MARX—AND HEGEL'S *LOGIC*

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IT is well known that Marx was interested in 'Hegel's Logic' and that on his own testimony he found it extremely helpful. But before this information can be of much assistance in understanding and evaluating Marx's methods and views, we must know exactly what this Hegelian work is, and what use Marx made of it.

In this paper I argue that the terminology of Hegelian logic is not as far removed from the English philosophical tradition as is generally believed; and I discuss the various versions of a 'Logic' prepared by Hegel and his editors, in order to show exactly which texts Marx was actually using.

Then I examine Marx's use of 'Hegel's Logic' while he was at work in 1858 on the *Grundrisse* manuscripts, so that the reasoning behind an essential part of his critical theory of capitalist society is laid bare. And I offer an interpretation of his famous but enigmatic comments on the dialectic, recorded in the 'Afterword' to *Capital*, in order to clarify his remarks on the relationship of his method to Hegel's. I conclude that, as a master key to Marx's work, 'Hegel's Logic' has been over-rated, but as a methodological source-book for Marx it has been lamentably under-researched.

HEGELIAN LOGIC

Present-day English readers have more points of contact with Hegel's treatises on logic than is generally realized by commentators on Marx.[1] In his works Hegel presents a revision of logic as it was understood and taught by his contemporaries, including the logic derived from the Greeks and modified by the medieval scholastic tradition. That logic was until Hegel's time much the same in English and in German. Today it is an elementary form of logic. Some of the distinctions which were basic to it are still in use, although they are not of much interest to mathematically minded logicians: quality–quantity, analysis–synthesis, essence–accident, subject–object are examples. Also there are terms in this elementary, 'traditional' logic which have a special sense different from their modern everyday meaning.[2] Some of the now unfamiliar terminology in the works of Hegel and Marx is in fact neither particularly Germanic nor peculiarly Hegelian. It is simply the technical terminology of the 'traditional' logic derived from the Greeks and the medieval schools. Definitions for these technical terms can be extracted from,

[1] See for example John Plamenatz on Hegel and Marx, *Man and Society*, vol. 2, Longmans: London 1963, repr. 1968, *passim;* Bertel Ollman, *Alienation*, Cambridge University Press 1971, pp. 3–42; István Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, Merlin: London 1970, pp. 12–13.

[2] See the notes on the following terms in Karl Marx, *Texts on Method*, trans. and ed. Terrell Carver, Basil Blackwell: Oxford 1975: determinate/determined (p. 47), determination(s) (pp. 50–1), subject/object (p. 48), ideal (p. 48), universal (p. 51), difference (p. 51), reflection (p. 55), moment (p. 53), mediate (p. 57), immediately (pp. 58–9), virtually (p. 60), transcending (pp. 63–4), intension/extension (p. 70), indifference (p. 77).

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among other sources, Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Many of the technical terms from 'traditional' logic appear in Hegel's treatises and are intended to be read, in the first instance, in the traditional way. After bringing these terms to the reader's attention, Hegel generally offers his own interpretation of their meaning and integrates them into his system. When these terms appear in Marx's works, they are sometimes used in the traditional way and at other times employed in a way that explicitly recalls 'Hegel's Logic'.

WHAT IS 'HEGEL'S LOGIC'?

It is no simple matter to turn to any of the three collected editions of Hegel's works and pick out his 'Logic'.[1] Moreover Hegel has not made it obvious which of the two versions of his 'Logic' represents his definitive views, nor does Marx usually make it plain which version he had in mind when he spoke of 'Hegel's Logic'. It is possible, however, to surmount these difficulties, so that the 'Logic' becomes for the student an accessible work, and it is also possible to state with certainty which version of it Marx found most useful in drafting his *magnum opus*, the critique of political economy.

Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*—his *Science of Logic*—appeared in three parts in 1812, 1813 and 1816.[2] A second edition of the first part was prepared by Hegel in 1831, the year of his death.

An *abbreviated* version of the *Science of Logic* was incorporated by Hegel into his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse—The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*—first published in 1817, only a year after the *Science of Logic* was completed. The later work is sometimes known as the Heidelberg Encyclopaedia, and its *opening* section as the Shorter Logic. The *Encyclopaedia* as a whole was published in two later editions (1827 and 1830) with Hegel's own revisions to the text. But in the *Werke* edition of 1840–5 the *Encyclopaedia*, including the Shorter Logic, became a much longer and substantially different work, since the editors of the collected works (students and associates of Hegel) added their own lecture-notes and comments throughout the book.[3]

[1] The three editions are the *Werke* (various editors) published 1832–87, the *Jubiläumsausgabe* (Jubilee Edition) edited by Glockner and published during the 1920s and 1930s, and the critical edition undertaken by Lasson, published 1905–40, of which more in n. 3 below.

[2] A copy of the first edition in the British Library (C.43.a.13) contains annotations, often sarcastic, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, in the first book of the first volume: 'This is the first sensible Remark I have met with. It occurs in Plato . . . ' (p. 89) 'My Stars! Now we *pop* upon it all at once. *The To self*-subsist[ing] determinate itself into The Self-subsisting, order zum Eins—&c&c!!—And so comes Repulsion, Attraction, and Quantity. What christian Heart could desire a clearer account—a more luminous elucidation?' (p. 91). See n. 1, p. 60 below.

[3] For his critical edition of the *Science of Logic* (vols. 3–4 of Hegel's *Sämtliche Werke*) Lasson takes the first (1812–16) edition as copy-text, explaining that Hegel's revisions for a second edition of the first 'book' were difficult to read; as far as I can gather, this is a comment on the texts of 1833 and 1841 in the posthumously edited *Werke* edition, which allegedly took Hegel's revisions into account. Lasson seems unaware that the partial second edition was actually published. The date of publication for this volume is usually given as 1831, since Hegel's 'Preface' is dated 7 November of that year, but the book itself (now very rare) is actually dated 1832. (Loan from the University Library, Leipzig.) Glockner gives the 1840–5 expanded text of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* the title *System der Philosophie* (vols. 8–10 of the Jubilee Edition) and reproduces the 1817 Heidelberg edition separately (vol. 6).

At points in the text where the same subjects are covered, there are significant differences between the Shorter Logic, as it appears in the *Encyclopaedia*, and the *Science of Logic* (sometimes known as the Greater Logic), but it is unclear which version of his views Hegel finally preferred. The second (partial) edition of the *Science of Logic*, on which Hegel was working just before he died in 1831, reproduced certain points in the 1812 edition. These passages had been altered by Hegel for the Shorter Logic and reproduced in its three editions: 1817, 1827, 1830. Hence it appears that Hegel endorsed what he had said in 1817 when he prepared the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopaedia*, and then reverted in 1831, while working once again on the *Science of Logic*, to what he had said in 1812. In his *Commentary*, McTaggart suggests that neither the 1830 *Encyclopaedia* nor the 1831 revisions to the *Science of Logic* represent a definitive text where the same subjects are covered. Marx used both the Shorter and Greater Logics; when he preferred the Shorter, he cannot be said to have used something elementary or inferior.[1]

In a letter of 10 November 1837 to his father, Marx mentioned that he 'got to know Hegel from beginning to end'.[2] During the rest of his career Marx occasionally referred to Hegel's works without giving precise references, but it is certain that when he was writing the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* he made use of the Shorter Logic (as it appeared in the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopaedia*).[3] The *Science of Logic* (in the *Werke* edition of 1841) was used by Marx as he and Engels were writing *The Holy Family*.[4] While he was working on the first volume of *Capital*, Marx used the Shorter Logic, though this time it was the expanded *Werke* version of 1840–5.[5] I have shown elsewhere that the Greater Logic was very much in Marx's mind during his work on what was to become the final version of his critique of political economy. It is the *Science of Logic* which I use below in analysing important arguments from the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*.[6]

HEGELIAN PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL ECONOMY, AND MARX — IN ENGLAND

It is generally assumed that Hegel's philosophy, and, to be sure, Marx himself, were virtually unknown in English intellectual circles of the early 1850s. This was not quite the case.

The first attempt at an English translation of 'Hegel's Logic' was a paraphrase entitled *The Subjective Logic of Hegel*, published in London in 1855 by John

[1] James M. E. McTaggart, *A Commentary on Hegel's Logic*, Cambridge 1910, pp. 2–3.

[2] Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Dietz Verlag: Berlin 1956 et seq., Ergänzungsband 1, p. 10. (Hereafter the series is referred to as *MEW*.)

[3] *MEW*, Ergänzungsband 1, p. 585.

[4] Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, *Die heilige Familie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1845, p. 219. (This reference is to one of the sections written by Marx.)

[5] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, 3rd edition, Hamburg 1883, p. 157 n.

[6] Marx, *Texts on Method*, pp. 43, 55, 77, 89, 112, 113, 115, 117, 119–20, 127, 130, 131, 132, 137, 139–40. The Greater Logic is available in an English translation by A. V. Miller (*Hegel's Science of Logic*, Allen & Unwin: London 1969); Miller has based his work on Lasson's text of 1923, rather than the corrected edition of 1932–4, as one would expect. The Shorter Logic, as it appeared in the expanded *Encyclopaedia* of 1840–5, has been translated into English by William Wallace as *The Logic of Hegel* (The Clarendon Press: Oxford 1874, 2nd edition 1892, 3rd edition 1975).

Chapman, who was friendly with various intellectuals interested in German philosophy, and, as it happens, an acquaintance of Marx. In a diary entry for 27 July 1851 Chapman wrote: 'Went with my brother to dine at Mrs Johnsons, met Freiligrath and a Herr Merks [*sic*], another exile'.[1]

Chapman was also the publisher of English versions of D. F. Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846) and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (1854), both influential works in Hegelian circles and both, as it happens, translated into English by Marian Evans, better known as George Eliot. He also published English translations of Fichte's works, and brought out a version of Schelling's *The Philosophy of Art*, translated by Andrew Johnson, which appeared in 1845. Johnson was a friend of Marx's correspondent Ferdinand Freiligrath (who figures in most accounts of Marx and his use of 'Hegel's Logic')[2] and of Marx himself. On 28 October 1852 Marx wrote to Engels: 'If you have to write to me on *important* matters, do it under the address: A. Johnson, Esq., (Bullion Office, B[ank] of E[ngland])'—it seems that Marx wanted to use the Bank of England (of all places) as a postal drop.[3] Johnson was the author of works on the gold supply and the theory of currency published in 1852 and 1856, a period generally—and wrongly—thought to be fallow for Marx's economic studies. He was, in fact, at work on just those aspects of political economy.[4]

MARX'S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY — AND 'HEGEL'S LOGIC'

The exact connections between Marx's critique of political economy (often called his 'economics') and his use of Hegelian categories are still obscure. The *Grundrisse* has been said to be a 'Hegelian' work, but what precisely does this mean? Why, in an 'economic' work, did Marx turn to Hegel for help? And why in the 'Afterword' to the first volume of *Capital* (an essay which postdates the *Grundrisse*, *Theories of Surplus Value*, the third volume of *Capital*, and nearly all of the second volume), did Marx announce that he was *still* a pupil of Hegel?

Marx made considerable use of 'Hegel's Logic' in formulating the fundamental arguments of his critique of political economy, the work which functions as a foundation for his political and social thought. The connections between Marx's arguments and Hegel's can be elucidated from the texts, and Marx's arguments can only then be grasped and analysed. The results may not impress present-day economists, even of the Marxist schools, but right or wrong, useful or not, Marx's arguments will continue to generate little but confusion until they are read in the first instance on his own terms. If Marx's work on such a basic economic category as profit, for example, were 'de-Hegelianized', even by a well-meaning inter-

[1] Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot and John Chapman*, 2nd edition, Archon: Hamden, Conn. 1969, pp. 124 n, 195. Mrs. Johnson was the wife of Andrew Johnson, to whom I refer below. Ferdinand Freiligrath had worked with Marx on the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne during 1848–9, and like Marx emigrated to London; he was the author of a biographical memoir of Coleridge, and the translator of numerous British and American poets into German, as well as a poet in his own right.

[2] See below, p. 61.

[3] *MEW*, vol. 28, p. 174. In this article all translations from the German are my own, unless an English work is cited in the first instance. In succeeding notes, English translations are sometimes cited (after 'cf.') for comparison.

[4] Marx, *Texts on Method*, pp. 23–7.

preter, the result would perhaps be more obviously 'economic', as the term is generally understood today, but it would have little to do with Marx, and the full import of his work would never emerge.

THE PROBLEM OF PROFIT

While Marx was working on the principal notebooks of the *Grundrisse*, he wrote to Engels (on 16 January 1858) that he had found 'Hegel's Logic' useful in dealing with a particular economic category—profit. Freiligrath had offered him Bakunin's old copy, presumably an edition of the *Science of Logic*, in October 1857.[1]

The difficulty with profit for Marx, as for numerous orthodox political economists, was explaining where in the economic process it arises. If it arises from the *exchange* of commodities, is it a surplus created by the exchange of one commodity for another of *greater* value? Or, could profit arise even on a 'fair exchange', in which one commodity is exchanged for another of *equal* value? Alternatively, if profit arises from the *production* process, is it a *joint* product of labourer and capitalist? Or is it simply a portion of what the labourer produces that is justifiably *deducted* for various purposes by the capitalist?

Marx's method for solving these problems was to analyse the basic *concepts* involved—what he called the 'simple determinations'. This was why, in writing an 'economic' work, he turned to 'Hegel's Logic'. What emerged from this analysis was immensely significant for his views on the structure and future of capitalist society. Once the economic 'law of motion' (*Bewegungsgesetz*) of capitalist society had been 'laid bare' (*enthüllen*), other social phenomena would be seen to fall into place, and the eventual political development of capitalist society would become clear.[2]

THE LAW OF MOTION OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY

The 'two-fold character of labour' and the theory of 'surplus value' together represent Marx's ultimate answer to the problems about profit posed above.[3] But these theories presuppose a view of the fundamental 'motion' of capitalist society. According to Marx the capitalist system is not in equilibrium; in fact, he claims that it has an in-built tendency to collapse because of the necessity to produce ever-increasing profits.[4]

But what exactly is this alleged necessity to produce ever-increasing profits? Why is the circulation of capital 'not a simple circle, but a spiral, an ever-expanding curve'? Marx set that very problem for himself in the *Grundrisse:*

[1] This copy has evidently disappeared; another was reported missing by Marx in 1861 when he received a shipment of books which had been in store in Germany for ten years. *MEW*, vol. 29, p. 260. Manfred Häckel (ed.), *Freiligraths Briefwechsel mit Marx und Engels*, Akademie Verlag: Berlin 1968, vol. 1, p. 96; Bruno Kaiser (ed.), *Ex Libris Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, Dietz Verlag: Berlin 1967, pp. 9–11, and *passim;* also *MEW*, vol. 30, p. 714, n. 153.

[2] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt: Frankfurt, n.d., p. 177; cf. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, Penguin: Harmondsworth 1973, p. 266. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, p. viii; cf. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Moore and Aveling, eds. Engels and Torr, Allen & Unwin: London 1946, repr. 1957, p. xix.

[3] For an exposition and critical analysis of these theories see Terrell Carver, 'Marx's Commodity Fetishism', *Inquiry*, vol. 18 (1975), pp. 39–63.

[4] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 603, 788–9.

It is damned difficult for Messrs the [political] economists to progress theoretically from the self-preservation of value in capital to its expansion; that is to say, this [expansion] in its fundamental definition, not just as accident nor merely as result.[1]

If Marx could establish an 'expansion' in the fundamental definition of capital, it would follow that the production of ever-increasing profits was an essential, even a definitional part of the capitalist system, rather than something that capitalists might or might not generally choose to do. Marx undoubtedly recognized that individual capitalists *might* choose (somewhat eccentrically) not to employ their capital in a way that would increase their profits, though doubtless they would soon find themselves undercut and thrown out of business by others who had invested in better machines. He also fully recognized that some capitalists might fail to employ their capital successfully because of bad luck or bad judgement. But at the end of the argument he concluded that capitalists could not, in general, decide *not* to employ their capital in order to increase their profits. That is, he decided that 'expansion' is no mere 'accident'[2] but an *essential* part of the concept 'capital':

Chit-chat that no one will employ his capital without drawing a profit on it either amounts to the absurdity that upstanding capitalists will remain capitalists even *without* employing their capital; or to saying in a very homely way that profit-yielding employment lies in the very concept of capital. Well. That would just have to be demonstrated.[3]

In the ensuing demonstration that 'profit-yielding employment lies in the very concept of capital' Marx finds a 'contradiction' in money used as capital—a 'contradiction' between its *quality* as the representative of all forms of wealth to an infinite amount, and its limit as a specific *quantity* at any given time:

The sole utility which an object can generally have for capital can only be to maintain or to increase it. We have already seen in the case of money, how value differentiated as such—or the general form of wealth—is capable of no other motion than quantitative; of increasing itself. According to its concept it is the epitome [*Inbegriff*] of all use-values; but as [it is] always but a specific quantity of money (here capital) its quantitative limitation is in contradiction with its quality.[4]

Marx draws our attention to two aspects of money as it is used in capitalist production: money stands for wealth in a way that is absolutely general and theoretically *limitless;* but it must always exist in *limited* amounts as coins, notes, money of account, that is, it must always be expressed as some numerical figure or other. From this 'contradiction' Marx concludes: 'There lies in its [money's] nature a continual driving beyond its own limitation.'[5]

In the *Grundrisse* Marx develops the implications of this conclusion by arguing that capital requires the production of ever-increasing profits:

For value, which retains its character as value [*der an sich als Wert festhält*], an increase in amount coincides in consequence with its self-preservation, and it is preserved only in

[1] Marx, *Grundrisse*, Frankfurt, pp. 177, 182; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth, pp. 266, 270–1.

[2] 'A property or quality not essential to our conception of a substance; an attribute.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, *s.v.* Accident II. 6. *Logic.*

[3] Marx, *Grundrisse*, Frankfurt, p. 182; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth, p. 270.

[4] Marx, *Grundrisse*, Frankfurt, p. 181; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth, p. 270.

[5] Ibid.

that it continually drives beyond its quantitative limitation, which contradicts its definitional form, its inner generality. Enrichment is thus the inner purpose. The end-determining activity of capital can only be that of enrichment, i.e., the amassing, the increasing of itself. A specific sum of money (and money always exists for its owner as but a specific quantity, [it] is always there as a specific sum of money) . . . can fully satisfy only a specific consumption in which it has ceased to be money. But as representative of the general form of wealth, it cannot do that. As a quantitatively specific sum, a limited sum, it is either only the limited representative of general wealth or the representative of a limited wealth, which goes precisely as far as its exchange-value; is exactly measured by it. Hence in no way does it have the capacity, which according to its general concept it ought to have, of buying all pleasures, all commodities, the totality of the material substance of wealth. . . . Retained as wealth, as the general form of wealth, as value which serves as value, it [money] is therefore the continual drive to go beyond its quantitative limit: an endless process. It own life-quality [*Lebendigkeit*] consists in just this: it *preserves* itself as exchange-value performing its function [*für sich geltender Tauschwert*] distinct from use-value, only in that it is itself *continually expanding* . . .[1]

In the above passage Marx has evidently done just what he set out to do: ' . . . to progress theoretically from the self-preservation of value in capital to its expansion . . . this [expansion] in its fundamental definition, not just as accident nor merely as result'.

MONEY — AND 'HEGEL'S LOGIC'

However, in the course of Marx's analysis of money as capital, two crucial questions arise: Why were the qualitative and quantitative aspects of money as capital said to be 'in contradiction'? And why does it follow from this that money by its very nature entails 'a continual driving beyond its own limitations' and hence a 'continual drive to go beyond its quantitative limit' in functioning as capital?

In setting out these views Marx's line of argument follows very closely Hegel's discussion of 'the finite', its negation as 'limitation', and the negation of this negation when it '*transcends* its limitation'. These arguments are developed in the *Science of Logic*:

> Something with its immanent limit, posited as the contradiction of itself . . . is the *finite* . . . The finite is thus inwardly self-contradictory . . . Something's own limit [is] thus posited by it as a negative . . . The limitation of the finite is not something external to it; on the contrary, its own determination is also its limitation . . . But now further, the finite as ought[2] *transcends* its limitation . . . its limit is also not its limit . . .[3]

Hegel concludes: 'It is the very nature of the finite to transcend itself, to negate its negation and to become infinite.'[4] Marx's development of the 'life-quality' of money in capitalist society is exactly parallel with the progression of Hegel's argument. Like 'the infinite', money is 'inwardly self-contradictory'; its 'quantitative limitation' is its 'own', not merely 'external'; it '*transcends* its limitation'

[1] Marx, *Grundrisse*, Frankfurt, pp. 181–2; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth, p. 270.

[2] 'This *in-itself*, therefore, as the negative relation to its limit (which is also distinguished from it), to itself as limitation, is the *ought*.' *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 132.

[3] Ibid., pp. 129, 136, 132, 133. Cf. the edition Marx is known to have used: G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, Berlin 1841, vol. 3, ed. L. von Henning, pp. 130, 139–40, 134, 135.

[4] *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 138; cf. Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 3, p. 141.

by 'continually expanding'—a 'continual driving beyond its own limitations'. For money, as for Hegel's 'finite', 'its limit is also not its limit'.

In general, capitalists do try to increase their profits, and if a capitalist were *not* to behave in this way, we would think it odd and seek some explanation, perhaps his eccentricity or lassitude. Similarly, it would be difficult to imagine an economic system in which those with capital generally did *not* try to increase their profits; we would find it difficult to refer to such a system of behaviour as 'capitalism'. If it is to these generalizations about behaviour that Marx was *referring* when he argued from a 'contradiction' in the concept 'money' to the conclusion that 'profit-yielding employment lies in the very concept of capital', then his point is well taken.

However, Marx's *actual* conclusion about a 'drive' within money functioning as capital does *not* follow merely from the arguments (derived from the *Science of Logic*) which he specifically adduces: the self-contradictory character of something finite (money), its negative relationship with a limitation (in this case, a quantitative one), and its drive to transcend this limitation by continually expanding. Do Marx's Hegelian arguments in the *Grundrisse* have any bearing, then, on his work in *Capital*?

'HEGEL'S LOGIC'— AND CAPITAL

When Marx wrote that he had found 'Hegel's Logic' useful in investigating profit, he left us—as we have seen—a valuable clue to an otherwise puzzling exposition of views in the *Grundrisse*. These are views *behind* those expressed in *Capital*, where the necessity for ever-increasing profits is simply *assumed* to be an immanent law of capitalist production. Marx pointed out in *Capital*, as he had done in the *Grundrisse*, that the reproduction of capital is not a circle, but a spiral.[1] Unlike the text of the *Grundrisse*, however, the argument in *Capital* proceeds *without* an analysis of the relevant 'simple determinations'. It is likely that the Hegelian exposition in the *Grundrisse* had *confirmed* Marx in his view that 'expansion' is inherent in the 'fundamental definition of capital'; and he might reasonably have considered that even a polished version of his work on 'simple determinations' in the *Grundrisse* was an unnecessary and possibly confusing step in putting his case to the reader of *Capital*.

Marx's theory of the 'contradictory character of money', whether or not it is true for the reasons he adduces in the *Grundrisse*, made it easy for him to argue the plausibility of a new type of society, in which conventional behaviour would be very different from that in capitalist society. He drew the contrast in *Capital*:

> Fanatically bent on making value expand itself, he [the capitalist] ruthlessly forces the human race to produce for production's sake; he thus forces the development of the productive powers of society, and creates those material conditions, which alone can form the real base of a higher form of society, a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle.[2]

Once Marx had shown that 'profit-yielding employment' lay 'in the very concept of capital', he had located certain patterns of human motivation and behaviour within the historically specific conventions of a particular type of society. Had he located the profit-motive in, for example, an apparently invariant 'human

[1] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 603, 594–5, 109–10, 129–31, 321.
[2] Ibid., p. 603.

nature', as other theorists had done,[1] then it would have been difficult for him to argue that a qualitatively different society was a realistic possibility. But Marx held the view that man makes—and re-makes—his own nature and the societies in which he lives through his productive activities, and that out of these activities come his ideas about himself and his society.[2] Hence his thesis was that the abolition of money and of its attendant contradictions would follow a *reorganization of production* along communist lines, and the resultant society would not be a slave to the continual 'expansion' inherent in capital.

THE DIALECTIC

In the letter to Engels of 16 January 1858, where Marx wrote about his use of 'Hegel's Logic', he also commented on his interest in Hegel's method: 'If there is ever again time for such work, I would very much like to make accessible . . . what is *rational* in the method which Hegel discovered but has mystified.'[3] And on 31 May 1858 he wrote to Ferdinand Lassalle, saying that the dialectic must be freed from the 'mystical appearance' that it has in Hegel's works.[4] Marx was drawing attention to an important parallel between his methods and those of Hegel, the same parallel mentioned as late as the 1873 'Afterword' to *Capital.*

In his *Science of Logic* Hegel defines the dialectic.[5] He explains that it grasps 'the positive in the negative' and that the 'moment of *negativity*' is essential:

> It is in this dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative, that speculative thought consists.[6]

> *Dialectic* is one of those ancient sciences that have been most misunderstood in the metaphysics of the moderns, as well as by popular philosophy in general, ancient and modern alike . . . To hold fast to the positive in *its* negative, in the content of the presupposition, in the result, this is the most important feature in rational cognition . . . The *syllogism*, which is also threefold, has always been recognized as the universal form of reason; but for one thing it counted generally for a quite external form that did not determine the nature of the content, and for another thing, since it progresses in the formal sense merely in the understanding's determination of *identity*, it lacks the essential *dialectical* moment of *negativity* . . . [7]

[1] See for example the opening chapters of three works criticized on this point by Marx: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (first published 1776); David Ricardo, *On The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (2nd edition 1821); Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (first published 1798).

[2] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 51–3, 156–7.

[3] *MEW*, vol. 29, p. 260.

[4] Ibid., p. 561.

[5] It is manifestly untrue to say that Hegel used the dialectic but never defined it; this point is made in G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, trans. G. E. Mueller, New York 1959, p. 67 n. Mueller also writes that the Hegelian dialectic could not possibly be 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis', but wrongly ascribes this triadic interpretation of Hegel to Marx, among others. When Marx referred in the *Poverty of Philosophy* to thesis-antithesis-synthesis, he was parodying Proudhon's mistaken ideas about Hegel. See G. E. Mueller, 'The Hegel Legend of "Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 19 (1958), pp. 411–14. See also Karl Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow, [1956], pp. 117–21: 'If we had M. Proudhon's intrepidity in the matter of Hegelianism we should say . . . thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.' (p. 117.)

[6] *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 56; cf. Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 3, p. 42.

[7] *Hegel's Science of Logic*, pp. 831, 834, 837; cf. Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 5, ed. L. von Henning, pp. 326, 330, 334.

Marx's dialectic, like Hegel's, grasps the *positive* and the *negative* of things, though Marx's project and his presuppositions were vastly different from Hegel's. In the 1873 'Afterword' to *Capital* Marx comes as close as he ever did to a definition of 'the dialectic':

> In its mystified form the dialectic became a German fashion because it appeared to transfigure the existing state of affairs. In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in the *positive* understanding of the existing state of affairs the understanding of its *negation*, its necessary downfall . . . [1]

For Marx the dialectic was a useful part of his repertoire of logical methods for critically analysing and re-presenting the categories of political economy, in order to confront the reader with the whole truth about the structure and future of capitalist society. When we apply the Marxian dialectic we see that we must include in the *positive* understanding of something an understanding of its *negation*. To know what something is, we must *also* know what is is not. The Marxian dialectic is a technique for critical analysis: discovering and specifying the contradictory, e.g. 'positive' *and* 'negative' aspects of something. For example, in a note to *Capital* (*à propos* the theory that capitalists are rewarded for their 'abstinence' from immediate consumption) Marx writes that 'every human action may be viewed, as "abstinence" from its opposite', and he advises the 'vulgar economist' to ponder Spinoza's phrase 'Determinatio est Negatio'.[2] This mode of thinking had been endorsed by Hegel in the *Science of Logic:*

> The positive and negative are the same . . . Even a slight experience in reflective thinking will make it apparent that if something has been defined as positive and one moves forward from this basis, then straightway the positive has secretly turned into a negative, and conversely . . . [3]

In the same note to *Capital* Marx comments that 'Hegelian *contradiction*' is 'the source of all dialectic' (my italics). Speculative thinking, Hegel remarked in the *Science of Logic*, 'consists solely in the fact that thought holds fast [to] *contradiction* . . . but does not allow itself to be dominated by it as in ordinary thinking . . . '(my italics).[4] And it is in the *dialectic*, as Hegel defined it (in a passage quoted on p. 65 above), that speculative thought consists.

The rare Hegelian and Marxian definitions of the dialectic are couched in strikingly similar terms. For both, the dialectic was a technique in investigating concepts, in fact, an essential step in obtaining a complete account of something: an account which specified the contradictory—e.g., positive *and* negative—aspects of whatever was under scrutiny.

DIALECTIC, IDEALISM, *AUFHEBUNG*

For Marx the dialectic is not itself a way of seeing human history, or the universe as a whole (as Engels claimed), nor is it some sort of invariant analytical formula

[1] Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, p. xix; cf. *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. xxx–xxxi. My italics.

[2] Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 608. See also Marx's earlier use of this phrase from Spinoza's letters (also quoted by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*) in Marx, *Texts on Method*, pp. 59, 117. Marx is known to have studied Spinoza's correspondence in 1841; Maximilien Rubel, Margaret Manale, *Marx without Myth*, Basil Blackwell: Oxford 1975, pp. 22–3.

[3] *Hegel's Science of Logic*, pp. 435–6; cf. Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 4, ed. L. von Henning, p. 61.

[4] *Hegel's Science of Logic*, pp. 440–1; cf. Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 4, pp. 67–8.

in stages like the syllogism. These misinterpretations have arisen, in part, because many commentators on Marx conflate the dialectic with the presuppositions of Hegelian idealism generally and with various senses of the term *Aufhebung*, e.g., abolition, preservation, transcendance. Explicit distinctions between dialectic, idealism, and *Aufhebung* were not made by Marx, but his work makes more sense if we keep in mind what each of these terms means, as well as the ways in which these meanings are interrelated.

When Marx refers (in the 'Afterword' to *Capital*) to the 'rational form' of the dialectic, he is referring to a technique in logical investigation: discovering and specifying the contradictory aspects of something, as he had done with 'money' in his work (discussed above) in the *Grundrisse*. And when he speaks of the mystified, speculative, or divine dialectic he is accusing Hegel of confusing, in an idealist way, the 'movement' of contradictory categories in logic with the real historical 'movement' of actual events as men make them. That categories 'move' is a Hegelian presupposition; or rather, in Hegel's works, categories are said to move or seem to move, oftentimes in an abolishing and transcending way, i.e., *Aufhebung* is said to take place.

The following exposition illustrates the way in which the distinctions between the Marxian dialectic, the presuppositions of philosophical idealism, and the term *Aufhebung* are very often blurred. Accounts like the one below can be found in the works of numerous commentators:

> The necessary condition, then, of a dialectical situation is at least two phases, distinct but not separate. The sufficient condition of a dialectical situation is given when those two phases present a relation of *opposition* and *interaction* such that the result (1) exhibits something qualitatively new, (2) preserves some of the structural elements of the interacting phases, and (3) eliminates others.[1]

In place of the Marxian specification of 'contradictory', e.g., 'positive' and 'negative' aspects, we are given, in the above discussion, the '*opposition*' and '*interaction*' of 'interacting phases'; instead of the logical investigation of a human situation by a human analyst, we are told how 'phases' move, apparently by themselves; rather than the further specification of what exactly is transcended, what is preserved, and what is abolished, these possibilities are taken *to be* the 'dialectical situation'.

However, if the distinctions between dialectic, idealism, and *Aufhebung* are clearly grasped (rather than muddled together), the most famous Marxian comment on the dialectic—an extraordinary mixed metaphor—makes better sense: 'With him [Hegel] it [the dialectic] is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel in the mystical shell [*Hülle*].'[2]

When Marx speaks of the 'rational kernel' he is referring to Hegel's insights into logical and conceptual analysis, e.g., grasping the 'positive' *and* the 'negative' of something, grasping the complete truth of a 'contradiction'. The 'mystical shell' is Hegel's alleged confusion between what Marx called (in a manuscript of 1857) 'the conceived world' (or 'the movement of categories') and actuality,

[1] Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, Mich. 1962, p. 61.

[2] Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, p. xix; cf. *Capital*, vol. 1, p. xxx. For an extensive misreading of this passage, see Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, Allen Lane: London 1969, pp. 89–128.

'the process of origination of the concrete itself'. Hence the dialectic is said to be 'standing on its head' because Hegel had confused the 'movement of categories' *in* the 'thinking head' (as Marx put it in the earlier manuscript) with the production of categories *by* the 'thinking head' as it 'appropriates the world in the only mode possible for it'. If the dialectic is 'inverted', as Marx suggests, then it will stand for the analyst in a proper relationship with the real world, that is, the material world as the object of human appropriation by 'thinking' *and* by 'practical-mental' activity.[1]

CONCLUSION

Marx worked from the premiss that a particular type of society, such as capitalist society, entails definitional concepts—concepts which have as their referents certain assumptions and patterns of behaviour: for example, the *assumptions* of people who accept the capitalist system on its own terms, and the characteristic *behaviour* of capitalists and would-be capitalists. A modern social theorist—*even* if he accepted the thesis that social changes of the most important sort grow out of economic activities, and *even* if he believed that these changes may be foreseen from an analysis of the concepts used in economic life, and *even* if he looked to Hegel as an authority on conceptual analysis—is unlikely to conceive of the relevant concepts as narrowly as Marx did, and as a result, he is unlikely to reach such sweeping conclusions. The Marxian analysis of the capitalist system turns on his arguments about the exact basis of commodity exchange; his presentation of the concepts involved relies heavily—and unjustifiably—on a restricted selection of source-material.[2]

Neither 'the dialectic' nor 'Hegel's Logic' represents a master key to Marx's work. For a methodological reason (discussed above) his arguments about capitalist society are derived from Hegel's treatises on logic, as well as from selected theorists of political economy and other sources. Some of these arguments are hardly intelligible unless their exact relationship with Hegel's work is grasped. Hence the *Science of Logic* is a valuable (though hitherto little-used) aid in making sense of Marx's arguments and of his comments on his dialectical method. This work on method is of considerable interest to present-day students of society, particularly those taking *concepts* as primary data for analysis. Specifying as many facets as possible of a phenomenon, by sorting out (for example) 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of its concept, is a useful technique in analysis, an antidote at least to studies where only the 'operational' is counted as real.

[1] Marx, *Texts on Method*, pp. 73–4.

[2] This view is substantiated in Carver, 'Marx's Commodity Fetishism', *passim*.