

HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF CONCEPT
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO KANT'S NEGATIVE MAGNITUDES
AND MARX'S CONCEPT OF CAPITAL IN HIS *CAPITAL*

HÜSEYİN SUNGUR KUYUMCUOĞLU

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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Hüseyin Sungur Kuyumcuoğlu

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Thesis Abstract

Hüseyin Sungur Kuyumcuoğlu, “Hegel's Concept of Concept and Its Relationship to Kant's Negative Magnitudes and Marx's Concept of Capital in His *Capital*”

The relationship between Marx's works on political economy and Hegel's philosophy has been the subject matter of numerous discussions and inquiries. Many of those inquiries take an issue with the relationship between Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*. In this work, the focal issue is narrowed down to the relationship between Marx's concept of capital in his *Capital* and Hegel's concept of concept. It is argued here that Marx benefits from Hegel's concept of concept when he defines what capital is and how it works. The inquiry is further expanded with the relationship between Hegel's concept of concept and his concept of essence and the relationship between Hegel's concept of essence and Kant's negative magnitudes. In the overall analysis, I aim to disclose the metaphysical roots of Marx's concept of capital through Kant's negative magnitudes, Hegel's concept of essence and Hegel's concept of concept.

Tez Özeti

Hüseyin Sungur Kuyumcuoğlu, “Hegel'in Kavram Kavramı ve Bu Kavramın Kant'ın

Negatif Büyüklükleri ve Marx'ın *Kapital*'deki Sermaye Kavramıyla İlişkisi”

Marx'ın ekonomi-politik üzerine olan çalışmalarının Hegel felsefesiyle ilişkisi pek çok tartışmanın ve incelemenin konusu olagelmıştır. Bu incelemelerin önemli bir kısmı Marx'ın *Kapital*'iyle Hegel'in *Mantık*'ı arasındaki ilişkiyi ele almışlardır. Elinizdeki bu çalışmanın odak noktası ise Marx'ın *Kapital*'de ele aldığı sermaye kavramıyla Hegel'in kavram kavramı arasındaki ilişkidir. Burada savunulan görüş, Marx'ın sermayenin ne olduğunu ve nasıl işlediğini anlatırken Hegel'in kavram kavramından faydalandığıdır. Bu görüş, Hegel'in kavram kavramının kendisinin öz kavramıyla olan ilişkisi ve yine Hegel'in öz kavramının Kant'ın negatif büyüklükleriyle olan ilişkisi üzerinden genişletilmektedir. Genel olarak bu incelemede Marx'ın sermaye kavramının metafizik temelleri, Kant'ın negatif büyüklükleri, Hegel'in öz kavramı ve Hegel'in kavram kavramı üzerinden ortaya koyulmaya çalışılmıştır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Numerous Marx scholars, in order to better understand and disclose the depth of his writings, worked on the connection between Marx's thought and Hegel's philosophy. One of the main issues on which many of these scholars have focused is the connection between Marx's *Capital*¹ and Hegel's *Logic*,² though it is not easy to say that there is a consensus on how exactly this connection is and even whether there is such a connection. Among those scholars who do not agree that there is a strong connection between Marx's work and Hegel's *Logic*, apart from the Spinozist readers of Marx (of which one main proponent is the renowned Louis Althusser³) there are scholars (two of whom are John Rosenthal and Lucio Colletti) who defend that Kant's metaphysics (Rosenthal refers to *Critique of Pure Reason* and Colletti refers to *Negative Magnitudes*⁴) is more pertinent to the task of revealing the underlying "methodical structure," whatever it is, of Marx's *Capital*.

When these scholars deny the connection between Marx and Hegel, they both also belittle particularly what Hegel does in his *Logic*. Rosenthal even calls Hegel's

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1990).

² When I mention Hegel's *Logic*, I am referring to both *Science of Logic* (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* [SL], trans. George Di Giovanni (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010)) and *Encyclopedia Logic* (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic* [EL], trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991)).

³ "A view prominently defended by Louis Althusser was that the true ancestor of Marx's naturalistic treatment of society and history was not Hegel's dialectical method, plagued with metaphysical idealism and a teleological view of nature and society, but Spinoza's version of naturalistic monism." Beatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), xiii.

⁴ Immanuel Kant, "Attempt to introduce the concept of negative magnitudes into philosophy", 1763 in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

“dialectical method” a “‘method' of paralogical mystification.”⁵ Their criticism seems to be focusing on how irrational and useless Hegel's metaphysics is and they seem to imply that a thinker of Marx's quality would not benefit from or would not be inspired by such irrational ideas. The thinker they deem suitable to Marx is Immanuel Kant and his “scientific” metaphysics.

Some other scholars, including Marx himself, hold a less radical position towards the relationship between Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's philosophy in general. Marx puts his own position as follows:

In its mystified form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.⁶

Here one can see how Marx makes the distinction between the “mystified” and “rational” forms of whatever he calls dialectic. Indeed, it seems that what he means by dialectic is what he sees is at the core of Hegel's philosophy. Yet in his notorious remark Marx talks of Hegel's dialectic as the “rational kernel in the mystical shell.” Marx himself does not expand this expression sufficiently. Allen Wood comments on this notorious remark as follows:

The 'rational kernel' of Hegel's dialectics, then, is his vision of reality as structured organically and characterized by inherent tendencies to development. The 'mystical shell' is Hegel's logical pantheistic metaphysics, which represents the dialectical structure of reality as a consequence of thinking spirit's creative activity. Marx's 'inversion' of Hegel consists in

⁵ John Rosenthal, “The Escape from Hegel,” *Science & Society* 63, no. 3, (Fall 1999): 283-309. , 283.

⁶ Marx, Afterword to the 2nd German Edition.

viewing the dialectical structure of thought not as a cause or explanation for the dialectical structure of reality, but merely as a consequence of the fact that it is thought's function to mirror a dialectically structured world.⁷

So according to Wood, it seems that Marx does not accept Hegel's metaphysics (or dialectic) as a structural exposition of how thought creates reality through certain steps, but he takes the Hegelian metaphysics as an “inspiration” for himself to build a model on which to collect empirical data so as to exhibit the underlying structure of his object of inquiry. Wood also contends that:

As I read Marx, he accepts Hegel's vision of reality but rejects the Hegelian metaphysical underpinnings of this vision, together with the epistemological conclusions which are supposed to follow from them. For Marx the world is a system of organically interconnected processes characterized by inherent tendencies to development, and subject periodically to radical changes in organic structure. Because Marx thinks the world is structured in this way, he also believes that the best way to mirror this structure is a dialectical theory [...] ⁸

Wood seems to claim that Marx shares with Hegel a vision of reality where “the world is a system of organically interconnected processes characterized by inherent tendencies to development, and subject periodically to radical changes in organic structure,” but while Hegel argues that this reality is the “consequence of creative activity of thinking spirit,” Marx thinks that this vision of reality is “helpful” in building a model to do empirical science, for this science yields the result that fits the model that was built at the beginning. Wood adds that “For Marx, however, the dialectical structure of the world is a complex fact about the nature of material reality.” As a result, Wood's arguments seem to claim that Marx “benefits” from Hegelian metaphysics or Hegelian dialectic in order to build a model for his empirical science, which at the end yields the result that the dialectical model that

⁷ Allen Wood, *Karl Marx* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 217.

⁸ Wood, 216.

was built by him fits the results of this science.

Sean Sayers seems to share a view quite in line with that of Allen Wood:

Dialectic, however, just because it claims to be a logical doctrine, is frequently accused of ascribing necessity to things in an *a priori* fashion. That this is true of Hegel cannot be doubted [...] Dialectical materialism diverges from Hegelian dialectic at this point. Marx's dialectic is not an *a priori* deduction, but a summary of human knowledge.⁹

Sayers also seems to argue, in line with Wood, that when Marx mentions his method as dialectic he does not mean to have deduced the categories of, say, political economy in an *a priori* fashion. Marx rather, as Sayers says, summarizes the results of his inquiries in their “dialectical relations.” Sayers adds: “There is no question here of using the principles of dialectics as 'axioms' from which to 'deduce' any concrete results. If anything, the process works the other way around, and philosophies are based upon results in the particular sciences.”¹⁰

Sayers emphasizes the role of philosophy as being “the summary of human knowledge” and being “based on the results in the particular sciences.” I agree with Sayers on these criteria and indeed De Boer emphasizes this aspect of Hegel's *Logic*:

I take the view, however, that Hegel aims to achieve not so much purely rational knowledge of reality (convincingly precluded by Kant) as comprehensive knowledge of such conceptual determinations as have been developed throughout the history of human thought (a mode of knowledge not precluded by Kant's criticism of metaphysics). On this view, Hegel's reconstruction of these determinations is not necessarily at odds with the task traditionally attributed to ontology.¹¹

De Boer brings forward one important aspect of Hegel's *Logic*, that his *Logic* is—besides itself being an ontology—also a methodical representation of metaphysical

⁹ Sean Sayers, “On the Marxist Dialectic,” *Radical Philosophy* 14, (1976), np.

¹⁰ Ibid., np.

¹¹ Karin De Boer, “Hegel's Account of Contradiction in the Science of Logic Reconsidered,” *Journal of History of Philosophy* 48 (2010), 3.

concepts in the history of Western Philosophy. This does not, of course, mean that Hegel's *Logic* is merely an index of some historical concepts exhibited in an elegant fashion. What she says is, I believe, in line with what Sayers attributes to Marx's works, namely that Hegel's *Logic* is the culmination of human knowledge on metaphysics until his time and it is based on the results of the relevant sciences (i.e. metaphysics) before him.

I agree with Longuenesse that Hegel's *Logic* had better be read “as a critique of metaphysics”¹² in the meaning just emphasized, i.e. as the new philosophy that is built upon the results of the previous philosophy. I have used here critique quite in line with Longuenesse and, as she says, not like how Kant uses:

I am making of the term critique” does not so much relate it, retrospectively, to Kant prospectively, to Marx. What I am proposing is that Hegel offers a critique of metaphysics in the way Marx will later offer a “critique of political economy.” Or rather, Marx offers a critique of political economy like Hegel, *and not Kant*, offered a critique of metaphysics. Marx does not ask: under what conditions is a political economy possible? Rather, he asks: what is going on, that is, what is thought, *in fact*, in political economy? What are the referents and reciprocal relations of its concepts? This way of proceeding is precisely the same as the one Hegel adopts in his *Science of Logic*. It does not consist in asking under what conditions metaphysics is possible. Rather, it consists in investigating what metaphysics is about, and how the project of metaphysics needs to be redefined if one is to come to any satisfactory accomplishment of its self-set goal.¹³

Longuenesse here argues that Hegel's *Logic* is a critique of previous metaphysics in the sense that it works on the existing concepts in the relevant science and redefines them so as to build the science of its time. Her claims seem to support what I had claimed earlier, namely that Hegel's philosophy shares the method that Sayers and Wood claim to be the method of Marx's critique of political economy or to put it in the right chronological order, as Longuenesse does in the quote above, Marx shares

¹² Longuenesse, 4.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

with Hegel the method of critique in which each benefit from existing relevant science in order to build upon it the new one.

Here in this thesis, I am trying to reveal the connection between Kant's metaphysics in his *Negative Magnitudes* and Hegel's category of essence in his *Logic*. I further develop the issue by revealing the connection between Hegel's category of essence and his concept of concept. Later I try to relate Hegel's concept of concept to Marx's concept of capital. In all these relations I am trying to disclose the metaphysical relations between Kant's, Hegel's and Marx's works. I argue that adhering to the method I have attributed above to Hegel and Marx necessitates expanding the tradition both of these thinkers build their works upon.

CHAPTER 2

KANT ON NEGATIVE MAGNITUDES AND REAL OPPOSITION

Definition of “negative magnitudes” in Kant’s *Negative Magnitudes*¹⁴

In his early text on negative magnitudes, Kant makes an important distinction, between “logical opposition” and “real opposition.” The general definition of opposition is given by Kant at the beginning of *Negative Magnitudes* as “Two things are opposed to each other if one cancels that which is posited by the other.”¹⁵ Such an opposition, for Kant, can be in two ways: Logical opposition, which bears contradiction and real opposition, which does not yield contradiction. In logical opposition “something is simultaneously affirmed and denied of the very same thing.”¹⁶ The result of such an opposition is “nothing at all.” Kant’s example of such a logical opposition is “a body which is both in motion and also, in the very same sense, not in motion.”¹⁷ Such a body is nothing at all, whereas a body which is in motion and a body which is not in motion are each something.

In real opposition, on the other hand, “two predicates of a thing are opposed to each other, but not through the law of contradiction.”¹⁸ Although in real opposition, as in logical opposition, “one thing cancels that which is posited by the

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, “Attempt to introduce the concept of negative magnitudes into philosophy”, 1763 in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). (From here on *Negative*)

¹⁵ Kant, *Negative*, 211.

¹⁶ Kant, *Negative*, 211.

¹⁷ Kant, *Negative*, 211.

¹⁸ Kant, *Negative*, 211.

other,”¹⁹ in real opposition the result is “something.” One of Kant’s examples of real opposition is two forces acting on a body in opposite directions. These forces can be simultaneously predicated of the same body without yielding contradiction and the result is not nothing at all but something, i.e. a body at rest. The result of these two opposing forces yields rest, i.e. no motion, and can be said to result in nothing, but this nothing is different from the nothing at all of logical opposition and Kant calls this former result zero = 0, rather than nothing.

In logical opposition, one of the predicates is considered to be affirmative and the other the negation of the first predicate. In Kant’s example of the two predicates of dark and not-dark, dark is logically affirmative, whereas not-dark is logically negation of dark. In real opposition, though, both of the predicates are affirmative, neither is the negation of the other in the logical sense. Kant’s first example concerns a person’s active debt of an amount A and the same person’s passive debt of the same amount A. The result of the simultaneous existence of these debts is not contradiction and thus not nothing at all, but rather a certain capital that does not exist or as Kant says the result is zero = 0. The same person can have these active and passive debts simultaneously without contradiction. Moreover, active debt is as much an affirmative predicate as passive debt. In the absence of any, the other predicate, being affirmative, would yield a certain amount of capital.

Plus and minus signs in mathematics are Kant’s second example to show the affirmative character of both real opposites. The operation ‘+5-3=+2’ is usually considered to be a subtraction, whereas ‘+5+3=+8’ is considered to be an addition of two + signed numbers and ‘-5-3=-8’ is considered to be an addition of two – signed

¹⁹ Kant, *Negative*, 211.

numbers. Thus whether the operation is an addition or a subtraction is not determined by the – sign, but rather by whether the signs of the operands are the same or different. In Kant’s own words “in mathematics these two signs only serve to distinguish magnitudes which are opposed to each other, in other words, those magnitudes which, when combined, cancel each other wholly or in part.”²⁰ So, these opposite magnitudes are both affirmative when each is taken on its own (either as +5 or -3), yet their effect on each other is determined by the fact that they are real opposites, meaning that each cancel the other wholly or in part when taken together (as in $+5-3=+2$).

From the affirmative character of real opposites, Kant reaches his definition of negative magnitudes, a term he admits to take from mathematics and later to apply to philosophy. According to this definition “a magnitude is, relative to another magnitude, negative, in so far as it can only be combined with it by means of opposition; in other words, it can only be combined with it so that the one magnitude cancels as much in the other as is equal to itself.”²¹ The affirmative character of real opposites shows itself in negative magnitudes as a reciprocal relationship, meaning that each of the two negative magnitudes of such a pair is the negative magnitude of the other and neither is absolutely negative on its own. The root of the term negative magnitude lies in mathematics and thus the best characterization of the term is + and – numbers. Kant reminds us that in mathematics, the – sign is usually taken to indicate subtraction and so it gives the negative character to a number –a. Yet the correct understanding of a negative magnitude is to see that –a does not have a negative character on its own, it rather is in opposition with a positive number +b and

²⁰ Kant, *Negative*, 213.

²¹ Kant, *Negative*, 213-4.

that $+b$ is itself as negative a magnitude as $-a$ when they are combined, i.e. put in a mathematical relationship, ' $-a+b$ '.

Kant gives examples of how a mathematical term like “negative” can be used in other contexts: Rising can be called as ‘negative descent’ as well as descent as ‘negative rising’, a certain unit of capital can be called as ‘negative debt’ as well as debt as ‘negative capital.’ In these examples, none of the opposite pair is the negation of the other; they rather have the relation of real opposites.

Related to negative magnitudes, Kant mentions two rules, first of which he calls the fundamental rule and the other second rule. The fundamental rule says: “A real repugnancy only occurs where there are two things, as 'positive grounds,' and where one of them cancels the consequence of the other.”²² The second rule is the reverse of the first and is as follows: “Wherever there is a positive ground and consequence is nonetheless zero then there is a real opposition.”²³

Philosophical Examples of Negative Magnitudes

After having defined negative magnitudes, Kant gives many examples of these magnitudes from different fields such as physics, psychology and moral philosophy. Many of these examples are the application of the second rule that is given above.

His example from physics concerns the forces of attraction and repulsion. Kant maintains that when a body is resisting the motive force of another body that attempts to penetrate into the space occupied by the first body, and the result is rest of both of the bodies, then according to the second law given above, the

²² Kant, *Negative*, 215.

²³ Kant, *Negative*, 217.

impenetrability of the first body is a real ground for the rest of the second body. Moreover the impenetrability of the first body must be the result of a force that is in real opposition with the motive force of the second body. The same phenomenon is observed when a body applies attraction on other bodies so as to enable them penetrate into the space that it itself occupies. In this case impenetrability acts as a “negative attraction.” Negative attraction, for Kant, is “true repulsion” and Kant calls the force that causes true repulsion the repulsive force or the force of repulsion. Kant expands the issue of attraction and repulsion later in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*²⁴.

In his example from psychology, Kant argues that displeasure is not simply lack of pleasure but it is a negative pleasure and thus is a real opposite to pleasure. Displeasure, being a real opposite to pleasure for Kant, “is not merely a lack, but a positive sensation.”²⁵ In the example he gives, a Spartan mother is told that her son “fought heroically for his native country in a battle.”²⁶ This news gives the mother a certain amount of pleasure. Later she is notified that her son “died a glorious death in battle.”²⁷ Kant argues that this last news would diminish her previous pleasure a great deal. The fact that the displeasure caused by the second news has an impact on the pleasure caused by the first news shows, according to Kant, that displeasure is not merely a lack of pleasure but it is a real opposite to pleasure.

Kant also gives an example from moral philosophy: According to him we can call vice a negative virtue. A vice is a negative virtue, according to Kant, in the sense

²⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970).

²⁵ Kant, *Negative*, 219.

²⁶ Ibid., 219.

²⁷ Ibid., 219.

that it cancels the impulse of a good action that stems from the inner law that exists in all human beings: “There is a positive law to be found in the heart of every human being.”²⁸ Thanks to this positive law, in the absence of any counter impulse, every human being would commit a good action. So when this consequence of a good action is canceled then there must be an impulse that cancels the effect of the impulse that stems from the inner positive law. Therefore the impulse that is a vice makes vice a real opposite to virtue and thus vice is a negative virtue.

Philosophical Significance of Negative Magnitudes

Negative Magnitudes as Real Ground

The philosophical significance of negative magnitudes, for Kant, stems from the two rules mentioned previously and especially the second rule. For if there is a positive ground that is cancelled, there should then be what Kant calls a *real ground* for this cancellation to occur. Kant explains this as follows: “I accordingly maintain that *every passing-away is a negative coming-to-be*. In other words, for something positive which exists to be cancelled, it is just as necessary that there should be a true real ground as it is necessary that a true real ground should exist in order to bring it into existence when it does not already exist.”²⁹ Kant here gives the clue of his understanding about how negative magnitudes are related to each other: Their connection is through “real ground.”

The definition of real ground becomes clearer when it is contrasted with

²⁸ Ibid., 222.

²⁹ Ibid., 228.

logical ground. Kant draws our attention to the parallelism between real-logical grounds and real-logical oppositions: “The distinction between logical opposition and real opposition, which we drew above, is parallel to the distinction between the logical ground and the real ground, which is under discussion here.”³⁰ This parallelism is as follows: Logical opposition is defined through contradiction, i.e. logical opposites are related to each other through the law of contradiction; whereas real opposition is not defined through contradiction. In a parallel sense, logical ground is defined through the law of identity as Kant says “A logical consequence is only really posited because it is identical with the ground.”³¹ whereas real ground is not defined through the law of identity. In the following quote Kant underlines this difference:

I fully understand how a consequence is posited by a ground in accordance with the rule of identity: analysis of the concepts shows that the consequence is contained in the ground. [...] And I can clearly understand the connection of the ground with the consequence, for the consequence is really identical with part of the concept of the ground. And, in virtue of the fact that the consequence is already contained in the ground, it is posited by the ground, in accordance with the rule of agreement. But what I should dearly like to have distinctly explained to me, however, is how one thing issues from another thing, though not by the means of the law of identity. The first kind of ground I call the logical ground, for the relation of the ground to its consequence can be understood logically. In other words, it can be clearly understood by appeal to the law of identity. The second kind of ground, however, I call the real ground, for this relation belongs, presumably, to my true concepts, but the manner of the relating can in no wise be judged.³²

In this long quote Kant explains that a real ground is not related to its consequences through the law of identity. Kant's examples for logical grounds are necessity, composition and infinity which are grounds for immutability, divisibility and

³⁰ Ibid., 240.

³¹ Ibid., 239ff.

³² Ibid., 239.

omniscience respectively. In all these examples the analysis of the concept that is the ground shows that the consequence is identical with all or part of the concept, in other words the concept of the consequence is contained in the concept of the ground in agreement with the law of identity. Yet, this is not the case for real ground. As Mellisa Zinkin says: “It is not part of the analysis of the concept 'cold,' for example, that it will *make* something else (hotter than it) less hot. Instead, the necessity of these relations is based on the nature of negative magnitudes itself.”³³ In this example the ground of the consequence of change in temperature is a real ground and this change cannot be explained at all by the rule of identity between the ground and the consequence. Cold and hot are connected (as real opposites) in such a way that it is in the nature of both that “each can only be combined with its real opposite so that the one magnitude cancels as much in the other as is equal to itself,” which is the definition of negative magnitudes. So, the consequence of such a change in temperature cannot be grounded on the analysis of the concept of cold or hot. Kant is quite explicit on this issue:

I have reflected on the nature of our cognition with respect to our judgment concerning grounds and consequences, and one day I shall present a detailed account of the fruits of my reflections. One of my conclusions is this: the relation of a real ground to something, which is either posited or cancelled by it, cannot be expressed by a judgment, it can only be expressed by a concept. That concept can probably be reduced by means of analysis to simple concepts of real grounds, albeit in such a fashion that in the end all cognitions of this relation reduce to simple, unanalysable concepts of real grounds, the relation of which to their consequences cannot be rendered distinct at all.³⁴

The fact that a real ground is not expressed by a judgment saves it from being subject to the law of contradiction. The concept of a real ground of a consequence then, according to Kant, can be analyzed down to simple concepts. At this point it is

³³ Zinkin, Melissa, *Kant on Negative Magnitudes*, Unpublished, p. 8.

³⁴ Kant, *Negative*, 241.

noteworthy to remark that not everything is suitable for being a negative magnitude; as Mellisa Zinkin says negative magnitudes are rather “properties of objects, like the motion of a body, rather than the body itself.”³⁵ Thus, the concept of a body cannot itself be a real ground for a consequence, while the concept of the motion of that body can, such as in the case when a body in motion collides with another moving towards it. In such a case, we say that the negative motion of the second body is the ground of the cancellation of the movement of the first. So in this example, the concept of a ‘body’ is not the ground of the cancellation of the motion of the first body, but the concept of ‘negative motion’ (i.e. a motion that is in the opposite direction to the motion of the first body) of the second body is the ground of the cancellation of this motion of the first body.

Negative Magnitudes in Cognition

The second philosophical significance of negative magnitudes, for Kant, is the fact that our cognition, like nature, is governed by the *necessity* of real opposition of negative magnitudes. Kant says that “our inner experience of the cancellation of representations and desires which have become real in virtue of the activity of the soul completely agrees with this.”³⁶ According to Kant then, when I abstract from a clear representation in my mind, the result is not a clear representation anymore because it is just an abstraction. But according to the second rule (see above, the end of the first section) if there is a positive ground (the action of having a clear representation in this case) and the result is still zero (the deprivation clear

³⁵ Zinkin, 6.

³⁶ Kant, *Negative*, 228.

representations) then there must be another positive ground which is in real opposition to the first (the action of abstraction). In Kant's own words: "Every abstraction is simply the canceling of certain clear representations; the purpose of the cancellation is normally to ensure that what remains is that much more clearly represented. But everybody knows how much effort is needed to attain this purpose. *Abstraction* can therefore be called *negative attention*."³⁷

Kant admits that when a thought in our mind cancels another one, it might not be so obvious that we are performing an action of real opposition. The reason that this is not very obvious is because, Kant says, "the actions in question are very numerous and because each of them is represented only very obscurely."³⁸ But on the other hand Kant argues that "Everybody is familiar with the facts which prove that this is the case."³⁹ So, Kant seems to say that even though the action of real opposition, during our mental activity, is hard to detect and bring forth to consciousness, one will be convinced with their existence and operative nature with some introspection. This much argumentation is sufficient for Kant to claim that "We must therefore conclude that the play of our representations and, in general, all of the activities of the soul, in so far as the consequences which they produce are actual and then cease to exist, presuppose the occurrence of opposed actions of which one is the negative of the other."⁴⁰ Kant says here that not only "play of our representations," but *all of the activities of the soul* presuppose the occurrence of negative magnitudes. One of Kant's examples of other activities of the soul is appetites. He says that

³⁷ Ibid., 228.

³⁸ Ibid., 229.

³⁹ Ibid., 229.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 229.

“Exactly the same necessity for a positive ground for canceling an inner accident of the soul is manifested in overcoming appetites.”⁴¹ Another example, Kant gives, of an activity of the soul which presupposes negative magnitudes is overcoming a sorrowful thought, in which case a strong effort as a negative sorrow is required to overcome the sorrow of the first thought.

Considering the cases both in states of matter and in states of mind, Kant sees the same necessity of real opposition of negative magnitudes. He writes: “in what concerns the *cancellation* of an existing *something*, there can be no difference between the accidents of mental natures and the effects of operative forces in the physical world.”⁴² This result is of metaphysical importance as Melissa Zinkin agrees when she writes “Negative magnitudes are therefore important for philosophy since, according to Kant, they are those forces both in nature as well as in our own mental activity that can produce a necessary effect.”⁴³

Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*

In the *Metaphysical Foundations*, Kant gives the metaphysical foundations of matter and its basic attributes. The first attribute of matter is that it is movable. Kant explains this attribute in the chapter called Metaphysical Foundations of Phoronomy. Then he moves to Metaphysical Foundations of Dynamics, where he explains what it is for a matter to fill a space: “To fill a space means to resist everything movable that

⁴¹ Ibid., 228.

⁴² Ibid., 229.

⁴³ Zinkin, 12.

strives by its motion to press into a certain space.”⁴⁴ So having attributed matter with motion in the previous chapter, now Kant uses this attribute to account for what it is for matter to fill a certain space. Matter resists the motion towards itself on every side or point of itself when “the space of its own extension is to be diminished.” When another matter intends to intrude to the space occupied by the resisting matter, then, the motion of this intruding matter is canceled out by the motion of the resisting matter in the opposite direction. Motion, for Kant, is caused by a moving force; therefore the resisting matter fills its space by the moving force of its own.

Kant defines two types of moving forces: attractive force and repulsive force. Repulsive force is that by means of which a matter resists the approach of another matter to itself. Attractive force, on the other hand, is that by means of which a matter can be the cause of the approach of another matter to itself. These two forces, according to Kant, are the only moving forces that can be thought of. The force, by means of which matter resists, then according to these definitions, is the repulsive force: Repulsive force is the force of extension of a matter.

If this repulsive force, by means of which matter ensures its extensibility and impenetrability, were the only force acting on matter and no other force were acting on it, matter would disperse into infinity and “no assignable quantity of matter would be found in any assignable space.”⁴⁵ This would entail that no matter could be found anywhere, which contradicts the presumption of existence of matter in the first place. Therefore another force acting in the opposite direction to the extensive force is necessary for the matter to exist. This force is the compressive force. The repulsive force was already said to be the part of matter as it guarantees the extensibility and

⁴⁴ Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 40.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

impenetrability of the matter. Now, the compressive force, the force in the opposite direction to the repulsive force is the attractive force.

On the other hand, if attractive force was the only force belonging to matter, with a similar reasoning, all parts of matter applying attraction to each other would diminish the space between them and coalesce with each other until the matter, and indeed all matter, turns into a point in space. This assumption, like the previous one, leads to the result that no matter would exist at all if attractive force were the only force belonging to the concept of matter.

It is seen now that both repulsive and attractive force belong to the possibility of matter and they precede any other properties of matter in general, i.e. all kinds of matter and not only some particular type. “Repulsive force belongs just as much to the essence of matter as attractive force; and one cannot be separated from the other in the concept of matter.”⁴⁶

In this section it is seen how Kant explains the possibility of matter making use of attractive and repulsive forces that he himself, in his *Negative Magnitudes*, had claimed to be in a relation of real opposition. So what was, in *Negative Magnitudes*, merely an example of how negative magnitudes were at work in nature are used in *Metaphysical Foundations* as the foundational explanation of the possibility of matter.

Reflections on Kant’s Negative Magnitudes

Kant’s differentiation between logical and real grounds, which is founded on the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 60.

distinction between logical and real opposites, gives rise to a metaphysically important result, namely that there are *real grounds*, in nature as well as in our minds, whose truth does not depend on the law of identity (partial or whole identity of the effect and the cause) but lies in the concept of negative magnitudes. Real ground is important precisely because of the character of real opposites. As Melissa Zinkin says “Since [the character of a negative magnitude] is necessarily true, it is *a priori*. And since this truth is not based on the analysis of a concept, it is also synthetic.”⁴⁷ The concept of negative magnitude seems to foreshadow notorious synthetic a priori of critical philosophy of Kant.

In the relevant essay, Kant counts numerous examples of negative magnitudes, yet he does not seem to make a universal claim about the existence of negative magnitudes, i.e. he does not seem to claim that all reality is composed of reciprocal things that are real opposites. He, on the other hand, seems to make a universal claim about the way our cognition functions when he says “I have reflected upon the nature of our cognition with respect to our judgment concerning grounds and consequences, and one day I shall present a detailed account of the fruits of my reflections.”⁴⁸ So, although according to Kant, our cognition necessarily functions via real opposites and further that the way our cognition works *agrees with* the way negative magnitudes are operative in nature, he seems to refrain from claiming explicitly that the conceptual structure, which is how a real ground is expressed, of our minds is exactly the same with the external reality.

Kant sees his claims in the relevant essay as an unfinished attempt when he says “The considerations which I am about to offer only constitute modest

⁴⁷ Zinkin, 9.

⁴⁸ Kant, *Negative*, 241.

beginnings, which is what generally happens when an attempt is made to open up new perspectives.”⁴⁹ I will claim, in the coming chapters of this essay, that Hegel adopts this unfinished metaphysical project from Kant and brings it to a level where the conceptual structure of our minds completely exhausts the reality, which, for Hegel, is indeed itself conceptual.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 208.

CHAPTER 3

HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF CONTRADICTION IN RELATION TO HIS CRITIQUE OF "OLD METAPHYSICS"

"Old Metaphysics"

Hegel, in his criticism of what he calls "old metaphysics" in the chapter entitled "The First Position of Thought with Respect to Objectivity" in his *Encyclopedia Logic*, explains how *understanding*, as a finite mode of thinking, takes essence and its determinations—erroneously—in isolation, leaving behind "only the empty abstraction of indeterminate *essence*, of pure reality or positivity, the dead product of modern Enlightenment."⁵⁰ What Hegel emphasizes here is that if one is to deny the negativity⁵¹ of essence, which means if one takes the essence of something and its determinations as separate entities, and leave behind the positivity of the essence, i.e. an essence with no determinations, then one is left without any grasp of either the essence or its determinations.

Hegel claims that old metaphysics treated thought-determinations to be capable of grasping the "what is" of a thing or as he puts it grasping "the things as

⁵⁰ *EL*, 73.

⁵¹ Here "negativity" is used to refer to a relation of non-identity between two things. X is negatively related to Y if and only if X is non-identical to Y, whereas X is positively related to itself if and only if it is identical with itself (like in the tautology X is X). Hegel in *EL*, uses negativity to mean "relation-to-another" or "mediation" as in this quote: "But essence is being-within-self, it is essential only insofar as it has the negative of itself, [i.e.,] the relation-to-another, or mediation, within itself." (*EL*, 178.) Moreover, Wolff defines "negativity" for Hegel as "X is negatively related to Y if and only if X is identical with not-Y and Y is identical with not-X." (Wolff, 11.) Wolff's definition of negativity is from Hegel's definition of positive and negative in the chapter on contradiction in *SL*. Although it is a more comprehensive definition it does not contradict with the other two definitions (or rather usages) I have provided in this footnote.

they are *in-themselves*”⁵² immediately, i.e. without reflective thinking. The problem of such a thinking is that while trying to reveal the “what is” of the thing, it presupposes the “what is” of the thought-determinations. These thought-determinations, abstracted from what they are thought-determinations, are thought to be capable of being predicates of the things. This way of thinking takes for granted that these predicates already have well established meanings and when they are predicated of a thing, they can give away the “what is” of that thing. Hegel calls this type of thinking “finite thinking,” which is the thinking of understanding as opposed to the infinite or speculative thinking of reason. What Hegel is interested in is not finding out which predicates are suitable in order to reveal the truth of a thing. Instead, Hegel inquires into “what a thing is” so that it can acquire predicates.

Now it is said that merely “attaching” predicates to an object and claiming that these predicates give away the truth of the object is problematic, for in such a thinking these predicates are thought to be found ready in the mind to grasp and exhaust the object. It is obvious that a good account of the predicates, which are claimed to be readily found in the mind, is absent in the old metaphysics. Against this way of thinking, Hegel advocates that “Genuine cognition of an object, on the other hand, has to be such that the object determines itself from within itself, and does not acquire its predicates in this external way.”⁵³ Having righteously criticized the ready-made understanding of the predicates, Hegel seems to be making a bolder claim when he says that the genuine cognition of an object stems from “an object determining itself from within.” What Hegel means by this becomes clearer when he explains the method of proof for infinite thinking, at the end of the chapter.

⁵² EL, 66.

⁵³ EL, 67.

According to this method, essence as the seeming consequence of examining the predicates of an object turns out, indeed, to be mutually dependent with the appearance (the predicates) and the truth of both lying in their “ground.” If the essence, even though we gain knowledge about it through its predicates, is mutually dependent with the appearance and the ground is the truth of both, then Hegel is right to say that the genuine cognition of an object stems from an object determining itself from within. Still it must be shown how Hegel came to the conclusion that essence is mutually dependent with appearance and ground is the truth of both even though we gain knowledge about the essence through examining its predicates.

Essence and Appearance

Hegel's criticism of “old metaphysics” (which he also calls pre-Kantian metaphysics) and also of Kantian metaphysics is based on his claim that the total distinction of essence and appearance is an untenable position. Karin de Boer agrees with this: “Hegel's *Doctrine of Essence* is intended, in my view, to expose the limit of any philosophy—including Kant's—that holds on to a strict division between appearances and reality as it is in itself.”⁵⁴

It was claimed above that, for Hegel, taking the appearance itself as *self-subsisting*, as an immediately existing element of reality is not philosophically satisfactory, for in such thinking one takes the truth of the predicates for granted or in other words does not give account of how one comes to grasp those predicates. Such thinking takes the meaning of predicates as if they are already present in mind. Or

⁵⁴ “De Boer,” 351.

else, if taking the appearance itself as self-subsisting, as an immediately existing element of reality is denied but on the other hand appearance is taken as a contingent part of reality, without any necessary element through which it is mediated, this is still philosophically not satisfactory for Hegel. This is not what Hegel wants to maintain, he is trying to disclose the necessary connections in reality. Charles Taylor explains this last point as follows: “[in Hegel’s notion of reality] what exists is not to be seen as simply there, as merely contingent, but rather as the manifestation of a thoroughgoing systematic web of necessary relations.”⁵⁵

As equally, taking essence alone, abstracted, without any determinations, i.e. merely distinct from appearance posited by it, is not a satisfactory result either, such an essence is “a dead and empty absence of determinateness.”⁵⁶ This result falls short of explaining the existing reality also. Karin de Boer says: “For Hegel, the term ‘essence’ does not designate a self-identical substrate, but pertains to the movement in which it distinguishes itself from its contrary and reflects itself in the latter.”⁵⁷ De Boer agrees that for Hegel taking essence as a self-identical substrate, or to put it in other way, taking it as self-subsisting is not acceptable. She says that essence distinguishes itself from appearance and then reflects itself in the latter. This act of essence as *reflecting* itself in the appearance is a metaphor Hegel uses with reference to reflection of light.

The standpoint of essence is in general the standpoint of reflection. The term “reflection” is primarily used of light, when, propagated rectilinearly, it strikes a mirrored surface and is thrown back by it. So we have here something twofold: first, something immediate, something that is, and second the same as mediated or posited. [...] And our usual view of the task or

⁵⁵ Taylor, 258.

⁵⁶ SL, 338.

⁵⁷ “De Boer,” 353.

purpose of philosophy is that it consists in the cognition of the essence of things. By this we understand no more than that things are not to be left in their immediate state, but are rather to be exhibited as mediated or grounded by something else. The immediate being of things is here represented as a sort of rind or curtain behind which essence is concealed.⁵⁸

This metaphor of reflecting is used by Hegel; it seems so, in order to explain better the relation between essence and appearance. So this metaphor tells us that what we see as part of reality, i.e. appearance, is not the source of light itself but the reflection of the light that is coming from a source, i.e. essence. And the task of philosophy is to find out the source of light from which the reflection stems or by which it is posited and discover the necessary relation between the reflection and the source.

Being more than a reflection in the appearance, essence is what is persistent in things. Hegel celebrates the German language for having kept this meaning of essence in the German word “Wesen” which is translated as essence. Wesen in German is “reminiscent,” as Charles Taylor says, “of the past participle of the verb ‘to be,’ ‘gewesen’”⁵⁹.

As for the further significance and use of the category of essence, we can recall first at this point how the term “Wesen” is employed to designate the past for the German auxiliary verb “sein” [to be]; for we designate the being that is past as “gewesen”. This irregularity in linguistic usage rests upon a correct view of the relation of being and essence, because we can certainly consider essence to be being that has gone by, whilst still remarking that what is past is not for that reason abstractly negated, but only sublated and so at the same time conserved.⁶⁰

Hegel uses this closeness (or reminiscence) of the two words “Wesen” and “gewesen” to claim that the German language has kept the meaning of essence that it is “being” in the past. But essence as being in the past is not gone by totally, it is also

⁵⁸ *EL*, 176.

⁵⁹ *Taylor*, 258.

⁶⁰ *EL*, 176.

kept in the current being. Essence as past, in Hegelian terminology, is being as *sublated*⁶¹, i.e. as being negated and preserved at the same time. Hegel gives a nice example that clears up the air on how “Wesen” as reminiscent of “gewesen” can negate and preserve the past together: “If we say in German, e.g., ‘Cäsar ist in Gallien *gewesen*’ [‘Caesar was in Gaul’], what is negated by that is just the immediacy of what is asserted about Caesar, but not his sojourn in Gaul altogether, for indeed it is just that which forms the content of this assertion—only it is here represented as having been sublated.”⁶² So, with this example it is seen that Hegel’s concept of essence refers not merely to a static entity that lies behind the alleged curtain of appearance, but it also keeps the information of all the past instances of being.

What Hegel sees as a solution is taking essence such that it is “absolute unity of being-in-itself and being-for-itself; consequently, its determining remains inside this unity; it is neither a becoming nor a passing over, just as the determinations themselves are neither an *other* as other nor references *to some other*; they are self-subsisting but, as such, at the same time conjoined in the unity of essence.”⁶³ The solution Hegel offers defines essence as the unity of being-in-itself and being-for-itself: Essence is both being-in-itself, which means it is implicit, immediate to itself,

⁶¹ In *SL* Hegel defines the meaning of “to sublate” as follows: “The German “aufheben” (“to sublate” in English) has a twofold meaning in the language: it equally means “to keep,” “to ‘preserve,’” and “to cause to cease,” “to put an end to.” Even “to preserve” already includes a negative note, namely that something, in order to be retained, is removed from its immediacy and hence from an existence which is open to external influences. – That which is sublated is thus something at the same time preserved, something that has lost its immediacy but has not come to nothing for that. – These two definitions of “to sublate” can be cited as two dictionary meanings of the word. But it must strike one as remarkable that a language has come to use one and the same word for two opposite meanings.” (*SL*, 81-2).

⁶² *EL*, 176.

⁶³ *SL*, 338.

it is not mediated through something else like appearance, or to say it differently it is self-subsisting; and it is also being-for-itself, which means that it is merely explicit, mediated, it shows itself in another; this other is appearance. Determinations, Hegel says, (or one can say appearance as equally) are not other to essence. Hegel means here that appearance is not an external entity to essence, whose relation to the latter is contingent (for it is external). He adds that determinations are not reference to some other either, which means that they are not merely what essence posits, they have their own existence, they are self-subsisting as well. Charles Taylor explains this solution of Hegel as follows:

Hegel sees Essence not just as that which one gets to from the external observable which is shown to be non-self-subsisting. It is also the underlying necessity which makes the observed what it is. So it must be understood not just in a movement of reflection from the external which is seen as given, and hence presupposed, to a posited substrate; but also in a movement from the underlying necessity which can thus be thought of as 'positing' the external observable.⁶⁴

This definition of essence and appearance will be shown, below in the section expanding *contradiction*, to be demanding a further explanation of how such a unity is possible. This explanation, it will be shown again below, lies in the necessary relations in reality, which Hegel explains under the category of *ground*.

Before going into the details of how Hegel accounts for the unity (or mutual dependence, as it was mentioned above) of essence and appearance it is explanatory to give his example on how such unity is exemplified. He says:

Thus, we often say specifically that the main thing about people is their essence, and not what they do or how they behave. What is quite right in this claim is that what someone does must be considered not just in its immediacy, but only as mediated by his inwardness and as a manifestation of it. But it should not be overlooked either that essence, and inwardness as well, only prove themselves to be what they are by moving out into the

⁶⁴ Taylor, 259.

domain of appearance; whereas, what underlies the appeal to an essence that is different from the content of what people do is often just the aim of making their mere subjectivity count, and of evading what holds in and for itself.⁶⁵

In this paragraph, Hegel explains that seeking an essential subjectivity in people without any reference to their deeds is as misleading as taking merely certain deeds and ignoring the underlying essential subjectivity. Hegel's solution is combining the two approaches by suggesting that essential subjectivity reflects or shows itself in the totality of one's all deeds. Such an approach both prevents making mystical claims about one's inner personality that has not shown itself in any of the occasions in his/her life and also precludes judging one's personality only due to some limited occasions in his/her life while ignoring the subjectivity that posits one's all deeds in life.

Karin de Boer also emphasizes the benefits of taking essence and appearance in unity: "This reflection has allowed thought to grasp, for instance, a particular act as moral act, and, conversely, to grasp the good as such as the essence of such acts. If one isolates these contrary conceptual determinations from this movement, nothing remains. For the good itself is nothing apart from its appearance in actual deeds, and, seen from a moral point of view, these deeds are nothing apart from their finite reflection of the good as such."⁶⁶ De Boer explains, here, that what makes an act good is its reference to essence of a good act or good as such; but on the other hand essence of a good act or good as such is nothing besides what shows itself in good acts. What De Boer emphasizes here, I think, has the consequence that good acts owe the label of being good to an underlying rule of goodness. As equally this rule is not a separate rule written somewhere and used as a test for each single act, rather this

⁶⁵ *EL*, 178.

⁶⁶ "De Boer," 353.

rule of goodness is acquired through time with some acts being valued as good and others as non-good.

De Boer continues to say: “Just as the good is reflected in moral acts, the essence of a rose is reflected in the actual rose that I see, touch, and smell. This presupposes, according to Hegel, that the pure concepts of essence and semblance themselves are also reflected into one another. I cannot define the essence of something, that is, without presupposing the conceptual unity of essence and semblance.”⁶⁷ As De Boer says, the relation between good acts and good as such is also seen in the relation between the essence of rose and a particular rose. What I call a rose is a rose with reference to the essence of rose, which in turn is a rule of what a rose is and such a rule is possible only because there has been through time and different spaces what we call roses. Essence of rose has shown itself in actual roses and continues to do so.

In this section I have tried to show how Hegel argues that total distinction of essence and appearance is a philosophically untenable view and the true way to understand any of these two concepts runs through grasping the conceptual unity of them. I have mentioned the examples, provided by Hegel and Karin de Boer that emphasize the benefits of grasping this conceptual unity. Until this point I have shown how Hegel argues against the opposing views (what he calls old metaphysics and critical philosophy) and how he promotes his own position. Hegel goes into more conceptual depth of his own position about the unity of essence and appearance and he does so by expanding more on the concepts identity, difference, opposition, contradiction and ground.

⁶⁷ “De Boer,” 353.

Identity, Difference, Opposition

An account on how the essence can be mutually dependent with the appearance, in the first place, lies in Hegel's understanding of *opposition*. But since opposition, for Hegel, is a specific *distinction*, it is necessary in the first place to dwell on the concepts of *identity* and *distinction*. Hegel criticizes the identity of understanding, which he calls the formal identity: "Formal identity or identity-of-the-understanding is this identity, in so far as one holds onto it firmly and *abstracts* from distinction."⁶⁸ Such an identity is possible, Hegel says, either by picking out a single element of the manifold or by ignoring the manifold determinacies and claiming that One is and many is not. In both of these two cases, identity is understood as distinct from distinction, as leaving out distinction; in the first case by ignoring the other elements of the manifold and in the second by ignoring the manifold altogether. The propositional form of subject-predicate moreover, Hegel claims, already contradicts the abstract identity claim of understanding, for this subject-predicate form, even when it is formulated as "A is A," presupposes the first term as the subject and the second as the predicate. This presupposition already makes a distinction. A better concept of identity, in Hegel's philosophy, contains also distinction within itself: "Certainly the Concept, and furthermore the Idea, are self-identical only in so far as they at the same time contain distinction within themselves."⁶⁹

Having reached at the concept of distinction, Hegel criticizes, as one would expect, the abstract, one-sided usage of this concept of distinction. This one-sided distinction takes distinct terms on their own as mere diversity. The elements of such

⁶⁸ *EL*, 179.

⁶⁹ *EL*, 181.

diversity are externally related to each other and are indifferent to one other. One can indeed reach this one-sided distinction through abstract identity by counting objects one by one as “A is A,” “B is B,” “C is C,” etc. In this view of reality, objects seem indifferent to one another but this is not how we grasp reality. We, according to Hegel, relate objects to one another and compare them with each other. This fact of comparison brings Hegel to the claim that in order to compare things and use the terms *equal* or *inequal*, we need to understand the mutual dependence of the equal and the inequal. Hegel defines these terms as: “Equality is only an identity of [terms] that are *not the same*, not identical with one another-and inequality is the *relation* between unequal [terms].” These terms gain their meanings with reference to each other. According to Hegel, this reasoning shows that distinction requires comparison and now that comparison requires identity, then distinction requires identity.

After having shown the necessary mutual dependence of identity and distinction, Hegel will use this knowledge to show how such a mutual dependence leads to a *contradiction*, when the object of inquiry is essence. In order to come to that point, it is now necessary to come to *opposition*, which is a specific distinction, namely an *essential distinction*. Opposition is a specific distinction, for Hegel, since in opposition each of the distinct elements has a specific other, rather than any arbitrary other that is distinct from itself. Such a distinction, Hegel claims, must be an essential distinction: “the distinction of essence is opposition through which what is distinct does not have an *other in general*, but its *own* other facing it; that is to say, each has its own determination only in its relation to the other [...]”⁷⁰

The first characterization of opposition, in the Encyclopedia Logic, is the

⁷⁰ EL, 185.

positive and the *negative*. The definitions of positive and negative are mutually dependent thanks to the mutual dependence of identity and difference, such that “the positive is the identical relation to self in such a way that it is *not* the negative, while the negative is what is distinct on its own account in such a way that it is *not* the positive.”⁷¹ Having benefited from the mutual dependence of identity and difference, Hegel shows the mutual dependence of positive and negative, each of which thus is defined with a reference to its opposite.

Using this definition of opposition Hegel denies the law of the excluded middle, which for Hegel claims that there is not a third element which is in between the opposites. Yet Hegel contends that this law, while trying to avoid contradiction actually commits it. He gives an example from mathematics: Such a law, Hegel says, would claim that A must be either +A or –A, +A and –A being the opposites of each other. But in making such a claim one already claims a third, which is A, and which is “neither +A nor –A and both +A and –A.” This means that such an A itself does not exactly carry a plus or minus sign with it, but it is manifested either as +A or as –A.

Hegel’s more concrete example for such a case is the opposition of 6 miles in the east direction and 6 miles in the west direction. These directions are the counterparts of +A and –A in the previous notation and their indifferent third, A in the previous notion, is a road of 6 miles, without the indicator of a direction. At this point it is worth remembering Kant’s example, in his *Negative Magnitudes*, of forces acting on a body in opposite directions; Kant calls these forces real opposites. Also, as has been mentioned, in *Metaphysics of Natural Science* Kant explains matter by the help of attractive and repulsive forces. These attractive and repulsive forces as

⁷¹ *EL*, 184ff.

well as forces acting on a body in opposite directions (real opposites for Kant) seem to be quite fitting examples for Hegel's "opposition." In both of these cases opposite forces stand in an essential distinction to each other, for each of the opposite force is *the other's* opposite and "force" in both cases is the indifferent third.

If one does not understand this indifferent third, Hegel argues, one might claim the two opposing thought determinations, wrongly, to be contradictory to one another. So, two thought determinations are considered wrongly as contradictory to one another if one of the two is considered to be affirmative and the other abstractly negative. Indeed, these roles of affirmativity and negativity can be exchanged with ease, i.e. one can either render 6 miles in east direction as affirmative and its opposite as negative or vice versa. Accordingly, for Hegel, if the opposition, rather than contradiction, of these two determinations are acknowledged, then the law saying "that of *all* such opposed predicates one applies to *each* thing, and the other not"⁷² would seem empty. A thing having two opposing predicates, like polarity in physics, would then be understandable.

It is now the point to give a remark on Hegel's relationship with "common logical"⁷³ rules like law of excluded middle or law of non-contradiction. In his critique of these logical rules Hegel each time shows how insufficient these rules are when they are applied to reality. Thus Hegel shows that common logic does not give us ontological knowledge, it is merely formal, it lacks—ontological—content. Robert Hanna explains this as follows:

In short, Hegel's philosophical use of common logic is a higher-order activity

⁷² *EL*, 186.

⁷³ Robert Hanna notes that by the term "common logic" Hegel refers to Kant's *Logic* (I. Kant, *Logic*, trans. R.S. Hartman and W. Schwarz (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1974)) and that this common logic is not identical with modern "elementary logic." "Hanna," 305.

than the common-logical activity, and does not therefore by any means *compete* with the common logic at its own level. Hegel's higher-order comments about the common logic are *ontological* remarks or recommendations, not *common-logical* remarks or recommendations.⁷⁴

Still Hegel does not merely dump common logic and its rules but uses its own concepts to show that they are insufficient and then transforms these rules and concepts making up categories of his own logic. On Hegel's method Hanna writes:

As regards the transformatory aspect, it is worth noticing from the start that Hegel's general procedure is to take a certain concept from the common logic, criticize it, and then to extend the meaning of the term over a much wider field which includes the initial meaning but is by no means reducible to it.⁷⁵

So, as Hanna also remarks, Hegel's critique of common logical rules does not rule out common logic as a whole but tries to build an ontology by the help of common logical terms. Hanna claims Hegel's use of common logical terms as “metonymic.”⁷⁶ He says that Hegel does not “widen” the meaning of common logical terms; he rather “refers back to” more comprehensive meanings of these terms whose meanings are taken merely partially by common logic:

When Hegel uses a term like 'contradiction' in *his* sense, it is because he has already shown that the original meaning of the term in the discourse of common logic was an abstract, partial, and specifically limited use of a much wider notion which can be named by the same word. In short, the narrow or "partial" use of the word gets its significance only *because* it is a narrowing of or participation in a much broader and more concrete notion which has been, as it were, "forgotten" in the ordinary business of common logic.⁷⁷

Hanna's comment on Hegel's “referring back to” the real wider meaning of a common logical term finds its meaning if one remembers Hegel's etymological

⁷⁴ “Hanna,” 308.

⁷⁵ “Hanna,” 309.

⁷⁶ “Hanna,” 309.

⁷⁷ “Hanna,” 309-10.

remarks throughout both *EL* and *SL*.⁷⁸

Contradiction

Hegel notes that in opposition, as in difference, both moments (or sides) of the opposition fall apart as equally distinct and indifferent. These moments, being indifferent to each other, have claims of “self-subsistence” besides having claims of difference.

Since the self-subsisting determination of reflection excludes the other in the same respect as it contains it and is self-subsisting for precisely this reason, in its self-subsistence the determination excludes its own self-subsistence from itself. For this self-subsistence consists in that it contains the determination which is other than it in itself and does not refer to anything external for just this reason; but no less immediately in that it is itself and excludes from itself the determination that negates it. And so it is contradiction.⁷⁹

This paragraph gives Hegel's official definition, as it were, of “contradiction” in his own logic. This definition explains that the moment of opposition is in contradiction because it “as equally contains and excludes its other moment, its opposite.” The act of a moment of opposition of containing and excluding the same thing (that which negates it) renders that moment contradictory and when that moment of opposition is the logical category of determination of reflection, it reflects itself to contradiction.

To expand it once more, according to the above definition, the moment of opposition can claim self-subsistence thanks to the fact that it contains its opposite in itself and thus it does not have anything else to relate itself to. This is indeed how it can claim self-subsistence, i.e. by not relating itself to anything else. But it is already

⁷⁸ One clear example is how Hegel finds close relationship between *gewesen* (past participle of 'to be') and *wesen* (essence).

⁷⁹ *SL*, 374.

said that this moment contains its opposite in itself, and containing one's opposite means that there is something that this thing excludes from itself, this act of exclusion is in the definition of opposite. If it excludes something from itself then there is something that it is related to by means of exclusion. But if it is related, it is no more self-subsistent. Thus this moment of opposition is “contradictory in itself,” or it is “self-contradictory.”

Hegel's first characterization of opposition was, as mentioned above, positive and negative. It is also mentioned above that positive and negative are defined with reference to their opposites and this makes each of them contradictory in itself. If we take first negative, it claims itself to be self-exclusion as negative, by only excluding its own identity. Negative is “a negative which is identical with itself [whose] determination is to be the not-identical, the exclusion of identity.”⁸⁰ This definition of negative makes it self-contradictory. Positive, on the other hand, claims self-identity as positive only by excluding the negative and by this act of exclusion turns itself into a negative. Therefore, it is also contradictory in itself.

In general for Hegel, “[the opposites] *fate themselves to founder*, since they determine themselves as self-identical, yet in their self-identity they are rather the negative, a self-identity which is reference to other.”⁸¹ That is why, for Hegel, opposites cannot stay as opposites but are contradictory in themselves (or are self-contradictory). In Hegelian terms then, Kant's real opposites are not merely opposites, each opposite is rather self-contradictory. Kant's example of the force acting on a body in a certain direction, yet leaving the body inert, refers to its (real) opposite force that acts on the same body but in the opposite direction. Indeed, these

⁸⁰ SL, 375.

⁸¹ SL, 376.

forces make up the real ground for the inertness of the body in question. Each of these forces is a self-identical force mediated by reference to its opposite force, which in Kantian terminology cancels its other. In the same (onto)logical sense Kantian forces of attraction and repulsion are both self-contradictory. Hegel praises Kant for having professed that opposite forces of attraction and repulsion are both essential to matter, indeed are what make up matter. Still, Kant's theory, according to Hegel's criticism, falls short of giving a proper (conceptual) account of these forces and their ground:

It is Kant who deserves the credit for having perfected the theory of matter by considering it as the unity of repulsion and attraction. This involves the correct insight that attraction should certainly be recognised as the other of the two moments in the concept of being-for-itself, and hence attraction belongs to matter just as essentially as repulsion. But Kant's so-called dynamic construction of matter suffers from the defect that repulsion and attraction are postulated as present without further ado, rather than being deduced. The "how" and the "why" of this merely asserted unity would have followed logically from a proper deduction. Besides, Kant expressly insisted that we must not regard matter as present on its own account, and only fitted out afterwards ("on the side" as it were) with the two forces of repulsion and attraction here referred to; on the contrary, matter consists in nothing else but their unity.⁸²

According to Hegel's criticism of Kant's theory of matter, Kant gave an account of matter by means of opposite forces of attraction and repulsion but he fell short of giving a logical account of why these opposite forces act together, so to speak, in order to make up matter. For such an account, one needs to understand reality as essentially composed of opposites that are self-contradictory and are conceptually grounded⁸³ for their unity.

Using again Hegel's mathematical example of $+A$ and $-A$ it can be said that

⁸² *EL*, 156.

⁸³ How something is conceptually grounded is covered in the next section of this paper, which is on ground.

+A is self-contradictory, for being a particular term it claims self-sufficiency, yet being a term of opposition it is founded on the term that negates it, i.e. -A. The same holds for -A, it is also self-contradictory as, like +A, it claims to be a self-sufficient term standing on its own, whereas in truth it is founded on its opposite.

Besides the self-contradictory opposites, Hegel argues that a third term, which is indifferent to the opposing extremes, exists. Following the same example, this third term is indifferent to the opposing terms +A and -A, for it is neither one nor the other. But this term A is also equally not indifferent to the opposing terms, for it is always manifested either as +A or -A. This third term A has been formulated above (while mentioning the law of excluded middle) as “neither +A nor -A and both +A and -A.” This is the formulation for solution of self-contradiction of terms +A and -A.

In the above example (of the terms +A and -A) Hegel shows that each term, in a particular sense (in the Hegelian speculative sense), is self-contradictory. For on the one hand each term claims self-sufficiency (i.e. not being related to another term) and on the other hand, each term actually is dependent on the other term. Therefore each of the terms +A and -A is dependent on the other. A is the *essential unity* of +A and -A.

Karin de Boer says:

By opposing such contrary determinations as positive and negative, external reflection 'alienates' both moments from their essential unity, that is, from the concept as such which constitutes their ultimate principle. Hegel's speculative logic annuls this alienation, as it were, by exposing the contradiction between, on the one hand, their essential unity and, on the other hand, their prevailing opposition.⁸⁴

The contradiction she mentions is between the opposition of the moments (or parts of

⁸⁴ “De Boer,” 363.

a whole) and their essential unity. In this particular example above, the prevailing opposition is between the mathematical terms +A and -A, and their essential unity is A.

In order to clear the ground off any confusion, it's worth summing up shortly between which terms contradiction is, and Hegel's mathematical example is quite beneficial for this purpose: +A and -A are *self-contradictory*, for each is, while claiming to be a term on its own, indeed founded on its opposite. According to De Boer contradiction is *between* what a concept determination actually is and what is its ultimate principle: “According to the speculative meaning of the principle of contradiction, a conceptual determination [...] only contradicts its ultimate principle—the concept as such—insofar as it opposes its contrary [...]”⁸⁵

According to this latter formulation, the contradiction in +A and -A is *between* their ultimate principle (their underlying—essential—unity) and what they actually are (their actual opposition). The solution of contradiction lies in the fact that the underlying essential unity of +A and -A, i.e. A, is “neither +A nor -A and both +A and -A.”

Hegel uses this formulation, one may say, of “neither nor and both” in various places in the book on essence: When he talks about the absolute under the title Actuality,⁸⁶ he says: “[...] the determining of what is the absolute appears to be a negating, and the absolute itself appears only as the negation of all predicates, as the void. But since it must equally be spoken of as the position of all predicates, it

⁸⁵ “De Boer,” 368.

⁸⁶ *SL*, 466.

appears as the most formal of contradictions.”⁸⁷ Here the absolute, according to Hegel's formulation, is neither any of the determinations (since it is negation of all predicates) and all of them also (since it is position of all predicates). Again when Hegel talks about the relation of substantiality,⁸⁸ he uses the same formula to show that necessity is the third element between the extremes of substance and accident.

At the end of section above on Essence, I had argued that Hegel not only argues against the opposing views and promotes his own view about conceptual unity of essence and appearance but also goes into conceptual depth of his own position. So, this is one crucial step he takes into this depth when, with contradiction, Hegel shows that essence and appearance are both self-contradictory, for they claim self-sufficiency while being founded on their opposite. It will be shown in the next section on ground that for Hegel what is self-contradictory cannot stay as such but “founders” into ground. Here, once again, we see Hegel's making use of metaphorical language when he mentions founder and ground together; the fact that Hegel seeks for a reason or, better still, a ground permits him to use a metaphor of foundering when he wants to explain that what is self-contradictory cannot stay as such but must turn itself into something else or resolve the contradiction. De Boer agrees: “[Hegel] employs the concept of contradiction to resolve the very opposition between essence and appearance, laying bare their 'common root'.”⁸⁹ The common root of essence and appearance, that which makes them mutually dependent, is Hegelian ground (details of which will be discussed in the next section).

Hegel's definition of contradiction seems quite in conflict with how the term

⁸⁷ *SL*, 466.

⁸⁸ *SL*, 490.

⁸⁹ “De Boer,” 363.

is used in common logic of his time and even in contemporary elementary logic. As it has been explained in opposition, again here in contradiction, Hegel is performing a critique of common-logical contradiction and giving an ontological account of contradiction as Hanna agrees:

Russell's cheeky remarks in "On Denoting" implying the absurdity of Hegel's "denial" of the principle of non-contradiction have long stood in the way of a fruitful understanding of Hegel's logic. But as we have seen, Hegel's account provides a critique of the common logic from an ontological point of view alone, and is by no means a "denial" of any principle of the common logic.⁹⁰

The apparent conflict between Hegelian contradiction and common-logical contradiction becomes visible also when Hegel avows contradiction to be "the root of all movement and life."⁹¹ Hegel makes this comment when he compares contradiction with identity:

It is, however, one of the basic prejudices of previous logic and of ordinary thought that contradiction is not as essential and immanent a determination as identity. But in fact, if order of precedence were an issue, and the two determinations were to be held separate, it would be the principle of contradiction that should be taken as the more profound and the more essential. For in contrast to it, identity is only the determination of simple immediacy, of inert being, whereas contradiction is the root of all movement and life; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, is possessed of instinct and activity.⁹²

Even sensuous motion, for Hegel, is an existent contradiction: "Something moves, not because now it is here and there at another now, but because in one and the same now it is here and not here; because in this here it is and is not at the same time."⁹³

⁹⁰ "Hanna," 327.

⁹¹ *SL*, 382.

⁹² *SL*, 382.

⁹³ *SL*, 382.

Ground

Coming back to the main problem of essence and its determinations (or appearance), I will, now, try to show how the concept of opposition and contradiction just expanded, can be applied to these categories, i.e. essence and its determinations in order to argue that essence is mutually dependent with appearance and ground is the truth of both.

It has been shown hitherto that what is opposed can but be contradictory, for it is founded on what is opposed to it. But Hegel does not leave the logic at the point of contradiction, as he says “[...] contradiction is not all there is to it, and that contradiction sublates itself by its own doing.”⁹⁴ Contradiction resolves itself and bears the category of “ground.” It was mentioned above, while discussing that Hegel does not accept the contingency of appearance, that in Hegel’s ontology, reality is not contingent, there is necessity in reality. He is clear on this when he says “The purpose of philosophy is, in contrast, to banish indifference and to become cognizant of the necessity of things, so that the other is seen to confront *its* other.”⁹⁵ or when he says “the true thinking is the thinking of necessity.”⁹⁶ This necessary connection of reality brings the idea that there must be a reason or ground for everything. In Hegel’s words:

Ground, like all the other determinations of reflection, is expressed in a principle: “Everything has a sufficient ground or reason.” – In general, this means nothing but this: Anything which *is*, is to be considered *to exist* not as an *immediate*, but as a *posited*; there is no stopping at immediate existence

⁹⁴ EL, 187.

⁹⁵ EL, 187.

⁹⁶ EL, 187.

but a return must rather be made from it back into its ground, and in this reflection it is a sublated being and is in and for itself.⁹⁷

Here Hegel mentions the importance of considering everything as grounded and not as contingent, for philosophical thinking. Something which is not grounded at all would be claimed to be immediate, not mediated through anything else or in other words standing without any relations to other things. Such thinking is insufficient for philosophy according to Hegel. He makes a similar point in *EL*:

When we ask about the grounds of things, this is precisely the standpoint of reflection that we mentioned earlier (§ 112 Addition); we want to see the thing in question duplicated as it were: first in its immediacy and secondly in its ground, where it is no longer immediate. This is indeed the simple meaning of the so-called principle of sufficient reason or ground. This principle only asserts that things must essentially be regarded as mediated.⁹⁸

The way of thinking Hegel suggests as the correct way, takes things not in isolation from other things but takes them in relation to each other. This thinking ensures that everything is thought to be mediated through, is posited by, a ground and nothing stands alone as a contingent part of reality.

In the section on ground both in *SL* and in *EL*, Hegel praises Leibniz for taking the ground not only as efficient cause, which is mechanical, but also as final cause, which is *conceptual*:

But Leibniz took the sufficiency of the ground above all in opposition to causality taken in its strict sense as mechanical efficiency. Since this mode of efficiency is as such an external activity restricted to a single determinateness according to content, the determinations that it posits come associated together externally and accidentally; taken one by one, the determinations are comprehended through their causes; but their connection, which constitutes what is essential in a concrete existence, is not to be found in mechanical causes. That connection, the whole as essential unity, is to be found only in the *concept*, in the *purpose*.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *SL*, 388.

⁹⁸ *EL*, 189.

⁹⁹ *SL*, 388.

Hegel sees efficient cause to focus on distinct grounds of a consequence and to miss the fact that these seemingly distinct grounds are essentially related; indeed they are posited by the same concept. His example is the growth of a plant: “According to this distinction, light, heat, and moisture, for example, must certainly be considered as *causae efficientes*, but not as the *causa finalis* of the growth of plants—the *causa finalis* being nothing else but the concept of the plant itself.”¹⁰⁰ The distinct grounds as light, heat and moisture are necessary for the growth of the plant and these grounds make up the efficient causes for the growth of the plant, yet they do not give a necessary connection in reality, and thus for Hegel—and he praises Leibniz for thinking in line with himself in this issue—these grounds are not sufficient to grasp the reality. For such a big task as grasping reality we also need the identity relation between the ground and what is grounded, in this particular example we need conceptual necessity between the concept of plant and its growth. The concept of plant includes all the development of the plant and it includes all its relations with its surrounding, these relations also involving light, heat and moisture. The concept of plant also includes what is distinct from the plant, since for Hegel concept of something finds its meaning in the—Hegelian—whole, which includes all that has been that thing and all that is distinguished and has been distinguished from that thing.

At the beginning of the section on ground in *EL*, Hegel claims ground to be unity of identity and distinction. Ground is identity, for something can be a ground if only it is identical with what is grounded by it. But such an identity is not informative enough for philosophical reasons; it is mere formal distinction while

¹⁰⁰ *EL*, 191.

keeping the identity in content. According to Hegel ground as identity “cannot provide definitive satisfaction, either in a theoretical or in a practical regard. This is because the ground still has no content that is determined in and for itself; and in consequence of that, when we consider something as grounded, we obtain only the mere distinction of form between immediacy and mediation.”¹⁰¹ Hegel's example is on electrical phenomenon: If one grounds the electrical phenomenon on electricity, one gives a merely distinct form that refers to the same content. Such a ground is philosophically sufficient, since the ground is identical with what is grounded, yet uninformative.

On the other hand ground, besides identity, also involves distinction: “Now, of course, the ground is also not just what is simply identical with itself; it is also distinct, and for that reason various grounds can be offered for one and the same content. So, in accordance with the concept of distinction, that diversity of grounds now leads to opposition in the form of grounds for and against the same content.”¹⁰² When the ground and what is grounded are distinct, this produces an informative result, yet this connection is contingent and thus it is philosophically insufficient. It is philosophically insufficient because different forms of grounds for the same content may be in opposition to each other and of course, if such is the case, none of these grounds can be considered to really be a ground. This was the case, Hegel reminds us, when sophists were giving grounds for situations:

[Sophists] taught people how to seek out the various points of view from which things can be considered; and these points of view are, in the first instance, simply nothing else but grounds. As we remarked earlier, however, since a ground does not yet have a content that is determined in and for itself, and grounds can be found for what is unethical and contrary to law no less

¹⁰¹ *EL*, 189.

¹⁰² *EL*, 190.

than for what is ethical and lawful, the decision as to what grounds are to count as valid falls to the subject. The ground of the subject's decision becomes a matter of his individual disposition and aims. In this way the objective basis of what is valid in and for itself, and recognised by all, was undermined, and it is this negative side of sophistry that has deservedly given it the bad name referred to above.¹⁰³

In such a view, as the view of Sophists according to Hegel, any ground can be found for any situation and thus any ground is contingent and relative. So, for Hegel, it is not sufficient for ground to be merely distinct from what is grounded. Charles Taylor explains this dilemma as follows: “The dilemma, or contradiction, in which we find ourselves with the notion of ground is thus this: to the extent that our citing of a ground is informative, it will be distinct from the entity to be explained (Hegel calls this 'real ground'), but then it will be insufficient; on the other hand, if it is sufficient, it will no longer be distinct from the explicandum, and then it will be empty and uninformative (what Hegel calls 'formal ground').”¹⁰⁴ Here the distinction Taylor mentions is the one Hegel makes in *SL*, under the heading “determinate ground.”¹⁰⁵

This distinction that Hegel makes between “formal ground” and “real ground” immediately reminds us of Kant's distinction, which has been explained in the previous chapter, between real ground and logical ground. As it has been explained, Kant claims logical ground to be defined through the identity relation of the ground and the consequence (the grounded), whereas real ground is not defined through such an identity but through the relation between real opposites. We can see a similar vein in Hegel's distinction between formal ground and real ground, where formal ground is exactly what Kant names logical ground and real ground resembles

¹⁰³ *EL*, 191.

¹⁰⁴ *Taylor*, 264.

¹⁰⁵ *SL*, 397.

Kant's real ground. Hegel's formal ground only resembles and is not exactly same with that of Kant's, for while Kant defines real ground to be through real opposites, Hegel merely says of it to be a ground which is distinct from the grounded. In both cases real ground is distinct from what is grounded.

It has been stated that the problem facing ground is that when it is identical with the grounded it is uninformative while philosophically necessary; and when it is distinct from the grounded it is informative but contingent. Hegel had given his solution to this problem or dilemma at the beginning of the chapter on ground when he claimed ground to be unity of identity and distinction. Charles Taylor explains this solution as follows:

Reality is necessarily both. Without the necessary link which is identity, what exists would have no ground, it would be without foundation, hence would not exist. But without difference, real differentiation of elements, there could also be no existence, because pure being as we saw is equivalent to pure nothing. And difference requires real separately existing objects, external reality, objects which exist apart from each other, hence in time and space. Without difference, there would be no real independent existence (Bestehen).¹⁰⁶

As one would expect, Hegel does not stop his logic at ground even though he seems to have solved the problem of mutual existence of necessity and distinctness of reality through his concept of ground. He does not stop at this point because even though the Hegelian ground provides us a firm step towards concept it is not itself concept: "[...]ground does not yet have a content that is determinate in and for itself; and consequently it does not act of itself and bring forth. It is the Concept that will soon show itself to be a content of this kind, one that is determinate in and for itself, and hence acts on its own[...]"¹⁰⁷ Even though ground does not have what concept

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, 267.

¹⁰⁷ EL, 190.

has, it still contains the solution of contradiction.

With the category of ground Hegel has shown that reality is not a collection of contingently floating, separate elements, but it is composed of existents that are grounded and that are grounds of the grounded: “This is the general shape in which the existing world is presented initially to reflection, namely, as an indeterminate multitude of existents which, being reflected simultaneously into themselves and into something else, are in the mutual relationship of ground and grounded with regard to each other.”¹⁰⁸ Still ground does not yet have sufficient qualifications for being “active and productive”¹⁰⁹ as Hegel puts it, it does not give us a systematically and necessarily connected “whole” that has a “purpose”:

In this motley play of the world, taken as the sum total of all existents, a stable footing cannot be found anywhere at first, and everything appears at this stage to be merely relative, to be conditioned by something else, and similarly as conditioning something else. The reflective understanding makes it its business to discover and to pursue these all-sided relations; but this leaves the question of a final purpose unanswered, and, with the further development of the logical Idea, the reason that is in need of comprehension therefore strikes out beyond this standpoint of mere relativity.¹¹⁰

It has been stated that for Hegel the category of ground is not sufficient for grasping the reality as a whole but ground is a very crucial category in the course of Hegel's Logic, for it shows us that the grounds of existents are other existents and these grounds are not mystical other-worldly gods. Charles Taylor explains this result by saying “The full understanding of Ground shows us that there is nothing behind external reality.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ *EL*, 193.

¹⁰⁹ *EL*, 192.

¹¹⁰ *EL*, 193.

¹¹¹ *Taylor*, 268.

This result ties the issue with the problem formulated at the end of first section of this chapter, namely the question on “how Hegel came to the conclusion that essence is mutually dependent with appearance and ground is the truth of both even though we gain knowledge about essence through examining its predicates.” In short, it has been shown until this point that taking essence and appearance as distinct from each other results in a contradictory situation, which must be resolved. The solution of the contradiction is maintained by grasping essence and appearance as mutually dependent; they are distinct elements in a unity. The connection between essence and appearance is a necessarily grounded one. Taylor formulates this as: “Hence with the transition to existence, Hegel has taken the crucial step in the task of this book, which is to make us see Essence, as that which underlies external reality, not as something hidden behind, but as fully manifest necessity.”¹¹² Hegel removes the “mystical shell” of essence, meaning that with Hegel's understanding of ground, appearance is necessarily grounded not by any hidden essence, but by the essence that is fully manifested in the appearance of which it is the essence.

In conclusion, once again turning back to Hegel's critique of “old metaphysics” and the solution he offers as the result of this criticism, namely that “the genuine cognition of an object stems from an object determining itself from within,” we see that this solution implies that the cognition of an object necessitates grasping its ground in the first place. It is necessary to grasp the ground of an object since ground is the solution of the contradiction between the ultimate principle of the object in question (the unity of its essence and appearance) and what it is in its actuality (its appearance or its essence in isolation).

¹¹² Taylor, 268.

Concept

Until concept, all the determinations of essence have their opposites in relation to them; essence and appearance, identity and difference, contradiction and ground each reflect itself in its own opposite. With concept, the relation of passing-over in being and relation of reflection in essence becomes self-relation of “development”:

The progression of the Concept is no longer either passing-over or shining into another, but development; for the [moments] that are distinguished are immediately posited at the same time as identical with one another and with the whole, and [each] determinacy is as a free being of the whole Concept.¹¹³

In the chapter Being, the relation between categories one coming after another was passing-over into, in Essence this relation was shining into or reflection, and finally in Concept this relation becomes development. Both in passing-over and shining, the categories, while being preserved, ceased to be, and so they were sublated. Being, as pure being, could not stay as it is and passed-over into nothing, and then into becoming and so on. In this passing-over into, being did not retain unity with itself, it did not pass over into being, after nothing, it kept passing-over. Similarly when essence reflected into appearance, they both showed themselves to be self-contradictory, and reflected into ground. Essence did not retain unity with itself after reflecting into appearance. This is the crucial difference of concept from being and essence; it develops and while positing difference, it still retains unity with itself, it stays as concept.

For Hegel “what corresponds to the stage of the Concept in nature is organic life.”¹¹⁴ It was mentioned above in ground that Hegel is praising Leibniz for keeping

¹¹³ *EL*, 237.

¹¹⁴ *EL*, 237.

final cause besides efficient cause and it was mentioned that only concept of something can be its final cause. The final cause of the growth of a plant is the concept of the plant. During its growth plant goes through stages of being a seed, a bud, a blossom, a flower, etc. The plant differentiates itself as all of these stages but in each stage it retains its unity with itself; it is always the plantseed, the plantbud, the plantblossom, etc. The other that is posited by the plant as seed, bud, and blossom are not in fact an other but the plant itself: "The movement of the Concept must be considered, so to speak, only as a play; the other which is posited by its movement is, in fact, not an other."¹¹⁵

It is apparent that concept for Hegel is quite different than concept for the common sense. This latter usage of concept takes it as a generalization of particulars thus taking concept to be the universal and so opposes universal with particular. For Hegel, on the contrary, "What is universal about the Concept is indeed not just some thing common against which the particular stands on its own; instead the universal is what particularises (specifies) itself, remaining at home with itself in its other, in unclouded clarity."¹¹⁶ Charles Taylor remarks this difference as follows:

So obviously we are dealing with Concept in a very different sense than in Kantian philosophy, or indeed, common sense. For the latter, the concept is a tool of our knowing, a way we have of grasping reality. Our use of it is, as it were, without prejudice to the nature of reality itself. For Hegel, on the other hand, the Concept is an active principle underlying reality, making it what it is.¹¹⁷

It is seen from both of these quotes that the Hegelian concept is quite different than its common-sensical counterpart in that the Hegelian concept is not an act of

¹¹⁵ *EL*, 238.

¹¹⁶ *EL*, 240.

¹¹⁷ *Taylor*, 298.

conscious beings who collect common properties of particulars under a name and call this a concept. Rather the Hegelian concept has an active principle, it “makes” the reality: “It is not we who 'form' concepts, and in general the Concept should not be considered as something that has come to be at all. [...] the Concept is what truly comes first, and things are what they are through the activity of the Concept that dwells in them and reveals itself in them.”¹¹⁸

Although concept divides itself into three moments of “universality,” “particularity” and “singularity,” they do not stand as opposed to each other as determinations of essence stand opposed to each other: “since in the Concept their identity is posited, each of its moments can only be grasped immediately on the basis of and together with the others.”¹¹⁹ Hegel says that universality, particularity and singularity are counterparts of identity, distinction and ground respectively except that the determinations of concept are identical. The similarity follows from the fact that as ground is the unity of identity and difference while maintaining their distinctness, so is singularity the distinction of universality and particularity in their unity.

The singular concept is the Hegelian “subject” and it is also the substance: “the singular means that it is *subject*, the foundation that contains the genus and species within itself and is itself substantial.”¹²⁰ Hegel adds: “It is only the moment of singularity that posits the moments of the Concept as distinctions, inasmuch as

¹¹⁸ *EL*, 241.

¹¹⁹ *EL*, 241.

¹²⁰ *EL*, 242.

singularity is the negative inward reflection of the Concept.”¹²¹ Singularity, being the “inward negative reflection” of the concept, first distinguishes the moments of the concept as distinct. This movement is the first negation of singularity. It then posits the unity of these moments; this makes the second negation of singularity. It is the notorious “negation of negation,” which maintains identity while preserving the distinction.

Hegel's concept, says Taylor, “is the totality which moves by contradiction.”¹²² Concept as universal is self-contradictory for it distinguishes itself from particular, which, in analysis, turns out to be identical with the universal. Then universal posits its distinct moments as particulars, which turn out to be also self-contradictory for the same reason. Then concept reunites these particulars with itself. The moving force of this whole movement of the concept is, for Hegel, contradiction.

Rotenstreich says that “Philosophical tradition has brought about a separation between substance and subject. Substance has retained its original meaning of essence, that which underlies, while subject has come to mean sum total of perceptions, images and feelings that is consciousness.”¹²³ Hegelian subject, it can be said, involves both of these meanings, such that subject as that which underlies, that which acts like the essential, is also conscious of its own acts.

One concrete example of the relationship between universal, particular and singular, and how singularity maintains unity of universality and particularity in their

¹²¹ *EL*, 242.

¹²² *Taylor*, 300.

¹²³ *Rotenstreich*, 1.

distinction, is “will” as Hegel explains it in his *PR*.¹²⁴ Will as universal denies all the determinacy that it has, it declares itself as “pure indeterminacy”.¹²⁵ Hegel says: “Only *one aspect* of will is defined here – namely this *absolute possibility* of *abstracting* from every determination in which I find myself or which I have posited in myself, the flight from every content as limitation.”¹²⁶ Hegel says that will as universal is only one aspect of will where all the attributes of *I* is denied and as such *I* claims to have a “negative freedom.”¹²⁷

Will as particular, on the other hand, is also a negative. It is the negation of will as universal. Will as particular appears when *I* adds determinacy to itself: “*I* is the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to *differentiation, determination*, and the *positing* of a determinacy as a content and object.”¹²⁸ Will as particular is finitude and just like will as universal it is one sided: “The indeterminate will [will as universal] is to this extent just as one-sided as that which exists in mere determinacy [will as particular].”¹²⁹

The third moment of the will is will as singularity and it unites both of the previous moments while maintaining their distinction. Will as singular can abstract itself from all the determinations, later limit itself by determining itself and can at any point get rid of the previous determinations going once more to the will as universal. Hegel says: “The will is the unity of both of these moments – *particularity*

¹²⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, edited by Allen W. Wood, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹²⁵ *PR*, 37.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

reflected *into itself* and thereby restored to *universality*. It is individuality [or singularity], the *self-determination* of the 'I', in that it posits itself as the negative of itself, that is, as *determinate* and *limited* and at the same time remains with itself [bei sich] [...]"¹³⁰ This is what is properly called will for Hegel. In will as singularity "we are not one-sidedly within ourselves, but willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other, even while knowing ourselves in this limitation as ourselves."¹³¹

I started the chapter with Hegel's critique of "old metaphysics," which, while searching the "what is" of a thing, according to Hegel, did not give a sufficient account of the relationship between essence and appearance of that thing. Then I moved to Hegel's arguments on the mutual dependence of essence and appearance. This led the way to determinations of essence and their relation to each other. The analysis of their relations showed that each of these determinations is self-contradictory and needed a resolution from this contradiction. Ground provided a resolution to contradiction but this was only a partial resolution. Ground already made explicit the need of a wider category that would act on its own to give a necessarily related reality. This need of a wider category led the way to concept, which then turned out to be the Hegelian subject. Concept is not yet the Hegelian absolute though, it cannot exhaust the reality as such. Still, concept is the category that occupies the crucial step from ground to the absolute. So in the course of this chapter the search for what is of things ended up with the subject. Subject, then, is a crucial aspect of the necessity of reality in this picture; it is an important step to the answer for the question what a thing is.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹³¹ Ibid., 42.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCEPT OF “CAPITAL” IN MARX'S CAPITAL¹³²

The Concept of “Capital”

In the previous chapter I tried to expand how the Hegelian subject is derived from the previous categories of Logic and how this subject is related to the category of contradiction. Here in this chapter I will dwell on Marx's understanding of “capital” in the first volume of his *Capital* and try to disclose the links between Marx's capital and the Hegelian subject. I will argue that due to the kinship of these two categories, Marx shows that capital, while acting as the “automatic subject”¹³³ that creates the social reality or the capitalist society as a whole, is self-contradictory in the Hegelian sense of the word.

Capital is self-contradictory, for capital as the creator of the social reality, claims self-sufficiency while including its opposite: Capital, when it claims self-sufficiency, equates itself with the social reality that it creates and it claims this social reality (and thus itself) to be the “sphere of circulation.” So capital as a self-sufficient subject claims the social reality to be exhausted by the sphere of circulation. Yet the sphere of circulation is only part of the social reality. Indeed, opposite of the sphere of circulation, the “sphere of production,” is already included in the former.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, in Hegelian terms when a category claims self-sufficiency while—in fact—including its own opposite, that

¹³² Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1990).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 255.

category is self-contradictory and is not sufficient to give the absolute truth or the whole reality. Capital, then in Marxian terms, makes up only the part of the social reality.

In the chapter entitled “The General Formula for Capital,”¹³⁴ Marx distinguishes what he calls the direct form of circulation of commodities from the movement of capital. He symbolizes the direct form of circulation of commodities by C-M-C, which means that this circulation starts with a commodity C, which then is sold to earn a certain amount of money M. This money is later used to buy another commodity C, which completes the path. Marx also calls this path “buying in order to sell.”¹³⁵ In this path money serves its role merely as money.

The movement of capital, on the other hand, is symbolized by M-C-M. Money at the beginning of this movement is used to buy a commodity C, which in the following step is sold to get back again money M. This path, for Marx, is “selling in order to buy.”¹³⁶ Money in this path, unlike in the previous path, does not serve merely as money, it rather serves as capital: “Money which describes the latter course in its movement is transformed into capital, becomes capital, and, from the point of view of its function, already is capital.”¹³⁷ Of course if the aim of this circulation were regaining the same amount of money at the end as at the beginning, the whole circulation would be, as Marx says, “absurd and empty.”¹³⁸ Indeed, the aim of the whole circulation of M-C-M is to buy in order to sell dearer and thus should be

¹³⁴ Ibid., 247.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 247.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 248.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 248.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 248.

better symbolized as M-C-M' in order to denote that the money at the end is different or at least is aimed to be different (dearer) than the one at the beginning: "M-C-M' is therefore the general formula for capital, in the form in which it appears in the sphere of circulation."¹³⁹ Even though the aim of the first purchase M-C is to sell dearer later on C-M', the difference of the two paths would still be preserved if the money acquired as the result of sale C-M' would be equal or even less than the first money M: "And yet, whether the merchant who has paid £100 for his cotton sells it for £110, or lets it go for £100, or even £50, his money has at all events described a characteristic and original path, quite different in kind from the path of simple circulation [...]"¹⁴⁰

Money describes quite different paths in both of the circulations both in form, one being C-M-C and the other being M-C-M', and in content. The first difference in contents shows itself, in the first place, in the way money is used. In C-M-C path money, once earned from the sale of the first commodity, is spent on the second commodity and it is gone for good, there is no "reflux" of money. Whereas in M-C-M', money is not spent but it is advanced, we can talk of the reflux of money in this path. And more importantly Marx says that "Without this reflux, the operation fails"¹⁴¹

The difference of the way money is used in these two circulations is due to the difference in the purposes of them. In C-M-C, the commodity bought at the end of the circulation was already the end (purpose) of the first action of selling, so it is the use-value of the second commodity that drives the whole process. In M-C-M',

¹³⁹ Ibid., 257.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 248.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 250.

though, since the two extremes of the path are both money, the driving force of this circulation is exchange-value.

The path C-M-C proceeds from the extreme constituted by one commodity, and ends with the extreme constituted by another, which falls out of circulation and into consumption. Consumption, the satisfaction of needs, in short use-value, is therefore its final goal. The path M-C-M, however, proceeds from the extreme of money and finally returns to that same extreme. Its driving and motivating force, its determining purpose, is therefore exchange-value.¹⁴²

In C-M-C, the path is completed when the purchase of the second commodity is accomplished, for this second commodity was at the beginning of the path, the object of the satisfaction of needs. Now if the peasant sells his/her commodity again for the purpose of buying another commodity, this is the repetition of the same path and not a continuation of it. In M-C-M', on the other hand, the fact that the starting point and the end point are the same qualitatively and in a sense quantitatively (in so far as they are both determinate, limited quantities of money) makes this movement repeat itself and this repetition is endless. Each time the circulation M-C-M' is repeated, a “surplus value” is added to the original value and thus money repeatedly increases itself: The money at the beginning and the one at the end “are both limited expressions of exchange-value, and therefore both have the same vocation, to approach, by quantitative increase, as near as possible to absolute wealth.”¹⁴³

Of course in the movement of capital in the circulation M-C-M', there is also a capitalist who manages the actions. But he/she who manages the actions of purchase and sale become a capitalist if only he/she acts in line with the movement that capital itself directs. As Marx says, the capitalist is only the “conscious bearer

¹⁴² Ibid., 250.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 252.

[*Träger*]”¹⁴⁴ of this movement.

The objective content of the circulation we have been discussing-the valorization of value-is his subjective purpose, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract is the sole driving force behind his operations that he functions as a capitalist, i.e. as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will.¹⁴⁵

Marx admits that in the circulation M-C-M', value (or capital¹⁴⁶) acts as if it is itself an “automatic subject,”¹⁴⁷ a free agent that is automatic, i.e. that moves by itself.

Indeed Marx names capital as “automatic subject,” “subject,”¹⁴⁸ “dominant subject [*übergreifendes Subjekt*]”¹⁴⁹ and “self-moving substance.”¹⁵⁰ This subject Marx attributes to capital, I claim, is the Hegelian subject or singularity. Just as singularity is unity of universal and particular, where all three have identity relationship, in the same sense capital is the unity of money and commodity. In M-C-M', the singular capital is the universal money, which particularizes itself as the particular commodity and then retains its identity with the universal money again: “in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular [...]”¹⁵¹ In this quote Marx says that value (or capital) posits itself as the general (or universal) money and as the particular commodity.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 254.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 254.

¹⁴⁶ Marx here uses capital and value interchangeably and sometimes calls capital a self-valorizing value. (Marx, 255.) In fact, value becomes capital in its movement: “Value therefore now becomes value in process, money in process and as such, capital.” (Marx, 256.)

¹⁴⁷ Marx, 255.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 255.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 255.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 256.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 255.

In the following quote also, the kinship between the Hegelian concept and Marx's capital is seen: "If we pin down the specific forms of appearance assumed in turn by self-valorizing value in the course of its life, we reach the following elucidation: capital is money, capital is commodities"¹⁵² Here the identity of capital with money and commodities is like the identity of singularity with universal and particular.

C-M-C unlike M-C-M does not act as a subject because the commodity at the beginning and the one at the end are qualitatively different commodities. For something to act like Hegelian subject there has to be a negation of negation, which reassures the unity of the first element and the final element while having distinct element(s) as the middle term. Only reassurance of such a unity shows that the thing in question is a subject that acts by itself, i.e. it is an automatic subject.

Capital as the subject of capitalist society claims to create all reality, which, in this context, is the society itself. Yet Marx, with the schema of M-C-M', shows us that capital already involves production (as part of commodity) as excluded from itself. This is the underlying reason for the self-contradictory character of capital; it includes what it supposedly excludes from itself. Capital acts like a subject that makes up the whole society, but after Marx's analysis we see that capital as the self-contradictory subject is not sufficient to create whole society. Capital and production are in an essential unity and they together create the capitalist society as a whole.

¹⁵² Ibid., 255.

Much has been said about the relationship between Hegel's Logic (either *EL* or *SL*) and Marx's *Capital*. The general argument about which the discussion takes place can be very roughly summarized as this: Marx's *Capital* is a “successful application” of Hegel's Logic in the sense that Marx was inspired by the way Hegel presents the categories in his Logic and the former tried to present the categories of capitalism in a similar way in *Capital*. While this claim bears almost no discussions about the relationship between Hegel's Logic and Marx's *Grundrisse*, when the inquiry is on the relationship between Hegel's Logic and Marx's *Capital*, the discussions arise.¹⁵³

One of the scholars who focuses on the relationship in question is John Rosenthal. In his “The Escape from Hegel,”¹⁵⁴ Rosenthal not only denies the Hegel's Logic – Marx's *Capital* relationship but also belittles what he calls Hegel's “dialectical method” like in “Hegel's 'dialectical method' is not a method of logical argumentation, but a 'method' of paralogical mystification.”¹⁵⁵ and in “[Hegelian] 'Dialectics,' one might say, is the opiate of Marxist intellectuals.”¹⁵⁶

Rosenthal, indeed, admits the similarity between Marx's concept of capital and Hegel's concept of concept:

[...] formal similarities between Marx's value-analysis and Hegel's exposition

¹⁵³ One of the recent works on the relationship between *Grundrisse* and Hegel's Logic belongs to Mark E. Meaney. Meaney starts his book *Capital as Organic Unity* with the following lines: “This work seeks to demonstrate that the doctrinal content of Marx's *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf 1857/58)* is indebted for its logical form to Hegel's exposition of logical categories as found in the *Wissenschaft der Logik*.” Mark E. Meaney, *Capital as Organic Unity* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002).

¹⁵⁴ John Rosenthal, “The Escape from Hegel,” *Science & Society* 63, no. 3, (Fall 1999): 283-309.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 285.

of the “concept” is undeniable, and the “new” Hegelian Marxism has at least done a service in bringing them out. But I would submit that any inference from the existence of such similarities to the conclusion that Marx’s “method” of analysis must, then, be Hegelian in inspiration is not only unjustified, but constitutes a grave error.

He even says that the way Marx exhibits money is the “legitimate scientific application” of Hegelian idealism: “What I am proposing, on the contrary, is that it is precisely Hegel’s idealism, or rather the formulae characteristic of the latter, for which Marx, by virtue of the ontological peculiarity of money, found a legitimate scientific application.”¹⁵⁷

Yet, still, Rosenthal argues that this kinship or similarity is merely a coincidence; he says that the object of Marx’s analysis fits the Hegelian metaphysics by chance: “quite by chance – that metaphysics happens to fit.”¹⁵⁸ So while admitting the kinship between Hegel’s “concept” and Marx’s exposition of “capital” and even while claiming that Hegel’s concept found its scientific application in Marx’s analysis, Rosenthal argues that this kinship is merely a coincidence and not due to even an inspiration Hegel’s Logic caused on Marx.

Rosenthal particularly criticizes Hegel’s exposition of “concept” and its three moments of universality, particularity and individuality. He claims that Hegel’s method of deriving one category from the previous one or ones is not driven by “the dynamic of self-transcending contradiction”¹⁵⁹ but rather by “quite pedestrian pun-making.”¹⁶⁰ Rosenthal adds: “This is to say that Hegel ruthlessly exploits every possible ambiguity in the terms of his discourse. Indeed, he systematically exploits a

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 287.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 286.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 293.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 293.

remarkable set of interlocking ambiguities which are built in to the three basic 'moments' of the 'concept' that provide the architecture for his entire exposition.”¹⁶¹

Tony Smith explains that Rosenthal's criticism stems mainly from trying to apply Hegel's categories to formal logic and that this cannot be legitimately done while still staying in the Hegelian paradigm:

Many of Hegel's claims are indeed absurd when applied to formal scheme of classification. But Hegel explicitly, constantly, and repeatedly denied that the world could be adequately comprehended solely in terms of static formal classifications. Hegel's vocabulary, as obscure as it is, aims to comprehend something quite different.¹⁶²

Smith says that Hegel's categorization of universality, particularity and singularity (or individuality in some translations) is an attempt to comprehend the complex structure of reality, let alone being simple pun-making that is not in conformity with formal logical categories: “Hegel's usage of the terms 'universal,' 'particular,' and 'individual,' is perhaps the greatest attempt in the history of Western philosophy to comprehend this complexity.”¹⁶³ and “What Rosenthal dismisses as pernicious ambiguity thus can be seen as a serious attempt to comprehend the various forms of unity-in-difference making up the world's complexity.”¹⁶⁴

Smith, like Rosenthal, emphasizes the kinship of Hegel's concept and Marx's capital:

Where is capital in this M-C-(P)-C'-M' circuit? It is not enough to say that capital is a genus with money capital, production capital, and commodity capital as species. 'Capital' is the principle of unity in an on-going process that makes up a complex and dynamic totality. It has no separate existence apart from the particular forms it takes on in the circuit, and yet those

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 293.

¹⁶² Tony Smith, “On Rosenthal's 'Escape' from Hegel,” *Science & Society* 64, no. 4, (Winter 2000-2001) p. 492.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 492.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 493.

particular forms are what they are only because they are united together in a single process. [...] 'Capital' is thus a universal, a category of unity-in-difference, while remaining a particular vis-à-vis other modes of production. Hegel's *Logic* can be used to capture this complexity.¹⁶⁵

In Smith's formulation M-C-(P)-C'-M', which is the enlarged version of M-C-M' of Marx, capital is neither any of the moments that are money (M), commodity (C) as means of production (P), labor power (P), etc., the new produced commodity (C') nor money with profit (M') and all of them also. As Smith says, the vocabulary of species, genus is insufficient to explain this contradictory and moving character of capital but Hegel's concept is capable of doing the job. That is why the kinship between Hegel's concept and Marx's capital can hardly be a coincidence as Rosenthal argues.

As it has been stated, even though Rosenthal agrees on the similarity between Hegel's concept and Marx's capital, he contends that this kinship is merely a coincidental one. Indeed, Rosenthal wants to argue that Marx does not use any Hegelian “methodology” in the course of the book *Capital* as he does in *Grundrisse*: “But the methodical experimentation in 'conceptual dialectics' on the Hegelian pattern, which is so characteristic of the *Grundrisse*, is notably absent from *Capital*.”¹⁶⁶ Smith disagrees partially:

The systematic ordering in the *Grundrisse* proceeding from 'generalized commodity production' through 'money as universal commodity' to 'capital' is the same ordering found in *Capital*. The argument used to justify the transitions from one level to the next are essentially same as well. *Capital* no less than *Grundrisse*, is an attempt to reconstruct in thought the essential determinations of capitalism, moving systematically from its simplest and most abstract determinations to progressively more complex and concrete determinations.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 493.

¹⁶⁶ Rosenthal, 302.

¹⁶⁷ Smith, 496.

So Smith disagrees with Rosenthal's claim not explicitly about the whole of *Capital*, but definitely on the chapters where Marx expands the concept of capital. I also agree with Smith on this issue and this is what I have tried to show in the previous section of this chapter, namely that Marx's exposition of what capital is and how it functions are quite “compatible with” Hegel's category of concept. I cannot comment at this point on whether Marx's exposition of the whole *Capital* is inspired by Hegel's Logic, such a claim would require deeper analysis on the whole of *Capital*. With what I have expanded in this chapter, I have tried to show that the relationship between Marx's exposition of capital and Hegel's concept is not merely a coincidental similarity but rather a “methodological” preference.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the course of this work I have tried to reveal the relationship between Kant's concept of negative magnitudes, Hegel's category of essence, Hegel's concept of concept and Marx's concept of capital.

The strong relationship between these concepts, while not subsuming the philosophical stands of Kant, Hegel and Marx under one big heading, shows that they do not stand purely distinct, i.e. without any connection, to each other. I have tried to give evidence to my thesis that Hegel and Marx build at least certain aspects of their thoughts upon their predecessors, on Kant and Hegel respectively.

Kant's negative magnitudes, as Kant himself claims, is an attempt to introduce the mathematical understanding of negative numbers into the service of philosophy. An approach in philosophy that is parallel to the understanding of negative numbers and their relationship to positive numbers in mathematics provides Kant the opportunity to develop the understanding of mutually related magnitudes. These negative magnitudes are in such a particular relationship that they have a particular impact of canceling each other's effect just as negative and positive numbers cancel out each other's effect.

Kant also calls these negative magnitudes, real opposites. He distinguishes real opposites from logical opposites in the way that when the latter are connected logically they yield contradiction, whereas real opposites do not yield a contradiction. Unlike logical opposites when real opposites are predicated of the same thing, the result is not nothing at all but something. Two forces of equal

magnitude acting upon a body in opposite directions make a very good example of real opposites. When these two forces are predicated of the same body as forces acting upon it, the result is a body at rest and not nothing at all; as it would be the result of predicating same thing of logical opposites like a body in motion and in the same sense not in motion.

A very important philosophical result of real opposites, for Kant, is real ground. A real ground is not connected to its consequences through identity as logical ground is. Real ground, rather, has its peculiar way of having consequences without being identical with them. The relationship of real ground and its consequences is found between real opposites.

Although the theorization of real opposites is a crucial step for a vision of reality built upon mutually related entities, Kant does not build an ontology on real opposites.

Hegel seems to have been inspired by Kant's theory of real opposites when he developed his *Logic* and the chapter on essence in particular. In the chapter on essence Hegel builds an ontology based on mutually related opposites, essence and appearance being the first of these. These opposites, in Hegel's ontology, include their own opposites while excluding them. This means that each of these opposites claim self-subsistence and independence from its other while at the same time including this other in itself. As the result of this inclusion by exclusion each of the opposite is self-contradictory.

Contradiction is resolved in ground; each of the self-contradictory opposites is seen as grounded in a necessary relationship with its other. This necessary relationship of the ground and the grounded makes up a reality of necessarily related

opposites.

The reciprocal relationship of the ground and the grounded reflects into the concept of concept, which is the concept of subjectivity in the *Logic*. Concept makes it explicit that the reality is the reality made by a subject. Concept is not the last category of Hegel's *Logic* though and so it cannot create the reality as such. Absolute is the last category which is the unity of subjectivity with objectivity, which are the two aspects of reality.

As I have explained the details in the previous chapter, Marx must have seen that this metaphysical picture of reality and particularly the place of concept in it explains very neatly the concept of capital, which, like Hegel's concept, acts on its own to create a reality of its own. Like Hegel's concept, Marx's capital falls short of exhausting the totality and thus is self-contradictory.

Marx's use of Hegel's concept in order to explain the inner workings of capital, I claim, cannot be merely a fitting of metaphysics by coincidence as Rosenthal argues. It is rather the continuation of a metaphysical tradition. I do not claim that Marx "applies" Hegel's metaphysics as it is to his object of inquiry. I agree with Wood and Sayers that Marx benefits from Hegel's metaphysics and especially his *Logic* when he analyzes the concept of capital.

Allen Wood reminds us that Hegel's way of presenting the subject matter, namely dialectic, is not a method one can apply to any sort of presentation nor is it a method for proving a series of arguments:

But as far as the philosophical or scientific value of a dialectical system is concerned everything depends on the details of its execution, on whether the 'life of the content' really displays dialectical interconnections and tendencies, and on how well the practitioner of the dialectical method is able to establish

each specific connection and transition by good arguments.¹⁶⁸

It is not difficult to say, after having shown the connection between Hegelian subject and Marx's analysis of capital, that Marx, as a practitioner of Hegelian dialectical method, establishes the conceptual connections by quite good arguments.

¹⁶⁸ Wood, 207.

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