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THE MEANING OF HEGEL



by
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Forgotten Books

George Plekhanov
**The Meaning of
Hegel**
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About the Author

In 1891 the editors of Neue Zeit, theoretical magazine of the German Social Democratic Party, requested G.V. Plekhanov to write an article in connection with the 60th anniversary of Hegel's death. Few were better qualified to deal with this subject than Plekhanov, a profound student of philosophy and the best trained Marxist theoretician of Russia at the time. Plekhanov's philosophical writings, including his Hegel essay, were for the most part written in the heyday of his brilliant Marxist career, long before his desertion of the cause to which he owed his fame.

Engels, who chose his words carefully, especially on questions of theory, praised Plekhanov's 1891 essay in the highest terms. Lenin's views on Plekhanov's philosophical writings were so emphatic that he took time out to recommend the study of Plekhanov's philosophical writings while the Civil War was raging in Russia. Exactly the same was Trotsky's view.

Lenin said that

"it is impossible to become a real communist without studying – really studying – all that Plekhanov has written on philosophy, as this is the best of the whole international literature of Marxism."

In 1922, Trotsky wrote:

"The great Plekhanov, the true one, belongs entirely and wholly to us. It is our duty to restore to the young generations his spiritual figure in all its stature."

The essay on Hegel was first published in Russian in a collection of Plekhanov's articles entitled, A Critique of Our

Critics, and was republished in Vol.VII of Ryazanov's monumental edition of Plekhanov's collected works (Moscow, 1923).

The translation by F. Forrest was checked against both the original German and Russian texts.

One of the first places in the history of thought indisputably belongs to a man who died 60 years ago, on November 14, 1831. None of those sciences, which the French call “*sciences morales et politiques*,” escaped the powerful and fructifying influence of Hegel’s genius. Dialectics, logic, history, law, esthetics, history of philosophy and history of religion assumed a new aspect, thanks to the impetus given them by Hegel.

Hegelian philosophy trained and tempered the thought of such men as David Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, Fischer, Gans, Lassalle, and, finally, Engels and Marx. Even during his lifetime Hegel enjoyed world renown. After his death, from the '30s to the '40s, the practically universal enthusiasm for his philosophy became even more intense. But a reaction quickly followed. Hegel began to be treated – to use Marx’s words – “in the same way as the brave Moses Mendelssohn in Lessing’s time treated Spinoza, i.e., as a ‘dead dog’.” Interest in his philosophy disappeared completely among the “educated” circles. His influence in the academic world as well became so weak that to this day it has not occurred to a single specialist in the history of philosophy to define and point out “the lasting value” of

Hegelian philosophy in the varied fields of knowledge it embraces.

We shall presently explain the reasons for this attitude toward Hegel. Suffice it to note here that in the near future we may expect a revival of interest in his philosophy and especially in his philosophy of history. The tremendous successes of the labor movement, which compel the so-called educated classes to concern themselves with the theory under whose banner the movement is developing, will also compel these classes to become interested in the historical origin of this theory.

And once they do become interested in it, they will quickly discover Hegel, who will thereby become transformed in their eyes from “a philosopher of the restoration” into the forefather of the most advanced modern ideas. And for this very reason we can predict that although interest in Hegel will revive among the educated classes, they will never show the same profound sympathy for Hegel as was shown 60 years ago in countries of German culture. On the contrary, bourgeois scholars will zealously occupy themselves with a “critical reexamination” of Hegel’s philosophy; and many doctoral diplomas will be acquired in the course of the struggle with the “exaggerations” and the “logical arbitrariness” of the dead professor.

Naturally, from such a “critical reexamination” there will be only one gain for science, namely”: the learned apologists of the capitalist order will again and again reveal their bankruptcy in theory, just as they have in politics. But not for nothing has it been said that it is always beneficial “to burrow around the roots of truth.” The revival of interest in

Hegel's philosophy will impel unprejudiced people to make an independent study of his works. Such mental labor will not be easy but it will be highly rewarding. Those who really strive for knowledge will find much to learn from Hegel.

In this article we shall try to evaluate the philosophic-historic views of the great German thinker. In general outline, this has already been done by the hand of a master in the excellent articles of Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of German Classical Philosophy*, which were first published in the *Neue Zeit*, and later appeared as a separate pamphlet. But we think that the above-mentioned views of Hegel fully deserve a more detailed analysis.

The importance of Hegel in social science is determined, first of all, by the fact that he examined all social phenomena from the standpoint of the process *des Werdens* (of becoming), i.e., from the point of view of their rise and dissolution. To many this may not appear as a very great contribution since, it seems, it is impossible to look at social phenomena in any other way. But first, as we shall show later, this point of view even now is not really understood by many who consider themselves "evolutionists." Secondly, in Hegel's day, those engaged in the social sciences were even further away from this viewpoint. Suffice it to recall the socialists and economists of the period.

The bourgeois order was, to be sure, looked upon as a very great evil by the socialists at that time, but they nevertheless considered it as a perfectly *accidental* product of human *errors*. The economists, for their part, were delighted by the bourgeois order and were at a loss for words to praise it, but they considered it as no more than the product of

an *accidental* discovery of the *truth*. Neither the Utopians nor the economists went beyond this *abstract counterposing of truth to error* although the teachings of the Utopian socialists already contained *inklings* of a more correct approach to things.

To Hegel such an abstract counterposing of truth to error was one of those absurdities into which “rational” thinking so often fell. J.B. Say considered as worthless the study of the history of political economy because prior to Adam Smith all economists had advanced erroneous theories. To Hegel, on the other hand, philosophy was only the intellectual expression of its time.

At each stage every “transcended” philosophy was *the truth of its time*, and for this reason alone Hegel could never have discarded all previous philosophic systems as something worthless, as old rubbish. On the contrary. “In philosophy,” he writes, “the latest [philosophic] birth of time is the result of all the [philosophic] systems that have preceded it, and must include their principles.” [1] At the basis of this view of the history of philosophy lay, of course, the purely idealistic conception that the “Architect has directed the work [i.e., the work of philosophic thought] and that Architect is the one living Mind whose nature is to think, to bring to self-consciousness what it is, and, with its being thus set as object before it, to be at the same time raised above it, and so to reach a higher stage of its own being.” (Ibid.)

But the most consistent materialist will not deny that every given philosophic system is only the intellectual expression of its time.[2] And if, in returning to the history of political economy, we ask ourselves from what point of view must we

approach it at the present time, then we will immediately see how much nearer we are to Hegel than to J.B. Say. For example, from the point of view of Say, that is, from the point of view of the abstract antagonism between truth and error, the mercantile system, or even the physiocratic system, must and did represent no more than an absurdity which accidentally befell the human mind. But we know today to what extent each of the above systems was the necessary product of its time:

If the monetary and mercantile system single out international trade and the particular branches of national industry directly connected with that trade as the only true source of wealth or money, it must be borne in mind that in that period the greater part of national production was still carried on under forms of feudalism and was the source from which producers drew directly their means of subsistence. Products, as a rule, were not turned into commodities, nor, therefore, into money; they did not enter into the general social interchange of matter; did not, therefore, appear as embodiments of universal abstract labor; and did not in fact constitute bourgeois wealth ... True to the conditions as they prevailed in that primitive stage of bourgeois production, those unrecognized prophets held fast to the pure, tangible, and resplendent form of exchange value, to its form of a universal commodity as against all special commodities. (Marx, *Critique of Political Economy*, pp.216-17)

Marx explains the polemic between the physiocrats and their opponents as a dispute over which kind of labor “it is that creates surplus value.” (Ibid., p.64) Is it not clear that this question was completely “timely” for the bourgeoisie which was then preparing to become master of everything?

But it is not philosophy alone that appears to Hegel as the natural and necessary product of its time. He regards both religion and law in this same way. Moreover, one has to

recognize that, according to Hegel, philosophy, law, religion, art and even technique (*Technische Geschicklichkeit*) are most closely interrelated: “Only in connection with this particular religion, can this particular political constitution exist; just as in such or such a state, such or such a philosophy or order or art.” [3] This, again, can appear somewhat trivial. Who does not know how closely interrelated are all aspects and manifestations of national life? At present this is familiar to every school child.

The Laws of Reciprocity

But Hegel did not at all understand the interrelation of the varied aspects and manifestations of national life in the same way as it is understood to this very day by many “educated” persons and school children. This relation is regarded by them as a simple reciprocal action of the aspects and manifestations referred to. In addition to this, there is, first of all, the interaction itself which remains entirely unexplained. Secondly – and this is of primary importance – it is entirely forgotten that there must be one common source from which all these interrelated aspects and manifestations originate.

Thus this system of interaction appears to be based on nothing, hanging in mid-air: law influences religion; religion influences law, and each of them and both together influence philosophy and art, which, in their turn, influence one another, influence law and religion, etc. Such is the wisdom of this universally familiar doctrine of the primary schools. Let us grant that for any particular period we can be satisfied with such an exposition. But after all we would still be left

with the question of just what conditioned the historical development of religion, philosophy, art, law, etc., right up to the particular historical period.

Generally, reciprocity itself is adduced in answering this question. Thereby, in the long run, it ends up by explaining nothing. Either we have pointed out to us some accidental causes influencing this or that other aspect of national life, and having nothing in common with one another – or, finally, the whole matter is reduced to a question of the subjective logic of individuals. For example, it is said that the philosophic system of Fichte logically flows from the philosophic system of Kant, the philosophy of Schelling logically flows from the philosophy of Fichte and the philosophy of Hegel – from the philosophy of Schelling. In this same way the changes in the different schools of art are likewise “logically” explained. Undoubtedly, contained here is a grain of truth. Unfortunately, it explains absolutely nothing.

We know that sometimes the transition from one philosophic system, or from one school of art, to another, is accomplished very rapidly, in the course of a few years. At other times, however, centuries are needed for a transition. Whence does this difference arise? The logical connections between ideas do not explain it at all. Nor do the references of academic wisdom to reciprocity and to accidental reasons. But the “educated” circles are not embarrassed by this. Having uttered profundities concerning the reciprocal action of the different aspects of national life, they remain satisfied with this “manifestation” of their own profundity and stop thinking exactly where *rigorous scientific thought first fully*

comes into its own. Hegel was as far removed from such profundities as heaven is from earth.

“If we get no further than looking at a given content from the standpoint of reciprocity,” Hegel says, “we are taking an attitude which is really unintelligent. We are left with a mere dry fact; and the call for mediation, which is the chief question in applying the relation of causality, is left still unanswered. And if we look more narrowly into the dissatisfaction felt in applying the relation of reciprocity, we shall see that it consists in the circumstance that this relation cannot possibly be treated as an equivalent for the notion, and ought, instead, to be known and understood in its own nature. And to understand the relation of action and reaction we must not let the two sides rest in their state of mere given facts, but recognize them ... as factors of a third and higher order ...” (*Enzyklopedia*, Sec.156, *Zusatz*.)

What Hegel means by this is that we must not, when speaking about different aspects of national life, for example, be satisfied simply to point out their reciprocity, but must search for an explanation in something new, something “higher,” i.e., something which conditions both their very existence as well as the possibility of their acting and reacting upon one another.

Where, then, are we to search for this new, this “higher” something?

Hegel’s Idealism

Hegel answers that one must search for it in the “notion” – in the peculiarities of the national spirit. And this is entirely logical from his point of view. For Hegel, all history is only “the development and realization of the universal spirit.” The movement of the universal spirit takes place in stages.

“Every step in the process, as differing from any other, has its determinate peculiar principle. In history, this principle is ... the peculiar National Genius. It is within the limitations of this idiosyncrasy that the spirit of the nation, concretely manifested, expresses every aspect of its Consciousness and will – the whole cycle of its realization. Its religion, its polity, its ethics, its legislation, and even its science, art, and mechanical skill, all bear its stamp. These special peculiarities find their key in that common peculiarity – the particular principle that characterizes a people; as, on the other hand, in the facts which history presents in detail, that common characteristic principle may be detected.”
(Cf. *Philosophy of History*, pp.63-4.)

There is nothing easier than to make the brilliant discovery that Hegel’s view of world history as set forth above is permeated with *idealism of the purest water*. As Hegel would have put it, this is obvious to everyone, even those who never studied in a seminary. There is also nothing easier than to limit the “critique” of Hegelian philosophy of history to a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders because of its extreme idealism. This is often done by people who are themselves incapable of any consistent thinking – people who are not satisfied with the materialists because they are materialists; and who are not satisfied with the idealists because they are idealists, and are overly satisfied with themselves because their own world outlook is supposedly free from all extremes. Actually, their own outlook is nothing more than a completely undigested hash of idealism and materialism.

“Not a Grain of Eclecticism”

The philosophy of Hegel possesses, in any case, the undisputed merit that it contains not a single grain of *eclecticism*. And if its mistaken idealistic basis does make

itself felt all too often; if it does place extremely narrow limits to the development of the genius thoughts of a great man, then precisely because of this should we study the philosophy of Hegel all the more closely, for it is precisely this which makes it so highly instructive. The idealistic philosophy of Hegel contains the best, the most irrefutable proof of the inadequacy of idealism. But at the same time it teaches us consistency in thinking. He who will devotedly and conscientiously pass through this severe school will forever acquire a healthy aversion to eclectic hash.

We now know that world history is not at all “the development and realization of the world spirit.” But this does not mean that we can rest satisfied with academic banalities to the effect that the political order of a given nation influences its customs, while its customs influence its constitution, etc. We must agree with Hegel that both the customs and the political structure arise from a common source. What this source is, is exactly what the modern materialist analysis of history tells us. Suffice it here to limit our remarks on this subject to stating that Messrs. Eclectics have as great a difficulty in understanding historical materialism as they have in penetrating into the secrets of the diametrically opposed idealistic views of Hegel.

Every time Hegel undertakes to characterize some great historic people, he reveals encyclopedic knowledge and great penetration. He gives truly brilliant and profoundly instructive characterizations, punctuating them with a whole series of the most valuable remarks about different aspects of the history of a particular people. He fascinates you until you are ready to forget that you are dealing with an idealist. You are ready to acknowledge that he actually “die

Geschichte nimmt, wie sie ist” (“takes history as it is”), that Hegel strictly adheres to his own rule: “to keep to the historical, empirical soil.”

But why does Hegel need this historical, empirical soil? To determine the *peculiarities of the spirit* of each particular people. The spirit of a particular people is, as we already know, no more than a stage in the development of the universal spirit. But the peculiarities of the universal spirit are not at all derived from the study of world history. On the contrary, knowledge of it is *introduced into the study of world history* as knowledge which is ready-made and completely finished from all sides.

The Contradictions in Hegel

Therefore, this is what takes place: so long as history does not contradict the “notion” of the universal spirit and the “laws” of the development of this spirit, history is taken “as it is”; Hegel “keeps to the historical, empirical soil.” But as soon as history not so much contradicts the “laws” of development of the universal spirit but rather falls outside the orbit of this assumed development, and appears as something unforeseen by the Hegelian *logic*, then no attention whatever is paid to it.

Obviously such an attitude toward history should have at least saved Hegel from contradicting himself, but actually this is not the case. Hegel is far from being free of contradictions. Here is a sufficiently striking example. Hegel writes about the religious conceptions of the Hindus as follows:

On the one hand Love-Heaven – in short everything spiritual – is conceived by the fancy of the Hindus; but on the other hand, his conceptions have an actual sensuous embodiment, and he immerses himself by a voluptuous intoxication in the merely natural. Objects of religious worship are thus either fantastic forms produced by art, or those presented by Nature. Every bird, every monkey is a god, an absolutely universal existence. The Hindu is incapable of holding fast an object in his mind by means of rational predicates assigned to it, for this requires Reflection. (Cf. *Philosophy of History*, p.157.)

On the basis of this characterization, Hegel considers animal worship – zoolatry – as the natural consequence of the circumstance that the spirit of the *Hindu people* represents one of the *lowest stages in the evolution of the universal spirit*. Ancient Persians, worshipping fire and also “the sun, the moon and five other luminaries,” recognizing them as “the honorable images of Oromaz,” are placed by Hegel on a higher plane than the Hindus. But let us now listen to what Hegel himself has to say about animal worship among the ancient Egyptians:

Egyptian Cult is chiefly zoolatry ... To us zoolatry is repulsive. We may reconcile ourselves to the adoration of the material heaven, but the worship of animals is alien to us ... Yet it is certain that the nations who worshipped the sun and the stars by no means occupy a higher grade than those who deify animals, but contrariwise; for in the animal world the Egyptians contemplated an inner and incomprehensible principle. (Cf. *Ibid.*, p.211.)

Depending upon whether the Hindu or the Egyptian is under discussion, the very same animal worship assumes, in Hegel’s eyes, an entirely different meaning. Why is this so? Is it really true that Hindus deified animals in an entirely different way from the Egyptians? Not at all. The whole point here is this, that the Egyptian national “spirit”

represents a “transition” to the Greek, and therefore occupies a comparatively high stage in the Hegelian system of classification. For this reason, Hegel does not wish to indict the Egyptians for those same weaknesses for which he indicted the lower-ranking Indian national spirit.

In the same way, depending on whether he meets them in India or in Egypt, Hegel takes a different attitude toward *castes*. Indian castes “become natural distinctions,” and therefore the individual in India has even less value than in China where there exists the unenviable equality of all before the despot. Regarding the Egyptian castes we are told that they “are not rigidly fixed, but struggle with and come in contact with one another; we often find cases of their being broken up and in a state of rebellion.” (Ibid., pp.204-5.) But even from what Hegel himself says about the castes in India, it appears that in India, too, there was no lack of struggle and contact between the castes.

Achilles Heel of Idealism

In this case, as on the question of zoolatry, Hegel, in the interests of a rather arbitrary logical scheme, has to attribute completely different meanings to completely analogous phenomena of social life. But this is not all. The Achilles heel of idealism reveals itself before us especially in those cases where Hegel has to deal either with the shift of the center of gravity of the historical movement from one people to another, or with a change in the *inner* condition of a given people.

In such cases, there naturally arises the question of the causes behind these shifts and changes, and Hegel as an

idealist seeks the answer in the attributes of the very same *Spirit*, the realization of which comprises, in his view, history. For example, he asks himself why did ancient Persia fall while China and India survived. Hegel's answer is prefaced with the following remark:

In the first place we must here banish from, our minds the prejudice in favor of duration, as if it had any advantage as compared with transience: the imperishable mountains are not superior to the quickly dismantled rose exhaling its life in fragrance. (Ibid., p.221.)

In no case is it possible to consider this prefatory comment as an answer. There then follows argumentation like this:

In Persia begins the principle of Free Spirit as. contrasted with imprisonment in Nature; mere natural existence, therefore, loses its bloom, and fades away. The principle of separation from Nature is found in the Persian Empire, which, therefore, occupies a higher grade than those worlds immersed in the Natural. [4] The necessity of advance has been thereby proclaimed. Spirit has disclosed its existence, and must complete its development. It is only when dead that the Chinese is held in reverence. The Hindu kills himself – becomes absorbed in Brahma – undergoes a living death in the condition of perfect unconsciousness – or is a present god in virtue of his birth. [5]

Here we have no change; no advance is admissible, for progress is only possible through the recognition of the independence of Spirit. With the "Light" [the fire-worship] of the Persians begins a spiritual view of things and here spirit bids adieu to Nature. It is here, then, [sic.!] that we first find ... that the objective world remains free – that the nations are not enslaved [6], but are left in possession of their wealth, their political constitution, and their religion. And, indeed, this is the side on which Persia itself shows weakness as compared with Greece. (Ibid., p.221.)

Idealism Barrier to Explanation

In all this lengthy argument only the last few lines, relating to the inner organization of the Persian kingdom as a cause of the weakness revealed by Persia in its conflict with Greece, can be considered as an attempt to explain the historic fact of Persia's fall. But this attempt at explanation has very little in common with the idealist interpretation of history which Hegel held. The weakness of the inner organization of Persia stands in a very dubious connection with the "Light of the Persians." Precisely where Hegel remains true to *idealism*, the best he is able to do is to hide that fact which needs explanation behind an idealistic curtain. In his hands, idealism invariably ends up this way.

Let us take as another example the question of the internal disintegration of Greece. The Greek world was, according to Hegel, the world of beauty "and of beautiful moral ethics." [7] The Greeks were a superior people, deeply devoted to their fatherland and capable of every self-sacrifice. But they achieved great feats "without Reflection."

For a Greek, "the fatherland was a necessity without which he could not live." Only afterward "did the sophists introduce principles"; there appeared "a subjective Reflection," "moral self-consciousness," the teaching that "each must behave in accordance with his convictions." From then on there set in the disintegration of the above-mentioned "beautiful moral ethics" of the Greeks; the "self-freeing of the inner world" led to the downfall of Greece.

One of the aspects of this inner world was *Reflection*, or thinking. Consequently, we meet here with the interesting historic phenomenon that the force of *thinking* acts, among

other things, as a “principle of corruption.” Such a view merits attention if only because it is considerably more profound than the one-sided view of the Enlighteners for whom success of thinking of any people must lead inevitably and directly to “progress.”

Nevertheless, there still remains the problem – whence comes this “self-freeing of the inner world”? The idealistic philosophy of Hegel answers: “the Spirit could only for a short time remain on the plane of beautiful moral ethics.” But this again is of course no answer, but merely a translation of the question into the philosophic language of Hegelian idealism. Hegel himself seems to feel this and therefore hastens to add that the “principle of disintegration *displayed itself first* in the external political development – in the contest of the states of Greece with each other, and the struggle of factions within the cities themselves.” (**Ibid.**, p.265.)

Anticipating the Materialist Interpretation

Here we find ourselves already on *concrete* historic soil. The struggle of “factions” inside the cities came, in the words of Hegel himself, as a result of the *economic* development of Greece. In other words, the struggle of political parties was only an expression of the unfolding *economic contradictions* in the Greek cities. And if we recall that the Peloponnesian war – as is clear from a reading of Thucydides – was only the class struggle which spread throughout Greece, then we will easily arrive at the conclusion that one must seek the principle of the disintegration of Greece in its *economic* history. Thus in

Hegel we find the anticipation of the materialist interpretation of history, although to him the class struggle in Greece is only a manifestation of the “principle of disintegration.”

To use Hegel’s terminology, materialism manifests itself as the truth of idealism. And we continually run up against such surprises in the Hegelian philosophy of history. It is as if the greatest *idealist* had set himself the goal of clearing the road for *materialism*. When he speaks of the medieval cities, immediately after paying due tribute to idealism, he analyzes their history on the one hand as a struggle of citizens against the priesthood and the nobility, and on the other hand as a struggle of different strata of citizens among themselves, of “rich citizens against the common people.” [8] When he speaks about the Reformation, he again first reveals to us the secrets of the “universal spirit,” and then makes the following remark – entirely surprising on the lips of an idealist – regarding the spread of Protestantism:

In Austria, in Bavaria, in Bohemia, the Reformation had already made great progress, and though it is commonly said that when truth has once penetrated men’s souls, it cannot be rooted out again, it was indisputably stifled in the countries in question, by force of arms, by stratagem or persuasion. The *Slavonic nations* were agricultural. This condition of life brings with it the relation of lord and serf. In agriculture the agency of nature predominates; human industry and subjective activity are on the whole less brought into play in this department of labor than elsewhere. The Slavonians therefore did not attain so quickly or readily as other nations the fundamental sense of pure individuality – the consciousness of Universality...and could not share the benefits of dawning freedom. [9] (Ibid., p.420.)

Economic Development as the Source

With these words Hegel tells us clearly that the explanation of the religious views and of all those liberating movements which arise in their midst, must be sought in the economic activity of the given people. But that is not all. Hegel's state reveals itself to be nothing else than *the product of the economic development*, although, according to his idealistic explanation, the state "is the actuality of the ethical Idea. It is ethical mind *qua* the substantial will manifest and revealed to itself, knowing and thinking itself and accomplishing what is known and in so far as it knows it." [10]

"A real state," Hegel says, "and a real government arise only after a distinction of estates has arisen, when wealth and poverty become extreme, and when such a condition of things presents itself that a large portion of the people can no longer satisfy its necessities in the way in which it has been accustomed to do." (*Philosophy of History*, pp.85-6.)

Exactly in the same manner Hegel considers the historic appearance of *marriage* to be closely related to the *economic* history of mankind:

The real beginning and original foundation of states has been rightly ascribed to the introduction of agriculture along with marriage, because the principle of agriculture brings with it the formation of the land and consequentially exclusively private property ...; the nomadic life of savages, who seek their livelihood from place to place, it brings back to the tranquillity of private rights and the assured satisfaction of their needs. Along with these changes, sexual love is restricted to marriage, and this bond in turn grows into care for a family, and personal possessions. [11]

We could cite many similar examples. But since space does not permit, we shall limit ourselves to denoting the

significance Hegel attached to the “geographical basis of world history.”

Much has been written *before* as well as *after* Hegel, regarding the significance of the geographic environment in the historical development of humanity. But just as up to Hegel, so after him, the researchers often sinned by having in mind the exclusively *psychological* or even *physiological* influence of the natural environment on man. They entirely forgot the influence this environment exerts on the development of the social *productive forces and, through them*, on all social relations of people along with all the ideological superstructures. [12] Hegel was entirely free of this great error in the *general posing* of the question, although not in this or that particular aspect. According to Hegel, there are three characteristic distinctions in geographic environment: (1) the arid elevated land with its extensive steppes and plains; (2) the valley-plains, criss-crossed by big rivers; and (3) the coastal regions directly adjoining the sea.

In the first, cattle-breeding predominates; in the second, *agriculture*; in the third, trade and handicraft. In conformity with these basic distinctions there are also the variously formed social relations of the people inhabiting these areas. The inhabitants of the plateaus – for example, the *Mongols* – lead a patriarchal, nomadic life and have no history in the real meaning of the word. Only from time to time, assembling in great masses, they descend like a storm on civilized land, leaving behind them everywhere devastation and destruction. [13] Civilized life begins in the valleys, which owe their fertility to the rivers.

Such a Valley-Plain is China, India ... Babylonia ... Egypt. In these regions extensive Kingdoms arise, and the foundation of great states begins. For agriculture, which prevails here as the primary principle of subsistence for individuals, is assisted by the regularity of seasons, which require corresponding agricultural operations; property in land commences, and the consequent legal relations ... (*Philosophy of History*, p.89.)

But the agricultural people inhabiting these valley-plains are characterized by great inertness, immobility, isolation; they are incapable of utilizing in their mutual relations all those means which nature provides. This shortcoming is foreign to the peoples who populate the coastal regions. The sea does not divide people, but unites them. That is why it is precisely in coastal regions that civilization, and together with it human consciousness, reaches the highest degree of development. It is not necessary to go far for examples. It is sufficient to point to ancient Greece.

Perhaps the reader is acquainted with the book of L. Mechnikov, *Civilisation and the Great Historical Rivers*, which appeared in 1889. Mechnikov indubitably has idealistic inclinations, but in general he nevertheless takes a materialist viewpoint. And what is the result? The view of this materialist on the historical significance of geographic environments coincides almost entirely with the views of the *idealist* Hegel, although Mechnikov undoubtedly would be very astonished to hear of this similarity.

Hegel also explains the appearance of inequality among more or less primitive societies as a result, in part, of the influence of geographical environment. Thus he shows that *before the time of Solon* the difference between estates in Athens (by "estates" Hegel designates the various more or

less well-to-do classes of the population: the inhabitants of the plains, the hills and the shores) rests upon the difference in localities. And undoubtedly the difference in localities and the difference in *occupations* connected with them must have exerted a big influence on the *economic* development of primitive societies. Unfortunately, contemporary researchers very seldom consider this aspect of the question.

Hegel hardly concerns himself with *political* economy; but the genius of his mind in this case as in many others helped him grasp the most characteristic and most essential side of the phenomena. More clearly than any economist of his time, not even excluding Ricardo, Hegel understood that in a society based on private property the growth of wealth on one side must inevitably be accompanied by the growth of poverty on the other. He categorically asserts this both in his *Philosophy of History* and especially in his *Philosophy of Right*. According to him, “this dialectic” – namely, on the one side, a living standard for the majority of the population so low that they cannot adequately satisfy their needs, and, on the other side, a great concentration of wealth in comparatively few hands – must of necessity, lead to a situation where civil society, despite “*the superfluity of wealth, is insufficiently wealthy,*” i.e., has not the means sufficient to eliminate the superfluity of poverty and of pauperized dregs (*des Pöbels*).

As a result of this, civil society [14] finds itself forced to go outside of its own boundaries and search for new markets, to turn to world trade and colonization. Of all the contemporaries of Hegel, Fourier alone was distinguished by such clarity of views, and understood as well the dialectic of bourgeois economic relations.

The reader has undoubtedly noted that, for Hegel, the proletariat is nothing more than “*Pöbel*,” incapable of benefiting from the spiritual advantages of civil society. Hegel did not suspect how greatly the modern proletariat differs from the proletariat of the ancient world, say, the Roman proletariat. He did not know that in modern society the oppression of the working class inevitably arouses the opposition of this class, and that in this society the proletariat is destined to far outdistance the bourgeoisie in intellectual development. But after all, the Utopian socialists – for whom the proletariat also was no more than “*Pöbel*,” deserving every sympathy and help, but incapable of any kind of initiative – did not know all this either. Only scientific socialism has been able to comprehend the great historic significance of the modern proletariat.

II

Let us summarize what we have said. As an idealist Hegel could not look on history otherwise than from an idealist viewpoint. He employed all the powers of his mental genius, all the colossal means of his dialectic, in order to lend some sort of scientific guise to the idealistic interpretation of history. His attempt proved unsuccessful. The results obtained seemed unsatisfactory even to him and he was often forced to come down from the misty heights of idealism to the concrete soil of economic relations. *Each time he turned to economics, it raised him from those shoals where his idealism had led him. Economic development turned out to be that prius (primary cause) which conditions the entire course of history.*

It was by this that the further development of science was determined. The transition to materialism, achieved after Hegel's death, could not have been a simple return to the naive metaphysical materialism of the 18th century. In the sphere which interests us here, i.e., in the sphere of interpretation of history, materialism had first of all to turn to *economics*. *To have acted in any other way meant not to go forward but backward in relation to Hegel's philosophy of history.*

The materialist interpretation of nature does not yet mean the materialist interpretation of history. The materialists of the last century looked upon history with the eyes of idealists and, moreover, very naive idealists. To the extent that they were occupied with the history of human societies, they tried to explain it by the *history of thought*.

For them the famous proposition of Anaxagoras, "Reason governs the world," was reduced to the proposition that human *understanding governs history*.

They attributed the sad pages of human history to the errors of the understanding. If the inhabitants of a particular country continue to patiently bear the yoke of despotism, it is only because they have not yet understood the superiorities of freedom. If they are superstitious, it is because they are deceived by priests who have invented religion for their own benefit. If humanity suffers from wars, it is because it has been unable to understand how wasteful wars are. And so forth.

The remarkable thinker J.B. Vico had already said at the beginning of the last century: "*The course of ideas is determined by the-course of things.*" The materialists of the

last century held the exact opposite to be true; the course of things in society is determined by the course of ideas, while the latter is determined – well, let us say, by the rules of formal logic and the accumulation of knowledge.

The absolute idealism of Hegel was very remote from this naive idealism of the Enlighteners. When Hegel repeated, after Anaxagoras, that “Reason governs the world,” on his lips this did not at all signify that human thought governs the world. Nature is a system of reason, but this does not mean that nature is endowed with consciousness:

“The movement of the solar system takes place according to unchangeable laws. These laws are Reason, implicit in the phenomena in question. But neither the sun nor the planets, which revolve around it according to these laws, can be said to have any consciousness of them.” (*Philosophy of History*, p.11)

Aims and Results

Man is endowed with consciousness; he sets definite aims for his actions. But it does not at all follow from this that history pursues the path that people wish. In the result of every human action, there is always something unforeseen and it is this unforeseen side which frequently, or more correctly almost always, comprises the most essential achievement of history, and it is precisely this that leads to the realization of the “World Spirit.”

“In world history an additional result is commonly produced by human actions beyond that which they aim at and obtain.” (*Ibid.*, p.27)

Men act as their interests demand and as a result of this there comes something new, something which was, it is true, contained in their actions but not in their consciousness or in their interactions. (Ibid., p. 27) States, nations and individuals pursue their private interests and special aims. To this extent, their actions are unquestionably *conscious and thinking*. But, while consciously pursuing their private aims (which are also as a rule permeated with certain general strivings toward good and right), they unconsciously achieve the aims of the “World Spirit.”

Caesar strove for autocracy in Rome. This was his personal aim. But autocracy was at the time a historic necessity. For this reason, in realizing his personal aim, Caesar rendered a service to the “World Spirit.” In this sense one can say that historic figures, as well as whole nations, are the *blind instruments of the “Spirit.”* It forces them to work in its own behalf by dangling a bait before them in the shape of private aims, and urging them forward by the spurs of *passion*, without which nothing great in history is ever achieved.

In relation to human beings there is in this Hegelian view no mysticism of the “Unknown” whatever. The activity of human beings unfailingly finds its reflection in their heads, but the historic movement is not conditioned by this mental reflection. *The course of things* is determined not by *the course of ideas*, but by something else, something independent of human will, hidden from human consciousness.

The *accidental nature* of human whims and calculations gives way to lawfulness, and consequently to *necessity* as well. This is what makes “*absolute idealism*” unquestionably

superior to the naive idealism of the French Enlighteners. Absolute idealism stands in relation to the Enlighteners much as monotheism is related to fetishism and magic. Magic leaves no room for lawfulness in nature: it presupposes that “the course of things” can be disrupted at any moment by the intervention of the medicine man. Monotheism attributes to god the establishment of the laws of nature, but it recognizes (at least in the highest stage of its development when it ceases to accept miracles) that the course of things is determined once and for all by these established laws.

Thereby monotheism allows to science a great deal of room. In exactly the same way absolute idealism, by seeking an explanation of historic movement in something independent of human whim, posed before science the problem of explaining historic phenomena in conformity with lawfulness. But the solution of this problem eliminates any need for the “*hypothesis of the Spirit*” – a hypothesis which proved itself completely worthless for the purposes of such an explanation.

If the views of the French materialists of the last century on the course of history boiled down to the proposition that human understanding governs history, then their expectations of the future may be expressed as follows: Henceforth everything will be arranged and brought into order by enlightened understanding, by *philosophy*. It is remarkable that the absolute idealist Hegel assigned a far more modest role to philosophy.

“One word more about giving *instruction* as to what the world ought to be,” we read in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right*. “Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene

too late. As the *thought* of the world, philosophy makes its first appearance at a time When the actual fact has consummated its process of formation, and is now fully matured ... When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has meanwhile grown old. And though philosophy can bring it into knowledge, it cannot make it young again. The owl of Minerva does not start upon its flight, until the evening twilight has begun to fall.” (p.20)

There is no doubt that Hegel here has gone too far. While entirely agreeing that “philosophy” cannot make young again a senile, outlived social order, one might ask Hegel: But what hinders “philosophy” from showing us, naturally only in general outline, the character of the *new* social order which is to replace the old? “Philosophy” examines phenomena in the process of their becoming. And in the process of becoming there are two sides: birth and dying out. These two sides can be looked upon as separated in time. But just as in nature, so especially in history, the process of becoming is, at each given period, a *twofold process*: the old is dying out and from its ruins *simultaneously* the *new* is being born.

Must this process of the birth of the new really forever remain hidden from “philosophy”? “Philosophy” seeks to know that which *is* and not that which is someone’s opinion it ought to be. But what *is* there in each given period? There is, to be precise, the *dying out of the old* and the birth of the new. If philosophy knows only the old that is dying, then this knowledge is *one-sided*. It is incapable of fulfilling its task of knowing the existing. But this contradicts Hegel’s assurance that the conceiving reason is omnipotent.

Such extremes are alien to modern materialism. On the basis of what *is* and *what is outliving itself* it is able to judge

what *is about to become*. But one must not forget that our conception of *what is about to become* is basically different from that conception of *what ought to be* (*sein sollenden*) against which Hegel directed the foregoing comment about the owl of Minerva. For us that which is *about to become* is the necessary result of that *which is outliving itself*, if we know that *it* is precisely *this* and not *something else* that is about to become, then this knowledge we owe to the objective process of social development which prepares us for the knowledge of that which is *becoming*. We do not counterpose our thinking to the being which envelops us.

But those against whom Hegel polemicized held entirely different views. They imagined that thinking can, as it pleases, modify the natural course of development of *Being*. Therefore they did not find it necessary to study its course and take it into consideration. Their picture of that which *ought to be* was gained, not by studying the actuality around them, but by inferring it from the judgments which they held at the particular time concerning a social order.

But these judgments were themselves nothing else but inferences from the actuality around them (predominantly its *negativeside*). To base oneself on these judgments meant to guide oneself by inferences from this very actuality – but inferences which were accepted completely uncritically, and without any attempt, to verify them by the study of the actuality whence they arose. This is like trying to familiarize oneself with an object, not by looking at it directly, but at its image in a convex mirror. In such circumstances, errors and disillusion were inescapable. And the more men forgot the origin of their pictures of what “ought to be” in the reality surrounding them; the more they believed, that, armed with

these pictures, they could deal with reality as they pleased; all the greater became, the gap between what they strove for and that which they accomplished.

How remote is modern bourgeois society from the kingdom of reason of which the French Enlighteners dreamed! By ignoring reality, men did not free themselves from the influence of its laws. They only deprived themselves of the possibility of foreseeing the operation of these laws, and of utilizing them for their own aims. But precisely because of this their aims were unattainable. To hold the point of view of the Enlighteners meant not to go beyond the abstract contradiction between *freedom* and *necessity*.

At first sight it seems that if necessity reigns in history, then there can be no place in it for the free activity of man. This egregious blunder was corrected by German idealistic philosophy. It was Schelling who demonstrated that—viewed correctly, *freedom proves to be necessity, necessity – freedom* [15] Hegel completely solved the antinomy between freedom and necessity. He showed that we are free only to the extent that we know the laws of nature and of socio-historic development, and only to the extent that we, *while subordinating ourselves to these laws*, base ourselves on them. This was the greatest conquest in the sphere of philosophy as in the sphere of social science. This conquest however, was exploited fully only by modern dialectical materialism.

Dialectical Method of Thinking

The materialist interpretation of history presupposes the dialectic method of thinking. Dialectics was known before Hegel, but it was Hegel who succeeded in employing it as did none of his predecessors. In the hands of this, genius-idealist it becomes the powerful weapon for knowing all that which exists.

“Dialectic” says Hegel, “is ... the soul of scientific progress, the Principle which alone gives an immanent connection and necessity to the subject-matter of science ... the refusal to abide by any one abstract form of the understanding is reckoned as mere fairness. As the proverb has it, live and let live. Each must have its turn; we admit the one, but admit the other also. But when we look more closely, we find that the limitations of the finite do not merely come from without; that its own nature is the cause of its abrogation, and by its own means it passes into its opposite.” (*Enzyklopedia*, 81 and *Zusatz*.)

So long as Hegel remains true to his dialectic method, he is a progressive thinker in the highest degree. “All things, we say, that is, the finite world as such, meet their doom; and in saying so we have a perception that Dialectic is the universal and irresistible power, before which nothing can stay, however secure and stable it may deem itself.”

Hegel is therefore entirely correct when he says that it is of the highest importance to assimilate and understand rightly the nature of the dialectic. The dialectic method is the most important scientific instrument which German idealism has bequeathed to its heir, modern materialism.

Materialism, however, could not utilize the dialectic in its idealistic form. It was necessary first of all to free the dialectic from its mystical shell.

Greatest Materialist of All

The greatest of all materialists, the man who was in no way inferior to Hegel in intellectual genius and who was a genuine disciple of this greater philosopher, *Karl Marx*, said with complete justification that his method is the direct opposite to the method of Hegel:

“To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of the Idea, he even transforms into an independent subject, is the *demiurgos* of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of ‘the Idea.’ With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.” (*Capital*, Vol.1, p.25.)

Thanks to Marx the materialistic philosophy attained a unified, harmonious and consistent world outlook. We have already noted that the materialists of the previous century remained rather naive idealists in the sphere of history. Marx drove idealism out of this, its last refuge. Like Hegel, he viewed the history of humanity as a lawful process, independent of human will. Like Hegel, he examined all phenomena in the process of their birth and dissolution. Like Hegel, he was not satisfied with the metaphysical, barren explanation of historic events. And finally, like Hegel, he tried to trace to a single universal *source* all acting and mutually interacting forces in social life.

But he found this source not in the Absolute Spirit, but in that economic development to which, as we saw above, Hegel himself had to resort in those instances where idealism, even in his strong and most skilled hands, proved an impotent and worthless instrument. But that which in

Hegel was more or less .accidental anticipation of a genius, became with Marx a rigidly scientific analysis.

Modern dialectic materialism clarified incomparably better than idealism the truth that people make history unconsciously. From this point of view the march of his- history is determined, in the final analysis, not by human will, but by the development of the material productive forces. Materialism is also aware just *when* “the owl of Minerva” begins to fly, but in the flight of this bird, as in much else, it sees nothing mysterious.

It proved capable of applying to history the relationship between freedom and necessity discovered by idealism. Men made, and had to make, history *unconsciously* so long as the motor forces of historical development operated behind their backs and independently of their consciousness. Once these forces have been discovered, once the laws of their actions have been studied, men will be in a position to take them into their own hands and subordinate them to their own rational powers.

The merit of Marx consists precisely in his disclosure of these forces and his subjecting their operation to a rigorous scientific analysis. Modern dialectical materialism which, in the opinion of the Philistines, is bound to convert man into an automaton, in reality opens up for the first time in history the road to the kingdom of freedom and conscious activity. But it is possible to enter this kingdom only by radically changing the existing social activity. Philistines know this or at least have a premonition of it. Precisely for this reason the materialistic interpretation of history upsets them and grieves them so. And for this same reason, no Philistine is

ever able or willing to understand or assimilate fully the Marxist theory. Hegel looked upon the proletariat as a *mob*. For Marx and for the Marxists, the proletariat is a great force, the bearer of the future. Only the proletariat (we leave the exceptions aside) is capable of assimilating the teachings of Marx, and we see how . the proletariat is actually becoming more and more permeated with the content of Marxism.

Philistines of all countries noisily proclaim that in the literature of Marxism there is not one significant work apart from *Capital*. In the first place, this is not true. And even if it were, it would prove exactly nothing. How is it possible to speak about stagnation of thought at a time when this thought each day gains way over masses of followers, when it opens new and broad perspectives for a whole social class?

Hegel speaks enthusiastically about the Athenian people before whom the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles were played, and to whom Pericles addressed his speeches and from whose ranks “appeared individuals who have become the classic models for all centuries.” We understand Hegel’s enthusiasm. Nevertheless, we must note that the Athenians were a *slave-holding people*. Pericles did not address himself to the slaves, and the great creations of art were not intended for them.

In our time science addresses itself to the workers and we have every right to look with enthusiasm upon the modern working class to whom the most profound thinkers address themselves and before whom the most talented orators appear. Finally, only in our time has a close and indissoluble alliance been concluded between science and the workers –

an alliance which will usher in a great and fruitful epoch in world history.

It is sometimes said that the dialectical viewpoint is identical with that of evolution. There is no doubt that these two methods coincide on some points. Nevertheless, there is a profound and important difference between them which, one must acknowledge, does not at all favor the doctrine of evolution. Modern evolutionists add to their teachings a considerable dose of conservatism. They would like to prove that in nature, as in history, there are no leaps. Dialectics, for its part, knows very well that in nature, as in human thought and history, leaps are inescapable. But it does not ignore the incontrovertible fact that throughout all the moments of change one and the same *uninterrupted process* operates. Dialectics simply seeks to clarify the entire series of conditions under which gradual changes must necessarily lead to a leap. [16]

From Hegel's standpoint, *Utopias* have symptomatic significance in history; they lay bare the contradictions inherent in a particular epoch. Dialectical materialism makes the same evaluation of *Utopias*. The present growth of the workers' movement is not conditioned by the *Utopian* plans of various reformers, but by the laws of production and exchange. And precisely because of this, in contrast to all previous centuries, not only reformers but all those public figures who strive to stop the wheel of history appear as *Utopians*,

And the most characteristic peculiarity of our epoch is the circumstance that it is not the reformers, but their opponents, who resort to *Utopias*. The *utopian* defenders of

the existing unattractive reality wish to convince themselves and others that this reality in and of itself has all the possible virtues and that, therefore, it is necessary to eliminate from it only these or those accumulated evils. In this connection we cannot help recalling the remarks which Hegel made concerning the Reformation.

“The Reformation,” he said, “resulted from the *corruption of the Church*. That corruption was not an accidental phenomenon; it was not the mere *abuse* of power and dominion. A corrupt state of things is very frequently represented as an ‘abuse’; it is taken for granted that the foundation is good – the system, the institution faultless – but that the passion, the subjective interest, in short the arbitrary volition of men has made use of that which in itself was good to further its own selfish ends, and what is required to be done is to remove these adventitious elements. On this showing the institute in question escapes obloquy, and the evil that disfigures it appears something foreign to it. But when accidental abuse of a good thing really occurs, it is limited to particularity. A great and general corruption affecting a body of such large and comprehensive scope as a Church, is quite another thing.” (*Philosophy of History*, p.412.)

There is nothing surprising in the fact that Hegel enjoys, little popularity among those who love to appeal to the “accidental” shortcomings whenever a root change of the “thing” itself is involved. They are terrified by the bold, radical spirit which permeates the philosophy of Hegel.

There was a time when those who rose against Hegel belonged to one degree or another, to the revolutionary camp. They were repelled from the philosopher by his Philistine attitude toward the then existing Prussian reality. These opponents of Hegel were greatly mistaken: because of the reactionary *shell* they overlooked the

revolutionary *kernel* of this system. But, at all events, the antipathy of these men to the great thinker arose from noble motives, deserving of every respect.

In our time Hegel is condemned by the learned representatives of the bourgeoisie, and they condemn him because they understand or at least sense instinctively the revolutionary spirit of his philosophy. For the same reason they now prefer to be silent about the merits of Hegel. They enjoy contrasting him to Kant, and practically every college instructor considers himself called upon to give Kant his due and do not at all dispute his merit. But what seems to us quite suspicious is the fact that it is not the strong but the weak sides of Kant which attract the bourgeois academicians to his "critical philosophy."

More than anything else it is the *dualism* inherent in this system which attracts the contemporary bourgeois ideologists. And dualism is an especially convenient thing when it comes to the field of "morals." With its help, the most bewitching ideals can be constructed; with its help, the boldest journeys "into a better world" can be undertaken without bothering for a moment about realizing these "ideals" in *reality*. What could be better? "Ideally," one can, for instance, abolish entirely the existence of classes, eliminate exploitation of one class by another, and yet in reality come forward as a defender of the class state, and the like.

Hegel looked upon the banal claim that the ideal cannot be realized in life as the greatest insult to human reason. "What is rational is real; what is real is rational." As is well known, this proposition has given rise to many, many misunderstandings, not only in Germany but abroad as well,

especially in Russia. The reasons for these misunderstandings are to be found in failure to clearly understand the significance which Hegel attached to the words, “*reason and reality.*”

It would seem that if these words were taken in their common popular sense, then even in this case the revolutionary content of the first part of the proposition “what is rational is real” should strike one in the eye. In application to history, these words can, signify nothing else than unwavering certainty in this, that everything rational does not remain “in a world beyond” but must *pass into* reality. Without such a fruitful conviction, revolutionary thought would lose all practical meaning. According to Hegel, history represents the manifestation and realization in time of the “World Spirit” (i.e., of reason).

How then explain, from this point of view, the constant change of social forms. This change can be explained only if we imagine that in the process of historical development “reason becomes irrational, and the good, evil.” In Hegel’s opinion, we ought not stand on ceremony with reason which has become transformed into its opposite, i.e., irrationality. When Caesar seized state power, he violated the Roman constitution. Such a violation evidently was an onerous crime. The foes of Caesar, evidently, had every reason to regard themselves as the defenders of right, because they stood on “the ground of law.” But this right, which they took under their defense “was a formal right, devoid of living spirit and left aside by the gods.” The violation of this right thus appears as a crime only from a formal standpoint and there is, therefore, nothing easier than to justify the violator of the Roman constitution, Julius Caesar.

As to the fate of Socrates who was condemned as the enemy of established morality, Hegel expresses himself as follows:

“Socrates is the hero who consciously came to know and to express the higher principle. This higher principle has absolute right ... In world history we find that this is the position of the heroes through whom a new world commences. This new principle stands in contradiction to the existing principle and therefore appears as destructive. For the same reason the heroes appear to be violently destroying the laws. Individually they are doomed, but it is only the individual; and not the principle, which is negated in punishment. The principle itself continues to operate, even if in another form, and undermines the existing.” (*History of Philosophy*, German ed. Vol.II, p.120.)

All this is clear enough by itself. But matters will become even clearer if we bear in mind that, as Hegel saw it, not only heroes, not only individual personalities, but also entire nations step forth on the arena of world history as soon as they become the bearers of a new world-historic principle. In these instances the field of activity, over which the right of the peoples extends, becomes enlarged in the extreme.

“Against this absolute right – to be the bearer of a given stage of the development of the World Spirit – the spirit of the other peoples is bereft of all rights. The day of these peoples has passed. They therefore no longer count in world history.” (*Philosophy of Right*, p.347.)

We know that the bearer of a new world-historic principle is at the present time not any particular nation, but a specific social class, the proletariat. But we shall remain true to the spirit of Hegel’s philosophy if we say that in relation to this class all the other social classes will enter into world history only to the extent that they are able to offer it support.

The irrepressible surge toward a great historic goal, which nothing can halt – this is the legacy of the great German idealistic philosophy.

Footnotes

1. *The Logic of Hegel*, translated from *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science*, by William Wallace, Oxford University Press, London 1931, Sec.13.

2. Of course it can be, and always has been, the expression only of a specific aspect of its time. But this does not change the matter in its essence.

3. *Philosophy of History* by G.W.F. Hegel, translated by J. Sibree, The Colonial Press, 1900, p.53.

4. That is, the Chinese and Indian “world.”

5. As a Brahmin.

6. That is, those nations which became part of the Persian kingdom.

7. As is well known, Hegel drew a sharp distinction between morals and ethics.

8. Hegel himself explicitly explains the emergence of Sparta “as a result of the inequality of possessions.”

9. Hegel remarks: “In contemplating the restless and ever-varying impulses that agitate the very heart of these cities and the continual struggle of factions, we are astonished to see on the other side industry – commerce by land and sea – in the highest degree prosperous. It is the same principle of lively vigor, which, nourished by the internal excitement of question, produces this phenomenon.” (*Philosophy of History*, p.386.)

10. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, translated by T.M. Knox, Oxford University Press, 1942, Sec.257.)

11. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, Sec 203. There is no point to discussing the fact that Hegel’s view on the primitive history of the family and property could not distinguish itself by any great definitiveness owing to the state of science at the time; but what is important is that he sensed where it is necessary to search for the key.

12. Thus, for example, Montesquieu in his *Esprit de Lois* engages in many discourses on the influence of Nature on the physiology of man. He tries to explain many historical phenomena through such influence.

13. Plateaus lead to narrow mountain valleys, inhabited by peaceable mountain peoples, herdsmen, engaged partially in

agriculture. Such are the Swiss, Hegel says. Such people one also meets in Asia, but, on the whole, they are of no importance.

14. Hegel has here in mind mainly England.

15. Schelling remarks that freedom is unthinkable outside of necessity: "For if no sacrifice is possible without the conviction that the species to which man belongs can never cease to progress then how is this conviction possible if it is built only and solely on freedom? There must be something here that is higher than human freedom, and on which alone action and behavior can be surely calculated, without, which a man could never dare to undertake a project of large consequence, since even its most perfect execution can be so thoroughly disturbed through the intervention of alien freedom that from his own action something quite different than he intended can result. Even duty can never permit me to be quite at ease about the results of my action, immediately it is certain, that, although my actions are to be sure dependent on me, i.e., on my freedom, nevertheless the results of my actions or that which will be developed from them for my whole race, are dependent not on my freedom but on something quite other and higher."; Schelling's *Werke*, III. Band, Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1858. p. 595.

16. Hegel has demonstrated with amazing clarity how absurd it is to explain phenomena only from the point of view of gradual change. He writes: "The gradualness of arising is based upon the idea that that which arises is already, sensible or otherwise, actually there, and is imperceptible only on account of its smallness; and the gradualness of vanishing on the idea that Not-being or the Other which is assuming its place equally is there, only is not yet noticeable; there, not in the sense that the Other, is contained in the Other which is there in itself, but that it if, there as Determinate Being, only unnoticeable. This altogether cancels arising and passing away; or the In-itself, that inner somewhat in which something is before it attains Determinate Being, is transmuted into a smallness of external Determinate Being, and the essential or conceptual distinction into a difference external and merely magnitudinal. The procedure which makes arising and passing away conceivable from the gradualness of change is boring in the manner peculiar to tautology; that which arises or passes away is prepared beforehand, and the change is turned into the mere changing of an external distinction; and now it is indeed a mere tautology." (*Science of Logic*, translated by Johnson and Struthers, Vol I, p. 390.)