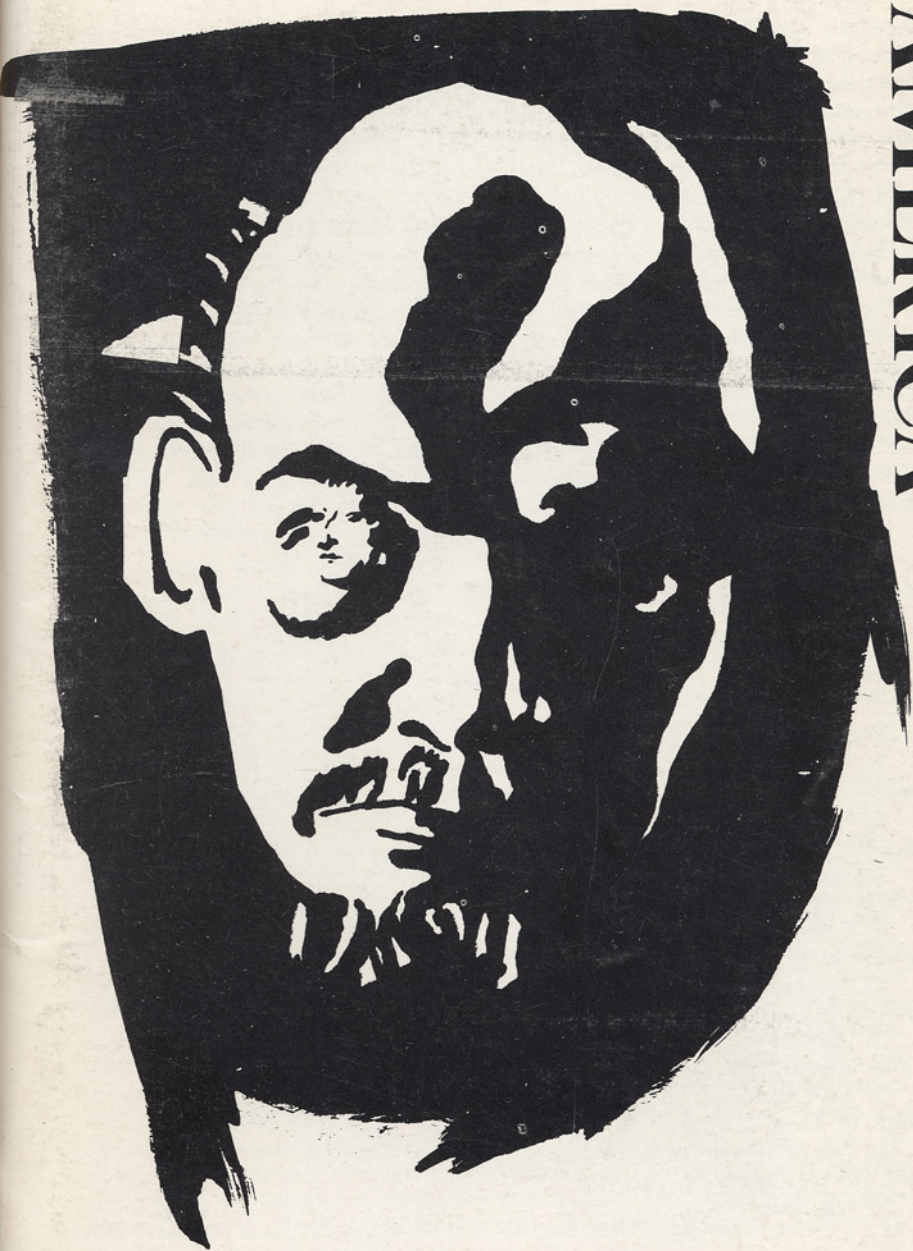


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Cover by Carolyn L. Batorski



Introduction

by
The Telos Staff

Since 1970 is the bicentennial of Hegel's birth, and the centennial of Lenin's, it is not surprising to discover that current philosophical and political literature is saturated with "special issues" on these figures. On this ground alone, a special *Radical America* issue would not have been warranted. However, a cursory examination of the *quality* of this literature readily shows that both Lenin and Hegel have been forced into pre-set molds which obscure and/or distort their political and philosophical relevance. Thus, Lenin is presented by the self-defined "orthodox" Marxists as a saint who could do no wrong and whose teachings apply always and in every situation. To the extent that Lenin never had *any* "set" teachings and tended to reconsider his theoretical frame of reference with every new situation, one can find quotes from him to justify everything – if his thoughts are *abstractly* separated from his actual political practice. To do this, however, is fundamentally in opposition to Lenin's thought, since the *most* important tenet of his Marxism-Leninism is precisely the stress on the inextricable connection between theory and practice.

This does not mean, however, that Lenin's theoretical framework was totally arbitrary: what it means is that *any* account that claims to do it justice must, first and foremost, be dialectical in character. Piccone's article, "Towards an Understanding of Lenin's Philosophy", seeks to do precisely that by pointing out an inner dialectical movement within the development of Lenin's thought, from his social-democratic days of the last decade of the 19th century, to his mechanistic approach of the *What is to be Done?* period, up to the dialectical stage characterized by the *Philosophical Notebooks* and actual revolutionary practice. What emerges is neither a perfect and theoretically infallible saint, nor a machiavellian manipulator, as other and equally absurd stereotypes would have it, but a concrete human being struggling with his world and with himself trying to bring about a socialist society in the face of overwhelming odds. Consequently, it is not surprising to find Lenin occasionally writing philosophical nonsense (e.g., *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*) or making dubious decisions (e.g., the attempt to reorganize the editorial board of *Iskra*), and then eventually reverse himself by taking altogether opposite views. Seen abstractly, the resulting picture of Lenin is a contradictory one, and this contradiction can be only understood concretely by a socio-historical analysis of the context within which it took place. Russell Jacoby's note on "Lenin and Luxemburg: Negation in Theory and Praxis" offers precisely such a concrete analysis where Lenin is no longer the embodiment of the pure idea of theoretical and political perfection, but a struggling revolutionary confronted with problems that evade the fossilized categories of a Marxism applicable only to a reality long since historically transcended.

Both Piccone's and Jacoby's approaches are fundamentally dialectical – which is precisely what is wrong (since it is missing) with most other accounts of Lenin and of society in general. And this is where Hegel's importance lies today

for the New Left: the resurrection of the dialectic as a major requirement for a *genuinely* revolutionary theory and praxis. But, given the intellectual hypnosis of the past half-century — a result of both Stalinism and internal repression in the U.S. — the analysis must start from the beginning. As Lenin himself suggested, we must return to Hegel to gain a full understanding of the dialectic. The articles by Paci and by Gambazzi respectively deal with the problems of logic within Hegel's system, and the function of "labor" as the moving force in history. An understanding and further elaboration of these problems is one of the preconditions to a viable revolutionary theory without which, to use Lenin's own words, there might be no revolution.

Lastly, this issue includes a section on the continuing debate on culture, with articles by Naison, Heckman, Delfini, Buhle, and Morgen. The development of revolutionary theory cannot proceed independently of revolutionary practice: thus, it is imperative to keep constant watch on the cultural scene as a compass of the crisis whose outcome might very likely be revolution.

This issue is one of what will hopefully be a series of studies on specific topics edited by the *Telos* staff.

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Towards an Understanding of Lenin's Philosophy*

by
Paul Piccone

What makes Marxism difficult is that it cannot be fragmented into independent and self-contained disciplines approachable in the analytical, bourgeois fashion. Its structural togetherness can only be dealt with *dialectically*. Its theoretical elaboration and practical implementation must constantly proceed by redefining the parts in terms of the whole, and the whole in terms of the parts, in a context where both whole and parts are not empty abstractions forcibly superimposed upon pre-given content, but teleological conceptual expressions thereof. This dialectic of the concrete totality¹ is, therefore, also a dialectic of appearances and reality whereby not only do we move from appearance to reality, but we also explain why reality happens to appear the way that it does. To the extent that Marxism has failed to heed these, its major theoretical tenets, it has degenerated to the level of an ideology (or ideologies), whose theoretical deficiencies have been more ostensibly reflected in its political failures. Yet, it is idealistic to consider political results merely as the outcome of theoretical deficiencies: the latter must themselves be explained in terms of major existing socio-economic relationships since, as Hegel put it, theory (the idea) directs practice (its object) only after the attainment of the Absolute² or, in Marxist terminology, of the classless society. Thus, it is very easy for Marxists to fall prey to precisely those ideologies that they fight against. When this happens, the crisis of capitalist society, which manifests itself *immediately* as the crisis of bourgeois thought, or, according to Husserl, as the crisis of European sciences³, can mediately transpose itself as the crisis of Marxism.

But what is really the crisis of capitalist society? Unless we constantly keep in mind the fundamental problem, all else can easily degenerate to the level of mere ideological slogans. According to Marx, the crisis of capitalist society consists primarily in *the alienation of man into capital* (crystallized labor). Thus, the object of man's creation — capital — becomes the determining subject, while the real creating subject — man — turns into a passive object. Because of this crucial dialectical reversal, the society within which this happens moves toward economic self-destruction. Human subjectivity (labor), in becoming capital and private property, loses its human character. Bourgeois property (from the Latin "one's own") is intrinsically social and, in becoming "private", is detached from

*This article is a revised version of the fourth chapter of my Ph.D dissertation, "The Philosophy of Antonio Banfi and European Marxism", State University of New York at Buffalo, 1970.

¹For a theoretical elaboration of this, see Karel Kosík, "Dialectic of the Concrete Totality", in *Telos*, vol. 1, no. 2, Fall 1968, pp. 21-37; and by the same author, "The Concrete Totality", in *Telos*, no. 4, Fall 1969, pp. 35-54.

²G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated by J.B. Baillie, "Introduction", pp. 131-145. It is interesting that from the very beginning Hegel treats theory (or mediation) as a tool which, as such, is necessarily socio-historical in character.

³Cf. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr (Evanston, Ill., 1970).

its collective "owners". As such, it not only controls the creators from whom it has been expropriated, but also the new individual owner who becomes himself the slave of the sociality embodied in the illicitly appropriated capital. Capitalist property relations become *determining* social relations and dead labor (capital) comes to control living labor.⁴ In the ultimate analysis, the fundamental flaw of capitalism is that it represents the victory of the abstract over the concrete,⁵ i.e., it is human subjectivity that has lost its human roots and subsequently comes to control man as a monstrous Frankenstein. The overthrow of capitalism means, first and foremost, the re-appropriation of this alienated humanity and, as such, a return of subjectivity to the real subjects.

Whereas economically *the crisis of capitalism* manifests itself in the systems's inability to continue without major structural changes, it is also reflected in the ideological sphere as *the crisis of science*: it is not accidental that, as Paci never tires to point out,⁷ the subtitle of Marx's major work, *Capital* is "Critique of Political Economy" as a science. And this is quite understandable for, what is science but specialized human labor? All the bourgeois apologetics for "scientific neutrality" whereby bourgeois science is passed on as simply science implicitly occludes its class-basis and, as such, its partiality in favor of the status quo against any possible future alternative. Consequently, to the extent that labor in bourgeois society continues to be *alienated labor*, the only plausible outcome of science within such a context is *alienated science*. Husserl's penetrating analyses adequately account for the "mad scientist" of modern fiction: the frightening thing is that the "madness" of the mad scientist is not a mere psychological disfunction in the *individual* scientist, but an inherent characteristic of bourgeois science. This explains the atomic bomb, biological warfare, and the fact that the majority of research scientists today are engaged in work whose ultimate outcome is the more efficient extermination of human beings. In the same way that capital — crystallized human labor — is originally created by man only to subsequently contrapose itself to its creator as an alien entity that reduces the very creating subject into a passive object, so the *determinate* labor of the scientist becomes mad, bourgeois science. It starts out with Galileo as partial mathematical extrapolations of measurable relationships

⁴Thus, in the *Grundrisse* (Berlin, 1953), p. 359, Marx writes: "... the objective world of wealth, through labor itself as a force extraneous to it, expands in front of labor and acquires an increasingly extended and full existence, so that relatively, i.e., in relation to created value or in relation to the real conditions of the creation of value, the implicit subjectivity of live labor-force represents an increasingly cruder contrast. The more labor becomes objectified, the more does the objective world of values, that contraposes to it as an extraneous world — as someone else's property — increase as well."

⁵Cf. Enzo Paci, "Dialectic of the Concrete and of the Abstract", in *Telos*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 5-32.

⁶It is not the purpose of this paper to examine the reasons why capitalism, in turning into imperialism, has been able to postpone these structural changes. For a somewhat better treatment of this problem, see my "The Problem of Consciousness", in *Telos*, no. 5, Spring 1970.

⁷Cf. Enzo Paci, "Towards a New Phenomenology", in *Telos*, no. 5, Spring 1970.

in a pre-categorical context much broader than could ever be captured by even the most perfect scientific formulations. It then becomes estranged from the concrete subjective operations of the scientist *qua* laborer that constituted it, to subsequently come to re-define reality itself in terms of those very partial relationships. Thus science, like capital, starts out as a teleological human activity which, given the nature of bourgeois social relationships, is separated from the subjective source whence it received its teleological orientation, and becomes a reified structure that can only deal with men as *mere* objects (e.g., as in behavioristic psychology) to be manipulated and controlled for ends whose character escapes science as such (e.g., automated exploitation and cybernated repression). Like capitalism, whose original task was the abolition of feudal stultification of human potentialities, science also opened new areas of investigation and developed new means of human emancipation, but again like capitalism, it lost its human *telos* and ended up as a new and much more sophisticated means of human oppression and emiseration.⁸

Given such a state of affairs, it is not at all surprising to find that Marxism also enters into a crisis when it ceases to be the concrete elaboration of the dynamics and self-transcendence of capitalist society, and becomes another ideology (or ideologies) whose end result is no longer the creation of the objective conditions for a free human society, but another form of ruthless repression. As Korsch has put it, "the rise of Marxist theory is only the 'other side' of the rise of the real proletarian movement of the class; only if taken together the two sides form the concrete totality of the historical process."⁹ But what happens when, in the last part of the 19th century, capitalism fully develops into imperialism and the European industrial proletariat ceases to be *the* working class while coming to occupy a privileged position with respect to the new world-wide working-class? The proletariat ceases to be revolutionary, and Marxism either becomes reformist or remains orthodox. If it becomes the former, the result is economism in the fashion of German Social Democracy whose "selling out" represents neither a conspiracy of the leadership nor a theoretical mistake as Luxemburg, among others, claimed, but *the new objective interests* of the proletarians of advanced industrial societies. If Marxism remains orthodox, however, it ends up in voluntarism since classical Marxism no longer

⁸Husserl, of course, although laying the groundwork for this type of analysis, never elaborated the social foundations of his work which, as such, remains abstract and incomplete. Cf. especially his yet unpublished manuscripts on history and existence; for a summary and critical analysis of these manuscripts, see Giovanni Piana, *Esistenza e Storia negli Inediti di Husserl* (Milan, 1965). It is unfortunate that with the possible exceptions of Paci, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Tran-Duc-Thao, most other phenomenologists have turned their attention to the irrelevant and idealistic features of Husserlian phenomenology. On the other hand, the elaboration of these trivialities is the "safe" and "profitable" thing to do in a context such as the United States, where official philosophy has as its main function the mystification of issues and the trivialization of critical thinking.

⁹Karl Korsch, *Marxismo e Filosofia* (Milan, 1966), p. 48.

represents the real historical movement.¹⁰ In both cases the outcome is disastrous: either a more sophisticated and efficient bourgeois society (Social Democracy) or a bureaucratic aberration such as the Soviet Union.

It has been necessary to take such a long introductory detour, for any analysis of Lenin's philosophy that does not start out from the concrete historical context of the crisis of capitalism, science, and Marxism, will not only result in useless abstractions, but will also fail to see its political implications. Lenin's philosophy must be seen within the context of this crisis of Marxism and, in its historical development from *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* to the *Philosophical Notebooks*, as an attempt to overcome such a crisis.¹¹ Also, since

¹⁰Of the few Marxists that have tried to give a dialectical and materialistic account of this phenomenon, Korsch is outstanding: "... it can be explained ... with the fact that in this historical period, for the labor movement that appealed to 'Marxism' on a formal level, it was not, from the very start, a true theory, i.e., 'the simple general expression of the actually developing historical movement' (Marx), rather it has always been only an ideology brought in ready made 'from outside'." Korsch, *op. cit.*, p. 19. But Korsch fails to conclude his account with a Marxist analysis whereby the whole phenomenon is dialectically related to *qualitative* changes in the economic base, and he proceeds to simply offer a mechanistic and quantitative account: "The materialistic explanation of all this apparent contradiction between theory and praxis in the 'Marxist' Second International and, at the same time, the rational solution of all the mysteries devised by the Marxist orthodoxy of the period to explain this contradiction, resides in an historical fact: the labor movement of the period, which had formally accepted Marxism as ideology, in its real praxis grounded on a *broader base*, was far from reaching a general level of development — and therefore also the theoretical level — that the revolutionary movement as a whole — and therefore also the class structure of the proletariat — had already attained within a *more restricted base* in the last phase of the first cycle of the historical development of capitalism, which was to close toward the middle of the century." *Ibid.*, p. 20. In this respect, Lenin's analysis of the labor aristocracy is much more relevant — although Lenin saw it as a temporary phenomenon and not as a qualitative change in the economic status of the industrial proletariat in advanced industrial societies. For an excellent account of Lenin's theory of the labor aristocracy, see Martin Nicolaus, "The Theory of the Labor Aristocracy", in *Monthly Review*, vol. 21, April 1970, no. 11, pp. 91-102. What Nicolaus overlooks, however, are Lenin's own ambiguities about this account, and his failure to draw long-range conclusions from the theory. For an account that takes into consideration the ambiguities and doubts, see Eric Hobsbawm "Lenin and the 'Aristocracy of Labor' ", in the same issue, pp. 47-56, which, however, does not realize the importance of such a theory for Marxism.

¹¹It may be helpful to notice how the outline of the determinations of the crisis is a partial Kosokian dialectical matrix. The crisis of capitalism moves from labor to its negation, commodities, to capital; while the crisis of science moves from *determinate* labor (scientific praxis) to abstract science (mathematical formulae) to objectified reality where both producer and product appear as natural objects devoid of any teleology, and a function of the universally valid laws of bourgeois science. The crisis of Marxism is the third stage of the matrix and moves from revolutionary labor (Marxism) to abstract ideology (scientific Marxism — Second International) to objectified Marxism (U.S.S.R., social democracy). For a

philosophy is inextricably connected with all other theoretical facets, it is to be expected that it reflects concrete political praxis. Thus, the mechanistic materialist approach that produced the Leninist theory of the party is the very same one that attacks empirio-criticism, and with the same one-sided consequences. Marx did not elaborate the notion of a Party, largely because according to his theory of class-consciousness, in bourgeois society alienated labor forces the worker into an increasingly worse state of alienation up to the point when his subjectivity is wholly objectified into the object. When this point is reached the subject-object identical is produced where the subject is wholly transposed into the object. But here the subject one of the dialectical poles of the dichotomy whose existence originally produced alienation and false consciousness, collapses into its otherness – the object – thus producing an explosive revolutionary situation where, once again, the subject (the worker) can become conscious of his status as a mere object and, as such, organize for the overthrow of the society that so dehumanizes him.¹² By the end of the 19th century, imperialism had converted large sections of the European proletariat into a labor aristocracy with respect to the working classes of underdeveloped countries and, as such, halted the process of growing alienation from proceeding to its logical consequence – the subject-object identical. Lenin's Party – also independently elaborated by Trotsky during his Siberian exile in 1901¹³ –

detailed account of the dialectical methodology employed, see Michael Kosok, "The Dialectical Matrix", in *Telos*, no. 5, Spring 1970.

¹²This, in a nut-shell, is Lukács' theory of class-consciousness expounded in "Die Verdinglichung und das Bewusstsein des Proletariats", in *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin, 1923), pp. 94-228. Alienation, it is to be remembered, manifests itself psychologically as the inability to understand one's own objective interests – which is due to the forced separation of the subject from the object. In the sense that capitalism leads to the total objectification of the subject and, as such, to its collapse into the object, it creates the conditions necessary for the overcoming of alienation and its socio-economic causes. This is why Lukács, as Avineri points out, does not distinguish between *Vergegenständlichung* and *Entfremdung*: although different, in the process of capitalist production they occur simultaneously. See Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 96.

¹³Trotsky's views were worked out in an essay that, according to Deutscher, had a wide circulation. Cf. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: 1897-1921* (New York, 1954), p. 45. What this indicates, first and foremost, is the extent to which the original Leninist concept of the party was a mechanistic response to *new objective conditions*. The dialectical movement here goes from spontaneity to organization (the mechanistic conception of the Party), to spontaneous organization or organized spontaneity. The original notion of the Party expounded in *What is to be Done?* represents the *second* negative stage where spontaneity is wholly subjugated to the *abstract* theoretical outlook of the Party leaders. But as early as 1905, with the development of the Petrograd Soviet, Lenin began to move to a more dialectical notion based on the Soviets and, by 1917, he had fully swung to the third stage. The problem here is that, although Lenin *did* transcend his mechanistic moment, the same cannot be said of his Bolshevik colleagues (with the possible exception of Trotsky). This explains Lenin's late struggles with the rest of the Bolsheviks *after* 1917 and, partly, the

becomes necessary only in a situation where class-consciousness does not and cannot develop spontaneously (as was the case in early 20th century Europe) and where even Marxist theory takes a reformist turn (the Second International). In such a context, the party takes the form of an external agency whose function is to coalesce the proletariat into the revolutionary political force which it would never *spontaneously* develop into otherwise. Lenin's and Trotsky's main arguments for their notion of the Party concerned the heterogeneity of the Russian working class which produced very different levels of consciousness.¹⁴ But this is itself an indication of the *immaturity* of the European proletariat as a revolutionary class: since Marxism is but the theoretical expression of concrete historical forces, the attempt to superimpose it as a *theory* upon an extraneous content reduces Marxism itself to the level of an ideology whose final political outcome could only be counterproductive. Bolshevism originally (1905) represented a theory of desperation that tried at all costs to revolutionize a nonrevolutionary situation. The original formulation of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" reflects the mechanism of this approach. This was, however, readily discarded by Lenin himself as early as 1905 when the first Russian Revolution and the developments of the Petrograd Soviet forced him to shift his view toward Trotsky's "permanent revolution".¹⁵ From this viewpoint it is easy to see how Lenin began by rejecting spontaneity through its negation, the Party, but, in the process of historical praxis, soon discovered its limitations. In the end he put forth a new notion based on organized spontaneity and spontaneous organization through the workers' councils. The main revolutionary slogan in 1917, "All power to the Soviets", was not *simply* a slogan but reflected a basic political position as well.¹⁷ By that time Lenin had completely *abandoned*

failures of the U.S.S.R. after Lenin's death when a *crude* mechanist such as Stalin took over control of the party.

¹⁴For an interesting attempt to specify how the different levels of consciousness develop, see Ernest Mandel, "Lenin und das Problem des proletarischen Klassenbewusstsein" in *Lenin, Revolution und Politik*, edited by Günther Busch (Frankfurt, 1970). The problem with Mandel's account is that he confuses the trees for the forest, and fails to place such an insignificant fragment of the Leninist theory within a broader socio-historical frame of reference.

¹⁵For an excellent elaboration of this point, see Marcel Liebman "Lénine en 1905", in *Les Temps Modernes*, April 1970, no. 285, pp. 1613-1631. Liebman's point is to distinguish between Lenin and Leninism, and he succeeds in showing how Leninism was always two steps behind Lenin's living dialectic. In fact, interestingly enough, in 1905, when Lenin came out in favor of the Soviets, Bogdanov and the rest of the Petrograd Bolsheviks *refused* to publish Lenin's views on the matter.

¹⁶Liebman also points out how Leninism became monolithic and authoritarian through the reactionary lull that ensued in Russia between 1906 and the outbreak of World War I. Although later Lenin fought these tendencies, after his death they became predominant.

¹⁷For an elaboration of this position, see Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (New York, 1968).

mechanistic materialism and, through his studies of Hegel's *Logic*, had developed a truly dialectical approach to reality. All of Lenin's work must be seen in this light, including his philosophy which was always fully engaged with mediate and immediate political tasks. As such, it is imperative to distinguish between Lenin's early mechanistic materialism, and his late dialectical Leninism.

The early mechanistic materialism at once subordinated philosophy to immediate political goals and, as Wolfe has pointed out, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* "is first of all a document in an intra-Party struggle",¹⁸ and only secondarily a philosophical treatise. This explains why Lenin, who originally learned Marxism from Plekhanov, sided with the neo-Kantian Bogdanov and the Machists *against* Plekhanov from 1903 to 1908,¹⁹ even though, as he himself confesses in a letter to Gorki, the falsity of Bogdanov's views had been known to him since 1903 when he was working on *Iskra*.²⁰ In 1907 Kautsky published in *Neue Zeit* Bogdanov's article on "Ernst Mach and the Revolution" with a preface by an anonymous translator deploring the sad theoretical state of Russian social-democracy. Lenin, as editor of the Russian journal *The Proletarian*, felt compelled to point out that the philosophical issues separating the Machists from the rest of the Bolsheviks should not have been regarded so crucial as to interfere with the political program of the party.²¹ Yet, in the fall of the following year, Lenin published *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, the main thrust of which was precisely to purge Bogdanov and the Machists from the Bolshevik faction of the party.²²

Given these political events surrounding the writing of the book, it is not surprising to find that the conceptual machinery employed by Lenin in demolishing the Machists poses serious philosophical questions. Although he consistently regarded himself as a *dialectical* materialist, in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, Lenin employed a *mechanistic* materialistic epistemology, which has been the cause of great consternation among commentators such as Lichtheim, Merleau-Ponty, Borkenau, etc., who have respectively characterized

¹⁸Bertram Wolfe, *Three Who Made a Revolution* (Boston, 1955), p. 511.

¹⁹Lenin's sympathetic evaluation of Bogdanov dates even further back to as early as 1898, when he wrote a very positive review of Bogdanov's book, *A Short Course of Economic Science* (Moscow, 1897). This review has been republished in V.I. Lenin *Collected Works*, vol. 4, (Moscow, 1964) pp. 46-59.

²⁰Thus, Lenin wrote: "In 1903, when I worked with him on *Iskra*, Plekhanov analyzed for me the error of Bogdanov's views." Letter to Gorki from Lenin dated February 25, 1908. As quoted by Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

²¹Cf. Lenin's note in *Neue Zeit*, March 10, 1908, vol. XXVI, no. 1, p. 838. He writes that: "This philosophical dispute does not actually constitute a factional question and . . . should not become one. Every attempt to present this divergence of opinion as distinctive characters of factions, within the party is totally erroneous." As quoted in Korsch, *Marxismo e Filosofia*, *op. cit.*, p. 136 and 143.

²²In calling for this purge, Lenin was careful to make it clear that expulsion from the Bolshevik faction was not an expulsion from the broader party: "the faction is not a party since the latter can contain within itself a whole set of shades of opinions, the extreme poles of which can even be absolute contraries." As quoted by Korsch, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

the work as "simply inconsistent with the dialectic",²³ "a remnant of metaphysical materialism",²⁴ and as an expression of "the negative aspects of Lenin's personality".²⁵ Yet, after the capitulation of the Second International in 1914, Lenin finally realized that there was something intrinsically wrong with the philosophical foundations of Marxism as conceived at the time, and, as already indicated, began to systematically study the Hegelian dialectic. Thus, he realized the central role of the dialectic and wrote that "... none of the Marxists for the past half century have understood Marx."²⁶ Although he never specifically criticized his early works, it seems fair that, when he spoke of the early Marxists, he considered, or should have considered, himself among them, for the errors that he saw in Plekhanov and other Marxists were also *his* errors. Engaged as he was in active political struggles, in 1908 Lenin did not bother to critically examine Marxist philosophy as a whole, he simply took what passed for Marxist philosophy in both the orthodox and the reformist wings of the Second International, and mechanically applied it to show its divergence from the Machian Marxism espoused by Bogdanov and Company. Given the limited political purpose of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, a critical and searching examination was not necessary for the task, and Lenin did not undertake it. The problem that the book generated, however, is that its mechanistic materialist epistemology was subsequently taken to be "genuine" Marxism by Stalinist theorists and, what was originally a tactical political pamphlet, became a philosophical bible.²⁷

²³George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (New York, 1961), p. 331.

²⁴Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, translated by H.L. and P.A. Dreyfus (Evanston, Illinois, 1961), p. 78.

²⁵Franz Borkenau, *World Communism* (Ann Arbor, 1962), p. 43.

²⁶Lenin, "Philosophical Notebooks", in *Collected Works*, vol. 38, *op. cit.*, p. 180. For stylistic reasons, I have chosen Dunayevskaya's translation of this passage as given in the Appendix of her *Marxism and Freedom* (New York, 1958), p. 340. Also relevant is that, immediately preceding these words, Lenin criticized Plekhanov and Marxists in general for doing precisely the things that he himself did in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*: "Plekhanov criticizes Kantianism (and agnosticism in general) more from a vulgar-materialistic standpoint than from a dialectical-materialistic standpoint. . ." and, "Marxists criticized (at the beginning of the twentieth century) the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Büchner) than of Hegel." Cf. *Collected Works*, vol. 38, p. 179. In the following exposition I am greatly indebted to Raya Dunayevskaya, who has more fully developed these very same points in her "Lenin's Philosophical Ambivalence", in *Telos*, no. 5, Spring, 1970.

²⁷For one such evaluation of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, see P.N. Pospelov *et. al.*, (Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: *A Biography Moscow*, 1965): "In our day, too, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* contributes to the struggle against bourgeois philosophy, revisionism and dogmatism, helping the peoples to understand and reorganize in a revolutionary fashion the world they live in." (P. 168). According to this biography, another merit of the book was to reject the Second International view "... that philosophical views of Party members were their private affair, and that one could be a Marxist without subscribing to dialectical materialism." Korsch has clearly shown that, up to 1907, Lenin

In order to concretely locate this work within the history of Marxism or, more specifically, within the history of Russian social democracy, it is necessary to recall Lenin's central role within the Bolshevik wing of the party from the beginning of the century, when he still found himself in substantial agreement with Kautsky,²⁸ up to the writing of the *Philosophical Notebooks* and the October Revolution. Of course, Lenin had sided very early with the orthodox wing against the revisionists' policies. He had seen the revisionist policies as boiling down to nothing more than "advocacy of class collaboration, abandonment of the ideas of socialist revolution and revolutionary methods of struggle, adaptation to bourgeois nationalism, disregard of the historically transient limits of nationality and fatherland, fetishizing bourgeois legality, renunciation of class viewpoints and of the class struggle out of fear of estrangement of 'the broad masses of the population' (read: petty bourgeois)". etc.²⁹ In fact, in order to combat these tendencies, in 1902 he wrote *What is to be Done?* where he developed his notion of the party as the *vanguard* of the proletariat, while at the same time reiterating the inevitability of the revolution and the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Given the Marxist theory of the development of revolutionary class-consciousness as a result of the development of the subject-object identical in the proletariat, it was quite obvious that because of the new international economic state of affairs, if revolution were to come about in Europe, it would have had to come through the consciousness of another class which would be in a position to attain it. Again, the central point here is that the industrial proletariat of advanced industrial societies was no longer driven to the revolutionary stage of total objectification where alienation can be finally overcome because of the identity of subject and object in the proletarian class. Lenin, of course, did not consider these premises, but drew the same conclusions from the political realities of his days: namely, the fact that the industrial proletariat did not seem to be excessively class-conscious, and that its daily life was not conducive to the attainment of any *spontaneous* revolutionary consciousness, but only trade-union consciousness.³⁰ But rather than locating the new working class

himself not only held, but also defended such a position (*op. cit.* p. 136). Furthermore, after 1917 Lenin constantly stressed the importance of *internal* disagreement. That the whole notion of *Parteilichkeit* is nothing but Stalinist bull-shit need not be elaborated here.

²⁸Cf. Lenin's postscript to the "Preface to the First Edition" of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5, where he emphasizes his total agreement with Kautsky's recently published work on agriculture, *Die Agrarfrage: Die Entwicklung der Landwirtschaft in der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1898), which reached the same theoretical conclusions.

²⁹V.I. Lenin, *Against Revisionism* (Moscow, 1959), p. 210.

³⁰Marx, too, pointed this out, but since he *always* considered capitalism as a competitive and *closed* system, he concluded that all the efforts of the unions would fail, thus transforming the economism of the trade-unions into political class-consciousness. The blossoming of imperialism historically did offer a safety-valve for capitalism and to the extent that trade-unions *did* succeed in improving the living conditions of the working classes, they never developed into a revolutionary political force.

which would be able to spontaneously attain class-consciousness in the underdeveloped countries that were being ruthlessly exploited by imperialism, he saw a radical sector of the European intelligentsia as the catalytic agency through which the alienated European proletariat would have attained the required revolutionary consciousness. As a consequence of this misplacement of both the revolutionary agency (the industrial proletariat) and of the catalytic agency (the intelligentsia organized as a closely-knit party), Marxism became an ideology which failed to have any revolutionary impact up to World War I. Because of the monumental crisis brought about in Russia by the war, it became possible to carry out a successful revolution which, however, took a non-Marxist turn as soon as a class struggle developed between the peasantry (Stalin) and the proletariat (Trotsky) – as Lenin had vaguely previewed in his fateful “Will”.³¹ Although espousing a Marxist ideology, the new Russian state had to operate almost entirely in semi-feudal conditions, thus running into scores of theoretical, organizational, and practical difficulties: precisely those which Rosa Luxemburg had the foresight of outlining shortly before her death.³²

³¹In his “Will”, originally published in English, October 18, 1926, in the *New York Times* and subsequently reprinted by Trotsky in 1935 along with his essay “On Lenin’s Testament” (only recently, in the wake of de-Stalinization, has the document been made public in the U.S.S.R), Lenin warned that, if the Stalin-Trotsky dispute represented a new class struggle, then the fate of the Party would be in serious doubt. Unfortunately, Lenin’s remark turned out to be correct. For an excellent analysis of Lenin’s “Testament”, see Dunayevskaya’s chapter “Lenin’s Will”, in *Marxism and Freedom, op. cit.*, pp. 205-209. As Mandel has put it, “Stalins Erfolg war nicht Konsequenz der Leninischen ‘Organisationstheorie’, sondern des Verschwindens Lenin eines wichtigen Moments dieser Konzeption.” Mandel, *op. cit.*, p. 184. Once again, Lenin and Stalinism must be sharply separated. It is interesting to notice that Stalin, the stupid fuck that he was, first admitted of the authenticity of Lenin’s “Testament” in 1926, and subsequently lied about it by presenting it as a Trotskyist fabrication. For a short history of this document, see “Foreword”, in Leon Trotsky’s *The Suppressed Testament of Lenin, op. cit.*, pp. 4-5. The first publication (in the *New York Times*) was by Max Eastman who, earlier, in his book *Since Lenin Died* (London, 1925), had already quoted selected excerpts. Since the Politbureau in Moscow had agreed to keep the document secret, after Eastman’s disclosure, it demanded that Trotsky write an outright denial, which was then reluctantly made by him in the September 1, 1925 issue of *Bolshevik*. For a full account of these events, see Isaac Deutscher *The Prophet Unarmed 1921-1929*, vol. II (New York, 1959), pp. 201-203, and 295-296. Guy Debord’s account of this, carried away by the force of its rhetoric, blurs very important details. Cf. his, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit, 1970), par. 112.

³²She wrote: “Without universal suffrage, popular consultation, freedom of press and of assembly, and without free discussion of ideas, the life of any public institution languishes, becomes a mere appearance, and every initiative falls prey to the bureaucracy. Little by little public life becomes extinct. A monopoly of party leaders with inexhaustible energy and boundless idealism directs and controls, and a dozen of prominent minds assume command among themselves. Occasionally an *elite* of workers is assembled so that they can applaud the speeches of the leaders and unanimously vote on preconstituted resolutions.

Returning to the political events preceding and leading to the publication of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, it should be recalled that, although originating in very minor details, the very same issues that had split the Second International in 1899, divided the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.³³ The latter, led by Trotsky and Plekhanov, rejected Lenin's concept of a close-knit party – at least for the time being – and proposed a slightly milder program than the one contained in *What is to be Done?* Their opposition was by no means without reasons: at that time the social-democratic party was quite weak and revolution did not appear imminent – hence a more cautious program aimed primarily at fostering growth seemed to have much merit. As a result of the split concerning this issue, Lenin suddenly found himself almost isolated from the party when Bogdanov and his friends, just released from Siberia and, as such, much more bitter and impatient than the ordinary revolutionaries, rallied to his side. Notwithstanding basic philosophical differences, Lenin could not afford additional opponents *within* the party. Consequently, he chose to overlook the philosophical debates between Bogdanov and Plekhanov, and remained allied with Bogdanov even though he knew that, at least in terms of the philosophical issues, Plekhanov was correct. As usual, Lenin during this period put *political* questions ahead of philosophical ones, whose resolution could wait until a more appropriate occasion – an occasion that eventually came in 1908 when the political situation had been considerably altered. As he wrote to Gorki: “a party man, when convinced of the falsity and *dangers* of a determinate theory has also the duty to attack it” yet he must constantly make sure that “the necessary practical party work does not suffer.”³⁴

The political climate of tsarist Russia changed drastically in 1905 when, under the strain of the restrictions imposed by the Russo-Japanese war, the Army was called to brutally suppress a peaceful demonstration meant to present a list of demands to the Tsar.³⁵ This event led to widespread strikes and riots, which culminated with the Tsar granting a Duma (or legislative parliament), whose function was to help draft legislative reforms. Of course, Lenin was opposed to participating in such a “bourgeois” enterprise, whose ultimate aim was cooptation: had the Duma been unsuccessful, it would have left everything as it was, while if it did actually fulfill its purpose it would have indefinitely postponed the revolution. These political events produced a major re-alignment. Ultimately this is a kind of collective – a dictatorship, of course, but not a dictatorship of the proletariat, rather the dictatorship of a few politicians, a dictatorship in the bourgeois or in the Jacobin sense.” Cf. Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Russische Revolution*, as quoted in Paul Fröhlich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Gedanke und Tat* (Hamburg, 1949), p. 249.

³³The whole thing originated essentially upon Lenin's request to re-organize the structure of *Iskra's* editorial board. For a detailed account of this, see Adam B. Ulam, *The Bolsheviks*, (New York, 1965), pp. 160-216.

³⁴Lenin's letter to Gorki, dated March 24, 1908, as quoted by Korsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

³⁵Cf. Pospelov, *et al.*, *Lenin, op. cit.*, p. 113. Cf. also V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 8 (Moscow, 1959), p. 108.

within the social democratic party. Contrary to Lenin, Bogdanov and the Machists argued for participation in the Duma, while, on the other hand, Plekhanov and a significant segment of the Mensheviks, encouraged by swelling party membership, began to stress a more closely-knit party organization, thus re-entering within Lenin's grace. By 1908 it had become evident that the Dumas (there had been three of them already) were a failure and Lenin was seriously considering a political re-alignment, dissatisfied as he was with Bogdanov's legalistic approach that he had been forced to accept. It was at this time that *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism*, a collection of essays written by Bogdanov and an amorphous group of Marxist writers (some of which, such as Yushevich and Valentinov, were Mensheviks), made its appearance. In this book Machism was openly presented as orthodox Marxism. This proved to be too much: no longer politically inhibited by the threat of isolation, Lenin undertook the writing of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. Meant to show how, in some basic positions, empirio-criticism, or Machism, differed drastically from Marxism, *this work had the very limited scope of ostracizing a group of philosophical deviationists from the Bolshevik ranks*. As such, it succeeded for, between the 21st and the 29th of June, 1909, Bogdanov and the Machists were officially expelled from the Bolshevik wing of the party.³⁶

Following Engels' basic distinction of philosophy into two major camps – idealism and materialism³⁷ Lenin's refutation consisted merely in showing how the Russian Machists' "advancements beyond Marx" were nothing more than relapses into the subjective idealist philosophy of the old Berkeleyian variety. According to Lenin, "the 'recent' Machists have not adduced a single argument against the materialists that had not been adduced by Bishop Berkeley."³⁸ What was seen as particularly bothersome in this account was the fact that the Russian Machists sought to pass it off as orthodox Marxism, while at the same time rejecting what Engels had called the central claim of dialectical

³⁶Cf. Lenin, *Against Revisionism*, *op. cit.*, p. 603. After the expulsion, Bogdanov remained in the party, and, after the Revolution, being a physician by training, "he returned to the medical laboratory and became the founder and director of the Moscow Institute for Blood Transfusions. In 1928 he died as a consequence of a blood transfusion experiment which, because of his uncertainty as to the outcome, he performed upon his own person." Cf. Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 516.

³⁷V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (Moscow, 1964), p. 22. As Korsch has pointed out, to identify idealism as the bourgeois philosophical viewpoint *par excellence* is not altogether correct: "Notwithstanding that some superficial phenomena of the present philosophical or scientific activity of the bourgeoisie seem to contradict such a tendency, and notwithstanding that undoubtedly there are some currents actually different and contradictory, even today, as sixty or seventy years ago, the fundamental tendency of bourgeois philosophy must be considered not the one aspiring to an idealistic conception, but, rather, the one that aspires to a materialistic conception influenced by the natural sciences." Korsch, *Marxismo e Filosofia* (Milan, 1966), p. 27. Mechanistic materialism, in fact, turned out to be the philosophy of bourgeois society. Engels and Stalinists to the contrary notwithstanding, what separates Marxist and bourgeois philosophy is the *dialectic*.

³⁸Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

materialism, i.e., the independent *being* of the world.³⁹ The Machist argument ran roughly as follows: "the materialists . . . recognize something unthinkable and unknowable — 'things-in-themselves' — matter 'outside of experience' and outside of our knowledge. They lapse into genuine mysticism by admitting the existence of something beyond, something transcending the bounds of 'experience' and knowledge."⁴⁰ The only things actually given in experience are sensations. Thus, "concepts of 'matter' or 'substance' are remnants of old uncritical views."⁴¹ In the ultimate analysis, "bodies are complexes of sensations."⁴² Lenin's answer to this was a *reductio ad absurdum* through which the whole position degenerated to a subjective idealism and "sensations . . . exist without 'substance,' i.e., thought exists without a brain!" At this point he asked the rhetorical question: "are there really philosophers capable of defending this brainless philosophy?"⁴³ and answered it in the positive: yes, Avenarius and his followers fall into this category.

As already indicated, idealism recognized for what it is did not trouble Lenin half as much as Bogdanov's *alleged* materialism which upon analysis turns out to be camouflaged idealism. Thus, Lenin subjected this philosophical fraud to the most severe criticism. In a way reminiscent of G.E. Moore's "Refutation of Idealism,"⁴⁴ he argued that "sensation is . . . the direct connection between consciousness and the external world."⁴⁵ Accordingly, Bogdanov and his friends were accused of simply restating Machism by merely altering the terminology without at all changing the meaning. Thus, they failed to avoid the pitfalls of subjective idealism. Actually, Bogdanov was much closer to Lenin's position than the treatment he received in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* seems to indicate. In a later work published in 1913, he argued along lines similar to Marx's second thesis on Feuerbach, that "the essence of experience lies in labor."⁴⁶ So refined, Bogdanov's position appears more congruent with Marxism, yet it remains idealistic at least to the extent that it retains a sharp

³⁹Korsch has pointed out that, as Engels put it in the "Preface" to the Second Edition of his *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow, 1962), p. 16, the task for Marxist theorists had not been to show the independent *being* of the world — something that very few had ever seriously doubted — but ". . . to rescue conscious dialectics from German idealist philosophy and apply it to the materialist conception of nature and history." Cf. Korsch, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴⁰Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁴Cf. G.E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (Patterson, N.J., 1959), pp. 1-30. Moore wrote: "We have then in every sensation two distinct elements, one which I call consciousness, and another which I call the object of consciousness." (P. 17.) The similarity between Lenin's early position here and bourgeois philosophy does not end with this.

⁴⁵Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁴⁶A.A. Bogdanov, *Filosofiya Zhivovo Opyta* (*A Philosophy of Living Experience*) (Moscow, 1913), p. 194. As quoted by V.V. Zenkovski, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, vol. II (New York, 1953), p. 742.

mechanical separation between the world of the things-in-themselves and the world of human experience which, instead, are dialectically related.

To what extent can it be claimed that Lenin had put forth a "theory of knowledge" of dialectical materialism in this work? In the sections examined so far he has only stated the materialist thesis that consciousness is a function of the independently existing external world. The dialectical element is introduced when, in attempting to account for some of the recent developments in the physical sciences, he argued that "... one can be a materialist and still differ on what constitutes the criterion of correctness of the images presented by our senses."⁴⁷ This presupposes a distinction between the *being* of the world and the *meaning* of the world: while the independent existence of the former cannot be seriously doubted (or else we fall to the level of psychotics or university professors, according to Lenin), the latter is *always* socio-historical in character and conditioned by the knowing subject. If the historicity of meanings is carried to its logical consequences, it becomes impossible to posit any truth as absolute and eternal. It does not follow from Lenin's own premises — unless he slips (as he does) into the metaphysical materialism that he elsewhere claims to reject⁴⁸ — that propositions of the kind "Napoleon died on May 5, 1821"⁴⁹ are either absolute or eternal truths. Propositions are meanings historically and socially determined. It is not altogether inconceivable that there may be human beings in the future, or presently on other planets, holding a radically different concept of time from the one that we now have. Similarly, although it is undeniable that there was a world before mankind came into being and there will continue to be one after the human race is extinct, it does not make much sense to say, *independently of men with a certain concept of temporality*, that "Napoleon died May 5, 1821." A confusion of the *being* of the world (a-historical) with the meaning of the world (historical) leads Lenin into arguing for the independent existence of a world which carries both its *being* and its *meaning* in its givenness.⁵⁰ Consequently, the historically determined meanings of science in 1908 are dogmatically reified and passed as natural entities constituting the being of reality. This leads to disastrous results. Thus, Lenin claimed that *Euclidean* space was part of the external world, and that "science does not doubt that the substance it is investigating ... 'necessarily' exists in ... three-dimensional space."⁵¹ This claim ran counter to his other claim that "...

⁴⁷ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴⁸ Cf. Lenin's "Conspectus of *The Holy Family* by Marx and Engels", where, following Marx and Engels, he is extremely critical of metaphysical or mechanical materialism for its *onesidedness*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 38, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-45.

⁴⁹ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁵⁰ Marx, of course, was always very careful on this point. One needs only recall the beginning of his discussion on value: "Value ... does not stalk about with a label describing what it is." Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 74. Marx never confused meaning with being: "The name of a thing is something distinct from the qualities of that thing." *Ibid.*, p. 100. The collapsing of the two, of course, represents the *Crisis of the European Sciences* as outlined by Husserl.

⁵¹ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

natural science . . . is alone capable of giving us objective truth,"⁵² when, in 1920, the general theory of relativity began to deal with non-Euclidean multi-dimensional spaces — unlike the special theory of relativity of 1905 which employed only Euclidean space. Does science give us truth, in which case we have n-dimensional spaces or is truth a function of metaphysical materialism that posits Euclidean space, and the box-universe of Newtonian physics, as ontic necessities? This mechanistic dilemma and others could have been easily avoided by not overstating the case and by retaining a dialectical distinction between *meaning* and *being*.

Lenin's enthusiasm for the science of his day led him also to misconstrue the nature of science in general which, according to historical materialism, has to be considered part of the superstructure. Thus, if meanings are historically contingent, it is nonsense to claim with Lenin that "each step in the development of science adds new grains to the sum of absolute truth."⁵³ This account presupposes, once again, a necessary mechanistic connection between the object and its meaning, which must be denied if *qualitative* scientific progress is to be allowed. If science is seen as giving us *objective* reality, we precipitate the Husserlian crisis of the sciences, according to which all activities (political in character) not following the logic of the "given" necessarily become irrational. Moreover science itself becomes an irrational activity, since it cannot tell us why we *ought* to do science. In Marxist terms, since science is of necessity a cultural and conceptual creation, it must be part of the superstructure and, as such, conditioned by its class character through and through. If so, Lenin's positing of bourgeois science as science *per se* turns out, in the ultimate analysis, to be a sophisticated bourgeois apology, since it implicitly accepts the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie by hiding its class character and *presenting its ideology as the reflection of the natural state of affairs*. Science today is the ruling ideology and "the ruling ideology of every society is the ideology of the ruling class."⁵⁴ All of this could have been easily avoided by Lenin if he had stayed away from the prevailing mechanistic scientism of the period by simply asserting that science only gives us *contingent* knowledge: to the extent that science is part of the superstructure, it is very likely to be radically altered as a consequence of some major qualitative changes in the socio-economic structure.⁵⁵ More concretely, in our age "the historical character of 'facts' that science believes to know with such 'purity' appears to be dependant in an even

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 121. This, of course, is the continuity thesis held by many bourgeois philosophers of science and by some scientists such as Bohr. For a thorough-going criticism of such a view, see Paul K. Feyerabend, "Niels Bohr's Interpretation of Quantum Theory", in H. Feigl and G. Maxwell, eds., *Current Issues in the Philosophy of Science* (New York, 1961), pp. 371-389.

⁵⁴ As quoted by Mandel in "Lenin und das Problem des proletarischen Klassenbewusstseins," *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁵⁵ It does not follow from this that science cannot give us valid knowledge. Both the later Lenin, and Lukács after him, accepted the relative validity of science, even though they considered it superstructural and exhibiting class-features like all other superstructural entities. For similar arguments along these lines, see Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York, 1962), p. 47ff.; and E.A.

worse way. These facts are, in effect (as products of historical evolution), not only implied by a continuing change, but yet, they are – *precisely in the structure of their objectivity – the products of a determinate historical epoch: that of capitalism.*⁵⁶ The very character of objectivity as theoretical *production* grounds science dialectically within the concrete socio-historical frame of reference whence it arises.⁵⁷

But even if we do give Lenin the benefit of the doubt and, with Paci, we consider his "... defense of realism in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* as engaged in the necessity to fight idealism in a determinate situation,"⁵⁸ it still remains an undialectical refutation, and, as such an abstract negation that fails to transcend what it seeks to negate. According to Lukács, "the opposition of the dialectical and of the 'critical method' (or the method of vulgar materialism or of Mach is itself... a social problem."⁵⁹ As such, a concrete dialectic negation would have consisted of a concrete study into the social basis of Machist philosophy – meaning by "concrete study", "relation to society as a whole."⁶⁰ Lenin never undertook such a study and, as he put it in the third chapter of his book, the idealist and the materialist positions are "the ultimate, most comprehensive concepts which epistemology, in point of fact, has so far not yet surpassed."⁶¹ This amounts to abstractly contraposing two equally inadequate metaphysical constructs the choice among which becomes entirely arbitrary.⁶² What Lenin actually meant to do was to posit the theoretical quibbling as a reflection of the objective socio-economic class-struggle. In fact, in the last page of the book, it turns out that "the struggle of parties in philosophy is a struggle which, in the last analysis, reflects the tendencies and ideology of antagonistic classes in modern society."⁶³ Yet for all intents and purposes,

Burt, *In Search of Philosophical Understanding* (New York, 1965), Chapter 7: "Science and Philosophy", pp. 177-211.

⁵⁶ Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, *op. cit.* p. 20. Italics in the original.

⁵⁷ Cf. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964), p. 168. He wrote: "No matter how one defines truth and objectivity, they remain related to the human agents of theory and practice, and to their ability to comprehend and change their world." Cf. also Burt, *op. cit.*, p. 199: "... if objective truth is to be attained, some responsible enterprise must accept the arduous task of objectification. The universe does not present us with objective truth on a platter: it has to be won by the strenuous exercise of creative imagination."

⁵⁸ Enzo Paci, *Funzione delle Scienze e Significato dell'Uomo* (Milan, 1963), p. 346.

⁵⁹ Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶¹ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁶² When subsequently, under Stalinism, Zdanov reifies this bogus distinction to the level of the *only* meaningful contrast in philosophy, the objective result is the ushering in of a new Dark Age where any inquiry, concrete or otherwise, becomes impossible. For a severe criticism of this abstract dogma, see the "Note to the Italian Edition" of Lukács *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*; György Lukács, *La Distruzione della Ragione*, translated by Eraldo Arnaud (Torino, 1959), pp. IX-XI.

⁶³ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

Lenin does not show this, and to this day no *Marxist analysis* of the history of Marxism (and its deviations such as Stalinism and revisionism) has been given.

Before investigating the radical revision of his whole philosophical outlook after 1914 (under the shock of the total collapse of the Second International), it is important to locate *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* within the previously outlined account of the history of Marxism. According to this, the proletariat of advanced industrial societies ceases to be revolutionary precisely at the time when its conditions of existence begin to improve as a result of new imperialist economic relationships. To the extent that classical Marxism is the consciousness of the proletariat as a revolutionary class, it ceases to be that as soon as the new economic situation recasts that same Western European proletariat in a relatively privileged position with respect to the rest of the world's working class. At this point classical Marxism degenerates to the level of an ideology and, in terms of Korsch's periodization of the history of Marxism, it coincides with the second stage, where the philosophical component is either de-emphasized or altogether ignored. Economically, the break can be traced to the period when capitalism, whose continued existence can be guaranteed only by the erosion of surrounding noncapitalist economies, exhausts, or approaches exhaustion of, the remaining peasant and neo-feudal national economies and turns to nonindustrial societies for the critically needed supply of new demand and raw materials. In the earlier period of national expansion the opponent had been feudal ideology and, as it developed during the 18th century, idealism versus mechanical materialism. In the more advanced stage, however, it becomes scientism versus primitivism, theology, and anything that could possibly stand in the way of international imperialist efficiency. Lenin's posing of the philosophical issue in his *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* thus reflects the economic backwardness of Russian society which, in 1908, was in fact still undergoing the transition from feudalism to bourgeois domination. Gramsci's call for a revolution against Marx's *Capital* in Russia was well justified; if Marxism were understood in the mechanistic and naturalistic sense of the Second International, then it proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the future of Russia would of necessity be bourgeois for a long time before one could even begin to think concretely about socialism.⁶⁴ Although Lenin never did publicly repudiate *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* and, as Dunayevskaya has shown,⁶⁵ he certainly had many more important things to do after the success of the October Revolution, it seems that he did become well aware of its limitations after 1914 and his careful study of Hegel's philosophy. Hence, he did have it reprinted, but it was not intended to function as the philosophical bible that it became for the next two generations of Stalinist philosophers. Rather, it was meant as a stage: "First one reads Plekhanov, then *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, then . . . Lenin himself continued his Hegelian readings even at the height of the famine."⁶⁶ In fact, when the new philosophical journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* was established, Lenin's directives to the editors

⁶⁴Gramsci, "La Rivoluzione contro il Capitale," in *Avanti*, November 24, 1918.

⁶⁵Dunayevskaya, "Lenin's Philosophical Ambivalence," *op. cit.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

were not to concentrate on the struggle with idealism, nor to continue the program of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, but rather: (1) "the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, i.e., the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his *Capital* and in his historical and political works;"⁶⁷ (2) "Taking as our basis Marx's method of applying the Hegelian dialectics materialistically . . . we can and should treat his dialectics from all sides, print excerpts from Hegel's principal works . . .;"⁶⁸ (3) "The group of editors and contributors of the magazine *Under the Banner of Marxism* should, in my opinion be a kind of 'Society of Materialist friends of Hegelian Dialectics'."⁶⁹

That *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* became the text upon which all subsequent Soviet Marxism elaborated the philosophical bases of Marxism is itself a phenomenon in need of a *Marxist explanation* – and such an explanation will have to take as its starting point the actual objective economic situation in the U.S.S.R. during the period of consolidation of the Communist regime. At any rate, whatever the status of Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* it certainly does not provide an account of the philosophical foundations of Marxism. Even though Lenin outgrew his crude epistemology and his political programs show a living dialectic unsurpassed to this day, he never reformulated his obsolete earlier account, and left Marxism as much of a *fragment* as he had found it at the turn of the century. The Hegelian Marxism of Lukács, Gramsci, Korsch and others, which historically developed immediately after the Great War, sought to remedy precisely such a theoretical *incompleteness* and redirect a whole spectrum of political activities, which, not concretely grounded in the objective historical situation, either failed, or produced altogether counter-productive results. But these efforts either fell short, or were soon completely stopped by the development of Stalinism in Russia, and Fascism in Italy and Germany. As such, it remains today as the main task of the New Left to pick up precisely where the theoretical elaboration was left off so as to expedite the development of a concrete political praxis.

⁶⁷ Lenin, *Selected Works*, vol XI, p. 77, as quoted by Dunayevskaya.

⁶⁸ As quoted by Dunayevskaya, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ Lenin, *Selected Works*, vol. XI, p. 78. As quoted by Dunayevskaya.

Lenin and Luxemburg: Negation in Theory and Praxis

by
Russell Jacoby

The unity of theory and praxis is not achieved by incantation. Rather the ritualized formula evokes a unity whose disunity is to be recognized before it is to be surpassed. This disunity can neither be wished or thought away; it is the heritage of the very old violence that man suffered and suffers, the forceful and fateful separation of physical and mental labor, and the cleavage remains as long as the violence remains, till the free society. From the very texts to which it appeals, as T.W. Adorno has written, the dogma of the identity of theory and praxis is undialectical.¹

In Marxism, or at least in Marx, the divergence of theory and praxis is neither sanctioned nor dismissed – the alternatives for bourgeois thought. Its dismissal, be it by pragmatism, positivism, or Marxist revisionism gains the unity of theory and praxis by giving up theory. Achieved is the unity of bad theory and bad praxis: this society. It is no accident that revisionism, as often found in trade unions, had a penchant for nontheory,² or when it took up theory, as with Bernstein, it cast off the Marxian “dialectical scaffolding” and “utopian mode of thought”³ for a renovated and renovating progress that changed nothing. Against their ossified separation or their bad identity, theory and praxis in Marx are, in Adorno’s word, discontinuous; or theory projects praxis, is not itself praxis nor absolutely distinct from it.

Theory takes leave of praxis, the existent praxis, so as to return to it; without taking leave it falls irresistably under the sway of the given and those who organize the given; it reduplicates where it wants to remake. Rather, the effort to alter the given presupposes the effort to comprehend it, to escape from the blind force of things so as to find the living relations behind. From Marx’s early formulations, such as the “reform of consciousness”, “realization of philosophy” to *Capital*, theory preceeded liberation in fact. “. . . I should have really regarded myself as *impractical*,” Marx wrote once, “if I had pegged out without completely finishing my book [*Capital*].”⁴ The point of the well known thesis on Feuerbach, that philosophers have only interpreted the world, is not to give up philosophy or theory, but to give up the “only”.

To the degree that theory and praxis cannot unite, the specific mediations between are crucial. To follow Lukács “organization is the form of mediation between theory and praxis.”⁵ The specific form of organization was that in dispute between Lenin and Luxemburg, and it, as mediation, was in turn derived from conflicting theories of the proletariat, its place as subject and object within

¹T.W. Adorno, “Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis,” *Stichworte* (Frankfurt, 1969), pp. 169-192.

²See P.Gay, *Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* (New York, 1962), p.138.

³E. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York, 1961), p.212.

⁴Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1965), p. 185.

⁵G. Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Amsterdam, 1967: photoreproduction of Berlin, 1923 edition), p. 302.

the whole. Lukács' own reading of the dispute may no longer be adequate; loyalty to the dialectic entails disloyalty to its adherents.

The interpretation of the revisionism or opportunism promising not the end of capitalist exploitation "but simply the regulation of this exploitation"⁶ brought to the fore the Lenin-Luxemburg differences. To Luxemburg of *Social Reform or Revolution* (1900), revisionism was a by-product of working class leadership, not of the working class itself; as such it expressed the "momentary weakness" of the working class, and would be remedied not by a closed and centralized party but by Marxist theory reaching the proletariat masses themselves. The proletariat mass, she wrote, must become "acquainted, actively and in detail" with the present controversy between revisionism and revolutionary theory. "As long as the theoretical knowledge remains the privilege of a handful of 'academicians' in the Party, the latter will face the danger of going astray. Only when the great mass of workers take the keen and dependable weapons of scientific socialism in their hands will . . . all opportunist currents come to naught . . . 'Quantity will do it!'"⁷

To Luxemburg of "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" (1904), the party advocated by Lenin seemed mechanical, bureaucratic, and conservative, countering the very essence of a mass party. The "claim is astounding . . . that it is possible to avoid any possibility of opportunism in the Russian movement by writing down certain words, instead of others, in the party constitution." Such an attempt is harmful, injuring the "natural pulsation of a living organism," diminishing "its resistance and combatative spirit." "It is illusory and contrary to historical experience to hope to fix, once and for always, the direction of the revolutionary socialist struggle with the aid of formal means . . ."⁸

A change in Luxemburg's analysis reveals the consistency. While in 1900 revisionism was weak and momentary, in 1904 it was an "inevitable phase of the historic development of the labor movement," but would pass on its own. "Such danger can be overcome only by the movement itself . . ." and not by setting an organization above or against the movement. The inner connection between revisionism as temporary and inevitable was the reduction of an organized subject that was to alter the given development. Social reality was not to be altered from without, but from within, but itself, by its own self-movement. Logically then, Luxemburg could, and did, accuse Lenin of 'subjectivism', "The unconscious comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the historic process." Lenin, she wrote, "fails to perceive that the only 'subject' which merits today the role of director is the collective 'ego' of the working class."⁹

To Lenin, the charge of subjectivism, in Luxemburg's terms, was acceptable. Revisionism to Lenin was more than an epiphenomenon that would

⁶R. Luxemburg, *Social Reform or Revolution* (Ceylon, 1966), p. 24.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁸Luxemburg, "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy," in *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism* (Ann Arbor, 1961), pp. 105-6.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 93 and pp. 107-8.

pass on its own. "What we now frequently experience only in the domain of ideology, namely the dispute over theoretical amendments to Marx . . . is bound to be experienced by the working class on an incomparably larger scale."¹⁰ That scale diminished if not erased the possibility that revisionism could be successfully resisted by the self-movement of the proletariat masses themselves. Rather, it called for an organization from, as it were, outside the proletarian masses. While, as Lenin admitted later, he had "exaggerated" the role of the organization in *What is to be Done?*, he had presented it more exactly in "Where to Begin?" "... It is quite possible and historically much more probable that the autocracy will collapse under the impact of one of the spontaneous outbursts or unforeseen political complications. But no political party . . . can base its activities on the anticipation of such outbursts and complications. We must go our own way . . ."¹¹ To "go our own way" was to resist the way things were going; yet the organization as subject does not so much stand blankly against the movement, as enter into it. Or as Lenin wrote, "To say, however, that ideologists (i.e., politically conscious leaders) cannot divert the movement from the path determined by the interaction of environment and elements, is to ignore the simple truth that conscious elements *participate* in this interaction and in the determination of the path . . ."¹²

Specific mediations between theory and mass acceptance of the theory, such as the Leninist party, were in general abhorrent to Luxemburg. Her loyalty was to Marxist theory and its mass base, neither to be mediated. Hence, for example, the Bolshevik policy of self-determination of nations was to her a violation of the international nature of the class struggle, "a hollow nationalist phraseology . . . the very banner of counter-revolution." But to Lenin it was another case of mediation between the general requirements of theory and those of the particular reality. In "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" he accuses Luxemburg of "continually lapsing into generalities about self-determination." Rather "the categorical requirement of Marxist theory is that it be examined with *definite* historical limits, and if it refers to a particular country . . . that account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others."¹³ The insistence on the international nature of the proletarian struggle at every point was untenable to Lenin; he wrote once that "to wait until the working class makes revolution on an international scale means that everybody will cool off waiting; it is nonsense."¹⁴ Or the insistence on mass acceptance as such is contentless; he wrote, if the criterion "were that which is immediately, directly, and to the greatest degree accessible to the broad masses, we should have to preach anti-semitism."¹⁵

¹⁰ Lenin, "Marxism and Revisionism," *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1963), XV, p. 39.

¹¹ "Where to Begin?" *Works*, V, p. 24.

¹² "A Talk with the Defenders of Economism," *Works*, V, p. 316.

¹³ "Right of Nations to Self-Determination," *Works*, V, p. 316. Cf. "Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," *Works*, XXXI, p. 89.

¹⁴ Cited in A.G. Meyer, *Leninism* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 179.

¹⁵ Lenin, "A propos of the 'Profession de Foi,'" *Works*, IV, p. 291.

As Luxemburg herself knew, the logic of her position, eliminating mediation, presented the danger of tossing between the two extremes, theory and the mass base, giving one up for the other. "Social Democracy must logically grope," she wrote first in *Social Reform or Revolution* and again in her essay on the Russian party organization, "on its road of development between the following two rocks: abandoning the mass character of the party or abandoning its final goal, falling into bourgeois reform or into sectarianism . . ."¹⁶

The persistence of revisionism to Luxemburg did not imply that it could not be resolved by the proletariat's own self-movement. Where Lenin concluded in the famous words of *What is to be Done?* that "the history of all countries shows that the working class exclusively by its own efforts is able to develop trade union consciousness . . ." and "the workers can acquire class political consciousness *only from without* . . ." Luxemburg continued to see revisionism as a function of leadership. Where Lenin reconceived the contradiction of the proletariat, conceiving it only from without, Luxemburg retained the notion of the immanent negation, the negation to emerge from the self-movement of the proletariat itself. This difference is the decisive one.

The "Junius Pamphlet", Luxemburg's anonymously published attack on the Social Democrat's war position, preserved her analysis of opportunism as a leadership phenomenon. The sellout of the German Social Democracy "cannot be a mere accident . . . It must have deep significant objective causes. But perhaps these causes can be found in the errors of the leaders of the proletariat, the Social-Democracy itself."¹⁷ Her pamphlet *Mass Strike, Political Parties and Trade Unions*, defending the revolutionary position of the social-democrats against the reformism of the trade unions, perhaps best presented her reasoning. "The alleged antagonism between Social-Democracy and trade unions shrinks to an antagonism between Social-Democracy and a certain part of the trade union officials . . ." In "the consciousness of the million trade unionists the Party and the trade unions are actually *one* . . . the trade union movement is not that which is reflected in . . . a minority of trade union leaders but that which lives in the consciousness of the mass of proletariat . . . In this consciousness the trade union movement is a part of Social-Democracy. 'And what it is, that should it dare appear.'"¹⁸

Lenin writing on the anonymous "Junius Pamphlet" restated, unknowingly, his objections to Luxemburg: one was the insufficiency of its analysis of revisionism, confining it to the leadership; and the other, the insufficiency of the praxis projected, the lack of an organized subject. "It is impossible to *account* for the 'betrayal' without linking it up with opportunism as a trend with a long history behind it . . ." Lenin's conclusions on the anonymous author pinpointed the individual nature of the action projected, the necessary result of an

¹⁶*Social Reform or Revolution*, p. 61. See "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy," in *The Russian Revolution* . . . , p. 105.

¹⁷*The Crisis in the German Social Democracy* ("The Junius Pamphlet") (Ceylon, 1967), p. 8.

¹⁸*The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (Ceylon, 1964), p. 71, p. 75.

unmediated relation between theory and praxis. "Junius's pamphlet conjures up in our mind the picture of a *lone* man who has no comrades in an illegal organization, accustomed to thinking out revolutionary slogans to their conclusions and systematically educating the masses in their spirit."¹⁹

The "lone man" was to spring the contradiction, the proletariat, that was ready to be sprung. As cited above, Luxemburg concluded her pamphlet appealing to the revolutionary essence of the trade unions to show forth with these words: "And what it is, that should it dare appear." ("Und was sie ist, das wage sie zu scheinen.") The formulation implies the classic construction of dialectical logic: essence contradicts appearance. Here the revolutionary essence contradicts the revisionist appearance. For Luxemburg the revolutionary essence of the trade unions would transcend revisionism once thought reached it, once it became conscious of itself; invoked, as it were, was the formulation of the young Marx: "and once the lightning of thought has squarely struck this ingenuous soil of the people, the emancipation of the Germans into men will be accomplished."²⁰

With Lenin the locus of the contradiction has shifted; it is not *expressed within* the working class; the contradiction of appearance and essence is not that of leaders and led, as Luxemburg would have it. To conceive of it this way would be, to Lenin, to underestimate the reality of the appearance, here the strength and entrenchment of revisionism among the masses themselves. Rather the revisionist policy of the trade unions, and of not only the trade unions, expressed in some form their essence. The masses themselves are not removed from the appearance, but participate in it. That contradiction of Luxemburg's reformulated for Lenin's analysis would read: And what it is, it does appear. As it stands the statement seems utterly positivistic — and even Lenin was misled for a while. Objective reality is as simple as sensory perception of objective reality: revisionism of the working class is revisionism of the working class. And so Lenin's major published philosophical work *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) was founded on a philosophy that has been labeled "primitive natural realism". Lenin accused the Machians, for example, of not trusting "the evidence of the sense organs . . . They do not recognize objective reality, independent of man, as the source of our sensations. They do not regard sensations as a true copy of this objective reality."²¹

And yet this was not Marxism, and could not be. The reduction of consciousness to a mere reflector restored that which Marx had surpassed, the polarization of thought and object, theory and praxis; it precluded the explosion where consciousness is not passive, but is a critical moment in the transformation of man from thing to self-activity. In reifying the relation of subject and object, it apologizes for the brutality of either. As Merleau-Ponty has written, the "philosophy of the pure object and of the pure subject are equally terrorist."²² Lenin's formulations in their indifference to the dialectic of

¹⁹ Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet," *Works*, XXII, p. 307; pp. 316-17; p. 319.

²⁰ Marx, "Contributions to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," *Marx and Engels on Religion* (New York, 1964), pp. 57-8.

²¹ Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Moscow, 1963), p. 126.

appearance and essence, subject and object, mirror those of Luxemburg; one giving up the essence to take up the appearance as the fact, the other giving up the appearance to take up essence.

Politically, Lenin surpassed this non-Marxist construction, but not philosophically until he studied Hegel in 1914, that is, the philosophy that was assumed and implied in his political theory differed from and opposed his self-proclaimed philosophy. Politically, he followed Marx; the working class and its appearance are contradictory. Or as Marx put it in the conclusion of the *Poverty of Philosophy*, the working class exists "in itself" but is not yet "for itself". With Lenin this contradiction does *exist* within the working class, but it is *expressed* only from without. Revisionism is real, arises from the proletariat itself, but is not identical with the working class essence. Appearance does and does not contradict essence. In Lenin's political thought appearance is dialectical, unlike Luxemburg's where appearance and essence are derived from different and discrete sources, leadership and mass, and each is left untouched by the other.

Only with Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* of 1914-15 did his philosophy 'catch-up' to his political theory and transcend the positivism of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Annotation on appearance and essence: "In the unessential, in Semblance, there is a movement of not-Being . . . i.e. the unessential, seemingly superficial vanishes more often, does not hold so 'tightly', does not 'sit so firmly' as 'Essence.' Etwa: the movement of a river the foam above and the deep currents below. *But even the foam* is an expression of essence."²³ Politically translated: revisionism is real, is "an expression of essence", but not as real, as "firm" as the revolutionary essence. He commented: "The more petty philosophers dispute whether essence *or* that which is immediately given should be taken as basic (Kant, Hume, all the Machists). Instead of *or* Hegel puts *and*, explaining the concrete content of this 'and'."²⁴ The crux of the Luxemburg-Lenin difference lies here, in the theory of appearance. To Lenin, the "concrete content of the 'and'" defines the appearance/essence relation. As such it can only be countered by being *undone*, by being met on its own grounds, by concrete mediation: the organization from without. Luxemburg dismisses this concrete relation of appearance and essence by deriving appearance from leadership, essence from the masses. The task then differs: it is only to reach the masses, bypassing the appearance, not working through it.

Lenin's political and philosophical analysis suggests a reformulation of the dialectic. That theory could only arise from without implied that the within was incapable of producing its negation; the revolutionary subject, the proletariat, is swallowed and stifled by the course of things, hence, revisionism. The immanent negation is both terrorized and duped by the positive. The dialectic of the proletariat, its self-movement, is rendered a dynamic; the self-movement shows as the non-movement of a closed-circle. Subject and object are reconciled in a bad immediacy forming, as Adorno remarks, a malicious retort to the hopes of

²²M. Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique* (Paris, 1955) p. 126.

²³Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks* (Moscow, 1963), p. 130.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 134.

idealist philosophy. To the point that the immanent dialectic is stilled, consciousness can only come from without. Yet nothing is outside the whole, only outside a part that is defined by the whole. The dialectical method, as Lukács and followers have emphasized, is not distinguished from bourgeois thought merely by its ability to know the whole, but rather the relation of the part to the whole is in principle different than in bourgeois thought. "The essence of the dialectical method -- from this standpoint -- consists in that every moment, correctly and dialectically grasped, contains the whole."²⁵

Marcuse in a small essay "Zum Begriff der Negation in der Dialektik" has questioned these key components of the dialectic, that of the immanent negation, and that of the whole. He suggests "the materialist dialectic remains under the spell of the idealist reasoning, in the positive, so long as it does not destroy the notion according to which the future is already rooted within the existent." Rather it may be that as a result of the integration and strength of capitalism the "liberating negation" emerges from without. This notion, Marcuse indicates, is not foreign to the dialectic. Even with Hegel, the State as guardian of the general interests was not derived from bourgeois society, the realm of the particular, but stood outside it.²⁶ The State in Hegel, in Adorno's words, was founded on the "insight in the irreconcilability of the contradictions of bourgeois society by its own self-movement."²⁷ It expressed from without what could not be expressed from within. The reformulation suggests that the immanent negation of an antagonistic part, unable by its own self-movement to resolve itself, is displaced and emerges outside.

Here as elsewhere the reformulation is not to be settled as a question of method, abstracted from the concrete, but as a question of comprehending and mediating the concrete. As if to remind, Lenin borrowed the concept of consciousness from without from Kautsky who, it turned out, shared nothing with Lenin. Lenin for years missed the hidden motif of Kautsky's thought, the sanctioning of the separation of theory and praxis; his theory was that of the "philosophy of the pure object". Fetishizing the 'within' which in the absence of an immanent negation endorsed the official progress. Unlike Lenin and Luxemburg, but like Bernstein, Kautsky jettisoned revolutionary consciousness for a mindless world of things that offered more of the same. Hence it is no accident that Kautsky, from early years, was drawn to Darwin. "Historical theory seeks to be nothing but the application of Darwinism to social development."²⁸ To Kautsky of *Terrorism and Communism*, the Marxist conception is that of a "perfectly natural development in history" entailing "for the proletariat . . . a certain amount of resignation."²⁹ Success and increasing numbers are guaranteed. "The most effective weapon of the proletariat is its numerical strength." And as he wrote, "the proletariat grows always in numbers,

²⁵Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, p. 186.

²⁶Marcuse, "Zum Begriff der Negation in der Dialektik", *Ideen zu einer Kritischen Theorie der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt, 1969), pp. 185-90.

²⁷T.W. Adorno, *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt, 1963), p. 41.

²⁸Cited in and see E. Mathia, "Kautsky und Kautskyanismus", *Marxismusstudien* (Tübingen, 1957), Zweite Folge, pp. 151-197.

²⁹K. Kautsky, *Terrorism and Communism* (London, 1920), pp. 154-5.

strength, and intelligence, it is ever approaching the climax of its development."³⁰

Yet this was not the only motif in Kautsky's thought, and Lenin, distant from the German scene, took Kautsky and the German Social Democrats as an example of the best of Marxists. What discredited them to Lenin and others was not at first their theory, but the practice of theory. Again theory and praxis do not and cannot coincide. If one is to condemn the German Social Democrats for violation of the theory of the international nature of the proletarian struggle in rallying to the German war state, one could as well indict the Bolsheviks for just as grave violation of the same theory, done and begun at the signing of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, their separate peace treaty with Imperial Germany. Allegiance to the whole, the whole proletarian movement, was in each case abandoned for the sake of the part. What is in question is not the simple violation of theory, but its concrete content. Insofar as theory and praxis must separate, the quality of convergence or divergence – the concrete mediations – is crucial.

The fear of losing mass support was analogous in both cases. The German Social Democrats conjectured that if they opposed the war "the socialist organization would be swept away by popular resentment."³¹ Analogously, Lenin argued against those advocating a revolutionary war against the Germans: "The vast majority of peasants, soldiers, and workers are in favor of a policy of peace. This is not the policy of the Bolsheviks; it is not a party policy at all – but it is the policy of the workers, soldiers, and peasants . . ."³²

That which follows reveals how the mediations differed. It seems clear that from the initial statement in the Reichstag on August 4, "We need to secure the culture and the independence of our country . . . We shall not abandon our Fatherland in its hour of peril . . ."³³ that the German Social Democrats brought no or little socialist theory to bear on the situation; while practice retreated (and whether it had to or not is questionable) so did theory retreat; it did not preserve its truth, but rather picked up the prevailing justifications. The "Junius Pamphlet" cited the socialist press extensively and concluded: "after the Social Democratic group had stamped the war as a war of defense for the German nation and European culture, the Social Democrat press proceeded to hail it as the Savior of the oppressed nations! Hindenburg became the executor of Marx and Engels."

The Bolshevik response differed in kind. Faced with the inevitable, the inability to remain true to the international proletariat – and this inevitability was contested by many – theory itself did not 'retreat', but was brought to bear on the situation. Trotsky's actions at Brest-Litovsk were symbolic of the Bolshevik attempt to mediate between theory and practice, bowing to the inevitable, surrendering to the Germans, while remaining true to the theory of the international proletarian revolution. From the peasants and workers that

³⁰K. Kautsky, *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (Ann Arbor, 1964), p. 24.

³¹Cited in A.J. Berlau, *German Social Democratic Party* (New York, 1949), p. 73.

³²Cited in Meyer, *Leninism*, p. 42.

³³Cited in Berlau, p. 75.

were brought to the conference, to the repudiation of diplomatic niceties and Trotsky's inflammatory speeches; from the propaganda material distributed to the German troops at the conference site, to Trotsky's bold conclusion – neither peace nor war – the actions expressed theory; or theory was practiced.³⁴ As Lenin knew, these specific mediations, ultimately dependent on an imminent German revolution, were the wrong ones. "We cannot put our trust in the German proletariat. Germany, only pregnant with revolution in the second month, must not be mistaken for the ninth."³⁵ To stake everything on the assumption that the German Revolution would begin immediately was self-delusion.³⁶ Even when Lenin was proved correct, and the Germans did advance again, and exact harsher terms, theory did not withdraw. At the signing, a mediation was still attempted; Sokolnikov stated that "this peace is no peace of understanding and agreement but a peace which Russia, grinding its teeth, is forced to accept . . . This is a peace which gives back the land to the land-lords and again drives the workers into the serfdom of the factory owners . . . Under the present conditions the Soviet Government . . . is unable to withstand the armed offensive of German Imperialism and is compelled for the sake of saving Revolutionary Russia to accept the conditions put before it . . ."³⁷

Brest-Litovsk was more than a symbol; it displayed the configuration of forces that would be the future for the Russian Revolution; the external enemies defined and deformed the revolutionary practices – and theory knew why and said so. The whole poisoned the part. History, wrote Lenin "has given birth in 1918 to two unconnected halves of socialism", the political conditions exist in Russia and "the socio-economic conditions" in Germany.³⁸ The result of this unexpected crystallization of forces was deadly, redefining the Russian Revolution towards saving itself, towards gaining a "respite" or "breathing space". Lenin's last article "Better Fewer, but Better" (1923) stated that while the European capitalists did not crush the revolution, they did "prevent it from at once taking the step forward that would have justified the forecasts of socialism . . . that socialism contains within itself gigantic forces and that mankind had now entered a new stage of development . . ."³⁹

Here Luxemburg's analysis seconded Lenin's: the failure of the whole deformed the success of the part. Brought to the fore was the category of the whole, and implied was a redefinition of the relation between within and without, here the within and the without of the Russian Revolution. The praxis projected by Luxemburg and Lenin differed only as to the location of the author. For Lenin, in the face of the hostility of the whole, it meant

³⁴For the details see J.W. Wheeler-Bennet, *Brest-Litovsk: the Forgotten Peace* (London, 1938).

³⁵Cited in Wheeler-Bennet, p. 192.

³⁶Lenin, "Fourth All-Russian Congress of Soviets", *Works*, XXVII, p. 186.

³⁷Cited in Wheeler-Bennet, pp. 268-9.

³⁸Lenin, "Left-Wing Childishness and Petty Bourgeois Mentality", *Works*, XXVII, p. 340.

³⁹Lenin, "Better Fewer, but Better", *Last Letters and Articles* (Moscow, n.d.), p. 56.

consolidating the gains. "War is inexorable and puts the question with unsparing sharpness: either perish, or catch up and overtake the advanced countries economically as well."⁴⁰ "We shall have to put up with many years of poverty, of retrogression to barbarism . . . The imperialist war has thrown us back to barbarism."⁴¹ The political part of socialism, encircled by hostile countries, had to laboriously build the economic part. For Luxemburg, the goal and necessity was revolution in the other parts, Germany and Europe, which in dissolving the hostility of the whole would save the revolution.

Her critique of the Russian Revolution, as even Lukács seemed to have missed, was more a critique of the international proletariat that isolated the revolution. It was not, as it might seem, simply an extension of her previous critique of the Bolsheviks. The world had changed since then; now there was revolution, and her objections to the political forms in Russia were as much a critique of the whole that informed and deformed them. She did not assume that the Russian Revolution was an independent and autonomous creation and, like Kautsky, recommended changes, but took it as refracted through the whole, to be undone or redone by the whole. While the German revolution was to be sparked from without by the Russian Revolution, so would the Russian Revolution be completed from within by the European proletariat.

She was undertaking a criticism of the Russian Revolution so as to overcome the "fatal inertia of the German masses." For it was clear from the "elementary conception of socialist politics", that given the abandoned and isolated condition of the Russian Revolution even the greatest revolutionary energy and idealism "are incapable of realizing democracy and socialism but only distorted attempts at either."⁴² The deformed part can only be saved by the whole; the praxis was clear. "Let the German Government Socialists cry that the rule of the Bolsheviks in Russia is a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . If it was or is such, that is only because it is a product of the behavior of the German proletariat . . . it is only internationally that the socialist order of society can be realized."⁴³ Left to itself, she wrote elsewhere, "it is the fatal logic of the objective situation that every Socialist party which comes to power in Russia today must follow false tactics . . ."⁴⁴

The "without", here the Russian Revolution, expressed the contradiction still suspended within the European countries, and "within" that suspended contradiction it could only exist imperfectly. Falsified in its form, it needed to be completed by the European proletariat. It was at once part of the whole and catalyst for the whole. Implicitly a reformulation of the dialectic was executed which Lenin in his political and philosophical analysis of revisionism had already indicated – and which today may preserve its truth. To the degree that an antagonistic part from its relation to the whole is totalitarian, suppressing and

⁴⁰ Cited in E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution I* (Baltimore, 1966), p. 132.

⁴¹ Lenin, "First All-Russian Congress on Adult Education", *Works* XXIX, p. 364.

⁴² See Marcuse's discussion in *Soviet Marxism* (N.Y., 1961), pp. 28f.

⁴³ Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* . . . p. 28; p. 79.

⁴⁴ Cited in J.P. Nettle, *Rosa Luxemburg* (London, 1966), p. 699.

diverting the self-movement of the negation, the negation is displaced and emerges outside the part. Integration here is purchased by disintegration there; the negative beaten and manipulated to a positive takes its revenge.

The cohesion and synchronization of capitalism have relocated the negative which does not emerge, or more precisely does not *yet* emerge, where it at first exists, but rather is found outside – in the Party for the workers in the Russia of Lenin, in Russia for the Germany of Luxemburg, in the third world for late capitalism . . . and in the blacks, the young, the new left for the workers within late capitalism? The battle rages from without. It is here, for the moment, where the hopes, possibilities, and realities of liberation encounter the full fury of capitalism; it is here where capitalism learns its own secret, violence to man and nature and where liberation discovers its own strength.

Yet outside and inside are dialectical; their reification signals their capitulation. As Luxemburg dedicated herself to the Russian Revolution by working for the European revolution, so too will the negation that surfaces from without be completed from within. That theory here as elsewhere does not unite with praxis is only too evident, as testifies the fate of Luxemburg and the Russian Revolution. But if, as Adorno has written, humanity awoke with the cleavage of theory from praxis, so too is it true that it awoke to the nightmare of history, and only with the end of the cleavage will the nightmare be past.

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Anthropology, Dialectics, and Phenomenology in Hegel*

by
Enzo Paci

Hegel places logic at the beginning of philosophy. But philosophical thought does not begin out of nothing and, as such, philosophy must presume "a certain *acquaintance* with its objects . . . and a certain interest in them . . . were it for no other reason than this: that in point of time the mind makes general *images* objects, long before it makes *notions* of them, and that it is only through these mental images, and by recourse to them, that the thinking mind rises to know and comprehend thinkingly."¹

Although Hegel *systematically* places logic in an absolutely primary position, he also sees logic as a point of arrival that presupposes a long pathway, discussed in his *Phenomenology of Mind*. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel writes: "The beginning is logical in that it is to be made within the sphere of Thought existing freely for itself, in other words, in pure Knowledge; its mediacy here arises from the fact that pure knowledge is Consciousness in its last and absolute truth."² This "Consciousness" is, for Hegel, the "science of consciousness", i.e., a phenomenology of spirit whereby consciousness attains pure and absolute knowledge. Thus, "logic assumes the science of the spirit which appears", i.e., phenomenology as a science of gradual appearances and of necessary stages enabling spirit to attain absolute knowledge.³ The logical structure of this knowledge -- a structure which is always valid for both reality and knowledge -- is the same one represented by phenomenology.

All this relates to the problem of the connections between the phenomenology and the system in Hegel's philosophy. In a way, these connections can be expressed as a paradox. On the one hand, for the sake of its rational autonomy, philosophy cannot be based on something outside of itself in order to arrive at logic (which represents the fundamental structure of thought and reality). Yet, on the other hand, philosophy must begin from something other than philosophy. It must begin from knowledge and interest *where that which appears is not yet what it really is*, and where the pathway to truth does not and cannot coincide with truth itself. The paradox can be better understood (but not resolved) if we consider that this pathway of consciousness, which, through phenomenology, attains absolute knowledge, obtains in historical reality and in time. But for Hegel, the point of arrival, i.e., the logic as well as the whole system, is not something existing as a consequence of historical becoming in time. Both the logic and the system are true once they are attained, but they were true even before they came into being. Consequently, if phenomenology is

* This essay originally appeared in Italian in Enzo Paci, *Relazioni e Significati* vol. III (Milan, 1966), pp. 234-268.

1 Hegel, *The Logic of Hegel* trans. by William Wallace (Oxford, 1892), second edition, p. 3

2 Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic* trans. by W. H. Johnston and L. G. Struthers (London, 1929), vol. I, p. 80.

3 *Ibid.*

needed in order to reach the system, then the system, once discovered, reabsorbs phenomenology.

In the *Phenomenology of Mind*, we are the actors of the "adventure of the Spirit". We become conscious of ourselves as absolute knowledge in the present historical situation by rediscovering the stages which humanity (i.e., ourselves) has already gone through before coming to the present. From this viewpoint, the present historical situation is absolute reality, and it is the task of philosophy to comprehend it. Philosophy must understand what is. It is nothing but its own time illuminated by the light of thought. In this regard one need only recall the famous introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* where Hegel writes: "To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts What lies between reason as self-conscious mind and reason as an actual world before our eyes, what separates the former from the latter and prevents it from finding satisfaction in the latter, is the fetter of some abstraction or other which has not been liberated . . . into the concept. To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present and thereby to enjoy the present, this is the rational insight which reconciles us to the actual, the reconciliation which philosophy affords to those in whom there has once arisen an inner voice bidding them to comprehend, not only to dwell in what is substantive while still retaining subjective freedom, but also to possess subjective freedom while standing not in anything particular and accidental but in what exists absolutely."⁴ The above conclusion of Hegel's systematic conception presupposes that absolute knowledge — as knowledge through concepts and as the reconciliation of the idea with itself, and therefore of the idea with reality — is total pacification. But this element of Hegel's philosophy, in which the dialectic itself ultimately reduces to an abstract form of its own dynamism, runs against the whole Hegelian system. The phenomenological elements, where we find the identification of reason and reality, are actually limiting ideas. Even if presented as ultimately attained, the identification of historical reality with its truth is prevented at least in spirit. This aspect of Hegel's philosophy does not consider the totality of knowledge as already accomplished and coinciding with the totality of history. If we look at Hegel from this viewpoint, history and truth do not appear as accomplished totalities but rather, as totalizing processes — processes which, to be possible, must break the dialectic understood in a purely formal or ideal sense and return it to concrete structures, i.e., to concrete historical contradictions.

In terms of the genesis of Hegelian thought, it is possible to explain its central paradox by remembering that the young Hegel tried to explain the *present reality of his own time*, i.e., his historical situation, by departing from what he considered the fundamental event of that epoch: the French Revolution. In his effort to understand the origins and meaning of the revolution, Hegel reconstructed all history and human thought. The *Phenomenology of Mind*, in fact, contains a profound study of the revolution.

4 Hegel, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1952), pp. 11-12.

One need only recall those pages dedicated to the struggle between faith and enlightenment, or those devoted to absolute freedom and terror – pages which obviously reflect the historical moment represented in the history of consciousness by Robespierre. But, while Hegel tries to understand the revolution, it develops and changes to the point of becoming superfluous, and France, because of the reaction, swings to Bonapartism. In a letter to his friend Niethammer, dated April 28, 1814, Hegel comments on the historic events in Europe at the time, and boasts of having predicted them (e.g., the fall of Napoleon and the Restoration). Hegel himself, however, remained a prisoner of the history of his epoch, at least to the extent that the Restoration coincided with the reconciliation between reason and reality.⁵

From the outset, Hegel's *Encyclopedia* is fully reconciled with reality. Yet, it contains the indicated paradox which appears in the conclusion of his *Philosophy of Nature* and in the first section of the *Philosophy of the Spirit*. It is not accidental that in this last section, along with the problems of anthropology and psychology, we find the problems of phenomenology reappearing closely bound to the dialectical relationship between spirit and nature, between man's concrete reality and thought, and between consciousness and *praxis*. In these central pages of the *Encyclopedia* one does not find the closed totality of the system, but, rather, the endurance of the phenomenological and dialectical character of Hegelian philosophy – an endurance opposed to the very intentions and conclusions of Hegelian thought. Here, a critical reader will find the real "beginning of philosophy", i.e., its concrete starting point. If, from a systematic viewpoint, philosophy begins with logic, concretely and phenomenologically it begins with man – the same man that Hegel describes at the end of the *Philosophy of Nature* and throughout the Anthropology. Here the point of departure is no longer absolute knowledge, but the *human subject*, or better yet, men who, in nature and in their own corporeality, derive their knowledge from such a reality. Thus, a critical reconstruction of Hegelian philosophy in a truly dialectical sense should begin with anthropology and with its relationship to the philosophy of nature. Obviously, this is not the course that Hegel followed, since he considered philosophy autonomous to the extent that it is without presuppositions, and saw the idea as finding its own truth and reality only within itself. Hegel's approach ends up precisely by occluding the "we" that he had discussed in the *Phenomenology of Mind*. In the final analysis, he has alienated the concrete man of the Anthropology in the face of the identification of the rational with the real – those elements constituting the in-itself and for-itself of Absolute Spirit.

In view of the above, we can now understand Hegel's insistence on the absoluteness of rational autonomy and his claim that such autonomy coincides with the very structure of real life.

In the "Introduction" to the *Encyclopedia* Hegel emphasizes the fact that the content of reason is reality itself. The content of reason, he writes, "is no other than *actuality*, that core of truth which, originally produced and producing itself within the precincts of the mental life, has become the

5 Jean Hyppolite, *Etudes sur Marx et Hegel* (Paris, 1955), p. 79.

world At first we become aware of these contents in what we call Experience.”⁶ Experience must coincide with the rational and necessary development of thought and, in this sense, it cannot leave anything *outside* of itself. It is precisely the overcoming of externality which makes the system possible and allows the congruency between historical reality and rationality. The Idea is concrete, but only if it rejects the so-called externality. This externality, however, always reappears not only as history but also as philosophy which has a history, i.e., as history of philosophy. This is why Hegel claims that “The same evolution of thought which is exhibited in the history of philosophy is presented in the System of Philosophy itself. Here, instead of surveying the process, as we do in history, from the outside, we see the movement of thought clearly defined in its native medium. The thought, which is genuine and self-supporting, must be intrinsically concrete; it must be an Idea; and when it is viewed in the whole of its universality, it is the Idea, or the Absolute. The science of this Idea must form a system. For the truth is concrete; that is, whilst it gives a bond and principle of unity, it also possesses an internal source of development. Truth, then, is only possible as a universe or totality of thought; and the freedom of the whole, as well as the necessity of the several sub-divisions, which it implies, are only possible when these are discriminated and defined.”⁷ This clearly shows that for Hegel the dialectic is not a struggle between thought and reality, and even less a struggle between subject and object, whereby one can speak of the subject-object interaction, or of the object conditioning the subject. The Idea is a preventive harmony between the subjective and the objective, between the internal and the external, and, as such, it is posited as an already attained totality. In other words, it is not a matter of *internalizing externality and of externalizing internality*, nor of a *process of continuous totalization*. The Hegelian viewpoint as to the autonomy of philosophy is the end result of an already concluded process. Yet, Hegel points out that there is an incongruence between the whole and its parts, and he speaks of a circle inherent in philosophy itself. Philosophy must include the whole, while this same whole must determine itself in parts. The elaboration of this problem, notwithstanding repeated attempts, is not made explicit in Hegelian philosophy. It is nevertheless important to note that Hegel speaks of the totality of systematic philosophy as “a circle of circles”⁸ and he even presents the *Encyclopedia* as a circular totality. This circularity is the circularity of the Idea which, in its internal totality, differentiates itself from itself to subsequently return to itself. The Idea is self-identical thought which poses in front of itself in order to see itself and be *for itself*. The Idea, therefore, is the self-positing of thought as its own science, as a science *in itself* and *for itself*. As such, this science is logic, understood as the structure of being in its totality. At this point, however, the previously mentioned phenomenological, natural, human, and concrete moment reasserts itself. If this element did not exist, logic would undoubtedly coincide with all of philosophy. But precisely because logic is only

6 *The Logic of Hegel, op. cit.*, p. 9, par. 6.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24, par. 14.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 24, par. 15.

the structure of reality, reality poses itself against logic, and the philosophy of nature appears as the alienation of the logical Idea – as a rebellion of the natural moment against the logical element which wishes to negate it. Thus, the philosophy of nature necessarily asserts itself as “the science of the Idea in its otherness”.⁹ This dialectical split between nature and the logical Idea requires the return of the alienated Idea to itself. It is precisely this return that in Hegel appears as the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

In the *Logic of the Encyclopedia*, Hegel tries to justify the foundation of his system by comparing it to the philosophy of his time. The central point of the comparison is the relationship between thought and real objectivity. Thus, for Hegel, it is a matter of examining fundamental positions of thought with respect to objectivity.

The first position he examines is that of traditional metaphysics, i.e., Wolff’s philosophy. The problems of the Wolffian metaphysic – soul, world, and God – are posed in an abstract and ontological form. They are already given, and the activity of thought applies to them externally. The object is thus assumed, and thought does not understand it: what is lacking is the reciprocal penetration between truth and reality – a basic Hegelian requirement.

The second position, in reaction to the abstractness of the first one, places the foundation of thought in empiricism. The truth of empiricism is explained in that, “on the subjective side Empirical cognition has its stable footing in the fact that in a sensation consciousness is directly present and certain of itself.”¹⁰ Hegel recognizes the principle of truth of empiricism in that “man must see for himself, and feel that he is present in every fact of knowledge which he has to accept.”¹¹ From this viewpoint, what is empirically true is that which appears in perception. But Hegel does not see in this principle the constitution of knowledge in the actual presence and in the experience in the first person. He accuses empiricism of not remaining true to its own premises, mainly because it substitutes abstract categories for concrete experience. “. . . There is a fundamental delusion in all scientific empiricism. It employs the metaphysical categories of matter, force, those of one, many, generality, infinity, etc.; following the clue given by these categories it proceeds to draw conclusions, and in so doing presupposes and applies the syllogistic form. And all the while it is unaware that it contains metaphysics – in wielding which, it makes use of those categories and their combinations in a style utterly thoughtless and uncritical.”¹²

An elaboration of this could lead to an evaluation of experience as precategorical structure, an elaboration that Hegel could have attained through Hume’s skepticism. But Hegel does not insist on this point and goes on to examine critical philosophy, i.e., Kant’s thought. “In common with Empiricism the Critical Philosophy assumes that experience affords the one sole foundation for cognitions; which however it does not allow to rank as truths, but only as

9 *Ibid.*, p. 29, par. 18.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 77, par. 38.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 78, par. 38.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 78, par. 38.

knowledge of phenomena."¹³

The fact that critical philosophy is limited to knowledge of phenomena necessitates the positing of *things in themselves*: according to Hegel, this is the limit of Kant's criticism. The phenomena of critical philosophy are not reality, since the knowledge which grasps them is the knowledge of the understanding and not of reason. Here, Hegel's criticism coincides with the criticism of all intellectualism and with the requirements of *dialectical reason*. But dialectical reason is not seen as an opposition of internality and externality, because reason, as idea, must resolve within itself all accidents and externalities. This is why Hegel concludes in regard to Kant that: "The main effect of the Kantian philosophy has been to revive the consciousness of Reason, or the absolute inwardness of thought. Its abstractness indeed prevented that inwardness from developing into anything, or from originating any special forms, whether cognitive principles or moral laws; but nevertheless it absolutely refused to accept or indulge anything possessing the character of an externality. Henceforth the principle of the independence of Reason, or of its absolute self-subsistence, is made a general principle of philosophy, as well as a foregone conclusion of the time."¹⁴

Such an attitude is typical of Hegel. It is true that the Kantian understanding resolves reality into phenomena, but it is equally true that Hegel is willing to consider the phenomena as reality only if the phenomena are resolved into the absolute internality of the Idea. Once this absolute internality has been attained, the phenomena must disappear. In fact, the phenomena react to the pure logic of internality as an externality of the idea which necessitates the philosophy of nature and, subsequently, the philosophy of spirit. This reaction of the phenomena is dialectical and can appear as a dialectic between internality and externality. If Kant led us necessarily to absolute internality, the consequence would be, even for Hegel, the elimination of the dialectic. For Kant also, reason is dialectical, and the fact that reason cannot give rise to an empirical science does not detract from the fundamental lesson of the *Critique*, i.e., a lesson consisting in the impossibility of eliminating dialectical reason, even if only because of the dubious concept of the thing-in-itself. In regard to logic, Hegel attempts to insert dialectic within the categories themselves. While this attempt breaks the formal categorical character of the understanding, it also restricts the dialectic solely to the sphere of knowledge, and to its conceptual and categorical constructions.

It should be pointed out that, at least at the level of philosophical sensibility, Hegel does not ignore these problems. Although he associates the Kantian criticism and empiricism, and accuses both of intellectualism, he also realizes the abstractness of his own critique, and the need to return to experience in its authenticity — to an experience prior to categorical and abstract constructions. It is because of this that Hegel considers Jacobi's position as so important and dangerous — a position which he characterizes as the third position of thought with regard to objectivity. Jacobi's philosophy is one of

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 82, par. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119, par. 60.

immediate knowledge. He criticizes knowledge transposed into abstract categories but does not succeed in discovering a level in which the empirical genesis appears in its fundamental necessity. Following an entirely different approach, Hume had discovered sensible beliefs as the basis of knowledge. Jacobi discovers an immediate knowledge: faith. In spite of Jacobi's urgent efforts to overcome the abstractness of the understanding, Hegel justly observes that he does nothing but contrapose faith in the immediate to the understanding, without mediating the two positions. Jacobi's requirement, once brought to light, could have led to the recognition that dialectical reason cannot do without a sensible, non-categorical foundation. This requirement, however, is not only left unsatisfied, but it is not even truly seen by Jacobi himself. Even Hegel does not fully understand the problems posed by Hume and Jacobi. The solution to these problems can only be found in a conception of the dialectic where reason is not alienated from sensibility, and rational structures are not abstractly separated from their foundation in material reality: this is the true mediation. Hegel's point in criticizing Jacobi was to assert that thought can only be mediation. From Hegel's standpoint, in the ultimate analysis, this means that logic finds its foundation only in the dialectic. If the understanding poses before itself an impenetrable immediacy, it will never rise to rational thought. Reason, instead, resolves externality by its own internal movement, i.e., it resolves reality in the rationality of reason. Its procedure is a continuous overcoming of the finite in the totality of its own dynamic self-transcendence. In this position, we find, once again the typical paradoxes of Hegelian thought. Hegel concludes: "Thus understood, the Dialectical principle constitutes the life and soul of scientific progress, the dynamic which alone gives immanent connexion and necessity to the body of science; and, in a word, is seen to constitute the real and true, as opposed to the external, exaltation above the finite."¹⁵ Thus, the immediate should not be considered as something external but, rather, as something resolved internally, and positing itself only through its mediation. In logical terms, for Hegel the immediate is the concept *in itself*. Mediation is reflection. In reflection the concept appears before itself, and is understood *for itself*. After having been first posited in itself and then for itself, the concept returns to itself and, precisely because it continually mediates its own immediacy, it finds itself in its own complete development. This means, in Hegel's language, that the concept fully understands itself both in and for itself. The first moment gives rise to the *doctrine of Being*, the second to the *doctrine of Essence*, and the third to the *doctrine of the Notion and of the Idea*.

The understanding of Hegelian logic is mainly a function of a correct explication of the problem of the immediate in its relationship with the dialectic. In its most profound sense, the dialectic must be conceived as a unity of determinations in their opposition. Thought retains its own unity at the same time that it distinguishes and determines itself in its own moment. The dialectic is not a form without content. The categories are not a list of activities of the understanding: they are the mediation of the logos with itself. "... The result of Dialectic is positive, because it has a definite content, or because its result is

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148, par. 81.

not empty and abstract nothing, but the negation of certain specific propositions which are contained in the result, — for the very reason that it is a resultant and not an immediate nothing.”¹⁶ In other words, the categories developed in the self-determination of the logos remain in the unity of the logos itself, and are not negated as we go through them. Thought already contains them all in its own immediacy. We discover the categories through the movement of reflection, in the being upon which we reflect. In this discussion, it is “we” who reflect on being in order to discover its constitutive logical structure. On the other hand, “we” ourselves have being. Therefore, by placing being before ourselves in order to discover the logical structures therein, we place ourselves in a dialectical situation where we should never forget that the placing of determinations is one of the activities of operating men — our own activity as reflecting human beings. As real and concrete beings we reflect because, prior to reflecting, we are already *in a reality* which allows us to reflect, and this reality is not the category of being, nor any other category: it is actual historical reality in its concreteness. Nevertheless, when logical reflection begins, it is as if we were trying to discover the determinate operations whereby we think and speak — e.g., that there are things such as quantity and quality. Now quality and quantity are part of our reality, and we cannot believe that they have “being”. Rather, they are operations of our real subjectivity, which is in the world as well as having the world within it, or, better, that same intersubjectivity to which Hegel himself alludes whenever he says “we”.

According to Hegel, the categories are certainly not a mere list, yet they are dialectically posed, one following the other, so that their determination results in a unity. Their self-removal as particulars in order to enter into the unity is delegated to a movement which is attributed to the categories themselves. In reality, this movement is our realization that the categorical operations can only be distinguished abstractly from our reality and its operations. At the end of the *Logic* this reality appears to Hegel as an idea which is both thought and reality, mediation and immediacy. Paragraph 216 of the *Encyclopedia* says the same thing: “The *immediate* idea is *Life*.”¹⁷

It can readily be seen that thought, as thought which is reality and reality which is thought, is both immediacy and mediation. For this reason, immediacy appears both at the beginning and at the end. But while at the beginning it is not aware of itself as immediacy, at the end it should realize that reality is not categorical, but prior to categorical mediation. Thought can become aware of this only *later*. It is only by passing through abstractions that thought reaches its concrete beginning. To pass through abstractions does not mean to remain in them. What it means, rather, is to posit them so that they can be subsequently removed. Reality is the reality in which we always exist. Even though, in order to refer to it we designate it as ‘being’, we are prone to forget that we are thus reducing it to an abstract word and, as such, negating it. Once reality is placed in the category of being, we can reflect on the negation that this being represents with respect to the reality from which we began. This negation, which is

16 *Ibid.*, p. 152, par. 82.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 358, par. 216.

reflection upon being, is what Hegel calls *essence*. If being is a negation of reality, *then essence is the negation of the negation*. But the negation of the negation is actually the reaffirmation of the negated reality. The initial reality reappears, but not until after it has undergone the process whereby it passes from being to essence. It constitutes itself "in us" as reality that is both immediately and conceptually thought. The concept retains both the original immediate reality to which it returns and its being as negation, as well as its essence as negation of the negation. Thus, the reality which was originally obscure as initial immediacy *becomes reality revealed* to itself through logic. It does so by going from being to essence to the concept. Through this process reality poses itself as the idea of itself and the idea becomes the idea of reality. We therefore find ourselves in the absolute transparency of the logos of being, or rather; of the immediate initial being of the logos. The process that Hegel describes is a process of revelation. Nevertheless, we can ask: to whom is revelation revealed? And from whom was hidden what was subsequently revealed? We ourselves are those men, i.e., the concrete human beings who discover through science the logical structures of themselves and of the world. This is precisely what appears as *aufgehoben* in Hegel's logic, and in many respects, in the whole Hegelian system.

The great three-way division of Hegel's logic is a function of the logical determination of being: the logic of the negation of being as reflection, the logic of essence, and finally, the logic of the return of being to itself after the negation of the negation (or the logic of the concept).

The described dialectical concept operates within each of the three divisions also. In the sphere of being we judge being as something different from essence, i.e., the reflection upon being. In the conceptual sphere, essence is seen as different from the concept. By making these distinctions, we "judge" by placing the parts in the whole. Hegel employs often the term judgment (*Urteil*), indicating by it, among other things, the activity which posits parts. These parts are in a whole, but, before appearing as a whole, they give rise to a preliminary and temporary partition, the aim of which is not to keep them separate, but to posit them as the organicity of the whole itself. "We" are the ones who consider partition as a temporary situation (*Vorläufigkeit des Einteilens*)¹⁸ because we know that partition is nothing more than the composition of the totality. The function of the partition, or of the judgement, is therefore to make us conscious of how reality is structured and logically constituted. Prior to the judgment, and therefore before the process from being to the concept through essence, reality was structured according to categories which we subsequently discover. We did not realize, however, that it was structured in such a way. Therefore, we begin with a lack of knowledge that contains a knowledge to be explicated. We begin with a knowledge which, to the extent that it is implicit, is only *in itself*. Perhaps we can better understand what Hegel means by using a different language. Knowledge in itself is a kind of knowledge which is not yet known, a kind of unconscious knowledge. Unconsciously, we have within us all of the structures of reality since we are not distinct from reality. Implicit in Hegel's thought,

18 G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Nürnberg, 1812), p. 64.

therefore, is a kind of unknown knowledge, something similar to the unknown which is known. If we consider this knowledge outside of ourselves, it appears as *nature*. Finally, in nature itself we find ourselves with our human reality, with the *obscurity* of this reality which, little by little, must pass from sleep to wakefulness and to conceptual awareness. This is the process that Hegel describes in his *Anthropology*. Before reaching this point of the Hegelian system (which has yet to be fully investigated),¹⁹ logic appears as a structure prior to concrete and temporal reality, as the world before creation.

In the scholastic division of Hegel's *Logic*, the sphere of being moves through the category of quality according to the forms of being which it abstracts from every limitation of determinate being and being for itself. In pure being, which is immediate and equal to itself and, therefore, equal to nothingness, we pass into becoming. Becoming, however, is specified as determinate being. Quality is precisely being with a determinate character. But the qualitative determination is always something which has a character to the extent that it is the negation of another character. It is, therefore, being for another. The being which has quality is always determined in relation to another being – according to the process to infinity which Hegel considers negative. It is here, more than anywhere else, that the categorizing process is in danger of becoming abstract, positing itself as a continuous self-negation in relation to the other. The elaboration of the relation of one character with another gives rise to quantity, and, through quantity, Hegel arrives at measure. Quality and quantity, in the ultimate analysis, are results of the opposition of being to itself, i.e., consequences of the relationship between being and nothingness which, in becoming, is concretely determined. From abstract being and not-being – from something and something other than that something – we must reach the qualitative and the quantitative. Immediate being, by negating its immediacy, becomes determinate and appears to itself as essence. This essence gives rise to a subsequent process of determination and concretization. In fact, it is through the essence that we attain our understanding of the phenomenon and of operative reality, in addition to the implicit categories of substance, cause and reciprocal action. Through reciprocal action, reality discovers itself in its own necessity and precisely because of this, it overcomes necessity through freedom: "This truth of necessity, therefore, is *Freedom*: and the truth of substance is the Notion . . ."²⁰

In the complex movement of Hegel's logical thought, so rich in illustrations strangely reminiscent of scholastic pedantry, we must point out the problem of the passage from necessity to freedom. In terms of his logic, freedom appears with the concept of necessity. In other words, freedom is not arbitrariness but the recognition of an insuperable necessity. Substance, cause, and reciprocity connect things. To use Hegel's own terms, being is linked to

19 This theme can also be connected to the problem of the relationship between Hegel's philosophy and psychoanalysis. Cf. A. DeWaelhens, *Reflexions sur une problématique de l'Inconscient: Husserl et Hegel*, in the volume dedicated to Husserl (1859-1959) (The Hague, 1960). Cf. also Jean Hyppolite, "Phénoménologie de Hegel et Psychanalyse", in *Psychanalyse*, n. 3.

20 *The Logic of Hegel*, *op. cit.*, p. 282, par. 158.

"necessity or . . . destiny."²¹ The first act of freedom is the recognition of necessity which is binding upon us. Logical thought is therefore the recognition of an insuperable logical structure, and it is only this recognition which allows us to recognize the structure, without, however, modifying it. This constitutes the domination of the structure, *not* the "escape in the abstraction". For Hegel, freedom from necessity is not the escape from the logic inherent in reality, but the recognition of such logic. Hegel stops at the thought of necessity, but insists on the fact that this thought is a unity of itself and its otherness, and arrives at the overcoming of every dualism: "For thinking means that, in the other, one meets with one's self."²² This is a pregnant statement and contains the whole dialectic between man and nature, and man and man. Hegel himself realizes that true freedom can only be attained through this dialectic. In fact, he claims that the meeting of self and other is a "liberation which is not the flight of abstraction, but consists in that which is actual having itself not as something else, but as its own being and creation, in the other actuality with which it is bound up by the force of necessity. As existing in an individual form, this liberation is called I: as developed to its totality, it is free Spirit; as feeling, it is Love; and as enjoyment, it is Blessedness."²³

It is easy to find in the above passage the dialectic of self and other. This dialectic is fundamental for contemporary thought and it is linked to the whole development of phenomenology and the relation between necessity and freedom, *praxis* and environment, and work and nature. Already in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, it is clear that the fundamental problem for man is the dialectic of recognition of self-consciousnesses, and the relationship between master and slave. As we can see with regard to the doctrine of essence, this relation is linked to the necessary structure of reality. Between myself and the other, between man and man, there is a fundamental necessity which must be discovered and recognized. Freedom must pass through passivity, and the discovery of freedom must pass through the thought of necessity. If freedom is liberation, it is such because it appropriates necessity and totalizes the necessary moments which render freedom possible. For Hegel, the negation of a necessity, which is the same as retaining it by overcoming it, is conceptual thought. So understood, conceptual thought is not abstract, but is the very concreteness of the thought of reality in its particular and individual determinations. Judgment is precisely the activity in the concept of the "original partition". The judgment unites categorical universality with individual concreteness, which has the function of converting abstract totality into concrete totality: "For the subject is a concrete totality, — which means not any indefinite multiplicity, but individuality alone, the particular and the universal in an identity . . ."²⁴ As thought becomes more elaborate, it discovers itself in its own concreteness, founded upon the recognition of the logical and necessary structure of reality. This recognition is the activity which allows us to judge, — i.e., to be free in

21 *Ibid.*, p. 285, par. 159.

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, p. 302, par. 171.

thought — while at the same time it is the mediation between the singular and the universal, the subject and the predicate. “In this manner subject and predicate are each the whole judgment. The immediate constitution of the subject is at first exhibited as the intermediating ground, where the individuality of the actual thing meets with its universality, and in this way as the ground of the judgment. What has been really made explicit is the oneness of subject and predicate, as the notion itself, filling up the empty ‘is’ of the copula. While its constituent elements are at the same time distinguished as subject and predicate, the notion is put as their unity, as the connexion which serves to intermediate them: in short, as the Syllogism.”²⁵

The preceding quote is not understandable, unless we keep in mind that, as Hegel elaborates his thought, he no longer finds himself in the sphere of logic as he wishes, but in the sphere of reality, i.e., the sphere of concrete human life which recognizes, thinks, and “constitutes” logic. The concept has become the reality of things to the extent that things reveal themselves. The thing is an individual which contains a typical and a universal meaning, thereby allowing the discovery of its own rationality. All things are concepts and syllogisms. Hegel’s effort is directed at resolving objectivity in conceptualization. But objectivity keeps appearing as something irresolvable, impenetrable and finite. Thought, by means of concepts and syllogisms, discovers within itself its own limitation, i.e., necessity as something external. We are free to think of necessity, but necessity behaves as if it were closed within a mechanical, inviolable, and external substantiality.

Within thought, the concept, and the connection between concepts explicated in the syllogism seem to shipwreck into the externality of any object to itself. This externality threatens the very thinking beings as though they were not merely a reflection of reality, but reality itself without reflection. Externality threatens thought which then reappears as the negation of externality and of its abstract mechanism. The concept is imprisoned by external objects. Freedom of thought again emerges in the *inertia* of objects as soon as it is discovered. Once again, it is necessary to pass through this inertia without becoming imprisoned by mechanical repetition and externality. Having to negate external immediacy, the concept must overcome mechanical repetition by positing itself as the goal, as *telos*. We then pass to teleology. Conceptual thought becomes “oriented” thought. What is opposed to the concept understood in this new way is matter and gravity: these are the structures that Hegel discusses in the *Philosophy of Nature*.

The aim of logic was to arrive at teleology. The idea of teleology depends mainly on the Kantian *Critique of Judgment*. Although Hegel’s finality leads the logical formalism back to the “us” whom we have never really forgotten, it is important to remember that this finality stresses the concreteness of living subjects. As Hegel had already seen in his systematic studies of the Jena period, needs and desires are revealed by discovering the finality. Teleology is the opening towards the Hegelian concept of the idea as life, but it is also the point where Hegel is closest to discovering the structure of needs and to a dialectical

25 *Ibid.*, p. 313, par. 180.

conception of living subjects in their natural and social environment.

In the teleological sphere, the concept becomes purpose, and the purpose aims at its own satisfaction. Here we meet the problem of the relationship between means and ends. "The End achieved consequently is only an object, which again becomes a Means or material for other Ends, and so on for ever."²⁶ This proposition needs to be analyzed in detail. It may clarify, within the Hegelian system, a certain tendency to collapse the end into the means and to reduce the finality of history to history as it is. The purpose is the negation of what is lacking. Negation, in turn, appears as a ready-made assertion, as an already realized totality. This ambiguous totality is the idea as both the absolute and an unrealizable horizon in the concrete actual presence. According to Hegel, the concept of means contains "the implicit unity of subjective and objective And this is the Idea."²⁷ Certainly, the ambiguous aspects of this Hegelian conception are not easy to clarify. The Hegelian Idea is a unity of being, and truth. It is both the point of departure and the point of arrival, thought and reality, and, at the same time, it is the individual concrete living reality, i.e., the reality that continually seeks to overcome the very lack constituting it, the negativity that moves it. What should be kept in mind is that the Idea is not a starting point or a conclusion, but a dialectical principle. What characterizes it is that it can never be itself, it must constitute itself in itself and in the other, and that it must posit itself as a process. Hegel makes this point clear when he indicates the becoming of the Idea and insists on the fact that the Idea is "thought, infinity, and subjectivity, and is in consequence to be essentially distinguished from the Idea as substance"²⁸ In the same page he points out that the Idea is "overwhelming subjectivity" – a movement which is different from one-sidedness and which, precisely because of this, defines and judges. The Idea always transcends itself, thus overcoming the reduction of ends to means. If it really transcends itself, however, it could never permit the imprisonment of totalizing movement in a definitive totality. This Idea, in its ambiguity, is, for Hegel, life itself, which reveals its own reason: "In this way life is essentially something alive, and in point of its immediacy, this individual living thing."²⁹

Thus, on the one hand the Idea is the End and the totalizing movement of every aspect of life, while on the other it is universal and absolute: it is both the individual and the general. If it were possible to remain on the level of pure logic, then the assertion of the ideal coincidence of the finite and of the infinite would suffice. But within logic itself, when we posit living individuality we also posit the problem of human concreteness, the problem of corporeality, the problem of reproduction, the problem of sexual differences, of the concrete individual and of birth and death.³⁰ The Idea finds within itself its own externality. In other words, life finds its limit in its own vitality, and it discovers

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351, par. 211.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 351, par. 212.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 358, par. 215.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 359, par. 216.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 359-362, pars. 218-222.

itself as increasingly constituted by the reality of nature. If logic represents the triumph of the internality of thought, at the very moment of its triumph thought rediscovers itself in its own externality: it finds itself embodied in immediate and sensible individuals who are, as concrete men, in a relation of praxis with nature and, at the same time, in a teleological relationship which tends to raise individual goals to the level of goals of mankind. Here we find ourselves already in the sphere of the philosophy of nature: "In man's *practical* approach to Nature, the latter is, for him, something immediate and external; and he himself is an external and therefore sensuous individual, although in relation to natural objects, he correctly regards himself as *end*." ³¹ The externality that thought wants to conquer forces man to become himself external reality, to become praxis, or, to put it in Sartrean terms, to become inert. Only by becoming as inert as nature can man win over nature, just as he can only attain freedom by recognizing necessity. Because of this, the Idea alienates itself in nature, and only through this alienation is it able to rediscover itself.

The abstract mythology into which Hegel forces nature has by now become proverbial, and it is not necessary here to follow his complex constructions between mechanism, the first level of the philosophy of nature; physicality, the second level; and organicity, the third level. What is more relevant is to point out the fundamental structure according to which the dialectic of nature unfolds. On one hand nature appears as accidental and in the multiplicity of phenomena, while on the other, it finds its essential principle in rational lawfulness. Therefore, the sphere of nature can be understood as a tension between the necessary and the accidental, between particulars and the universal. In its absolute externality nature appears as the inertia of death. Ultimately, death is the proof of externality as such, and it is only by passing through its own externality that the Idea returns to itself as a living Idea. "Nature is, in itself, a living whole. The movement through its stages is more precisely this: that the Idea *posits* itself as that which it is *in itself*; or what is the same thing, that it returns out of its immediacy and externality which is *death*, in order to be, first a *living creature*, but further, to sublimate this determinateness also in which it is only Life, and to give itself an existence as Spirit, which is the truth and the final goal of Nature and the genuine actuality of the Idea."³² No matter how we interpret this paragraph, it is certain that for Hegel the passage to spirit is conditioned by the externality of matter, i.e., by the "determination of externality or of infinite isolation." This infinite isolation is precisely what characterizes matter. Mechanism is the ideal rational order according to which the externality of matter can be ordered. Externality characterizes the material world to the extent that matter is quantitative, no longer from the viewpoint of logical determinations, but in the sense of a type of being which is necessarily external to itself: that being which Hegel calls *Aussersichsein*. Material being is characterized by its being "juxtaposed", i.e., divided both quantitatively as well

31 A. V. Miller, *Hegel's "Philosophy of Nature"* (Oxford, 1970), par. 245, p. 4.

32 *Ibid.*, par. 251, p. 24.

as qualitatively. Therefore, spatiality external to itself appears as the root of matter, and time itself is characterized as the negative unity of externality. Time "is that being which, inasmuch as it *is*, is *not*, and inasmuch as it is *not*, is."³³ To be in time means to be born and to die. *Chronos* makes and destroys everything. That time is external to itself means that time is negation, external indifference, and dead unity. Time and space are the constitutive forms of inert matter and of gravity. These Hegelian constructions are often connected to the science of his epoch, although Hegel never clarifies the real relation between his own idealizations and actual scientific practice. Yet, it is important to notice that, although Hegel loses himself in arbitrary syntheses, it is also true that he realizes that science itself uses metaphysical categories without knowing that it is doing so.

In the second section of the philosophy of nature, matter becomes determined as individuated matter, i.e., as physical bodies (light, the elements, air, earth, etc.). Hegel attempts to give a dialectical explanation to the problems of cohesion, sound, heat, etc.: he tries to deduce the concrete individuality of bodies, electricity, chemical process, and galvanism. It is difficult to rescue anything from this part of the *Encyclopedia*. It is sufficient to remember that the philosophy of nature passes from physicality to organicism, i.e., to biological structure, and to vegetable and animal organic natures. With the dialectic of the animal organism, the dialectic of nature becomes interesting once again. Hegel is forced to explain the basic nature of the organism in the relationship between the body and the external world. In order to live, the organism is forced to "assimilate." Here we enter into an area already developed by Hegel in Jena. Because the animal is a corporeal reality, Hegel develops the *dialectic of need and instinct*. Instinct is a kind of finality operating in an unconscious way, while need links the animal body to the environment. Without this need, it could not live. The organism is a special synthesis of externality and interality. In fact, the organism is the basis of the distinction between external and internal.

The living organism is not essentially autonomous, it is not free, nor does it coincide with its own concept. The entire accidental and mysterious element, which Hegel fights throughout his philosophy of nature, reappears as biological life and organism. The living organism is not perfectly rational and does not follow its own Idea other than by continuously losing itself in imperfections and monstrosities. If the living species were to recognize their own rationality, they would also be able to realize the perfect rationality of life. But the living organism, and man in particular, is continuously exposed to the accidental from without which exercises a sort of violence against him. Life, rooted in matter, is not only subject to need and instinct, but also to sickness and insecurity. At this level the rational does not coincide with the real, the idea of man does not coincide with concrete man, consciousness does not coincide with the event, and truth does not coincide with reality. In its ideality, the genus is forced to divide itself into species and into individuals. Individuals posit themselves against each other, and thereby separate themselves from each other. What characterizes life on the organic level is deprivation and separation. The distinction between the

33 *Ibid.*, par. 258, p. 34.

sexes is a fundamental aspect of this separation. "Almost less even than the other spheres of Nature, can the animal world exhibit within itself an independent, rational system of organization, or hold fast to the forms prescribed by the Notion, preserving them, in face of the imperfection and medley of conditions, from confusion, degeneration, and transitional forms. This impotence of the Notion in Nature generally, subjects not only the development of individuals to external contingencies – the developed animal (and especially man) can exhibit monstrosities – but even the genera are completely subject to the changes of the external, universal life of Nature, the vicissitudes of which are shared by the life of the animal . . . whose life, consequently, is only an alternation of health and disease. The environment of external contingency contains factors which are almost wholly alien; it exercises a perpetual violence and threat of dangers on the animals' feeling which is an *insecure, anxious, and unhappy* one."³⁴

Thus, it is precisely the relation of non-identity between the rational model of animal life and the actualization of such a model in concrete individuals, that leads Hegel to a dialectic of natural reality. If there were only one kind of universal life, and if the life of the genus never divided itself into different species, there would never be war in nature, but only peace. There is war (i.e., the concrete dialectic) because the species and individuals fight amongst themselves. In order to assert himself, the individual tends to destroy the other. To be himself he negates the other – even if he is himself conditioned by the other being negated by him. Man negates nature through labor, i.e., he negates need, yet he cannot subsist without nature or need. In every individual, mankind is a limit toward which the individual aims as if every individual wanted to reach complete humanity. Since no individual can do this, he tries, consequently, to integrate himself by means of another, through a union with another. This dialectic gives rise both to the contradiction of needs and that of sex.

"The first diremption of the genus into species and the further determination of these to the point of immediate, exclusive being-for-self of *singularity*, is only a negative and hostile attitude toward others. But the genus is also an essentially affirmative relation of the singularity to itself in it; so that while the latter, as an individual, excludes another individual, it continues itself in this *other* and in this *other* feels its own self. This relationship is a *process* which begins with a *need*: for the individual as *singular* does not accord with the genus immanent in it, and yet at the same time is the identical self-relation of the genus in *one* unity; it thus has the *feeling* of this defect. The genus is therefore present in the individual as a straining against the inadequacy of its single actuality, as the urge to obtain its self-feeling in the other of its genus, to integrate itself through union with it and through this mediation to close the genus with itself and bring it into existence – *copulation*."³⁵

Consequently, the individual is inadequate to itself and tries to realize the genus in its own existence. Instead of realizing its own complete humanity, it

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 416-417, par. 370.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 411, par. 368.

reproduces, and this process of propagation, according to Hegel, "spends itself in the spurious infinite process." "The genus preserves itself only through the destruction of the individuals who, in the process of generation, fulfill their destiny and, in so far as they have no higher destiny, in this process meet their death."³⁶

Hegel's higher destiny is that of the world of spirit. We must remember that the passage from the world of nature to the world of spirit is rooted in an essential human deficiency. This is the most concrete point of Hegelian philosophy. It cannot be said here that man's reality is resolved solely by thinking. Man is characterized by a constitutive inadequacy whereby he is subject to externality implicit within himself. Externality is internalized: it appears within the very internality of animal and human life as deficiency, need, and as man's subjection to an actual reality, subjection to the need for food and work in order to satisfy hunger, and subjection to sickness, decay, and death. Particularly important, even today, are the pages that Hegel devotes to sickness. Precisely because man is not a thought but a real being and an organism, he may become sick and be in need of medicine. Man is an organic totality made of a system of organs. Since he has to live and feed himself, he is "stimulated into conflict with the inorganic power." Man, hungry, sick, and in need, is man in which one part of his organism imposes itself on the whole. This part "establishes itself in isolation and persists in its particular activity against the activity of the whole, the fluidity and all-pervading process of which is thus obstructed."³⁷ What is missing in Hegel is the awareness that man can dominate his inorganic excitement only by posing himself, through labor, on the inorganic level, i.e., only in a praxis that constitutes him in nature by also making him nature. Only by passing through this praxis and through the labor that constitutes it, can man pass into the world of civilization that Hegel calls the life of spirit. But this situation places man in a struggle against one another, and allows the possibility of exploitation of man by man: the horizon that opens up here, in all its depth and complexity, remains closed to Hegel. Yet he realizes that real man is rooted in nature, he is "in the circle of nature". Nature reappears within man as a negative force that makes impossible the identification between the real, natural, and social man, and man as conceived by the philosophy of spirit. Closely examined, this theme contradicts the Hegelian tendency whereby philosophy realizes itself in the Idea in itself and for itself. It does not allow the primacy of the logos, since it leads man back to his real and historic environment, the root of the *Phenomenology of Mind*.

Man is inadequate to his being, and the individual to his universality. To negate this negation is to construct civilization and human society. This is a path that Hegel runs through too fast in the dialectical passage between nature and spirit. "The disparity between its [the animal's] finitude and universality is its *original disease* and the inborn *germ of death*, and the removal of this disparity is itself the accomplishment of this destiny. The individual removes this disparity in giving his singularity the form of universality; but in so far as this universality

36 *Ibid.*, p. 414, par. 369.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 428, par. 371.

is abstract and immediate, the individual achieves only an *abstract objectivity* in which its activity has become deadened and ossified and the process of life has become the inertia of *habit*: it is in this way that the animal brings about its own destruction."³⁸ What Hegel overlooks is that the individual can be degraded and ossified, i.e., reduced to the level of pure object and pure commodity, by another individual or by another class of individuals. Within Hegel's thought, it is this shortcoming that leads eventually to the Hegelian left. In place of the construction of human society and its process of liberation, Hegel quickly posits the passage to spirit. The inadequacies of the animal in relation to the universal are raised to the level and forms of spiritual life.

In passing from nature to spirit, we should once and for all overcome that external determination of nature which, according to Hegel, is opposed to the purity of the Idea in itself and for itself. Beyond nature, spirit becomes the living reality of the Idea, which is expressed in concrete, spiritual subjectivity which is, at the same time, free and universal. The essence of spirit is freedom, which is also its reality. Spirit is the correspondence of reality and truth. In this sense it is absolute. "*The Absolute is Mind (Spirit)* – this is the supreme definition of the Absolute. To find this definition and to grasp its meaning and burthen was, we may say, the ultimate purpose of all education and all philosophy: it was the point to which turned the impulse of all religion and science: and it is this impulse that must explain the history of the world."³⁹ Hegel's distinctions in the world of the spirit are familiar. To the extent that spirit posits itself in a relation with itself, it can be called subjective spirit. To the extent that subjective spirit is expressed in reality and this reality is produced by subjective spirit and by human subjectivities, freedom realizes itself objectively in an existing reality: this is objective spirit. To the extent that spirit unites its objectivity to its own truth, i.e., when spirit finds its own meaning and value as a unity in itself and for itself in its own objective products; this is absolute spirit.

The three moments of the subjective spirit are anthropology, phenomenology, and psychology. The three moments of the objective spirit are law, morality, and ethics. The three moments of the absolute spirit are art, revealed religion, and philosophy. Only in philosophy does "The eternal Idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute Mind."⁴⁰

The spirit aims at its own infinite idea. For Hegel, however, this infinity, attained only in art, religion, and philosophy, remains conditioned by objective spirit, i.e., by the world of law, of morality, and of ethics (civil society, the state). In turn, objective spirit is rooted in subjective spirit, i.e., in that human concreteness examined by Hegel in the anthropology. Even if concealed, the foundation of all of Hegel's philosophical and historical constructions is a function of man understood as *anthropos*: a man who is in some way the unity of spirit and nature and who, in the ultimate analysis, is in an intersubjective

38 *Ibid.*, p. 441, par. 375.

39 William Wallace, *Hegel's "Philosophy of Mind"* (Oxford, 1894), p. 7, par. 384.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 197, par. 577.

relation with others. It is that “we” dealt with in the *Phenomenology of Mind*. The Hegelian dialectic, when seen outside of every abstraction and myth, is the very same dialectic among men within which the relation between humanity and nature arises. From this viewpoint it is possible to reconsider in an altogether new way the relationship between phenomenology and dialectic in Hegel. If the dialectic exists, it is because the concrete man of anthropology exists. The dialectic is the overcoming of the finite but, precisely because of this, it appears as the finite constituted by the need to overcome itself. Thus, Hegel writes: “the finite *is not*, i.e., is not the truth, but merely a transition and an emergence to something higher. This finitude of the spheres so far examined is the dialectic that makes a thing have its cessation by another and in another: but Spirit, the intelligent unity and the *implicit* Eternal, is itself just the consummation of that internal act by which nullity is nullified and vanity is made vain.”⁴¹ Here spirit operates within its own forms. On one hand, it operates as the “we” of the *Phenomenology*, while on the other, it operates as intentionality itself which continuously overcomes itself through the negation of the negation. In terms of phenomenology, the spirit is the negation of its own degrees and of its own appearances which are continuously preserved and overcome in the whole. The infinite idea is, therefore, internal to the dialectical process, and operates from the very beginning – well before Hegel defines it, at the end of the *Encyclopaedia*, as the idea which eternally produces and enjoys itself eternally as absolute spirit. This may appear as the end of the dialectic. Yet, the dialectic obtains only to the extent that there is an inadequacy, i.e., only to the extent that the finite is never the identity of concept and reality. According to Hegel, the dialectic teaches us that everything contains an infinite stimulus that overcomes itself. Considered from within the finite, this stimulus poses the finite in a dialectical relationship. When the Idea has attained itself, the dialectic is overcome and, to the extent that the dialectic moves, it can be overcome. This demonstrates the fundamental paradox of Hegelian thought, and leads us to think that the dialectic itself is in need of further development and criticism. In other words, we are faced here with a *critique of dialectical reason*. Such a critique will have to examine the limits of the very dialectic itself, and lead reason back to real experience. What this means is that real experience must ground a real dialectic. At this point, *the subject appears as the concrete man of philosophic anthropology*.

Spirit, for Hegel, is real subjectivity to the extent that, before becoming such, it “becomes” in nature. The soul is nothing but nature negating itself as negation, i.e., nature reflecting upon itself. As the principle of determination, the soul is determined in its vital matter and has a body of its own. From this viewpoint, the freedom of the human subject, considered as spirit, “is the existing truth of matter”. Subjective freedom negates matter as truth, but at the same time it does so, it also preserves it and recognizes it within itself. This is the relation between soul and body. Obviously, this relation implies the persistence of material nature and corporeality within subjective spirit. Yet, if this movement is present in Hegel, it remains linked to the typical Hegelian tendency

41 *Ibid.*, p. 9, par. 386.

of transforming matter into concept.

In the Anthropology, Hegel faces all of the problems that closely unite man and nature. Thus, he deals with the problems of age of life; of the passage from child to man; he comes back once again to the problem of sexual relations; and he pauses on the topic of sleep and wakefulness, and on the meaning of the lack of consciousness when man is asleep. The problem of sensation is closely related to that of consciousness and unconsciousness. Hegel sees very well that a fact such as sleep, through the unconscious, links human subjectivity to nature and, without this link, sensation is impossible to explain. Sensation is an altogether particular mediation between the external and the internal. Unconsciousness and sensation are covered by obscurity, and it is from obscurity that consciousness arises. Man himself is linked to his genetic origin. In his mother's womb, the baby is surrounded by a nature which, in turn, is the physical and psychical nature of the subject which contains it, i.e., the mother. Precisely because of this, man is a concrete monad. To put it in Hegel's terminology, perceptive individuality is a monadic individual conditioned by passivity. The relationship between man and nature is the same relationship between one subject and another. The intersubjective relationship has, as its foundation, the relationship of the baby to its mother: the mother is a subject for herself, but she is also a subject for her baby, and she presents a situation in which a subject is internal to another. In this sense, Hegel says that the mother is "the genius" of the baby. The psychic life of the baby is itself based on this original coupling. This is "the condition of the child in its mother's womb: — a condition neither merely bodily nor merely mental, but psychical — a correlation of soul to soul. Here are two individuals, yet in undivided psychic unity: the one as yet no *self*, as yet nothing impenetrable, incapable of resistance: the other is its actuating subject, the *single* self of the two. The mother is the *genius* of the child; for by genius we commonly mean the total mental self-hood, as it has existence of its own, and constitutes the subjective substantiality of some one else who is only externally treated as an individual and has only a nominal independence. The underlying essence of the genius is the sum total of existence, of life, and of character, not as a mere possibility, or capacity, or virtuality, but as efficiency and realized activity, as concrete subjectivity."⁴² Hegel's periodization leads us to believe that, for him, psychic life has a genetic and physiological foundation. Needs, sensations, emotions, and the unconscious content of feeling arise from the concrete individual and his relationships. On the other hand, the concrete individual is always linked to the external environment which penetrates and constitutes him. What we call externality, that very historical environment which created us, becomes the condition of our life. Our internal reality is strictly connected to our external reality. At a certain point, Hegel goes so far as to say that our internality can be identical with the external. "As an illustration of that identity with the surroundings may be noted the effect produced by the death of beloved relatives, friends, etc. on those left behind, so that the one dies or pines away with the loss of the other. (Thus Cato, after the downfall of the Roman republic,

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 28, par. 405.

could live no longer: this inner reality was neither wider nor higher than it.)"⁴³

Therefore, human life is conditioned, and it contains this conditioning within itself. In this sense it is passive and can feel itself as passive even when it overcomes this passivity in its own feeling. Hegel's analyses of sensible consciousness, of habit, and of the relationship between the internal and the external in the consciousness of concrete man define the sphere of anthropology. In *Phenomenology of Mind* man retraces his own path. But there is a stage prior to phenomenology itself, and it is this stage that Hegel describes in the anthropology. Not accidentally, in the *Encyclopedia* this stage precedes the resumption of phenomenology and the dialectical analysis of sensible consciousness, perception, understanding, and desire, up to the passage from phenomenology to psychology and to the analysis of the theoretical spirit of representation, recollection (*Erinnerung*), imagination, and memory (*Gedächtniss*).

These analyses seek to explain the genesis of thought and the passage from theoretical to practical spirit, to subsequently pass, through praxis, to objective spirit. The specific analyses that lead Hegel from subjective to objective spirit constitute the less well known and less studied part of Hegel's philosophy. Because of this, they have to be emphasized as a subject of study fundamental for contemporary thought. Hegel thinks that objective spirit is not understandable other than as a consequence of human action and will. These, in turn, are connected to the whole psychological structure of concrete man. The grasping of this structure is the task of phenomenology, which finds its own foundation in anthropology and which is itself based on the philosophy of nature and on the essential inadequacy that constitutes man. This is the inadequacy that differentiates individuality and universality, and which, in the ultimate analysis, posits spirit as a continuous infinite negation of such a difference, or as the continuous negation of the negation.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 32, par. 406.

THE CONCEPT OF PRAXIS IN HEGEL*

by
Paolo Gambazzi

In order to deal with the problem of the meaning of Marxism, it is necessary to focus on the concept of *praxis* as the basis of historical experience and its (dialectical) laws. Therefore, we must investigate the character of *praxis* and of the labor process,¹ as a starting-point in order to understand its concrete nature within the historical totality of a given economic system (e.g., the capitalist system). If the labor process is the general foundation precisely because of its generality, it is the necessary but not sufficient condition for the understanding and explanation of what is historically concrete. Thus, in order to effectively and exhaustively understand historical experience, it is necessary to descend from the abstract to the concrete, i.e., to the "rich aggregate of many conceptions and relations."² But this is possible only through an analysis of the practical relationships between man and nature that guarantees an understanding of the *meaning* of historical action (by means of the synthetic enrichment of these abstract properties and their concretization in relation to particular historical forms). If this *general structure of praxis* is not properly understood, it will be impossible to grasp the concrete and its laws.³ Hence, in explicating the concept of labor, it is necessary to avoid fetishistic fixations of it as an abstract category and to bring to light "determinate functions expressed in determinate categories."⁴

In analyzing the Hegelian concept of labor-*praxis* we shall see that the fundamental determination of the concept of labor-*praxis* used by Marx in his study of the foundations of history had already been indicated in Hegel, even though for Marx this concept assumed a new and different meaning. For this reason, it is necessary to begin by outlining how Marx posed the problem.

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1 In the first book of *Capital*, Marx defines the labor-process as follows: "... human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature; it is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather, is common to every such phase." *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, ed. by F. Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1967), vol. I, pp. 183-184; vol. I, part III, ch. 7, sec. 1.

2 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* ("Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy"), trans. N.I. Stone (Chicago: Kerr, 1904), p. 293.

3 The "idealistic", "positivistic", and "mechanistic" interpretation of history have a common denominator in the mystification of the general structure of *praxis* in relation to the general problem of the historically concrete, even if the ideological developments of their "understanding" of history assumes different directions.

4 Cf. Karl Marx, *Capitale*, Italian translation, vol. II (Rome, 1956), p. 237.

In the seventh chapter of the first volume of *Capital* ("The Labor-Process and the Process of Producing Surplus-Value"), Marx poses the problem of the general structure of labor-*praxis* in the following terms: "In the labor-process, therefore, man's activity, with the help of the instruments of labor, effects an alteration, designed from the commencement, in the material worked upon. The process disappears in the product; the latter is a use-value, Nature's material adapted by a change of form to the wants of man. Labor has incorporated itself with its subject: the former is materialized, the latter transformed. That which in the laborer appeared as movement, now appears in the product as a fixed quality without motion."⁵ Here, in a nutshell, we see the structure of the labor-process. Need gives rise to an aim. This aim is realized in matter by transforming it in the required way. Purposeful activity enters this transformation by modifying matter in realizing itself and enduring in the objective domain. The subjective pole (the purpose) which was originally opposed to materiality and showed itself inadequate to the need, is rejoined to the objective pole in the product as the outcome of the process: "At the end of every labor-process, we get a result that already existed in the *imagination of the laborer* at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also *realizes* a purpose of his own that *gives the law to his modus operandi*, and to which he must subordinate his will."⁶

In Marx labor is defined by its teleological structure: the end or the aim of action arises from need which constitutes the world as the material for the satisfaction of the same need. The aim organizes the material realm according to a teleological hierarchy (corresponding to the idea of the subject) and determines the object and the instruments of labor as adequate to the realization of the project. Finally, the aim *structures* the action and becomes its *intrinsic* law. Therefore, the aim is present not merely at the beginning (as the idea of the laborer) and at the end of the process (as product), but acts in every single moment as the organizing law of the activity. The aim is the foundation of the possibility of a *praxis* which transforms objectivity according to a meaning and which synchronically and diachronically constitutes a history in relation to other practices. In the *Grundrisse* Marx writes that labor is essentially "*formation, submission of objects to a subjective purpose; transformation of these objects into results and recipients of subjective activity.*"⁷ Thus, labor is, on the one hand a modification of materiality in order to appropriate it to human needs, and, on the other, a realization of man in materiality – an action whereby man, in modifying materiality, modifies himself. Here is the *original* subject-object moment of the dialectic which is the nucleus of Marxism and the basis of its ability to understand history.

In *The Holy Family*, Marx writes that Hegel "very often gives a *real*

5 *Capital*, vol. I, part III, ch. VII, p. 180.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 178; italics added. It is clear that the problem of *praxis* in Marx cannot be limited to these general observations, but presupposes a *global* understanding of his conception of history.

7 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Berlin, 1953), p. 389; italics added.

presentation, embracing the *thing* itself, within the speculative presentation.”⁸ This remark refers to the concept of the self-production of man as a process, and, in particular, to the fact that Hegel “grasps the essence of labor and comprehends objective man – true, because real man – as the outcome of man’s *own labor*.”⁹ What interests Marx is the fact that in certain aspects of Hegelian philosophy man appears as a dialectical being (albeit idealistically mystified), who in his activity determines his own *historical* and *human* essence. In this general context, the concept of labor-*praxis* has a prominent place.

The *Phenomenology*, as is well known, analyzes the dialectical moments in which self-consciousness realizes itself by passing from the level of sense-certainty to the level of philosophical understanding, and recapitulates in an abbreviated manner the whole historical experience of humanity by establishing a basic relationship between individual experience and the experience of the race. The parts of this work which interest us are the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness and the dialectic of recognition.

On the passage from consciousness to self-consciousness, Hegel writes: “. . . . But in this result the simple genus points life towards what is other than itself, namely, towards Consciousness for which life exists as this unity or as genus. This other life, however, for which the genus as such exists and which is genus for itself, namely, self-consciousness, exists in the first instance only in the form of this simple, essential reality, and has for object itself *qua* pure Ego. In the course of its experience, which we are now to consider, this abstract object will grow in richness, and will be unfolded in the way we have seen in the case of life.”¹⁰ In the movements of sense-consciousness, perception, and intellect, consciousness (“which has an object as object”) develops into *self-consciousness* (“for which the Ego is the object”). Self-consciousness initiates its own experience in the *instincts* to the point of constituting itself a history: “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.”¹¹

Therefore *instinct* is the beginning of this “new form of knowledge” – self-consciousness (“the knowing of oneself”) – as opposed to sense-certainty (“the knowing of another”). It is a movement of consciousness which *negates* being: for self-consciousness the truth of the sensible world is no longer in that world, and the sensible world is nothing more than a phenomenon: “. . . .the sensible world is regarded by self-consciousness as having a subsistence which is, however, only appearance, or forms a distinction from self-consciousness that

8 *The Holy Family* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), p. 82 (ch. 5, sec. 2).

9 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, edited by D.J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 177.

10 *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper, 1967), pp. 224-225.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

per se has no being.”¹² Self-consciousness, in order not to remain an empty tautology, demands an otherness, which is the world of consciousness conserved in self-consciousness. But this world is no longer now a being in itself, but becomes a *negative* object, i.e., something which must be negated by self-consciousness. Thus, “Consciousness has, *qua* self-consciousness, henceforth a twofold object – the one immediate, the object of sense-certainty and of perception, which, however, is here found to be marked by the character of negation; the second, viz. itself, which is the true essence, and is found in the first instance only in the opposition of the first object to it.”¹³ Therefore, what is fundamental at this level is the experience of a *praxis* in which the subjective and the objective are dialectically contraposed until they are mediated by another Ego and they reach a relationship of teleological modification (labor) of the objective by the subjective. In this way, by means of the stage of simple consumption, there is a transition to recognition and labor.

The Ego relates in desire to a negative object “without independence,” and consumes it: “Desire”, writes Hegel in the *Enzyklopaedie* “is therefore in its satisfaction, generally a destroyer, since – in its content – it is *egoistic*: and since satisfaction occurs only in a single thing, and this is transient, desire is once more generated in the satisfaction.”¹⁴ But the gratification overcomes individuality, because it is “a negation of immediacy and individuality,” and the result “contains the determination of *universality* and *identity* of self-consciousness with its object.” Thus self-consciousness now seeks “a *free* object” in which the Ego has the knowledge of itself as Ego, and attempts to obtain recognition by another self-consciousness: “Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that, it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it *is* only by being acknowledged or ‘recognized’.”¹⁵ Thus, desire wishes to have *another desire* as its own object. Insofar as it is human desire, it must transcend animal appetite, hence must risk its own life in order to win self-recognition. Therefore, the struggle for life and death between self-conscious beings cannot be resolved in death (which would prevent any recognition whatsoever), but must conclude in inequality: one self-conscious being recognizes another without being recognized by it (“the one pole is only that which is recognized, while the other is only that which recognizes”). In this struggle the *slave* accepts his life from another and prefers slavery to death; the master becomes “a consciousness existing for itself, not mediated by another consciousness.” In all this intersubjective dialectic, however, what we are interested in analyzing in particular is the conclusive moment only, the moment in which labor appears as an instrument of liberation for the slave. In fact, while the recognition attained by the master proves insufficient (he wished to be recognized by a desire, but the slave has made himself a thing) and without possibility of development,¹⁶

12 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

14 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1920), p. 376: Part III, “Die Philosophie des Geistes”, sec. 428.

15 *Phenomenology*, p. 229.

16 For the master, the slave is the possibility of finding certainty of himself.

the position of the slave makes freedom possible *precisely through labor*.

The master consumes the products of servile labor and, through the servant, relates mediately to the thing. Therefore, the master enjoys pure *pleasure*, the pure negation of the thing. The servant, on the other hand, has a double attitude towards the thing: he relates negatively to it and destroys it. But this negation cannot completely destroy the thing, because for him the thing is "at the same time independent." Thus, the slave can only *transform* the thing with his labor: "The master, however, who has interposed the bondsman between it (the object) and himself, thereby relates himself merely to the dependence of the thing, and enjoys it without qualification and without reserve. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who labors upon it."¹⁷ The relationship between the master and the slave reverses the sense of recognition, and through labor the servile consciousness proves itself "the truth of the independent consciousness." The master, in fact, stops at the moment of desire¹⁸ and forces the servant to labor, because he sees in labor a non-essential relationship to the thing, while reserving for himself the amount of pure enjoyment. But labor, or transforming something (relationship to the objective side and its subsistence) proves to be a process of liberation. This moment (overcoming the appearance in which "the aspect of the non-essential relation to the thing seemed to fall to the lot of the servant, since there the thing retained its independence") leads to a recognition of the real character of the master-slave relationship. In labor the slave comes face to face with the independence of the thing, while at the same time overcoming the immediate moment of desire: "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. This negative mediating agency, this activity giving shape and form, is at the same time the individual existence, the pure self-existence of that consciousness, which now in the work it does is externalized and passes into the condition of permanence. The consciousness that toils and serves accordingly attains by this means the direct apprehension of

but "it is clear that this object does not correspond to its notion; for, just where the master has effectively achieved lordship, he really finds that something has come about quite different from an independent consciousness. It is not an independent but rather a dependent consciousness that he has achieved. He is thus not assured of self-existence as his truth; he finds that his truth is rather the unessential consciousness, and the fortuitous unessential action of that consciousness." *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.

18 "Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby unalloyed feeling of self. This satisfaction, however, just for that reason is itself only a state of evanescence, for it lacks objectivity or subsistence." *Ibid.*, p. 238. "Die Begierde hat sich das reine Regieren des Gegenstandes und dadurch das unvermischte Selbstgefühl vorbehalten. Diese Befriedigung ist aber deswegen selbst nur ein Verschwinden, denn es fehlt ihr die *gegenständliche* Seite oder das Bestehen." *Sämliche Werke*, vol. II (Stuttgart: Fromman, 1964), p. 156.

that independent being as itself.”¹⁹ The slave is forced to labor for the master, and in this labor he is forced to restrain his own desires. He cannot destroy the thing as it is, but must transform it and adapt it to consumption (i.e., give it a form suitable to the needs and desires which constitute the precategorical structure of labor). Thus, he introduces his own aim into objectivity which endures and subsists in it. In his labor he recognizes himself and achieves a consciousness of his own reality.

In labor the slave also overcomes the anguish, which constituted him as a slave in relation to the master²⁰ because in the formation of objects suitable to a purpose (the satisfaction of needs), the servile self-consciousness creates a world in which it recognizes itself in the permanence of objectivity. On the other hand, the master’s behavior in relation to the thing is solely destructive. For the master this world will be something alien, while in labor the servile consciousness “by means of this rediscovery of itself, through itself,” achieves a “proper sense.” Thus, true freedom comes in through servitude and through its operation in fear and anguish. (“Without the formative activity shaping the thing, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become objective for itself.”) This is what Hegel means when he says that the slave is the truth of the master.

In Hegel, therefore, labor appears in an immediate relationship to *need*, and is at the base of the *human* dialectic (of self-consciousness). Self-consciousness is a becoming, a negation which conserves, a transcendence of the immediately given. It is posed in an immediate relationship to Another, first in desire, and then in the desire for recognition. In the face of the immediate givenness of the natural world, it poses itself as a principle not only of negation, but also of transformation. *Labor*, as a mediation between self-conscious beings, and man and himself, *leads to objectivity and to permanence* — the project that negates self-consciousness. Therefore, the giving of forms (labor), is the mediation which *realizes the subjective in the objective*, permitting the formation of a *human* and *historical* world in which subjectivity rediscovers its own sense.

But, what is the relationship between need, aim and labor for Hegel? In *The Philosophy of Right* he deals with Objective Spirit which externalizes itself on the level of family, civil society, and State. This happens after Objective Spirit manifests itself on the level of the person characterized by the possession of property (right), and on the level of the subject as particular will, which must

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

²⁰ “For in shaping the thing, it [consciousness] only becomes aware of its own proper negativity, its existence on its own account, as an object, through the fact that it cancels the actual form confronting it. But this objective negative element is precisely the alien, external reality, before which it trembled. . . . In fashioning the thing, self-existence comes to be felt explicitly as his [the bondsman’s] own proper being, and he attains the consciousness that he himself exists in its own right and on its own account [*an und für sich*]. 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.” *Ibid.*, p. 239.

become universal while maintaining itself within the limits of the distinction between intention and action, and of the internal and external (morality). After the stages of abstract objectivity of law and pure subjectivity of morality, we reach a sphere of concrete objectivity. Here only substantial freedom is possible: individual caprice vanishes, and the identity of the particular and universal will is realized in the objectivity of the State (internal national right: constitution; external national right: war).

Civil society is thus seen by Hegel as “an association of members as self-subsistent individuals in a universality which, because of their self-subsistence, is only abstract. Their association is brought about by their needs, by the legal system . . . and by an external organization for attaining their particular and common interests.”²¹ In the first stage *civil society* (*the system of needs*) is the object of political economy – a science “which arose in modern times, as on its own proper ground.” This is where Hegel comes closest to the foundation of history as man’s self-productive *praxis*.

For Hegel, however, this is not the stage where the dialectical synthesis of morality is realized – a stage which is represented by the State hypostatized as a universalizing ethical reality. In the *Philosophy of Right*, in discussing political economy, Hegel writes: “Here at the standpoint of needs what we have before us is the composite idea which we call *man*. Thus this is the first time, and indeed properly the only time, to speak of man in this sense.”²² The Hegelian philosophy goes beyond the natural immediacy of these economic relationships and discovers the objective truth of the individual *in the State*. Marx criticizes Hegel here for when he speaks of man “elsewhere,” he abandons the level of concrete productive practice and limits himself to idealistic language. Hegel imagines that the State transcends the particular level of family and civil society, and realizes a substantial morality. However, he forgets that “the State shatters the will of the family and civil society for the sake of giving existence to the will of private property, which is without family and without society.”²³

What is interesting here is Hegel’s description of this process. In the system of needs, we find “the mediation of need and one man’s satisfaction through his work and the satisfaction of the needs of all others . . .”²⁴ The individual in his immediacy, in his individuality in relation to nature as external, elaborates through need and desire an initial form of the “teleological-finite” relation. Writing in the *Enzyklopädie* about teleology, Hegel claims that “need and desire

21 G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 110; Third Part (“Ethical Life”), par. 157.

22 *Philosophy of Right*, p. 127, par. 190.

23 In “Aus der Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Kritik der Hegelschen Staatsrecht” published in MEGA vol. 1, part II. pp. 403-553, Marx argues that Hegel ideologically identifies real man as the *citizen* while actually “the *real man* is the *private individual* in the actual constitution of the State.” In other words, he fails to radically pose the problem – and he winds up by posing it only speculatively – of the general interest which has validity only “if the particular

particular interest actually becomes the *general* interest.”

24 *Philosophy of Right*, p. 127, par. 188.

are the most *immediate examples of purpose*. They are the *felt* contradiction found within the living subject himself, and pass over into activity to negate this negation, which still is mere subjectivity. Satisfaction restores peace between the subject and the object, since the objective, which during the contradiction (the need) stands *on the other side*, is negated in its one-sidedness by means of a reunion with the subjective."²⁵ *Need is therefore the foundation of economic behavior and of teleological activity*. Purpose, which at first appears as a subjective goal in relation to an objective world toward which its activity is aimed as to something already existing, "determines the subjectivity of the concept, presupposed in opposition to objectivity, as something insufficient in comparison with the totality enclosed within itself, and therewith turns towards the outside."²⁶

This dialectic of needs and satisfaction in labor develops in a civil society where individuals have their aim in a "particular interest." For them, the universal is "a means of satisfying needs." Therefore, the particular is raised to the level of universality not as freedom (ethical identity of the universal and particular), but as necessity: "In these circumstances, the interest of the Idea – an interest in which those members of civil society are as such unconscious – lies in the process whereby their singularity and their natural condition are raised, as a result of the necessities imposed by nature as well as of arbitrary needs, to formal freedom and formal universality of knowing and willing – the process whereby their particularity is educated up to subjectivity."²⁷ But the particularity of this immediate and natural existence reveals true sociality in its "being for others," and in the independence of the system of means for the satisfaction of need. For Hegel, this sociality is formal universality, since it is still bound to natural immediacy: concrete universality, right as freedom, "the interest of the Idea," will be reached only in the State.

"Man is in practical relation to nature (as to an immediate and external Self)," writes Hegel in the *Enzyklopädie*,²⁸ "as an immediately external and hence a sense-individual which however rightly also comports itself as an end in relation to natural objects. Consideration of natural objects in this relationship gives rise to the teleological-final viewpoint." Marx's concept of *praxis* serves the most important function of discovering precisely in this relationship of "activity conformable to an end" the global foundation of human reality, and also of relating to it what in Hegel was hypostatized universality.

For Hegel the relationship is reversed: the "positive reality" of civil society finds its verification in the State, which in its own moral substance transforms sociality into the concrete universality of freedom. Social need, for now, in the stage of civil society, is only "natural and immediate" need, the proper sociality of which is in its own "being for others." "Needs and means, as things existent *realiter*, become something which has *being for others* by whose needs and work satisfaction for all alike is conditioned This abstract character, universality,

25 *Op. cit.*, p. 186; First Part, sec. 204.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 187; First Part, sec. 207.

27 *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 124-125.

28 *Op. cit.*, p. 206; Third Part, sec. 245.

is the character of *being recognized* and is the moment which makes concrete (i.e., social) the isolated and abstract needs and their ways and means of satisfaction."²⁹ For Marx, this reciprocal conditioning and this mutual social relating of productive *praxis* will assume the role of the original foundation of the possibility of history and its general significance. In addition, for Marx, relationships at the level of economic *praxis* represent the only real domain where alienation can be overcome. For Hegel, on the other hand, liberation through productive *praxis* remains formal "since the particularity of the ends remains their basic content,"³⁰ and since, ideologically, he sees the universality of ends only in the State. But what interests us here is that, even for Hegel, freedom is created, at least in its provisional phases, in *mediation*. He will subsequently posit a hypostatized mediation in the idealistic conclusion of the preeminence of the universality of the State. But it is still in self-production that man is able to attain freedom through continual mediations with objectivity and others. The idealistic inversion, through which men and even history are instruments and means for the return of Spirit to itself, intervenes to limit this conclusion in an important way. This is typical of ideological thought, which Marx hits, signalling thereby a point of distinct separation: the abstract is brought back to the concrete, and only in the profane concrete do we find the real foundation of the history of man. Having placed these limits on the Hegelian conception of labor, we are able to discern what concreteness exists in his analysis: "The means of acquiring and preparing the particularized means appropriate to our similarly particularized needs is work. Through work the raw material directly supplied by nature is specifically adapted to these numerous ends by all sorts of different processes. Now this formative change confers value on means and gives them their utility, and hence man in what he consumes is mainly concerned with the products of men. It is the products of human effort which man consumes."³¹ Labor is *mediation*, elaboration, that which gives form (as Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*), and also theoretical education. *Praxis* is the opposite of an immediate and natural relationship, it is the self-productive mediation of man. For Hegel this happens within the limits of a "natural" stage of Spirit while for Marx it is the global foundation of human reality. "In the multiplicity of objects and situations of interest is the stage in which theoretical education develops. This education consists in possessing not simply a multiplicity of ideas and facts, but also a flexibility and rapidity of mind, ability to pass from one idea to another, to grasp complex and general relations, and so on. It is the education of the understanding in every way, and so also the building up of language. Practical education, acquired through working, consists first in the automatically recurrent need for something to do and the habit of simply being busy; next, in the strict adaptation of one's activity according not only to the nature of the material worked on, but also, and especially, to the pleasure of other workers; and finally, in a habit, produced by this discipline, of objective activity and universally recognized aptitudes."³² Functioning becomes

29 *Philosophy of Right*, p. 127. Italics by the author.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

education when it overcomes the resistance and recalcitrance of matter, in terms of an end and a purpose which instrumentalize causal necessity. This practical “culture” is fitness, i.e., adequacy of the action to the purpose.³³

In the *praxis* of labor, a new relationship between *causality* and *finality* is established. The purpose which arises from need does not abstractly contrapose itself to the causality of matter, but inserts itself therein, guiding to the realization of the subjective end. In labor-*praxis*, causality and finality are not two opposed and contradictory terms; and human finality does not operate in an abstract, but in a concrete freedom. The world of ends and the world of causality are not parallel orders which do not meet. They are connected in a dialectical relationship, in which the end realizes itself by entering into the natural world, thus making it historical and human.

It is interesting here to note the logical relationship which Hegel establishes between necessity and freedom, when he passes from the doctrine of essence to the section devoted to the doctrine of the concept, which contains – among other things – a section devoted to teleology: “The passage from necessity to freedom is the most difficult The thinking of necessity is . . . the solution to this difficulty; since it is the encounter of oneself with oneself in the other – freedom: which is not a flight of abstraction, but consists in discovering oneself in another real being, with which the first real being is bound by the power of necessity – not as the being of the other, the situation of the other – but as one’s own being, one’s own proper situation.”³⁴ Freedom is not abstract freedom of choice, but a purposeful use of necessity in order to direct it to the fulfillment of one’s subjective end.

This aspect of the problem is particularly evident in the Hegelian analyses of the tool as a mediation between the subjective end and the satisfaction of need. In operating with tools man acts on matter according to its necessary laws – he brings about the *cunning* of *reason*.

In his lectures of 1805-1806, Hegel had already analyzed the problem of the use of tools: “The tool is a lazy thing . . . I must always work with it. I have introduced art between me and external thingness, to spare myself and to conceal my determinateness, and to let it consume itself . . . This occurs in such a way that . . . the proper activity of nature – the elasticity of the spring, water, wind – comes to be used to make (in their sensible reality) something completely different from what they wished to make; that their blind activity is transformed in activity according to a purpose, in opposition to themselves: rational behavior of nature, laws, in their external reality. To nature itself nothing happens; individual aims of natural being become a universal. Here the impulse really withdraws from labor. It allows nature to consume itself by

33 “A clumsy man always produces a result he does not intend; he is not master of his own job. The skilled worker, on the other hand, may be said to be the man who produces the thing as it ought to be and who hits the nail on the head without shrinking (*Keine Sprödigkeit in seinem subjektiven Tun gegen den Zweck findet*).” *Ibid.*, addition to par. 197; p. 270.

34 - *Enzyklopädie*, pp. 155-156; First Part, sec. 159.

quietly looking on, and governs all with only a slight exertion: art.”³⁵ The means is in an immediate relation with matter, and operates for a purpose thus introducing itself into the causal structure by its own inertia.³⁶ It is certainly not by accident that, in *Capital*, Marx, in analyzing tools in relation to the labor-process, cites this passage from the *Enzyklopädie*: “Reason is as cunning as she is powerful. Her cunning consists principally in her mediating activity, which by causing objects to act and re-act on each other in accordance with their own nature, in this way, without any direct interference in the process, carries out reason’s intentions.”³⁷ Marx sees the possibility of a logic which would overcome traditional dualisms in the relation between necessity and freedom, between causality and teleology developed by Hegel. Marx, however, connects these dialectical determinations more closely to *praxis* and labor, and elaborates these stages (which in Hegel are provisional and to be overcome) to the point of making the structure of the whole human reality out of them.

Hegel also reveals the new and increasingly more abstract character that labor assumes in a capitalistic society. Thus, he sees the *industrial system* as a typical expression of capitalistic labor. Man, unlike animals, transcends the limited and immediate realm of his own life. In the multiplicity of his needs and means, he reaches an ever more abstract differentiation: “An animal’s needs and its ways and means of satisfying them are both alike restricted in scope. Though man is subject to this restriction too, yet at the same time he evinces his transcendence of it and his universality, first by the multiplication of needs and means of satisfying them, and secondly by the differentiation and division of concrete need into single parts and aspects which in turn become different needs, particularized and so more abstract.”³⁸ As already indicated, labor specifies matter by employing a particularized means to satisfy a particularized need. For Hegel, the dialectic gives rise to the division of labor, and, subsequently, to the machine: “The universal and objective element in work, on the other hand, lies in the abstracting process which effects the subdivision of needs and means and thereby *eo ipso* subdivides production and brings about the division of labor. By this division the work of the individual becomes less complex, and consequently his skill at his section of the job increases, like his output. At the same time, this abstraction of one man’s skill and means of production from another’s completes and makes necessary everywhere the dependence of men on one another and their reciprocal relation in the satisfaction of their other needs. Further, the abstraction of one man’s production from another’s makes work more and more mechanical, until finally

35 Cited by Georg Lukács in his *Der junge Hegel* (Zürich: Europa, 1948), p. 439, ch. 6 (“Die Arbeit und das Problem der Teleologie”).

36 “This relation is the sphere of the mechanical and the chemical, which now serve the end, and of which the end is the truth and free concept. The cunning of reason consists in this: that the subjective end, as the power of these processes in which objects consume and cancel themselves, itself remains outside these processes, and is what is conserved in them. “*Enzyklopädie*, p. 188; First Part, sec. 209.

37 *Capital*, I. p. 179n.

38 *Philosophy of Right*, p. 127.

man is able to step aside and install machines in his place.”³⁹

To return now to a closer examination of the *teleological problem*, the fundamental difference between the concept of cause and the concept of purpose is that in the latter the representation of the end is present before the beginning of the operative process, and is conserved at the end of this process in its objective realization. On the other hand, for Hegel the cause belongs to blind necessity and passes into its otherness, the effect, thus losing its original status: “only in itself or for us does the cause first become the cause in the effect, and return to itself. On the other hand, the end is posited as containing the determination in itself, or that which still appears as other-being, the effect. Thus, it does not pass over into his activity, but is conserved, i.e., it causes only itself and is at the end what it was at the beginning – in its origin. It is through this self-conservation that the purpose is what is truly original.”⁴⁰ Purpose is a concept which is *per se* in the negation of immediate objectivity. That is, it is subjective – it has objectivity before it as something given. Purpose, therefore, is “an ideal reality, in itself it is nothing.” It is a negating activity which aims to pose its own antithesis as identical to itself (i.e., it aims to pose the idea of being). This is attained through work as the transformation of immediate objectivity: “This is the realization of the end, in which by making itself into the other and by conquering objectivity it has overcome the difference between both: it has become connected with and conserved itself.”⁴¹ Hegel here alludes again to drive and need “as the most proximate examples of purpose” and refers to the analyses of drive and satisfaction already indicated in the *Phenomenology*, in the passage from consciousness to self-consciousness. In addition, he clearly stresses that it is precisely *need*, as a “felt contradiction,” that *demonstrates to us the inadequacy of self-consciousness* and the necessity for the activity of negating and transforming reality: “Those who talk so much of the solidity and insuperability of the finite have, in every instinct, an example of the contrary. Instinct is, so to speak, the *certainty* that the subjective is as one-sided and lacking truth as the objective. Furthermore; instinct is the carrying out of this certainty: it overcomes the contradiction between the subjective, which is and remains only something subjective, and the objective, which is and remains only something objective, as well as their finality.”⁴² Labor carries the

39 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

40 *Enzyklopädie*, p. 185. “. . . Nur an sich oder für uns ist die Ursache in der Wirkung erst Ursache und in sich zurückgehend. Der Zweck dagegen ist gesetzt als in ihm selbst die Bestimmtheit oder das, was dort noch als Anders sein erscheint, die Wirkung zu enthalten, so das er in seiner Wirksamkeit nicht übergeht, sondern sich erhält, d.i. er bewirkt nur sich selbst und ist am Ende, was er im Anfange, in die Ursprünglichkeit war; durch diese Selbsterhaltung ist erst das Ursprüngliche.” First Part, sec. 204.

41 *Ibid.*, “Dies ist das Realistieren des Zweckes, in welchem er, indem er sich zum Anderen seiner Subjektivität macht und sich objektiviert, den Unterschied beider aufgehoben sich nur mit sich zusammenschlossen und erhalten hat.”

42 *Ibid.*, p. 186. “Diejenigen, welche soviel von der Fertigkeit und Unüberwindlichkeit des Endlichen, sowohl des Subjektiven als des Objektiven sprechen, haben an jedem Triebe das Beispiel von dem Gogenteil. Der Trieb ist zuzusagen die Gewissheit, dass das Subjektive nur einseitig ist und keine

subjective purpose "towards the *external*," and the *purpose thereby acquires the objectivity of a product*. The teleological relation can therefore be represented as a *syllogism*: "The teleological relation is the conclusion, in which the subjective end, through a middle, joins itself to the external objectivity through a middle term which is the unity of both as purposeful activity and as objectivity set immediately under the end, the means."⁴³ The middle term is "broken in two," and is constituted by activity in accordance with a purpose and by an object which serves as a means: "The entire middle term is this inner power of the concept as activity with which the object as means is immediately united, and under which it stands." But activity in accordance with a purpose cannot stop with the subduing of an object as means, but must (through the means) be further mediated towards the external. The means is now in immediate relation with the other extreme of the syllogism, with the material. Thus, on one side we have the purpose as still subjective (the middle term is constituted by activity in conformity with a purpose and by the means), while the other extreme is presupposed objectivity. The outcome of labor is "the realized end, the *posited unity* of the subjective and the objective." They lose their one-sidedness and the objective is subdued to the purpose, for which it (the objective) is conserved: "The end maintains itself against and in the objective, since – in addition to being the one-sided subjective and the particular – it is also the concrete universal, the identity which is in itself, of both."⁴⁴ The result is "a form posed outside of pre-existing material." This is the source of the relativization of the attained purpose which Hegel carries out: the attained purpose is "only an object, which in turn is also means or material for other goals, and so forth to infinity." The goal is never absolute, but can be itself transformed into a means.

Thus, in Hegel's notion of labor-*praxis*, work originates in a need which determines the purpose. The purpose is the subjective existence only of an object posed as ideal and must therefore *be mediated in activity* and in a means in order, through these, to attain an objective existence. Labor has thus a *concrete teleological structure* and it is activity in accordance with a purpose. But in order to effectively act on objectivity, work is forced to specify itself in relation to objectivity in the means. And this is the immediate subordination of objectivity to purpose. Through the means the purpose actualizes itself in things, causing the functioning of the mechanical and chemical structure of things. Reason (and this is its cunning) remains outside the process. But it *is realized in it, thus carrying out its own ideal object*, – the purpose.

Returning now to the Marxian concept of labor-process, it is evident that Wahrheit hat, ebensowenig als das Objektive. Der Trieb ist ferner die Ausführung von dieser seiner Gewissheit; er bringt es zustande, diesen Gegensatz das Subjektive, das nur ein Subjektives sei und bleibe, wie das Objektive, das ebenso nur ein Objektives sei und bleibe, und diese ihre Endlichkeit aufzuheben."

43 *Ibid.*, p. 187; First Part, sec. 206. "Die teleologische Beziehung ist der Schluss, in welchem sich der subjektiven Zweck mit der ihm äusserlichen Objektivität durch eine Mitte zusammenschliesst, welche die Einheit beider als die zweckmassige Tätigkeit und als die unter den Zweck unmittelbar gesetzte Objektivität, das Mittel, ist."

44 *Ibid.*, p. 189. First Part, sec. 210.

there are important analogies between it and the described Hegelian analysis. In light of the function assigned to labor-praxis, and in the transition from this elementary dialectic to the dialectic of intersubjectivity and history, the two positions turn out to be irreconcilable. The determination of these differences is what would indicate the great meaning of the famous Marxian "reversal."

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Youth Culture in the Bronx

by

Mark D. Naison

As the movement has begun to reach out beyond the campuses, no issue has generated more controversy than the political implication of "Youth Culture". During the past year and a half, great theoretical debates and factional splits have occurred over the question of whether youth culture represents a viable link between the movement and the working class. But to radicals with no factional attachment, the issue has been equally important. Every radical group in a working class community finds itself confronted *almost daily* with problems arising from the generational revolt: what drugs should it encourage people to use and what drugs must it fight; what music and dress and sexuality can it tie in to its politics without sacrificing women's liberation; what programs can it create to link the spontaneity of street culture with a collective spirit and a respect for work.

After eight months of activity in a predominantly Irish working class neighborhood in the Bronx, the group I am part of (The Bronx Coalition) has not yet found answers to these questions. Youth culture has affected many kids in our community profoundly, but we are by no means persuaded that it represents the *key* to social revolution. In the street culture of the Bronx, "the youth revolt" has become so tangled and twisted with the values of the market place that it presents no clear liberating message. With the help of the media, the communal vision of the hippies and the social mission of the movement have been sacrificed to an appearance of rebellion in which the individualism of Amerikkkan culture still reigns supreme. The number of people who "dig" the movement is vastly greater than the number of people who will work steadily to build it.

An equal difficulty arises in connecting youth culture to women's liberation. Although the youth revolt has undermined many repressive attitudes (racism, patriotism, authoritarianism) it has not dramatically reduced the exploitation of women. Street women who have rebelled against their parents by smoking pot, or not wearing make-up, or going to demonstrations continue to feel pressure to be passive, sexual objects from the men they hang out with. The "revolutionary spirit" in youth culture which has been glorified by radical men (Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin) does not appear so groovy to politically conscious women. Where men see sexual and personal freedom, women may see a new and more subtle form of oppression.

These contradictions have come out clearly in our group's short history. When we got our storefront in December, the Coalition was dominated by men who saw the longhaired street kids in our area as material for a white liberation army. All we had to do was use the right rhetoric, play the right music, and display a little bravado, and we could get thousands of kids in motion to rip-off draft boards, ROTC's, banks, recruiting stations, and other manifestations of the Pig Presence in the Bronx. We leafleted schools and parks, put out a newspaper modeled on *Rising up Angry*, called rallies and marches (hoping they would spin off into "trashing") and made plans for week-long offensives against the war

machine in March (Anti-Draft Week) and April (Anti-Imperialist week).

But during our first week of action in March, hardly anyone showed up. A lot of young people said they dug our leaflets and came to our office, but less than a hundred actually joined the demonstrations. This failure forced our group into extended self-criticism. Not only was it apparent that we had failed to create a youth liberation army, but we had created a dynamic which pushed women's issue into the background. The women in our group had played the major role in staffing our office, putting out our newspaper, and distributing our literature, but our emphasis on trashing and military-related issues placed the women's struggle in a distinctly subordinate position. The women presented us with an ultimatum: either the Bronx Coalition incorporated women's liberation into every aspect of its organizing or the men would have to leave the group.

From that point on, the Coalition ceased to consider "street organizing" as its major reason for existing. As the women's group took leadership, "bread and butter issues" and community service programs assumed a far more important place in the organization's activity. We scrapped the plans for "Anti-Imperialist Week" and concentrated on developing programs to which the whole community could relate. We set up a draft counseling and abortion counseling service. We worked with local postal workers during the mail strike. Our women's group forced a local hospital to provide free cancer detection examinations in our storefront and brought more than 150 women from the community in to be tested. Films and discussions on women's liberation were put on weekly. The office was cleaned and converted from a "youth hangout" into a place where a working class mother might feel *somewhat* comfortable.

These changes did not mean we had given up on "youth culture". We continued to sell our newspaper, the CROSS-BRONX EXPRESS (whose profits paid our rent), at the local high schools, colleges and parks. We worked closely with radical students at local schools. And we gratefully accepted the "insulation" which the proliferation of long-hair and hippie clothes gave us in our very conservative neighborhood. The fact that our storefront window remained unbroken when the women's group removed the boards was testimony to the degree to which the symbols of the movement, if not its substance, had penetrated our area.

However, the women's revolution did initially make our group more difficult for young people to relate to. As we began to emphasize programs over rhetoric, disciplined activity over "hanging out", the number of high school kids and street kids who came into our office temporarily dwindled. The group reduced to a hard core of some twenty-odd people in their twenties and thirties with a group of high school students on the fringes. The efficiency of our work greatly improved as did our reputation with local adults, but we felt ourselves getting increasingly isolated from the thousands of street kids whom many of us still saw as an important force in the revolution. Our preoccupation with purging the group's chauvinism produced a puritanical atmosphere which made it difficult for kids to be around us; we came on like teachers and parents and social workers who were trying to force them to conform to an alien culture.

The Cambodia-Kent State explosion helped dramatize (and ultimately

reduce) this isolation. When the news of the invasion hit, kids in our community took to the streets in unprecedented numbers. At Clinton High School (half black, half working class white) 3000 students charged out of school, breaking windows and overturning buses, and marched over to Roosevelt High. Two thousand more kids came out to meet them and they charged the Fordham University campus, retreating only when the Tactical Patrol Force came at them with guns. Similar events occurred at Taft and Columbus High, other schools where we had worked. Kids who had previously been reluctant to hand out leaflets were now leading strikes at their schools and putting out underground newspapers of their own. The political level of the strikes was as impressive as the violence. In addition to demanding all troops out of Southeast Asia, the high school strike committees called for the release of political prisoners, cops out of the schools, and student control of the educational process. For a week it seemed like the middle of a revolution; the students had acted *on their own* beyond our wildest dreams.

By the end of May, however, the schools had sunk back into apathy. Although ambitious proposals had been made about keeping high schools open as liberation centers for the community, the strike committees were unable to convert the violence into concrete programs. Students fell back easily into the routine of getting high, hanging out, and studying for exams. The level of political consciousness had been raised in the sense that more students were able to see themselves as oppressed (and therefore identify with the Blacks and the Vietnamese) but new social and educational structures did not emerge from the struggle. Our paper sales and the number of people working with us increased, but we remained the only viable radical group in the community.

The strike experience was thus as sobering as it was exhilarating. We had seen tangible potential for rebellion among white youth in our area: there was enormous pent-up frustration which could express itself through symbols and issues that "the movement" put forward. But at the same time, we observed impatience, an inability to work without immediate emotional gratification, and a preoccupation with a mystique of power and action which could be mobilized by an advertising campaign or a pennant race as well as by the Left. We found very little collective spirit. The kids related to politics as something that could give them a quick thrill in an emotionally barren life. Within the youth of our community, politics seemed to play precisely the same role as drugs! It was a substitute for human relationship in a society where basic institutions – family, church, school – were failing to provide meaning to people's lives.

This connection between social decay, politics and drugs came through to us dramatically when we discussed the problem of dealing with the rapid growth of heroin addiction in our neighborhood. Almost every day we were out on the street, we came across working class kids, once "hitters" and racists, who had begun to identify with the anti-war and black liberation struggles. They had begun to relate their own oppression to that of third world peoples and they could talk with great feeling about how the police served the ruling class. But to a man, these people were strung out on junk. Ten dollars a day, twenty dollars a day, fifty dollars a day, armed robbery, breaking and entering. Rikers Island (the

State Prison). Some of these guys would sell our papers and come to our meetings, would promise they were going to kick, but they always went back. We would watch them nodding and scratching, wiping themselves with handkerchiefs, young, once vigorous men turned into compulsive children. If this is what it takes to break down racism in the working class, we realized the movement had better create some alternatives.

Up to now, our group has not been able to provide them. We set up a drug committee and began investigating ways of drying out and rehabilitating addicts, but could do little more than learn the appeal of the "enemy" with which we were competing. The pleasure of heroin is real and tangible; it creates a physical high, an orgasm of the whole body, a very beautiful feeling. If the restraints against taking it are breaking down, as they are in our neighborhood, and the satisfactions of family life and work are shrinking, it is a very difficult thing to give up. Youth culture only encourages the process. If the media tells kids that the revolution means enjoying themselves *now* without regard for the consequences, what better way is there to do this than shooting up? In terms of sheer pleasure, heroin makes you feel a lot better than a demonstration or a good fuck.

But youth culture should not be seen as the cause of drug addiction. It is a related (and largely positive) response to an underlying sickness. Amerikkkan society is falling apart. There are almost no institutions that function successfully as stabilizers of human personality, no basis for community. The productive machine has been stripped of its meaning at the same time that its performance has been deteriorating, and people are being left without symbols with which they can identify. (The flag is a bad substitute for a successful economy and foreign policy.) The media are continuing to manufacture needs for sexuality and goods, while the opportunity for such satisfaction is decreasing. There is a cultural crisis so basic in the making that it portends mass psychosis. People need values and continuity as much as they need thrills. Either there will be a revolution and a new order of human community, or we will sink into a barbarism.

Our group in the Bronx has been forced to respond to this crisis cautiously, but we are not without hope. After unfortunate experiences in trying to engineer mass actions under our leadership, we have been concentrating on programs which provide services to our community while exposing the literal bankruptcy of the local power structure. Our summer program consists of self-defense classes, rock concerts in local parks, the CROSS-BRONX EXPRESS, a day care center, draft counseling, and a campaign for community control of health facilities and the construction of new hospitals. Our impact in the short run has been small but we are steadily increasing the number of people working in our projects and have begun to provoke conflict between the police and local politicians on how best to handle us. When the head pig in the Bronx denied us a sound permit for one of our rock concerts (claiming we were a radical group which "shouts Power to the People!") we got one thousand signatures in a day from local residents asking the permit to be restored, and forced the borough president to overrule the pig! To many in the movement, this may represent

collaboration, but to people in our community, it represented **POWER!** As we implement programs which function and succeed, as we show we are in the community to stay until conditions genuinely improve, we will not only encourage people to get involved with us, but inspire them to take action *on their own* against problems they once thought insoluble.

The strategy is a long term one. Some of the actions we would like to take, such as a war on the drug traffic, cannot be realistically attempted without far greater organization and community support. Stopping junk involves taking on the cops and the Mafia simultaneously, something one does not even contemplate without plenty of guns and a constituency for protection and defense. And at the same time we feel we are on a path which has *a chance* of reaching that point, and feel other radical groups in working class areas can reach it if they create a network of counter-institutions to back up their rhetoric.

This requires that the movement *build upon* youth culture rather than imitate it. Revolutionaries must probe beyond the primitive thrill of seeing working class kids with long hair and militant rhetoric; they must look beyond a sense of frustration and hatred for the pigs. In every contact with the street culture, they should try to create institutions which bring out a collective spirit, which enable people to be revolutionary between demonstrations, which provide more satisfying ways of meeting basic human needs, than the old structures. Coffee houses, experimental schools, cooperative stores and services, communal living experiments, community radio stations and newspapers, community health clinics, collective farms and retreats for drying out addicts are potentially viable forms which can be created in the vacuum that American Capitalism has left. If the quality of working class life continues to deteriorate, the need for new institutions will dramatically increase. The movement can reap the benefit. If we use youth culture creatively, we can open opportunities our predecessors always lacked; we can build a revolutionary culture which will make personal liberation an integral part of the struggle of Socialism.

On the Role of Youth Culture

by

John Heckman

If we had no art and literature even in the broadest and most general sense, then the revolutionary movement could not be carried on to victory. -- Mao Tse-tung

The November issue of *Radical America* on youth culture expresses a curious ambivalence. Youth culture is seen as a "promise and a threat": full of liberating potential, but also dangerously co-optable as a potential mask for serving the status quo. Piccone in his article offers the most concise statement of the dilemma:

...the rise of the youth culture can be a crucial moment in the development of a new revolutionary consciousness. But if its catalytic function is misconstrued and seen as the revolution itself, it simply becomes another mystification of the real revolutionary possibilities that it carries. (Page 30)

The bases of the potential promise of youth culture are laid both in a historical analysis of rock, folk, and blues music on the one hand, and in a new working class-oriented analysis of societal development on the other.

It is therefore extremely important that the historical evidence offered in the longer articles by Joe Ferrandino and Paul Garon is almost exclusively negative. Over and over, they chronicle the way in which black and rural performers have been exploited and cheated, and, more important, the way in which their music has been adopted and adapted by the ruling elite as a means of social control. In the 1950s, rock-and-roll and later folk-rock were used to defuse the "tension and rage generated by an oppressive system" (Page 27), to channel energies which might otherwise have become political. What Joe Ferrandino tells is the story of all previous attempts to inject a progressive political content into rock culture, of the unsuccessful "attempt to introduce the subject into what was purely an object-to-object relation". (Page 30) Despite his own evidence of the co-optation of all previous efforts, he assumes nevertheless that the Truth has finally arrived and is liberating. Given the evidence of the *Radical America* issue itself, it almost seems that any defense of youth culture must succumb to the dangers which Piccone correctly attacks in his comments on Theodore Rozak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* --in particular, the claim that youth culture is a privileged solution, the final resolution of the problem, rather than merely a stage in the development of social contradictions.

What are supposed to be the positive aspects of youth culture? Primarily, the injection of genuine emotion (Page 35), "authenticity" (Page 32), "sensuality" (Page 29), and rebellion: "sensuality (though channeled) and rebellion (though primitive)--and concomitantly a growing sense of community." (Page 29) These are seen as positive in spite of reservations:

...the people who were attracted to the folk culture ...were aware of many symptoms of a diseased society--meaningless unproductive labor, racism, distorted social relations, *et cetera* --but very infrequently did they get to the real causes of these problems. (Page 38)

The proper questions to ask about youth culture do not concern the subjective intentions and efforts of those involved in it, but first, the objective results of such involvement, and second, the real material basis for the possibility that youth culture might someday become a liberating force. Or, to put it another way, whether there are elements built into the structure of the youth culture which actively oppose "getting to the real causes" of the problems; whether it is an accident that such self-consciousness and social analysis are "infrequent".

It seems clear that the current public manifestations of rock-youth culture all serve reactionary purposes. The phenomenon of Woodstock has come to be seen as the absorption of whatever good political energies may exist by the system. And in the words of The Berkeley Tribe, the recent Stones' concert at Altamont, "...like the massacre at Song My, exploded the myth of innocence for a section of America." The hippie-love-flower-power phenomenon which is an integral part of youth culture must be seen in psychological terms as a refusal to recognize the violence of American society. Instead of meeting it head-on and trying to change that society, youth culture's advocates withdraw from it. Thus the common reaction of refusing to argue about anything at all. The middle-class nature of the movement accentuates the problem. The "rebellion" of youth against their parents, in fact, extends the already individualistic tendencies of their parents, and is further based on the lack of any real financial difficulty. Instead of thinking in long-range terms and becoming involved in prolonged political struggle, these young people even further reduce the already very limited scope of vision they inherit from the world of their parents. At the other pole one can view the Weathermen as literally being driven crazy by the frustration caused by life in the United States, and emerging as anarchist terrorists.

This does not necessarily mean that rock culture cannot be personally liberating for specific individuals, that it cannot serve to free people from the excessive demands of the Protestant ethic, from the performance principle. However, it is not merely a question (to borrow from Eric Fromm) of freedom from, but also a question of freedom for. There is an antagonistic relation between the undeniable possibility of individual liberation from oppressive patterns and the fact that as a mass phenomenon youth culture serves retrogressive social purposes--and consequently that any personal liberation which is achieved must ultimately be balanced against the refusal to recognize and participate in mass political action. The case for youth culture cannot therefore be made on the basis of what currently is, nor on the basis of individualistic liberation; since its concrete manifestation on a mass social level is reactionary, whatever personal liberation is achieved must be ultimately undercut, forcing the majority of people involved in youth culture

into various forms of lethargy. The assertion of the progressive, liberating character of youth culture must be based on something else. In the November issue of Radical America, that something else is held to be a new working class cum youth as a class analysis of American society. Only if the basis of society as a whole is fundamentally changing can youth culture hope to become progressive. This contention is most explicitly stated in Delfini's lead article. He claims that changes in the base of technology tend to eliminate the traditional working class and to increase the importance of technical workers, dividing society into "technical workers and managers on the one side, and passive consumers on the other". (Page 10) Nowhere, however, does Delfini argue this case. On the contrary, he presents a caricature of a good argument for it (along with his caricature of an opposing position which he identifies with his blatant distortion of the position of the Progressive Labor Party). He then bases a positive analysis of youth culture on the statement that youth culture represents a response to this shift in objective conditions and the discovery on the part of youth of "their own common conditions as a nascent class" (Page 11). Since (pace the Rowntrees) youth by definition cannot be a class, the case must be argued on the basis of what they will become. One must argue that you will somehow (although it is never said how) "grow up" and become capable of turning society around to assert the progressive values which now appear in youth culture. This is the ultimate basis for the assertions, contained in most of the other articles, that youth culture is progressive.

There seem to me two things wrong with this argument. First, that it is factually incorrect. (1) Second, even supposing that a new working class analysis is roughly accurate, it would not follow that youth culture is a positive force. On the contrary, if capitalist society is to be increasingly divided between managers/technical workers and passive consumers, then that capitalist society must create a large number of marginal and essentially useless positions on its peripheries. It must find a way to get people to accept their status as "passive consumers", as parasites. The objective role of youth culture is one answer to this need. Under the mask of "genuine emotion" and "sensuality" and astrology, there exist a relatively large and growing number of people who work only marginally, who frequently get money from their middle-class parents, who have nothing useful to do, but who do consume large amounts of expensive clothing, records, sound systems, cameras, et cetera. It is irrelevant whether time spent in meditation--or, still better, entranced in a product sold by the capitalist--is good for the soul: it is very good for the capitalist, for it enables him to deal with the problem of unemployment created by this "new technological base". It is not by accident that youth culture is primarily a middle-class phenomenon, one which is the privilege of people who have money and leisure.

Finally, the question of "liberation for whom?" must be asked. In and of themselves, manifestations of youth culture represent an attempt to escape from an oppressive social order. To the extent that the social order oppresses many different groups, they are a psychological necessity for the participants. For different social strata vacations, sports, listening to music on expensive

sound equipment, going in to gourmet cooking, going to the drive-in movies, do-it-yourselfing, or spending lots of money customizing a car fulfill similar needs. Basically, there is little difference in the escapist function fulfilled for the leisured youth of the petty bourgeoisie (or the new working class, if one prefers) by Dylan and a tape deck, and by the money and time that a working class guy spends "customizing" his car and talking about it at great length with his friends. In both cases, the individual has a sense of escaping from everyday reality, an identification with a culture hero (singer or racing driver), and a sense of accomplishment.

The real danger of youth culture is that "personal liberation" can become the primary, overwhelming focus of one's energies. By devoting large amounts of time to youth culture (or whatever), personal liberation is achieved at the expense of a real political orientation. It preempts the task of creating real group solidarity between all the groups--from the industrial proletariat to the swing segments of lower-level technocracy--whose interest is similarly opposed to that of the ruling class. Primary devotion to life style--to doing one's own thing--precludes any real challenge to the system. And by a real challenge, one must understand a challenge which has a concrete chance of success, which is mass oriented, and which includes the traditional working class, since it still possesses more potential social power, and stands to gain more, than any other single group.

But it is inadequate to simply dismiss the present manifestations of youth culture as counter-revolutionary, as perpetuating the capitalist system. They may be that, but they are also a response to something. What is their real place--and, more important, what characteristics would they need in order to become a force for real social liberation?

For many people, it is true that youth culture has represented the sign of the beginning of personal liberation. That is also the crux of the problem. To be truly liberating, it would have to involve the total structure of social experience--not simply one or even a series of aspects. The public and commercial manifestations of youth culture do their best to insure that it remains in the realm of personal liberation; that it does not involve any collective thinking or group action. Even enormous gatherings such as Woodstock do not promote a group consciousness, but rather the mentality of a series.

In fact, music in the discotheques and the systems of the light shows more resemble a trance than anything else. And it is not insignificant that drugs such as peyote and mescaline were originally used to induce religious trances, or that Zen is the instrument of repression and was historically used to maintain a strict caste and economic class system in India. What begins as bodily liberation and the rejection of a rationality that has become repressive turns into mere stupor, or exists at the expense of the repression of others. What is supposed to be "total experience" is in fact stultifying. Any verbal communication becomes impossible, and the synthesis of art and politics which Martha Sonnenberg calls for in her article becomes in fact the abolition of any intellectual effort at all. It is no accident that youth culture is heavily anti-intellectual. The very vocabulary of the Weatherman paper (or its

analogues) or of people heavily into youth culture, exhibits a regression to infantilism: the complete breakdown of grammar into stereotyped and infinitely repetitive phrases (such as dig, heavy, rap, groove, right on, too much, et cetera).

Rather than considering the totality of experience, youth culture isolates its elements from each other and from the society around it and bases an analysis on the isolated elements of whatever work one considers. What good do "revolutionary" lyrics do if the music itself, or the surroundings in which it exists, induce either a trance or the refusal to think about the lyrics? It seems plausible, for example, that the musically repetitive structure of rock and the blues mitigates against any effect the lyrics might otherwise have.

Culture, if it is to be progressive, must itself be seen as a coherent totality. Many of the objections to the established culture are on the grounds that it consists of, or is taught as, a series of isolated, meaningless fragments. And the objections are correct. But there is qualitatively very little difference between the ploy of established culture in reducing Shakespeare to a series of isolated quotations, or in talking about "existentialism" and the tendency to glory in some single aspect of experience, or in a song, on the part of people into youth culture. Grooving on Dylan and a professor's enthusiasm for Homeric epithets are not fundamentally different. Within cultural phenomena, the dichotomy between the various elements is a barrier to revolutionary use of culture, and constitutes the main way in which culture becomes useful to capitalism. The songs of Brecht's "Three Penny Opera" are "safe" when isolated from the context of the play as a whole, just as it is safe to glory in the romantic revolutionary ethos of "Street Fighting Man", or Che or Ho, because it is isolated from any meaningful total context. Thus the poster style of the May revolts in Paris, again produced in the famous first poster during the Harvard strike in 1969, has been taken over by a wide variety of commercial productions. The fist is "great", but also useful to capitalism, because it is looked at as an end in itself. Because of this isolation, the record companies, clothing industries, et cetera can fashion the phenomenon of youth culture to their own ends.

In addition to opposing the split perception which renders music and other elements of youth culture useful to the economy, cultural innovators must consistently attempt to re-appropriate the means of production of the work of art away from the ruling class and toward the masses, as Walter Benjamin pointed out in his essay "The Author as Producer". Benjamin argues that the artist exists in relation to his means of production, just as does the worker, and that those means "belong" to capitalism. The artist must at every point attempt to change that relation. Concretely, there cannot be an excessive reliance on the implements of advanced capitalism--on expensive sound equipment, movie cameras, et cetera. Social and cultural elements must be mastered by people for their own use.

First, this implies reducing technical equipment to a minimum. It also means mastering the rudiments of the machinery we use--from amplifiers to electric typewriters to cars. Any reduction in technical dependence on the tools of capitalism is a cultural gain. In more directly cultural areas, it means

strenuously opposing the fads of stars and heroes, particularly rock stars and revolutionary heroes. People should instead evolve their own music, songs, styles. The mere repetition of received culture, as opposed to attempts to create a new totality out of it, can only serve the further use of these elements by the ruling class. This process can never stop; we can never be satisfied. Walter Benjamin defines a hack as someone who merely transmits received elements, and points out that a "revolutionary hack is still a hack", "an author who teaches a writer nothing, teaches nobody anything". The mere use and simple reproduction of culture as a commodity is inherently reactionary.

In addition to the internal contradictions and uses of cultural elements, there is the essential question of the relation of culture to the world outside it. By itself, culture cannot accomplish anything. And a cultural revolution which refuses to consider the way in which it is going to take political power is doomed to disintegration. Culture must also thematically--that is, within the works themselves--be set in a mass context. A truly liberating culture would avoid the rhetoric of extreme personal liberation and hyper-individualism. But just as cultural liberation alone is sterile, the conquest of political power is no guarantee of anything without a concentrated effort at personal and cultural liberation. If the ruling class can successfully isolate culture and personal liberation from questions of mass political movements, it has won an essential victory. Indeed, in isolation from everything else, culture becomes reactionary, since it serves to keep people as a series of isolated individuals rather than a cohesive group.

This is the crucial point which is overlooked by those who say that the goal of youth culture is precisely to constitute a total cultural environment in the form of a life style or a broader "sense of community". Granted this, the question again is not the intended goal, but the actual results. The groups, communes, et cetera which are formed to that end bear the traces of the same contradictions as elements of youth culture we have already considered. The result is not a totality, but a series of isolated phenomena which become inward looking and soporific. The increasing failures of communes bear witness not only to the ultimate sterility of groups which systematically refuse to look outside themselves, but also to disastrous political results: increasing social antagonisms between groups which should be allied. (2)

To be effective, youth culture must look outside itself, toward the liberation of larger groups. It cannot simply dismiss the perversions of youth culture by the mass media as mere epiphenomena, for the public manifestations of youth culture are its effects on groups outside itself. By group liberation, we mean the masses of people in the United States today, not least of all the traditional working class. A group solidarity which is built up on the basis of a primarily middle-class movement (which is the case at this point) must be outward looking if it is to succeed. It must be geared to building a large base. A small isolated group is not much better than a series of isolated individuals, and can be worse, since it increases antagonisms between groups of people who share a common interest. Any progressive culture must therefore be set in a political context of building a mass base.

To call for the abolition of the dichotomy between art and politics is to beg

the question of how it is to be done. What conscious strategy based on mass action can eventually hope to take power, run the state, and change society? That is the crucial problem with which youth culture nowhere deals. In the absence of any reflection on that question, the actual manifestations of youth culture (not to mention idle speculations on it) will be reactionary in general. And in the absence of those questions, personal liberation remains primarily individual, and only secondarily liberating. It thereby prevents any real development of solidarity among those groups in whose interest it is to ally with each other to consciously promote a revolution.

(1) While it is true that the categories of workers which can be called "new working class" are growing, the industrial proletariat is hardly withering away. Between 1929 and 1965, the percentage of the labor force in the traditional proletariat remained virtually constant: 39.7% in 1929, 39.6% in 1965. The increase in the importance of the service sector of the economy in relation to the traditional working class came almost entirely from a drop in the percentage of the work force employed in agriculture (Labor Department statistics, in Workers and the American Economy, Data on the Labor Force, published by the New England Free Press). Further, it is notorious that real wages have been declining since 1965. The current average take-home pay of workers with a family is under \$80 a week, \$4,000 a year. Yet the Government estimates that it costs a family of four upward of \$8,000 a year after taxes to live "moderately" in any of the major population centers. However, this is not an argument I want to enter in detail right now.

(2) Since I do not have space to offer an entire positive program, a brief example will have to suffice. About two years ago, a small commune was established in Cambridge. It was not particularly excessive, and in fact fairly conservative as communes go, yet it soon established the reputation of "a bunch of hippies living together" and of "those SDS types". This became a significant barrier to organizing work in the neighborhood and in Cambridge in general. Only after a concerted effort was made to establish personal contacts with the neighbors and with community people--through dinners, visits, work with neighborhood kids--did the hostility begin to abate. The source of hostility was not so much the actual practice or life style of the people involved as the fears and fantasies aroused in the community. It is not necessary to give up one's beliefs or life style to set culture in a mass base; it is sufficient to patiently explain them and to take seriously the people one tries to work with rather than flaunting one's life style as a red flag. The a priori assumption that the people with whom we will have to ally are "part of the problem" is a sure loser.

Notions of Youth Culture by Paul Buhle and Carmen Morgen

The following comments should not be taken as an attack upon or a defense of John Heckman's critique as such; nor should they be considered an affirmation or denial of the concepts set forth in the *Radical America* Youth Culture Number (November 1969). Rather we seek to utilize the exchange of views in RA to clarify our general perspective on the subject. First it should be remembered that Youth Culture is an extremely heterogeneous development within American society, and that its role varies widely among, for instance, a large college campus, a small rural community, and a metropolitan area. Second, it must be recognized that the term "Youth Culture" is so vague — and has been so often misused — that only general definitions and descriptions are possible. Yet we shall attempt to convey, in a limited space, our sense that Youth Culture as a whole is one significant historical response — among a wide variety of responses from nearly every population sector — to the accelerating disintegration of social-cultural institutions in this society and the growing barbarity of relations at every level.

The essence of John Heckman's argument is that Youth Culture is not self-contradictory. Certain aspects of it (communality, desire for self-expression, et cetera) are for him healthful reactions to the reification of Culture; but once hardened into Youth Culture proper these reactions only aid in the creation of new forms of mystification. The personalization/internalization of social dilemmas thus becomes a direct evasion of the most pressing social problems, and thereby offers many forms of rationalization to the leisured sons and daughters of the least oppressed population groups.

Heckman's views of Youth Culture closely follow the views of the "Frankfort School" of social theorists (with whom Walter Benjamin was closely associated) on modern mass culture. The late Theodor Adorno held adolescent music to be the abolition of the Utopia which classical music (with all its class limitations) had always implied for mankind as a whole. Rock dancing, through its promotion of hyper-active but essentially serialized and non-socializing motions, was for Adorno a virulently anti-intellectual mode of accepting the world as it is rather than struggling rationally and collectively against totalitarian trends.(1) Heckman similarly sees Youth Culture as regressive precisely because it obviates that social collectivity necessary for the transformation of society.

Our disagreement with Heckman's notions is both historical and sociological. Heckman repeatedly refers to the danger of viewing Culture "in isolation from everything else". Yet in our conception, his analysis falls victim to that very danger. Because he abstains from a concrete analysis of the social-historical context from which Youth Culture emerges, he blithely uses selective perception (and a concomitant abstract categorization) in viewing its present characteristics. Such methodology is, we believe, an unfortunate inheritance from a Political Left which — almost from the time of Marx — has persistently

(1) "Perennial Fashion—Jazz", in *Prisms* (London, 1967), Page 132.

seen the evolving reality in developed societies in a fragmented manner, isolating social and cultural phenomena from each other and from the past.

The distant predecessors of Youth Culture are those little groups of intellectuals and artists who, as early as the 1830s in America, attempted to come to grips with the dehumanization of life in capitalist-directed industrialization. Their social origins lay in the leisure time that modern society had begun to afford to some sectors, but unlike earlier thinkers and writers they refused both to deify traditional religious and cultural values, and to offer optimistic predictions about industrializing America. Most important, they bore a vital connection to a radical Feminist movement then making its presence felt. These early Feminists held a social vision in which women's suffrage was only one aspect of fuller liberation; and as the secularization of Feminism into Suffragism in later decades was to mark the decline of the women's movement, so the periodic rise of Feminist initiatives has denoted recurring trends for a kind of "total liberation" within American radicalism. In the immediate sense the reformers and Utopians of that early period represented little more than a futile effort to preserve the best of American values at a time when the material basis for those values was being liquidated. But from a historical vantage point, they are significant for having indicated an uneasiness of relatively leisured groups which was to grow, in varying degrees, as the size of those groups grew in later decades. Further, they denied to the evolving industrial Capitalism the acquiescence of the society's best minds that Capitalism has since increasingly come to demand. (2)

By the period of Debsian Socialism, the breakdown of pre-industrial society in America was far advanced. Urbanization and continued industrialization had done much to undercut the patriarchal home and the extended family. The availability of leisure to a still larger group of Americans, and the relative leisure for a growing group of white collar workers of various kinds, allowed a participation in social and political affairs previously limited to a few. For the first time in this country, there existed a stratum of so-called "Parlor Socialists", non-wage-earners whose social vision was extended by the literature of the Socialist movement and limited by their fears and misunderstandings of the unskilled proletariat. And significantly, there was a re-surfacing of the Feminist movement after decades of apparent quiescence. Thousands of Socialist women — very often from comfortably wealthy homes — responded to their very real oppression and attempted at their best moments to serve the needs of the mass of super-oppressed working-class women, thereby to create a vital alliance against Capitalist and Sexual exploitation. (3)

(2) Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return* (New York, 1963 edition), particularly Pages 62-65. Also David Herreshoff, "Transcendental Politics in the 1960s", *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Art, and Letters*, 52, 1967 (1966 Meeting), who comments: "The New Left will continue to look more like a 1930s movement unless there is a revival of labor radicalism in the U.S."

(3) See M. J. Buhle, "Women in the Socialist Party, 1900-1914", *Radical America*, Volume 4, Number 1 (February 1970).

A parallel phenomenon of vital importance was the growth of Greenwich Village as a writers and artists' community of significant talent and size. Out of the currents flowing through the Village around the time of World War I, the Masses appeared as a socialist agitational magazine with some of the best painting and journalistic talents of the period. A powerful symbol of the emerging synthesis of proletarian and avant-garde values was the friendship of two social giants: Margaret Sanger, the birth-control advocate who agitated brilliantly for women's rights and stressed in her private life the full potential of sensuality; and Haywood, the tough proletarian-born leader of the I. W. W. who had led the miners and other workers against the conditions of forced scarcity and repression at the workplace. Another powerful symbol was the work of Louis C. Fraina, acknowledged as the first Leninist intellectual in America: in 1915-16 he edited several numbers of Isadora Duncan's magazine Modern Dance, and he had involved himself with great seriousness in the developments in painting and poetry. Of course such examples do not establish the existence of a meaningful cultural-political trend. But quite clearly there were elements in the Socialist Left which had begun to point to the revolutionary process as more than "Politics", as a fundamental reconciliation of Desire and Need in a Socialist society.

Just as the first waves of working-class activity across the world failed to establish any lasting workers' control anywhere, so the "Bohemian" impetus fell — above all in America — into confusion and anti-political self-involvement. The connection between this failure and the rise of American Youth Culture is absolutely vital to our understanding: while the social vision of radical Bohemians lapsed, their habits and mannerisms became STYLES of both consumption and rebellion among the youth of relatively leisured groups across the country. The adolescents among country-club sets in Denver and Iowa City aped the "Bohemians" into an attack upon the then-dying Protestant values of hard work and frugality. Similarly, the "Sexual Revolution" of the 1920s, which set the pace for sexual habits in our society since, was a concomitant objective result of the loosening mores in a time when, significantly, the Political Left was too small to be used effectively as a "scare" tactic against the social-sexual innovators. Thus a triumphant and undaunted American Capitalism accepted the spread of more "liberated" cultural forms among wider population sectors. (4)

(4) Note the remarkably presentist tone in Cowley's discussion of the 1920s, written in 1934:

To keep the factory wheels turning, a new domestic market had to be created. Industry and thrift were no longer adequate. There must be a new ethic that encouraged people to buy, a consumption ethic.

It happened that many of the Greenwich Village ideas proved useful in the altered situation. Thus, self-expression and paganism encouraged a demand for all sorts of products—modern furniture, beach pajamas, cosmetics, colored bathrooms with toilet paper to

By the 1920s in Europe and America, the shape of today's Youth Culture was developing. Interest in Eastern religions, in drugs, in various forms of mysticism had appeared sporadically. The reaction to Black music provides a direct parallel: the pre-1920 Bohemian praise of (and dancing to) Black jazz was succeeded by the broad acceptance of sterile, consumption-oriented musicians like Paul Whiteman, just as in the 1950s white youth interest in black urban Rhythm and Blues and Beat interest in jazz was succeeded by Pat Boone's popular parodies of Rock tunes and the likes of Herb Alpert's jazz. Or again, the generation of writers who got to the Village after World War I were, as Malcolm Cowley pointed out, careerist professionals who exploited their cultural expertise to write advertising copy, publish in sophisticated cynical magazines, and buy homes in the suburbs; forty years later the successors to the real Beat writers would make many fortunes designing hip slogans for The Uncola and writing hip novels for the porn-paperback market.

And the internalized repression of the new, "liberated" styles was also apparent by the 1920s. A larger stratum of active artists did little to relate to anything in America beyond Greenwich Village; rather, an incestuous and essentially parasitic artists' "community" continued to grow in Manhattan. The higher level of actual pre-marital sex among Youth in general did not significantly alter the oppression of women or the sensual esthetic of the people involved: they still went on to marry—he to become (more frequently than before) a low-level executive in a non-productive, consumption-oriented industry, and she to become a hopelessly bored and alienated housewife. Individual rebellions of sensitive people were to continue and even grow, but with few exceptions the results were only newer forms of confusion and mystification.

Throughout the 1920s-1940s the Political Left intently and successfully stifled the personal liberatory attitudes of those in and around its circles of power. While the orthodox leaders of the Debsian Socialist Party merely suspected (but tolerated) individual attitudes toward culture and sexuality, Communist leaders publicly forbade even the sexual liberation which Communist rank-and-filers practiced privately. Every effort to introduce a cultural component of any autonomy into revolutionary political activity was resisted by the Left as a whole in the name of a "proletariat" whom the leaders knew only abstractly.

Along with middle-class America, the 1930s Left entirely missed the

match. Living for the moment meant buying an automobile, radio, or house, using it now, and paying for it tomorrow. Female equality was capable of doubling the consumption of products—cigarettes, for example—that had formerly been used by men alone.

It is also important to note that, as Cowley points out, the scandalizing about "Village morals" in the *Saturday Evening Post* by Village writers themselves was an important source of information on new habits and styles to the rest of the American people. Cowley, Page 62.

significance of working-class youth revolt and viewed it as "crime" and "juvenile delinquency". Understanding only formulas about the "lumpen proletariat", the Left could not grasp the anti-property content of working-class crime. While middle-class law breaking has tended to be mainly instrumental (stealing money, organized crime, embezzling), working-class offenses have been fundamentally expressive (vandalism, vagrancy, loitering, drunkenness, et cetera). But the symbolic content was almost never explored, save by Frank Tannenbaum, who had written for the old Masses and who tried to describe the fine line between play similar to the spontaneity present in Art and delinquency:

In the conflict between the young delinquent and the community there develop two opposing definitions of the situation. In the beginning the definition . . . by the young delinquent may be in the form of play, adventure, excitement, interest, mischief, fun. Breaking windows, annoying people, running around porches, climbing over roofs, stealing from pushcarts, playing truant — all are items of play, adventure, excitement. To the community, however, these activities may and often do take on the form of a nuisance, evil, delinquency, with the demand for control, admonition, chastisement, punishment, police court, truant school. (5)

The point here is not to propose working-class crime as veiled revolutionary consciousness, but to indicate an awareness of and hostility by sectors of the class against the kind of life imposed upon it. Working-class youth, like the youth of more prosperous groups, responds to the fettering conditions in the world around it; that response must be analyzed critically rather than either ignored or merely assumed and categorized.

The rise of relative leisure among working-class youth, especially from the 1940s, has been inextricably connected with the automobile and with popular music. Long before Youth Culture was recognized by the society as a whole, broad contacts between poor whites and the black population had been made in jazz, and a sharing of "anti-social" habits (such as marijuana) was already notorious among musicians. To outsiders — whether radical scholars or disapproving parents — hot-rodding and rock dancing have always appeared as "opiates", nihilistic reactions to the world crises which compel Men of Good Will to social and political action. But to the youth itself, cars and music provided an outlet for creativity with the tools at hand.

The general form of the "tools at hand" is produced by the semi-controlled relationship between the technological level of Capitalist society and the needs/capabilities of the Capitalist marketplace. But the point must be made that the particular varieties of entertainment and social release increasingly necessary to a society which has entered a period of social disaccumulation are not the result of a conspiracy on the part of the ruling class. (6) Rather,

(5) *Crime and Community* (Boston, 1938), Page 17.

(6) See Martin Sklar, "On the Proletarian Revolution and the End of Political-

they are mediated between what is merchandisable and what is most readily acceptable to a mass of consumers. On a deeper level, they may represent a search by the most alienated members of the society for the authentic, the real experience denied to all by Capitalism. Thus Ragtime in its original forms gained popularity not because it was chosen by the ruling class for the task of opiating, but because it expressed a fundamental beauty and strength of the black community and its music, a beauty and strength that whites sought to expropriate for themselves. Again, there is no indication that the ruling class sought to force hot-rodding upon adolescents in the 1940s and 50s. Rather, rodders and greasers (the social type was James Dean in the "Wild Ones") were idealized and imitated despite the disdain of adult society. Finally, it is demonstrable that only lower-level entrepreneurs such as Alan Freed were instrumental to the broad and rapid acceptance of Rock'n'Roll among white teenagers: their parents were appalled by the open expressions of sensuality as their grandparents had been appalled by the sub rosa sexual promiscuity of the 1920s.

In all cases where a revolutionary situation is not an immediate possibility and where the Left has not made a determined intervention, all forms seized upon by adolescents (or other groups) will be converted, emptied of progressive content, and made into profit-providers to the maximum extent possible by the rulers of society. But the rulers' ability to appropriate and put to their own ends such mechanisms should not blind us to the essentially reactive (that is, non-formative) nature of Capitalism in the Culture-Market mechanism, or to the ever-present attempts of the adolescents (as with other groups) to find a form inherently "theirs".

During the 1950s American society entered its fourth decade of Social Disaccumulation, a decisive period in its maturity as a welfare-warfare Corporate State with its tentacles into the very institutions (above all, the trade-union movements) which had earlier seemed to pose the most hopeful signs for social transformation earlier. This is the period in which Adorno wrote: "There are no more ideologies in the authentic sense of false consciousness, only advertisements for the world through its duplication and the provocative lie which does not seek belief but commands silence." The aphorism seemed starkly true during the Eisenhower administrations, and yet one Social Threat could be ascertained by most Americans, a Threat which appeared in various guises and was all the more frightening than Communism because it was indigenously American and it therefore forced countrymen to face themselves and their own past: The Blacks.

All Social Outlaws, in this society where Communists had been jailed or cast out or executed or silenced, began to appear like Blacks. The re-emergence of non-working-class Bohemia, in San Francisco and other places, depended directly upon the type Norman Mailer called the White Negro, the existential figure who practiced all the social habits lost to white America. Similarly, Economic Society", *Radical America*, Volume 3, Number 2, May-June 1969, for the seminal notion of the disaccumulation of the productive process itself within capitalism, resulting in a massive transformation of the marketplace toward "Consumerism" in an increasingly wasteful fashion.

white middle-class teenagers began to listen to Southern Rhythm'n'Blues stations, straining their ears for authentic music as White Rock swept through its initial periods of innocence (mostly as a white-working-class phenomenon, especially Gene Vincent-like figures) and into its first decline. Campus folk music revivals a few years later would focus early New Left political activities, and would also lean heavily upon the Black traditions. But most important, the social types of Blackboard Jungle and Rebel Without A Cause were seen by the public (and, in a refracted way, by themselves) as having fallen to habits previously charged to Blacks: laziness, violence, oversexedness, unwillingness to work, and rejections of the Triumph of Capitalist society.

In the 1960s, the figure of the Social Outlaw has represented an overlapping of traditional avant-garde, black, and working-class youth activities due to the accelerated increase in Capitalism's cultural repressiveness and to the non-emergence (by 1970, at any rate) of a significant class-conscious proletarian political movement. That working-class white and black kids smoke marijuana and wear long hair may be regretted by political purists; but it is a political and social fact nonetheless. The brutalization of life due to the increase of heroin-addiction, on one level, and the accessibility of multiversities and junior colleges to black and working-class kids, on another level, are important points for more shared experience. In some areas particularly (Manhattan, San Francisco and Cambridge are excellent examples) tensions may be higher than ever before, particularly between rich hippies and working-class kids or blacks; but the more general trend should not be dismissed or relegated to the epiphenomenal category.

In America today, the collapse of cultural institutions is surely as rapid as the growth of actual class war. If we may assume that the revolutionary forces have certain periods of rapid growth and certain periods of lapse ahead, then we see that a unity among those who find Capitalist society most intolerable will surely grow. The French example of May-June 1968 leads to the following conclusions among others: (a) the working class had not ceased to exist as a class, and indeed was capable of moving beyond unionism and reformism in a dramatic sweep, quite without the help of a Party apparatus; (b) the most advanced sectors of the working class were often the youthful workers who were among the first to respond to the initiatives of students who had helped touch off the revolt; and (c) the point of revolutionary struggle was not and could not be merely the "Socialist State" or even "Workers' Councils"; rather, as was voiced throughout the Revolt, a total restructuring of the conditions of life was felt necessary, a leap beyond Pre-History was deemed possible and manageable. Drawing upon this example and the material at hand concerning Youth Culture, we conclude that at least a significant role must be played in any American revolution by those forces scarcely considered important by traditional Marxists; and that — equally important — a significant element of desire in the working class itself will be not easily categorizable under "Marxist-Leninist" stereotypes of abstract "worker needs".

What we find most regressive in John Heckman's critique is, finally, his treatment of the "non-rational" aspects of society and culture. Despite his own interest in the Frankfort School's initiatives, he expresses a hostility to

semi-indigenous institutions among blacks, juvenile delinquent working-class kinds, and others which totally neglects their real social significance: the "don't rat" ethic of delinquents, the community among jazz musicians (mostly lower class), the collectivist and equalitarian nature of fundamentalist and revival religion, all represent for us meaningful expressions of solidarity. But Heckman, like the traditional Communist looking at the Black Church from the outside, has no understanding; as Adorno, surveying Capitalist mass culture with a comparison only to Nineteenth Century "Classic" culture, can come only to a one-sided pessimistic conclusion. Thus Heckman grants, in effect, that the domain of the non-rational and irrational are the property of the Right, to manipulate and perhaps ultimately pervert the legitimate but unclarified desires of the masses. Such a position, for us, is a dangerous and even irresponsible abstention from an important battle-front of the class war.

Heckman, unlike the hardened "hack Marxists" in this country, is willing to provide the proto-political sectors with one exceptional opportunity: they may participate in progressive cultural action IF they devise it themselves and are able to repair it by hand. One might ask: How long are they being allowed to practice? When do we adjudge their efforts a failure? Quite seriously, this "exception" is only one more form of Adornoesque damnation, for it accepts people and their cultural traditions not as they are (with a hope to transforming them), but as they should be. Like the vulgar "Leninists", Heckman's cultural teachers will be harsh masters for their pupils, who must perform their tasks in a certain prescribed way or be failed.

On the other side of the coin, Heckman rejects the non-rational desires in the population. He attacks Zen, Eastern mysticism generally, and drugs because they offer nothing more than a "trance". But in a certain context, a significant aspect of Buddhism has been the usage of forms toward a greater sense of self (the powers and limitations of the body and its connections with the unconscious and semi-conscious mind), as has been that of users of certain drugs. Socialism, if it has meaning at all, will reconcile man's physical capabilities to his social self. As Marx himself phrased it:

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, and as a fully developed humanism is naturalism. 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. (7)

(7) "Alienated Labor", in *Early Writings*, edited by Bottomore (New York, 1964), Page 155, emphasis in original.

With that vision as a social possibility and necessity, we flatly reject a return to the 1930s' Left notion that life was at best a merciful dispensation of suffering; that sexuality is for the procreation of children; and that Art is an exhortation to the workers to produce More.

There were once reasons why the Stalinist variant of the Protestant-based Performance Principle was understandable (if never fully acceptable). There were reasons why the hostility of radicals to advanced Art, to militant Feminism, to uncompromising sensuality, was inevitable. But that period is past. And we, as part of a social-political movement, must ignore or defeat those tendencies which seek to push women back into the home, which perpetuate the rigidity of a strictly-defined "Proletarian Art", which seek to deny radicals the right to Laugh. We do not deny the seriousness of Revolution, nor do we expect to make Revolution "For the Hell of It"; rather, we believe that the kind of liberation which sensuality, real sexual equality and open laughter represent is part of the revolutionary process itself. To claim less for post-Revolutionary society is to become anti-Utopian in the worst way, to deny the conclusion to the struggle for freedom which was Marx's life's work, and which must become the life's work of every revolutionary today.

Youth Culture and Political Activity – Reply to Heckman by Alexander Delfini

John Heckman's response to the November issue of *Radical America* on 'Youth Culture' is ironically the concrete representation of what I have referred to as "metaphysical Marxism".¹ The distinguishing characteristic of Heckman's essay is the general consistency of his dogmatic treatment of the youth culture phenomenon. Instead of attempting to understand the phenomenon under question, he seeks to *refute* it with abstract categories. For example, the students are regarded as *middle-class* – the evidence being that they don't suffer *financial burden*, youth culture is *reactionary* – the evidence being that it doesn't appeal to the masses (presumably the industrial working class, if not then, who?), and that Piccone and Delfini see youth culture as potentially revolutionary (something they do not say), the evidence being, *merely*, that they refuse to hack it to death with obsolete 19th century categories, i.e., the ones dominating Heckman's distorted perception of the real world.

To be a theory of revolutionary practice such that theory informs practice while practice is the real foundation for the determination and truth of theory, Marxism must avoid the pitfalls of either losing itself uncritically in the immediacy of a given activity or otherwise preserving its supposed theoretical purity in spite of and against a changing reality. Both pitfalls produce the same consequences – Marxism degenerates into an ideology serving, in spite of good intentions, to perpetuate the given order rather than transforming it through revolutionary practice. The possibility of error is not excluded from any particular analysis, but it is impossible that the relation of theory and practice be sundered without Marxism ceasing to be a revolutionary theory. When this divorce is made, Marxism negates itself – and ideology can only serve the status quo. We do not propose that Heckman is wrong because he disagrees with us on this or that aspect of an analysis. Rather, we propose the whole character of Heckman's approach is doomed to mystify the phenomena under question because he persists in the preservation of certain notions about revolutionary classes that have long since been made irrelevant by changed condition. Thus, when he condemns youth culture for being middle-class, his criterion for class membership is the most flimsy imaginable – financial burden.

Heckman's analysis fails to comprehend a basic Marxist conception as to the relationship between consciousness and existence – that consciousness is determined by social being; and that this social being is not static. If we find a change in consciousness expressing itself, no matter how apparently outlandish to the smug defenders of proletarian good manners, it behooves the Marxist to at least offer an explanation for the basis of this shift in consciousness (and activity) among social groups. But Heckman, not having time to deal with these 'individualistic' expressions of *personal* as opposed to *social liberation* (any

¹Alexander Delfini, "Technology, Class Structure and The Radicalization of Youth", *Radical America*, November, 1969, no. 15.

serious Marxist would not ever utter such a possible dichotomy)² prefers to condemn the whole movement on grounds that capitalists make money in the sale of records. That he can identify youth culture *solely* with rock music is itself a serious distortion. Among the more significant phenomena, which Heckman nowhere seems to have recognized (one wonders where he has been for the last ten years) is their opposition to racism, militarism and imperialism. One might indeed wonder who has sensed the cause of international struggles of the oppressed more in the last several years, the students, those petty-bourgeois personal liberationists or the internationally-minded American working class whose most recent efforts against the war are only too well known to need mention.

Heckman's notion of culture is itself suspect. On the one hand he seems to recognize it as genuine to the extent that it emerges from within the oppressed classes themselves and gives expression to their needs and aspirations, as well as clarifying their plight, while on the other hand he speaks of using culture as an instrument. The latter notion sounds strikingly mechanistic if not downright elitist, and can only reflect an elementary confusion as to the relationship between vanguard and base in Heckman's thinking. The spontaneous culture of the oppressed may itself have to be mediated by a more advanced culture stemming from bourgeois or upper class backgrounds. Such was the case with every revolutionary party thus far in history. But to speak of *using* culture is not to talk the language of *mediation*, but rather of *manipulation*. No one has been more successful in *using culture* than the bourgeoisie and to do this they had to produce a culture, synthesize a culture that could gain hegemony over the classes they dominate.³ This hegemony consists to a great degree in wiping out the

²Social liberation is not something separate from personal liberation and anytime the two are contraposed what results is a mystification whereby the personal liberation is logically deduced from its social counterpart and enforced by police power. If the youth rebellion has taught us anything, it is (as Marx never tired to reiterate in his criticism of Hegel, Proudhon, Feuerbach, etc.) that there is no such thing as liberation in general, but only 'personal' liberation for real social human beings. The move from personal to social liberation is made, as Sartre has forcefully stressed, through the recognition that my personal liberation is fundamentally a function of the others liberation since my existence is necessarily social in character. Heckman is not incorrect to attack 'youth culture' as a world view, but this aspect of youth culture is hardly the whole picture. The individualistic hedonistic elements are indeed present and articulated by certain groups selling liberation as 'free food', 'free dope' and 'free fucking', but it can hardly be said that Delfini and Piccone are unaware of this. Indeed, the whole thrust of Piccone's article is to expose this bankrupt mystification.

³This, of course, is not the place to discuss the possibility of proletarian as opposed to bourgeois culture. It is relevant to make reference, however, to the debate taking place in Russia in the early 1920's concerning the *Proletkult* and both Lenin's and Trotsky's denial of the possibility of a *distinct* proletarian culture. The main point was that, according to Marxism, after the revolution there can only be a classless culture and, to the extent that the dictatorship of

culture of the oppressed, or else assimilating it and presenting it in a relatively non-antagonistic way. It could indeed be argued that the bourgeoisie have been busy assimilating and transforming so-called 'youth culture' into a profitable commodity as well as an instrument of social control. Because this can be done does it mean that youth culture is inherently reactionary? We would then have to conclude that folk music in the 60's was reactionary for the same reasons, when in fact it played an extremely progressive role (in spite of those who made a fortune at it). This folk music revival died out, not because the bourgeoisie found it subversive but, rather, because the young themselves discovered that the struggles of other generations under different social conditions only very imperfectly expressed their own aspirations.

This link between the political culture of the last generation and of this generation was of course represented musically by Bob Dylan. The problem is not whether this culture is reactionary, which it obviously is not if we refer to those aspects which clearly indicate the racism and imperialism of this system, and expose the vanities, and barbarities of bourgeois life in the 70's. Now, if there is any meaning to the notion of using culture, we must first reject Heckman's battering ram thesis. Culture is not to be used but to be elevated. If there is implicit class antagonism in the culture of an exploited class then this antagonism should be made explicit – *mediated*, not *used*. And I am not quibbling over words here because the notion of mediation involves a conception of reciprocity. What is to be mediated is the spontaneous culture of the oppressed. But with Heckman one gets the impression that the revolutionary culture is to be developed explicitly as an *instrument* to reach an extrinsic goal revolution. Such a view leads us to believe that Heckman is not thinking in terms of concrete human beings in need to make a revolution against the given order and constitute a new one, but rather of objects, or a *category* called the *oppressed*, that has to be prodded on to a God-given goal because *theory* requires that it happen. For us what is of primary importance is the existence of the spontaneous element. One does not create *ex-nihilo*. Neither do revolutionaries *create* revolutionary culture *ex-nihilo*. It develops precisely because concrete men as social beings in a determinate situation find their the proletariat exists, culture remains in a proto-bourgeois limbo. This, among other things, explains why in Lukács' monumental works on aesthetics, there is never any mention of "proletarian culture" and very little reference to that Soviet abortion known as "Socialist Realism". True art and true culture are *always* opposed to the *existence* and, as such, they are always revolutionary in essence. The contradiction, however, can be readily pacified and integrated into the existing state of affairs (capitalism) and consumerized. That this happens, as Heckman points out in agreement with us, is no justification either for rejecting youth culture outright or for opting out for a "proletarian culture" (or culture for the masses) – a category that can only be generated by a mechanistic nuts and bolts Marxism that sees all superstructural elements as ideological smoke out of the structural engine. Furthermore, if a Frankenstein such as "proletarian culture" – or culture for the masses – could be concocted by the Left, it remains to be seen how such a monstrosity could ever be used as a quixotic battering ram against the windmills of bourgeois hegemony.

conditions of life unbearable and in need of transformation. It is this concrete element that is the touchstone of Marxist revolutionary theory and practice. Without it theory becomes the expression of mere particular wills, subjective whimsy, and distinguishes itself from lunacy only on the formal basis of its internal consistency.

Heckman has unfortunately failed to comprehend the significance of the November issue of R.A. The general standpoint articulated there was in no way ambiguous, as he says: it only expressed the view that the spontaneous basis of the youth culture phenomenon indicates a revolt against the integrative structure of contemporary capitalism, and that the elevation of this cultural response to a theory of 'the revolution' is in effect reactionary. This was the reason for Piccone's lengthy discussion of Rosak's work on the 'counter-culture'. My own article barely mentioned youth culture but rather focused on the shifts in the technical base of production and its effect on the nature of the work force⁴ — and I would emphasize here, against Heckman's rather static way of dealing with these matters, that I conceived of this shift *in process*, not as an accomplished fact, something that only obtains in the thick skulls of Marxist positivists. The purpose of this article was to attempt an explanation for the massive radicalization of college students, witnessed in the last ten years, traditionally conceived by bourgeois sociologists as *middle class*, because of their *financial* status. While I do not claim in any way to have settled this matter, I think it rather ironic that all Heckman can do against me is quote a statistic indicating that the absolute size of the blue collar work force has not declined, but only its relative size — this due to the breakup of small farms, etc. His own evidence is itself evidence against him — the point being that the industrial working class, as blue collar workers, has stopped expanding relative to the growth of other sectors. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to deal with these other sectors and try to determine the significance of these shifts. That Heckman's paper offers us absolutely no insight into the present situation — specifically, the political activity of the college youth in the 60's and 70's, but can only condemn the youth culture as *reactionary* because record sales lead to net gain and college students do not have financial burdens, is the best argument that he can present against himself. Marxism refuses to attain the kingdom of heaven at the expense of losing the whole world. Heckman's theological purity would lead us to lose both the world and the kingdom of heaven, because it is theology and at the same time painfully mundane.

⁴For another account of this view, see the more complete discussion in Herbert Gint's "The New Working Class and Revolutionary Youth" in *Socialist Revolution*, vol. I, no. 3.

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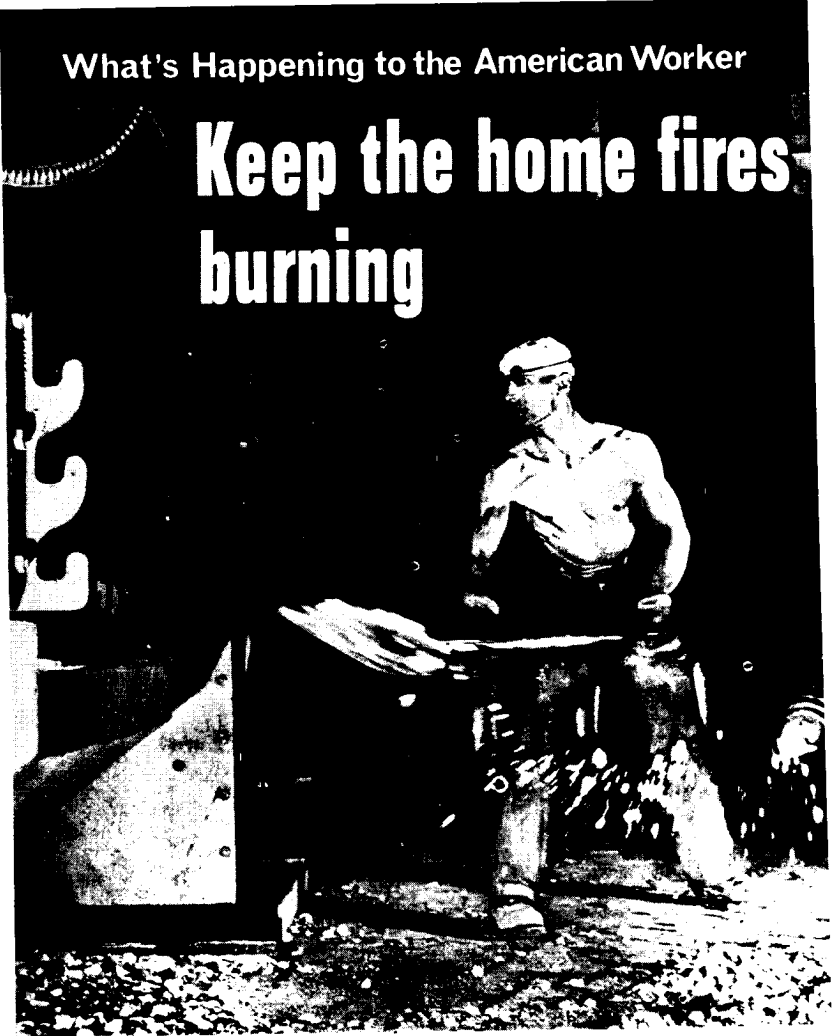
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