

## THEORY / PRACTICE

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The Communist Ideal in Hegel and Marx by David MacGregor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984)

Professor MacGregor holds that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* "parallels" the theory of Marx "and throws even greater light on our contemporary situation than the richly textured analysis of *Capital*" (p. 3). He comes to this conclusion without grappling with, or even mentioning, Marx's detailed, paragraph by paragraph, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Thus Professor MacGregor's very first paragraph of the Introduction to the whole work stresses the challenge contained in the title *The Communist Ideal in Hegel and Marx*. He maintains that the communist ideal characterizes both Hegel and Marx.

MacGregor reinforces his own view of parallelism between Hegel and Marx with his claim, this time in the Introduction to the first chapter, that "Hegel's use of the dialectic is identical with that of Marx" (p. 11). Now that MacGregor has turned the parallelism into full identity, he further extends his analysis to political and social fields. It seems that nothing deters the professor from the concept of parallelism, even when he concedes that "For Marx freedom or rationality is identical with communism and is ultimately reached through development of the consciousness of the proletariat and the overthrow of private property and social classes" (p. 27).

Quite the contrary. Not only does he there repeat the claim that "Marx's vision of communism also animates Hegel's social and political theory," but, in the last chapter of his work, MacGregor explains that Hegel developed a profound critique of bourgeois private property, economic crises, and imperialism, which anticipates and, in some cases, goes beyond Marx" (p. 239).

PROFESSOR MACGREGOR IS so enamoured of his new discovery that Hegel "goes beyond Marx" even in the critique of private property that he devotes the whole of that final chapter 8 (pp. 236-256) to gathering all the threads of his 312-page work (whether the subject matter was Religion and Theology or Alienation and Kant, or



even the modern world of Capitalism and Imperialism and what he calls "The External Capitalist State"), for the purpose of reinforcing his view that Hegel's vision and Marx's vision of a classless society are "identical."

Although, for this 23-page chapter, "Dialectic and the Rational State," Professor MacGregor has 132 footnotes, they hardly add up to a rigorous analysis of Hegel's dialectic. His concept of Hegel's dialectic method specifies that "There are three aspects or moments of dialectic method" (p. 241). He calls the first moment "recognition," but what he quotes from Hegel is not from any first stage of consciousness or logic, but from Hegel's climactic, final chapter in *Science of Logic*, "The Absolute Idea". Here is the first sentence from Hegel which MacGregor abbreviated: "From this course the method has emerged as the

self-knowing Notion that has itself, as the absolute, both subjective and objective, for its subject matter, consequently as the pure correspondence of the Notion and its reality, as a concrete existence that is the Notion itself." (p. 826, A.V. Miller translation)

Insofar as tracing and detailing what Hegel was developing of the dialectic in the Absolute, the textual dialectic simply fails to materialize. Instead, MacGregor turns to Hegel's Introduction in the *Science of Logic* where Hegel says: "the method is the consciousness of the form of the inner self-movement of the content of logic." (p. 53) MacGregor, however, left out the two words, "of logic," so that you don't see that what Hegel is doing is contrasting what dialectic method is in the *Logic* and in *Phenomenology*.

For what MacGregor calls the "second aspect of dialectic method," naming it "method proper," he again does not follow Hegel on the dialectic in the Doctrine of the Notion, but this time turns to the Introduction of the *Encyclopedia*, footnoting a reference to paragraph 12, but not quoting it. That paragraph 12 begins with a clear specification of its subject matter: "The first beginnings of philosophy date from these cravings of thought. It takes its departure from Experience..." This is nowhere near what the dialectic is in the Absolute Idea.



MacGregor considers "exposition" to be the "third moment of the dialectic." He devotes the last section of his final chapter (which he entitles "Dialectical Exposition and the Rational State") to this. The one time he returns to quote Hegel on the dialectic as he develops it in the Absolute Idea as "the individual, the concrete, the subject," he not only disregards Hegel's warning against "the impatience that insists merely on getting beyond the determinate," but turns to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and with that turns against Marx: "But the rational society Hegel envisions has nothing to do with the abstraction of the 'withering away of the state.'" (p. 254)

IT BECOMES IMPERATIVE to establish unambiguously—i.e., concretely—that, far from the "withering away of the state" being a mere abstraction, it was the actuality of the Paris Commune that showed Marx the workers had created a non-state form of workers' rule. Just as MacGregor makes no reference to Marx's *Critique of the Philosophy of Right*, so there is no reference to the existence of the Paris Commune. What does exist for MacGregor is the non-existence of "Hegel's rational state."

Is it because MacGregor adheres more rigorously to Hegel? Far from it. As we showed, MacGregor no sooner touches the Hegelian dialectic at its highest point in the Absolute Idea than he runs away from Absolute Method.

No wonder MacGregor could not grasp Marx's lifelong adherence to the Hegelian dialectic, its Absolute Method since, at the same time, Marx transformed the revolution Hegel wrought in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution.