

The Dialectical Gyration in and between Hegel and Marx

Graduate Essay by Govert Schuller

Introduction

This paper initially intended to address discussions regarding the importance and scope of an alleged break between the early, philosophical articles of the revolutionary theoretician Karl Marx (1818-1883) and his later, mature historical-materialist socioeconomic investigations. But, because Marx in his early years dealt predominantly with the grand and influential philosophy of the German idealist Georg Hegel (1770-1831) and with the ideas of the Left Hegelians, who developed the progressive and even revolutionary strands within Hegel, the conceptualization and investigation of this 'break' morphed into a search for the proper locus of an idealism-naturalism transition within the field of the larger and more complex subject matter, which in a memetic shell could be named the 'Hegel-Marx transition', though when unpacked and put to paper, as done by many later philosophers and social thinkers, might fill quite some library shelves.

Before outlining the thesis and structure of this paper I will present an introductory sketch of the two ideal poles between which one can position the assessments of the Hegel-Marx relationship by those who looked into it.

Among some scholars, especially Althusser and those who follow him, there reigns a long-standing and conventional idea that in order to properly understand Marx's intellectual work it is not necessary to bring in Marx's historical role as an early critic of Hegel's philosophy, a philosophy which merely happened to be the dominant background of young Marx's intellectual world when he was in the formative phase of his intellectual, revolutionary career in the 1840s. Hegel's spiritual, transcendental, pan-logistic philosophy together with its political conservative and pro-Christian attributes is so fundamentally different from the atheist, revolutionary, social-economic investigations of Marx that studying Marx's critiques of Hegel—let alone reading the very works by Hegel which were critiqued by Marx—would not contribute anything to a deeper understanding of Marx's own work. As Marx engagement with Hegel was merely an accidental fact, a fluke of history to be left alone, it would not even make sense to look for a connection between the two thinkers.

On the other side there is the surprising and according to British Marxist philosopher Joseph McCarney (2000) “hyperbolic and notorious claim” by the Russian revolutionary Marxist Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) made after he had

studied Hegel's *Logic* during his WWI exile in Switzerland, that,

It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx. (Quoted in McCarney, 62; italics in original)

Hyperbolic or not, Lenin indicated that Marx picked up important ideas from Hegel and developed them further such that Hegel becomes a necessary key—if read “materialistically” casting away “God, the Absolute, the Pure Idea, etc.” (quoted in McCarney: 62)—to unlock not only the first part of *Capital*, but the whole of Marx thought. In terms of 'transition' one could argue that an essential component of Hegel's' work transferred into Marx's work, in which it became an equally essential part, though this went according to Lenin unrecognized and therefore barely appreciated.

Structure and Outline

After reading a) most of the relevant early works by Marx in conjunction with b) those parts of Hegel's philosophy he criticized; c) some of Marx's later work; and d) also many, but certainly not all, of the knowledgeable commentators, my provisional strategy to tackle the problematic of a 'break' in Marx's work or between Hegel and Marx, is to 'complexify' the field by posing several initial, probing questions and proposing a metaphor which seems to provide some space in which to answer them.

The questions range from a) the starting question, Where can one locate a 'break' in Marx? b) If there is no 'break', where is the break to be located between Marx and Hegel? c) Is there a 'break' in Hegel with one part to be rejected and another part to be incorporated into Marxism? d) Do the later commentaries address the same break or not? e) Are there different breaks, possibly at different times? f) Did a break happen retro-actively *after* Marx's death in the later work of Engels in which he arguably reconstructed the Hegel-Marx transition according to his own understanding, which was then received as the real Marxian position? g) And would it not be helpful to insert Feuerbach between Hegel and Marx as he arguably provided some of the keys to Marx to transform some of Hegel's ideas to make them acceptable within a naturalist framework?

Maybe a helpful metaphor is to see the Hegel-(Feuerbach)-Marx-(Engels) sequence as a more or less continuous bundle of ideas, some of which strands, intentionally or not, get silently dropped or explicitly refuted, and others silently or

explicitly appropriated or transformed. The preliminary hypothesis is that different commentators locate 'breaches' at different places in this uneven, bundled continuum of strands between Hegel and Marx in which there might be multiple breaks of different kinds and all evaluated differently in their importance.

The task of this paper then seems to come down, with the help of the commentators, to identify the most relevant of strands; differentiate and classify the different kinds of strands; locate possible breaks in these strands; and differentiate and classify the different kinds of breaks. It is my hope that by using this metaphor I can evaluate the ongoing debate about the question if there was a break in Marx's work set within the wider context of Marx's struggle with Hegel's philosophy.

For a starting and entry point I will take the lead from the American continental philosopher James Luchte, who proposes to see a *poetic* break in Marx's work (Luchte, 2015) in contradistinction to French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990) who made the case for an *epistemic* break in Marx's work (Althusser, 1968). Then I will go through different commentators in a chronological order starting with Marx's and Engels' own quite different perceptions of Hegel's political thought with the help of Italian Marxist philosopher Lucio Colletti (1975), then moving on to Herbert Marcuse (1941) Erich Fromm (1961), Louis Althusser (1968), and ending with Tony Burns and Ian Fraser (2000).

The above mentioned thinkers, who had access to and grappled with the relevance of Marx's *Early Works*, are the experts from whom I will try to extract the relevant ideas on the relation between an early and later Marx while taking the very important Hegelian background into consideration, a background which is so important that it almost naturally becomes foreground.

James Luchte

My point of entry into the problematic is the short paper "Into the Breach – the Meaning of 'Marx'" by James Luchte.¹ Though the paper is a very critical examination of Althusser's interpretation of Marx, Luchte makes the case that he adheres to a 'continuity theory' regarding the relationship between the early and later Marx.

1 This short paper made its way in a slightly extended form as chapter one into a longer piece titled "Marx and the Revolution of the Sacred". I copied, pasted, double-lined and paginated the chapter to keep this paper somewhat organized and referable.

Luchte develops his position by questioning Althusser's use of the classical, formal division of labor in academia between the different disciplines of poetry, philosophy and science. Althusser posits a sharp epistemological break between an early, idealist, pre-scientific, philosophical Marx and a later historical-scientific Marx. For Althusser pre-scientific philosophy is nothing more than an ideological veil or deluded interpretation of the world covering the reality which the later Marx scientifically investigated. According to Althusser the break started in *The German Ideology* and the *Theses on Feuerbach* (both written in 1845), after which Marx's work becomes thoroughly re-organized in harmony with scientific principles and should not be considered philosophical anymore. Althusser therefore is a "discontinuity theorist" (Luchte, 3). Even if a meaningful philosophy could be established, according to Althusser, it would be based on Marx's matured science some-when still in the future.

Luchte criticizes Althusser's adoption of this division of disciplines by reasoning that such a division itself is still beholden to a capitalist, alienated, ideological categorization (Luchte:9). He even depicts Althusser's take on the later purported 'scientific' Marx as similar to Hegel's Absolute Idea, because both Hegel and Althusser's Marx claim a "monologicity of meaning" in their understanding of history, "free of interpretation"(Luchte, 12). He even muses whether Althusser's thought becomes thereby "perhaps one of the vanguard of capitalist ideologies"(Luchte, 12), an accusation which seems to take a page out of the ongoing intra-Marxist debates in which contestants jockey for the most pure, revolutionary interpretation of Marx free of any capitalist ideological elements and often berate their opponents of having succumbed to such elements.

In contrast to Althusser, Luchte sees a "continuity and maturation of insights" running through the whole of Marx's oeuvre which consisted not only of, as *per* Althusser, alleged early philosophical and later scientific studies, but also included "differing topographies of expression" (Luchte:12) like poetry, magazine articles, political pamphlets and political programs within which one can detect an ongoing 'flow' of "analyses, deconstructions and actions", even to the extent that "all of Marx's later insights were originally developed in his early works" (Luchte:2). He belongs therefore to the "continuity theorists" camp (Luchte:3).

Nevertheless, Luchte does see a relevant breach happening in Marx's work, but it is not on the epistemic level, which he does not deny, but regards as quite overblown by Althusser. Luchte locates the 'event' of a breach in Marx's poetry in which he found the "emergence of a profound questioning which took place amid his first readings of Hegel, Fichte and Schelling". Luchte wrote,

That which erupts in Marx is a poetic space in which he began to explore the sense and contours of 'love' and commitment, of the sacred, a space, as with *dasein* in Heidegger or the ethical in Levinas, where an alterior sensibility is disclosed which is not articulated via the theoretical and practical 'logics' of rational organization (3).

This profound poetic questioning was obviously not conducted in a philosophical vacuum, but within the context of German Idealism, which importance is such that Luchte states the following:

... that which is most profound about Marx is precisely his relationship to and transformation of the philosophy of Hegel – and thus, of the relationship of Marx with the traditions of early German Romanticism and German Idealism. (Luchte, n.d.:13)

If I were to venture into characterizing Luchte's position I would say that Marx attained something of a non-theoretical sensibility in his very early years while grappling with German Idealism, which gave him a quite unique *attitudinal* vantage point from which he could both appropriate and transform this tradition. Initially he expressed this perspective in his poetry, then in his early philosophical works, and was still guided by those early insights while developing later his more historical, economic, proto-sociological investigations, which, though quite technical, also retained many poetic and philosophical elements.

Marx's and Engels' Take on Hegel per Colletti

From the fact that Marx never explicitly repudiated his early writings and that many of his later ideas had their origin in the early works, Luchte deduces the idea that Marx himself would not have perceived a 'breach' in his own work. If there is a break it would be with certain elements of Hegel's philosophy, even while incorporating other strands of Hegel's thought. In this section I will discuss Marx's and Engels' self-perception of the break between Hegel's dialectical spiritualism and their own dialectical materialism.

In his exhaustive and helpful foreword to Marx's *Early Writings*, which contains many of Marx's articles critically examining Hegel's philosophy, Colletti highlighted Marx's own assessment of his difference with Hegel's philosophy with the help of Marx's pithy expression penned for the afterword of the second edition of *Capital*, that

The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell. (Marx, 1873)

For Colletti it seems not so much that the oft-quoted spatial metaphor of turning Hegel 'right side up' was of crucial importance for understanding Marx's difference from Hegel, but that instead he found it more useful to focus on Marx's proposed correction of Hegel's philosophy of discarding within Hegel's dialectic method the 'mystical shell' in order to discover its 'rational kernel' (Colletti, 13). Note here that Colletti, and he is quite adamant about this point, refers to a problem Marx perceived *within* the dialectical method itself. According to Colletti Marx distinguished “two different and opposed aspects of the *Hegelian dialectic itself*—that is, two aspects of the 'method'” (Colletti:13; italics in original). This makes Marx's position quite different from Engels' critique of Hegel, which was close to, if not identical with, the position of the Left Hegelians, i.e. Hegel's dialectical method was basically correct and quite revolutionary in itself, but, because Hegel compromised with the Prussian State and produced incorrect conservative conclusions, Hegel's inherently revolutionary principles would have to be worked out anew towards the more correct revolutionary conclusions (Colletti:11). In short, whereas Engels saw Hegel's conservatism as extrinsic to Hegel's dialectic method, Marx saw it as intrinsic.

The Core: Marx's Sublation of Hegel

But what is Marx's understanding of Hegel's dialectic method in this respect? In this section I will first sketch Hegel's system and then plunge into Marx's 1844 unpublished article “Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole”, which also addresses Feuerbach's pivotal role in Marx's grappling with the deficiencies of Hegel's abstruse dialectics.

Hegel's System

Hegel's philosophy could be construed as a logicized narrative of alienation and redemption, which movement is fueled by an inner logic of *Aufhebung* (sublation, suspension) in which a particular idea or reality becomes first, and paradoxically all in one swoop, a) negated, b) lifted up and c) preserved, into its dialectical opposite, only to be sublated again—the negation of the negation—back into its starting point, though now thoroughly transformed by the whole process. It could be argued that on a grand, *ontological* level the process is a 1-2-3 motion (1. positing; 2. negation; 3. negation of the negation) and that in the *human*, historical realm this process of dialectical transformation is multiplied many times over in multi-periodic, multi-layered sequences. This dialectical movement is quite inevitable because every station on the way, every idea or reality, carries in itself the seeds of its own suspension, though for both Hegel and Marx there is a

culmination happening, or to be expected, in the historical process of man's development. For Hegel, the starting point is the Idea or Self-consciousness, which negates or externalizes itself into its opposite, i.e. material reality including humanity, which in turn is the entity in and through which the sublated Idea executes its double negation and becomes transformed into self-conscious Spirit, which realized itself on the world-historical stage in protestant Christianity in conjunction with the Prussian State of the 1820s, and especially in Hegel's own and privileged philosophical awareness of that culmination.

Feuerbach's Inversions of Hegel

Marx's criticisms of Hegel's system are initially based on the ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), whom Marx credits with “genuine discoveries” in the field of Hegel's dialectics and being the “true conqueror of the old philosophy” (Marx, 1988:144). Basically, according to Marx, Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel is that Hegel incorrectly starts--and therefore equally incorrectly finishes in the double negation--with a position which itself is already a negation (or estrangement) of something more primary and concrete. The Idea, or infinite absolute with its religious overtones, with which Hegel starts the dialectical process is nothing more than a logical abstraction of what is concrete and primary, which is for Marx the “actual, sensuous, real, finite, particular”(144), which for Hegel in turn is the negation of the Idea and therefore secondary and to be overcome. Because Feuerbach sees Hegel's abstract starting point as theological and religious, and the first negation in material reality as the realm where philosophy and science hold sway, Hegel's philosophy *qua* philosophy is therefore self-contradictory, because in the negation of the negation it negates itself as philosophy and re-instates theology and religion.

Feuerbach thus conceives the negation of the negation ... as a contradiction of philosophy with itself—the philosophy which affirms theology (the transcendent etc.) after having denied it, and which it therefore affirms in opposition to itself (Marx, 1988:144).

The implication of this false starting point for the correct understanding of man's history is that it is locked in an abstract, empty logic. According to Marx, Hegel had “only found the *abstract logical, speculative* expression for the movement of history”(145), but not the real, concrete process of history anchored by man's social relations and desires embedded in nature.

Besides criticizing Hegel for inverting the concrete and the abstract, Feuerbach also had a parallel criticism of Hegel's inversion of the subject-predicate relation,

which lead to the formulation of his influential “transformative method”.² For Hegel the concrete subject bearing the whole of history is the absolute, infinite Idea or God, which would make “real man and real nature”(162) into its mere abstract predicate. Feuerbach saw this tendency in Hegel to make out of the essential attributes of man, like thinking and self-consciousness, real living, concrete subjects, and therefore proposed to just reverse the relationship to get at the truth. In Marx's appropriation of the “transformative method” the correction is formulated such that man is not the predicate of a hypothesized self-consciousness (with its theological implications), but that self-consciousness is a predicate or attribute of the real, sensuous man (with obvious naturalist implications). In Marx's own statement, in which one has to juggle with the original Hegelian dialectical double negation together with Marx's inversion of it (adding a third complexifying negation to the whole dialectical edifice), one could make sense of the following.

If I *know* religion as *alienated* human self-consciousness, then what I know in it as religion is not my self-consciousness, but my alienated self-consciousness confirmed in it. I therefore know my own self, the self-consciousness that belongs to its very nature, confirmed not in *religion* but rather in *annihilated* and *superseded* religion.

In Hegel, therefore, the negation of the negation is not the confirmation of the true essence, effected precisely through the negation of the pseudo-essence. With him the negation of the negation is the confirmation of the pseudo-essence, or of the self-estranged essence in its denial; or it is the denial of this pseudo-essence as an objective being dwelling outside man and independent of him, and its transformation into the subject (Marx, 1988:158-9; italics in original).

Marx's Assimilation of Hegel

Important to the overall argument of this paper is the fact that Marx in his inversion of Hegel's dialectic did not enact a wholesale refutation of Hegel, but made a qualified appropriation of it, which--if one keeps in mind the paradoxical nature of sublation as both negation and preservation—was arguably itself a dialectical move in which Marx both criticized its incorrect aspects and preserved its positive elements. In the later part of his “Critique ..” he spells out two positive elements in the context of the foundational concept of estrangement (alienation).

2 It is an open question for me if the tensions and possible inversions in the pairings of Idea-Reality, Subject-Predicate, Essential-Contingent, and Concrete-Abstract, are variations of an underlying logic of the relation between Transcendence and Immanence.

According to Marx the positive elements in Hegel's dialectic were a) that Hegel saw the possibility of the annulment of estrangement (even though he incorrectly exchanged its abstract and concrete moments) and b) saw the estranged nature of the world and man's "self-estrangement" (even though incorrectly in an abstract manner and not in a concrete manner) (161). To make some sense of the quite abstruse closing paragraphs (161-8) of the article, the following:

For Hegel this world is a defective world where we do not really belong. It is the negation of our spiritual origin and the way out, back into positivity, is by overcoming the initial negation by a second one, i.e. the annulment of the estrangement. Marx turns this logic around. He accedes that the world as experienced by man seems an alien world, that the objective world is in an "estranged mode of being"(161), but then makes the case that the key in overcoming this estrangement is by *appropriating* the objective world by "annulling" its estranged *character*, and not by going beyond it by, and into, abstraction. Marx thus accedes Hegel's possibility of "[a]nnulling as an objective movement of retracting the alienation into self" but inverts the sequence of Idea-Nature-Idea to Nature-Idea-Nature. For Marx man is a this-worldly being fully embedded in nature as an integral, symbiotic part. Religion and Idealist philosophy did not realize that and made their own abstractions into living entities projected into a fictitious transcendent realm seen as both our place of origin and destiny. This redirected humanity's attention away from each other and their social and practical world towards a fictitious beyond and therefore man felt home-less and estranged. Religion therefore was the real cause of alienation, which was later amplified by the capitalist system in which the institution of private ownership of the means of production and its correlate, commodified labor, alienated man from his own essence as a practical, creative, environment-shaping, sensuous being. To overcome this estrangement Marx proposes a one-two punch. First atheism would annul religion to establish "theoretic humanism", then communism would annul private property and establish "practical humanism"(161).

In Marx's explanation of Hegel's second "positive achievement"(162) it could be argued that Marx was not just inverting Hegel's logic, but was actually pushing it to its logical, dialectical conclusion, which would entangle the development of Marx's thought even more intimately with Hegel's. Though Marx mainly paraphrases and criticizes Hegel in these last pages of the article, it is not always entirely clear whether he also sometimes develops or inverts Hegel—something which apparently created belated discussions (See Stanley, 1997). Given that slight ambiguity and opening, I will venture into an interpretation which reads

Marx as completing a dialectical sublation of Hegel. The key paragraph here is the following.

But what, then, is the Absolute Idea? It supersedes its own self again, if it does not want to traverse once more from the beginning the whole act of abstraction, and to acquiesce in being a totality of abstractions or in being the self-comprehending abstraction. But abstraction comprehending itself as abstraction knows itself to be nothing: it must abandon itself--abandon abstraction--and so it arrives at an entity which is its exact contrary—at *nature*. Thus, the entire *Logic* is the demonstration that abstract thought is nothing in itself; that the Absolute Idea is nothing in itself; that only *Nature* is something (Marx, 1988:163; italics in original).

Marx seems to make the case that Hegel's dialectical endpoint in absolute spirit is a “totality of abstractions” or a “self-comprehending abstraction”, which, because it knows itself to be empty, will have to abandon and annul itself and “so it arrives at an entity which is its exact contrary—at *nature*”(163; italics in original).

Abstraction which, made wise by experience and enlightened concerning its truth, resolves ... to *abandon itself* and to replace its selfabsorption, nothingness, generality and indeterminateness by its other-being, the particular, and the determinate; resolves to let *nature*, which it held hidden in itself only as an abstraction, as a thought-entity, *go forth freely from itself*: that is to say, abstraction resolves to forsake abstraction and to have a look at nature *free* of abstraction. (Marx, 1988:164; italics in original)

In other words, in my reading of these passages, it looks like that Marx was not merely paraphrasing Hegel's defective dialectical move from Idea to Nature, but seems to suggest—as its sub-text--how to push and finish Hegel's Idealist dialectics into a dialectical, naturalist humanism by a more radical overcoming of 'abstraction'.³ The other way to read it, and admittedly the overall intention of the closing paragraphs goes in that direction, is that Marx is still, and *only*, criticizing Hegel's dialectical move from Idea into Nature as infected with 'abstraction', that is, Hegel's nature is still “*abstract nature*, only nature as a *thought-entity*”, and that Hegel's supposed “abandonment of thought” is still “revolving solely within

3. There is another passage in which Marx seems to indicate that his naturalist humanism is based on a dialectical overcoming of the dualism between idealism and materialism. “... naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism, constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both”(154). Fromm took this quote serious. See below.

the orbit of thought, of thought devoid of eyes, of teeth, of ears, of everything”(165).

The upshot here is that it could be argued that Marx either executed a corrective inversion of Hegel, which would create some critical distance between the two systems, or executed a dialectical completion, which would imply a systemic enmeshment of their thoughts, with Marx dialectically continuing where Hegel stopped short, and with the implication that in both cases Marx's early struggle with Hegel was not only an integral part of the development of his own thought, but also a qualified continuation of Hegel's system.

Marcuse

Another possibility is to interpret the Hegel-Marx transition along the lines of the German-American thinker Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). Marcuse makes the case that the important discontinuity did not happen between Hegel and Marx, but already in Hegel's thought itself. Hegel, according to Marcuse, already made important moves towards, or even into, a dialectical materialist interpretation of history, especially in his concrete social studies (Marcuse:60, 184). Hegel's social thinking was already driven by a “conception of the world as a product of human activity and knowledge”(39), in which the concept of alienated labor is pivotal (78). Marcuse's Hegel also sees that a social order based on “blind economic mechanisms” causes the “irreconcilable contradictions of modern society” and that such system will not be able to establish “a rational community”. Marcuse credits Hegel to be the first one to acknowledge the contradictions inherent in an individualistic market system, though Hegel wants a strong state to overcome its problematic nature (60-61). Reading these passage it is quite clear that Marcuse's Hegel, except for minor issues, already thinks within a dialectical materialist framework centered around man as a world-transformative agent through his labor, and sees the necessity to overcome the contradictions of the market-based social order. Hegel in Marcuse's depiction is therefore not necessarily exclusively an idealist and certainly not a conservative.

Later commentators of Marcuse's engagement with Hegel observed a contradiction within Marcuse's assessment of Hegel between the above mentioned dialectical materialist insights and Marcuse's “official judgment” that Hegel was still beholden to his idealist metaphysics. In the end, and in harmony with Marx's “canonical” self-perception of his break with Hegel, Marcuse goes with the general view that it was Marx who surpassed Hegel's idealism, not Hegel himself as Marcuse's own more detailed investigations seemed to suggest (McCarney:61-2; see also Burns and Fraser:12-3).

Fromm

This section will get us back again into the question of continuity within Marx's own thought with the help of German social thinker Erich Fromm (1900-1980), who, like Marcuse, had a background in the Frankfurter Schule and embraced a Marxist “existentialist humanism”. He published in 1961 large parts of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (EPM here after) within a study titled *Marx's Concept of Man*, in which he makes the case that the “central issue” of Marx's philosophy is the “real individual man” and what he or she concretely is and does and changes through history (Fromm:v); that this humanist concept of “productive” man was best expressed in this early work (v); that this concept, from EPM to *The German Ideology* to *Capital*, never changed (74-75); and that Marx's criticism of capitalism and promotion of socialism could not be adequately understood without this foundational concept of man as worked out in his early works (79). Fromm stresses Marx's ongoing concern for man's self-realization and freedom through overcoming the alienation of man from his labor and fellow men caused by the capitalist division of labor (43-58). Fromm developed this position also by contrasting it polemically with other western Marxists and Russian Communists, who all downplayed Marx's early works with its humanist concept of man, in favor of more abstract sociological concepts like class and economic forces, thereby rationalizing their own theoretical and real disregard--even more than in the capitalist system--for the concrete individual (70-75).

Besides making the case for the ongoing importance of Marx's humanist concept of man throughout his whole *oeuvre*, Fromm also makes the case that Marx actually picked up these ideas from an already established rich tradition with its roots in “Prophetic Messianism”, carried over by Spinoza, Goethe and Hegel with the latter giving it its “most systemic and profound expression”(29). In Fromm's own words the central idea is of

... the productive man, of the individual who is *he*, inasmuch as he is not passive-receptive, but actively related to the world; who is an individual only in this process of grasping the world productively, and thus making it his own. For Hegel the development of all individual powers, capacities and potentialities is possible only by continuous action, never by sheer contemplation or receptivity. For Spinoza, Goethe, Hegel, as well as for Marx, man is alive only inasmuch as he is productive, inasmuch as he grasps the world outside of himself in the act of expressing his own specific human powers, and of grasping the world with these powers. (Fromm:29; italics in original)

Like with Marcuse, who is approvingly quoted by Fromm on Hegel's technicalities, there is the idea that Hegel did some foundational work on the topics of man's "self-activity", labor, alienation, and its overcoming, such that Marx could appropriate this big chunk of Hegel's thought and incorporate it by cutting it out of its idealist origin and setting it in a atheist, humanist framework. Actually, Fromm seems to interpret this move by Marx as a proper dialectical move operated upon Hegel's idealism. Fromm takes serious and elaborates on a passage in Marx's *EPM* in which Marx states that his "... naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism, constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both"(Marx, 1988:154). The materialism apparently sublated here is a positivist, mechanical, bourgeois, abstract materialism which excluded man's self-activity set within the concrete historical process of "the real economic and social life of man and of the influence of man's actual way of life on this thinking and feeling"(Fromm:9). The dialectical character of this move is that idealism and its negation in crude materialism is overcome by a synthesis in which both are negated, lifted up and preserved in a naturalist humanism. In this dialectical sequence Marx's philosophy is not the refutation or negation of idealism, but the synthesis of idealism and its anti-thesis, crude materialism. In short, Marx's early work on Hegel is both content-wise and methodologically a critical, dialectical continuation of Hegel.

Althusser

Althusser's concept of an epistemic break within Marx's work was already discussed above in the context of Luchte's 'continuity theory'. The positive aspect of the break was the establishment of the wholly new science of history, a "scientific discovery without historical precedent, in its nature and effects"(Althusser, 1970:14), which slowly but steadily happened starting in 1845 and finding its fulfillment in about 1875. Its correlative negative aspect was Marx's break with pre-scientific ideologies in general and Hegelianism in particular. In Althusser's preface to the French translation of the first volume of Marx's *Capital* he stated that, though the rupture with Hegel could be discerned in Marx's 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*, Marx was not necessarily fully aware of that and that he "needed a very long period of revolutionary work before he managed to register the rupture"(Althusser, 1971:93). Traces of Hegelianism remained throughout his mature writings and only were decisively overcome in his later work. In the metaphor of continental drift, which Althusser employed, the first crack between the newly to be formed continent and the landmass from which it broke away happened in 1845 and was barely perceivable. Then around 1875 the new continent was totally detached

and irreversibly drifting away.

The implication here is that, because Marx's break with Idealism only started to happen in 1845, that his pre-1845 writings like *EMP* were still within the ban of Idealism, and, even though they were critical of Hegel, were still ideological and pre-scientific. The decisive break is in Marx's own work and the early Marx consists of variations of German Idealism. Althusser's more detailed assessment of the relationship of Marx early writings with Hegel can be found in Althusser's *For Marx*, in which he made the case that “the Young Marx was *never strictly speaking a Hegelian*”, except in one singular, unique text, *EPM*, which was “the most extreme test of the 'inversion' of Hegel ever attempted”(Althusser, 1970:35; italics in original), though this text was not the locus of Marx's break-through and transformation as many perceive it to be.

[Marx] had always kept his distance from Hegel, and to grasp the movement whereby he passed from his *Hegelian university studies* to a Kantian-Fichtean problematic and thence to a Feuerbachian problematic, we must realize that, far from being close to Hegel, Marx moved *further and further away from him* (Althusser, 1970:35; italics in original).

Fraser and Burns

The last commentators for whom there is room in this paper are the British Hegel and Marx scholars Ian Fraser and Tony Burns who compiled the very helpful *The Hegel Marx Connection*. They open their insightful introductory essay with an apt quote from erstwhile Marxist and later anti-communist Sidney Hook, which truth I am now quite aware of, that to “conjoin . . . the names Hegel and Marx . . . is not so much to express a relationship as to raise a problem – one of the most challenging problems in the history of thought” (Fraser & Burns:1). To make sense of the diverse positions trying to understand this problematic and complex relationship they propose to initially categorize them in two camps: those who *appropriate* Hegel into Marx and those who *expunge* Hegel from Marx. The first see the importance of Hegel's principles of dialectics, but then recast in a humanist frame, while the second group would reject any use of Hegel's dialectics because it is still problematically enmeshed with idealist metaphysics.

Though there are many variations within the two categories, Burns and Fraser see a recent emergence of a third alternative, which seems to me a variation of the appropriation agenda. This alternative would reject the assumption shared by the first two groups of the idea that “Marx is a materialist, [and] Hegel is an *idealist*” and would interpret Hegel's economic, social and political writings as

already materialist. Burns and Fraser think this position of Hegelian materialism was initially 'hinted' (20) at in the thoughts of Lenin, Lukács and Marcuse, and then developed by more contemporary thinkers, but my reading above suggests that at least Marcuse was explicitly taking that position already. He might not have fully develop it, at least he made some big strides in that direction.

As we saw in the case of Marcuse and Fromm, who would belong to the first (or third) group, it looks strongly that the Hegel-Marx 'appropriationists' would also adhere to a 'continuity theory' in Marx's own work by the logic that the young Marx picked up useful elements in Hegel's thought, which subsequently continued to be integral to Marx development. The mirror image is to be found in Althusser, who seems to be both the 'expunger' and 'discontinuity theorist' *par excellence*.

Conclusion

Given the obvious complexity of the subject matter, it will maybe be forgiven that a neat conclusion of this topic is well nigh impossible. Sticking to my initial metaphor to see the continuities and discontinuities within Marx work and within the inevitably closely connected Hegel-Marx transition as a bundle of ideas of which some go through fundamental changes (or not) at different moments, and are evaluated differently depending on who is looking, I will venture into the proposal that there are three major strands, each with a multiple amount of threads themselves. I will try to organize and name the threads while also naming those who could be associated with them.

The major strands are A) ontology, B) methodology, and C) content.

The two major components of the ontological strand are A.1) Idealism and its opposite A.2) Materialism. Most commentators seem to incorporate this simple dichotomy as a basic assumption, though Marx, and Fromm following him, would make a tripartite differentiation of A.1) idealism, A.2') its antithesis, crude materialism and their synthesis in A.3) naturalist humanism, which overcomes the subject-object dualism in a concept in which man and his social and natural environment continually co-create and transform each other.

The two major components of the methodological strand are B.1) dialectics and B.2) science, with many variations in between (see below), and a minor third methodology of accessing the whole subject matter, and that is through B.3) a non-theoretical, poetic sensibility (Luchte).

Content-wise one could create a quite long list, but the major contenders would

be C.1) productive, self-active man, C.2) a. alienated labor and b. freedom, C.3) man's a. social, b. economic and c. political life, C.4) a. thought and b. consciousness, C.5) a. biological and b. physical nature.

Though I think that Fromm is right to perceive the central issue in both Hegel and Marx to be man's self-realization and freedom, the deeper methodological issue by which much is decided is that of the dialectical method. It seems to be this specific topic on which all thinkers have widely different ideas and even adhere to different versions within their own thought.

The first simple differentiation is between B.1.a) Hegelian Idealist dialectics and B.1.b) Marxist, naturalist dialectics.

The second differentiation concerns the *where* of the idealism-naturalism transition with the possibilities of placing it in B.1.x) Hegel (Marcuse), B.1.y) in Feuerbach (Marx), or B.1.z) in Marx (Althusser).

The third differentiation concerns the *how* of the transition with the possibilities of B.1.k) partial assimilation/appropriation (Marx, Engels), B.1.l) dialectical continuation/radicalization (early Marx, Fromm), B.1.m) inversion (Marx, Feuerbach), and rejection (Althusser).

Then, within the dialectical radicalization thread one can see this happening either in B.1.l.a) a one stroke radicalized sublation of Hegel's abstract system into naturalism as I suggest to read EPM, or B.1.l.b) a two stroke dialectical sequence from Hegelian Idealism to crude materialism to naturalist humanism (Marx, Fromm).

Also, within the appropriation thread there is the difference between B.1.k.a) assimilating the revolutionary, dialectical method wholesale but shedding the conservative conclusions (Engels), and B.1.k.b) assimilating only the rational core of the method but shedding its mystical shell (Marx).

And, as a hopefully last differentiation, one can see both the difference and similarity within the inversion thread between B.1.m.a) the abstract-concrete inversion (Marx, Feuerbach), and B.1.m.b) the subject-predicate inversion (Marx, Feuerbach).

Is there a simple summation possible of these concluding observations such that the whole topic can be nicely wrapped up in a meme? I don't think so, though my preference goes towards Marcuse's Hegelian materialism and its dialectical radicalization in Marx.

Origin

This graduate essay was written for the class "Nineteenth Century European Philosophy" (CSPH7046) under Dr. Adrian Davis at the University of Wales in the fall of 2015.

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