Robespierre. The wars of the armies of the Republic, and later of the Empire, had caused second thoughts among the utopians. Hegel saw that war at close hand, villages half in ruins, churches demolished to the bare walls.<sup>28</sup> New thoughts about the French Revolution began to appear. In 1793 Gentz translated into German Burke's conservative *Reflections on the French Revolution*, so important for its elaboration of the romantic and organic conception of the State.

Like others Hegel experienced the wave of reaction, but in his own way and without changing his attitude to one of conservatism. His new position is best expressed in his essay on "The German Constitution."<sup>29</sup> There he no longer regards the State as the product of a contractual association. The State imposes itself upon individuals as their destiny. The unity of the State is the creation of force and great political geniuses—such as Richelieu in France—and not of ideologies. Hegel's penetrating and often

prophetic analysis of the condition of the German State, as a State in thought, incapable of undertaking a decisive war of the people, is well known. Hegel declares in this essay that "The thoughts expressed in this essay have no other purpose or aim than to understand what is."<sup>30</sup>

Whereas a few years earlier Hegel had exalted the "*sollen*," he proposes henceforth "to understand what is as it is" and to discover within it the necessary development of the Idea. However, one should not be misled. For there is in this formula an emphasis which already calls to mind the revolutionary realism of his future student, Karl Marx.

As we see it, Hegel's development prior to the *Phenomenology* is marked by the shift from a reformist attitude to an attitude of contemplation, from the "*sollen*" to "the comprehension of what is." That is why in this work of his, which takes up all the themes of his early writings, Hegel undertakes to comprehend the process which led necessarily to the French Revolution and its consequences, which were no less necessary, but which were hidden from those who engaged in it.

### **The Background of the French Revolution**

In his essay on "The Positivity of Christian Religion," where he studies the transition from the ancient world to the modern era, Hegel conceives of "a still and secret revolution in the spirit of the age, a revolution not visible to every eye, especially imperceptible to contemporaries, and as hard to discern as to describe in words."<sup>31</sup> He himself had described the outcome of this profound transformation of the pagan world. The beauty of the Greek city—the ethical realm of the *Phenomenology*—survives only as a memory. Hegel's contemporaries sought in vain to bring back to life the Greek past.

The land of Hellas seeking with my soul.<sup>32</sup>

The collapse of the ancient world is the source of a permanent division in the modern world. Henceforth consciousness has a

double aim. It inhabits simultaneously "two worlds" which have become alien to one another. One of the two worlds is the realm of social and political reality in which the spirit alienates itself in order to constitute a concrete reality which confronts self-consciousness. "The first world of spirit is the expanded realm of spirit's self-dispersing existence and of certainty of self in separate individual shapes and forms. . . . The second world contains the generic principle, and is the realm of the ultimate inherent nature (*Ansichseins*) or the essential truth, over against that individual certainty."<sup>33</sup> This reduplication is such that "presence" is henceforth lacking in "essence" and that essence becomes a transcendent entity beyond the present. The temporal and spiritual realms are divorced and thus the transcendental world is merely an "escape," an asylum of the faithful consciousness that lifts itself outside the present.<sup>34</sup>

These two worlds, which exist only as correlatives, are subject to a "silent revolution" such as precedes great upheavals and the result of these parallel changes is the attempt at unification represented by the French Revolution. The world of presence is brought to its downfall and the transcendental world becomes the source of a dramatic conflict within pure consciousness. Under the pretext of combating superstition, the "Enlightenment," which is the eighteenth-century formulation of pure thought, in effect lays the ground for the "reconciliation" of these two worlds of man. By the end of these two movements, which we shall describe, "both worlds are reconciled and heaven is transplanted to earth below."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, for the oppressed German peasants and the wretched town proletariat the Reformation, which Hegel calls the German Revolution, was not simply a question of justification by Faith, but the realization of Justice on earth according to the words of Christ and the Prophets. But Luther's view was rather different, as is well known; "Neither injustice nor tyranny justify revolt. . . . Christ's spiritual kingdom cannot be transformed into an external and earthly kingdom."

We may well wonder whether, *mutatis mutandis*, Hegel's own conclusion is not sufficiently like Luther's.

*The evolution of the "noble consciousness" from Feudalism to the Revolution*

The world of presence is the world of concrete reality which consciousness forms in the process of cultivating itself. This cultural process (*Bildung*) must be understood in its most general sense. The individual renounces his natural liberty to become a man in a social and political world which is constituted by this very act of alienation. But in exchange for this surrender he acquires the power of culture and gains the possibility of mastery over nature.<sup>36</sup> The two elements of this world are the "State Power" and "Wealth."<sup>37</sup> The State Power is at first essence, but in the process of its full realization it is transformed into its opposite, Wealth. The entire meaning of the world of culture is comprised in the evolution of these two elements considered as two types of self-consciousness—the noble consciousness and the base consciousness—which are the vehicle of this world and in bringing it to its full development contribute at the same time to its dissolution.

The noble consciousness acquires its self-definition through proportioning itself to the social and political world and to the powers that dominate that world: the *Power of the State* and of *Wealth*. The base consciousness, on the contrary, is always in a state of inequality. It is the element of revolt and, so to speak, the revolutionary ferment of the whole development. The base consciousness is, of course, obliged to obey the constituted authority. But if it yields, it is with a secret feeling of internal revolt. It, too, seeks the wealth which is the source of enjoyment, but it hates the benefactor. Furthermore, just as the slave is the truth of the master—or as the master is in fact a slave without knowing it—so the base consciousness is the truth of the noble consciousness. Here (as Marx observed) it is impossible to overlook the revolutionary character of the Hegelian dialectic.<sup>38</sup> Whatever the conservative implications of his system, the consequences of the dialectic are revolutionary, whether or not intended by Hegel.

Let us translate this dialectic into concrete terms: the nobility, which is the ethical ideal of the *ancien régime*, always becomes

something other than what it ought to be. The truth hidden within it is the base consciousness that is its antithesis and which it must end by discovering within itself. The noble consciousness exists at first in the form of the "loyal vassal." He has entirely renounced any private, particular will and is ready to die in the service of the State.<sup>39</sup> Through this act of alienation he gives rise to the first form in which "State Power" exists. In exchange, he is held in regard less for himself than for his courage and the nobility of his ideal. His renunciation is simultaneously the acquisition of a sense of personal worth. Hegel calls this the sentiment of honor, having in mind an essay of Montesquieu in which he considers honor the "essential principle" of monarchy. However, in renouncing his particular desires the "haughty vassal" does not surrender his "self." Though he is willing to sacrifice himself on behalf of the State, he is so only when the State is not embodied in a will that is a particular will: ". . . 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."<sup>40</sup> This is why honor, or a personal sense of the Universal, is an ambiguous mixture of pride and virtue. Should the noble not die in battle, there is nothing to disprove the accusation that the truth of his nobility lies in that *amour-propre* of which La Rochefoucauld spoke in the early seventeenth century. "Individual self-existence, the possession of an individual will that is not yet *qua* will surrendered, is the inner secretly reserved principle of the various classes and stations, a spirit which keeps for its own behoof what suits itself best, in spite of its words about the universal best, and tends to make this clap-trap about what is universally the best a substitute for bringing it about."<sup>41</sup> Thus the noble consciousness does not differ from the base consciousness which is "always on the point of revolt" and, as Hegel shows elsewhere,<sup>42</sup> it was with justice that Richelieu reduced the claims of the nobility.

However, there is a new development destined to result in an absolute monarchy. In the course of this process the State Power reaches its apex in the form of an individual above all individuals, a single and decisive Self. This happens because the noble consciousness forswears its honor and through courtly language alienates its self-respect, exchanging the "heroism of

service" for the "heroism of flattery."<sup>43</sup> Behind these dialectical formulas what appears is the reign of Louis XIV, and Hegel is here describing what Taine later called the classical spirit.<sup>44</sup> Through this development in which the *noble* becomes a *courtier* there occurs a profound transformation of the social structure. The structure of the State is overturned and the stage set for the coming of the French Revolution. "By its name, then, the monarch becomes absolutely detached from everyone, exclusive and solitary, and in virtue of it is unique as an atom that cannot communicate any part of its essential nature, and has no equal. . . . Conversely he, this particular individual, thereby knows himself, this individual self, to be the universal power, knows that the nobles not only are ready and prepared for the service of the state-authority, but are grouped as an ornamental setting around the throne, and that they are forever telling him who sits thereon what he is."<sup>45</sup>

Once the rule of the *Roi Soleil* was established, the vitality of the feudal institutions was sapped so that they survived only as décor, as a motley of privileges all the more frivolous now that organic ties with the State had been uprooted. France is clearly the country in which this process was carried furthest, compared, for example, with the states of North Germany. Writing sometime after Hegel, de Tocqueville comments that "even after it had ceased to be a political institution, the feudal system remained basic to the economic organization of France."<sup>46</sup> However, in alienating its honor, the nobility received in return pensions and material benefits. The King is the one individual who can allow himself to be seduced by flattery and when he says, "It is I who am the State," he remains unaware that in these words the State is dissolved and nothing more than an "empty name." The real power now lies in the hands of Wealth as a further manifestation of the decomposition of the State. And again the noble consciousness allies itself with the base consciousness and "adjusts to its surroundings"<sup>47</sup> in order to get out of the State the only thing it now considers real, namely, hard cash. Earlier, we alluded to La Rochefoucauld. Here, we may refer to La Bruyère who observed this process toward the end of the seventeenth century. "Such people are neither parents nor friends, neither citizens nor Chris-

tians, perhaps not even men; they have money." The practical effect of such a transformation of the social structure is the collapse of the polarity between the noble consciousness and the base consciousness.<sup>48</sup> With their disappearance, a culture has in fact passed away. "The base type has gained its end, that of subordinating universal power to self-centred isolation of self."<sup>49</sup>

*The mood of pre-revolutionary society: the disintegrated consciousness*

A living culture must have a recognized and stable system of values. The social order is dependent upon a nearly universal recognition of a well-defined conception of good and evil. But there are critical periods in history when the old order becomes a shadow and the new order has yet to appear. These periods of transition, which precede every revolution, are times of spiritual disintegration. At such times the dialectic appears to consciousness only in its negative form and the positive dialectic which underlies negativity is not perceived. Though others have since drawn attention to these crises in the social order, Hegel's early perception of these phenomena seems to us to have original merits.

The *ancien régime* was founded upon the distinction between the noble consciousness and the base consciousness. But the nobility, which was once consecrated to the service of the State, alienated its honor in exchange for a more real power, money. The State Power, having assumed the form of an absolute monarchy, lost its universal character and survived only in appearance. As a result, wealth became the only worthwhile pursuit, and thereby the distinction between the noble and base consciousness was reduced to a formal distinction, without any basis in truth, but providing a façade behind which a new order might be prepared. Even when wealth had become an essence there remained a vast number of differences in the social order, those between the privileged and the non-privileged, between the arrogant rich and the ignoble flatterers. "The form of utterance which supplies wealth with the sense of its own essential significance, and thereby makes itself master of it, is likewise the language of flattery, but of ignoble flattery."<sup>50</sup> Once wealth—the reference here is not

to work or production in general but to a condition of immediate satisfaction<sup>51</sup>—becomes the sole essence, a profound perversion of the social structure is involved for the reason that “what it imparts, what it gives to others, is self-existence. It does not hand itself over, however, as a natural self-less object, as the frankly and freely offered condition of unconscious life, but as self-conscious, as a reality keeping hold of itself.”<sup>52</sup> The result is thus widespread depravity in which the soul of the rich man is caught no less than that of his client. However, it is in the soul of the client, in the depths of his disintegration, that there awakens the most lucid awareness of the decomposition of society.

To describe the disintegrated consciousness and the negation of the ancient world and its culture Hegel chose an essay from Diderot at that time unknown in France. It had been translated into German by Goethe and sent to Schiller, who wrote about it that “it is a dialogue which the (supposed) nephew of Rameau, the musician, has with Diderot. This nephew is the ideal of a Parasite (*Schmarotzer*), but a hero of the class, and as he describes himself, he makes a biting satire on society and the world in which he lives and flourishes.”<sup>53</sup> Schiller’s comment seizes upon what Hegel saw in the essay, namely, not simply the portrait of a unique individual, a fine character description, but the vision of a society of extremes and the moral disintegration which is its consequence.

The dialogue, as Hegel points out, brings together two quite different personalities: the truth-seeking philosopher and the Bohemian. The philosopher seeks to support and preserve a certain number of fixed values. The philosopher is shocked by the dialectical shifts and constant changes of mood in his interlocutor and yet he is obliged to recognize the latter’s absolute frankness and sincerity. “I was confused by such cleverness mixed with such baseness, by so many ideas at one moment so right and in the next so wrong, by the perversity in every one of his sentiments, his total depravity and his extraordinary candor.”<sup>54</sup> The philosopher is unable to adapt his conscience to such an upheaval in morals and Hegel himself often attempts to escape the consequences of his own dialectical logic. But in this case truth is on the side of the Bohemian, for he describes everything in the social

world for what it is, that is to say, the opposite of what it appears to be: "Money is everything, but we should not say so."<sup>55</sup> The noble consciousness and the base consciousness are in reality the opposite of what they should be, the good is evil and the evil is good.<sup>56</sup> The Bohemian lays bare the comedy of a social order which has lost its foundations in any substantial reality. The awareness of such a loss transforms action into comedy and intentionality into hypocrisy. The sole truth in such a context is the desire and greed for money and the will to power. But at this point, having candidly exposed "what the world thinks but does not dare say," Rameau's nephew pulls himself up, proud of his unimpeachable candor, and raises his self above all this baseness by the very act of espousing it and thereby achieving identity with himself in the very depths of his disintegration.<sup>57</sup> At this point Hegel's analysis of the disintegrated consciousness brings to mind his earlier analysis of the skeptic consciousness or the unhappy consciousness. But what is original in his description of the disintegrated consciousness—apart from its dialectic of insult and humiliation which one finds later in Dostoevsky<sup>58</sup>—is that it reveals the mind of a society about to perish of an unhappy consciousness from the pre-revolutionary period. Thus, by neglecting the façade of appearances in such a world, Rameau's nephew can exclaim, "Vanity, there is no homeland, from one end to the other I see only tyrants and slaves."<sup>59</sup>

The language of he who expresses the vanity of the social world is, as Hegel puts it, the madness of the musician who "piled and mixed up together some thirty airs, Italian, French, tragic, comic, of all sorts and kinds."<sup>60</sup> By contrast, the honest soul of the philosopher struggles to keep within the harmony of Good and Evil. "The honest soul takes each moment as a permanent and essential fact, and is the uncultivated thoughtless condition that does not think and does not know that it is likewise doing the very inverse. The distraught and disintegrated soul is, however, aware of inversion; it is in fact a consciousness of absolute inversion; the conceptual principle predominates there; brings together into a single unity the thoughts that lie far apart in the case of the honest soul, and the language conveying its meaning is, therefore, full of *esprit* and wit (*geistreich*)."<sup>61</sup>

The scintillating language employed by the wit is used not only by the tragi-comic Bohemian but is the language of an entire society that only preserves any self-respect at all by being able to denounce forthrightly in chosen surroundings the vanity of its world. It enjoys the existing order but knows itself to be superior to it as the object upon which it exercises its "sparkling wit" and judgment. Yet as Diderot observes: "There is no one who does not think like you and indict the entire social order, only to find that he denounces his own very existence."<sup>62</sup>

The true expression of this cynical avowal of inversion would involve a return to the state of nature described by Rousseau.<sup>63</sup> But even Diogenes in his tub was conditioned by the world from which he sought to exclude himself. The return cannot assume the form of particularity: "It is a return of the whole unto itself that is needed." And thus Hegel is involved in his own interpretation of Rousseau's thesis. The return can only involve the spirit of culture itself "and can only mean that it must *qua* spirit return out of its confusion into itself, and win for itself a still higher level of conscious life."<sup>64</sup> Torn from its transcendental world, consciousness leads us to absolute thought, or the identity of thought with itself in its disintegration. It remains to consider the inverse evolution, namely, that which proceeds from the transcendental world to the immanent world. The pivot, or middle term, in this twofold evolution is self-consciousness which, by comprehending everything within itself, becomes in its universality "Absolute Liberty."

### *The struggle of the Enlightenment*

The conflict between Faith and Enlightenment, which dominated the eighteenth century, represents a struggle between self-consciousness possessed of an objective knowledge of truth and pure thought whose claim to objectivity is grounded transcendently. The two are indeed not dissimilar, but simply fail to recognize their identity and like brothers on opposite sides in a battle seem all the more bent upon each other's destruction, despite the fact that they share a common origin and spring from the same source of truth, the Absolute Spirit. The struggle nevertheless has

a necessary character, for the reason that it prepares the way for the return of the transcendental realm to the level of self-consciousness. We shall not pursue the analysis of the manner in which discursive thought deals with Faith, illuminating it from an objective standpoint, transforming it into a system of prejudice and superstition and thereby rendering it the very opposite of the claim to truth to which it pretends. The truth it reveals is in fact the real nature of human rationality. It uncovers in man a wholly irrational world, a tissue of unfounded absurdities, a savage nightmare which must be driven out of any truly human universe, if man is to be restored to himself and made the master of his own destiny.<sup>65</sup> We shall limit our discussion to the development and social diffusion of the Enlightenment. This philosophical struggle is an essential stage in the development of the French Revolution, for, as Hegel remarks in his *Philosophy of History*, the French Revolution "resulted from philosophy."

We have drawn attention to the similarities between the Hegelian dialectic (master and slave, noble and base consciousness) and the later Marxian dialectic without, however, wishing in any way to obscure the differences that have been observed between Hegel's idealism and his student's historical materialism. In Hegel's view, history is determined by Ideas which become incarnate in certain world-visions. These world-visions, such as the Enlightenment, Utilitarianism, Absolute Liberty, are developed in more or less abstract systems by philosophers. But they originate in the course of the historical development of society. Strictly correlated with social reality, or culture, as Hegel defines it, these world-visions are not supra-structures but living ideologies that must be grasped as such. They are not to be abstracted from the concrete situation—the mode of life and the social system corresponding to it—in which they arise. In pretending to stand Hegelian philosophy upon its feet, Marx in fact overturned the entire Hegelian system. In this reversal, the dialectic of the history of ideas—the most original element in Hegel's thought—for the most part disappears or loses its meaning. What better example can one find of the activity of the Idea than the Revolution of 1793, the experience of the new mystique of a Social Contract within "a nation one and undivided"?

The Enlightenment represents a philosophical struggle with the

kingdom of error which is founded upon three elements. The first element is the naïve consciousness of an inexperienced mass. In such a consciousness error is simply the absence of any reflection directed toward the Self. It is expressed by Séide in Voltaire's *Mahomet*, which Lessing imitated in his *Nathan der Weise*.

My soul is the willing slave to your command  
Enlighten only its obedient ignorance.<sup>66</sup>

Opposed to such naïve consciousness is the second element, namely, the evil purpose of the priests who wish to be "alone in possession of insight."<sup>67</sup> Like Mahomet, they set themselves up as the sole representative of God.

Through my voice listen to his supreme will.<sup>68</sup>

The clergy "conspire, therefore, with despotism," which is the third element in this alienated world. In order to stabilize itself despotism manipulates the naïveté of the mass and draws advantage from the dupery of the priests. Such is the kingdom of darkness excavated by the Enlightenment, which, indeed, as the result of a dialectical phenomenon in history justly emphasized by Hegel, is almost the creation of its explorers. When one side denounces the other, the effect is to develop in the opponent a *bad consciousness*, which, by lifting him out of his naïve state, results in a cynical acceptance of his values.<sup>69</sup>

Since the Enlightenment is unable to reform the perverted consciousness of the despot and the priests, it works directly upon the transformation of the mass. The mass in itself is what self-consciousness is for itself and this explains why the Enlightenment spreads without resistance throughout society. "The communication of pure insight is on that account comparable to a silent extension, or the expansion say, of a scent in the unresisting atmosphere. . . . Only when the infection has become widespread is that consciousness alive to it, which unconcernedly yielded to its influence."<sup>70</sup> In the same vein, Hegel quotes from a passage in Diderot: "The foreign God gains a humble place on the altar beside the local idol; gradually, he becomes more secure there; one fine day he gives

his neighbour a shove, and crash! bang! the idol finishes on the floor.”<sup>71</sup> Hegel continues with a remarkable description of this revolution in the spiritual climate of the age: “being now an invisible and unperceived spirit, it insinuates its way through and through the noble parts, and soon has got complete hold over all the vitals and members of the unconscious idol.”<sup>72</sup> Hegel has in mind a bloodless revolution. “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.”<sup>73</sup> The new serpent of wisdom has thus painlessly sloughed off its shriveled skin. A conscious awareness of this revolution is not achieved until it is too late and the resistance which the powers that be attempt is vain. The harm has already been done and persecution serves only to strengthen the power of the new spirit.

The struggle was won by the Enlightenment. But then the question arose: If every prejudice and superstition has been erased, what is the nature of the truth which the Enlightenment offers in their place?<sup>74</sup> The truth which emerges from the struggle is the truth of “utility,” as developed in the philosophy of Helvetius. Everything that was intrinsic has been destroyed, leaving a vacuous, unordered world. “Since in this way it conceives in general every characteristic . . . to be a finite fact, to be a human entity and a mental presentation, Absolute Being on its view turns out to be a mere vacuum, to which can be attributed no characteristics, no predicates at all.”<sup>75</sup> This spiritual vacuum is the counterpart of the world of the “human herd” which only subsists as a herd or society for the reason that man is regarded as useful to man. “As everything is useful for man, man is likewise useful too, and his characteristic function consists in making himself a member of the human herd, of use for the common good, and serviceable to all.”<sup>76</sup> In such a world there is no place for any absolute truth other than an absolute flux or utility oscillating between the in-itself and the for-itself. Utilitarianism is precisely the expression of a consciousness that has not yet integrated its own moments, but still has before it an objectivity, like a shallow image which it struggles to erase, only to see it reappear. “Utility is still a predicate of the object, not a subject.”<sup>77</sup> Consequently, the flux will yield to a new order that is to be proclaimed: “Man

is free will." Thus man is capable of raising himself above the drab world of social utility, and, as the truth at which the world aims, discovers the absolute in his own "universal self-consciousness." This spiritual revolution engages with the revolution in the social realm and bursts forth in the new conception of consciousness as Absolute Freedom, in which the two worlds hitherto separated are henceforth reconciled.

### Absolute Liberty

In his eulogy of Rousseau, Lakanal remarks that: "In effect the *Social Contract* provides us with an explanation of the Revolution." Hegel had read Rousseau while at Tübingen, and he approaches the interpretation of the *Social Contract* in the light of the events taking place in France in his own day. The standard of the new era is none other than the principle of Rousseau and Kant, namely, the principle of Absolute Liberty. Man's essence is defined by his will—not a particular will in pursuit of private ends, but a general will. "Rationality of will is nothing else than maintaining oneself in pure freedom, willing this and this alone."<sup>78</sup> Freedom involves that each individual citizen rediscover himself in an indivisible identity with the general will, that is to say, with the State. Man subordinates his impulses and appetites to his self-prescribed obedience to the Law. The people becomes God; it recognizes itself in the *unmediated* reflection of the Law. In the French Revolution, Absolute Liberty "puts itself on the throne of the world, without any power being able to offer effectual resistance."<sup>79</sup>

However, this unmediated encounter of the Universal and the individual rests upon an abstraction which considers man only as a *citizen* and not as a *bourgeois*, the essentially private individual. Now, ever since his early studies in Tübingen, Hegel had been reflecting upon that organic society which necessarily mediates the State and the individual. Because it neglects this concrete world Rousseau's work is inadequate and results in an impasse. The postulation of an unmediated identity between the individual and the general will was possible, as Hegel thought, in the *polis*,<sup>80</sup> but was no longer a modern possibility. The individual

has necessarily to alienate his will and, as Hegel says, "to objectify himself," or to become a particular moment within a Totality which infinitely transcends him. The general will can only become a reality by means of this organized Totality divided into specific, concrete spheres. Self-consciousness has, however, an absolute right to participate directly and purposefully in the general project. The glory of the French Revolution consists in its struggle against all alienation of the will, against every limitation of self-consciousness. There, too, lies its failure. Saint-Just was led to declare that "the force of events has perhaps led us to consequences that we had not imagined." The force of things, or as Hegel puts it, the cunning of reason, is the actual working of the Idea, and it is from this that the philosopher who studies the events of history can discover their significance. The French Revolution is, as it were, a great *métaphysical* event.<sup>81</sup>

With the Enlightenment self-consciousness appeared to have achieved a level of critical objectivity. There still remained social institutions but they could no longer claim to be self-subsistent. Their "being-in-itself" is directly their "being-for-another"; in other words, they serve a function. The constitutional monarch is no longer a king by the grace of God, a king in himself, but only as he serves the body politic. However, this concept of social utility is subsumed into its ultimate truth, namely, in the being-for-itself of consciousness as absolute and universal human will. "There is here no more than an empty semblance of objectivity separating self-consciousness from actual possession." Thus utilitarianism yields to the general will, or to Absolute Liberty. The people unite in a single and undivided will within which each citizen desires only what is generally willed. For such a people, "the world is for it absolutely its own will,"<sup>82</sup> and no longer a brute obstacle. There is no longer any transcendental entity, or, at least, there remains only "an exhalation of stale gas, of the empty *être suprême*."<sup>83</sup> The Revolution emerges, then, as a prodigious effort of Reason to actualize itself in the world and to discover its reflection in this process without it resulting in an aberration of self-consciousness. As a result of its transformation by the Enlightenment, "consciousness *qua* pure insight is not an individual self, over against which the object, in the sense of hav-

ing a self all its own, could stand, but the pure notion, the gazing of the self into self, the literal and absolute seeing itself doubled."<sup>84</sup>

The people do not manifest their will "by giving a silent assent." Rather, what emerges as the operation of the Totality "is immediately and consciously the deed of every single individual." That is why the democrats in the Commune and the Jacobins protested the strict application of the precepts of the social contract. They claimed for themselves the right to sanction the Constitution and its laws. They demanded the referendum and an unlimited mandate: "For in the case where the self is merely represented and ideally presented (*vorgestellt*), there it is not actual: where it is by proxy, it is not."<sup>85</sup>

Such unrestricted liberty was achieved from 1789 until 1794. But what became of it in the course of its enjoyment? It is to the dialectics of that experience that we must now turn.

Its results were mainly negative. Rousseau had said: "If, then the general will is to be truly expressed; it is essential that there be no subsidiary groups within the State, and that each citizen voice his own opinion and nothing but his own opinion."<sup>86</sup>

That is why all the organic divisions within the social body gradually disappeared as the rotten elements in the old order of things were brought to ruin by earlier developments. What Hegel refers to as the "spiritual masses," the Nobility, the Third Estate, the Clergy, were dissolved into the mass of citizens. "Each individual consciousness rises out of the sphere assigned to it, finds no longer its inmost nature and function in this isolated area, but grasps itself as the notion of will, grasps all the various spheres as the essential expression of this will, and is in consequence only able to realize itself in a work which is the work of the whole."<sup>87</sup> By the same token, the single and undivided sovereignty no longer allowed itself to be split into executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The Committee of Public Safety concentrated all power within itself. How scornful is Rousseau of "the tricks performed by our modern men of politics. The body of the Commonwealth is first dismembered with an adroitness which would do credit to a country fair and then reassembled, no one knows how."<sup>88</sup> All that remained was a multitude of disparate individuals, a shower

of atoms whose bond is the general will.<sup>89</sup> Under such conditions there could be no question of a positive achievement.

A more positive outcome could only be attained through a new form of alienation, that is, only if Absolute Liberty again objectified itself and "made itself an existing substance." But then "the activity and being of personality would, however, find itself by this process confined to a branch of the whole, to one kind of action and existence; when placed in the element of existence, personality would bear the meaning of a determinate personality; it would cease to be in reality universal self-consciousness."<sup>90</sup> The activity of this Totality, conceived as an individual, cannot operate in the same fashion. To be capable of action, a people must assemble as a single individual and "put an individual consciousness in the forefront."<sup>91</sup> But the government, which is what is in question here, is an individual that excludes all other individuals from itself. Nothing guarantees that it will embody the general will. It is therefore a matter of principle to suspect it. It cannot act, since any positive action, inasmuch as it is its own work, excludes from itself the activity of others. Its very nature as a government renders it culpable. This same notion is expressed by Hegel, in a study he made of Fichte's *Natural Law*, prior to the Jena period. Following Rousseau's comment, "We shall force it to be free," Fichte conceives of a system of constraints in order to guarantee the operation of the general will. As Hegel interprets it, the governed will be constrained by the governors and the governors by the governed. But ultimately this *perpetuum mobile* results in a *perpetuum quietum*.<sup>92</sup> But action is a necessity. "A Government of some kind, however, is always in existence. The question presents itself, then, whence did it emanate."<sup>93</sup>

This is the reason why during the Convention the government existed as a "faction in power," which of its very nature was destined to fall. After the Girondin, Robespierre took power and with great violence "maintained the State" until "in turn necessity abandoned him."<sup>94</sup> However, in this very process Absolute Liberty was actualized, though in reality it achieved the reverse of what it sought. Whereas it conceived itself to be a positive force, it was merely a negative principle which resulted in the destruction of

the individuals identified with it. "But just on that account this will is in unmediated oneness with self-consciousness, it is the pure positive because it is the pure negative; and that meaningless death, the unfilled, vacuous negativity of self, in its inner constitutive principle, turns round into absolute positivity."<sup>95</sup> Just as the government is suspect in virtue of being in power, so individuals are suspect in the eyes of the government, not for their actions, but for their suspected intentions (the law of suspects), their mistrust and reserve with respect to the power which claims to embody the general will. *Vox populi vox Dei*, but the people-in-itself and the general will are revealed to the initiate "in the silence of passion."<sup>96</sup> Once the individual has merged himself with the citizen, there is no personal conduct which escapes the control of a police charged to enforce the reign of virtue on earth.

Hegel had already perceived the extreme implications of Fichte's liberalism. It involves a police state in which practically every action of the bourgeois is watched.<sup>97</sup> On the side of the *sans-culottes* the struggle against the inequality of wealth is not motivated by envy and crude jealousy. It is motivated from the legitimate apprehension that the state, or the general will, might fail in its destiny, overwhelmed by the enjoyment of material goods and the concern for private interests over the common good.<sup>98</sup> In brief, the great metaphysical event experienced during the year of 1794 was the complete realization of Absolute Liberty and the creation of a new relation between politics and death. A total democracy emerged, but as the very opposite of what it claimed to be. It became a manifestation of the most literal totalitarianism, or anti-liberal democracy, because it completely absorbed the private individual in the citizen and reduced a transcendental religion to the religion of the State. Robespierre resorted to religion for a focus and support for the Republic.<sup>99</sup> "Robespierre," says Hegel, "set up the principle of virtue as supreme, and it may be said that he was serious about virtue."<sup>100</sup>

As to the outcome of this turmoil, Hegel's reflections in the *Phenomenology* are hardly unambiguous. After Robespierre there follows a name unmentioned as such, but surely we are meant to read between the lines the name of Napoleon. For it is Napoleon who restored the State. He therefore prefigures a kind of restora-

tion, though he is destined to disappear from the scene that he prepares. The great man, the tyrant or the dictator, preserves and reconstitutes the State. In opposition to the apparent will of each individual, the tyrant expresses the true and permanent will, the destiny of all.<sup>101</sup> He subjugates them and disciplines them to obedience. Once this is accomplished, though unable to abdicate himself, the tyrant must leave the stage. "The people overthrow tyranny because to them it is an abomination and an infamy, but really because it has served its purpose."<sup>102</sup> In a letter to his friend Niethammer, written April 28, 1814, in which he comments upon the historical events taking place in Europe, particularly the decline of Napoleon, Hegel, in the course of reflecting upon the historical scene in Europe and in particular the decline of Napoleon, boasts of "having foreseen this reversal in the work which he had finished on the eve of the battle of Jena."

Thus the result of the French Revolution is the Restoration. However, the Restoration is not simply the re-establishment of the old order. After having suffered the Terror and dictatorship, the formless multitude reorganizes itself once again. "These individuals, who felt the fear of death, their absolute lord and master, submit to negation and distinction once more, arrange themselves under 'spheres,' and return to a restricted and apportioned task, but thereby to their substantial reality."<sup>103</sup> The new divisions or new spiritual masses which become the elements of the modern society are, however, quite different from the old ones. To grasp clearly the nature of the difference involved it is necessary to refer to Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, 1805-1806, which precedes *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Whereas in 1802 Hegel still conceived the organic divisions of society on the model of the aristocratic structure of northern Germany,<sup>104</sup> he is now influenced by Napoleon's reconstruction. In the constitution which Napoleon made for Italy there was a college of "*possidenti*," of "*mercanti*," and of "*dotti*," in which "we have united the different constituent elements of a nation."<sup>105</sup>

These elements differ from those of the old order, the hereditary nobility, bourgeoisie, and peasantry, and this is the basis of the remarkably more concrete description of 1805-1806 in comparison with the sketch only a few years earlier in the *System der*

*Sittlichkeit*. The peasantry are still weighed down by a life of toil that binds them to nature but they have a collective strength which finds occasional expression in violence. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, differentiates and organizes itself. Hegel draws a distinction between the *petit bourgeois*, who is characterized by the respect for his honor and the comfortable position he enjoys in the town, and the great merchant who lives in an abstract world and whose dealings are universal in space and time.<sup>106</sup> The merchant is accustomed to handle money—the abstract universal—rather than things. He espouses abstract law and the rigor of exchange, indifferent to their consequences for human beings: “Factories and mills base their existence upon the misery of a class.”<sup>107</sup> Of course, the State stands above this business world, which is like a “wild animal,” and surveys it from a universal standpoint. But “its intervention must be hardly visible; one should not want to save what cannot be saved, but find other employment for the class that endures misery,”<sup>108</sup> in seeking new markets. At the side of the nobility, which still retains its place, there appears the great administrator, whose model Hegel found in Napoleon as adviser to the State. These administrators are men with a sense of duty who, like the philosophers, give expression to “public opinion.”<sup>109</sup>

We have stressed the treatment of historical events in Hegel, for the tendency is to overlook this aspect in comparison with the abstraction of the *Phenomenology*. The State, then, is restored after the Revolution, but it is “refreshed and rejuvenated.”<sup>110</sup> The effect of any revolution, Hegel seems to think, is simply to strengthen the State. But there remains a problem or, rather, a question which Hegel himself asked. It is the question whether the revolt against alienation which resulted in a new alienation of Liberty is to be repeated. In this case, the history of the spirit would be a cyclical history, each revolution resulting in the institution of a new social order. Thus, just as war “shakes to the very center”<sup>111</sup> individuals who would otherwise sink into particularity, so it is the function of revolution to renew otherwise petrified social orders. From this point of view there might be some sort of progress involved in the conflict between the body politic and self-consciousness. In each revolution the body politic

would be increasingly permeated by the conscious subject. Ultimately perhaps, alienation, as a hitherto necessary phenomenon, would disappear and the realm of individual consciousness might expand to the point where it found its reflection in a common social enterprise. It would then be "able to endure the objective reality of universal spirit, a reality, excluding self-consciousness *qua* particular."<sup>112</sup>

Having raised the possibility, Hegel nevertheless seems unwilling to pursue the history of the spirit to this conclusion. Much as Luther considered impossible the reign of God on earth, Hegel, too, at least in the *Phenomenology*, conceives of another solution than the unmediated reconciliation of the two worlds. He seems to have recorded the failure of the French Revolution as a necessary event whereby Absolute Liberty "passes over into another land of self-conscious spirit,"<sup>113</sup> namely, Germany, where, instead of being realized in deeds, it is internalized in the ethical and religious world of Kant, Fichte, and the romantics. As Hegel puts it: "Among the Germans this view assumed no other view than that of tranquil theory, but the French wished to give it practical effect."<sup>114</sup>

The events in France were passed in judgment by Burke in a work which became the Bible of all future conservatives. He contrasts English freedom with French liberties and foresees as a consequence of the latter the triumph of force and despotism. But he fails to rise to the grandeur and universal significance of the Revolution. He confines himself to the contrast between the French mode of reasoning by abstractions, which carefully-levels everything, "like their ornamental gardeners,"<sup>115</sup> and the prejudice for prejudice, or untheoretical empiricism. Although Hegel may be compared to Burke, particularly in his criticisms of the abstract principles of 1789, the differences between them cannot be overlooked. We have attempted to illustrate the effort which Hegel made to comprehend the necessary development of the events which culminated in the French Revolution. Despite its partial failure, Hegel considers the Revolution an intellectual revolution of infinite consequence, as may be seen from the following passage written toward the end of his life:

The conception, the idea of Right asserted its authority *all at once*, and the old framework of injustice could offer no resistance to its onslaught. A constitution, therefore, was established in harmony with the conception of Right, and on this foundation all future legislation was to be based. Never since the sun had stood in the firmament and the planets revolved around him had it been perceived that man's existence centres in his head, i.e., in Thought, inspired by which he builds up the world of reality. Anaxagoras had been the first to say that *vous* governs the World; but not until now had man advanced to the recognition of the principle that Thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch. Emotions of a lofty character stirred men's minds at that time; a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation between the Divine and the Secular was now first accomplished.<sup>116</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 75.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 393-394.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- 5 These criticisms were first clearly set forth in Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin, 1857), p. 241. But Haym confuses a number of distinct phenomenological levels of analysis.
- 6 *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, edited by J. Hoffmeister (Stuttgart: Frommans Verlag, 1936), p. 360.
- 7 On this "practical realism" and the apparent contrast with Hegel's theoretical works, see R. Haym, *op. cit.*, p. 269; also E. Vermeil, "La Pensée politique de Hegel," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, XXXVIII, No. 3 (1931), pp. 441-510.
- 8 *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 406.
- 9 J. Hyppolite, "Les Travaux de jeunesse de Hegel d'après des Ouvrages récents," pp. 399-426 and pp. 549-578.
- 10 G. Aspelin, *Hegels Tübinger Fragmente, eine psychologisch-ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Lund: Ohlssons Buchdruckerei, 1933), p. 21.

- 11 F. Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, Vol. I (Munich and Berlin, 1920), p. 29.
- 12 On the destiny of love, which is so important in Hegel's early works cf. *Early Theological Writings*, 246-247.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- 14 When the ideal of the State no longer inhabited the individual soul, then "Death . . . must have become something terrifying, since nothing survived him. But the republican's whole soul was in the republic, and there hovered in his mind the thought of its immortality." *Ibid.*
- 15 I.e., "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," Part V: "The Fate of Jesus and His Church," in Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*. [Trans.]
- 16 Herman Nohl, *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen, 1907), p. 89.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- 18 Actually, despite the contrast between these two conceptions of the State, Hegel is even at this time aware of the need to reconcile them. Thus he conceives a republican State whose goal is to respect the rights of man, but whose essence is the complete and direct expression of the general will of its citizens.
- 19 *Briefe von und an Hegel*, Vol. I, 1785-1812, edited by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1952), pp. 23-25. [Trans.]
- 20 For Hegel's commentary on these letters, see *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, pp. 247ff.
- 21 Listen, and learn justice. [Trans.]
- 22 E. Vermeil, *op. cit.*, p. 444.
- 23 *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, p. 249.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 249.
- 25 "Über die neuesten innern Verhältnisse Württembergs, besonders über die Gebrechen der Magistratsverfassung," in *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, pp. 150-154.
- 26 *Quo usque tandem abutere, Catalina, patientia nostra?* M. Tulli Ciceronis in *L. Catilinam*, Oratio, I, 1. "Just how long do you think you can go on trying our patience, Catiline?" [Trans.]
- 27 *The Philosophy of History*, with Prefaces by Charles Hegel and the Translator, J. Sibree, and a New Introduction by C. J. Friedrich (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 457. At first, Hegel seems to have thought of the State as a contract, then as a power which expresses the destiny of the individual. Subsequently, he envisaged a further destiny for the State itself in which it becomes lost amidst wealth and the multiplicity of private interests. While the individual reconciles himself with the State in becoming a citizen, the State finds itself confronted with the world of economy as its destiny. The reconciliation between

- the State and economic interests is envisaged in Hegel's Jena essay on Natural Law, *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 327.
- 28 See, for example, "Hegel an Nanette Endel, 25 Mai 1798," *Briefe von und an Hegel*, Vol. I, 1785-1812, pp. 57-58.
- 29 *Hegel's Political Writings*, translated by T. M. Knox, with an Introductory Essay by Z. A. Pelczynski (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). [Trans.]
- 30 *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 5. Hegel adds that our troubles arise from not finding things as they ought to be. But through knowledge we free ourselves from the contingency of personal desires and learn to recognize necessity and even the reason which underlies it.
- 31 *Early Theological Writings*, p. 152.
- 32 *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Act I, Scene I, *The Dramatic Works of J. W. von Goethe*, translated by Sir Walter Scott, E. H. Bowring, and Anna Swanwick (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1918).
- 33 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 597.
- 34 Here we return to the passage mentioned above in which Hegel contemplates the transition from the ancient to the modern world. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel distinguishes between Faith, as a flight from the world, and Religion, which is the "self-consciousness of absolute essence."
- 35 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 598.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 515.
- 37 The study of this section of the *Phenomenology* (Culture and its Realm of Actual Reality) presupposes a study of Hegel's earlier Jena writings, "Ueber die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts" and the "System der Sittlichkeit," in *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*.
- 38 It is certainly a revolutionary dialectic, but a dialectic whose character is psychological or spiritual. The drama of the opposition between the noble and the base consciousness is never reducible for Hegel to the conflict between two economic classes. In the world of honor what is essential is the ambition or desire "to achieve greatness." This desire is succeeded by the desire for wealth alone, which gives rise to a second dialectic of a wholly different nature.
- 39 Montesquieu's study of the evolution of monarchy had considerable influence upon Hegel. "Honor, therefore, has its supreme principles . . . first, it is permitted to value one's fortune, but absolutely forbidden to value one's life." Montesquieu, "De l'esprit des lois," Vol. IV, Chapter ii, in *Oeuvres complètes*, texte présenté et annoté par Roger Caillouis (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1958); *The Spirit of the Laws*, translated by Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner Library of Classics, 1949), p. 32.

- 40 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 528.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 528. It was particularly in Germany that this narrow spirit substituted itself for a public concern. Hegel observes that as an able statesman Richelieu had done everything to combat provincialism in France and to foster it in Germany.
- 42 "Die Verfassung Deutschlands," in *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, especially pp. 107-108. Cf. *Hegel's Political Writings*, pp. 216-217.
- 43 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 533.
- 44 Hegel quite rightly emphasizes the importance of "language" for the creation of this court-culture.
- 45 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, pp. 533-534.
- 46 Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, translated by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), p. 31.
- 47 Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, in *Oeuvres*, texte établi et annoté par André Billy (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1951), p. 500.
- 48 The desire for wealth instead of honor creates a number of changes in the social structure but these are only quantitative differences. The qualitative differentiations which are the foundation of the social organism have lost all meaning.
- 49 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 536. Moreover, we know that the French Revolution actually began with a "revolt of the nobles," a vain attempt to deny history, in order to restore the ancient monarchy and regain political power for the nobility.
- 50 *Ibid.*, p. 540.
- 51 Actually, in this chapter of the *Phenomenology* there are two distinct dialectics of wealth. Having read Adam Smith, Hegel follows his conception of the new social order which was about to emerge. The development of wealth, in the form of work, production, and consumption, is a process *universal in itself* but which does not appear as such to self-consciousness . . . "in his own enjoyment each gives enjoyment to all, in his own labour each works for all as well as for himself. . . ." Private interests are therefore pretenses and mere appearances. The second dialectic, which we are now considering, is the dialectic of the perversion which follows once the desire for wealth is pursued for its own sake.
- 52 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 539.
- 53 "Schiller to Körner, Weimar, April 25, 1805," *Correspondence of Schiller with Körner*, translated by Leonard Simpson, Vol. III (London: Richard Bentley Publisher, 1849), p. 333.
- 54 Diderot, *op. cit.*, p. 441. Cf. *Rameau's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream*,

translated with Introductions by L. W. Tancock (London: Penguin Books, 1966). [Trans.]

- 55 Diderot, *op. cit.*, p. 491. "In all this there was much that one thinks and according to which one behaves but without ever saying so" (*ibid.*, p. 492). Compare the following passage which also inspired Hegel in his description of the disintegrated consciousness which is the effect of wealth: "What a fiendish economy! There are some who burst with everything while others whose needs are no less imperious, to whom hunger comes just as often, haven't even a crust of bread" (*ibid.*, p. 500).
- 56 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 541.
- 57 As in music, which is the only means of expressing the achievement of identity through difference. The event in which the Self finds itself in an external and independent object, money, is the greatest possible loss of identity. "All identity and concord break up, for what holds sway is the purest discord and disunion, what was absolutely essential is absolutely unessential, what has a being on its own account has its being outside itself: the pure ego itself is absolutely disintegrated. . . . *Qua* self, however, it at the same time *ipso facto* rises above this contradiction; it is absolutely elastic, and again cancels this sublation of itself. . . ." (*The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 538.)
- 58 Dostoevsky on several occasions quotes Diderot's text: "There has to be a certain dignity to human nature that nothing can destroy. It can be aroused over a pair of boots, even a pair of boots" (Diderot, *op. cit.*, p. 438).
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 452.
- 60 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 543. The quotation is from Diderot, *op. cit.*, p. 484.
- 61 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 543.
- 62 Diderot, *op. cit.*, p. 433. Hegel distinguishes two moments, one in which the critique of social institutions is the prerogative of only a few individuals and another in which it is the right of every individual throughout society. Consciousness "gathers these scattered elements into a universal conception which expresses the thought of everyone," two moments in which the *Philosophical Dictionary* follows the *Persian Letters*.
- 63 Rousseau's work is the most negative product of the century, yet it prepares the ground for a fresh positive approach.
- 64 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 546. The critique of a civilization appears to involve a critique of culture in general. This becomes intelligible through the *rise of consciousness* in which a civilization that is at first in a state of *immediacy* rises above this to become "formative culture." However, the significance of the return to nature is not a re-

turn to brutishness but to a new order in which self-consciousness is no longer alienated.

- 65 On this subject Hegel influences, in particular, Feuerbach. Hegel's criticisms are aimed solely at the *polemical* attitude of the Enlightenment. He himself proposes to recover the philosophical truth underlying the themes of Faith.
- 66 *Le Fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète*, Acte III, Scène VI, *Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire*, Vol. I (Paris, 1876), pp. 435–457.
- 67 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 562.
- 68 Voltaire, *op. cit.*
- 69 In the replies which Faith makes to the Enlightenment critique Hegel offers an example of this perverse reaction of the subject to the criticism of his judges. Thus, Faith agrees to the discussion of the historical truth of revelation in place of the conception of it as "the witness of the spirit unto spirit," but in accepting debate on these grounds, it reveals how much it has in fact incorporated its adversary's position.
- 70 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, pp. 563–564.
- 71 *Ibid.*, pp. 564–565. Hegel actually quotes only part of the passage as it stands in Diderot, *op. cit.*, pp. 483–484. [Trans.]
- 72 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 654.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 565.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 576. We simply note the division within the victorious party between the *Deists* and *Materialists*. Hegel quite cogently observes that this division is actually a sham since it in fact testifies to a certain preservation of the old culture within the new order. Indeed, pure matter without properties and God without attributes are identical.
- 75 *Ibid.* [Trans.]
- 76 *Ibid.*, p. 579. Hegel attempts in these pages to disengage the "new vision of the world and man" which is the framework of the concept of utility.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 599. The relativity of the fluctuating world of utility is succeeded by the Absolute founded upon a universal human will.
- 78 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 443.
- 79 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 601.
- 80 On this point see *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 249.
- 81 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 599.
- 82 *Ibid.*, p. 600.
- 83 *Ibid.*, p. 602.
- 84 *Ibid.*, p. 600.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 604.
- 86 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, translated by Gerard Hopkins (London: World Classics, Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 275.

- 87 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 601.
- 88 Rousseau, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
- 89 According to Hegel, the only movement that is possible is the endless alternation between the individual and general will. All private virtues must therefore be absorbed into civic virtues.
- 90 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 603.
- 91 *Ibid.*, p. 604.
- 92 *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie*, p. 365.
- 93 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 450.
- 94 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 248.
- 95 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 609. In simple terms, the dialectic reveals that what is absolute in Liberty is the negation of Liberty, "the despotism of Liberty" in the name of Liberty (Robespierre).
- 96 Rousseau's article on Natural Law (*Droit naturel*) in the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, Vol. XI (Lausanne and Bern, 1782), pp. 369–372. "This virtue [as interpreted by Robespierre] had now to conduct the government in opposition to the many, who had been rendered unfaithful to virtue through their corruption and attachment to old interests, or a liberty that had degenerated into license, or through the violence of their passions." *The Philosophy of History*, p. 450.
- 97 *Erste Druckschriften*, edited by G. Lasson (Leipzig: Verlag Felix von Meiner, 1928), p. 67.
- 98 On this point see Hegel's remark about "Sanscülottismus," *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, p. 269. Hegel considers wealth and the security of private property to be the great obstacle to the institution of the general will. Yet the French Revolution leaves no doubt about the error of regarding man solely as a citizen.
- 99 This is the view of Novalis.
- 100 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 450.
- 101 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 247.
- 102 *Ibid.*, pp. 247–248.
- 103 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 607.
- 104 Especially in the *System der Sittlichkeit*.
- 105 Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat*, p. 194.
- 106 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 256.
- 107 *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- 108 *Ibid.*, p. 233. Hegel takes as his starting point for his description this new world. "There emerges the conflict between great wealth and great poverty" (p. 232). Of necessity, wealth attracts everything to itself in a great concentration. "To him who hath shall it be given"

(p. 233). This leads to a new split in the social order based on a new phenomenon of "internal revolt and hate" (p. 233).

109 *Ibid.*, p. 259.

110 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 607.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 474.

112 *Ibid.*, p. 607.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 610. We cannot enter here into the difficulties which this transaction involves in the interpretation of the unity of the *Phenomenology*. The State, there can be no doubt, persists, though not as an Absolute. Of all Hegel's works, the *Phenomenology* is the least *étatiste*.

114 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 443.

115 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), p. 202.

116 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 447.

## 4

## Alienation and Objectification: Commentary on G. Lukacs' *The Young Hegel*<sup>1</sup>

G. Lukacs' work on Hegel's early studies, from his "republican period at Tübingen and Bern" to the publication of *The Phenomenology of Mind* in 1807, is an essay in historical philosophy written in the spirit and method of Marxism. At the start, it should be said that any Marxian history of philosophy is doomed to failure if it rigidly insists upon reducing every philosophy to an ideology explicable in terms of social and economic factors. What was a defect of the Hegelian history of philosophy—its claim to arrange all of philosophy in a logical and chronological order so that every later philosophy is more progressive by reason of encompassing and transcending its antecedent—is all the more defective in a narrowly Marxian schema. With these reservations aside, we are better able to concentrate upon Lukacs' extremely interesting thesis that the understanding of Hegel, and the variety of interpretations of his philosophy, force upon us a confrontation with Marxism.

It has to be recognized that Marx is one of the best commentators upon Hegel; he completely digested *The Phenomenology of Mind* in his early work, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*; he borrowed the Hegelian method in the exposition of *Capital*, a work whose structure and plan is inconceivable apart from its relation to Hegelianism, even to the detail of particular chapters from the *Phenomenology*. But these reasons, though sufficient in themselves, and in any case often pointed to, are not the only grounds for a confrontation of Hegelianism and Marxism. One must go further and raise the question to what extent the entire

Hegelian system more than any other philosophical system derives from the social and political events of the day. For the philosopher who wrote that "the reading of the daily newspaper is the morning-prayer of modern man" (it enables us to take a stand in the world and become conscious of the historical situation) is not as much of a theologian as one might be led to believe. Lukacs is perhaps not entirely wrong (though he tends to take the opposite extreme) in treating the theme of Hegel's theological period as a reactionary legend. Hegel may well use the language of theology. But it should not be overlooked that, from his earliest reflections, he considered religion as a representation of human life, individual life, but above all of collective life, a sort of projection on the symbolic level of concrete human problems. Hegel's occasionally mystical language should not obscure his early positive pre-occupation and concern with political, social, and even *economic* problems.

It is precisely in the analysis of Hegel's view of the economic problem that Lukacs makes an original contribution to the understanding of a philosopher to whom nothing human, no event in human history, was alien.

The attempt to construct a Marxian explanation of Hegelianism may have outstanding value provided that, on the one hand, we remain aware of the importance Hegel attached, from his first reflections at Bern, Frankfurt, and Jena, to political economy, work, and the influence of wealth in the life of a people, and, on the other hand, if we see in Marxism a transposition of the Hegelian dialectic, which nevertheless has its basis in Hegel's own work and certain of its directions. Despite certain standard references to Lenin and even to Stalin (quite beside the point), Lukacs' book shows a sympathetic understanding of Hegel. In particular, his account of the development of the bourgeoisie as described by Hegel and Goethe combines a fine sweep with delicate nuances. Consequently, Lukacs' work on the young Hegel escapes being a partisan work that forces into a rigid system a philosophy incompatible with such a fate.

It is impossible for us to follow, as Lukacs does in detail, the evolution of Hegel's thought from the years in the seminary at Tübingen, his youthful republican enthusiasm, through to *The*

*Phenomenology of Mind* and the justification of Napoleon as the soul of the world. We shall direct our attention to the relations observed by Lukacs between Hegel's economic thought and his philosophical thought and to Lukacs' rather interesting defense of Marx's critique of Hegel which puts in doubt the entire Hegelian approach to the phenomena of "alienation and objectification."

### Philosophy and Political Economy

The title of one of the earliest works of Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, initiates a vast project. It contains the seed of the later thesis of *historical materialism*. Marx shows what progress has been made in economics from the Physiocrats to Adam Smith. The science of the wealth of nations, of the production, exchange, and consumption of goods, had gradually worked out the notion of the *value of human labor*. The Physiocrats still attributed to nature what Adam Smith accorded to human labor alone, the status of being the sole source of value. This labor is social labor. It is what makes intelligible the transformations that man effects in nature and those that, by consequence, are produced in man himself and the organization of collective life. Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in London in 1776, was translated into German by Garve between 1794 and 1796 and considerably influenced Hegel, who cites it on several occasions, particularly in the *Jenenser system*<sup>2</sup> which precedes *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

In an extremely cogent manner, Marx shows the relation between the science of economics and idealist philosophy from Kant to Hegel. The task is to integrate the human science of political economy with Hegel's *Phenomenology*, with its concept of negation, the transformation of nature by human labor that humanizes nature and as its counterpart raises the individual to the state of universal man with an understanding of the collective relations and objectivity of being. It is such a unity that Marx seeks for philosophy and economics—a unity that would lead to a new conception of man and the human future, to a *praxis* that reconciles speculative knowledge and human life as a historical development. In Marx's opinion, philosophy reaches an impasse in the form of

speculative idealism. By restricting itself to the comprehension of what is, as Hegel did, philosophy ends in an insurmountable contradiction. However, the relation of the two disciplines allows political economy, on the one hand, to expand to include the entire problem of man and the relation of man to nature, and philosophy, on the other hand, to transcend itself as speculative knowledge and to realize itself in an action that is the effective emancipation of man rather than merely speculative wisdom.

We reviewed briefly the significance of this early work of Marx in order to grasp more fully the import of Lukacs' work. For Lukacs' subject is the study of the relations between political economy and philosophy, and he draws insights from Marx's earlier study. More specifically, he compares three elements: the political, economic, and social background of the period; economic theory; and the Hegelian philosophy. His aim is to show that, in so far as it is a general interpretation of life and the human condition, Hegelian philosophy always turns upon a specific economic viewpoint, broadly conceived. Yet at the same time he attempts to show how the inadequate development of the productive forces in Hegel's Germany hindered him from achieving a philosophical solution to the problems he raised. Hegel was writing at a time when capitalism was in its early stages in England and France and feudalism, though still rooted everywhere in Germany, was collapsing elsewhere as the bourgeoisie rose to power. It is, in fact, this world of the victorious, self-confident bourgeoisie and the world-vision characteristic of the rising bourgeoisie that Hegel describes, as Goethe was doing about the same time. However, with a penetration peculiar to his dialectical genius, Hegel also perceives all the contradictions of this world in its mature form, all the crises that it carries within it, as the clouds carry a storm. Thus, as early as 1807, Hegel raised himself above his time. Although unable to resolve the crises and transcend the limits of his period in his answers, as Marx was to later, Hegel nevertheless perceived the *decline* of the bourgeoisie in the very moment of its *ascendancy*. For want of the corresponding development in the productive forces, there is no question of Hegel being a Marxian. Yet his extremely searching reading of Adam Smith leads him philosophically beyond Smith to foreshadow Ricardo. Transcend-

ing the strict limits of liberal economics, Hegel elaborates a philosophy of human life which, if it culminates in a tragic vision, offers nonetheless a positive and non-tragic solution to the problems it merely poses—a solution that finds its place in Marx, once the time is ripe for a genuine revolution. “Hegel begat Feuerbach, who begat Marx.” Thus one may understand the meaning of Lukacs’ study and his use of the Marxian method in tackling a problem in the history of philosophy. One need only add that he poses in a general way the problem of the *relation between political economy and philosophy*, developing an earlier study of Marx that we have mentioned and offering invaluable guidance in the direction of studies still to be undertaken.

In the past there has been no lack of studies of the relation between philosophy and science. There is an abundance of works on the relations between the metaphysical *Meditations* and the mechanism of Cartesian science or on the relations between the Newtonian philosophy of nature and the philosophies of Kant and Hume. There are fewer works on the relations between biology and philosophy from Aristotle to Bergson. But there is practically nothing on the relations between the economics and philosophy of a given period. Yet if one wanted to understand, for example, Hume’s ethics and his general views of human nature, it would surely be material to keep in mind the relations between Hume and Adam Smith and Hume’s important essays on interest, commerce, and so on. Immediately, Hume’s philosophy is related to a certain form of economy. Just as historians have attempted to analyze philosophical systems by relating them to the natural sciences of their age, so an attempt should be made to display the relation between philosophical theories and the science of political economy, the science of man in society working upon nature and consuming the products of his labor. Attention has been given to Aristotle’s economic writings, but only to juxtapose his economic thought to his philosophical thought; similarly with Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, and even Hegel. What is needed—and this should be an exercise for Marxians—is to comprehend the relation between the economic thought of a given period and its philosophical thought. This is the value of Lukacs’ study of Hegel’s early period.

Hegel always tried to understand human life as the life of a people and, in turn, the life of a people as a moment in the general history of peoples. From his earliest works, starting, as he says, from the lowliest exigencies of human consciousness, he sought a comprehensive vision that would integrate what in the life of a people we would call psychology, or the science of individual and collective needs, and the science of labor and technology. Hegel's first version of the philosophy of mind, the *System der Sittlichkeit*, was drafted in 1803 at Jena. It resembles very much what, since Auguste Comte, we call Sociology, and it combines in its vision of society both the most elementary forms of human behavior and the highest forms of speculative thought, Art, Religion, and Philosophy.

These higher forms are the representations that a people creates out of its concrete life. These representations, however, are integral with the *masses of society*, the nobility, the bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and each of these in its turn formulates a certain relation between man and nature. The elementary forms of human behavior, need, labor, the use of tools and the machine are moments within a totality, and the psychology of the individual man is in turn merely a category that fades into the comprehensive social category. The concept of the social system as a whole that dominates its parts has its origins in the great treatise of Adam Smith and in numerous other works of the age on human nature, as well as, for example, Montesquieu and Rousseau. But the Hegelian notion of a totality that somehow pre-exists its parts as their soul and their meaning already surpasses the liberalism of Adam Smith and anticipates the viewpoint of Marx.

Beyond what Lukacs himself has to say, it seems to us that the *Hegelian dialectic* has its origins in a different sense in the work of Adam Smith. This dialectic, which is so difficult to define, is not only a dialectic in the sense that philosophers have intended from Plato to Kant but a method for the comprehension of human life in its concrete aspects. The Hegelian dialectic aspires to be both a philosophical and a concrete dialectic, and in as much as it is a concrete dialectic, it is frequently inspired by Adam Smith's works. Adam Smith's liberalism assumes in practice that the free play of individual interests results in the optimal realization of

the collective interest. On this assumption, he never tires of showing how individual projects are transformed in collective life, how they become something more in the very process of their realization. "As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can to employ his capital . . . that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labors to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can . . . he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."<sup>3</sup>

There are numerous passages similar to this one in Adam Smith. The division of labor and the play of exchange are at first individual aims that are realized through a group and become a new goal, full of significance, yet not wished for as such by an individual. It was this kind of finality that earlier led Hegel to the idea of the cunning of reason, a dialectic that opposes the aims that the individual sets for himself and the ends that he achieves. It was in the course of tracing this concrete dialectic through the whole of human life, and then translating it onto a logical plane, that Hegel struggled to reconstruct the very notion of dialectic, reconciling *the life of thought and the thought of life*.

Hegel's use of this concrete dialectic appears to have led him to a threefold result, which Lukacs greatly clarifies.

First, there is Hegel's remarkable description of the rise of capitalist society. Drawing especially upon Adam Smith, he describes the social division of labor, the development of technology, the cooperation of individuals in the production, exchange, and consumption of wealth.

Second, there is Hegel's prophetic vision of the contradictions in this society and of the fatal alienation of man in a society where production for production's sake—one might say power for the sake of power—has no reason for its moderation.

Third, there is the impossibility, given Hegel's historical position, of resolving the contradictions in capitalist society which he perceived in such a profound manner. He could not resolve them because, as Lukacs points out, capitalist society was not mature enough, the forces of production—at this time in Germany less than elsewhere—were not yet developed enough.

A closer examination of these three points may permit a better understanding of the social and political aspects of Hegel's system, as well as of Lukacs' book, which lays stress upon them. In connection with the first point (the description of the economy and society at that time), there are numerous significant texts in Hegel, both in the *Jenenser Realphilosophie* and the *Phenomenology*, of which we venture to cite a sample. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel describes the social life or the ethical world of a people and already distinguishes the two moments, *power* and *wealth*. His description of the dialectic of wealth reflects Adam Smith's liberalism:

In enjoyment each individuality no doubt becomes aware of self-existence, aware of itself as single; but this enjoyment is itself the result of universal action, just as, reciprocally, wealth calls forth universal labor, and produces enjoyment for all. . . . Each individual doubtless thinks he is acting in his own interests. . . . Yet looked at even in external fashion, it becomes manifest that in his own enjoyment each gives enjoyment to all, in his own labor each works for all as well as for himself, and all for him.<sup>4</sup>

This passage catches the essence of economic liberalism, of the harmony that establishes itself between individual needs and labor, between egoistic interests and the collective purpose manifest in the total life of society. But Hegel goes on to draw the conclusions from what Adam Smith is content simply to describe. Egoism is a mere pretense and disinterested virtue (or what claims to be such) is merely impotence. The course of the world is the outcome of the interaction between individuals which constitutes a *universal individuality*. In his actions and practical conduct every individuality who believes himself to be an egoist in fact transcends himself and refuses to recognize himself in this world of universal individuality. Nevertheless, it is the individuality who posits and realizes this world. "But the individual gains an awareness of himself, he is enhanced as a universality and purges himself of singularity." This conduct, which is not only a moral purpose or intention but the stance of the individual within being, is the truth of the particular individuality, a truth which has a universal

character. Here one can see how Hegel's depth analysis of the modern economic world described by Adam Smith arrives at a philosophy of human conduct which surpasses both the contemplative philosophers of nature and purely ethical philosophies of the spirit, such as Kant and Fichte's ethical vision of the world. Lukacs rightly draws attention to this *transcendence of naturalism and ethical idealism* in order to show how the evolution of philosophy from Kant to Hegel is continued in Marx.

After the insipid rationalism of the Enlightenment, Hegel calls for the dissolution of ethical—merely ethical—idealism in a great article on the philosophy of his day, "*Glauben und Wissen*," which he wrote at Jena. However, to grasp the relation between this critical article and its economic and social background, one must read with it the writings from the same period on *natural law* and the *system of social morality*, which, as we have said, constitute within the first draft of the *Philosophy of Mind*<sup>5</sup> a veritable sociology.

However, Hegel is not content to reproduce the economic world of Adam Smith by enriching it with a philosophy of practical conduct. He reflects upon the alienation of the singular individual who becomes a universal in the course of this world's frenzied dialectic: "Consciousness becomes an enigma to itself, the consequences of its behavior no longer appear to be its own action." By externalizing itself, as Hegel says, and becoming an object in the world—the world of the Other and of others, the sole means of reaching nature, for the least material instrument implies the other, as is doubtless suggested by the notion of nature in itself—the singular consciousness alienates itself, makes itself Other; *objectification in the world and alienation of the self*, these are the two great moments of the Hegelian dialectic.

This alienation—which on the logical plane becomes the contradiction of the self with itself—in the modern world assumes the form of economic contradictions that clearly contrast with the harmonies of liberalism. Hegel's vision is all the more astonishing when one remembers that German society as he observed it around 1800 did not yet foreshadow the contradictions of the modern world. It is true that Adam Smith laid the foundations of this analysis. Yet it should be remarked that Hegel does not

follow the reactionary romantics, preaching the return to a new medieval age; he rather anticipates the analysis of the economists and socialists to appear in the future.

The result of the division of labor is that, while the individual no longer depends on nature, he becomes dependent, by contrast, on society, which acts upon him like a blind force. The social environment takes the place of the natural environment. This notion is one of the basic themes of Hegelian thought and is developed later by Auguste Comte, who assigns primacy to sociology over psychology. "To the individual society is his nature, upon whose blind and elementary development he is dependent for both the maintenance and the suppression of his physical and spiritual growth." This society is, however, a communal effort, a transaction of each and all, the object itself; but in this object the individual becomes alien to himself. This alienation, which Hegel identifies with objectification or the externalization of man through his labor, is a new concept which, when substituted for the notions of positivity (in the period at Bern) and destiny (in the period at Frankfurt), enables Hegel to raise the human problem in all its complexity. The term alienation is also employed by Marx to advance the Hegelian dialectic.

The individual "can work more," but, as Hegel notes, "the value of his work begins to diminish." Nevertheless he is pushed to lengthen his hours of work, or to increase the intensity of his labor, in order to produce more, to be able to produce the means of subsistence. After a variable lapse of time, this progress is canceled and the individual is thrown back to his previous level of life. "Labor is then a commodity that is worth less." Here one sees how Hegel goes beyond Adam Smith, announcing the iron law of wages and in a sense anticipating Marx's analysis. He perceives all the consequences of the division of labor. "Because of the abstract nature of labor, it becomes more and more mechanical, more and more absurd." Of course, the stick is replaced by the tool and the tool yields to the machine, which is man's craft over nature, bending its blind forces to human purposes. It reveals the in-itself of nature through the for-itself of man. In his study of work and the machine, Hegel develops a new conception of finality and of theology in general. But man's cleverness with

regard to nature has repercussions for the individual man: in practice, it transforms intelligent and integral labor into a stupefying and partial labor, "formal and inhuman." The humanization of nature results in the dehumanization of the laborer. Finally, the movement of production and distribution as a system leads to "the restless search for machines and new markets, without any limit." We may say that as early as 1803 Hegel had envisaged the process of production for production's sake of which Ricardo spoke and which Marx described as the expansion of value that animates the entire system of capitalist production. Although Marx had no knowledge of these writings that we present from the Jena period, they nevertheless foreshadow him. "In society the individual's skill is the means by which he keeps himself in existence. The latter is entirely exposed to the confusion of the contingent nature of the whole. There is thus an ever increasing mass of men who are condemned to unhealthy labor, without security, to the "absurd labor of the factories and the mine . . ." and Hegel adds: "This entire mass is condemned to irremediable poverty. . . . It is then that the conflict between great wealth and great poverty emerges on the world scene—*auftritt*."<sup>6</sup> By formulating in a vague way what was later called the law of concentration, Hegel undertook to show that the *conflict between rich and poor*, which replaces that between the *noble and the villein*, is the result of an inevitable social dialectic. Wealth attracts everything to itself, and in virtue of an immanent necessity develops itself onesidely, while poverty increases on its side. He adds that "To him who hath shall it be given."

The State, as universal providence, can only intervene at a distance. Although it is in the State rather than through money, the objectification of the universal collective, that the citizen is able to conceive of his generic and free nature, the State is suspended above the play of his freedoms maintained by bourgeois society. "The liberty of bourgeois society is unique, but it merely buries the individual in individualism; he can only save himself through the State and Religion." The individual is left to live in two worlds, each alien to the other, each a reflection of the other. His fate is like that of the man who lives by the law of the heart which when

acted upon produces a split between the way of the world and the heart whose life was in the law:

A man should be sincere; and in all honor  
He shouldn't say a word his heart disclaims. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, its actions alienate the heart from its deeds. Similarly with language, as well as work and money, man is always alienated. The nature of this alienation, its source and resolution define the problem of the future *Phenomenology*.

### **Alienation, Externalization, and Objectification**

Lukacs demonstrates the influence of social and economic concepts upon Hegel's thought and rightly draws attention to a feature neglected by previous historians. However, his remarks on the influence of Napoleon and the French Revolution are better known. He focuses the theme of energy and heroism in Hegel and notes its lack of harmony with certain bourgeois conceptions. Nevertheless this is an important theme in the "Hegelian world-view," at any rate, in his period at Frankfurt and in the *Phenomenology*. We may recall the element of pantragedy in Hegel, according to which "the tragic expresses the absolute state," whereas the comic merely announces the collapse of forms for the individual alone and only finds its true significance in a new tragedy, that of modern man who believes in the permanence of finite things, money, health, contracts, and sees them gradually disappear, without understanding the reasons for their disappearance.

But the most interesting part of Lukacs' work is where he analyzes in detail Marx's early critique of Hegel. It is here that the heart of the discussion lies. According to Marx, Hegel confused *objectification* (or the externalization of man in nature and society) and *alienation*. This confusion serves to explain both the inadequacy of Hegel's social analysis, its inability to solve the problems it raises, or at least to do so effectively, and the mystification of his philosophical thought, which, instead of resulting in

positive action, fulfills itself in a speculative idealism that fails to keep its own promises. As Kierkegaard said later, Hegel lifts us up to a speculative heaven but leaves us to live in the hovels of reality. Hegel's celebrated notion, the Idea, is nothing but mystification when it pretends to overcome all alienation through the philosopher's *Absolute Knowledge*. Marx's critical analysis of the concepts of *objectification* and *alienation* is so important and suggestive that it must be treated further and in more detail.

Marx's view, then, is that Hegel confounded *objectification*, or the process by which man makes himself an object and expresses or externalizes himself in nature through labor and work, and *alienation*, or the process in which man, once he has externalized himself, finds himself alien to himself, and sees himself in his work as "other than himself," or, rather, fails to find himself or recognize himself. This lost recognition or loss of self-identity in the externalization of the self is the great misfortune of man, both on the level of objects and the social or intersubjective level. The individual is unable to recognize himself in either his work or another person. Man is overwhelmed by his product, thus he is unable to see himself reflected in another's soul; he cannot conceive of himself as a generic element in the collective enterprise, but only as a lost individual crushed by what he has built with his own hands. Such is the experience of the *unhappy consciousness* for which Hegel merely offers the prescription of philosophy—a poor remedy, in Marx's opinion.

Marx's own view is that objectification is not in itself an evil. On the contrary, it is the sole means of integrating man and nature. Man transforms nature and makes of it an expression of his humanity, and in the course of this transformation, natural man, confirmed by the particularity of biological need, becomes more universal in outlook; he educates himself and cultivates his true generic nature (as Hegel saw in part). Every need that he has, from the need for food to the need for sex, ceases to be a particular need and becomes a human need, mediated through the natural recognition of his fellow men and the intersubjectivity that is necessary for him to become a man through whom *reason* has its existence. This process constitutes the foundation of what has justly been called *socialist humanism*.

Why, therefore, is man, once externalized, still an unhappy consciousness, a consciousness lost and alien to its work? Why does society appear not as the very expression of his will but as an alien will? It is on this question that Marx and Hegel differ. Hegel's philosophical answer is unlike the practical and historical response from Marx. Marx explains this calamity in terms of history. He denounces the process of production and believes that it is possible to show that objectification only becomes alienation as a result of certain historical circumstances that have a historical origin and are destined to disappear in history. Objectification, though not *in itself* a form of alienation, becomes such *in fact*. The description of capitalism—as Marx later presents it in *Capital*—is the monumental description of the total alienation of human labor necessitated at a certain moment of history in order to raise the total productive forces of man to the highest level.

The consequences of Marx's distinction between *objectification* and *alienation* are evident, as are the reasons why Hegel, who was trapped in a particular moment of history that he could not truly transcend, confounded the two phenomena essentially, whereas they were only indistinguishable in virtue of a particular historical contingency. The result is that, despite its claim to dominate history, Hegelian philosophy falls back into history and is itself explained historically. Hegelian Idealism is simply the elaboration of this basic confusion. In his early *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx develops Hegel by revealing the true character of man's objectification in labor. "It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. By means of it nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*; for he no longer reproduces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed."<sup>8</sup> However, he is not a happy consciousness, but an unhappy consciousness, not, as Hegel thought, because consciousness has not yet been conceived in the true philosophy, but because it is alienated from its labor in the capitalist system which is a phase of history.

"The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only

that his labor becomes an object, assumes an *external* existence, but that it exists independently, *outside himself*, and alien to him, and that it stands opposed to him as an autonomous power."<sup>9</sup>

In the capitalist system the worker is frustrated by his product, he is dispossessed and alienated. Thus objectification appears in *reality* as the loss of self, as servitude to the object, and the appropriation of the object is manifested as alienation and dispossession. The realization of labor becomes a non-realization to the point where the laborer is robbed of his own reality in the way of being starved to death. Objectification becomes the loss of the object to a degree that the laborer is deprived both of the necessary things of life and of the means of labor. Moreover, *work itself becomes an object* which the worker can only get hold of with great effort and with very irregular stoppages. It is a crushing system that dominates both the capitalist, who is caught in his own chains, and the proletarian, whom it reduces to a new kind of slavery. It is a system made by man to crush man. Thus frustration is experienced not only in relation to the object but within the self: "Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of human fantasy, of the human brain and heart, reacts independently as an alien activity of gods or devils upon the individual, so the activity of the worker is not his own spontaneous activity. It is another's activity and a loss of his own spontaneity."<sup>10</sup>

Despite his ability to perceive the tragic character of human existence and the rise of the bourgeois economy, Hegel was unable to explain them in terms of a historical alienation, the *consequence* of private property and capitalism. This is why he interprets every objectification of man as alienation and every alienation as objectification, a confusion which pervades his entire philosophical system.

In the first place, Hegel fails to provide a practical solution for alienation. The *Phenomenology* is only a caricature of what is offered by *communism*. Each confronts the same task of overcoming the alienation that is the misfortune of man. But what is the prescription in the *Phenomenology*? Absolute Knowledge, that is, the triumph of *intellectual self-consciousness*. Alienation is overcome in thought but not in deed. Religion and the beyond that it proposes are conquered by the philosophical conception of man

reflecting upon himself and the alienation of his being, *but in practice nothing is changed*. Pure speculation is unable to resolve a particular historical problem which requires nothing else than a historical revolution. The same is not true of communism, for it alone can lead to an end of history.

*Communism* is the *positive* abolition of *private property*, of *human self-alienation*, and thus the real *appropriation* of *human nature* through and for man. It is, therefore, the return of man himself as a *social*, i.e., really human, being, a complete and conscious return which assimilates all the wealth of previous development. Communism as a fully developed naturalism is humanism. It is the *definitive* resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution.<sup>11</sup>

From the preceding remark there arises a second question. Apart from the identification of alienation and objectification and his belief that alienation could be overcome philosophically, Hegel also believed that it was possible to transcend nature. Hegelian Idealism adopts the strange position that "nature is only the alienation of the spirit." It is here, according to Marx, that Hegel is amiss; he stands the universe on its head, and for this is rightly attacked by Feuerbach's materialism, or, rather, naturalism. Hegel's basic confusion leads him to consider every objectification—in particular, brute nature and the world of objects, man's external world—as a species of alienation. One may recall the passage in the *Phenomenology* where self-consciousness contemplates itself in a bare object, a skull.<sup>12</sup> It may well be true that money is an alienation of man's productive labor, but it is surely a verbal argument to make of nature, while untouched by man, an alienation of the spirit. This is a prime example of *Idealist mystification*. Hegel does not succeed in transcending historical alienation through philosophy (though he might have by transcending philosophy in a historical act). Far less is he able to transcend philosophically an insurmountable objectivity, namely, nature from which man originates

and to which he must return. The whole of Hegelian Idealism rests upon this mystification of an *Absolute Spirit* whose objective nature constitutes *alienation*.

Finally, Hegel retains the notion of alienation even within his conception of the Absolute. It is only in appearance that the Absolute transcends contradiction, that is, the movement of alienation. There is no synthesis for the Absolute apart from the presence of a permanent internal antithesis. Indeed, it is natural to think that Absolute Knowledge still contains alienation, along with a movement to transcend it. This contradiction is revealed in the three moments of the system: Logos, Nature, Spirit. The Spirit is the identity of Logos and Nature, though the *opposition* between these two moments is always present within it, even if continuously transcended. In Language, the expression of this notion of the Absolute is the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. For Marx, on the other hand, there is in history a definitive synthesis that excludes the permanence of the antithesis: "Communism solves the mystery of history."

Lukacs' critical analysis is entirely devoted to the confrontation of Hegel and Marx without perhaps grasping all its implications (in particular, the rather troublesome notion of an *end of history*). But while he employs Marx to refute Hegel, his argument yields a historical justification of Hegel, inasmuch as it explains why he could only eternalize a contradiction, the alienation that he found in his own age, without at the same time discovering the technical and historical conditions for the resolution of that contradiction. Thus the Hegelian system remains an expression of its age, and its defects come from the impossibility of entirely transcending one's historical horizon.

### **Alienation and the End of History**

To close this critical study, we should perhaps raise the question whether Lukacs has not deliberately oversimplified the problem that occupied Hegel. The author of the *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopaedia*, and the *Philosophy of History* cannot have confused the historical alienation of the human spirit with objectification

without some valid reasons, other than those one might find in the economic structure of the period and the stage reached by the capitalist system. By objectifying himself in culture, the State, and human labor in general, man at the same time alienates himself, becomes other than himself, and discovers in this objectification an insurmountable degeneration which he must nevertheless try to overcome. This is a *tension inseparable from existence*, and it is Hegel's merit to have drawn attention to it and to have preserved it in the very center of human self-consciousness. On the other hand, one of the great difficulties of Marxism is its claim to overcome this tension in the more or less near future and hastily to attribute it to a particular phase of history. It is surely an oversimplification to imagine that this tension can be reduced to a super-structure of the economic world. It is undeniable that the capitalist system represents a form of human alienation, but it can hardly be the only one. Is there not in love, in human relations, in the mutual recognition of men, in technology by means of which man creates and builds his world, and in the political administration of the State, even where socialist, a representation of the self external to itself, a recognition of the self through the Other which presupposes a kind of separation or alienation which one may continually seek to displace but which forever subsists and is consequently part of the very notion of the Absolute that is open to man?

This does not mean that the proletarian struggle for its liberty is a useless fight. It is never useless to struggle to overcome an alienation that is insupportable once one is conscious of it, and, indeed, this very rise of consciousness is a fundamental condition of a new order. Hegel opens up a problem which Marx for his own purposes narrowed to precise limits. That is why Hegel cannot distinguish the notions of objectification and alienation. Between nature and human self-consciousness there is a basic tension observed by Rousseau. Man is no longer a living creature like others; in reflecting upon his life he immediately finds himself on the margin of this life, he grasps it as a risk, as the necessity of death. He confounds himself with nature from which he emerged and yet from which he is separate; the life instinct and the death

instinct are, as it were, the poles of an irresolvable dualism. This is the source of alienation and the origin of the problem of human destiny.

The limits of an essay demand a rather general criticism of Lukacs' interpretation of Hegelian philosophy. Our primary intention was to emphasize the significance of the concept of alienation which follows upon the concepts of positivity and destiny and occupies a central place in Hegel's system. As such, this notion does not seem to be reducible solely to the concept of the alienation of man under capitalism, as Marx understands it. The latter is only a particular case of a more universal problem of human self-consciousness which, being unable to conceive itself as an isolated *cogito*, can only recognize itself in a world which it constructs, in the other selves which it recognizes and by whom it is occasionally disowned. But this manner of self-discovery through the Other, this objectification, is always more or less an alienation, *a loss of self and a simultaneous self-discovery*. Thus objectification and alienation are inseparable, and their union is simply the expression of a dialectical tension observed in the very movement of history.

This is by no means to say that Hegel ignores in history the monumental objectification and alienation of man. It was Hegel who before Marx said that "the history of the world is the world."<sup>13</sup> It was he who sought in objective success the guarantee of success and in man the only worthwhile success. His entire system is an effort to reconcile alienated man with his destiny which is history. No one more than Hegel insisted upon an internal life that remained such without externalization, upon a law of the heart that would remain a law of the heart without the necessity of translation into an objective social law. Nevertheless all these moments of the Hegelian dialectic are tantamount to history inside out, a negative liberty that is a philosophy of failure by the standard of epic victory. But this failure is not the symbol of another world consecrated by theology; it is only the dissolution and nothingness that are a permanent possibility. Thus the noble soul who, at the end of the *Phenomenology*, refusing to forgive the man of action and to make peace with him, can only fade away "like a shapeless vapour dissolving into thin air." The

human self is obliged by an ineluctable necessity to externalize itself, to engage in action in the world, without which self-consciousness would be an impossibility, because for man reflection can only be reflection upon the self in the world, upon another self whom he loves or hates (Love or Self-Hatred), before it can exist as the isolated reflection in the metaphysical meditations of a Descartes. Objectification and, with it, alienation are, therefore, a matter of necessity. What is lacking in the noble consciousness that from a desire to preserve its innocence rejects the impurity of action? "It lacks force to externalize itself, the power to make itself a thing, and endure existence."<sup>14</sup> What becomes of it as a consequence of this refusal which can be nothing else than the *refusal of communication* and the *flight into an inner silence*? "Its activity consists in yearning, which merely loses itself in becoming an unsubstantial shadowy object . . . it becomes a sorrow-laden 'beautiful soul,' as it is called: its light dims and dies within it, and it vanishes as a shapeless vapour dissolving into thin air."<sup>15</sup>

Hegel never tires of stressing the necessity of man's externalization. Yet in the reconciliation he always finds an inevitable species of alienation, a destiny to be borne and confronted by man. Thus the Hegelian conception of alienation, unlike the Marxian, is not confounded with a complete loss of the self in a new nature. There is a philosophical problem of alienation, inseparable from the problem of human alienation, which is not resolved with a certain transformation of history. Hegel's analysis in the *Phenomenology of Le Neveu de Rameau* offers an example of the extent to which the dialectic of *offense and humiliation*, of man's revolt against a culture in which he feels at a loss, is indebted to a certain social period, to a prerevolutionary mentality, and how far it is an expression valid *beyond this historical period* as a more profound problem without limits in a particular moment of history. Consequently, the strict Marxian account of Hegel's confusion of objectification, as the glory and final end of man in a rediscovered nature, with self-alienation, as merely a development within a particular phase of history, in our opinion fails to do justice to Hegel's philosophical analysis and interpretation of these notions. Perhaps this analysis dangerously oversimplifies a system in a

way quite compatible with action but in other respects unresolved concerning certain philosophical problems arising out of action which it could only touch upon. At the same time, the Marxian account assumes a certain rigidity that makes it philosophically unacceptable, whatever the validity of other aspects of its analysis.

## NOTES

- 1 G. Lukacs, *Der Junge Hegel: Über die Beziehungen von Dialektik und Oekonomie* (Zurich and Vienna, 1948).
- 2 *Jenenser Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie* (1802) and *Jenenser Realphilosophie* (1803–1806).
- 3 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), p. 423. [Trans.]
- 4 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 520. [Trans.]
- 5 "Jenenser Philosophie des Geistes, 1805–1806" in *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806. [Trans.]
- 6 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. II, 1805–1806, p. 232. [Trans.]
- 7 *Le Misanthrope*, Act I, Scene I, lines 35–36, in *Eight Plays by Molière*, translated with an Introduction by Morris Bishop (New York: Modern Library, 1957). [Trans.]
- 8 *Karl Marx, Early Writings*, translated and edited by T. B. Bottomore (London: C. A. Watts, 1963), p. 128. [Trans.]
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 122–123. [Trans.]
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 125. [Trans.]
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 155. [Trans.]
- 12 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, pp. 358 ff. [Trans.]
- 13 *Die Weltgeschichte weltgerichte*. [Trans.]
- 14 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 666. [Trans.]
- 15 *Ibid.* [Trans.]

PART

III

MARXISM  
AND  
PHILOSOPHY



## 5

## Marx and Philosophy

On November 10, 1837, Karl Marx, at that time a student in Berlin, wrote to his father to bring him up to date on his intellectual development and to tell him of his study plans. From the style of the letter and certain of Marx's phrases, one readily recognizes the influence of his recent reading of Hegel. Quite naturally, one is reminded of the Preface which Hegel added to his masterwork, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, completed in 1807, about the time of the battle of Jena. At this time, perhaps not yet having altogether forsaken his early ambition and desire to act directly upon events, Hegel still considered that the world spirit was bringing about a revolution. There was to be the birth of a new world, the seeds of which lay in the French Revolution, German philosophy, and romanticism, beginnings which the deeds of Napoleon were bringing to maturity. In 1837 Marx wrote to his father in phrases reminiscent of Hegel: "There are moments in life which like a frontier mark off a period passed through but at the same time clearly point out a new direction. . . . All the more does universal history love to survey the past and the present with the eagle-eye of thought to attain an awareness of our actual position."

This letter from Marx is a *philosophical act of conscience*, and like every such instance with Marx, it has a *creative significance*. Already, Marx partially envisages his task in the years to follow: *to bring down the Hegelian Idea to the level of things*, in other words, to replace *speculative idealism* with a philosophy of *action* which reconciles life and philosophy in an authentic way—the

desire of thinkers in every age, but one generally never satisfied—and to employ for this purpose the *dialectic*, a marvelous tool forged by Hegel, who did not, however, understand its full import.

In the same letter Marx comments that “Above all, the characteristic idealist contrast between reality and what ought to be proves extremely limiting.”<sup>1</sup> Here in *the conflict between the ideal and the actual* we have the subject of Marx’s early philosophical meditations between 1840 and 1848, from his first works on Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* to the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, which, after a period during which his philosophical thought matured, opens the way for an authentic intervention in universal history. We shall have to discover the scope and meaning of these writings as well as their significance not only for the understanding of the *Communist Manifesto*, and what is called *historical materialism*, but also for the derivation of the theme and structure of the major work, *Capital*.

But Marx’s letter to his father gives a more detailed description of the philosophical tool which he intends to use, namely, the *Hegelian dialectic*. The allusion to Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is clear. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel contrasts the mathematician’s method with the philosopher’s dialectic.<sup>2</sup> The mathematician reflects *upon* his object, and the steps in his demonstration are distinct from the object itself. The philosophical dialectic, by contrast, is not a method of reasoning external to its object, namely, history. It expresses the very development of its subject. The task of the philosopher is to trace a historical development, to display its internal movement, exposing the contradictions which appear in it and showing how these tend to be resolved. Hegel says, “Truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature reaching its completeness through the process of its own development,”<sup>3</sup> and Marx takes this up, citing the same illustrations:

The triangle permits the mathematician his constructions and demonstrations but for all that remains a spatial image and does not become something more than that . . . but in the concrete expression of the *everyday ideal world*, in the Law, the State, the science of Nature and all of Philosophy, it is necessary by contrast

*to intercept the object in the process of development:* it will not do to introduce into it arbitrary distinctions; the demonstration of the object should, insofar as it is contradictory in itself, establish the principle of its development and discover its unity within itself.<sup>4</sup>

It is very difficult within the short space of an essay to show how Marx fulfilled the program he had outlined in this first letter. The essence of it, however, is his creative transformation of the problem of the contrast between the ideal and the actual, which he early interpreted in terms of the contrast between *philosophy* and the *human condition*, thereby making novel use of the Hegelian dialectic. Thus we shall confine ourself to examining how young Marx viewed the contrast between philosophy and reality as he found it in the speculative system of Hegel and in what manner the solution which Marx attempts constitutes an improvement upon Hegel. It is hoped that the brief observations which follow will throw light upon the *real significance* of the problem of the relation between *philosophy* and the *human condition* as Marx saw it.

### **The Importance of Marx's Early Development for the Understanding of His Later System**

The evolution or structure of Marx's thought between 1840 and 1847 may be approached in two different ways. In one case we might take the view that, after having been more or less a Hegelian, having played a part in the left wing of Hegelianism, Marx completely abandoned his youthful escapades. Thus his development culminates in *historical materialism*, and the formulation of this doctrine is to be considered quite independently of his early works. There is indeed a body of doctrine which stands by itself and requires no interpretation in terms of the development of the earlier studies. On this view, the economic basis of *Society*, or the forces of production and the economic structure, constitutes an infra-structure, while the super-structures are the product of *objective* developments in the economic basis. There is more or less explicit recognition of the reaction of the secondary structures upon their foundation, but the part played in the social

dialectic by the rise of consciousness, which we consider essential, is not sufficiently understood. Ultimately, on this view one can hardly avoid interpreting *dialectical materialism*—an expression of Marx and Engels which seems to us quite obscure and in a sense even self-contradictory—on the model of an unqualified materialism or *scientific objectivism*. But Marx would have regarded such an objectivist interpretation as one of the most extreme forms of the alienation of man as a living and active being.

In our own opinion, the current debate over Marx's conception of materialism would be clarified if one were to return to the philosophical writings prior to the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. Indeed, it might be granted—and this is the alternative approach to Marx—that he cannot be understood unless one starts from his philosophical works.<sup>5</sup> In particular, to read *Capital*, without previously having read the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, indeed, without having read through Hegel's *Phenomenology*, inevitably leads to a series of misinterpretations. Neither the economist who ignores the dialectic of *alienation*, developed by Hegel and Feuerbach, nor the philosopher who overlooks the *economic* studies of Engels, which had such considerable influence on Marx, can understand either the dynamic or the dialectic which is the heart of *Capital* or the notion of value as *socially necessary work* which can have no meaning for either the economist or philosopher who remains within the limits of his discipline. The exploration of the conjunction of the two disciplines is characteristic of Marx and is admirably expressed in the study mentioned above, whose title, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, formulates a whole program of future investigations.

### **The Problem of the Alienation of Man**

In the following, we shall assume a knowledge of Cornu's indispensable work on Marx's early period.<sup>6</sup> Not that we are entirely in agreement with the particular philosophical interpretation that Cornu advances. For his thesis seems to us to border on a view that we have rejected, namely, that Marx progressively re-

nounced the earlier stages in his development. However, Cornu's work has the indisputable merit of a complete historical description of Marx's development prior to the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, with a summation of its principal elements. It is, therefore, an essential tool for any serious study of Marxian thought.

What was Marx's view of philosophy? This question unavoidably turns into the question: What did Marx think of Hegelianism? For Marx, as, indeed, for Kierkegaard, with whom comparison is not really so strange as it might seem at first, philosophy was identified first and foremost with Hegel, whose system is to us what Aristotle's was to the ancients. Hegel had given philosophical thought its final form. He is "the last of the philosophers" whose speculative thought distills the very essence of philosophy. After Hegel, it is no longer possible to do philosophy in earnest. To refute Hegel is, therefore, to refute all philosophy. *The Crisis of Hegelianism is the turning-point of philosophy.* Thus the thoroughly detailed criticism which Marx makes of Hegel's philosophy, particularly his *Philosophy of Right*, has far-reaching consequences. Taking up the work of Feuerbach, who had from Hegel's own suggestions elaborated the Hegelian critique of religion, Marx poses the problem of philosophy in terms of the negation or suppression of philosophy. He attempts to demonstrate the inadequacies of a philosophical system which continually affirms the necessity of reintegrating Life without ever effectively doing so and which sets out to overcome every alienation of "self-consciousness," but only achieves it *in idea*, leaving a yawning abyss between the idea and reality.

Marx was completely abreast of the full sweep of Hegelian philosophy. He addressed himself directly to the fundamental work on the *Phenomenology*, in which Hegel shows that Self-Consciousness of Man, but man still conceived abstractly as the bare thought of himself, *alienates himself in things*. Though strange at first sight, this text shows how self-consciousness according to objective knowledge can discover itself as a *mere thing*, as in the most abstract *materialism*. Thus, in his observation of the physical world, man can perceive himself as a part of matter, a skull, for example, or,

in the social world, see himself in terms of *money*—the abstract universal. Money is not self-consciousness in its humanized form but the *alienation of self-consciousness in an objective form*.

Hegel had developed this conception of the alienation of man through the medium of money in the course of the *Phenomenology*, and Marx, drawing upon the introduction to economics which he received from Engels, took over Hegel's entire analysis and even his terminology. This appears clearly if one compares Hegel's chapter inspired by *Le Neveu de Rameau*, entitled "Spirit in Self-Estrangement—The Discipline of Culture," with the chapter of Marx on the alienation of man by wealth,<sup>7</sup> where he says: "Money, in virtue of its power to buy everything and to appropriate every object, is thus the object *par excellence*."

Inasmuch as Marx criticizes the alienation of man's vital and creative qualities through money, he is equally opposed to the alienation of man through an objectivist scientism which fails to perceive science as the creation of man who, as he says, "produces man and *makes himself*." Whereas scientism explains man in terms of nature, Marx, following Feuerbach, argues that nature insofar as it is *for man* cannot be detached from its *human significance*. There does not exist a nature, without human significance, and *then* man. There is only nature *at the human level*, neither objective nor subjective—nature produced by man, that is to say, seen, touched, tasted, worked upon, and transformed by a living being.

Evidently, from the observations left in the *Manuscripts* and his study on the *German Ideology*, Marx did not have time to develop this theme. These are nonetheless invaluable sources. Marx says expressly that it is essentially a question of the reconciliation of "idealism and materialism in a higher synthesis" which would no longer be philosophy but action and, insofar as it is a critique of reality, be simultaneously the realization of the critique and of reason. Thus a (subjective) critique is no longer the vain irony of a self-consciousness superficially confronting every obstacle, but the creative engagement of consciousness with a reality which in this very process discloses its contradictions and furnishes the real basis of its own transformation.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel had also shown that self-con-

sciousness was no less alienated in the *bourgeois society* which took root in the eighteenth century and expressed itself through the notion of *utility*. Man's nature, which is essentially generic or social, is *externalized* through the system of economic relations and is lost in this *externalization* which transcends man. The blind development, as Hegel puts it, of wealth, which becomes increasingly concentrated, ends by dominating all humanized self-consciousness. The whole of this dialectical analysis is later discovered by Marx. For he had no knowledge of the unpublished works of Hegel's Jena period<sup>8</sup> in which the philosopher had perceived with extreme accuracy *the world of economic alienation* produced by the social division of labor and had foreseen what Marx later called the *law of concentration* and the increasing *proletarianization of society*. Finally, Hegel in these same works had shown, in connection with Kant's *moral vision of the world*, that self-consciousness was alienated in a God *beyond* man yet *posited* by man.

It was to this latter phenomenon that the first Hegelians turned their attention. They began with a critique of man's alienation through religion, broached by Hegel and completed by Feuerbach. In actual fact, this critique has its origins in the vital Christian doctrine according to which God the Father, or the transcendental in-itself, is made flesh, and man as the mystical body of Christ, as Humanity-Church, becomes divine. One may see in Christianity, as it is interpreted in Hegelian philosophy, the source of everything in Marxian humanism.

We must, however, return to what we referred to as Marx's critique of philosophy, a critique which is simultaneously the authentic realization of philosophy in *human praxis*. The entire Hegelian system may be seen as an endeavor to overcome the alienation of (human?) self-consciousness. Hegel undertook to show how in the object, in social relations, in the State as objective will, and in the God of religion, the inalienable self-consciousness of man is externalized and finally estranged. It might appear that we are using contradictory notions in speaking of an *inalienable self-consciousness* and of the *alienation* of that consciousness. But it is precisely this contradiction which is the dynamic principle of the entire Hegelian system, certainly, of the

*Phenomenology*, and it is this in turn which provides the impulse of Marx's *revolutionary dialectic*. The difference is that Marx, like Kierkegaard, contends that Hegel only suppresses alienation *in thought* while the contradiction reappears between man's *actual state* and philosophy as a *system of ideas*. Kierkegaard writes that "the philosopher has built out of ideas a palace but he lives in a hovel." Marx comments that "Certainly, it was Hegel who revealed the nature of labour as the activity through which man produces himself," but "as he only grasped this labour *in idea*, in abstract thought, he could only suppress alienation *in thought*." Hegel had thus, so to speak, reduced the world to a world philosophy, and though he had succeeded in showing that in his own speculative system of the Idea the world might be constructed as a palace of ideas, he had left standing the hovels of the everyday world. The new dialectic which was to replace Hegel's speculative version is formulated rather cryptically in the following phrase of Marx: "The future-philosophy of the world must immediately become the world-future of philosophy." What Marx is saying is that, having raised itself through Hegel to a world conception, Germany should become the battlefield of the proletariat through whom the idea of the inalienable social nature of man might become a reality, the constitutive principle of its own world. The realization of this conception of man as a social being—as the generic consciousness of the unity of man in a union with all men—is the task not only of a philosophical consciousness, which in embracing this task denies itself as philosophy and becomes absorbed into a thought which is simultaneously action; it is also the task of actual history which, inasmuch as it is *the outcome of the alienation of man*, must for that reason culminate in the conquest of that alienation. The instrument or lever employed by history to accomplish its task is, according to Marx, the proletariat, or, rather, the *self-consciousness gained by the proletariat*. For the proletariat is the last of the revolutionary classes—the one in which alienation, being at its very worst, must bring about its own dialectical alienation, in view of the fact that *revolutionary enthusiasm* does not exceed the bounds of *class interest*; witness the revolutionary bourgeoisie of France. Thus history, considered as the progressive realization of human development through a con-

tinuous alienation of man's social being, contains within it the Idea or the power to make the Idea an actuality; the Idea, on the other hand, finds this agency of its actualization in the proletariat insofar as it becomes conscious of its fundamental need or absolute want by the standard of *authentic* man.<sup>9</sup> Critical activity or subjectivity, in a word, the act of consciousness, is never lost, off in the clouds. It is an awareness that is at the same time the realization of the *truly authentic man*. Starting from the Christian teaching which gathers Humanity in the living God, Hegel had sketched a philosophy which in effect finally reduced nature, religion, and the State, respectively, to the *philosophy of nature*, the *philosophy of religion*, and the *philosophy of Right*. Kierkegaard and Marx, each in his own way, showed the *existential* emptiness of this contemplative reduction. But where the one went back upon philosophy to religion, to an existential concept of religious man, the other pushed the critique of religion on into *the critique of the social foundations of religion* and of philosophy itself, which Marx called a "spoof of idealism." Elsewhere, Marx adds, "Every form and creation of consciousness may be reduced not only in the way that spiritual criticism reduces everything to self-consciousness or transforms them into phantoms and visions but in a unique way through the practical reversal of the actual social situation in which these idealist spoofs originate." Again, however, the sense of this practical reversal or revolution must be correctly understood: it is by no means a theoretical revolution. It is only possible through a *profound consciousness of the human condition*, an act of consciousness which is open only to the proletariat. The transition from the critique of religion to the critique of law and thence to the social revolution is well described in the following remark: "This state, this society, produce religion, an *inverted world consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world* . . . the struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly a struggle against *that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion."<sup>10</sup> Whenever man alienates himself, he projects his own reality beyond himself, and reducing himself to nothing, he becomes unto himself the creature of his own projection. Thus man recognizes his maker in the transcendental God of religion by the same act in which he nullifies himself. Similarly, though the State is his own work, man

is unable to recognize himself in it. Thus the discovery of this alienation and contradiction, once it becomes self-conscious, should become the same thing as working to end it once for all.

### **The Social and Economic Alienation of Man in the State**

There is in the Hegelian State, as Marx showed at length, *a mystery which is in fact a mystification*.

The Idea which becomes concrete in Hegel's State is actually juxtaposed to an empirical reality easily recognized as the Prussian bureaucratic regime. Marx revealed how, in the name of the Idea, Hegel had deduced the experience of his own age, just as Hegel himself had demonstrated that the Platonic *Republic* was really the fulfillment of the *polis* at the moment of its demise. Moreover, it is not unlikely that Hegel was sufficiently aware of this mystification, the philosopher being unable, as he would say, to transcend his age, to bridge heaven and earth. Pushing further his own line of criticism, Marx saw in Hegel's conception of the organismic State the formal expression of bourgeois or civil society, the kind of society which Hegel in his youth had considered an obstacle to democracy.<sup>11</sup> Marx concluded that the alienation of man's generic nature in God has its counterpart in his alienation in a State which proclaims the rights of man, these being merely formal rights, since they overlook the actual condition of man as it develops through labor and the production of wealth. That is why Marx sought in the study of political economy and the experience of conditions in England, which he drew from Engels, a more profound grasp of man in his everyday life, in the indivisible union of his body and soul. It is man so conceived who is alienated bodily and spiritually in history, whose alienation is the drama of all history. Political struggle no less than the philosophical struggle against the gods merely shifts onto another plane the movement of social classes and the development of the *awakening of human consciousness*. Perhaps it is at this point that Marx's otherwise extremely penetrating insight has led his critical faculty to overstep itself. Is it at all possible that politics, or the State, can be completely absorbed into the category of the *social*; can the antagonism between men, which Hegel had stressed so, no less

than conflict between nations, be resolved completely by the resolution of economic conflict? This question remains a fundamental one to our mind, although we do not intend to develop it further.

However, if our interpretation of the philosophical writings of Marx is at all correct, we should find support for it in the monumental structure of Marx's master work *Capital*.

Clearly, the latter work cannot be thoroughly understood by anyone ignorant of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, for it is the living image of it. Whereas, in the *Phenomenology*, it is the absolute spirit, once it has become its own object, that raises itself to self-consciousness, in *Capital*, it is man's alienated social being, the gross product or, rather, the *communal labor of men*, namely, Capital, which, so to speak, *objectifies itself* and confronts the consciousness of the proletariat. In his earlier works, particularly on political economy, Marx had shown how man's social nature is alienated through history and finally takes the form of Capital. In *Capital*, however, this development is looked at from the other side; the product, which is the result of the alienation of man's social nature, *itself results in the production of man*. As a proletarian, man becomes *the product of his own product*; he is reduced to the status of a cog in a huge machine which overwhelms him and whose function Marx struggled to grasp in all its aspects. Capital is self-productive, or rather reproduces itself and accumulates. It is capital which determines the conditions under which men reproduce, what they eat, and their mode of group life. However, there comes a time when *this alienation becomes a living contradiction*. This is the time of the proletariat. In the proletariat, and above all in the general proletarianization of society, man is nothing more than *the inert product of his own product*. However, man's consciousness is, in Hegel's phrase, "elasticity absolute." It cannot be reconciled to accepting itself as a mere object. Thus its lowest point of inertia is the very condition of its recovery. That is the reason why human consciousness is restored in the proletariat and in a society which is proletarianized. This class-consciousness is simultaneously consciousness of humanity, a consciousness creative of a new order. Here, as Marx conceives it, communism is simply a stage which will be superseded. It is

the active negation of its own negation, capitalism, yet this negation of the negation is authentically positive. It is the Idea in actuality, the divinization of man, *authentic man*, fully aware that he is the one who *makes his own history*. There is here a concrete humanism in which philosophy as merely speculative thought disappears. We may wonder what are the implicit philosophical assumptions which make this accomplishment possible and to what extent the vagaries of history support Marx. These are questions which we shall not pose. It has merely been our intention to initiate once again a discussion of Marx's philosophical position which at the present time may have fruitful consequences.<sup>12</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 "Brief an den Vater aus dem Jahre 1837," in Karl Marx, *Frühe Schriften*, edited by H. J. Lieber and P. Furth (Stuttgart, 1962), p. 9.
- 2 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 101. [Trans.]
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 81. [Trans.]
- 4 Marx, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 9.
- 5 Karl Marx, *Early Writings*.
- 6 Auguste Cornu, *La Jeunesse de Karl Marx* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1934). This work is out of print, but see Cornu, *Les Années d'enfance et de jeunesse, la gauche hégélienne, 1818/1820-1844*, Vol. I of *Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels, leur vie et leur oeuvre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955).
- 7 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Second Manuscript (XLI), "Money," in Karl Marx, *Early Writings*. [Trans.]
- 8 These works, which were written while Hegel was at Jena, are extremely interesting, given that they date from 1805-1806 and were still not published by Marx's time. [Trans.]
- 9 Marx develops the relation between the Idea and its realization by the proletariat in the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in Karl Marx, *Early Writings*.
- 10 Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 43.
- 11 Here we are summarizing the entire evolution of Hegel's thought. In his youth Hegel had supported the French Revolution; he later examined the reasons for its failure and the causes of the Terror. Though

in a different sense, Marx was to be concerned with the same development.

- 12 Of course, the systematic functioning of this process of alienation—capital—contains multiple internal contradictions not analyzed here. Our intention was solely to emphasize one fundamental point: the proletariat which is unavoidably created by capital is the focus of an untenable contradiction, the existence of a consciousness which is human yet *completely* alienated from its humanity.

## 6

Marx's Critique of  
the Hegelian Concept  
of the State

In the years 1842 and 1843, Marx studied Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. In Marx's lifetime only the introduction to this study was published in the *Franco-German Annals*. However, this introduction reveals a major development in Marx's thought. It constitutes an early "Communist Manifesto," making explicit what is still only implicit in the rest of the critique of the Hegelian State.<sup>1</sup> All the same, it is interesting to look into Marx's more detailed study of the Hegelian conception of the State. In this way we may elaborate upon Marx's own thinking and at the same time clarify the relation between Marxism and Hegelianism.

In his long, paragraph-by-paragraph analysis of the Hegelian philosophy of the State, Marx not only seeks to reveal the *philosophical presuppositions* of Hegelian politics, but also aims at bringing out the *historical content* to which Hegel perhaps arbitrarily bound his philosophical system. What relation is there between the form of this system and the content which may be deduced from it? The solution of this problem determines the attitude which Marx adopts toward Hegelianism. It can then be understood how Marx is led both to a critique of Hegel's philosophical idealism, for its failure to legitimate its particular historical content, and to a historical critique of the inadequacy of its content in relation to the Idea. It is this disequilibrium between the Idea and historical reality which emerges as the first result of Marx's study. Clearly set forth in the article in the *Franco-German Annals*, this concept of disequilibrium leads Marx in turn to seek for the root of the Idea in a historical reality—the pro-

letariat—whose dynamic content Hegel had tried arbitrarily to limit and fixate, although its origins in a revolutionary dialectic might well be attributed to Hegel's conception of the original movement of the *rise of consciousness*, which is the soul of the whole Hegelian *Phenomenology*.

Marx's study is extremely noteworthy, both for its philosophical interest and its historical value. Marx did not have knowledge of the *early works* of Hegel, made familiar to us thanks to Herman Nohl, Johannes Hoffmeister, and others. Presently, the course of Hegel's development is being reconstructed more accurately. One sees behind the crabbed formulas of the Berlin professor a system of thought which demanded a continuous elaboration that is no mere dialectical play but has its source in Hegel's empirically grounded reflections upon the great events of his age, the French Revolution, the Terror, Napoleon's reforms and wars, the Restoration, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one cannot over-emphasize Hegel's realism. To read the newspaper is, he says, the modern man's morning-prayer: it enables us to find our bearings in the historical world.

In his Jena writings Hegel thought that the great man of action was more capable of catching the significance of a historical development than the pale theorist of reason or the routine empiricist. He is able to rise above contradictions through a global intuition, surpassing them like a speculative philosopher whose dialectical thought cuts through the formalism and rigid distinctions of discursive reason. But what the man of action grasps in an intuition which surpasses more limited perspectives the speculative philosopher should, according to Hegel, conceive as an *Idea*. Hegel expresses this notion in his *Philosophy of Right* in the following words: "The rational consideration of a topic, the consciousness of the Idea, is concrete, and to that extent coincides with a genuine practical sense. Such a sense is itself nothing but the sense of rationality or the Idea, though it is not to be confused with mere business routine or the horizon of a restricted sphere."<sup>3</sup>

Hegel considered that in *The Republic* Plato had not constructed a utopian city. He had only elaborated upon the reality of the ancient city, seized its Idea, in the very moment it was

about to decline and disappear. He had attempted to eliminate from the ancient city the unrest of individualism which destroyed it from within and which could not fail to bring about its downfall. No philosophy can transcend its own age, or jump over Rhodes, as Hegel puts it. When, in turn, Marx criticizes Hegel for having opposed bourgeois or civil society<sup>4</sup> to the State, for having arrived by deduction at the constitutional monarchy and Prussian bureaucracy, giving them an aspect of the eternal, he is simply revealing an essential tendency of Hegelian thought, which is to legitimate existing reality by conceiving it philosophically. Despite this, Hegelian thought is also *dialectical* and its movement is opposed to this kind of fixation. In his early work—where he uses the term Life in place of the term Idea—Hegel always contrasts the deadly *positivism* of religion or law with the movement of life which continually *negates* such positivism. This explains why Marx exposes the conflict between the Hegelian method, which he himself adopted, and the inadequate results which Hegel achieved with his own method.

Nevertheless, Marx's criticism is not limited to this very general exposure. It enters deeply into the form and content of Hegelian thought and is valuable for its detailed critical analysis, all the more suggestive because the antagonists, Hegel and Marx, are both first-rate philosophers and historians who conceive history as genesis. This is why Marx has no difficulty in refuting Hegel with the help of Hegel, using actual remarks of Hegel. It explains why we ourselves, either in the light of contemporary events or through the knowledge of Hegel's historical reflections with which Marx was unacquainted, are able to do justice to Hegel and occasionally understand how he might be defended against Marx.

### The Hegelian State

Before proceeding to the details of Marx's critique, it may be worthwhile to take an overall view of the Hegelian philosophy of the State as developed in the *Philosophy of Right*, 1821. Hegel distinguishes three elements in a concrete and objective ethical system or State: the *Family*, which is the State in its unmediated form; *Bourgeois Society*, which is the State created by necessity

and discursive reason, in other words, the State of liberal economic theory, in which life is private and the State is still no more than a means to individual ends pursued in isolation; and finally the *State*, properly speaking, which represents the organic unity of political life. Hegel conceives these three elements such that the third, the State, appears to be at once the Idea which constitutes the principle of their development and the final outcome of this very process. Bourgeois society is thus merely the "Phenomenon" of the State. It appears to precede the Idea, but is actually only the mediated appearance which the Idea takes on before it posits itself in independence beyond the appearance, which is left as a subsistent moment of the Idea that must always be surpassed. In bourgeois society, the Idea is not yet an actuality, *for itself*. It is not a self-conscious unity but an unconscious unity that is realized in the interaction of individuals through a kind of trickery. Thus Hegel gives liberalism its place—in bourgeois society—but he is convinced that "the Whole is prior to its Parts," that the parts only exist so that the whole may posit itself as such. The truly political State is an emergent over and above the everyday life of individuals; it is their unity, their rationale; within this unity alone are they what they ought to be, namely, conscious of themselves as the general will which has precedence in law over all particular desires, just as the principle of unity in an organism is prior to the organs in which it is embodied and through which it maintains itself.

The opposition between *bourgeois* or *civil society* and *political life* has a long history in Hegelianism. It is the expression of a dualism that Hegel longed to overcome, but the exigency of which he was obliged to recognize in the light of the historical events to which he was witness. In simple terms, it is the dualism between the bourgeois *private individual*—sunk in the particularity of his existence—and the *citizen* who has discovered the eternal aspect of himself in his city and whose will is identified with the common will. It was in the *polis*—at least as Hegel and his contemporaries philosophized upon it—that man lived as a citizen. His life was in harmony with the life of the city, his will was *directly* a general will. But such immediate identification is unknown to

modern man. Thus the French Revolution failed because it was unable either to suppress the bourgeois and the private individual, or to absorb them completely into a truly political state.

In a passage from his early period Hegel describes a basic form of the "unhappy consciousness" in this very image of the separation of the two spheres of private life and civic life, of "concern for the particular and concern for what is general." In the last days of the Roman Empire the individual separated himself from the city and withdrew into himself, to his private property, his private labor, his own finite and limited domain. He came to consider the State as an external force—a *form of alienation*, as Hegel and Marx later expressed it. The counterpart to this experience of political alienation was one of religious alienation because the private individual, having lost the meaning of life in the *polis*, could only flee from his own limited conception of life to take refuge in an eternal nature projected beyond himself. Political and religious alienation are twin developments, both of which the French Revolution, as Hegel sees it, had attempted to remove by thoroughly reforming the private individual in the name of the citizen, and announcing heaven on earth.<sup>5</sup> But this removal proved impossible and the modern State must consequently show itself strong enough to allow its own "phenomenon," namely, liberalism appearing as a moment of the Idea, to subsist within it. On the other hand, as self-consciousness, the Idea must posit itself for itself as a particular reality in the Constitution and the Monarch. In the phenomenal world, these two moments are separate; in true Reality it is the Idea itself which separates itself and offers itself to itself in order to reconcile itself unto itself in an eternal mediation. In the Hegelian philosophy of the State, however, this mediation is extremely obscure; it is expressed through public opinion, the representation of civil associations in the state, through bureaucracy and so forth; as such it comes under heavy attack from Marx. In summary, one might put it that, in contrast to the ancient City-State, the modern State after Hegel is powerful enough "to permit the principle of subjectivity to work itself out to the limit of autonomous individual personality while at the same time bringing the latter within a substantial unity and

thereby to establish that unity within the very principle of subjectivity."<sup>6</sup>

To put it simply, Hegel offers here what he considers a solution to a problem which all of us continue to ponder, namely, the reconciliation of liberalism and socialism, of individual liberty and the unity of the general will. But, as Marx shows beyond doubt, Hegel does not really resolve the problem through the mediations which he constructs out of the historical events of his day. Is Marx's solution any better? We may wonder whether Marx succeeds in resolving the problem as such by locating its source in an internal conflict of bourgeois society, namely, the class struggle founded upon the development of the forces of production. May we expect that with the end of the class struggle there will be an end to the dualism of the private individual and the citizen, each suffused in the other, at first under *communism* and later in *anarchy*? At least, it should not be forgotten that at one point Hegel was almost a Marxian before Marx and that he abandoned the possibility of a complete conquest of alienation, not only because he was or became more conservative, but for reasons inspired by events which he witnessed and others more profound which are integral to his system. Though we cannot discuss these features here, they concern Hegel's conception of the relations between men and nations which cannot be reduced to the status of supra-structures of their economic life.

### The Marxian Critique

We have seen that Hegel's conception of the State had presupposed the distinction between the State and bourgeois society. Marx now proposes to resolve this dualistic contradiction—one which is not merely a feature of Hegel's thought but also the effective expression of a moment of history—through the absorption of the State into a society which would be transformed so that it never again lapses into individualistic atomism. The reality of man's life and work should find its proper expression in the State so that the latter loses its character as a transcendental entity. The real nature of man should have an effective political

expression, no longer purely formal or in the mode of self-alienation. Later, Marx formulates this criticism in more specific economic terms by demonstrating that in bourgeois society the alienated State is in reality the instrument of the domination of one class over the other class in that society. By employing this instrument on its own behalf the other class will eventually succeed in a thorough conquest of alienation. But in 1842 and 1843, Marx does not quite see so far; he claims only to stand Hegel on his feet by explaining the Idea of the State through bourgeois society—the only concrete term—instead of reading the latter as Hegel did, as a “Phenomenon of the Idea.”

Marx's entire critique of Hegelian idealism is contained in the reversal of its inverted conception of the State. The truly concrete subject, the bearer of predicates, is *man as social being*, who belongs to what Hegel called bourgeois society, and the State, which Hegel mistakenly took for the Subject, as Idea, is in fact a predicate of man's social nature. The Idea—in reality, the product of man's social activity—appears in Hegel as the authentic subject which results in “a mystery which degenerates into mystification,” as Marx puts it. This Idea-Subject which posits itself and becomes the “phenomenon” within bourgeois society, in the constitutional monarchy, the bureaucracy, and the two chambers, is substituted for the activity of men in making history. Reduced to its own level, as the Idea in logic, it can only explain actual history by mystifying it. The result is that there is in the Hegelian philosophy of the State a juxtaposition of pure logic with empirical observation which Marx rightly rejects by pointing out the transitions in Hegel's thought from the development of the pure Idea, a concept valid in his *Logic*, to an existing entity which might equally well be taken for a purely biological organism as for the constitutional organ of the body politic.

At most, Hegel shows that the State should have organic features. But when he proceeds to show what sort of organism it is or what specific form the State should have, he introduces a content foreign to its concept; he then fails to conceptualize it adequately and instead merely juxtaposes to it his logical notion whose schema he reproduces with endless monotony. In Marx's excellent phrase, Hegel substitutes “the object of logic for the

logic of object." Instead of allowing himself to be guided, as he often does in the *Phenomenology*, by the *dialectic of experience*, which embraces the contours of reality and follows its actual movements, Hegel in this case falls victim to the formalization of his speculative thought. By an irony of fate, Hegel makes the very mistake for which he reproached Schelling in the Preface of the *Phenomenology*: he did not adequately conceptualize his material, but borrowed it and forced it into a ready-made framework.

It is important not to misunderstand the significance of Marx's criticism, for it might with more justice be attributed to Hegel himself. Marx is not immune to the notion of a final state of life in which the real subject of history—and the whole problem lies in knowing just what is the real subject—transcends itself immanently. Marx at first conceives this notion of an existential transcendence that is the authentic fulfillment of generic man (like Feuerbach, this is Marx's description for the real subject of history) as a real democracy, in contrast to a purely formal democracy which like speculative idealism only results in the alienation of man in real life by a heavenly politics as far removed from man as the heaven of metaphysics or religion.

However, from a knowledge of Hegel's earlier works, we know that as a philosopher in Berlin he started from a romantic vitalism, that, in his own words, he set out from "the lowliest exigencies of human Life." It is in terms of the concept of Life that he first described the general constitution of the city. He uses the vocabulary of Life to contrast the condition of the happy city with the sicknesses of the social body that continually threaten to destroy the unity of the city or to reduce it to a moribund form that must be sloughed off, though it inevitably involves a series of crises. All the same, it cannot be denied that while the Hegelian Idea may still bear within it the memory, as it were, of the drama of this dialectic, it nevertheless leaves itself open, in the *Philosophy of Right*, to all Marx's criticisms. Marx rightly pours scorn upon Hegel's deductions, exposing how little the empirical content of those deductions is implied by the logical form used to arrive at them. Even though Hegel brings an empirical material, and a rich one at that, to the "idea mill," one has to admit that he finds in it what suits his deductions, constricting empirical events in the

formulas of the dialectic. Yet, as Marx admits, this combination is not entirely illegitimate: it is just that when an actual situation attempts to legitimize itself it becomes evident that it fails, whatever its claim to be the consequence of an Idea that is more than a notion of logic.

The mystery of the Idea is, therefore, an outright mystification—one that is transparent, for example, in the deduction of the constitutional sovereign, the bureaucracy, the two chambers, and the rest. Indeed, when he destroys the monarchy, Hegel avoids the real issue: “The sovereignty of the monarch or the sovereignty of the people, that is the true question.” By appealing to the Idea, Hegel evades confronting the issue squarely. Certainly, he sees that to some extent sovereignty belongs to the nation as a whole—to the people—but having made the people merely a mediated appearance of the Idea, he is obliged to introduce the Idea in its own right as the negation of this first appearance; thus he comes to a strange conclusion, namely, that the Idea should be present as an individual, hence the *monarch*. The Idea should be realized without mediation as a fact of nature, for in the mass of individuals it has only a mediated presence, hence *hereditary* monarchy. Finally, the monarch should be the *living law* since each of the moments of the Idea should contain within it the other moments, the singular, the universal, and so on.

We do not wish to spend too long on the details of Marx's criticisms, though they are often biting. Let us keep to the essence of what Marx has to say, taking first the subject of *Democracy*. In his review of the famous three forms of government Hegel observes that though democracy may have been compatible with the ancient city, it is no longer suited to the modern world, where the privacy of the individual has so large a place and where the unity of the State must be embodied confronting this private life. The monarchy is intended to be “the constitution of reason fulfilled.” But, says Marx, if the people, as Hegel has it, being generally isolated from the monarch and sovereign, is only a formless mass (Hegel's actual words are: “The Many, as units—a congenial interpretation of ‘people,’ are of course something connected, but they are connected only as an aggregate, a formless mass whose commotion and activity could therefore only be

elementary, irrational, barbarous and frightful"),<sup>7</sup> this is only true to the degree that one presupposes, in the first place, the existence of monarchy. The question, otherwise, is precisely whether the people need necessarily be conceived as a formless mass. Marx goes on to say: "Democracy is the truth of monarchy, but monarchy is not the truth of democracy. Democracy, unlike monarchy, is intelligible in itself. Democracy is the *genus* of the constitution, whereas monarchy is a species, a degenerate species. *Democracy is the foundation and the form. Monarchy should only be a form but it alters the foundation.*"<sup>8</sup>

Marx's comparison is a significant one and important for the understanding of the humanist and perhaps Christian origins of Marxism. Democracy stands to other forms of government in the relation that Christianity bears toward other religions. Christianity is the religion *κατ'ἐξοχήν*, the divinization of man in the form of a particular religion. In the same way, democracy is the essence of all constitutions, the truth of all of them, the socialization of man in the form of a particular political constitution. But there is a difference, and it is one which constitutes the great advance of Marxism over the purely political theories of the State: as the Christian religion can only be a formal affirmation not pervading the *entire* life of men, so political democracy can still only be one emergent among other possible forms. Marx says that it could happen, as in America, for example, that "the republic would not be a mere political *form* like our own monarchy."<sup>9</sup> The problem is that the form may not be adequate to the foundation or that the foundation—society's actual mode of life—is not identical with the form which fails to give it real expression. "Hitherto the political constitution has been a religious realm, the religion of popular life, *the heaven of its universality* in contrast with the reality of its earthly existence."<sup>10</sup> Just as the Christian religion posits the truth of man beyond man, so the State in the abstract form of the Republic posits the truly socialized man beyond real man.

Hegel was profoundly aware of this dissociation and Marx praises him for it because it is the presentiment of a definite historical situation. But if Hegel escapes criticism, "because he describes the nature of the modern State as it is," he must be

*censured* when he proposes "as the essence of the State what it is." To say that the rational is what is actual "is precisely in contradiction with the irrational actuality which is everywhere the contrary of what it expresses and expresses the opposite of what it is."<sup>11</sup> Herein lies the mystification of Hegelianism both as to its form (speculative idealism) and its content (a specific and fixated historical situation grasped apart from its fundamental disequilibrium).

We can now see the presuppositions of Marxian thought in contrast with those of the Hegelian system. Marx conceives the possibility of an authentic existence of man, compatible with his social nature (unfortunately, he never exactly defines this social nature of man, and his ambiguity on this point has dire consequences for the future). Assuming such a possibility, it remains to understand why the true nature of man has not been realized existentially. Marx discovers historical causes for it in the struggle between social classes. But once this class struggle is resolved within the heart of bourgeois society, the contradiction between the social nature of man and his existential condition should be resolved; it should disappear *in reality* and not merely *in idea*, as in religion or the philosophical mediations of Hegel, which are simply intellectual acrobatics.<sup>12</sup> The Hegelian dialectic still preserves the tension of conflict at the very core of the mediation, whereas Marx's real dialectic works for the complete suppression of that tension. It aims at achieving this *within reality itself*.

Were one to imagine Hegel's objection to this criticism, one can hardly believe that he would assent to the possibility that there might be an end to "the drama of the human situation." This drama is not only a matter of economic conflicts which might some day or other be resolved. It concerns the very development of Life or of the Idea in history. By some curious reversal of perspective, which becomes intelligible if one grants that at a given moment in his development Hegel, like Marx, imagined an effective end to the alienation of man but dropped the thought upon reflection over certain historical events, it is Hegel who in this case seems to be involved in an *endless dialectical development* in which the Idea would be reflected, whereas Marx looked forward to an *end of history*.

On one point in particular the two approaches that we have distinguished emerge clearly. Hegel remarks that the unity that is the supreme principle of the State is only truly realized in moments of "internal stress or external danger." It is then that the Idea, as the negation of the negation, emerges, when history authentically reveals the Idea. Thus terror, revolutions, and wars between nations are inevitable moments of world history, and these moments are always returning because in these phenomena of the "disappearance of the disappearance" is manifest absolute Life or, as Hegel calls it, the Idea. Marx comments on this in an ironic remark about Hegelian Idealism: "This Idealism only finds its true reality in the event of distress or war, so that its nature is expressed as the state of war or distress of the State and its peaceful state is simply the struggle and distress of the organism."<sup>13</sup> In other words, Hegel located the Idea in an *existential drama* of history, whereas Marx finds the real counterpart of the Hegelian Idea in the end of this historical drama, in its effective reconciliation or *positive synthesis*.

But this is much too important a problem for us to take up *en passant*. It would lead us into the contrast between two different "world-views" and send us back to the original source of their divergence, namely, in *the struggle for life and death*, which to Hegel is the very root of history, and *the exploitation of man by man*, which Marx took as his starting point, each considering the position of the other a secondary consequence of his own. Perhaps the contemporary conflict between existentialist philosophy and Marxism would become more tractable if the problem which we have merely touched upon here were tackled directly. Nevertheless it should be noted that Hegel moves away from an existentialist position to adopt a far too conservative attitude to the drama of history. He sublimates it in a philosophy which "escapes from the weary strife of the passions that agitate the surface of society into the calm region of contemplation."<sup>14</sup> Here Marx is at his best in opposing "the hovels of reality to the philosopher's palace of ideas."

Marx, of course, rejects the Hegelian *mediations* which do not *in reality* resolve the contradictions within any historical situation. The Hegelian State is the formal State which answers to the de-

velopment of bourgeois society in its latest form. This society is individualist. Once the old medieval estates (*Stände*) broke up, there emerged the industrial world characterized by the conflict of private interests, the struggle of each against all, and at the same time there appears the modern State as the formal principle of unity in this society of private men. It is in this formal unity that the real essence of man is self-alienated.

We have previously observed this alienation in the monarch, and we shall encounter it more explicitly in what Hegel calls the "governing power" manifest in an overexpanded bureaucracy that Marx subjects to a penetrating attack, more devastating, perhaps, than he in fact intended. In his works of the Jena period, Hegel had sought to define a social state that would be both a particular State and one which might embody and reflect the general interest. He first thought that this was what he had found in the ancient hereditary nobility which laid down its life for the good of the State. But under the influence of Napoleon and later of Prussian reformists, he gave the role of the ancient nobility in the State to the modern bureaucracy: a corps of high-level functionaries, recruited from the middle class, often by means of examination, and charged with the conception of the unity of the State and the execution of its common interest. This bureaucracy is effectively the *soul* of the State, its functional guarantee. Its order and hierarchy pervade the social body from top to bottom; it is to the State what the universal knowledge of the philosopher is to knowledge.

However, Marx once again reverses the Hegelian dialectic. These functionaries, whose "particular function is a universal function," reach a state where they make their universal function into "their particular business," their private property. This corps of bureaucrats, which in the guise of the abstract State or formal knowledge confronts bourgeois society and empirical knowledge, is the realization of a contradiction. Marx has no trouble showing that Hegel in this case submits as a moment of the Idea "an empirical description of bureaucracy, in part as it actually is and in part as it sees itself."<sup>15</sup> Hegel always starts from the assumption of a separation between the State and bourgeois society, between particular interests and the Universal, which should exist in its own

right, in and for itself; and it is indeed upon this separation that the bureaucracy rests.

The bureaucracy contributed to the formation of the modern State by fighting on the side of the rising monarchy against the separatism of the corporations and estates. But it continues to rely upon this separation for its own perpetuation, thus creating what it destroys. If the corporations represented the *materialism* of society, bureaucracy embodies its *spiritualism*. These contraries, however, presuppose each other dialectically and each reverts to the other. "The spirit of bureaucracy is the formal spirit of the State. Thus it constructs out of the formal spirit of the State or the lack of spirit in the State a *categorical imperative*."<sup>16</sup> In other words, bureaucracy simply turns in a void; it is self-perpetuating and becomes a social tumor; instituted to solve problems, it instead creates problems in order to solve them. In a bureaucracy, the goals of the State become opposed to any definite content. Hence its formal treatment of particular affairs, its hierarchy, its atmosphere of mystery, its inevitable tendency to make "the empty purpose of bureaucracy the purpose of the State itself." Such abstract spiritualism ends by having a single content, namely, the tendency of bureaucracy toward self-maintenance. "Thus its spiritualism becomes a sordid materialism, the mechanism of a fixated formalism, of rigid principles, ideas, and traditions. As for the bureaucrats taken individually, they make the purpose of the State their own private end, the race for promotion and getting ahead."<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, Marx's extremely perceptive criticism does not include any definite solution to the problem it raises. It is a matter of overcoming the *dualism of the private man and the citizen*, reconstituting the real nature of man which is essentially social: "Just as Luther," says Marx, "proclaimed an end to the distinction between the layman and the priest," so the new social order transcends the distinction between the State functionary and the private man. Of course, every layman might become a priest, and thus in the new society every private man might become a functionary of the State by means of an examination or competition, in other words, through a kind of baptism or initiation into the religion of politics, but the separation between the

sacred and the profane corps would only be deepened. We may very well wonder to what extent a generalized statism or a society fully equated with the State could dissolve such a bureaucracy. Indeed, does it not create it, if not intentionally, then in practice? The question remains: can the political and social dualism which Hegel failed to resolve be resolved once for all, as Marx believed?

On the subject of the legislative power and Hegel's "deduction" of the two chambers, each charged by various titles with the establishment of a *mediation* between the *unorganized mass* and the *government power*, Marx demonstrates that, in the first place, Hegel is describing an archaic historical situation characteristic of a Germany that had not yet been through its political revolution like France, and that, secondly, his views borrow from the ideals of the French Revolution. Hence a basic contradiction in the Hegelian system which derives from the lag between the Idea and the actual condition of Germany at this time. But there arises a more profound contradiction which derives from Germany's advanced ideological state in contrast to its historical backwardness. "The Germans have in mind what other peoples have accomplished," and they surpass them only *in thought*. This is why, a year later, Marx reaches the conclusion that a radical revolution can only be really brought about in Germany, once the proletariat absorbs the Idea instead of leaving it to ferment in the solipsistic mind of philosophers.

The juxtaposition of ideology and an archaic situation is clearly present in the existence of the chamber that represents the estates (*Stände*) of bourgeois society, despite the fact that these estates have ceased to exist as such by virtue of the very development of bourgeois society. It is all the more evident in the high chamber, made up of hereditary peers, great landowners with their inalienable holdings bound to pass on their property to the eldest son (a system in which man, instead of owning the land, is owned by the land). Such a scaffold of mediations from the bottom to the top of the pyramid is a vain attempt to create the illusion of a relatively stable equilibration of the Idea, but is in fact merely the expression of the unstable equilibrium of a transitory moment of history. The State which Hegel tries to eternalize and grasp through his Idea is only a fleeting state, an internally contradictory

moment, which in reality must pass away undermined from within.

Marx, on the other hand, catches the real nature of legislative power when he writes: "Legislative power is the contradiction between the abstract political State and its own existence." Legislative power is important to the people because, there in the very heart of politics, it is "the revolt in making." In calling for universal suffrage, the private man of bourgeois or civil society means to reconquer the State and to reappropriate it. Basically, Hegel only constructs all that intricate scaffolding of mediations that Marx makes a play of to avoid the latent inevitable conflict between abstract power and concrete society, though he does not succeed. One might even go further and see in Hegel's *defiance* with regard to the legislature and his *confidence* in respect of government the peculiarly conservative nature of Hegel's self, the poor representative of the pure Idea. Marx analyzes Hegel's psyche thus: "Hegel has only to oblige the representatives of the estates to submit to *examination* before the honorable government. Here Hegel reaches the limit of servility. One can see that he is thoroughly contaminated with the wretched arrogance of Prussian officialism which in its narrow bureaucratic spirit deprecates the self-confidence of (subjective) public opinion. In every case for Hegel the State is identical with the 'government.'"<sup>18</sup>

Marx's analysis is incomplete. All the same, it remains stimulating to anyone nowadays who reads it without prejudice. One can hardly disagree with Marx when he uncovers the precise historical situation behind the Hegelian Idea. Yet at the same time this tactic is to some extent a defense of Hegel, for it reveals his striking political realism. Nevertheless, it is clear that Hegel's mediations do not completely resolve the phenomenal tension that emerges with the Idea. As a professor in 1821 he may very well have imagined that his mediations accommodated this tension. If war, for example, is the dramatic manifestation of the Idea, then any professor of philosophy who manages to transpose that drama into his lectures may speak about it comfortably. He is capable of writing that "War has the higher significance that by its agency . . . the ethical health of peoples is preserved . . . just as the blowing of the winds preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of a prolonged calm . . ."; or again,

"... peoples unwilling or afraid to tolerate sovereignty at home have been subjugated from abroad . . . their freedom has died from the fear of dying."<sup>19</sup> These opinions, which are still to be found in the *Philosophy of Right*, derive from a combination of Hegel's youthful romantic vitalism, his mature reflections upon the events of the Terror in 1793, and the wars of the Revolution. Marx is hostile to an idealism that becomes contemplative. He believes in a practical solution of these contradictions, in an effective synthesis of Idea and reality in the here and now.

For Marx, Hegelian Idealism is simply a mystification. In setting Hegel's inverted system upon its feet, Marx intended to ground the Idea deep in reality and to make of it a permanent reality. The difference between the two thinkers strikes one immediately. Hegel, for his part, remarks that "a people has the constitution which corresponds to the consciousness which the world spirit realizes in that people." But such a consciousness may be transcended, "so that," as Marx says, "the Revolution is necessary and it *must* be made." Again, according to Hegel, the legislative power does nothing but apply the constitution; yet that application results in a modification of the very constitution. Why, then, not say clearly that this power is none other than that of man as a social agent "who gives rise to the constitution"? The legislative power is itself a part of the constitution. But the *constitution* itself is not made in a vacuum. The laws which according to Hegel demand a transcendent development must nevertheless be worked out . . . the conjunction is clear: the legislative power is both a constitutional power and a constitutive power. There is indeed a contradiction here, if one refuses to admit that it is in reality the people—and not an abstract Idea—that is the living source of any real constitution.

From his intensive study of the Hegelian philosophy of the State, Marx constructs a first revolutionary manifesto which forms the Introduction to the 1844 *Critique* and is in turn the germ of the *Communist Manifesto*. Having perceived the contradictions native to Germany, namely, its backwardness relative to Western Europe, combined with a philosophical development beyond the level of German politics, indeed, even of the general European political situation, Marx proceeds to show that this conflict be-

tween philosophy (or the Idea) and the actual situation necessitates a radical revolution and cannot be contained within the sophisms of Hegel's logic. The Idea must become completely incarnate, which it can only achieve if bourgeois society in turn emancipates itself completely and appropriates the abstract State that Hegel constructs over and beyond it. However, the contradiction between the State and bourgeois society is itself simply the expression of contradictions within bourgeois society—the contradictions between *social classes* (a new concept which replaces that of states).

In the countries surrounding Germany each of these social classes had managed at least for a moment to take upon itself the emancipation of the whole society and this was the making of revolutions. "It is only in the name of the universal rights of society that a particular class can assume general supremacy; thus it falls to another class to represent the state of bondage and the perversion of society." In France, the bourgeoisie, precisely speaking, was in 1789 identified with the idea of the complete emancipation of man, whereas the nobility embodied the crimes of society. But in Germany each social group "begins to assume a self-consciousness distinct from the rest, not when it encounters oppression but whenever circumstances to which the group has made no contribution offer a new social group over which it may in turn exercise its oppression." The result is an impossibly one-sided development of Germany and an archaic situation which offers a counterpart for practically every one of the mediations that Hegel sets up between the abstract power of the State and the mass of particular states. That is why Marx believes that the future revolution in Germany cannot arise in a particular class that for a moment identifies with the Idea but only through the complete breakdown of all the classes of bourgeois society. Only such a decomposition can make possible a genuine revolution, one that will end once and for all the dualism of Society and the State, of Reality and the Idea.

What, then, is to be the instrument of the realization of this conception—the social man whom Marx, to repeat, does not fully describe—that is finally to end human alienation? Marx gives this instrument a distinct name, that of the *proletariat*. The proletariat

is not a particular class among the other classes of bourgeois society. It is the class which arises from the decomposition of bourgeois society. It is the product of its deepest contradictions, "a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done to it is not a *particular wrong*, but wrong *in general* . . . a sphere of society which claims no *traditional* status but only a human status . . . a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself from all the other spheres of society, without, therefore, emancipating all these other spheres. . . ." Marx discovers the instrument necessary for the "non-alienation" of man in the proletariat whose conflict expresses the contradiction of *all* bourgeois society. Thus it is by means of the proletariat that the Idea becomes an actuality. Marx, therefore, has not altogether abandoned Hegelian philosophy. He tries to provide a more secure foundation for the Idea and Reality in the human subject. In place of Hegel's transcendent Idea, Marx substitutes the revolutionary dialectic of the proletariat. There is a further feature for which Marx appears to us to be indebted to Hegel, namely, that of the *awakening of consciousness*.

The notion of the *awakening of consciousness*, which is so important in the dialectic of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, is in Marx the driving force behind the emancipation of man. The awakening of consciousness is not the passive reflection of some state of affairs. It is that which alone can embody the dialectical contradiction and at the same time demand its resolution. The act in which the proletariat becomes conscious of the alienation of man signifies a contradiction within man himself. This contradiction is a real one and demands a solution precisely for the reason that it is at once *objective and subjective*. It expresses an empirical situation—man posited, as it were, outside himself, like an *object*—and the negation of that situation—man as an inalienable subject for whom it is impossible to recognize himself as a mere object. For Marx the proletariat is the subject that experiences to the extreme the contradiction of the human condition and is thereby capable of resolving it forever. But is such a resolution of all transcendence possible on the historical plane and not just

at the level of thought? Does the human condition as a problem carry within it the solution to its problem?

## NOTES

- 1 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Introduction, in *Karl Marx, Early Writings*, pp. 43-59.
- 2 See the author's introduction to *Principes de la Philosophie du Droit*, French translation by André Kaan (Paris: Gallimard, 1940), especially pp. 7-19.
- 3 *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, translated with notes by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), paragraph 308, p. 200.
- 4 *Die Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*.
- 5 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 601.
- 6 *Philosophy of Right*, p. 161.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 198.
- 8 "Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrechts," *Frühe Schriften*, p. 292.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 295.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 338-339.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 372. "... it is a society which in its heart and soul is warlike, but too afraid of bruises to actually go to war ..."
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 282; cf. *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 179-208.
- 14 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 457.
- 15 Marx, *Frühe Schriften*, p. 314.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 316. Notice the clear allusion to Kantian legalism.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 372.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 422-423.
- 19 *Philosophy of Right*, p. 210.

## 7

On the Structure and  
Philosophical Presuppositions  
of Marx's *Capital*

First of all, in order to understand *Capital* it is absolutely necessary to consult Marx's philosophical works prior to his economic studies. Marx's work presupposes an underlying philosophy whose various elements are not easily reconstructed. There is the profound influence of Hegel, whom Marx studied in great depth (particularly the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*). There is also the influence of Darwin and a biological philosophy which occasionally modifies the Hegelian philosophy in an interesting way.

Second, there is the idea of *alienation*, which, through Hegel and Feuerbach, provides the source of Marx's philosophical thought. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel presents the life of the individual in a process that estranges him from life. This concept of Life, however, is not simply biological; it is human life as *history*. The implication of this thesis in Hegel and Marx is that the struggle against such alienation defines the *liberation of man*. But absolute knowledge and philosophy cannot bring about this emancipation. They constitute a new form of alienation, namely, speculative alienation. Marx's attitude toward philosophy has certain prophetic elements. In place of *nations*, which in Hegel are the incarnate moments of the Idea, Marx puts *social classes*, and the latter role devolves upon the *proletariat*. In Marx, attention must be given to the idea or practical history of the awakening of consciousness. Finally, it is impossible to interpret Marxism in terms of a simple objectivism.

Third, we must examine the structure of *Capital* aside from its philosophical basis. Its foundation is the theory of *value*, or so-

cially necessary work. This theory is as much a philosophical and sociological theory as it is economic in the strict sense. Man produces, reproduces, and enlarges his own life and the *conditions* of such a life through the collective labor of humanity. This labor is the manifest value of its phenomenal forms (merchandise, exchange, money). It is necessary to discover, behind these generally quantitative phenomenal appearances, the Essence (labor-value) of the Phenomenon (market). This involves a comparison with the Hegelian *Logic* and *Phenomenology*.

Fourth, Marx raises the question of what made possible the complete alienation of man manifest in the condition of the nineteenth-century English proletariat. If one combines the theory of value with the theory of surplus-value (the misbegotten exploitation of man by man), one can then understand the dialectical and historical genesis of capital, which is the greatest alienation of man in history. Capital, which is man's product, in turn produces man. Marx studies the workings of this system, unveiling its essence in the three major parts of his work (capital production, circulation, production and circulation as a whole). Starting from the essence, Marx tries to rejoin the appearance and historical phenomenon which, if viewed in isolation from their essence, appear as a mystification. Marx shows how capital functions so as to involve its own breakdown.

Fifth, the question arises whether Marx's explanation involves the intervention of factors that are not purely economic, in particular, a certain *will to power*, which one can hardly imagine will disappear with the disappearance of capital. There is a contrast here between Hegel and Marx. However, it is possible that from an objective study of Marx himself one might go beyond his own conclusions.

Today, an objective study and detailed commentary on Marx's *Capital* would seem indispensable to the philosopher who is to understand contemporary history and to define the role of philosophy in it. Possibly, it would contribute beneficially to framing the problem of our time—that of the philosophy of history: What are the conditions of such a philosophy? What would be the significance of such a philosophy of history today?

## Early Philosophical Influences: Hegel and Darwin

The first question concerning the early influences upon Marx, particularly that of Hegel, may be dealt with briefly here, since it will be taken up later in the chapter. Hegel's influence was considerable and it is not possible to understand Marx's basic work, *Capital*, without a knowledge of the principal works which contributed to the formation and development of his thought, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, the *Logic*, and the *Philosophy of Right*. It is quite certain that Marx read these works closely and developed his thought from them, at times inspired by idealism and at others rejecting it. Contrary to what others have claimed, Marx in fact had a detailed knowledge of *The Phenomenology of Mind*. No other commentator upon this difficult work was at that time as sufficiently removed from it as Marx to penetrate its meaning and discover its overall significance. To be convinced of this one has only to look at Marx's study, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, which was to have appeared in the *Franco-German Annals*. This study is one of the most remarkable works of Marx. It perhaps contains the meaning and foundation of his entire philosophy, revealing the double influence of the classical economists and Hegelian philosophy. For it resumes and rethinks the entire Hegelian *Phenomenology*, from *sensible consciousness* through to *Absolute Knowledge*. In it are reproduced the most obscure passages from Hegel, with an attempt to determine their exact significance. It attempts to demonstrate the originality and value of the Hegelian system. It proposes an end to the alienation of man in history and examines the reasons for Hegel's inadequate solution, its inability to resolve a problem that it had set itself merely in thought. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is no less basic to the foundations of Marx's great synthesis, *Capital*, than are the theoretical economists and Engel's empirical studies. Marx's thorough knowledge of the *Phenomenology* is evident from the allusions to a section of it on asceticism and the unhappy consciousness in his *German Ideology*.<sup>1</sup> Any reading of *Capital* is sufficient to convince one of the influence of Hegel's *Logic*. One realizes—as Lenin observed—that one must master the *Logic* to follow Marx's

exposition and arguments (his use of the categories of quality, quantity, and measure is well known). As for Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (and the possible transcendence of its philosophy), Marx left a masterful critique of it in his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, which we have discussed in the previous chapter.

Unquestionably, Marx worked out his own system against the background of Hegel's speculative philosophy. This is very well shown by Cornu in his indispensable work on *Marx's Early Period*. However, it is our view that Cornu goes too far in thinking that Marx progressively abandoned his original theses and finally developed a historical materialism quite unassociated with his early thought. On the contrary, we believe that Marx's original theses are to be found in *Capital* and provide the best means of understanding the full significance of the theory of value.

Of course, Hegel was not the only one to influence Marx. In reading *Capital*, one finds an astonishing wealth of economic, historical, and philosophical documentation. Marx is as likely to refer to Aristotle's *Economics*, on which he is an excellent commentator, as to the English and French economists of his day. It would be necessary to make an exhaustive study of these sources if one were to comment upon and interpret *Capital*. It is possible that one would discover that its sources are not always compatible and that, as a result, there is in Marx's thought, as it comes through Hegel and Darwin, a certain ambiguity. If this is indeed so, then perhaps the clarification and resolution of these contradictions may well help to illuminate contemporary historical problems. Marx, for example, thinks like a Hegelian and yet he adopts from Darwin a quite different philosophy of life and nature than Hegel's own. In the section of *Capital* where he deals with technology and the transformation of man's forces and relations of production, he speaks about the invention of tools, machinery, and machine-tools like a Darwinian. He considers these inventions an extrapolation of a natural technology. However, he thinks less in terms of adaptation than of man's domination of nature, and the ambiguous concept of the *will to live* or the *will to power*—although these are not explicitly Marxian concepts—is mixed with concepts of a quite different nature. It was remarked that Marx

does not, to our knowledge, use the expression "will to power." But he certainly has in mind a will to power when he describes the historical role of capitalist society, its need to dominate, expressed in the *value set on value* that inspires the capitalist and without which progress is inconceivable. One merely wonders whether this will to power will cease with the class struggle. These and other problems arise from a close reading of *Capital* with attention to the heterogeneity and wealth of influences that Marx experienced (not to mention literary influences such as Balzac, for example, whose social dialectic he found in *The Peasants*). Moreover, we should not overlook the influence of the economists and social reformers. But our primary task is to think through the origins of the Marxian synthesis in Hegelian philosophy, as a fundamental approach to the understanding of its structure.

### The Concept of Alienation

We turn now to the second question which we outlined at the beginning of the chapter. The original idea, and, as it were, the seed of all Marx's thought, is the idea of *alienation*, which he took from Hegel and Feuerbach. If one takes this notion as the starting point, defining *human emancipation* as man's active historical struggle against every mode of alienation of his nature, one is then best equipped to set out the Marxian philosophical system and to achieve a structural understanding of Marx's major work, *Capital*. To determine the meaning or various meanings of the term *alienation* and what is understood by its correlative term, human emancipation, one must, like Marx himself in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts 1844*, go back to Hegel's *Phenomenology* and to Feuerbach's interpretations of alienation.

In the chapter of the *Phenomenology* entitled "Self-Consciousness" (consciousness of self and of life, the struggle to the death for man's recognition of man, domination and servitude), Hegel describes our life as a phenomenon estranged from us. Self-consciousness is a human consciousness of *life*. What I am most profoundly and intimately, my self, and my life, appears to me as other than myself. I see myself, so to speak, outside of my self, and it is this externality of the self with respect to itself that

constitutes the movement of self-consciousness. The first moment of this self-consciousness is *Desire*, the desire to live, in contradiction with itself, since I am that life. But this life is not only *mine as a particular individual*. It is *life in general*, life as the genus (*genos*). It is universal life, and its development, at first in nature then in history, confronts (human) self-consciousness as something external. It is, as Hegel puts it, "the universal power, or objective essence as a totality," the struggle of the individual for recognition and domination in the face of the particularity of the phenomenon of death.

Marx comments several times on this passage from Hegel, the first time in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and a second time in *The German Ideology*.<sup>2</sup> For example, he says of death: "*Death* seems to be a harsh victory of the species over the individual and to contradict their unity; but the *particular individual* is only a *determinate generic being* and as such is mortal."<sup>3</sup> Consciousness in man cannot be anything else than this apprehension of the species which implies the death of particular individuality. Finally, in *The German Ideology*, where he argues with Max Stirner, Marx shows that the general conditions of life, in the biological sense of the term, have become foreign to us. We find them crystallized outside ourselves in harsh objective forms. The self-alienation that is the essence of the individual is not simply an externalization of the self; it reveals itself with a certain hostile character since it is the particular individual who experiences death and who, though he cannot be anything other than *subjective*, finds himself under the sway of a harsh *objective* reality. However, in Hegel life has a certain physiognomy (*Gestalt*): it is first of all the other *ego* who, as a loved one, is both myself and *alter*; it is then the other fellow in general who appears to me simultaneously as myself and as other than myself; from this there ensues the struggle to the death for *recognition of the self* and the relation of *domination and servitude* which results from it. It is not necessary to pursue this dialectic any further since it is well known how it inspired Marx. The outcome is that (human) self-consciousness can only be consciousness of the other man, of my human environment, as Marx says, or again, consciousness no longer of nature, but of *history*. It is in the *history*

of society that the individual acquires consciousness of himself as generic man. The interdependence of individuals, the domination of nature and its *humanization* through labor and the struggle of individuals for recognition and domination provide the field of contemplation for self-consciousness. But self-consciousness does more than contemplate these phenomena since, in virtue of its active nature, its basic project is to overcome this alienation through an object which is contradictory with the very (subjective) nature of self-consciousness.

It is in history that man produces his life; he produces it by reproducing it on an ever larger scale, in a form which continually approximates a *generic universality*. This self-production of the self, which as a philosophy of man replaces the perpetual creation of classical philosophy, results, nonetheless, in an alienation. For the self-production of the self, which Marx also traces in the theories of political economy, extracting from them the notion of abstract labor, appears—from the individual standpoint of the self looking upon it as a macro-process—to be a harsh objective reality, a strange and even hostile power to which the self is submitted:

In the same way [Marx writes] as society itself produces *man* as *man*, so it is produced by *him*. Activity and mind are social in their content as well as in their *origin*; they are *social* activity and social mind. The *human* significance of nature only exists for *social* man, because only in this case is nature a *bond* with other *men*, the basis of his existence for others and of their existence for him. Only then is nature the *basis* of his own *human* experience and a vital element of human reality. The *natural* existence of man has here become his *human* existence and nature itself has become human for him. Thus society is the accomplished union of man with nature, the veritable resurrection of nature, the realized naturalism of man and the realized humanism of nature.<sup>4</sup>

We could dwell on this text and show from its construction that it expresses a secularized version of the Christian notion of the mystical body. Marx presents a substitute kingdom of God on earth which is the complete reconciliation of man and nature emancipated from every form of alienation, a state where man as

the effective producer of his own life has appropriated his universal nature which in the early history of society appeared alien to him. We shall avoid the difficult problem of the *end of history* and instead call attention to other forms of alienation which result from the basic experience and, so to speak, translate onto another plane the real absence of any reconciliation between man and himself in history. Such, for example, is the alienation in Religion, in the beyond, that Feuerbach attacked, clearly, under the inspiration of Hegel (in particular, Hegel's chapter on the "Unhappy Consciousness," or the one on "The Struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition").

Man expresses the self-alienation that we have spoken of through the notion of transcendence. God is the master and man is the slave. A form of alienation that reduces man to an existential nothingness results in a humiliation of man which, as Feuerbach noted, might have serious moral consequences. But Feuerbach believed that this form of alienation demanded a speculative criticism that would reveal that it is generic man whom man perceives in the transcendent which he has mistakenly projected beyond himself. Marx, however, considered such speculative criticism totally inadequate and quite incapable of suppressing alienation. Without realizing that he was harking back to an idea previously developed in Hegel's early writings, Marx sought the origin of religious alienation in man's social and political alienation.

The basis of irreligious criticism is this: *man makes religion*; religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man's self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or has lost himself again. But *man* is not an abstract being, squatting outside the world. Man is *the human world*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion which is an *inverted world consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual *point d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its general basis of consolation and justification. It is the *fantastic realization* of the human being inasmuch as the *human being* possesses no true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly a struggle against *that world* whose spiritual *aroma* is religion.<sup>5</sup>

The preceding passage contains the essential departure of Marxian thought and its method. The conquest of human alienation is not achieved solely by denouncing it, or analyzing it speculatively. It is necessary to go further and to fight against the *circumstances* that make it possible and perpetuate it. Philosophy does not resolve religious alienation, for it only substitutes a speculative heaven for the heaven of religion. Such is Marx's opinion of Hegelian idealism. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* he shows at length what he takes to be at fault in Hegel and why it is necessary to reverse his idealism and put in its place the active struggle of man against the specific causes of alienation. Hegel's own speculative method merely substitutes for religion, experienced naïvely by consciousness, the *Idea* of religion, in the form of the philosophy of religion; art, too, is replaced by the philosophy of art, and there are similar substitutions: ". . . self-consciousness thus becomes conscious of itself through its object and pretends that in this way it has reduced the object to itself." But this is a speculative illusion. In reality, the object is always there, untranscended, and it is only the philosopher who imagines that by thinking the object he dominates it. "The hovels of the real world," as Kierkegaard says, "continue to exist despite the speculative palace built by the philosopher." The negation which remains speculative does not lead to any real transformation of the object. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is consequently an *acceptance* and even a *justification* of the political world and the contemporary state; that it is a retrospective justification of Napoleon or of the Prussian state makes little difference. The comprehension of the actual as rational and the discovery of "the rose in the Cross of the present" are certainly more valid than the purely subjective criticisms of B. Bauer and M. Stirner, which merely result in a comedy of liberation and necessarily encounter the tragic fate of (subjective) comedy, as Hegel already observed. But Hegel's thoughts nevertheless constitute another form of alienation, *speculative alienation*. Such is the source of the transcendence of the Idea and the fatalism in Hegel, criticized by Marx. *Thus it is necessary to transcend philosophy as well as religion*. But the transcendence of philosophy is not its negation. On the contrary, it is the effective realization of philosophy, assuming that philos-

ophy is assimilated with the Idea. It is both the *future-world* of philosophy and the *future-philosophy* of the world. The Idea of liberation dominates all of human history; it is contained in what Marx called the *enthusiasm* of every social class that undertakes a revolution, but due to the presence of another class does not exceed the bounds of its own *limited class interest*. Hegel renounces any personal intervention in history when he writes: "Philosophy escapes from the weary strife of passions that agitate the surface of society into the calm region of contemplation; that which interests it is the recognition of the process of development which the Idea has passed through in realizing itself—i.e., the Idea of Freedom, whose reality is the consciousness of Freedom and nothing short of it."<sup>6</sup> Marx, on the contrary, is incapable of adopting a position outside of a history that *is to be made at the same time as it is to be thought*. "Until now the philosophers have only interpreted the world; now it must be changed." In a letter to his father, written in 1837, Marx sets out his lifetime program, the reconciliation of life and speculation, of action and knowledge, a unity of which Hegel in his youth may have dreamed but which he was to abandon for the sake of reflections upon history which remain reflections. In 1844 Marx believed that he had at last found a solution to his problem, in his thesis of *the unity in history of the idea and the proletariat* and his notion of *the awakening of a truly authentic consciousness* of history and the human situation achieved by the proletariat. This is an indispensable awakening of consciousness, arising in a universal proletariat, guided in its struggle, of course, by its most conscious elements, but as a universal class forever re-creating its own foundations. This *awakening of consciousness* differs from all others because for historical reasons it can no longer be limited and thus illusory. Thus man becomes capable of thinking and realizing the *absolute truth* of his being. Today it is well worthwhile to recall that love of truth, that universalism—rooted in the historical conditions of its realization—which animate all Marx's thought and which he demands that history make possible.

It is evident that one can discover a certain idealism in Marxian thought. Certainly, we regard the theory of *labor value* as a fundamental *ethical testament*. Such an ethical testament is con-

ceivable only if it finds in the actual events of history both the source of its expression and the means of its realization, and this is the source of the synthesis of idealism and realism that characterizes the Marxian dialectic. Marx believed that *by substituting social class for the Hegelian nation* he had discovered the synthesis in the *proletariat*. The proletariat is not a chosen race, an elect people destined to dominate other races and peoples. It is the last product of human alienation and as such it alone is capable of completely realizing the Idea, since man cannot be reduced to the status of a mere object, to a bone or skull, as Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology*, but possesses that reflexiveness of self-consciousness which enables him to recoil from the most extreme state of alienation. Hitherto the realization of the Idea was impeded by the limited circumstances of social classes that were mutually opposed and had always to defend themselves against others. "*This is our reply*," says Marx posing the question of human emancipation,

A class must be formed which has *radical chains*, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done to it is not a *particular wrong* but *wrong in general*. There must be formed a sphere of society which claims no *traditional* status but only a human status . . . a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself from all the other spheres of society, without, therefore, emancipating all these other spheres, which is, in short, a *total loss* of humanity and which can only redeem itself by a *total redemption of humanity*.<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to see what we have in mind when we remark upon a certain *prophetic* element in Marx. His conception of science is not only of a science of social reality, but one that contributes, as it becomes conscious of it, to the realization of that very social reality, or at least modifies it profoundly. It is this attitude which is reminiscent of the prophets. Finally, one can see that we must dispense with any purely *objectivist* interpretation of Marx. Certainly, it is reality that provides the opportunity for a liberating social class. But the latter must become conscious of itself and its

universal role in the course of its struggle. Without this *creative* awakening of consciousness the historical emancipation of man would not be possible.

In view of the changes that have occurred in the conditions of production that Marx was unaware of, and that have led to a specialization and diversification of the so-called universal class, it is questionable to what extent the proletariat has or will accomplish the mission assigned to it by Marx. Finally, one wonders whether that phenomenon of a will to power that Marx perceived in the origins of capitalism and generally in the struggle between classes would disappear with the proletariat. To our mind these are essential questions and it seems likely that a commentary on Marx's work, along with an analysis of events posterior to it—in particular, a certain persistence of the phenomenon of nationalism in a strange combination with the class struggle—would help us frame questions more adequately, if not to solve them.

### **The Philosophical and Sociological Nature of the Labor Theory of Value**

On the basis of the preceding philosophical and historical presuppositions we may now attempt to elicit the structure of Marx's work on capital, as well as its logic and phenomenology, in the Hegelian sense. Whereas Hegel starts from *Phenomenology*—a theory of appearances—and leads us up to his *Logic*—a theory of the universal nature of all appearances—Marx proceeds in the opposite manner in *Capital*. Marx claims to capture the historical phenomenon, of which Engels and himself were the informed witnesses, by proceeding, as he says, from the abstract to the concrete, from the underlying essence (labor-value) to the appearance, which without knowledge of the essence is merely a delusion, a mystification with which the bourgeois economist fools himself, clinging to it out of a certain bad faith. If one does not start from the essence, but like the bourgeois economist deals with the phenomenon, one is unable to understand the veritable origin (at once dialectical and genetic) of capitalism viewed as a system. It may be possible to formulate empirical generalizations, but one will misunderstand its total working. It will not be understood as

a *totality* (one of Marx's own discoveries). Thus the confusion, handed down from Adam Smith, between the pairs, Constant-capital/Variable-capital, and Fixed-capital/Circulating-capital, may at first sight appear insignificant, but it contributes to misunderstanding and eventually to an almost willful obscuring of the origin of surplus-value. The distinction between Constant-capital and Variable-capital presupposes the entire thesis of labor-value. It is based upon the empirical postulate underlying the whole Marxian edifice, namely, the conception of man's production of his own life through the process of labor. On the other hand, the distinction between Fixed-capital and Circulating-capital is based solely on the process of circulation which, relative to the field of production, is merely the field of appearance.

Marx starts with the description of the essence of his subject, drawing upon Hegel and even referring to Aristotle's analysis. He tries to reveal those truly qualitative distinctions that are hidden by the homogeneity of quantitative formulations (often leaving the reader of *Capital* with a feeling of useless, overdrawn sequences). As a matter of fact, the empirical documentation of the qualitative essences that underlie the homogeneous quantitative formulae, the compilation of historical examples corresponding to these essential moments, make one of the most attractive features of the first volume of *Capital* (the only one to which Marx put his finishing touch). Unlike those of Aristotle, these studies are not static. They possess a dialectical sweep which strips away the quantitative inadequacy formulae and relocates the data in a totality that transcends them. Thus we approach the concrete historical phenomenon (the market and the proletariat in the England of Marx's day, described in the third part of *Capital*).

Perhaps the best way to illustrate Marx's procedure is to do so in his own words:

In the first volume we analyzed the phenomena presented by the *process of capitalist production*, considered by itself as a mere productive process without regard to any secondary influences of conditions outside of it. But this process of production, in the strict meaning of the term, does not exhaust the life cycle of capital. It is supplemented in the actual world by the *process of circulation*,

which was the object of analysis in our second volume. We found in the course of this last-named analysis, especially in part III, in which we studied the intervention in the process of social reproduction, that the capitalist process of production, considered as a whole, is a combination of the processes of production and circulation. It cannot be the object of this third volume to indulge in general reflections relative to this combination. We are rather interested in locating the concrete forms growing out of the *movements of capitalist production as a whole* and setting them forth. In actual reality the capitals move and meet in such concrete forms that the form of the capital in the process of production and that of the capital in the process of circulation impress one only as special aspects of those concrete forms. The conformation of the capitals evolved in this third volume approach step by step that form which they assume on the surface of society, in their mutual interactions, in competition, and in the ordinary consciousness of the human agencies in this process.<sup>8</sup>

Here Marx provides us with a remarkable exposition of his method and the structure of his work (what earlier we called the movement from the essence to the appearance, the distribution of the gross product which constitutes a mystification in which everyone is deceived) and the appearances that are to be saved: What we call the essence is labor-value, the origin of surplus-value, the process of production itself; the appearance is the market, the law of supply and demand, the competition of capital and revenues (III). The intermediary is the process of circulation, the turnover of individual and social capital, and the function of the time factor (II). It seems to us that it is the failure to understand this philosophical, genetic method that has led a number of economists to the belief that there is a contradiction between the first and third volumes of *Capital*. There may well be other contradictions in Marx's economic philosophy, but this is certainly not one that survives a consideration of Marx's genetic and dialectical exposition whose aim is not simply to enunciate a *law* but to *comprehend* (in the most profound sense of the term, i.e., as only a conscious proletariat can comprehend it) the origin of the entire capitalist system and the mystery of its working. Vico, whom Marx loved to quote, says that the difference between human history and

natural history is that we have not made the latter but the former we have made. As early as 1837, in the letter to his father previously referred to, Marx reveals his method, taking up a passage from the Preface of Hegel's *Phenomenology*: It differs from the mathematician's method which is external to its object.

In the concrete expression of the living ideal world, in Law, the State, Nature and all of philosophy, it is necessary, by contrast, *to intercept the object in its development* and one cannot introduce into it arbitrary distinctions; the demonstration of the object should inasmuch as it embodies a contradiction, develop its movement and find its principle of unity within itself. Truth, as Hegel said, is the vehicle of its own realization.

The first part of *Capital* contains the basic principles (an empirical and ethical postulate reminiscent of Fichte's thetic principle) of the Marxian system, namely, the labor theory of value which the classical economists had slowly worked out. We have established (as a philosophical postulate at the start of this essay) that man *produces, reproduces, and reproduces on an ever-expanding scale* his own life and the conditions of life in general. *Value in the absolute sense* is constituted by this collective labor (viewed as a totality) of humanity producing and reproducing its collective livelihood. The notion of value, which Marx, referring to Hegel (particularly the section on "Culture" in the *Phenomenology*), also calls *substance*, must be distinguished from the forms that it assumes when divided in the *exchange* of commodities, in the *equivalence* ratios through which a particular commodity finds its value reflected in another, and, finally, in the objective realization of its value in the form of a universal equivalent, money, that is no longer a commodity but a *hypostatization* of exchange-value in the form of an object, an objective alienation, as it were, of absolute value. Such a *realization of substance* makes possible the man's alienation in the course of making himself in history. It enables the creative power of human labor to become incarnate in an object which is the Thing itself (*die Sache selbst*). It allows the human will to power, which always encounters a limit in the quantitative order, since a given quantity

can always be exceeded by another quantity, to exercise itself *even before* the capitalist form of production emerges in history.

In its qualitative aspect, or formally considered, money has no bounds to its efficacy, i.e., it is the universal representative of material wealth, because it is directly convertible into any other commodity. But, at the same time, every actual sum of money is limited in amount, and therefore, as a means of purchasing, has only a limited efficacy. This antagonism between the quantitative limits of money and its qualitative boundlessness, continually acts as a spur to the hoarder in his Sisyphus-like labor of accumulating.<sup>9</sup>

For historical reasons the hoarder and the usurer precede the true capitalist, whom they make possible and whom in some sense they foreshadow in history. This anticipation has a significance. He who exchanges for money solely in terms of the formula "M-C-M" and not to gain a living through the exchange "C-M-C" is seeking power. But this will to power, *the value set on value*, that is the source of the unbridled exploitation of man by man throughout history, is simply posited by Marx without any indication whether it will still be found at the end of history in forms that he had denounced earlier as a young man (for example, in his critique of the governing bureaucracy in Hegel's philosophy of the Prussian State). In the section on "Culture" in the *Phenomenology*, which it would be interesting to compare with *Capital*, Hegel defines the social substance in terms of two components, *the Power of the State* and *Wealth*, and shows how the will to power in the individual is determined by his *ambition* and *avarice* and how the two elements combine to produce a social cleavage. Marx retains only one of the movements, namely, "the value set on value" and considers the first merely a sort of epiphenomenon; though contemporary historical events perhaps justify Hegel's view.

But we shall leave such considerations aside and return to the structure of *Capital*. In a process similar to that in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the producer is alienated through the *commodity and money*, and this monumental alienation is the foundation of capital, which, as virtually the principal agent in Marx's work, although produced by man, eventually comes to *dominate man in*

history, and to reduce him to a simple factor in its working. Certainly, behind the capitalist formula "M-C-M" there is hidden the exploitation of one class by another and the whole source of the surplus-value that makes it possible for  $M^1$  to be greater than M; but this is nothing else than the alienation of the proletariat. In the end, the capitalist in his own way is as alienated as the proletarian.

Except as personified capital, the capitalist has no historical value, and no right to that historical existence, which, to use an expression of the witty Lichnowsky "hasn't got no date." And so far only is the necessity for his own transitory existence implied in the transitory necessity for the capitalist mode of production. But, so far as he is personified capital, it is not values in use and the enjoyment of them, but exchange-value and its augmentation, that spur him into action. [Were we not correct in speaking of a primordial will to power in Marx?] Fantastically bent on making value expand itself, he ruthlessly forces the human race to produce for production's sake; he thus forces the development of the productive powers of society, and creates those material conditions, which alone can form the real basis of a higher form of society, a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle. [It is worthwhile emphasizing this ethical formula.] Only as personified capital is the capitalist respectable. As such, he shares with the miser the passion for wealth as wealth. But that which in the miser is a mere idiosyncrasy, is, in the capitalist, the effect of the social mechanism of which he is but one of the wheels.<sup>10</sup>

In a short study we can hardly think of examining the whole intent of Marx's theory of value—the creative substance hypostasized in money. All we can do is to emphasize its philosophical and sociological character in addition to its economic aspect. The notion of value, taken from the philosophy of Hegel as much as from the classical economists, is interpreted as *socially necessary labor*. Through this concept Marx wishes to convey, in the first place, that the products of this labor constitute, as it were, a vast *collective product* in relation to which, though unconsciously, all individual producers have a certain *solidarity*; what counts is not their individual working time but their social working time. Sec-

only, Marx wants to say that this labor should correspond to the *social needs* of a period, to a *social distribution* of those needs.

Every commodity must contain the necessary quantity of labor, and at the same time only the proportional quantity of the total social labor time must have been spent on the various groups. For the use-value of a thing remains the prerequisite. The use-value of the individual commodities depends on the particular need which each satisfies. But the use-value of the social mass of products depends on the extent to which it satisfies in quantity a definite social need for every particular kind of product in an adequate manner, so that labor is proportionately distributed among the different spheres in keeping with these social needs, which are definite in quantity. (This point is to be noted in the distribution of capital to the various spheres of production.) The social need, that is the use-value on a social scale, appears here as a determining factor for the amount of social labor which is to be supplied by the various particular spheres.

With the crises of capitalism in mind and his theory of the *breakdown* of the system, Marx adds: "This point has any bearing upon the proportion between necessary and surplus-labor only in so far as a violation of this proportion makes it impossible to realize the value of the commodities and the surplus-value contained in it."<sup>11</sup> Without surplus-value the entire system collapses. The social character of this theory of value and its implications are evident. It appears both in its essential form expressed in the solidarity of the *productive laborers* and in the specific form of the *social needs* of a given historical period.

The important thing is to be sure to distinguish absolute value (man's self-production and reproduction) from the particular form which it must assume under capitalism, where production is not in principle regulated by use but by the race for profit and the "expansion of value" that is rooted in the exploitation of man by man. In the society of the future, the classless society, to which Marx rarely alludes in *Capital*, a kind of immanent plan will regulate and harmonize production and consumption with a view to *the liberty of man now the master of his fate*.

In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labor under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required. In the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of material production in the strict meaning of the term. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature, in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and reproduce it, so civilized man has to do it, and he must do it in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. With his development the realm of natural necessity expands, because his wants increase; but at the same time the forces of production increase, by which these wants are satisfied. The freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialized man, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; that they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its fundamental premise.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, we wish to return to the basic features of the Marxian method: the progression from the concept of essence, or *production*, to the appearance, or the *market*, and the conflict between essence and appearance in the capitalist system. The distribution of income—interest, entrepreneurial profits, rent, wages—ultimately conceals from the bourgeois economist the great human and philosophical problem that Marx posed. The essential nature of the distribution problem in terms of *human labor* disappears when treated by means of homogeneous quantitative formulae. Herein lies the deepest form of human alienation. Capitalism is a mindless machine that runs by itself and in which men are merely cogs. It is the task of the proletariat, a universal class, according to Marx, to think out the true source of the machine's energy, and by getting at the roots of the matter through a radical revolution, to comprehend the essence of the phenomenon and to equate it to its essence.

## The Historical Nature of the Theory of Surplus-Value

So far we have not dwelt particularly upon the Marxian theory of *surplus-value*, partly because it is well known and so it may suffice simply to call it to mind, and partly because by reserving any mention of it until this point we may be in a position to clarify the *essential historical* character of the Marxian dialectic which so far we have not sufficiently emphasized. Capitalism and the proletariat which it engenders as its destroyer are each categories (whose logical development we have examined), but they are historical categories.

The outlines of the theory of surplus-value are well known. The possession of money, or of the means of production, enables the capitalist to purchase *labor-power*, which should not be confused with *the productive power of labor* and *the social productive capacity*. As we have seen, this labor-power is the only *source* of value. It is the *subject* that is alienated in the entire process. This process of the objectification of the creative subject, as Marx says explicitly, is the key to the system.

The way in which surplus-value is transformed into profit via the rate of profit is but a continued development of the perversion of subject and object taking place in the process of production. We have already seen that all subjective forces of labor in that process appeared as productive forces of capital. On the one hand, the value of past labor, which dominates living labor, is incarnated in the capitalist. On the other hand, the laborer appears as materialized labor-power, as a commodity.<sup>13</sup>

But this mode of alienation obscures the theory of surplus-value. In practice, the capitalist only succeeds in increasing his capital according to the formula " $M-C-M^1$ " ( $M^1 > M$ ) because he has the luck to find in the market "a commodity whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value, whose actual consumption, therefore, is itself an embodiment of labor, and, consequently, a creation of value. The possessor of money does find on the market such a special commodity in capacity for labor or labor-power."<sup>14</sup> In a society which is apparently free, he

obtains this power through an exchange which resembles every other commodity exchange. But what is the standard of this exchange, what is the labor-value of this labor-power? This human labor-power is reproduced and expanded as a product of certain amount of the means of subsistence. Consequently, the *law of wages* determines the price of labor in terms of the subsistence necessary for the maintenance and preservation of labor-power. There is a certain ambiguity here as to whether the quantity and quality of the necessary subsistence is determined once for all, or whether it is a variable function of the historical change in social needs. We should not forget that Marx argued from the condition of a particular proletariat, that he generalized from the case of the English proletariat of the nineteenth century.

This exchange between wages and labor-power has an appearance of *legality*; in fact, it is the locus of the sharpest exploitation of man by man, since this labor-power actually produces more than it costs and the conditions of the exchange inevitably reproduce a state of affairs in which the worker is condemned to work and the capitalist is committed to maintain and increase his domination (the individual worker and capitalist are thus elements of social classes that as a whole can only be opposed).

But if "the capitalist is a shrewd fellow compared to the miser," if he finds a way of getting more for his money than he puts in, it is because certain *historical conditions* have been created and developed to make possible the *sale of labor*; and this labor market is a fact of the same order as the *existence of slavery* in antiquity. Here Marx's *logic* impregnates the *history* which it clarifies. The basic question which Marx raises is: What made possible the English proletariat, the type of all future of proletariats? (*De te fabula narratur.*) Kant had posed the question: How is experience possible? And he answered it by means of the eternal categories. Marx asks: What has made possible the event or historical phenomenon of capitalism and the proletariat? And he replies with a logic which in turn can only be solidary with history, a history already made and a history yet to make. However, from a similar perspective, an absolute transcendence is an impossibility, and today revisions might be made that Marx never conceived.

Marx proceeds from this historical experience, the phenomenon, to the essence of the phenomenon (production):

Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face "No admittance except on business." Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last force the secret of profit making.

This sphere that we are deserting, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each. Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all.

On leaving this sphere of simple circulation or of exchange of commodities, which furnishes the "Free-trader *Vulgaris*" with his views and ideas, and with the standard by which he judges a society based on capital and wages, we think we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our *dramatis personae*. He, who before was the money owner, now strides, in front as capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but—a hiding.<sup>15</sup>

Such a *particular* analysis of the essence of the production of surplus-value in no way conceals the *universal* character of the whole process. In practice, the capitalist class as a whole is united in the *distribution of surplus-value* and the *tendency to a falling rate of profit* which results from the increase in the ratio of constant-capital to variable-capital. It is the capitalist class that becomes conscious of itself as a class under the pressure to defend itself against the proletariat, once the operation of the system becomes historically impossible (the theory of crises and breakdown).

But it is the proletariat, in a condition of extreme alienation produced by the capitalist system, that embodies as a *universal class* the idea of human emancipation and through this *act of consciousness* is able to negate its alienation and create a new history. Thus we return full circle to our starting point in Marx's philosophical studies of alienation and the historical role of the proletariat. Unfortunately, *Capital* ends at this very point where Marx intended a deeper analysis of *social class* as a result of his foregoing study of the capitalist system.

### Capital and the Philosophy of History

In the last part of this essay we intended to show how the structure of *Capital* was rooted in *historical phenomena* (the crises of capitalism, the historical origins of capitalism, the nineteenth-century English proletariat). In the earlier section, however, we drew attention to certain *philosophical presuppositions* of Marxian thought (the theory of man's alienation in history, the will to power expressed in man's drive to expand value, the notion of a universal class necessary to embody and realize the idea of human emancipation). Marx's philosophy of history cannot be understood apart from the Hegelian philosophy which so strongly influenced it. Whereas Hegel's reflections upon history had culminated in completely transcending it, Marx remains within history, seeking to transform it; the result is the ambiguity of a philosophy of history that is simultaneously a historical event and the present necessity, in view of events succeeding *Capital*, of a fresh analysis of Marx's achievement.

There is need for research into all the sources and the entire philosophical background of Marx's work, and for an extremely detailed commentary upon *Capital* followed by an analysis in the light of such a commentary of events that have followed. Our own essay is intended to invite such a serious study. We believe that there is a contemporary need for a reckoning with Marxism and that there is in Marx's intentions and his work a model for a philosophy of history that we must attempt to realize. At all events, it will not be possible to supersede Marxism until there has been a serious examination of the *philosophical presuppositions* and *structure* of the Marxian edifice.

## NOTES

- 1 *The German Ideology*, Parts I and III, edited with an introduction by R. Pascal (New York: International Publishers, 1947), pp. 16–27. [Trans.]
- 2 *Ibid.* [Trans.]
- 3 *Karl Marx, Early Writings*, pp. 158–159. [Trans.]
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 157. [Trans.]
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 43. [Trans.]
- 6 *The Philosophy of History*, p. 457. [Trans.]
- 7 *Karl Marx, Early Writings*, p. 58. [Trans.]
- 8 Karl Marx, *Capital*, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Vol. III (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Co., 1932), pp. 37–38. [Trans.]
- 9 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 149–150. [Trans.]
- 10 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 648–649. Hyppolite's parenthetical remarks. [Trans.]
- 11 *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 745. [Trans.]
- 12 *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 954. [Trans.]
- 13 *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 58. [Trans.]
- 14 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 186. [Trans.]
- 15 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 195–196. [Trans.]



PART

**IV**

THE PROBLEM OF THE  
RELATION BETWEEN  
TRUTH AND EXISTENCE



## 8

# The Human Situation in the Hegelian Phenomenology

## Action and the Rationality of the Act

Haym, one of the principal commentators on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, remarks that: "It is a history distorted by transcendental psychology and a transcendental psychology distorted by history." An uninformed reader might well be puzzled by the nature of its development. He is likely to wonder why self-consciousness emerges against the background of universal life and what particular relation constitutes the foundation of life and self-consciousness. The conjuncture between life and self-consciousness invites questions about the role of the struggle for life and death in which each consciousness seeks the death of the other and risks his own life in the course of forcing others into the same conflict. Have we here an event of human history that must be given a historical location, or a myth for the interpretation of a quasi-permanent relation between self-conscious individuals? Readers interested in Hegel's frequently dramatic presentation, affecting a certain naïveté, occasionally ask what becomes of the master, once the slave becomes master of his master, or what becomes of the slave, once he is in turn master. Hegel's account breaks off at this point and passes on without any clear transition to the Stoic who preserves his liberty "on the throne as when in chains." The images of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are evoked summarily, and the reader over-fond of novels is left languishing for the final outcome of the adventure of master and slave.

The problem of the logical connections between the transitions and the symphonic development of themes in the *Phenomenology*

immediately confronts anyone who attempts to grasp the significance of this work, unique in the whole of philosophical literature. It is a philosophical novel, and, if so, is it still philosophy, or is it a serious philosophical work in which each element is logically tied to the other? Lucien Herr has remarked: "In Hegel the transitions are always guided by sentiment." However, we can hardly accept this judgment, if we are to understand the allegation of sentiment in its usual sense. Lucien Herr was right to insist upon the creative power of the Hegelian dialectic at a time when too many Hegelians interpreted Hegelian philosophy simply as a panlogic. But this is no longer the case, and we must now attempt to understand what were in fact Hegel's intentions. We shall limit our endeavor to a study of the chapter on "Self-Consciousness"—the most profound and significant chapter of the entire *Phenomenology of Mind*—in the hope that we may show that it has nothing to do with either a history or a transcendental psychology, and still less with an analysis of essence. Briefly, Hegel wanted to analyze the very *foundations* of historical action. He inquired into the general conditions of *human existence* that constitute the possibility of the human act as such. As we now understand it, man is always in a specific historical situation that nevertheless presupposes certain general conditions which it is important to distinguish since they are more or less constant for every human situation as such. The question arises as to the nature of the method of abstracting these conditions. We remarked above that the expression, "analysis of essence," will not serve to describe what we have in mind. It would leave the impression that there exists a *human nature* or an essence of man, such as Spinoza and even Hume supposed. But Hegel has no intention of discovering such an essence in which he seems to have no belief and whose conception he criticizes in his early works. For Hegel man is *spirit*, that is to say, history and collective development; the truth to which he may aspire appears in and through that history. The question which Hegel set himself, we believe, is the problem of how to *ground* human history and a possible truth, or *reason*, within the development of history so conceived. To grasp the originality of Hegel's starting point it may suffice to compare him with either his predecessors or successors. Kant, for example, raised a ques-

tion which appears similar to that of Hegel. He asked what were the conditions of human knowledge in so far as it is empirical knowledge. But he confined himself to the problem of knowledge and did not consider, at least in his main work, the question of the historical condition of man seeking knowledge. This is perhaps why he failed to solve his problem. Because reason itself has historical preconditions, the *human act* possibly precedes, *de jure* and *de facto*, the *notion of reason*. It is no accident that, in the development of the *Phenomenology*, *reason* appears in a new chapter, following the one which deals with the *recognition* which one self-consciousness demands from another.

We turn now to one of Hegel's great successors, namely, Marx. Quite rightly, Marx comments that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel occasionally describes "the true features of the human condition." But Marx himself did not understand the necessity of penetrating to the ground of the historical event and of the human act itself. He was so steeped in Hegel—in his doctoral dissertation he had interpreted the relations between the atoms of Democritus and Epicurus in terms of the Hegelian dialectic of self-consciousness—that he neglected to deal with the problem at its very source. The result is that he seems to start from certain *facts* which, however fruitful they may be, are nonetheless merely facts to which others might be opposed. He takes up the class struggle in history as an essential phenomenon; of course, he relates it to the notion of labor, and labor itself to a primary relation between man and nature, but he does not offer any explicit treatment of this basis of his dialectic. Contrary to Kant, Marx offers facts where there was reason. From this there results an ambiguity in his thought which can only be clarified by resorting to the Hegelian *Phenomenology* from which he clearly drew inspiration. Since history pervades the entire realm of thought and human action, one must penetrate to the root of history, and ask, as Hegel did in the *Phenomenology*, what are the conditions of self-consciousness or of the very existence of man. Of course, as is in fact clearly indicated by the term self-consciousness, which only Hegel uses, we are not here concerned with an anthropological analysis in the strict sense. It is not a question of man considered as a biological species, but of the emergence in the very heart of life of a being

who becomes conscious of this life as the condition of his existence and through this rise of consciousness creates almost a new dimension of being, generating a history in which conscious being makes and reveals a rational truth.

### **The Human Situation in Relation to Nature**

"The desert," says Balzac, "is God without man"; Hegel took a similar view of pure nature, while it remains an *in-itself* not having found in man that whereby it may be given a *meaning*. "Nature is a hidden spirit." Universal life, which is the true object, the condition of self-consciousness, does not exist as such in the indefinite multiplicity of living individuals; "it is the *whole* which develops itself, resolves its own development, and in this movement simply preserves itself," yet does not exist as such, as a possible totality, except for (human) self-consciousness which reflects on life. "It is the simple genus, which in the movement of life itself does not exist in this simplicity for itself; but in this result points life towards what is other than itself, namely, towards Consciousness for which life exists as this unity or as genus."<sup>1</sup>

These remarks drawn from Hegel summarize the relations between self-consciousness and life. They show how self-consciousness emerges as the necessary rise of the consciousness of universal life, of "the soul of the world, the universal life-blood, which courses everywhere, and whose flow is neither disturbed nor checked by any obstructing distinction."<sup>2</sup> This Absolute of the romantics, whose inhumanity reminds one of the God of Spinoza, is also the "universal ineradicable substance, the fluent self-identical essential reality"<sup>3</sup> upon which are exerted man's desire and labor, "labor and the patience of the negation," in order to dominate it. Admittedly, this principle of negation is already present in the living forms which succeed each other in cosmic time, or are juxtaposed in space. But this is simply a particular manifestation, a finite modality which within the process of life suppresses itself and dies in giving birth to a new living form. This death is not yet internalized and surpassed; it remains external to the particular creature which it nevertheless animates. This "dying and becoming" is without an echo in that silent nature which waits for its

expression in the "logos of man." But self-consciousness must emerge against the background of this universal life because the latter is already in itself what self-consciousness must become for itself; and this reduplication of the "self same" is here a dialectical necessity which all the preceding chapters of *The Phenomenology of Mind* have prepared. The object which at first confronts consciousness is now determined as being universal life; what self-consciousness finds confronting it as a totality is the life that is its *own* life which it discovers as something at once identical with itself and other than itself. Consciousness observes itself outside of itself in this living universe to which it belongs because it is also "a particular living form," a determinate organic body. In so far as it is self-consciousness of life it is the contradiction of being the universal genus, "which does *not exist* as such in animal life," and a particular, determinate existent. This contradiction lies at the heart of the unhappy consciousness, but its resolution constitutes the reason and truth of human history.

In his early works Hegel had conceived this dualism necessary to consciousness in the form of love; but love is only a "return to the original and sombre innocence." He had completely ignored any philosophy of nature. However, from the Jena period he begins to follow his former student friend, Schelling, and reflects upon organic life and the general dialectic of living creatures. He then comes to understand how self-consciousness of organic life can raise itself above life and, while reflecting it, yet oppose itself to life. This reflection, which is simultaneously an act of negation, or a creative awakening of consciousness that "raises the omnipotence of Non-Being to the level of Being," generates a new dimension of being. Self-consciousness of life becomes something other than life in the course of displaying its truth, by becoming capable of being the *truth* of life. The difficulty is in understanding how self-consciousness of life is able, precisely through this act of reflection, to negate the life of which it is only a reflection, or how it can generate a new form of being while not confining itself to being solely the contemplation of what already exists. To repeat within itself the cosmic process of life which makes it possible, and to create through this repetition a history distinct from this life-history—because spirit is higher than nature since it is the reflection of

it—such is the enigma of the emergence of consciousness as an authentic creation. But this enigma is nothing else than the existence of man, or rather of men. For in repeating the cosmic movement of life Hegel brings to light the conditions of self-consciousness and, within the latter, the mutual relations between one self-consciousness and another in the process of *recognition*. We must follow this essential development from the moment where self-consciousness defines itself as *desire* (of life) through to the moment where it posits itself as the need for a *recognition* that, in creating the element of universality, and consequently of reason, makes possible history, an “Ego that is ‘we,’ a plurality of Egos, and ‘we’ that is a single Ego.”

### **Desire: Spinozism and Hegelianism**

In giving an account of the philosophy of life from which Hegel started it may be useful to employ Spinoza's vocabulary and to follow Hegel in comparing his philosophy of life with that of Spinoza. Universal life is a substance that is considered the infinite source of all particular living beings, each of which is a finite mode, a singular individuality, which emerges from this universal life. Each one expresses substance in a vital process of dying and coming into being. Life works itself out in some way through each and without any of them; it appears as something beyond, an external accident that is alien to their characteristic “positive particular essence.” For its own part, individuality can only persevere in its mode of being; it does not contain within itself the conflict essential to life. Every essence is positive. Proposition V in Book III of the *Ethics* excludes the possibility of conflict within the same individuality. “In so far as one thing is able to destroy another are they of contrary natures, that is to say, they cannot exist in the same subject.” Spinoza, according to Hegel, failed to understand the nature of individuality *in itself* which enables it to express authentically the infinity of substance; he did not conceive negation as something determined by the operation of negativity. His (inhuman) philosophy may very well account for the life of nature (*Deus sive natura*) which never surpasses itself. But it does not hold for human existence which, in so far

as it is consciousness of life, reveals the *for-itself* of this *in-itself*.

We may consider what the individual perceives in the *in-itself* of this nature. Each living agent is alive only through coming into being; at a particular moment, when he arrives on the world scene, he confronts universal life, and in this process of opposition to what is other (Spinoza here makes an unwarranted transition from the standpoint of essence to the opposition of exteriority), he determines himself completely and fulfills himself in the course of negating himself as a particular existent. This negation of the negation is the movement of the *genus*. Thus it appears as death and reproduction in such a way that we see the living succeed each other like waves "in a silent flood." Each particular only realizes the universal in so far as it dies and its death is the correlative of the birth of another particular being which is in turn quite distinct from that which engendered it. But the distinctiveness or separation which characterizes positive being, or nature diffused through space and time, is such that the process of universal life never succeeds in coming to itself but falls short just when it might discover itself. Not even for itself is it "that pure restlessness of the concept," as is the flow of time for self-consciousness. It can only be this for man who becomes conscious of death in order to surpass it. Thus the slave who has known the fear of death, the absolute master, raises himself above the master, who has only known, as master, what it is to risk his physical life. But immediate risk amounts to less than the effort of the slave who, having experienced the fear of death, knows how to free himself from it within his life.

Even at the level of living nature, individuality is always haunted by a latent conflict; it needs to complement itself in another individuality. "The idea of organic individuality is in itself a genus, universality," . . . "Individuality by itself is infinite, it is thus other than itself, appears outside itself in 'its other.'"<sup>4</sup> It exists in the separation of sexes in which each contains the idea of the whole but "in relating to itself as to an other, recognizes its being-other as itself and consequently suppresses this opposition." But the suppression of this diremption at the level of animal life does not result in the explicit emergence of the *Idea* as such, but only in another individuality which in turn repeats this process.

Nevertheless, in itself "the individual is the Idea, and it exists only as Idea. Therefore there exists within the individual the contradiction between being the Idea and being other than the Idea." This is why the individual is the "absolute impulse," rather than merely the tendency of being to remain in a given state, and it is this in virtue of an internal contradiction. The Spinozan philosophy of nature is displaced by a dialectical philosophy in which the dialectic is only for itself in the case of man, for "organic nature has no history."<sup>5</sup>

It was seen that in nature the cycle of the Idea is only closed through a repetition of the same process. The child is indeed the quest for unity, but he in turn is a particular existent "who deprives those who are opposed of their essence from becoming Idea." The growth of children is the death of parents. "The savages in North America kill their parents and we do the same." However, even at the animal level there is a moment which foreshadows consciousness, namely, *in sickness*. In sickness the organism is divided against itself internally. Life which becomes lodged in a particular being is in conflict with life in general. This conflict between the moment of particularity in relation to universal life constitutes, as in a sick organism, the positivity and destiny of history. Hegel had studied this schism within man and human history in his early works. By perceiving in organic illness a prefiguration of the consciousness which is always internally divided within itself, and is an unhappy consciousness in so far as it is the consciousness of "the positivity of life as the unhappiness of life," Hegel alters the meaning of his comparison. Human self-consciousness is able to triumph just where the organism fails. It is quite true that "the sickness of the animal is the origin of spirit" and that there is some truth, though not the whole truth, in Nietzsche's theme of *man the sick animal*.<sup>6</sup> But man is essentially the being who can transgress the limit by internalizing it and who can bestow a spiritual meaning upon death by means of his entire history, thus making something positive out of a negative. "It is life which bears death and preserves itself through death that is the life of the spirit." Again, the master who risks his life, but without a thought for death, because he never for a moment flinches before it, does not bring himself to the level of

the slave who has "trembled to the very roots of his being." If he were not to rise above this anxiety over death, the slave would indeed be merely a sick animal, having really internalized a sickness. But by transcending it, once he has recognized it, he opens up new perspectives and makes the life of spirit a *creative* life which continually surpasses its destiny.

We have dwelt at some length on Hegel's account of universal life because it seemed necessary for an understanding of man's situation at the center of this life. It is a description of the significance that life has for us, although this significance is profoundly hidden from individuals by themselves. It is (human) self-consciousness to which organic life must refer for clarification.

In *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel presents self-consciousness as generalized *desire*. As such it is simply the tautology, "I am I," or the movement which produces this unity, and which must reproduce for itself the process we have discovered in universal life. In Hegel's language, self-consciousness is *mediation*, and it is this which expresses the relation between desire and its object. The latter is at first the world around it, just as the world of the particular living creature is its "*Umwelt*." In the next state, it is life itself, envisaged as a totality, and desire is directed essentially "towards life itself." To desire and to desire life are *at first* one and the same thing; except that life then appears as something *external* to the self and alien to it. The life of the self becomes an object to it, spread before it in the external world. Desire, or the absolute impulse that we recognized in the life of an individuality, can only be for itself by discovering itself in an external world.

Hegel's analysis of this phenomenon is much too brief to allow us to extrapolate its sense so far as to see in it a phenomenological description comparable to what it is usual to find in modern philosophers. Strictly speaking, there is no object which is simply an object, nor any subject that is only a subject, one without and the other within. My internal life does not exist as such; rather it exists through my exchange with the world, or in my projects which alone confer a meaning upon what is outside. Hegel returns to this point in connection with the nature of human individuality, of its own body, the world which is its world and is such that one cannot be understood apart from the other.

"Probably the chief gain from phenomenology<sup>8</sup> is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world or of rationality."

In relating to this world, desire must rediscover itself, but it is unable to recognize itself without passing through the mediation of this world. Thus the self appears to itself as an immediate datum of the external world, even at the bare level of life. Similarly, my organic life forms the object of the self's desire, and through the resistance which it offers or opposes to its negation the self learns the meaning of its independence. However, self-consciousness must find its satisfaction and fulfill itself in this diremption. But it can only achieve this if it appears in the form of an *other* Self, another living self-consciousness. "Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness."<sup>9</sup> The existence of the Other is an ontological condition of my own existence.

Just as the life of an individuality can only be fulfilled by finding itself in another individuality, so the desire that constitutes the self can only exist if it is for itself an *object* of another desire. Thus the desire of life becomes the desire of another desire, or rather, in view of the necessary reciprocity of the phenomenon, human desire is always *desire of the desire of another*. Thus, in human love, desire appears to the self as the desire of the desire of another. The self needs to be beheld by the Other. For the self is essentially desire. Thus what the self expects to find in the Other is desire of its desire. It is only the animal that satiates itself in abstract negation or an indulgence that is a kind of death. But the self's desire must perpetuate itself and this it can only accomplish if its object is also desire, a desire at once identical with its own desire and alien to it. Thus the self appears in the Other and the Other appears as the self. Each exists only through this reciprocal recognition: "they recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another."<sup>10</sup>

However, the recognition which appears to be immediately forthcoming in love is open to the danger of foundering again upon the lifeless in-itself. This is why Hegel gives a somewhat different account of the process of mutual recognition between one self-consciousness and another. In order to exist, each self-consciousness must be recognized by another; consequently each

demands from the other the recognition without which it could not exist, except perhaps as a living thing, but not as consciousness of universal life, or absolute desire. The consequence is the familiar struggle for life and death, a struggle for prestige in which man confronts man to gain recognition as a man. For without this recognition in successful struggle each would be unable to "prove themselves and each other."

But the consequences of this strife are deceiving and lead to an impasse. The truth which should result from it disappears into pure nature with the death of the combatants. The moment of nature is always present, forever intimately interwoven with the reciprocity between one self-consciousness and another; it is the source of their diremption and it remains essential. The role of this moment of nature is even more evident in the unilateral recognition of the master by the slave. The slave is only truly a slave of universal life from which he has recoiled through the fear of death. But through the fundamental process of labor he becomes capable of subjugating this "indestructible substance" more effectively than was ever possible for the master. We shall see later how labor in general, together with the effective recognition of work by the other, is able to lead human existence to its truth. For the moment, it is important to notice that Hegel poses this struggle to the death and the phenomenon of labor and unilateral recognition, not as the basic facts of history, but as the very conditions of self-consciousness; they *ground* history while making it possible. Similarly, the Stoic's abstract recognition that makes it possible to transcend slavery, although already contained in the pure reciprocity of self-consciousness, is nevertheless insufficient, for it results in a merely abstract freedom, a formal equality of the very kind that Marx later denounces in the fiction of equality of rights which suppresses slavery but countenances the proletariat.

All the conditions of human existence or, as Hegel puts it, of self-consciousness of life, are contained in the need of desire for recognition in another desire, or in *intersubjectivity* which is the sole means by which consciousness of life may become something other than a reflection of this life. It is through this necessary intersubjectivity and the relation with nature or universal life

that Humanity and History, or, in Hegel's terminology, Spirit, are founded; "What consciousness has further to become aware of, is the experience of what mind is—this absolute substance, which is the unity of the different self-related and self-existent self-consciousnesses in the perfect freedom and independence of their opposition as component elements of that substance: Ego that is 'we,' a plurality of Egos, and 'we' that is a single Ego."<sup>11</sup>

## Truth and Existence

What Hegel calls Necessity is a necessity of meaning which progressively unfolds itself; "it is hidden in the events that happen and only appears in the end." Thus universal life refers back to consciousness of life, for only the latter is capable of clarifying the blind necessity in which it is grounded. Similarly, self-consciousness of life repeats the movement of living creatures. But here *meaning* already exists as such in the interweaving of desires which are expressed by the mediating action of *recognition* which grounds the *universality* of self-consciousness. This universality is essential to the *absolute impulse* and must be realized through the mediating progression of the spirit. Perhaps it is possible to see a way of getting the better of Lucien Herr's comment that "the transition is always guided by sentiment" without, however, falling into the errors of a panlogical interpretation, by avoiding altogether the use of the term deduction which is ill suited because the dialectic has both creative and descriptive features and is at the same time conceptual (in Hegel's sense of the term). It is the *Concept* itself which becomes explicit through the three essential moments which are at the root of human history, namely, self-consciousness, the *other* self-consciousness, and universal life, or nature as an independent subsistence. For the rest, Hegel was perfectly clear about the concrete character of this necessity; he does not contrast it to description or to the *a posteriori*: "It is the concept which alienates itself and is the development of *necessity as a datum of intuition*, yet at the same time, through this necessary intuition, it is self-subsistent and knows it conceptually." To find its counterpart, we should have to approach the Hegelian

concept of necessity in terms of the contemporary method of intentional analysis.

Perhaps we should have given more attention to the role played by "the subsistence of nature" in the process of recognition. Without it the struggle between self-consciousnesses would result in their pure and simple dissolution. Death and Pleasure are uniquely "states of dissolution," for they lack an *objective* aspect or *subsistence*. "Labor, on the other hand, is desire *restrained and checked*, evanescence delayed and postponed; in other words, labor shapes and fashions the thing. The negative relation to the object passes into the *form* of the object, into something that is permanent and remains; because it is just for the laborer that the object has independence."<sup>12</sup> This quotation contains the essence of what we wish to demonstrate. If we add that *thought* is in turn defined by Hegel as the labor which extracts the form of nature, and is as such the truth of labor which reveals that "by the fact that the form is objectified, it does not become something other than the consciousness moulding the thing through work, for just that form is his pure self-existence, which therein becomes truly realized,"<sup>13</sup> we may begin to understand how a rationality or a truth may be generated at this level by the dialectic. What we are dealing with here are the very conditions of *reason*, provided that it is true that the necessity of its *emergence* is identical with its *content*. Thus reason is itself grounded as a human event, and so, too, *spirit*, which is the history of that event.

Labor has a double function. First of all, labor humanizes nature, giving it the form of self-consciousness. It manifests externally what it is in itself, appearing thus as a *work*, a human Object (*die Sache selbst*) and no longer a mere thing (*Ding*) as it was at the level of perception. Nature ceases to be a power over which man has no control and before which he trembles (God without man). *In-itself*, in its cosmic significance, nature was already self-consciousness; it now becomes such *for-itself*. Man discovers himself through this labor and is reconciled to nature. The slave does not yet understand that he liberates himself through labor no less than the warrior who transcends life by risking it. The slave does not realize it, but the Stoic achieves this on his be-

half. He understands the freedom of man and this first truth will come to light when all men are free and recognized in themselves and for themselves in an immediate truth that was once merely formal.

Secondly, labor conveys a real coherence and universality upon human existence. This second feature is no less important than the first because it alone authenticates, although the slave is still ignorant of it, that necessary recognition or universality which the slave appeared to have forsaken when he recognized the master without demanding recognition for himself. But recognition from someone whom one does not oneself recognize, or to recognize without recognition in turn, are both false mediations which reverse themselves. It thus becomes necessary for work to be recognized for itself. It is in work—independent and nevertheless a reflection of being-for-itself—that self-consciousness becomes recognizable by others. Furthermore, it must be recognized in practice and this is the source of a new struggle between men. It is not any longer the struggle to the death which initiated the first movement of recognition, but it is still a conflict, because work has no meaning except as *collective work*. Ultimately, it is the entire *human species* in the full range of its internal conflict and unity which must find expression and *make itself* in this work which, consequently, is no longer a particular task but anticipates the fullness of its significance.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel returns to the theme of human work as the activity of each and all and the foundation of history to the extent that it is at all open to rational interpretation. In this connection it is essential to read the important chapter on the "Thing"<sup>14</sup> (*die Sache selbst*) which is the foundation of the general conditions of human history and of a *living truth* which finds expression or, should we say, creates itself in the course of that history.<sup>15</sup> Of course, the particular effort, inasmuch as it is particular, disappears, but what does not disappear, but is finally acknowledged, is the *disappearance of the disappearance*, which is nothing else than "the Object itself." It is simultaneously the product of each and of all. It is both for-the-others, in so far as it is objectified, and for-the-self, as its *alienated* meaning but nevertheless its *own* meaning. At this level a *meaning* of human history

becomes a possibility, as a kind of *true value*; this meaning appears to be at once the projection of the nature of human self-consciousness and something open to rationalization and justification through mutual recognition at the level of created being. We shall understand that the Hegelian problem, which is our own, concerns *the relation between Truth and Existence* if we add the observation that the human object from which *The Phenomenology of Mind* develops as a history *senso strictu* is what Hegel calls the Truth, "the essential spiritual substance . . . in which the certainty consciousness has regarding itself is a 'fact'—a real object before consciousness, an object born of self-consciousness as its *own*, without ceasing to be a free independent object in the proper sense";<sup>16</sup> for the truth of the *universal predicate* becomes the *subject*, the living truth which creates itself and is its own guarantee. We may ask how a truth can be the work of men, raised at the very heart of existence through the mediation of existence which it simultaneously transcends: *the humanity-god* simultaneously vindicated by the *God-man*. Hegel does not resolve this problem in a clear fashion; but is that possible? It is the same problem that today faces existentialism, Marxism, and Christianity. At all events, the merit of the *Phenomenology* is to have raised the *foundations* of the *human task* and its possible *rationality*, to have offered a means of access to these foundations at a time when the classical dogma of eternal truth and the notion of transcendental consciousness were tottering under the events of history.

## NOTES

1 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 224.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 208. [Trans.]

3 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

4 *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, Vol. I, 1803–1804, p. 130.

5 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 326.

6 F. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Horace B. Samuels (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1964), p. 155. [Trans.]

- 7 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 219. [Trans.]
- 8 Namely, that of Husserl and Heidegger; cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by C. Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), Preface, p. xix.
- 9 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 226. [Trans.]
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 231.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 227.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 238. Hyppolite's italics.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 239. [Trans.]
- 14 "Perception, Thing, and Deceptiveness," *ibid.*, pp. 161-178. [Trans.]
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 430.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 431.

# 9

## On the *Logic* of Hegel

### The General Conception of the Logic

“What I call art,” writes André Malraux, “is the expression of hitherto unknown yet evident relationships between creatures or between creatures and objects.” Everything transpires as though there were an immediate lived-experience that must be given expression, an expression which would be a discovery both in the sense of a revelation and an invention. The most general form of expression, which alone deserves the description since all others refer to it in some way, is human language, which might be called the logos of lived-experience or the logos of Being, its universal revelation. To express Being would seem to be the proper enterprise of man. It is the true significance of the consciousness which in this manner becomes a universal self-consciousness of Being, or logos of Being, and constitutes the very essence of the Hegelian *Logic*. In the strict sense of the term, the *Logic* is a rigorous poetic of Being which unfolds through the agency and mediation of man. It is the manifestation of a universal self-consciousness in the singular consciousness of the philosopher. It is the Idea which is manifest in human judgment and is not simply its arbitrary or subjective creation.

A description of philosophy conceived as a logic in the sense above seems paradoxical and immediately invites a variety of objections. Indeed, Hegel was so conscious of the paradox of the concept of Absolute Knowledge, in which Being is immediately reflected and in which thought is immediately Being, that he found it necessary to write a weighty introduction to his *Logic*, namely,

*The Phenomenology of Mind*. The latter answers to the conviction of consciousness as thought that "being is other than itself," and that its subjective certainty is distinct from the objective truth to which it aspires.

It is not easy to abandon the representation of experience as a *milieu* through which truth is offered to us or as an *instrument* by means of which we grasp truth.<sup>1</sup> But the instrument and milieu alike separate us permanently from the Absolute or from the Being that we wish to reflect upon. The result produced by this conception is inevitably and ineradicable skepticism, or a critical philosophy which distinguishes on the one hand an objective truth relative to human understanding and on the other an absolute, inaccessible in-itself which can only be the object of faith, or a radical transcendentalism. Hegelian philosophy rejects any notion of transcendence; it is a rigorous philosophical attempt to remain on the ground of immanence and not leave it. There is no question of another world; there is no thing-in-itself, no transcendence. And yet finite human thought is not trapped in its own finitude; it surpasses itself and what it reveals or manifests is Being itself. Thus it is not a case of man expressing Being more or less adequately; it is Being itself which finds expression and testament in man. Philosophy, as Absolute Knowledge, is this very expression, and the philosophy of philosophy is simply the consciousness of the function of philosophy to express Being.

In *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel starts from the conception of naïve consciousness which from the beginning draws a distinction between the subjective and the objective, certainty and truth, but against the background of a primordial unity. This distinction presupposes an original identity, a neutral experience, which is neither that of a subject nor that of an object. But consciousness develops only to the extent that it introduces such a distinction and reflects upon lived-experience through the schema of subject-object, certainty-truth. The *Phenomenology* is the description of the itinerary of finite or human consciousness in the course of transcending the distinction from which it arises and which is the source of its development and, as it were, its *modus operandi*. As a finite and singular consciousness I experience Being, I see it, I posit it as truth to be attained, and I seek to

know it, that is to say, to give an exact formulation of what is given to me in immediacy. But this determination implies meaning or the foundation of some such congruency.

What can be the nature of the relationship between the Concept which is the logos of Being and Being as it is experienced by the ego? Subjective certainty and objective truth are mutual opposites in so far as one is the Concept (inseparable from language) and the other the Object. Or rather, as Hegel observes, it makes no difference to call either one Concept or Object. For it is a question of the one providing the measure of the other, a phenomenon which constitutes the foundation of all human experience in so far as it develops through ups and downs in the course of which what was at first posited as an Absolute independent of the ego eventually appears relative and provisional. This distinction always reproduces itself at the very moment where consciousness transcends itself through reunion with its point of origin in the discovery (a historical discovery, the revelation of Absolute Knowledge itself) that the object is itself a concept and the concept an object, or that Being itself is Meaning as Meaning is Being. It is in the moment where humanity achieves consciousness that the Hegelian *Logic* becomes possible and the distinction between certainty and truth, subject and object, is validated against the background of a more profound unity, namely, that of a thoroughly naïve knowledge, which presupposes a primary identity, and most profound Absolute Knowledge which, as the transcendence of distinctions, reunites with and validates the original starting-point.

Being enters thought and finds expression, which is to say that it is thought and expressed through man who is its interpreter, although man is unaware of himself as the interpreter of Being until he has transcended in the course of his history (a practical history) the stages in the *alienation* of consciousness. Indeed, finite consciousness posits (this is the meaning of the *Phenomenology*) an absolute truth which transcends it, as it also posits the interpretation of Being, prior to Being itself, as a divine understanding from which human understanding can only be a fall. Consequently, *certainty* is always somewhere below the level of *truth*, which is at a level beyond, and in order to ground

certainty, truth is necessarily also a concept, *logos*, but a divine, transcendent *logos* which as such always escapes when one is about to seize it. Finite consciousness which believes that it can grasp truth through its lived-experience always sees it recede, or withdraw into itself into a truth for-itself but not for consciousness. It is thus fundamentally an *unhappy consciousness* which projects onto a transcendental and always distant God the fundamental identity of certainty and truth, of the Concept and Being.

*The Phenomenology of Mind*, which, as its title indicates, considers only the phenomenal aspect of consciousness, describes the historical transcendence of the unhappy consciousness. Man has come to the knowledge that the distant and transcendental God is effectively dead. There is a history of the mind in the sense that human consciousness overcomes its alienation and comprehends the significance of that separation which results in the confrontation of consciousness with immediate Being which it must reveal and express. At the beginning, as at the end of this history, one still finds in the immediate the *identity of Being and Meaning*. Naïve consciousness is itself the Being from which it begins by distinguishing itself in order to express Being. Universal self-consciousness, Absolute Knowledge, is the very Being which achieves expression and is endowed with meaning, because the knowledge which appears in consciousness as the duality of subject-object appears in Being itself as an immanent knowledge of Being itself, of Being which becomes appearance and takes on Meaning and becomes intelligible to itself as it makes itself. That is why *The Phenomenology of Mind* and Hegel's *Logic* are each the whole of philosophy, but from two different aspects.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel traces human experience in so far as that experience develops by means of its own relativity and, as it were, in the dimension of subjectivity. There is an immediacy, a primary original identity which separates because "in the distinction that it implies [it] is the certainty of what is immediate or is sense-consciousness—the beginning from which we started."<sup>2</sup> But it is the achievement of the consciousness of this identity through the reflexive differentiation of experience that constitutes the goal of the *Phenomenology*. Thus what sense-awareness could only envisage is now achieved. The immense richness which is

given in immediacy is now revealed and given expression; those relationships or essences of experience, unknown yet evident, are now discovered and have become *appearances* in the development of human experience. But they have appeared in the mode of subjectivity, as moments of particularity, without anyone grasping their relationship to the totality of Being. They have appeared in a phenomenology, that is to say, as phenomena more or less torn out of Being. Undoubtedly, they were at first taken as absolutes by the consciousness that discovered them, but it afterwards relativized and transcended them and failed to see the truth which inhabited them. It ignored the truth in them both because the peculiar character of phenomenological analysis—which is comparable to a kind of critical philosophy—is precisely the distinction between the in-itself and the for-us, between an absolute objective and a subjective, and because this distinction necessarily relativizes all experience. But at the same time that these relationships reveal themselves, human consciousness is in the process of transcending the latter distinction, which ultimately becomes a distinction between a transcendental God and a finite consciousness eternally subordinate to Him. Consciousness discovers that the transcendent is nothing else than the original unity, or primary immediacy. Thus it rethinks this primacy immediacy, as it were, to the second power which through consciousness then becomes Absolute Knowledge, the postulated identity of certainty and truth, of the Concept and Being. The entire process has the form of a cycle—a cycle that is essential to the Hegelian system inasmuch as it is a philosophy of integral immanence—in which, once the goal of Absolute Knowledge is achieved, it validates the point of departure independently of the mediations of critical reflection. The latter, however, far from being superfluous, is in fact essential because it reveals that the immediacy which was only *envisaged*, or proposed for knowledge, is implicitly knowledge, self-interpretation, and mediation. Henceforth, Absolute Knowledge is no longer *the knowledge of consciousness*, but *the knowledge of immediacy itself*, its internal interpretation, and its mediation through human thought (the Being which is knowledge of itself).<sup>3</sup> Meaning is no longer subjective meaning opposed to objective Being, but the very meaning of Being. If it is possible any more to speak

of subjectivity, it must be to refer to a subjectivity which is Being itself, or what Hegel has in mind when he says that the whole of his philosophy "depends on grasping and expressing the ultimate truth not as Substance but as Subject as well."<sup>4</sup>

Hegel's presentation is extremely rigorous and difficult and it might be well to express its intention in a more simple statement. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel presents both a revelation (which through expression is also a creative discovery) of what today we call *essences*, in the Husserlian sense, and an itinerary for man whereby he may transcend the relativity of human knowledge which derives either from an ineffable substance or from a transcendental God. In the *Phenomenology*, we have a study in the unveiling of these essences which has been the aim of artists and philosophers. But these interpretations are distinguished from Being itself and remain human, or more or less evident or subjective interpretations that are not grounded ontologically and claim no intrinsic necessity. The result of a phenomenology that refuses to become Absolute Knowledge after the logic of Hegel is something like a philosophy of culture which, indeed, constructs an inventory of the whole wealth of experience and its modes of expression, but does not go beyond humanism or man's interpretation of Being.

In such an endeavor, the phantom of the thing-in-itself never fails to arise and to send humanism back to a faith beyond all knowledge. In an important essay from the Jena period on "Faith and Knowledge,"<sup>5</sup> Hegel in fact argues that Humanism and Faith depend upon an inaccessible transcendence. Now contemporary philosophy is most often to be found oscillating between these two poles always trying to come to rest at one or the other. All the same, it remains a philosophy of consciousness, but one which develops much further the task undertaken by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*. Contemporary phenomenology aims at the description, by abstraction from the lived-experience of a particular consciousness, of the structural essences of all human experience which, in so far as they are given expression and enter the domain of logos, translate the Singular into the Universal. However, the translation of the lived-singular into the universal must be in accordance with its own possibility, just as the essences must be

shown to be truly the essential structures of Being; otherwise they are open to the dangers of absolute subjectivity. That is why a phenomenological philosophy culminates in the renunciation of philosophy as such—as a strict science—and becomes, if you will, an anthropology or humanism, but not strictly philosophy. Perhaps one should speak of the descent of philosophy into literature, provided one notes also that literature itself rises to the search for those unknown yet evident relationships and aspires to become philosophy, though it can never achieve that. The philosophy of consciousness inevitably ends in this subjectivization, even when it professes a concept of the transcendental ego. Its fate is expressed in the following comment from a contemporary philosopher: "Its development is material or within singular essences and its impulse comes from the necessity to transcend each one of them. It is not a philosophy of consciousness but only a philosophy of the concept which can yield a theory of knowledge. Creative necessity does not lie in the necessity of action but in a dialectical necessity."

It is clear that the Hegelian *Phenomenology* is not intended to remain at the level of phenomenology, but to go beyond it and to arrive at an ideal genesis of the essences hidden in experience—and at times in the contingency of history—in order to demonstrate that these essences are related through a dialectical necessity grounded in the absolute identity of thought and Being which reveals itself as open to thought and understanding. The logos of Being is Being reflecting upon itself. In turn, Absolute Knowledge, or logic ontologized, is realized through its validation of the phenomenology. It proves, in effect, that the Absolute is Subject, reflects upon itself and is self-intelligible, and that in its highest manifestation its significance is evident in human consciousness. It is most important not to lose sight of the correspondence between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*. They are the same essences which, in the former, are revealed through human experience (and there is nothing that is not part of human experience) and, in the latter, are manifest in the thought of Being itself as a universal self-consciousness which expresses the absolute meaning of Being and is simultaneously its revelation. "Conversely, again, there corresponds to every abstract moment of Absolute Knowl-

edge a mode in which mind as a whole makes its appearance. As the mind that actually exists is not richer than it [Absolute Knowledge], so, too, mind in its actual content is not poorer."<sup>6</sup> Thus the Hegelian *Logic* constructs the dialectic of those essences revealed in experience and, as Being reflecting upon itself independently of human consciousness, provides their validation. It is not man who creates philosophy; philosophy creates itself through man and the philosophy of philosophy is founded upon the consciousness of a corresponding ideal genesis, the attempt to ground metaphysics as a logic of philosophy.

### **The General Schema of the Logic**

Hegel's *Logic*, as Benedetto Croce has expressed it, is a logic of philosophy. For Hegel thought is never formal. It is always thought of Being, thought of the "thing itself." There is, therefore, no question of formulating the general laws of analytic thought, apart from all content or meaning. On the contrary, the concept, judgment, and reason are considered in relation to the development of meaning and not as tools of logic. The guiding notion is the concept of form in which meaning is constituted by the content of thought, namely, the Absolute. Hegel's *Logic*, as the logic of philosophy, is the expression of absolute Being in so far as it is open to expression and given voice in the variety of philosophies that have arisen in human history. Each of the philosophies of the past has expressed the Absolute from a certain standpoint, just as the Leibnitzian monad expresses the entire universe from its point of view. In a work from his Jena period Hegel wrote, concerning the great philosophical systems, that "Every philosophy is perfect in itself and, like an authentic work of art, contains within itself a totality."<sup>7</sup> In each philosophical system the Absolute is thought and finds its expression. The comparison with a work of art reflects Schelling's influence in the Jena period. But in his lectures on aesthetics Hegel shows equally how poetry—in its most general sense—borders upon philosophy in so far as it employs a language which constitutes the existence of universal self-consciousness because it permits the translation of the limits and particularity of singular experience onto the plane of the

universal. It is language which creates the individuation of the Universal, or the manifestation of the existential unity of the Singular and the Universal. Language announces simultaneously the object of which one is speaking and the subject who speaks; language is the voice that "the moment it speaks, recognizes itself as no longer a voice without a self."

Hegel's *Logic* develops Kant's discovery in the Transcendental Logic of the identity of the conditions of the objects of experience with the very conditions of the knowledge of experience. Kant, however, refused to turn the Transcendental Logic into a logic of philosophy and left the phantom of the thing-in-itself floating beyond possible experience. But Hegel pushes to the limit Kant's conception of the identity of nature and the thought of nature, and seizes upon the categories not just as schematized concepts of phenomena but as expressions of the Absolute. There is nothing beyond the categories through which the Absolute is expressed as at once an object and the thought of the object. Each category is a *particular moment of that primary identity* and is enriched and developed in a particular philosophical system, although its refutation is the result of its inadequacy due to the particularity or partiality of its standpoint. However, it is this very partiality which makes possible history in the strict sense.<sup>8</sup> Each category is the Whole, or the Absolute, and though it is a particular and inadequate expression, it is nevertheless a necessary expression, considered as a stage in a developmental process.

There is thus a certain correspondence between the *actual genesis* of the history of philosophy and the *ideal genesis* of the categories in Hegel's *Logic*. But the parallel is not a perfect one. For history is subject to temporal vicissitudes and particular situations. As long as there is meaning which has not found expression—or is alienated—there will be, indeed, perhaps there must be, misunderstanding. The Hegelian attempt to locate the categories in a rearrangement that would demonstrate their internal pattern suggests a comparison with the mathematician who might struggle to rethink systematically the various concepts of mathematics that have appeared in history. But the comparison falters because the mathematician can abstract from the existential relationships behind his concepts. By contrast, the logic of philoso-

phy, though not restricted to an actual genesis, which is the condition of the *appearance* in human experience of the categories of the Absolute, must present an ideal genesis and explicate the dialectic which binds the categories one to another due to their mutual inadequacies and the necessity of transcendence which is the internal dynamic of their development. As a logic of philosophy, Hegel's *Logic* presupposes all the systems of philosophy to which he makes continual reference in the comments appended to the *Logic*.<sup>9</sup> But at the same time the *Logic* attempts to substitute in place of the actual history of these systems an ideal genesis which would reveal the connection between all the categories. The latter are no longer seen as historical moments but as moments of the logos, of a reflection of Being at once intuitive, since it is always the thought of an immediate totality which includes Being and itself, and discursive, since it presents in mediated thought the latter totality in each of its aspects, stopping at each one, appearing to dwell upon and to enrich it as though it were the only aspect, finally to discover its inadequacy and the necessity of transcending it. "In reality there exists no essential hard and fast distinction drawn between what appears to be the concepts and the development that pervades them."

Everything happens as though the one and only category, the Absolute, were assuming specific forms and developing itself to the point where it has exhausted its riches, while remaining externally the same category, the same absolute reflection of Being which develops and forms itself to the point where it can validate its own point of origin. This thought is necessarily cyclical. It furnishes its own proof through its own development and in turn this proof, or dialectic, far from being an instrument employed externally upon Being, is in fact an internal development which integrates Being. The proof or dialectic is not external to its object, the Absolute; it is its own movement. Nor is it the instrument of a knowledge alien to its object. It is the Absolute itself which posits itself in this manner. Indeed, it is Absolute precisely on account of this mode of positing itself, that is to say, becoming only in the end what it pretends to be in the beginning. The Absolute exists only through positing itself. "Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result."<sup>10</sup> Thus we may under-

stand the development of Hegel's *Logic*, as starting from Being and progressing toward the Concept, or Meaning, while in this very movement positing Meaning as Being, in order to return to its starting point and there perhaps to initiate a new cycle. Indeed, the cyclical form of the *Logic* is expressed in the phrase: "*Being is Meaning and Meaning is Being*." The starting point is immediacy, or Being-in-itself which pretends to be an absolute origin, and which, in so far as it develops, assumes its proper expression as Meaning. But in turn Meaning becomes Being, reverts to immediacy, and is absorbed as the past of what was a future. It is remarkable to note how in his early works, where he uses the ideas of positivity and destiny, Hegel had given a concrete expression to what in the *Logic* he would formulate with such universality. The absolute Idea with which the *Logic* terminates, the identity of Being and Meaning, leads back to an original immediacy, but in this restored form this immediacy presents itself as nature. Nature is the Absolute Idea as it exists in immediacy, such that there is an *unmediated* identity between Nature and the Logos, a *posited* identity which, once it has become for-itself, is mind, in which nature again reflects upon itself as logos.

Let us consider further that *identity of Meaning and Being*, the demonstration of which is the substance of the *Logic*. The moment which mediates the categories of Being and the Concept or Meaning is the moment of Essence. The understanding of Hegel's *Logic* lies in the unfolding of the categories in respect of these fundamental aspects: the logic of Being or Immediacy, the logic of Essence or Reflection, the logic of the Concept or Meaning. The first is the eternal present of Being; the second is the eternal past of Being: "*Wesen ist was gewesen ist*."<sup>11</sup> The third is the eternal future of Being which continuously becomes present, so that temporality is the very eternity of the Concept, or the Meaning which is the subjectivity of Being and which confounds itself with and loses itself in Being. Being, and the same is true of Nature, is a lost meaning yet a meaning that exists only as Being. It is not an ought-to-be, a *sollen* which would be the expression of a false infinity of the future, just as the idea of an origin, of an absolute immediacy, is the expression of a false infinity of the past. The significance of the Absolute as Subject lies in its being the con-

crete identity of immediacy and mediation, of intuition and discursive reason. Mediation is not to be understood as an intermediary but as a concrete totality. In the *Phenomenology*, when speaking of the Christian religion, Hegel enunciates the eternal return of Meaning to Being as the law of their reciprocity. Christianity is always tempted to return to an absolute origin, to rediscover the authentic message of the man-god, and the various schools and churches have sought purification in the return to this absolute: "This reversion to the primitive is based on the instinct to get at the concept, the ultimate principle; but it confuses the origin, in the sense of the immediate existence of the first historical appearance, with the simplicity of the concept."<sup>12</sup> This confusion is a constant one, for the search for an origin, or the quest of immediacy, always haunts our mind. But the opposite is equally true, that we are haunted by a meaning which can only be a distant future and which stands in radical opposition to the immediacy of Being. Between the two options, the thought which separates appearance, or existence, from essence, or the conditions of the intelligibility of existence, results in the conception of two worlds, one of which is the reason for the other. The consciousness which can represent to itself immediacy raises this essential mediation to the Absolute in a form which is appropriate to it by using the categories of Space and Time to represent the mediation itself in the mode of the immediate: "The conditions 'past' and 'distance' are, however, merely the imperfect form in which the immediateness gets mediated or made universal."<sup>13</sup>

Thus the logos of Being expresses primarily the immediacy of Being through the development of the categories for the description of immediacy which are then presupposed in any description of Sense-awareness. Mediation is, of course, necessary but as a Protean capacity for assuming different forms. Although thought is always the total and integral thought of Being, an intuitive thought, it nevertheless abstracts from its own wealth and development and posits itself originally as Being and Non-Being, or as the permanent oscillation from the one to the other, an *oscillation* which internalizes contradiction. Being is Non-Being since it comes into being; it is a continual nihilation and yet it always is, since

it never ceases to come into being. Concrete thought is the disequilibrium of mediation which proceeds from one term to the other, unable ever to think them through in terms of each other. The categories of Quality and Quantity express the immediacy of Being and its disequilibrium. With the appearance of one category, the other disappears and the movement of mediation is precisely this conjunction and disjunction of categories which deny each other and yet necessitate each other. Contradiction is present in immediacy in the most critical form. In connection with these categories, it is well known how Hegel returns to some of the classics of the history of philosophy, Parmenides and Heraclitus, as well as the Atomists. By means of the category of Measure, the concrete unity of qualitative and quantitative being, Hegel sought to express the most profound notion of Greek thought which was the instrument for the transition to the categories of Essence, as in Plato.

The categories of Essence manifest not only the *immediate* opposition between Being and Non-Being, but also the *reflection* of Being which has internalized Non-Being. In this case mediation is no longer an immediate process but is reflection from one term to another. Very briefly, one might say that the contradiction involved here is the opposition between intelligible essence and appearance. Being no longer passes over into Non-Being; instead, it appears (not only to consciousness, the Latin word *videtur* has the double sense of "to be seen" and "to seem"), but to itself. Being reduplicates itself in such a way that appearance is just as necessary to essence as essence is to appearance, and these two realms simultaneously demand and contradict one another, each reflecting the other. The postulation of this distinction is the logical foundation of the datum of history. Philosophers such as Spinoza and Leibnitz have attempted to get at the very roots of the intelligibility of Being, but it is a question of the identity of intelligibility with appearances, of substance with its modes.

Just as in the *Phenomenology*, man alienates his own self-consciousness and makes out of it a God through whom he explains himself, so Being alienates itself from itself (reflects upon itself) and posits the Absolute beyond the appearance or Phe-

nomena. This reflection of Being becomes another Being, Essence, through which the intelligibility of Being is realized, distinct from the phenomenon, although the entire development of the category of Essence is to overcome that distinction through the complete identity of Essence and Appearance. The intelligibility of Essence is wholly present in Appearance, which is its effective reality, as Hegel calls it. As the latter it is the reality which actualizes itself, in which necessity is not distinct from the contingency of appearance. It is the reality that is an intelligible reality whose development is nothing else than the process of its own comprehension. Hegel shows that reality is not the manifestation of an Absolute that never ceases to be distinct from it. Reality is the manifestation that does not aim beyond itself; it is not dependent but sufficient in its own self-manifestation. Reality is not the presentation of an absolute content to which appearance is related as its form, for its form is identical with its content: "The Absolute inasmuch as it is a process of explanation which is self-sufficient, as a mode which is absolutely identical with itself, is not the manifestation of an interior opposed to something external but an absolute manifestation in-and-for-itself. For this reason it is nothing less than Reality." The concrete procedure of naïve thought which clings to the level of immediacy has raised it to the level of the intelligible sources of what it grasps as appearances, and thus it has reflected upon itself. But it returns to its naïve state, this time, however, at a more intense level, and it is here that the necessity that has been reflected upon reveals itself immediately. Essence is no longer the condition of reality but becomes its meaning and is identical with reality in so far as it is self-comprehension and no longer simply that which is understood.

In the third part of the *Logic* which Hegel entitles "Subjective Logic" the Concept occupies the stage in place of *essence* and the *Logic* becomes, properly speaking, a logic of meaning, where meaning is identified with a reality in process, or Being itself, the original Being that had revealed itself as meaning. The Absolute Idea in which the *Logic* culminates is this meaning as Being, the return to immediacy which is the very reality of mediation. The logic of the immediate, or Being, is the counterpart to the description of Sense-awareness, the first great metaphysics of

Being. The logic of Essence is in turn the complement to the thought of the intelligibility of Sense-awareness, the metaphysics of essence. But the logic of the Concept, through which the Absolute reveals itself as Subject, not only as a being-for-understanding, but as a self-understanding being that creates itself and, as it were, becomes identical with its concrete realization of its own demonstration, is the counterpart of those philosophical systems which since Kant have struggled to replace the thought of essence with the thought of meaning. But in Hegel the distinction between Being and Concept dissolves through mediation, Being as Concept and Concept as Being, and the unending shift from one to the other which constitutes self-reflection. The transition from Being to Essence (that is to say, to reflection) and the return of reflection to the immediate as meaning, through the reflection of reflection, is reminiscent of contemporary phenomenological thought.

The historian of philosophy might distinguish two lines of thought in Hegelianism. First of all, he might point to a philosophy of history which culminates in what may be called humanism (the most usual consequence of Hegelianism). He might then describe the notion of Absolute Knowledge which, as the external reflection upon the philosophies of the past, constitutes no less an internal philosophy of complete immanence in which thought abstracts from Time everything but the external temporality of mediation and thus transcends history. Is it possible to reconcile the Hegelian philosophy of history (which is strictly a philosophy of human history) with the notion of Absolute Knowledge in the *Logic*? Perhaps we should adopt the suggestion in the *Phenomenology* that we consider history as simply the preparation of Absolute Knowledge, or, in other words, a reflexive logic of philosophy. But that would imply some sort of end to history as we know it, or at least the appearance of an absolutely new phase of human history. Absolute Knowledge would at the same time transcend humanism, since self-consciousness only expresses the adventure of Being, and, as a philosophy of the Absolute, it would itself transcend all history. The identity postulated between Meaning and Being (or the death of God) would inaugurate a new departure to which the notion of history would no longer be proper.

## NOTES

- 1 Introduction, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 133.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 806.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 80. [Trans.]
- 5 "Glauben und Wissen," in *Erste Drukschriften*.
- 6 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 806.
- 7 "Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems" in *Erste Druckschriften*.
- 8 Cf. The alienation of knowledge, not only in consciousness, but also in nature and history, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 806; and the remark from an earlier fragment on Absolute Knowledge: "Philosophy must alienate itself."
- 9 *Science of Logic*, translated by W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961).
- 10 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 82. [Trans.]
- 11 "We may note that in the German auxiliary verb 'sein' the past tense is expressed by the term for Essence (Wesen): we designate past being as *gewesen*." *The Logic of Hegel*, translated by W. Wallace, from the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), Chapter viii, section 112. [Trans.]
- 12 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 764.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 763.

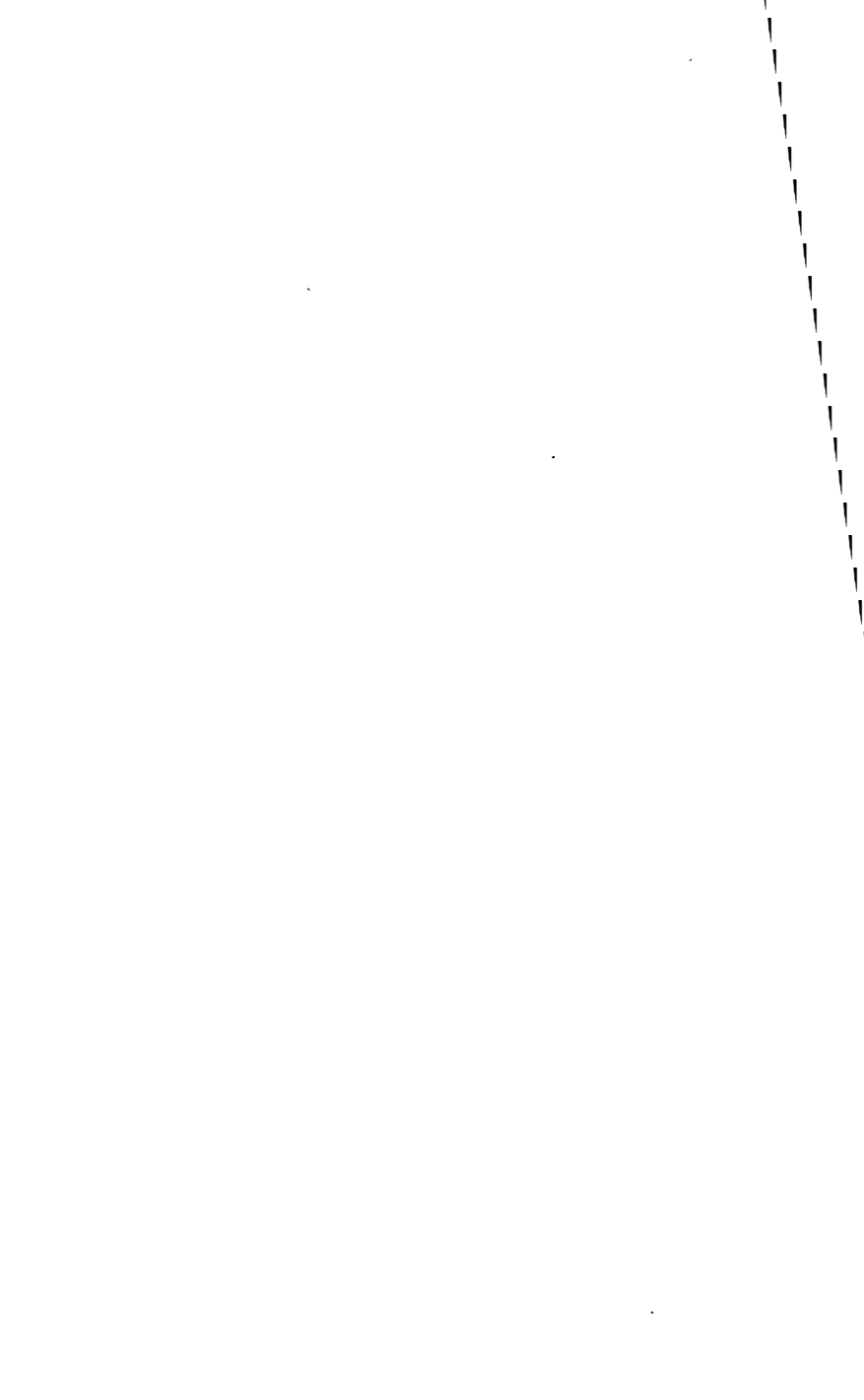
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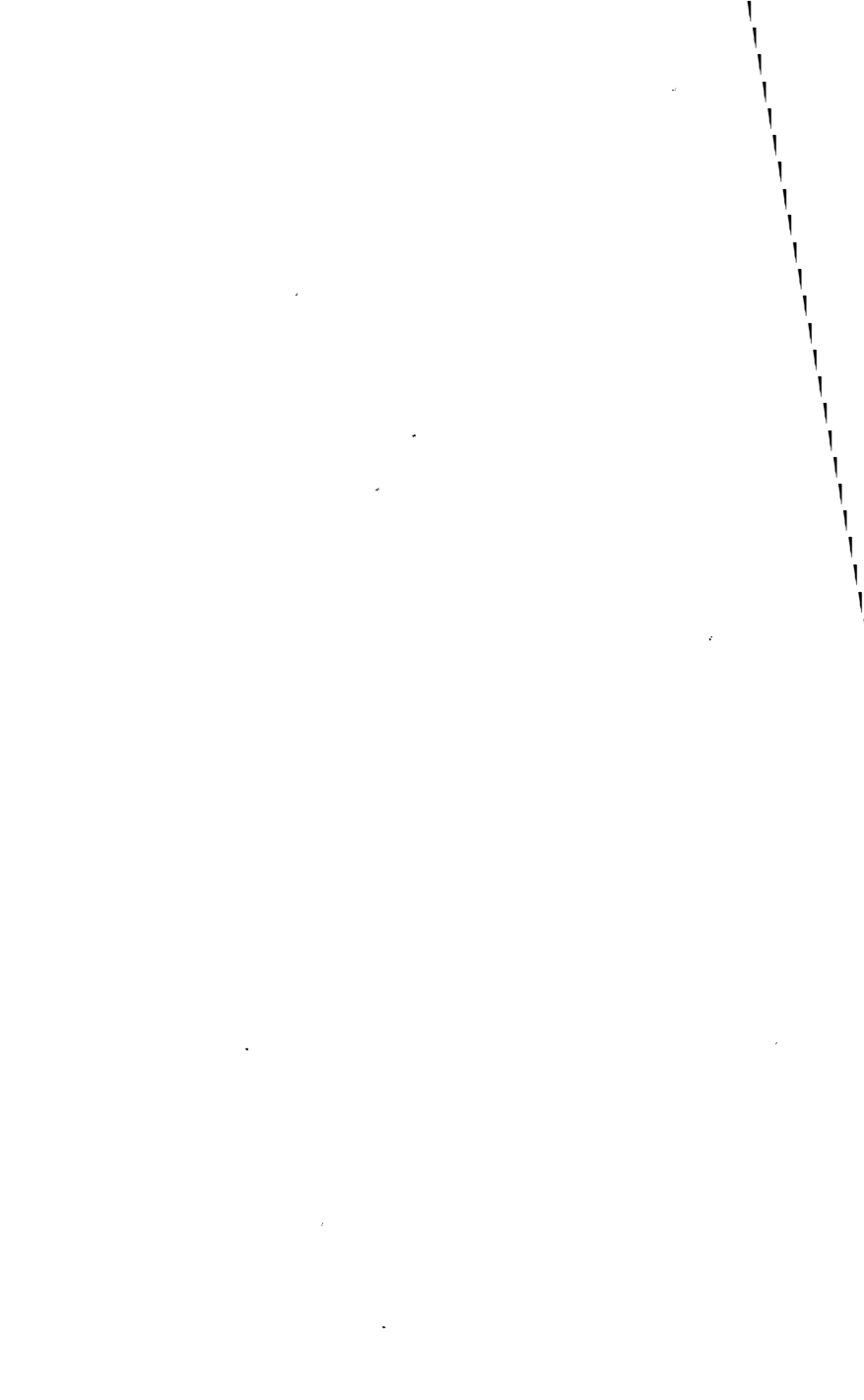
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