



A



Richard J. Bernstein



**PRAXIS
AND
ACTION**

**CONTEMPORARY
PHILOSOPHIES
OF HUMAN
ACTIVITY**



*University of Pennsylvania Press
Philadelphia*

1971

BARO COLLEGE LIBRARY
BETHLEHEM, PA.

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Introduction	1
Part I. <i>Praxis</i> : Marx and the Hegelian Background	11
II. Consciousness, Existence, and Action: Kierkegaard and Sartre	84
III. Action, Conduct, and Inquiry: Peirce and Dewey	165
IV. The Concept of Action: Analytic Philosophy	230
<i>Epilogue</i>	305
<i>Bibliography</i>	321
<i>Index of Names</i>	334
<i>Index of Subjects</i>	337

be helpful to the reader to know something of the intellectual journey that led to the writing of this book.

Like many philosophy students, I was initially excited and confused by the variety of contemporary philosophic orientations. Studying thinkers as different as Hegel, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Marx, and Kierkegaard was both a source of excitement and frustration. While it was possible to be "carried along" by each of these thinkers and to appreciate his distinctive insights, there seemed no way of even beginning to reconcile the conflicting approaches. Gradually, I began to see some order emerging from what appeared to be sheer chaos. At first, it was the common negative stance of contemporary philosophers that most forcefully struck me. Most contemporary philosophers have been in revolt against the Cartesian framework. Descartes is frequently called the father of modern philosophy. If we are to judge by philosophy during the past hundred years, this title can best be understood in a Freudian sense. It is a common characteristic of many contemporary philosophers that they have sought to overthrow and dethrone the father.

We find this strain in the pragmatic thinkers. Peirce's series of articles written in 1868 is still the most brilliant and devastating critique of the Cartesian framework.² (I speak of the "Cartesian framework" rather than "Descartes" because there is a serious question whether what is being attacked is really the *historical* Descartes.) In one fell swoop Peirce sought to demolish the interrelated motifs that make up Cartesianism. He attacked the ontological duality of mind and body; the subjective individualism implicit in the ultimate appeal to direct personal verification; the method of universal doubt which was supposed to lead us to indubitable truths; the doctrine that language and signs are an external disguise for thought; the doctrine that vagueness is unreal and that the philosophic endeavor is one of knowing clearly and distinctly a completely determinate reality; and most fundamentally, the doctrine that we can break out of the miasma of our language or system of signs and have direct

2. "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man"; "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities"; and "Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic: Further Consequences of Four Incapacities." These articles are reprinted in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Vol. V. ✕

intuitive knowledge of objects. It is this last claim that Peirce took to be the heart of Cartesianism and the central dogma of modern philosophy. The themes that are developed in these articles and the alternative conception of knowledge and inquiry sketched by Peirce here, not only preoccupied him throughout his life, but are echoed and further developed by John Dewey, especially in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*.

It is striking that with all their differences, the same motifs—the same attack on intuitionism and what has been called the “myth of the given”—are to be found in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophic Investigations*. Miss Anscombe speaks for many contemporary post-Wittgenstein analytic philosophers who have been influenced by Wittgenstein when she writes:

Certainly in modern philosophy we have an incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge. Knowledge must be something that is judged as such by being in accordance with the facts. The facts, reality, are prior, and dictate what is to be said, if it is knowledge. And this is the explanation of the utter darkness in which we found ourselves.³

We find a similar criticism and attack on the Cartesian view of knowledge and philosophy in a thinker who shares little else with Miss Anscombe—Marx. Marx, of course, was scarcely concerned with the epistemological and metaphysical disputes of modern philosophy. His famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach was written more with Hegel and his disciples in mind than with Descartes. It is, however, perfectly applicable to what Anscombe calls “the contemplative conception of knowledge” and what Peirce calls the “Cartesian framework.” “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it.”⁴ In this thesis, Marx is characterizing what he understands to be the aim of philosophy—an aim enshrined in the Cartesian tradition—but calling for the need to go “beyond” philosophy.

Existentialist thinkers are tainted with the subjectivist bias implicit in Cartesianism insofar as, first and last, their concern is with

3. G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, p. 57.

4. Marx’s “Theses on Feuerbach,” trans. and reprinted in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. by Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat, p. 402; Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, p. 7. References to the German or French text are given immediately after the English reference.

the existing individual, but they are no less vehement in their attack on the Cartesian account of what it is to be an existing individual and the distortion that results from an “incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge.”

There is common ground in what contemporary philosophers have attacked even though the points of attack, strategies, and emphases are quite different. What do they offer to replace the traditional foundations of modern philosophy? Gradually, it became clearer to me that there are also common positive themes and “family resemblances” among the variety of contemporary philosophic positions. The felt difficulty experienced by many contemporary philosophers with the mainstreams of modern philosophy and even earlier philosophy has been that the conception of man which we have inherited is a distorted one. It has been distorted not only by the preoccupation with man as knower, but by a certain view of what knowledge is or ought to be—one that is “incorrigibly contemplative.” To correct this distortion, to achieve a better understanding of just what sort of creature man is and can be, we need to understand him as an agent, as an active being engaged in various forms of practice. It is necessary to be very careful here. There is a tendency to think or expect in a study of this kind, that we will or ought to arrive at some grand synthesis in which everything has its proper place. I do not think there is such a synthesis. Contemporary philosophy, like contemporary life, is fragmentary. But it is not completely chaotic. We will be left with sharp differences and conflicts that do not fit into any neat overall pattern, but perhaps the reader will better understand the basis and significance of these differences.

It should now be apparent what my own attitude is to the manifest pluralism of contemporary philosophy. I reject the view that one of these philosophic perspectives is the true path to understanding, while all others are false, confused, or misguided. Each of the philosophic orientations discussed in this book deserves serious study, not simply because it is the product of thoughtful philosophers, but because each has something important to say to us about what it is to be a thinking and active human being.

The skeptic ultimately may be right in his judgment about philosophy, although I do not think he is. But it is clear that the evaluation of what he claims can come only after careful and patient study, not as an a priori bias based on ignorance. There is more wisdom in

the way suggested by Aristotle and Hegel. Most of the truly great philosophers have sought to show us how their own views capture what they *take* to be the insight and "truth" implicit in other views, and they reject what is thought to be misleading and false. Our first task is to try to understand, and to understand in such a way that we can highlight what is important and sound. Consequently, I sharply disagree with Hegel, who in some of his more ambitious moments, wrote as if the problem presented by the pluralism of philosophy were resolved once and for all—that we (Hegel) could now see the inner *logos* of the development of philosophy. What Hegel sometimes seems to have taken as an established truth is better understood as a heuristic principle—not to be put off by the manifest radical pluralism of competing philosophic positions, but to attempt to understand each, to appreciate both the distinctive contributions and the limitations of each. This is really a very old idea in philosophy; giving each man and argument its proper due is central to the Platonic idea of justice. This is the spirit in which this inquiry is undertaken.

In a study of this type there must be drastic selection if one is to do justice to the thinkers and issues studied. There are major philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth century, including Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger, and Whitehead who are not discussed here. If my primary aim were to give a complete overview or survey of philosophy during the past 150 years, then these omissions would be inexcusable. Furthermore, I believe that each of these thinkers can also be seen as providing important contributions to our understanding of man as agent and actor. But I have tried to strike a balance between dealing with thinkers and issues that are genuinely *representative* of the major currents that have shaped our modern consciousness and becoming overwhelmed by the complexity and variety of contemporary philosophy. It is my hope that this book provides a guide and orientation for coming to grips with other dominant figures who are no less important for telling the full story of philosophy during our time.

In Part I, "*Praxis*," the primary aim is to understand the role of this concept in Marx's thought, especially against the background of Marx's own dialectical struggles with Hegel. In Part II, "Consciousness, Existence, and Action," a very different type of reaction to Hegel is explored in the thinking of Kierkegaard and Sartre. Part

Hegel: To think is to act
Marx: To act is to think

PART ONE

PRAXIS

MARX AND THE HEGELIAN
BACKGROUND

Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach"¹

(1)

THE CHIEF DEFECT of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object or perception* [*Anschauung*], but not as *sensuous human activity, practice* [*Praxis*], nor subjectively. Hence in opposition to materialism the *active side* was developed by idealism—but only abstractly since idealism naturally does not know actual, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects actually different from thought objects: but he does not comprehend human activity itself as *objective*. Hence in *The Essence of Christianity* he regards only the theoretical attitude as the truly human attitude, while practice is understood and fixed only in its dirtily Jewish form of appearance. Consequently he does not comprehend the significance of "revolutionary," of "practical-critical" activity.

(2)

The question whether human thinking can reach objective truth—is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, actuality and power, this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute about the actuality or non-actuality of thinking—thinking isolated from practice—is a purely *scholastic* question.

(3)

The materialistic doctrine concerning the change of circumstances and

1. "Theses on Feuerbach" in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. by Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat, pp. 400-402 (hereafter referred to as *Young Marx*); Marx/Engels *Werke*, Bd. 3, pp. 5-7. For a detailed analysis of Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach," and the philosophic background of these theses, see Nathan Rotenstreich, *Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy*.

education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine must divide society into two parts—one of which towers above [as in Robert Owen, Engels added].

The coincidence of the change of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be comprehended and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.

(4)

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious and secular world. His world consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But the fact that the secular basis becomes separate from itself and establishes an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavage and self-contradictoriness of the secular basis. Thus the latter must itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice. For instance, after the earthly family is found to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then be theoretically and practically nullified.

(5)

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, wants *perception*; but he does not comprehend sensuousness as *practical* human-sensuous activity.

(6)

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships.

Feuerbach, who does not go into the criticism of this actual essence, is hence compelled

1. to abstract from the historical process and to establish religious feeling as something self-contained, and to presuppose an abstract—*isolated*—human individual;

2. to view the essence of man merely as “species,” as the inner, dumb generality which unites the many individuals *naturally*.

(7)

Feuerbach does not see, consequently, that “religious feeling” is itself a social product and that the abstract individual he analyzes belongs to a particular form of society.

(8)

All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice.

(9)

The highest point attained by perceptual materialism, that is, materialism that does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is the view of separate individuals and civil society.

(10)

The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society or socialized humanity.

(11)

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it.

The eleven theses on Feuerbach jotted down by Marx in 1845 when he was only twenty-seven but published with some revisions only after his death as an appendix to Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach*, is one of the most remarkable and fascinating documents of modern thought. The theses were written after a period of intensive philosophic study and a deepening interest in politics and economics. They contain the quintessence of Marx's thought at the time, which is articulated in greater detail in the famous 1844 *Paris Manuscripts (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts)*, and *The German Ideology* written less than a year after the theses. This was a period when Marx's diverse studies and interests were developing into a coherent perspective, and the theses can serve as a basis for understanding his later development, including the writing of *Capital*. All of these theses revolve around the meaning and significance of *praxis*. *Praxis* is the central concept in Marx's outlook—the key to understanding his early philosophic speculations and his detailed analysis of the structure of capitalism. It provides the perspective for grasping Marx's conception of man as “the ensemble of social relationships” and his emphasis on production; it is the basis for comprehending what Marx meant by “revolutionary practice.” The theses have important critical practical consequences; they also have metaphysical and epistemological ramifications. To comprehend these theses in detail, we must look backwards to the origin of *praxis*, and forward to the way in which this concept affects Marx's later development. To understand what Marx meant by *praxis* we must first dig back into Hegel. It was Feuerbach who helped Marx see what was wrong and what was right in Hegel's philosophy. But as the

perspectives. Hegel self-consciously attempts to integrate and synthesize in a single concept two independent leading ideas that have shaped Western thought. The first is that of Reason or *Noûs*, especially as this concept emerges from Greek philosophy. The second is that of God as Spirit as this concept emerges from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, where God is conceived of as an omniscient, omnipotent, active Being who makes Himself manifest in history and guides history in the form of Divine Providence.

To appreciate what Hegel intends when he tells us that *Geist* is rational, or is Reason, we must divest ourselves of certain modern conceptions of reason and project ourselves back into the Greek—more specifically—the Aristotelian understanding of *Noûs*. Much of modern thinking about reason has been shaped by the Humean doctrine that separates reason from experience and the passions, and conceives of reason as a faculty of individual men that has no inner *conatus* or dynamic force of its own. Reason is a faculty or instrument for drawing logical consequences. Except for the narrow class of analytic truths (or in Humean terminology, “relations of ideas”) reason cannot make any inferences without presupposing premises or starting points that are based on experience. Hume’s famous doctrine that “reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions”³ is not intended to be a license for irrationality, but rather a way of calling attention to the impotence of reason when not motivated by the passions. Furthermore, “reason” is actually a predicate and not a subject. Reason, by itself, doesn’t do anything. To speak of reason is to speak of an abstraction. It is individual men who reason; reason is a faculty possessed by and exercised by individuals. It sounds odd to the modern ear to say, for example, that “Reason knows the world,” or that “Reason rules the world.” But if we think of the ways in which reason has been understood in the mainstream of Western philosophy, we realize that the Humean conception of reason is a tributary of the mainstream. Philosophers from Anaxagoras to Spinoza felt no intellectual embarrassment in speaking of Reason itself as a subject with its own power and *telos*. From this point of view, we are rational insofar as we manifest or participate in universal Reason or *Noûs*—a universal Reason closely associated

3. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, p. 415.

with the concept of the Divine. For Aristotle as well as for many modern rationalists, we are most godlike when we manifest our Reason. Reason, from the perspective of this tradition, is not merely a faculty, capacity, or potentiality, it is an actuality. When Reason is fully actualized, both the understanding and what is understood are characterized as rational: they are, according to Aristotle, identical. When Reason is understood in this manner, the aim or *telos* of philosophy as the highest form of *theoria* is to *interpret* the world—to grasp its ultimate rational principles and to contemplate the nature of reality. This reality is properly understood when we grasp the rational order inherent in it. It is not a metaphor to speak of Reason pervading the world; it is a literal and fundamental truth. To say that Reason rules the world is to say that there are rational principles, or universal unchangeable laws that govern the world.

For Hegel these general claims about Reason are “abstract,” and consequently “false,” until we have shown concretely and in detail precisely how Reason is realized in the world. When Hegel comments on Socrates’ criticism of Anaxagoras’ claim that Reason rules the world, he says: “It is evident that the insufficiency which Socrates found in the principle of Anaxagoras has nothing to do with the principle itself, but with Anaxagoras’ failure to apply it to concrete nature. Nature was not understood or comprehended through this principle; the principle remained abstract—nature was not understood as a development of Reason, as an organization brought forth by it.”⁴ *Geist* for Hegel is Reason or *Noûs* as charac-

4. *Reason in History*, trans. with an introduction by Robert S. Hartman, p. 14; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, p. 38. Hegel never published a book with the title “*Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*,” or “*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*.” These “Lectures” are essentially lecture notes; so even the German edition is basically an edited version of Hegel’s lecture notes. Furthermore, the German text is supplemented by students’ notes. Eduard Gans’ edition appeared in 1837. A revised and enlarged edition was edited by Hegel’s son, Karl, and was published in 1840. Karl Hegel published still another edition in 1843. An entirely new edition of the “Lectures” was prepared by Georg Lasson in four volumes (1917-1920). Since Lasson’s original edition, four more editions of Vol. I, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte: Einleitung in die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, have appeared. The most recent is by J. Hoffmeister. It appeared in 1955, reprinted in 1963. *Hartman’s Reason in History* is a

terized by the Greeks, but *Geist* is not “abstract” understanding, it is not *Verstand*; it is Reason (*Vernunft*) fully actualized in the world.

The above comment on Anaxagoras, especially the phrase “the development of Reason,” reveals an important distinction for Hegel and suggests a second perspective for understanding *Geist*. The distinction is that between nature and spirit. Ultimately, *Geist* is all-comprehensive, but in the course of its development it dirempts itself into a realm of nature and a realm of spirit. “Spiritual life is distinguished from natural, and particularly from animal, life in this, that it does not merely remain *in itself*, but is *for itself*.”⁵ Hegel here is making the point that what distinguishes the spiritual from the natural is the development of consciousness, and ultimately self-consciousness. But this diremption of *Geist* into the natural and the

pastiche. It is based on Karl Hegel’s second edition; but Hartman interpolates passages from other editions as well as some passages of his own.

The above gives a brief idea of the editorial problems involved in quoting from Hegel. Hegel published only four books during his lifetime, some essays and some book reviews. Most of what we today consider to be his *Werke* was published posthumously, some of it reconstructed and supplemented with student notes. Problems are further compounded by the fact that Hegel followed the typical nineteenth-century German practice of extensively revising and rewriting his works when he published subsequent editions of them. While I have made use of the full range of Hegel’s works, including the posthumous works and student notes published with them, I believe that every passage cited is a true reflection of his thought and can be supported by passages from those works which are considered to be most authoritative. For an excellent discussion of the state of Hegel’s editions and their translations, see Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary*, especially his “Bibliography.” See also Otto Pöggler’s illuminating discussion of the history of Hegel-editing and its close connection with Hegel research, “Hegel-editing and Hegel Research.” This article will be published in a forthcoming volume of papers from the 1970 Hegel Symposium sponsored by Marquette University. For a discussion of the special textual problems involved in *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, see the Hoffmeister edition, pp. 272 ff.

5. The translations of this passage and the next passage are by Findlay. J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination*, p. 37. See also William Wallace, *The Logic of Hegel*, pp. 54-55 (hereafter referred to as Hegel’s *Logic*); Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. VI, p. 55. Wallace’s translation is based on the first part of Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia*, and is frequently called “The Lesser Logic” in order to distinguish it from Hegel’s *Science of Logic* which has recently appeared in a new translation: *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, trans. by A. V. Miller.

spiritual spheres is eventually *aufgehoben*⁶ in the full development of *Geist*. "Nature is by no means something fixed and finished for itself, which could also exist without Spirit: rather does it first reach its aim and truth in Spirit. Just so Spirit on its part is not merely something abstractly beyond nature, but exists truly and shows itself to be Spirit, insofar as it contains nature as subjugated in itself."⁷

When Hegel speaks of *Geist* in this manner, he is thinking of *Geist* as God who does not abandon the world to chance and accident but guides it by Providence. "The truth that a Providence, that is to say, a divine Providence, presides over events of the world corresponds to our principle; for divine Providence is wisdom endowed with infinite power which realizes its own aim, that is, the absolute, rational final purpose of the world."⁸ *Geist*, according to Hegel, turns out not only to be the final cause of the world, it is also the material, efficient, and formal cause. It is the material cause in the form of the natural and spiritual realms (the spiritual realm is the realm of history). It is the efficient cause, for through the "cunning of Reason" (*List der Vernunft*) which works in devious ways through the passions of men, *Geist* is the agency of historical development. It is the formal cause, for as *Noûs*, it is the source of the rational structure or form of the world. And it is the final cause, because *Geist* guides history to its true and final aim—the complete realization of freedom. Hegel is claiming that if we take a world historical perspective, we will see that there is an inner *logos* to the seemingly chaotic multiplicity of events. This *logos* has a teleological form. There is a narrative or "story" to be discovered in history—this is the epic of the devious ways in which *Geist* is realizing itself, moving from freedom and self-determination as an abstract idea to its concrete embodiment in human institutions.

Hegel is fully aware of the ambitiousness, initial implausibility,

6. There is no English word that captures the distinctive meaning that "*aufheben*" has for Hegel. Baillie's translation "to sublimate," and Kaufmann's translation "to sublimate" are pallid substitutes. "*Aufheben*" is to negate, affirm and transcend, or go beyond. These are not necessarily three distinct moments, but can be involved in a single process. Throughout, I use the German expression. Its full meaning for Hegel and Marx will be brought out from the contexts in which it is used.

7. Findlay, op. cit., p. 37; Hegel's *Logic*, p. 180; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. VI, pp. 190-191.

8. *Reason in History*, p. 15; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, p. 39.

and emptiness of these grand claims. He fully realizes that he is drawing together the two most profound traditions that have shaped Western culture—the classical Greek tradition and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. As he himself emphasizes, these abstract claims are empty, for they neither provide us with a clear meaning of "Geist" nor a proof that it is actually manifest. But if we grasp the import of Hegel's claims, we can already see what he would have to do to make these abstract claims concrete and to validate them. He would have to show us in complete systematic detail how *Geist* manifests itself. This is precisely what he attempted to do. Hegel's entire system can be viewed as an attempt to reveal the meaning and to demonstrate the truth of these claims. This is why in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he announces that the time is ripe to show that philosophy can relinquish the name of the *love* of wisdom and finally become actual wisdom; philosophy is finally to be elevated to a science revealing the inner necessity of the truth of *Geist*.⁹

But how does *Geist* realize itself or make itself manifest? Here we have a third perspective for understanding *Geist*. The logic or dynamic structure of *Geist* manifesting itself is not a direct or immediate unfolding of its nature.

The transition of its potentiality into actuality is mediated through consciousness and will. These are themselves first immersed in their immediate organic life; their first object and purpose in this natural existence as such. But the latter, through its animation by Spirit, becomes infinitely demanding, rich, and strong. Thus Spirit is at war with itself. It must overcome itself as its own enemy and formidable obstacle. Development, which in nature is a quiet unfolding, is in Spirit a hard, infinite struggle against itself.¹⁰

Geist is perpetually alienating itself, dirempting itself, and struggling with itself. But it is not a meaningless struggle. It is by means of this life and death struggle with itself that *Geist* emerges triumphant and realizes itself. Hegel uses and modifies the oriental image

9. See "The Preface to the *Phenomenology*," translated by Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary*, p. 372; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister, p. 12. English quotations from the "Preface" are from Kaufmann's translation in the above-mentioned work, which is hereafter referred to as *Hegel: Reinterpretation*.

10. *Reason in History*, p. 69; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, pp. 151-152.

conserve

of the Phoenix to convey his meaning about the nature of the ceaseless activity of *Geist*. The Phoenix prepares its own pyre and consumes itself "so that from its ashes the new, rejuvenated, fresh life continually arises."¹¹ Hegel goes on to comment:

This picture, however, is Asiatic; oriental, not occidental. The Spirit, devouring its worldly envelope, not only passes into another envelope, not only arises rejuvenated from the ashes to its embodiment, but it emerges from them exalted, transfigured, a purer Spirit. It is true that it acts against itself, devours its own existence. But in so doing it elaborates upon this existence; its embodiment becomes material for its work to elevate itself to a new embodiment.¹²

Lest we think that Hegel is speculatively spinning metaphors, we need to realize how seriously he takes this picture of the eternal self-struggle of *Geist*. We find here the kernel of what Hegel means by "dialectic." There has been a lot of loose talk about Hegel's dialectic being a movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. Not only do these concepts play an insignificant role in Hegel's philosophy, they are essentially static concepts and completely misrepresent what Hegel means by "dialectic."¹³ The dialectic of *Geist* is essentially a dynamic and organic process. One "moment" of a dialectical process, when it is fully developed or understood gives rise to its own negation; it is not mechanically confronted by an antithesis. The process here is more like that of a tragedy where the "fall" of the tragic hero emerges from the dynamics of the development of his own character. When *Geist* is dirempted, alienated from itself, a serious struggle takes place between the two "moments." Out of this conflict and struggle, out of this negativity, emerges a "moment" which at once negates, affirms, and transcends the "moments" involved in the struggle—these earlier moments are *aufgehoben*. In the course of *Geist* realizing itself, this process which involves a stage of self-alienation that is subsequently *aufgehoben* is a continuous, restless, infinite one. The logic of the development of *Geist* is dialectical where *Geist* struggles with what appears to be "other" than it—a limitation, or obstacle which must be overcome. *Geist* "returns to itself" when it overcomes the specific obstacle that it

11. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 90.

12. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, pp. 90-91.

13. See Gustav Emil Müller, "The Hegel Legend of 'Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis'" in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (June 1958).

encounters, only to renew the dialectical process again. *Geist* finally "returns to itself" when all obstacles and determinations have been overcome, when everything that has appeared "other" than itself is fully appropriated and thereby subjectivized. This is the final aim or goal of *Geist*. The negativity and activity of *Geist* come into focus in this dialectical characterization.

Death . . . is what is most terrible, and to hold on to what is dead requires the greatest strength. That beauty which lacks strength hates the understanding because it asks this of her and cannot do it. But not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself undefiled by devastation, but the life that endures, and preserves itself through death is the life of the spirit. Spirit gains its truth only by finding itself in absolute dismemberment. This power it is not as the positive that looks away from the negative—as when we say of something, this is nothing or false, and then, finished with it, turn away from it to something else: the spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face and abiding with it. This abiding is the magic force which converts the negative into being.¹⁴

The self-realization and the self-fulfillment of *Geist* takes place only by self-destruction. This tremendous power of the negative has dramatic consequences for the study of history. History is the scenario of perpetual struggle and self-destruction where all finite social institutions are destroyed and *aufgehoben*. History is "the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed."¹⁵ But the power of negativity does not result in meaningless destruction; it is the means by which the progressive development toward concrete freedom is realized.

It should be manifest that by "negativity" Hegel means an active process. *Geist* is the principle of self-activity itself. "The very essence of spirit is action. It makes itself what it essentially is; it is its own product, its own work."¹⁶ This is the dimension of Hegel's *Geist* that most fascinated and deeply influenced Marx. Or again, Hegel tells us the "criterion of Spirit is its action, its active essence."¹⁷ If we keep in mind that it is man, who according to Hegel reflects the develop-

14. Hegel: *Reinterpretation*, pp. 406-408; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 29-30.

15. *Reason in History*, p. 27; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 27.

16. *Reason in History*, p. 89; Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. IX, p. 91.

17. *Reason in History*, p. 51; Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. VIII. 2, p. 93.

Feuerbach's aphorisms is that he talks too much about nature and too little about politics. The latter is the only means by which present philosophy can become a reality."³⁶ This remark is especially revealing because in Marx's first detailed systematic critique of Hegel, it is Hegel's political philosophy that was subjected to devastating criticism. Until recently, Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, which is a commentary on paragraphs 261-313 of Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie*, has been generally ignored and overshadowed by the more famous 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*. But Shlomo Avineri has brilliantly demonstrated that a careful reading of this document shows the emergence of many of Marx's distinctive themes *before* Marx seriously studied political economy.³⁷ For example, in Marx's criticism of Hegel's analysis of bureaucracy as the universal class, Marx argues that it is a fraud to think that the bureaucracy has truly universal interests. Bureaucracy identifies the interest of the state with its own private goals. But Marx doesn't reject the idea of a "universal class," he "historicizes the term, and as a dynamic term it looms very large in the evolution of his thought towards the proletariat."³⁸ As Avineri points out, when Marx mentions the proletariat for the first time in "Toward The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction" (1843), Marx's description is dominated by universalistic attributes:

A class must be formed which has *radical* chains, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of *all*

36. Quoted in McLellan, *The Young Hegelians*, p. 113; *MEGA*, I.i.2, p. 308.

37. Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. This is now one of the best books in English dealing with Marx's social and political thought. I am not only indebted to Avineri for his demonstration of the importance of Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, but for many other points discussed in this part. See also his "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," *The Review of Metaphysics* 21 (September 1967). For further discussions of the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, see Louis Dupré, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*; Henri Lefebvre, *The Sociology of Marx*; Jean Hyppolite, "Marx's Critique of the Hegelian Concept of the State," *Studies on Marx and Hegel*; J. Barion, *Hegel und die marxistische Staatslehre*. Sections of the *Critique* have been translated in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. by L. Easton and K. Guddat. The entire manuscript has been translated by Joseph O'Malley. This translation, which has been published by Cambridge University Press, was unavailable at the time of writing this book.

38. "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," loc. cit., p. 39.

classes, a sphere of society which has a *universal* character because its sufferings are *universal*, and which does not claim a particular redress because the wrong which is done to it is not a particular wrong but wrong *in general*. There must be formed a sphere of society which claims no traditional status but only a *human* status, a sphere which is not opposed to particular consequences but is *totally* opposed to the assumptions of the German political system; a sphere, finally, which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from *all* other spheres of society, without, therefore, emancipating *all* these other spheres; a class which is, in short, a *total* loss of humanity and which can only redeem itself by a *total* redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the *proletariat*. . . .³⁹

So too, Avineri shows us how in an obscure section of the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* we can detect the origins of Marx's conception of private property. By dialectically twisting Hegel's defense of the right of primogeniture, Marx sketches for us what was to become a major thesis for him, that under a system of private property, it is an illusion to think that man is truly a master of his property. Man is himself made into an object of property and his own products master and enslave him.⁴⁰ One by one, Marx subjects Hegel's claims in the *Philosophy of Right* to the same sort of dialectical critique.

Marx's procedure in this unpublished manuscript may strike a contemporary reader as perverse. Why dedicate all this energy to the critique of another philosopher's work in order to arrive at a correct analysis of existing political institutions. To understand what Marx is doing, we need to realize how seriously Marx takes Hegel's pro-

39. Quoted in "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," p. 41; *Frühe Schriften*, I, p. 503. McLellan has recently suggested that Marx's understanding of the proletariat at this time is "empirically based" and that "Marx's proclamation of the key role of the proletariat is a contemporary application of the analysis of the French Revolution he had outlined earlier in his article, when he talked of a particular social sphere having to 'stand for the notorious crime of society as a whole so that emancipation from this sphere appears as general self-emancipation.'" (David McLellan, *Marx Before Marxism*, pp. 156 ff.) I do not think that this lessens the significance of the Hegelian origins of Marx's thought. The issue is not primarily whether Marx had empirical evidence for his concept of the proletariat but rather how he *interpreted* this evidence. The above passage makes clear that at this early stage of his career, Marx's understanding of the proletariat is shaped by Hegelian categories.

40. "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," pp. 42 ff.

of his species-being as an actual, that is, human, being is only possible so far as he actually brings forth all his *species-powers*—which in turn is only possible through the collective effort of mankind, only as the result of history—and treats them as objects, something which immediately is again only possible in the form of alienation (*Y.M.*, pp. 320-321; *I*, pp. 644-645).

This passage, written under the dominating influence of Feuerbach, especially in its reliance on the concept of "species-being," prefigures Marx's own analysis of *praxis* and shows the direction he was taking in his dialectical critique of Hegel. Marx's "depth" reading of Hegel shows that the *Phenomenology* is not properly a phenomenology of *Geist*, but of *man*. The point here is the way in which Marx transforms the meaning of the activity of *Geist*, of its self-realization in history. This is in reality a concealed way of describing and criticizing the "development of man as a process." "Process" is not a general vague term: it refers to human activity in the form of work. Just as the objectifications of *Geist* are to be properly understood, according to Hegel, as the ways in which *Geist* congeals itself, objectifies itself and thereby alienates itself, so too the products that a man produces are not just accidental by-products; they are the objectification, the concrete expression of what he is. And under prevailing conditions of political economy, it is the very process of objectification, production, that results in human alienation. Human alienation is the true latent content of Hegel's myth of *Geist*. Nevertheless human alienation finds its expression in the actual social and political institutions that encompass man. There exist practical contradictions in the world; contradictions which have the consequence of dehumanizing man and of separating him from his true species-being. And just as in Hegel there is an incessant drive to overcome (*aufheben*) all contradictions, so too Marx sees the demand for an *Aufhebung* of the practical contradictions that really exist. It is only a short step to the demand for "revolutionary *praxis*" as the way of overcoming the forms of human alienation which have existed until now and of achieving a humanistic society in which man reappropriates his own essence, his own species-life.

If Marx's dialectical critique of Hegelianism had stopped here, he might have had the same status and significance that the other Left Hegelians have for us today. Much of what we have thus far attrib-

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achinstein, Peter, *Concepts of Science*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.
- , "On the Meaning of Scientific Terms," *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (September 17, 1964).
- Allison, Henry, "Christianity and Nonsense," *The Review of Metaphysics* 19 (March 1966).
- Alston, W. P., "Do Actions Have Causes?" *Proceedings of the Seventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy*. Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1967.
- , "Wants, Actions, and Causal Explanation," *Intentionality, Minds, and Perception*, ed. by H. Castañeda. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966.
- Althusser, Louis, *For Marx*. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.
- Anderson, Thomas C., "Is a Sartrean Ethics Possible?," *Philosophy Today* 14 (Summer 1970).
- Anscombe, G. E. M., *Intention*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. by Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
- Austin, J. L., *Philosophical Papers*, ed. by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Avineri, Shlomo, "The Hegelian Origins of Marx's Political Thought," *The Review of Metaphysics* 21 (September 1967).
- , *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968. X
- Ayer, A. J., *Language, Truth and Logic*. New York: Dover Publications, 1946.
- Barion, J., *Hegel und die marxistische Staatslehre*. Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1963.
- Belkind, Allen J., *Jean-Paul Sartre in English: A Bibliographical Guide*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1970.
- Berlin, Isaiah, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.
- Bernstein, Richard J., "Action, Conduct and Self-Control," *Perspectives on Peirce*, ed. by Richard J. Bernstein. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965.