

October 14, 1959

THE UNIVERSITY, Leeds 2, England

MARX'S DEBT TO HEGEL

I think to say that Hegelian Philosophy

able to

The topic for today, Marx's Debt to Hegel, neither merely academic, nor pertains only to the historical period of Marx's lifetime. From Africa to Hungary the struggle for freedom has transformed reality and pulled Hegelian dialectics out of academic halls and history books to the living stage of history.

philosophy

It is true that this transformation of Hegel into a contemporary has been via Marx. But one needs only look at Russian Communism's attack on ~~the young Marx~~ Hegel to see that they are perverting Marx and, above all, fighting ~~to~~ to suppress the struggles of freedom against their state capitalist rule. It is because they recognize the so-called mystical Absolute, "the negation of the negation", as the revolution against themselves, that Hegel remains so alive and worrisome to the Russian rulers today. Ever since Zhdanov in 1947 demanded that the Russian philosophers find "a new dialectical law" that of "criticism and self-criticism" to replace the Hegelian law of contradiction, and through the 21st Congress of the Russian Communist Party where Khrushchev was declared "the true humanist", the attack on both Marx (and his ~~clear~~ indebtedness to Hegel) and Hegel as the alleged mystic has been continuous. One thing these intellectual bureaucrats sense correctly -- HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF THE ABSOLUTE AND THE INTERNATIONAL STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM ARE NOT AS FAR APART AS WOULD SEEM ON THE SURFACE. The Ideal and the Real are never far apart.

Acquisition through

It is this which Marx gained ~~from~~ from Hegel. It is this which enabled ~~the young Marx~~ the young Marx, once he broke from bourgeois society, to break also with the vulgar communists of his day who thought that one negation--the abolition of private property--would spell out a new society. He insisted--and this again is central to Hegel's philosophy--that the alienation of man does not end with abolition of private property unless what is most alien of all--the labor of man as an appendage to a machine--is abrogated, ~~and~~ the place of the motive force of capitalist society--extraction of surplus value--is ~~replaced~~ "the full and free development of the individual."

Marx placed not properly form but

The pluri-dimensional in Hegel, his presupposition of the infinite capacities of man to grasp through to the "Absolute" not as something isolated in heaven, but as a dimension of the human being ~~is~~ on this earth is in the full humanist tradition both of those who preceded him and those who followed, ~~Marx~~ Marx. To my mind, it is wrong, however, to consider Hegel's Absolute as a restatement, enriched it is true, but a restatement nevertheless of Aristotle's Absolutes.

Because Aristotle lived in a society based on slavery, his Absolutes had to be that of "Pure Form"--mind of man would meet mind of god and contemplate how wondrous things are.

On the other hand, because Hegel's Absolutes emerged out of the French Revolution which put an end to serfdom, the Bondsmen, as Hegel put it, "gaining a mind of his own", Hegel's Absolutes breathed the earthy air of freedom. Even when ~~Marxist~~ one reads Absolute Mind as God, no one can escape the earthy quality of the unity of theory and practice and grasp through to the Absolute Reality as man's attainment of total freedom, inner and outer.

Freedom is something one gets by overcoming bondage and the process of acquiring freedom man gets to know all his true potentialities. Freedom is not only his point of departure in temporal history. It is his point of return in "Split".

This is what makes him so contemporary. This is the link not only with ~~Marxist~~ but our day.

~~Marxism is not a philosophy but a method.~~ As Lenin discovered during the collapse of the Socialist International at the time of the outbreak of World War I when he returned to the philosophic foundations of Marxism in Hegel, the revolutionary element of the dialectic was not superimposed upon Hegel by Marx; it is in Hegel himself.

150 p 331
MIF

II. Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy

There are academicians who likewise consider Marx so strange a progeny that, where they do not deny indebtedness of Marx to Hegel, do most emphatically stress perversion to the point of non-recognition. Whether "the shock of recognition" will come upon us at the end of this talk remains to be seen, but it is clearly discernible in Marx.

There are two stages of absorbing and transcending Hegel in Marx's intellectual development. The first is when he breaks with the Young Hegelians and accuses them of dehumanizing the idea. It was in the period also when he wrote both his Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right and the Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic. In the first Essay, in stating that "Man makes religion; religion does not make man...Man is no abstract being, squatting outside the world," he discovers his materialist outlook: "It is not the consciousness of man that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their existence," but that that is no confining wall to the "subject" striving to remake the world can be seen from his own answer as to why did he Marx, become a radical. "To be a radical," wrote Marx, "is to grasp the matter by its root. Now the root of mankind is man."

Ideas do not float somewhere between heaven and earth outside of the brain in the head of the body of man living in a certain environment and at a specific historic period. Indeed Hegel himself would be incomprehensible if we did not keep in front of our minds the historic period in which he lived--that of the French Revolution and Napoleon. It is this self-movement of men making their own history that gives the drive to the Hegelian dialectic.

It is true that Hegel himself treated objective history as if that were the development of some world-spirit, and treated self-development of mind as if the head could indeed be disjointed from the body, but the greater truth is that he had his pulse on human history both present and past and indeed this bond of continuity of present and past, in which you also see the attraction exercised by the future on the present, is the mainspring of the dialectic. As your J. Baillie has put it: when he introduced the PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND:

"Movements of human history which have marked epochs in the development of the human race are treated as typical or permanent embodiments of attitudes of mind....(it is)the life history of the human spirit."

It is this great work of Hegel--which remains a landmark in all human thought for any and every age, ours especially--that Marx undertook to analyse to settle his debt to Hegel. Marx was not one to forget his intellectual debts either to classical political economy or philosophy, especially the latter, without which as his closest collaborator, Friedrich Engels puts it, "there would have been no scientific socialism."

Marx's Critique of Hegel is at the same time the greatest tribute to that most encyclopedic mind of Europe and a critique of the most serious of the materialist critics of Hegel: Feuerbach who had regarded "the negation of the negation only as the contradiction of philosophy with itself." Marx, on the other hand, shows that principle to be the expression of the movement of history itself, albeit in abstract form, and proposes "to explain the critical form of this movement which is still uncritical in Hegel." First, and most importantly, says Marx, to the extent that the PHENOMENOLOGY holds fast to the alienation of Man

Quote M+F
#309

It is true that Hegel worked out all the contradictions in thought alone while in life all contradictions remained, multiplied, intensified ~~and~~ the class struggle did not abolish contradictions, those contradictions ~~only~~ plagued society and its thinkers, who, in the view of Marx, only became "prize-fighters" for capitalist ideology. But, first, Marx did not separate ideology and economics as if the latter were the ~~only~~ fundamental and the former mere "show". Marx's contention is that they are both as real as life--throughout CAPITAL, as we shall show in a moment, Marx castigates the "fetishism of commodities" not because these relations of production appear as mere "things", but because that is what indeed they are; so preverse are human relations under capitalism that Machine is master of man; not man of machine.

Marx's main point was that the driving force of the dialectic was man himself; not just his thought, but the whole of man, and that, whereas the capitalist and bourgeois ideologists, because of their place in production which makes them defend the status quo, have a false ideology, the proletariat because of his place in production, is the "negative principle" driving to resolution of contradictions, is, as Lukacs put it, "both subject and object of its proper knowledge. The unity of theory and 'praxis' is then only the other face of the historical/situation which makes self-knowledge and knowledge coincide."

In a word, if we are to return to "pure" philosophic language, sans the class struggle reality, Marx accused Hegel for not having truly surmounted the duality of thought and being, of theory and practice, of subject and object; of having remained a prisoner of Kant on this decisive point and that his dialectic was thus simple appearance, pure phenomenology that had not gone to the actual, interior dialectic of the historic process, and that he, Marx, was carrying to its concrete, actual meaning the Hegelian conception of a spirit-phenomenon.

Marx did not know the young Hegel. ~~before he had retired to his~~
~~ivory tower.~~ Only comparatively recent discoveries have uncovered
Hegel's First System and, in seeing Hegel on his First System before
he escaped to his ivory tower, we can see that Hegel's description
of industrial labor is indeed reminiscent of Marx. It is Hegel,
not Marx, who wrote:

"The more ~~chanized~~ ^{chanized} labor becomes, the less
value it has and the more the individual must toil.... The value
of labor decreases in the same proportion as the productivity of
labor increases... The faculties of the individual are infinitely
restricted and the consciousness of the factory worker is degraded
to the lowest level of dullness." Hegel could not see the positive
in that negative--that the very deprivation of his human senses
would drive the degraded labor "to seek universality"--and abandoned
his First System. I myself think there is no more dramatic moment
in intellectual history than that where the young Hegel, having
described the phenomenon of alienated labor under capitalism,
turned away from it never to return to it in this form.

It is this which Marx saved and developed--and the actual proletarian
revolutions which were not characteristic of Hegel's time but were
of Marx's helped him see where that other genius could not see if
even he had not compromised with Prussianism. ~~and he became a~~
~~state philosopher~~

But those Marxists who see Hegel only as a state philosopher, who
consider Hegel, without Marx, is pure gibberish, and that when
Marx stood Hegel on his feet where he previously was standing on
his head, Marx proves that he thereby took "only" the dialectic
method understand neither Marx nor Hegel, ~~and he became a~~
fall into the Communist trap of keeping Marx imprisoned in state-vs.
private property vice, and, what is worst, help pile up intellectual
sloth that is impeding the way of the proletariat and youth finding
its way to a ~~new~~ new society built on truly human foundations.

Marx's
It is here that we come to the second stage of/indebtedness
to Hegel, which he didn't get a chance "to write out" as he did
his Early Philosophic Essay but which he did realize in that creative
act of theory, CAPITAL.

III HEGEL'S AND MARX'S "ABSOLUTES"

On the face of it it would seem that no greater contrast, indeed
absolute opposition, exists than that between Marx's CAPITAL and
Hegel's PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND, and yet it has been rightly stated
that CAPITAL is a concrete Phen., that is to say, an analysis of
a specific historic period, that of capitalism, with its notions.

Marx had finished, or rather broken off his Critique of the Hegelian
Dialectic, just as he reached the Absolute Idea, Absolute Mind.
Although Marxists swear by "the dialectic" as method, they mean
a "tool" to be used--and I might add abused--and not as a philosophic
perspective based on the unity of theory and practice.

"It is not so much from as through slavery," wrote Hegel in his History of Philosophy, that "man acquired freedom."

It is true that Hegel himself threw a mystical veil over his philosophy by treating it as a closed ontological system. But ~~regarding the~~ ~~maintaining~~ ~~the~~ ~~subject~~ ~~of~~ ~~Hegel's~~ ~~philosophy~~ ~~he~~ separated himself completely from those to whom the road to the Absolute was pure intuition or belief, as with Jacobi, or like "a shot out of a pistol", a bare unity of subject and object as with Schelling. ~~As~~ ~~Prof. Baillie~~ ~~brilliantly~~ ~~stated~~ ~~by~~ ~~Prof. Baillie~~ ~~of~~ ~~Leeds~~ ~~University,~~ ~~this~~ ~~type~~ ~~of~~ ~~abstractness~~ ~~possessed~~ ~~objectivity~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~price~~ ~~of~~ ~~being~~ ~~inarticulate.~~

Indeed it would be a complete misreading of Hegel's philosophy were we to think that his Absolute is either a mere reflection of the separation between the philosopher and the world of material production or that his Absolute is the empty absolute of intuitivists from Fichte to Schelling, whose type of abstractness, as Prof. Baillie of this University has so brilliantly put it, "possessed objectivity at the price of being inarticulate."

Whether, as with Hegel, Christianity is taken as the point of departure, or whether --as with Marx --the point of departure is the material condition for freedom created by the Industrial Revolution, the essential element is this: man has to fight to gain freedom; thereby is revealed "the negative character" of modern society. Now the principle of negativity was not Marx's discovery--he merely named it: the living worker --the discovery of the principle was Hegel's.

Marx's re-discovery of the Absolute came out of the concrete development of capitalism itself which split the Absolute into two: (1) ~~what~~ Marx called "the general absolute law of capitalist development, ~~the unemployed army~~" That was the negative feature of capitalism that would cause its collapse. (2) But Marx saw the positive element in this negative, the workers who would become the "gravediggers of society" and in whose aspirations and activity stirred "new passions" which made them the force for the creation of the new society and thus bring about "the negation of the negation."

Again, "Praxis" is not Marx's discovery--he merely designated praxis as the class struggle activity of the proletariat. Praxis in Hegel's theory, let us not forget, stands higher than the "Idea of Cognition" because, as he puts it, "it has not only the dignity of the universal, but is the simply actual."

In the end Spirit itself finds that it no longer is antagonistic to the world but is indeed the indwelling spirit of the community. As Prof. Kroner has shown in his analysis of Hegel's intellectual development, and as Hegel himself put it in his Early works, "The absolute moral totality is nothing else than a people ... (and) the people who receive such an element as a natural principle HAVE A MISSION OF APPLYING IT." (my emphasis.)

When, Lenin, in his re-discovery of Hegel, said that none of the Marxists, himself included, had in the previous century understood CAPITAL because it is impossible to understand ~~it~~ its 1st chapter without the whole of the Logic, he recognized the need for ~~it~~ each generation to reinterpret both Marx and Hegel for himself. To him, the core of the dialectic was the unity of opposites.

For us, in 1959, it is the Absolute Idea, the unity of theory and practice, the total outlook, the philosophy which comes closest to our day, and, in Marx's day, impelled him to call his philosophy HUMANISM.

For our day, this humanism has gained a much greater urgency. The Humanism of Hegel may not be the most obvious characteristic, and in part was hidden even from Marx, although Lenin in his day caught it in Hegel's Description of the Doctrine of the Notion "as the realm of Subjectivity OR freedom."

The genius of Hegel achieved the seemingly impossible

9484

It is this dimension of the human personality which Marx saw in the ~~historical~~ historical struggles of the proletariat that would once and for all put an end to all class divisions and open up the vast potentialities of the human being so alienated in class societies, so degraded by the division between mental and manual, that not only is the worker made into an appendage of a machine, but the scientist builds on a principle which would lead to ~~it~~ complete impasse. For, as he put it, "To have one basis for society and another for life is a priori a lie."

9484