

# Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning

by

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-- from the preface by Warren E.  
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.....This volume incorporates papers presented at the 1974 meeting of the Society which was held at Georgetown University. The present volume makes available scholarly work on two of the most creative parts of Hegel's philosophy, his Aesthetics and his Logic.

The double theme does not suggest that the topics are minor in character or of insufficient scope to warrant a conference each for itself. Rather, quite the opposite is true. There is so much work being done on these topics today that it is difficult for scholars to keep in touch with the vigorous interest in them. For that reason a conference with a double theme was proposed in order to bring to light some of the work being done in each area. Indeed, Hegel may be said to be one of our contemporaries, as Raya Dunayevskaya remarks in her essay when she calls attention to the new editions, new translations and re-issues of Hegel's works as well as the frequent conferences and plethora of articles on Hegel that are occurring with such frequency.

## Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning

by

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

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In the beginning was the Word (*das ursprüngliche Wort*), not as a command, but as the philosophic utterance which vanishes into thin air. The release of the self-movement of the Absolute Idea unfolds, not as if it were in repose, but so totally infected with negativity that throughout the twenty seven paragraphs that constitute the final chapter of the *Science of Logic*, starting with the very first paragraph, we learn that the Absolute Idea contains "the highest opposition in itself." (*den höchsten Gegensatz in sich*). (W. V, 327; SL 824)<sup>1</sup>

The dialectic would not be the dialectic and Hegel would not be Hegel if the moment of encounter with the Absolute Idea was a moment of quiescence. Thus, far from the unity of the Theoretical and Practical Idea being an ultimate, or pinnacle, of a hierarchy, the Absolute Idea is a new beginning, a new beginning that is inevitable precisely because the Absolute Idea is a "concrete totality" and thus entails differentiation and impulse to transcend. To follow Hegel, step by step, without for a single moment losing sight of negativity as the driving force toward ever-new beginnings, it may be best to divide the twenty seven paragraphs into three principal areas. The first three paragraphs, centering around that highest contradiction contained in the Absolute Idea at the very moment of the unification of the Theoretical and Practical Idea, shows its self-determination disclosing not a new content, but its universal form, the *Method*, i.e., the dialectic.

Once Hegel asserts (in the fourth paragraph) that "*Notion is everything* and its movement is the *universal absolute activity*, the self-determining and self-realizing movement," (SL, 826) Hegel divides his field of concentration in what I call the second subdivision into two: a) paragraphs 5 to 7, stressing the new beginnings, immediacy that has resulted from mediation, and b) further opens the scope wider (paragraphs 8 to 15) as he sketches the development of the dialectic

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historically, from Plato to Kant, and differentiates his concept of second negativity as *the*

turning point of the whole movement of the Notion . . . the innermost source of all activity, of all inanimate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true; for on this subjectivity alone rests the sublating of the opposition between Notion and reality, and the unity that is truth. (SL, 835)

The third subdivision I make, covers the last twelve paragraphs. These disclose concreteness both in its totality and in each sphere, in each of which, as well as in the whole, inheres the impulse to transcend. And this includes the *system* itself. The intimation of totally new beginnings is not restricted to the fact that there will be other spheres and sciences Hegel plans to develop, — Nature and Spirit. Inherent in these intimations are the consequences of what we will have been grappling with in the whole of the *Science of Logic*.

The Absolute Idea as new beginning, rooted in practice as well as in philosophy, is the burden of this writer's contribution. While this cannot be "proven" until the end of Hegel's rigorous and yet free-flowing final chapter, it is necessary here, by way of anticipation, to call attention to the three final syllogisms in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* which had not been included in the first edition of the work. To this writer, these crucial additions to the 1827 and 1830 editions constitute the summation, not alone of the *Encyclopaedia*, but of the whole cycle of knowledge and reality throughout the long tortuous trek of 2,500 years of Western civilization that that encyclopaedic mind of genius, Hegel, was trying to bring to a conclusion. Just as the first of those syllogisms (*Enc.* §575) shows that the very center of its structure, — Logic, Nature, Mind — is not Logic but Nature, so does the very last paragraph in the *Science of Logic*.

Whether one conceives Nature as "externality" in the Hegelian sense, or "exteriority" in the Sartrean manner, or as "Practice" in Lenin's World War I view, the point is that Hegel, not Sartre, nor Lenin, conceives Nature as mediation. When I develop this further at the end of the paper, we shall see what illumination our age casts on the movement from practice that helps us in grappling with the dialectic. But here it is best to continue with the three central divisions I suggested:

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(1) The same first paragraph of the Absolute Idea that riveted our attention to the highest opposition, cautioned against imposing an old duality on the new unity of opposites reached, — the Theoretical and Practical Idea. "Each of these by itself is still one-sided. . . ." The new, the highest opposition, rather, has to self-develop: "The Notion is not merely *soul*, but free subjective Notion that is for itself and therefore possesses *personality*." This individuality is not "exclusive", but is "explicitly *universality* and *cognition* and in its other, has *its own* objectivity for its object." (SL, 824) All that needs to be done, therefore, is for the Absolute Idea "to hear itself speak", to "outwardize" (*Ausserung*). Its self-determination is its self-comprehension. Or, put more precisely, "its own completed totality" is not any new content. Rather it exists wholly as *form* and "the universal aspect of its form — that is, *method*." From that moment on Hegel will not take his mind's eye from the dialectic for, as he puts it, "nothing is known in its truth unless it is totally subject to method" (*als der Methode vollkommen unterworfen ist*).

(2) No less than eleven paragraphs follow the pronouncement that the Absolute form, the Method, the Notion is the whole. The pivot around which they all revolve, Hegel stresses over and over again, is the "*universal absolute activity*", the Method which "is therefore to be recognized as . . . unrestrictedly universal". (SL, 826) In a word, this is not just another form of cognition; it is *the unity* of the Theoretical and Practical Idea we have reached. Far from being a "merely *external* form" or the instrument it is in inquiring cognition, the method is no "mere aggregate" of determinations but "the Notion that is determined in and for itself", the middle, the mediation, *because* it is objective and it is "posited in its identity", namely "subjective Notion." (SL, 827)

To be swept up by the dialectic is to experience a plunge to freedom. Since, however, the rigor of thought cannot be allowed to dissolve into a "Bacchanalian revelry", it is necessary to work through these paragraphs without missing any links. The first is the beginning, — the *Absolute as beginning*. When Hegel refers us to the very start of the Doctrine of Being, where he first posed the question: "With What Must Science Begin?", it is not for purposes of proving that the Absolute is a mere unfolding of what was implicit from the start, the manifesta-

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tions. It also becomes a totally new foundation—absolute negation. Although from the beginning, Hegel emphasized that everything, no matter how simple it sounded contained equally immediacy and mediation (SL, 68), it is now so permeated with negativity that it is no mere remembrance of things past when Hegel writes, “*there is nothing, whether in actuality or in thought, that is as simple and abstract as is commonly imagined.*” (SL, 829)

The long passageway through “concrete totality” of diverse, contradictory forces and relations from the Doctrine of Being through Essence to Notion makes it clear that though every beginning must be made *with the Absolute*, it becomes Absolute “only in its completion.” It is *in* the movement to the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality that transcendence will be achieved in subjectivity and subjectivity alone. In a word, this new beginning is both in thought and in actuality, in theory and practice, that is to say, in dialectical “mediation which is more than a mere beginning, and is a mediation of a kind that does not belong to a comprehension by means of thinking.” Rather “what is meant by it is in general the demand for the *realization of the Notion*, which realization does not lie in the *beginning* itself, but is rather the goal and the task of the entire further development of cognition.” (SL, 828)

Whether or not one follows Marx’s “subversion”<sup>2</sup> of the Absolute’s goal, the “realization of philosophy” as a “new Humanism,” the unity of the ideal and the real, of theory and practice, indeed, of philosophy and revolution,<sup>3</sup> one cannot fail to perceive Hegel’s Absolute advance (*Weitergeben*) and “completion” as the conclusion *and* fulfillment, as the beginning anew *from* the Absolute for he never departed from conceiving all of history, of human development, not only as a history in the *consciousness* of freedom, but, as we shall see, as achievement in *actuality*. Even here, where Hegel limits himself strictly to philosophic categories, to history of thought, he maintains the need to face reality. In tracing the conceptual breakthroughs of the dialectic from Plato to Kant to his own view of second negativity, he calls attention to Plato’s demand of cognition “that it should *consider things in and for themselves*, that is, should consider them partly in their universality, but also that it should not stray away from them catching at circumstances, examples and comparisons.” (SL, 830)

Considering things “in and for themselves”, Hegel maintains, has

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made possible the working out of ever-new unities and relations between practice and theory. That is the achievement of Absolute Method. To whatever extent the method is analytic, to whatever extent synthetic as it exhibits itself as Other, the dialectic moment is not reached until (as the unity of the two), the “no less synthetic than analytic moment” determines itself as “the *other of itself*.” The point is that it is the power of the negative which is the creative element. It is not the synthesis, but the absolute negativity which assures the advance movement. Since this is what separates Hegel from all other philosophers, and this philosophic ground, how a “universal *first, considered in and for itself*, shows itself to be the other of itself,” this idea will dominate the last twelve paragraphs following the encounter with

the turning point of the movement of the Notion . . . the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true; for on this subjectivity alone rests the sublating of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and the unity that is truth. (SL, 835)

Before, however, we go to those paragraphs developing second negativity to its fullest, I should like to retrace our steps to the threshold of the Absolute Idea, “The Idea of the Good,” and call attention to the Russian Communist celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Lenin’s birth, which coincided with Hegel’s two hundredth. This will illuminate the problematic of our day. Academician Kedrov, Director of the Institute of History of Science and Technology, embarked on still another attempt to “disengage” Lenin from Hegel with the claim that the word, “alias,” before the quotation: “Cognition not only reflects the world but creates it,” shows Lenin was merely restating Hegel, not bowing to Hegel’s “bourgeois idealism”.<sup>4</sup>

The simple truth, however, is that the most revolutionary of all materialists, Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin, witnessing the simultaneity of the outbreak of World War I *and* the collapse of the Socialist International, felt compelled to return to Hegel’s dialectic as that unity of opposites which might explain the *counter-revolution within* the revolutionary movement. Absolute negativity became Lenin’s philosophic preparation for revolution, as Lenin’s *Abstract of Hegel’s Science of Logic* shows.<sup>5</sup> By the time his notes reach the Doctrine of the Notion, Lenin states that none of the Marxists (and the emphasis on the plural makes it clear he includes himself), had fully understood Marx’s greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, “especially its first chapter” since that is

impossible "without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*."<sup>6</sup> His passion at the approach of the Doctrine of the Notion—"NB Freedom = Subjectivity, ("or") End, Consciousness, Endeavor, NB"—had made it clear that Lenin at this time, 1914, saw in freedom, in subjectivity, notion, the categories with which both to transform the world and to gain knowledge of the objectively real *because* he had already, in the Doctrine of Essence, recognized, in Hegel's critique of causality, the limitation of "science" to explain the relation between mind and matter.

Lenin then proceeded to grapple with the role of practice *in Hegel*, especially when Hegel writes of the Practical Idea as having "not only the dignity of the Universal, but also the simply actual." Lenin's quotation about cognition that the Communists are presently trying to expunge is significant, *not* because he accords such "creativity" to cognition but rather because Lenin, in "granting" that creativity to cognition, had followed it up by calling attention to the fact that Hegel had used the word, Subject "here suddenly instead of 'Notion'".<sup>7</sup> And to make matters still worse for those Russian epigoni, it was all in the sentence about "the self-certainty which the subject has in the fact of its determinateness in and for itself, a certainty of its own actuality and the *non-actuality* of the world."

Vulgar materialists are so utterly shocked at Lenin writing about the "*non-actuality* of the world" and the "self-certainty of the Subject's actuality" that, they quote, not Hegel, as Lenin did, but Lenin's "translation": "i.e., that the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity." But the point is that, after that "translation", Hegel is quoted in full, on the contrast between inquiring cognition where "this actuality appeared merely as an objective world, without the subjectivity of the Notion, and here it appears as an objective world whose inner ground and actual subsistence is the Notion. This is the Absolute Idea." (SL, 823)

It is this appreciation of the Absolute Idea, not as something in heaven or in the stratosphere, but in fact in the objective world whose very ground is the Notion, that has statist Communism so worried about Lenin, ever since the East German Revolt of June 17, 1953, and the emergence of a movement *from practice* to theory and a new society. They have rightly sensed that Lenin's break with his own philosophic past of the photocopy theory of reality plus voluntarism produced the

Great Divide in the Movement that has yet to run its course.<sup>8</sup> We will take up the illumination the actual movement from practice (these past two decades) sheds on the problematic of our day at the end of this study. Here it is necessary to resume Hegel's own concentration on and development of "second negativity" in those last twelve paragraphs of Absolute Idea.

(3) Beginning with paragraph 15, and all the way to the end of the chapter, we no sooner face the subjectivity that has overcome opposition between Notion and Reality than we learn that, since this subjective is the "*innermost*", it is also the "*most objective moment*" (SL, 836), and it is this subjectivity as objectivity which is "*subject, a person, a free being . . .*" Clearly, free creative power assures the plunge to freedom. It is the unifying force of the Absolute Idea. And since absolute negativity, the new foundation, is not "something merely picked up, but something *deduced* and *proved*" (SL, 838), this subjective could not but be objective, so much so that it extends to the *system itself*.

There too we learn that the content belongs to the method, is the *extension of method* so that the system, too, is but another "fresh beginning" which has been arrived at through an infinite remembrance of things past and advance signposts (*Weitergehen*). This is why the discussion in paragraphs 20 through 25 not only never departs from absolute negativity as the transcending mediation, but shows that every advance in the system of totality becomes "*richer and more concrete*."

The expression, "richer and more concrete", no more than the categories of subjectivity, reason, freedom, may not have led the reader to think of any such "materialistic" movement as the movement by which man *makes* himself free, but here is how Hegel spells out "Free Mind" in *The Philosophy of Mind* of his *Encyclopaedia*:

When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength, just because it is the very essence of mind, and that as its very actuality . . . The Greeks and Romans, Plato and Aristotle, even the Stoics did not have it . . .

If to be aware of the Idea—to be aware, i.e., that men are aware of freedom as their essence, aim and object—is a matter of *speculation*, still this very Idea itself is the actuality of men—not something which they *have*, as men, but which they *are*. (Enc. § 482)

The fact that, in the *Science of Logic*, the stages in dialectical ad-

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vance are not shown as so many stages in the historic development of human freedom, but, in the end, unwind as a circle, become a circle of circles, is, however, a constant reminder that every absolute is a new beginning, has a before and an after; if not a "future", surely a consequence, a "successor—or, expressed more accurately, *has only the antecedent and indicates its successor* in its conclusion." (SL, 842) Whatever Hegel said, and meant, about the Owl of Minerva spreading its wings only at dusk simply does not follow from the *objectivity* of the drive, the *summation* in which the advance is immanent in the present. While he neither gave, nor was interested in, any blueprints for the future, he was not preoccupied with death, the "end" of philosophy, much less of the world. His philosophy is "the end" only in the sense that "up to this moment" philosophy has reached this point with "my" philosophy of absolute negativity. From the beginning, when his first and greatest elemental work, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, ended with nothing short of the Golgotha of the Spirit, Hegel had succeeded in describing the final act as if it were an unfolding of the everlasting. When subjected to the dialectic method from which, according to Hegel, no truth can escape, the conclusion turns out to be a new beginning. There is no trap in thought. Though it is finite, it breaks through the barriers of the given, reaches out, if not to infinity, surely beyond the historic moment.

In the final two paragraphs we see that there is no rest for the Absolute Idea, the fulfilled Being, the Notion that comprehends itself, the Notion that has become the Idea's own content. The negativity, the urge to transcend, the ceaseless motion will go into new spheres and sciences and first then achieve "absolute liberation." The absolute liberation experienced by the Absolute Idea as it "freely releases itself" does not make it ascend to heaven. On the contrary, it first then experiences the shock of recognition, "the *externality of space and time* existing absolutely in its own without the moment of subjectivity." (SL, 843)

So much for those who consider that Hegel lived far away from the concrete objective world, in some distant ivory tower in which he "deduced" Nature from the Idea. Equally wrong, however, are those who, while recognizing that Hegel presents the transition to Nature as an actual process of reality, conclude that Hegel is standing on his head. Proud as Hegel might have been of the feat, we need to turn both to

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the *Science of Logic*, and the *Philosophy of Mind*, especially the three final syllogisms, to see what Hegel was telling us.

What was an intimation in the Logic about Nature being the mediation is spelled out as the first syllogism at the end of the *Encyclopedia*: Logic, —Nature, —Mind. In that paragraph Hegel further assures us that "Nature, standing between Mind and its essence, sunders them, not indeed to extremes of finite abstraction, nor stands aloof from them." (*Enc.* §575)

One of the most relevant of the scholarly studies of the 1960's is Reinhart Klemens Maurer's *Hegel und das Ende der Geschichte: Interpretationen zur Phänomenologie*. He holds that it may very well be true that the first of these final syllogisms (in §575), which has Nature as the mediation, gives the appearance that "Hegel turns to Darwin, turns to dialectical materialism and other nature-geneses of man," and also means to turn "to Liberty", there leading the "course of necessity", but Hegel himself brings in a "correction" in his next paragraph. Here the sequence reads: Nature—Mind—Logic. Professor Maurer then proceeds to "appropriate" that syllogism as expressing the dialectic of the *Phenomenology*. Whatever one may think of that analysis as a philosophy of history or whatever, the point most Hegel scholars do agree with regarding the final syllogism (§577), is this, in Otto Pöggeler's words of 1961: "In opposition to the usual interpretations of the Hegelian text, I should like to propose the following: that the actual science of Spirit is not the Logic, but the philosophy of Spirit."

Thus the focus of the third syllogism has shifted and the stress has been correctly placed on the fact the Logic has been replaced and, in its stead, we get, not the sequential but the *consequential Self-Thinking Idea*. To Hegel this has resulted from the fact that "it is the nature of the fact, the notion, which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition." (*Enc.* §577)

Hegel's Absolutes never were a series of ascending ivory towers. Revolutionary transformation is immanent in the very form of thought. As we saw from the chapter on Absolute Idea, the unifying force was free creative power. By the time we reach the mediated final result, Absolute Mind, the absolute negativity that was the moving force in Logic, in Nature, in *Geist* where we saw them as concrete stages of human freedom, there no longer was any difference between theory and practice. This is why our age can best understand Hegel's

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Absolute. It has been witness to a *movement from practice* for two long decades, —(ever since the death of Stalin lifted the incubus from the heads of the masses in East Europe). To this writer, Hegel's genius is lodged in the fact that *his* "voyage of discovery" becomes one endless process of discovery *for us*. The "us" includes both Marx's new continent of thought of materialist dialectics, and Hegel scholars, as well as the movement from practice that was itself a form of theory once its spontaneity discovered the power of thought along with its physical might. This writer has followed very closely this movement of revolt ever since June 17, 1953, and saw in it a quest for universality because she had already discerned in the dialectical movement of the three final syllogisms in *Absolute Mind*, a new point of departure in the Idea and in the movement from practice.<sup>9</sup>

This movement from practice hardly had the ear of contemporary Hegelians, orthodox or Marxist, as evidenced in the erudite, Leftist director of the famous Frankfurt School, the late Theodor Adorno. His very reason for being, for thinking, for acting, was Dialectics, that is to say, for negations of what is. He entitled the summation of his life's thought, his intellectual legacy, *Negative Dialectics*.<sup>10</sup> This book, however, has little to do with the dialectics of negativity, and least with the concept of Subject, by which Hegel distinguished his view from all other philosophers who left the search for truth at Substance only. As "concretized" by Marx for the proletarian class, Subject is supposed to have been accepted also by Adorno, but again, Adorno keeps his distance and originality locked up in what he calls *Negative Dialectics*. From the very beginning of the Preface of his work (p. xix), Adorno informs us that the positive in the negative, —"the negation of the negation," — is the enemy: "This book seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits without reducing its determinacy." The so-called "theoretical inadequacies of Hegel and Marx" revolve around what he sees as the all-encompassing evil, the concept, that "subsuming cover", its "autarchy".<sup>11</sup>

Naturally, Adorno keeps his distance from "positivists" and the vulgarisms of the knighted Karl Popper and his infamous "Hegel and Fascism" school. Nevertheless, Adorno, almost out of nothing, suddenly brings in Auschwitz and introduces some sort of kinship between it and absolute negativity. He writes: "Genocide is the absolute integration . . . Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure iden-

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tity as death . . . Absolute negativity is in plain sight and has ceased to surprise anyone."<sup>12</sup>

By "almost out of nothing", I naturally do not mean that Auschwitz was not the reality of Fascism, nor do I mean only the suddenness and shock of introducing such subject matter in the climax of a book called "Meditations on Metaphysics". Rather, I mean it is wrong. That is to say, it is totally illogical and non-dialectical, considering that Adorno devoted an adult lifetime to fighting fascist ideology as the very opposite of Hegelian dialectics and had seen the very death of dialectics in Nazi Germany. Perhaps a better word than "wrong" would be Adorno's own curse-word "naive." I mean that as late as 1957, in his *Aspects of the Hegelian Dialectic*, he almost defended a subject-object identity.

Subject-object cannot be dismissed as mere extravagance of logical absolutism. . . . In seeing through the latter as mere subjectivity, we have already passed beyond the Speculative idealism. . . . Cognition, if it is genuine, and more than simple duplication of the subjective, must be the subject's objectivity.

And, indeed, in his *Negative Dialectics*, he reiterates the same idea when he writes that, despite the fact that Hegel "deifies" subjectivity, "he accomplishes the opposite as well, an insight into the subject as a self-manifesting objectivity."<sup>13</sup>

Why, then, such a vulgar reduction of absolute negativity? Therein is the real tragedy of Adorno (and the Frankfurt School). It is the tragedy of a one-dimensionality of thought which results when you give up Subject, when one does not listen to the voices from below, —and they were loud, clear, and demanding between the mid-fifties and mid-sixties. It is a tragedy once one returns to the ivory tower and reduces his purpose to "the purpose of discussing key concepts of philosophic disciplines and centrally intervening in those disciplines".<sup>14</sup> The next step was irresistible, the substitution of a permanent critique not alone for absolute negativity, but also of "permanent revolution itself."

Now, whether the enduring relevance of Hegel has stood the test of time because of the devotion and analytical rigor of Hegel scholars, or because a movement of freedom surged up *from below* and was followed by new cognition studies, there is no doubt that *because* Absolute Negativity signifies transformation of reality, the dialectic of contradiction and totality of crises, the dialectic of liberation, Hegel's

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thought comes to life at critical points of history, called by him "birth-times of history." In addition, there were Marxist scholars, revolutionary dissidents, who built on new ground. While a scholar from the West, like Reinhart Maurer, was pre-occupied with Hegel's concept of where to end, the Czechoslovakian philosopher, Karel Kosik, was pre-occupied with where to begin anew. Of the Eastern European studies that accompanied the revolts, and revolved around Marx's Humanism, especially Marx's "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic", one of the most rigorous studies was Karel Kosik's *The Dialectics of the Concrete*.<sup>15</sup>

Nor were these serious studies limited to the "East".<sup>16</sup> As Frantz Fanon saw it, the African struggle for freedom was "not a treatise on the universal, but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute."<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt, of course, that once action supersedes the subjectivity of purpose, the unity of theory and practice is the form of life out of which emerge totally new dimensions. To this writer, this is only the "proof" of the ending of the *Science of Logic*, the absolute as new beginning, the self-bringing forth of liberty. Because Hegel's great work had new horizons in sight, Nature and Spirit, the Absolute Idea had to undergo "absolute liberation" (*Befreiung*). No mere transition (*Übergang*) here; Freedom is unrestricted. It will "complete" (*vollendet*) its liberation in the Philosophy of Mind (*Geist*). But there is no doubt either in the *Science of Logic* about the Notion being Subject, being Reality, and not some sort of closed ontology. To think that Hegel referred only to the idea of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world when he wrote about "the pivot on which the impending world revolution turned at that time"<sup>18</sup> is both to forget the Christians thrown to the lions, and that it was the "resigned" Hegel of the *Philosophie des Rechts* who wrote about the "impending world revolution" and not the young Hegel who had earlier toasted the great French Revolution.

Is it mere accident that, after 150 years of indifference, two simultaneous translations of the *Philosophy of Nature* appeared in English? Or is it mere accident that in the new studies on Hegel, a thinker like Professor Riedel suddenly sees in *Hegel* an equal primacy of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea? Or that new studies in Hegel cover East and West, North and South, and that many of the world conferences on Hegel coincide with Marx and Lenin as philosophers? Is it not rather,

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that the problematic of our crisis-ridden world impinges in no incidental way on the whole question of the relationship of theory to practice not just on the immediate level, but one grounded in philosophy? No doubt, as Hegel put it, to accept a category at face value is an "uninstructed and barbarous procedure". But it is also a fact that the single dialectic process surges up from thought as well as from actuality. It would be equally "uninstructed" for philosophers to act as if the relationship of theory to practice is merely a "job for politicians." Just as the objective world and the elemental quest for universality have a crucial meaning for students of the dialectic, so do the students of the dialectic have a crucial meaning for the movement from practice. Just as the movement from the abstract universal to the concrete individual through the particular, *necessitating* a double negation (and that, after all, comprises the whole movement of the *Science of Logic*), so does the "comprehension" of it. If philosophers learn to eschew elitisms, then the unity of theory and practice, of absolute as new beginning, will not remain an abstract desire, or mere will, but philosophy itself will become action.

In his *Hegel: A Re-examination*, Professor Findlay was right when he stated that Hegel's exegeses can seem "arid and false to those who see nothing mysterious and god-like in the facts of human thought." But is it not equally true that philosophers who stand only in terror before revolution not only do not "comprehend" it, they cannot fully comprehend the revolution *in thought*? And Hegel did revolutionize philosophy. Absolute Idea as new beginning can become a new "subjectivity" for realizing Hegel's principle, that "the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and that unity which is truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone." This is not exactly a summons to the barricades, but Hegel is asking us to have our ears as well as our categories so attuned to the "Spirit's urgency" that we rise to the challenge of working out, through "patience, seriousness, suffering and the labor of the negative," a totally new relationship of philosophy to actuality and action as befits a "birth-time of history." This is what makes Hegel a contemporary.

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### NOTES

1. The SL designation together with a number refers to the A. V. Miller translation of Hegel's *Science of Logic* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969).
2. Karl Löwith writes: "Marx takes over the task of the philosophy which ended with Hegel and puts revolutionary Marxism, as reason becoming practical, in the place of the whole previous tradition." Then Prof. Löwith footnotes his comment by referring to Manfred Riedel's *Theorie und Praxis im Denken Hegels* (Stuttgart: 1965). It is there, continues Löwith, "where it is established for the first time that, for Hegel, theory and practice share an equal primacy, since spirits as will is a will to freedom and freedom is the origin of all historical practice" (from Löwith's "Mediation and Immediacy in Hegel, Marx and Feuerbach" in W. E. Steinkraus (ed.), *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1971,) p. 122 and note).
3. See Chapter Two, "A New Continent of Thought, Marx's Historical Materialism and its Inseparability from the Hegelian Dialectic," in my book, *Philosophy and Revolution*: (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973).
4. See the article by Academician Kedrov printed in *Soviet Studies in Philosophy*, Summer, 1970.
5. This is my own translation which was published as an Appendix to my *Marxism and Freedom* (New York: 1958). However I am cross-referencing here the "official" translation which was published out of context, in 1961, as "Conspectus of Hegel's Book, the Science of Logic" in Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 38.  
See also footnote numbered 221 on page 317 of my *Philosophy and Revolution* for evidence of the interest Lenin displayed in the study of Hegel by Prof. Ilyin who was then sitting in jail for opposing the Bolshevik revolution, and whom Lenin freed. The reference to this in the Archives of the Lenin Institute for the year 1921, was included in Russia only in the first publication of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*, specifically in the Introduction by Deborin.
6. Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 180.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
8. Elsewhere I have developed more fully the ramifications and break in Lenin's philosophic development. See Chapter Three, "The Shock of Recognition and the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin" in my *Philosophy and Revolution*, pp. 95-120.
9. The letters on the Absolute Idea and the three final syllogisms of Absolute Mind (dated May 12 and May 20, 1953), I have turned over to the Labor History Archives of Wayne State University in Detroit. These comprise part of the collection on "Marxism-Humanism, its Origin and Development in America, 1941-1975." They are available on microfilm for other libraries and are listed as "The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection".
10. The original German edition was published in 1966. Quotations will be made from the English translation by E. B. Ashton published in 1973 by the Seabury Press of New York.

## HEGEL'S ABSOLUTE AS NEW BEGINNING

11. Adorno's accusation of "conceptual fetishism" against Marx's famous "Fetishism of Commodities" as "truly a piece from the heritage of classic German philosophy" (p. 189f) is not relevant here. Contrast it with Karel Kosik's analysis of the very same section in a work described below in footnote 15.
12. T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, (tr. Ashton, New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 362.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
14. *Ibid.*, xx in Preface.
15. Two of the chapters of his *Dialectics of the Concrete* have been published in English in *Telos* (Fall, 1968 and Fall, 1969). While in the second issue, Kosik contrasts the empty absolutes of Schelling with those of Hegel, who characterized the absolutes of the Romantics as having got to the Absolute "like a shot out of the pistol," in the earlier, 1968 issue, Kosik wrote that Marx's beginning of Capital with 'Commodity' means "it can be characterized in Hegelian terms, as the unity of being and non-being, of distinction and similarity, of identity and non-identity. All further determinations are richer definitions or characterizations of this 'absolute' of capitalist society. The dialectic of interpretation or of exegesis cannot eclipse the central problem: how does science reach the *necessary beginning of the exposition*. . . . The dialectic is not a method of reduction, *but the method of spiritual and intellectual reproduction of reality*."
16. The only one in the academic world in Hegel studies in the West who has dealt seriously, not with *existing, given*, established, *state* Communism, but with Marx himself and sees the transformation of the commodity as phenomenon into Notion is Karl Löwith in his *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (tr. by David Green, New York: 1964). The original German edition appeared in 1941. [*Von Hegel bis Nietzsche* (Zurich, 1953).]
17. I have limited myself to Eastern Europe, but of course I really mean the East, the Orient, and Mao's perversion of Hegelian dialectics, especially the concept of Contradiction, with which I have dealt elsewhere. (See Chapter Five, "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung," in my *Philosophy and Revolution*, pp. 128-150.)
18. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 33.
19. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (tr. Sir T. M. Knox)(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), Preface, p. 10. See also the translator's note No. 26 on page 301.