

This article argues that while the limitations of Hegel's political reconciliation with existing reality has long been evident, the depth of Marx's challenge to capital cannot be fully comprehended, let alone restated for today, without a re-encounter with Marx's rootedness in and transcendence of Hegel's concept of absolute negativity. The need to go beyond critiques of private property and the market by projecting ground for the negation of capital creates a compulsion to return to Hegel at his most 'abstract' level—the Absolute.

POLEMIC

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The Dialectical Structure of Marx's Concept of 'Revolution in Permanence'

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* last year seemed to have brought with it a shock of recognition concerning the timeliness of Marx's critique of existing capitalism. For some, the *Manifesto's* discussion of the relentless drive of capital for self-expansion makes it 'the most concise and thrilling account of a process that creates havoc in the contemporary world, the inexorable pressure of globalization.' For others, the *Manifesto's* description of 'a class of labourers who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital,' makes it the best 'characterization of capitalism at the end of the 20th century currently available.'¹

An increasingly number of theorists, journalists, and even establishment pundits are acknowledging the *Manifesto's* presence in describing the nature of the social conditions manifested by the present stage

of capital. Yet at the same time, there is another side to the Marxian critique which, while less pronounced in recent discussions, is also gaining new attention—the way in which Marx provides direction for envi-

sioning and actualizing the *abolition* of capital itself. In the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism and failure of Social-Democracy, it has become increasingly evident that focusing on the elimination of the *personifications* of capital, while leaving capital itself intact, in no way ensures the forward movement of humanity. The compelling and yet profoundly difficult question of how to project the abolition of capital in light of present conditions underlines much of the growing sense that the time has come to return with new eyes to Marx.

Few have recently articulated this more forcefully than István Mészáros in *Beyond Capital*:

Today, in light of the 20th century historical experience and the failure of all past attempts to overcome the dehumanizing constraints and contradictions of capitalism, the meaning of radical negation can only be defined as a subordinate moment of the positive project of labour's hegemonic alternative to capital itself... without the proper target of the strategic offensive—orientated towards the socialist order as a hegemonic alternative to the existent—the journey itself is without a compass. And we certainly cannot afford the luxury of wandering for another century and a half in the blind alley of trying to produce structural changes within the paralyzing confines of the capital system... what is most unreal is not the socialist hegemonic alternative to the rule of capital in all of its historically known and still feasible forms, but the gratuitous projection that humankind can survive much longer within the necessarily destructive structural limits of the established mode of social metabolic reproduction (Mészáros 1995: 793).

It is here, concerning the need to develop a positive alternative to the power of capital,

that we find the central theoretic and practical problem of our time. The compulsion to develop a comprehensive alternative to capitalism in both its 'free market' and statified forms has never been more pressing, and yet never in graver crisis. We need to ask, however, whether it is possible to fully develop a liberatory alternative to capital without a renewed internalization of the Hegelian dialectic, from which Marx developed his concept of 'revolution in permanence'? Can the task of envisioning the abolition of capital be achieved without overcoming the endemic hostility to dialectical philosophy which inheres in so much of post-Marx Marxism?

These are by no means academic questions. For while many are today trying to return to Marx, relatively few are doing so through a deeper return to Hegel's dialectic. Whether it be the postmodernist 'return' to Marx à la Derrida, or new discussions of Marx from those associated with Critical Theory or Orthodox Marxism, the importance of Hegel's dialectic for comprehending and restating Marx's revolutionary vision is being largely passed open. This predominates, despite Marx's insistence in *Capital* that the Hegelian dialectic 'remains the source of all dialectic' (Marx 1976a: 102, 744). In some respects today's situation contrasts with earlier periods, when a compulsion was felt to hew a path out of the seemingly insuperable barriers facing the Marxist movement by turning anew to Hegel. It was true of Lenin in 1914, who responded to the collapse of established Marxism at the outbreak of World War I by delving deeply into Hegel's *Science of Logic*. It was true of the Frankfurt School and French neo-Marxists of the 1930s and 1940s, who turned to Hegel in a period defined by fascism and the rise of Stalinism. And it was true in the 1950s, when in the face of the new challenges posed by the

post-World War II era thinkers in East Europe and the West developed the philosophy of Marxist Humanism through a direct encounter with the Hegelian dialectic. Today, on the other hand, where Hegelian dialectics is not passed over or taken for granted, it is often treated as little more than the object of Marx's critique. Many, including Mészáros himself, argue that Hegel's all-important concept of 'Absolute Spirit' is little more than an intellectual expression for the universalization of capital.² The need to combat the notion that there is no alternative to the hegemonic power of capital calls upon us, in this view, to cast off the shadow of the Hegelian incubus. In this sense, the effort 'to drive Hegel back into the dead of night' has resurfaced today, albeit in a somewhat different form than earlier articulated by Althusser.

This article posits an alternative argument —namely, that while the limitations of Hegel's *political* reconciliation with existing reality has long been evident, the depth of Marx's challenge to capital cannot be fully comprehended, let alone restated for today's realities, without a re-encounter with Marx's rootedness in and transcendence of Hegel's dialectical *philosophy*. For no writing of Marx is this truer than of the *Communist Manifesto* itself. Precisely because it is a *political* document, written, as Marx and Engels emphasized, 'under the conditions obtaining at the time,' it becomes all-too-easy to view it in terms of its political and economic conclusions without regard to the underlying dialectical categories. For this reason, to gain full illumination on the meaning of the *Manifesto*, we need to roll the film back a few years to those works which gave rise to the concepts that set the dialectical structure for the notion of 'revolution in permanence' which is politicized in the *Manifesto* itself.

1. Transforming Hegel's Revolution in Philosophy into a Philosophy of Revolution

A huge body of literature has been developed concerning the path which took Marx from a critic of Hegel his early writings to his ensuing discovery of the proletariat as a class and engagement in the critique of political economy. However, the importance of Marx's critical appropriation of Hegel's dialectic for his concept of 'revolution in permanence,' especially as developed from 1848-50, is often passed over. For instance, though Hal Draper devotes considerable attention to this period in his multi-volume *Marx's Theory of Revolution*, and includes a detailed discussion of each of Marx and Engels' use of the term 'revolution in permanence,' he pays scant attention to the Hegelian inheritance, scornfully dismissing it as something Marx 'sloughed off' as he clarified his new world view (Draper, 1977: 94).

It therefore becomes important to recall how Marx's encounter with Hegel impacted even the most concrete issues, such as the concept of capital and what is needed for its abolition. This is especially powerfully developed in Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. As is well known, Marx (following classical political economy) here defined capital as congealed labour. However, as he makes clear from the start of the 1844 Manuscripts, capital is not the congelation of any kind of labour. Capital is the congelation of abstract, alienated labour. As he says in the Second Manuscript, capital is the expression of 'a special sort of work [which is] indifferent to its content, of complete being-for-self, of abstraction from all other being' (Marx 1975: 286). Though Marx has not yet developed his concept of the dual character

of labour which becomes so central to *Capital* (and which he defined as his unique contribution to the critique of political economy), in 1844 he already defines capital as congealed abstract labour. He writes in the First Manuscript,

The proletarian...lives purely by labour, and by a one-sided, abstract labour...what in the evolution of mankind is the meaning of this reduction of the greater part of mankind to abstract labour?...Political economy considers labour in the abstract as a thing, labour as a commodity...Capital is stored up labour (pp.241, 247).

The mechanism used to force the worker to live 'purely by labour' is of course the private appropriation of the means of production. By tearing the labourers from their connection to their 'natural workshop' of the land, capitalism forces workers to sell their labour to the private possessor of capital. Yet Marx shows that the abolition of private property does not necessarily lead to the abolition of capital. To liberate the worker, he shows, we must go deeper than the property relation and deal with 'the direct relation of the worker and production.' After noting that workers are alienated from the product of their labour, Marx shows that the source of this inequity lies in the alienated character of labour itself. By reducing labour to a mere means to earn a living, in which all joy and satisfaction is banished, the worker no longer feels at home in her own labour. This necessitates the existence of an alien class which extracts *forced* labour from the workers. Marx writes, 'Private property is thus the result, the necessary consequence of alienated labour, of the external relation of the workers to nature and to himself...though private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labour, it is rather its

consequence, just as the gods are originally not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion' (p.279). Marx concludes that while private property is an evil that must be abolished, that is not the crux. The crux is the need to abolish capital itself, through the creation of freely associated labour.

While all this is clear enough, what may not be as clear is how much these concepts are rooted in Marx's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic. Marx's expression that capital is the expression of 'a special sort of work [which is] indifferent to its content, of complete being-for-self, of abstraction from all other being,' should right away alert the reader that he is utilizing Hegelian categories to describe the nature of capital. Capital, as self-expanding value, is 'indifferent' to otherness, be it of nature or human sensuousness, which it seeks to subsume under its self-movement; yet at the same time, capital must take on a material, externalized form. Hegel presents a similar dynamic in discussing 'being-for-self' in the *Science of Logic*:

We say that something is for itself in so far as it transcends otherness, its connection and community with other, has repelled them and made abstraction from them... Being for self is the polemical, negative attitude towards the limiting other, and through this negation of the latter is a reflectedness-into-self, although along with this return of consciousness into itself and the ideality of the object, the reality of the object is also still preserved, in that it is at the same time known as an external existence (Hegel 1989: 158).

There is little question that throughout the Manuscripts, Hegelian categories play a crucial role in Marx's effort to delineate the logic of capital—something which later

takes on even greater significance in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. Yet this does not mean that Hegel was important to Marx only insofar as his dialectic helps reveal the nature of capital. For Hegel's dialectic also impacted Marx's conception of what is needed to *abolish* capital. This is seen from Marx's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic of negativity 'as the moving and creating principle' in his 1844 Manuscripts. In Hegel, all movement proceeds through the power of negativity, the negation of obstacles to the subject's self-development. The actual transcendence of these obstacles is reached, not simply through the negation of their immediate and external forms of appearance (which Hegel calls first negation), but through 'the negation of the negation.' In the 'negation of the negation,' the power of negativity gets turned back upon the self, upon the internal as well as external barriers to self-movement. This movement through the negation of the negation, or absolute negativity, is what produces the positive, the transcendence of alienation; in Hegel second negativity 'is the innermost and most objective moment of life and spirit, by virtue of which a subject is personal and free' (Hegel 1989: 830). As he wrote in the *Science of Logic*,

But in all this, care must be taken to distinguish between the *first* negation as negation *in general*, and the second negation, the negation of the negation: the latter is concrete, absolute negativity, just as the former on the contrary is only *abstract* negativity (Hegel 1989: 115-6).

In the third Manuscript of 1844, Marx appropriates this concept of transcendence of alienation through second negativity to express the process by which capital can be abolished. The first negation, he says, is the abolition of private property. Yet this

negation by no means ensures liberation; on the contrary, Marx says, 'this type of abolition of private property is...only a retrogression, a sham universality.' He refers to this kind of negation as 'the *abstract* negation of the entire world of culture and civilization' (p.295). This 'vulgar communist' negation of private property, Marx says, must itself be negated in order to reach true liberation. Whether this type of communism is 'democratic or despotic,' Marx says, makes no difference; it is still defective because it is infected with its opposite in reducing everything to the question of property.³ To abolish capital, the first negation of private property must itself be negated. Only then, he says, will there arise 'positive Humanism, beginning from itself.' For this reason, Marx defines genuine communism (which he calls 'a thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism') as 'the position of the negation of the negation' (p.306).

Marx makes explicit just how much his new humanism is rooted in Hegel's dialectic in the final part of the Third Manuscript, the 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic.' He here takes on Hegel by focusing on the concluding chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, entitled 'Absolute Knowledge.' In this chapter Hegel most fully presents his concept of self-movement through the process of self-reflected negativity, showing that the result of this journey of discovery is a 'new world' freed from the forms of alienation which permeate the prior stages of the *Phenomenology* (Hegel 1977: 492). Marx is scathingly critical of Hegel's way of putting this, for he sees that Hegel is suggesting that the world of actual existence is the result of a purely logical movement. Like Feuerbach, Marx rejects as an idealist illusion any suggestion that actual, positive existence is the result of some 'spiritual' or logical movement through double negation. Marx's

point is that because Hegel dehumanizes the *subject* of the dialectic, in presenting it as mere disembodied consciousness instead of live men and women, transcendence in Hegel becomes a mere reflection of abstract thought upon itself. The transcendence of alienation is therefore obtained at the price of the transcendence of objectivity. This means, Marx argues, that Hegel's concept of self-movement through double negation becomes an idealist abstraction which leaves the actual alienations in the real world untouched. Therein, he says, lies Hegel's 'uncritical positivism and extant empiricism.' However, Marx does not leave his discussion of Hegel with this critique, as did Feuerbach and as most Marxist critics of Hegel do to this day. For instead of completely rejecting Hegel's concept of self-movement through second negativity, Marx sees that it contains a key insight in that the transcendence of alienation, or 'positive humanism, beginning from itself,' is reached only as a result of a movement through *second* negativity. Marx writes,

Feuerbach this conceives the negation of the negation *only* as the contradiction of philosophy with itself—as the philosophy which affirms Theology (the transcendent, etc.) after having denied it... But because Hegel has conceived the negation of the negation from the point of view of the positive relation inherent in it, ... to that extent he has discovered, though only as an *abstract, logical, and speculative* expression, the movement of history (Marx 1958: 308).⁴

Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., is one of the few to have captured the depth of the new concept of revolutionary humanism born from Marx's critical appropriation of Hegel's concept of self-movement through second negativity. As she wrote in her *Philosophy*

and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao,

The integrality of philosophy and economics manifests itself most sharply in the fact that Marx's counterposition of his Humanist philosophy to that of Communism comes, not in the 'economic' essays, but in his 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic.' This occurs, moreover, at the very point at which, in opposition to Feuerbach's criticism of 'the negation of the negation' as if were mere mystification, an excuse for the philosopher to return to religion, Marx lays great emphasis on 'the *positive* moments of the Hegelian Dialectic,'—'transcendence as objective movement,' absolute negativity as the 'moving and creative principle'. The confrontation with this absolute negativity ... is what Marx considered the only way to create a truly human world, 'positive Humanism, beginning from itself' (Dunayevskaya 1989a: 54).

With this conception self-movement through absolute negativity in hand, Marx's 1844 Manuscripts projects a truly new and revolutionary world conception, one which takes him far from the positions held by other socialists and communists of the time. The process of revolutionary transformation is seen by him not as a singular act, as the negation of private property and political overthrow of the bourgeoisie, necessary as that of course is, but as a consistently self-critical *social* revolution, that is, as a process of *permanent* revolution. Though many of the political ramifications of this concept were not spelled out until afterward, when Marx was confronted with specific political tendencies and issues posed by the forces of liberation, the concept of 'revolution in permanence' is born right here, in Marx's appropriation of Hegel's concept of self-critical movement through absolute negativity.

Dunayevskaya presented a new way of viewing this in one of her last writings in 1987, in calling Marx's 1844 Manuscripts 'the philosophic moment' for his entire body of work. Each of his subsequent major developments, she argued, be it on economics, philosophy or politics, was contained, however much in embryo, in Marx's 1844 'unchaining' of the dialectic, in which he transformed Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution (Dunayevskaya 1989b: 3-7).

II. The Politicalization of a New World View

So what does all this have to do with the *Communist Manifesto*? After all, it seems to have little or no direct relation to the 1844 Manuscripts. Neither Hegel, dialectic, nor humanism is once mentioned in it. If we are to accept the standard view, Hegelian conceptions were essentially left behind by this point, only (at best) to later return when Marx sought to explicate the nature of capital in his economic works.

A careful reading of the *Manifesto*, however, reveals the presence of underlying dialectical categories. Take one of its most famous lines—'the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property' (Marx 1976b: 498). It may seem that Marx has muted, if not moved away from, his perspective of 1844, in that the abolition of private property seems to be posed not just as a mediatory stage, but as the goal itself. However, a closer look at the text reveals a different truth. Marx focuses on the need to negate the institution of private property because it is the most *immediate* expression of the power of bourgeois society over the worker. Through the bourgeois property relation, the worker is forced to sell herself for a wage to the

owners of capital, who appropriate the products of her productive activity. Without the abolition of this property relation, the economic and political domination of the bourgeoisie remains unchallenged. However, this does not mean Marx has forgotten about the conditions that help create and shape alienated labour. Though the phrase 'alienated labour' nowhere appears in the *Manifesto*, Marx singles out the need to *uproot* the conditions of labour. *Before* the getting to the need to abolish private property he writes,

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him... as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases (Marx 1976b: 490-91).

In another passage that is strikingly reminiscent of the language found in the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx says 'In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality' (p.499). Marx continues in this vein by asserting that the abolition of this condition is the essence of proletarian revolution: 'The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation' (p.495). Only *after* saying this does he write:

The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the

final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few. In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property (p.498).

Far too many have read the *Manifesto* selectively, skipping over the phrase 'In this sense' in the last sentence and the word 'But' in the previous one. It is reflected in the way so many have fetishized the question of property forms without entering into the critical exploration of capitalism's *human* relations. But the problem goes deeper than mere inattentiveness to text. Because private property is the most immediate expression of oppression, it is all-too-easy to remain stuck at its phenomenal level, without penetrating deeper into the underlying contradictions. As Karel Kosik (1976) noted in *Dialectics of the Concrete*, the 'thing-itself' does not present itself to consciousness immediately; grasping it requires a detour, a dialectical process of reflection and mediation. The nature of capital as a social form certainly does not show itself to us immediately; its immanent drive and inequities show themselves through an array of mediatory forms, such as property relations and class formations. The critical question, as Kosik noted, is to engage in the labour of disentangling the mediatory forms without becoming so lost in them that access is barred to comprehension of the essential determinants. It is precisely here where dialectical cognition takes on critical importance.

The difficulty of measuring up to this is reflected in the differences between Marx and some of his closest followers on this issue, including Engels. In his initial outline for the *Manifesto*, the October 1847

'Principles of Communism' which Marx put aside, Engels wrote:

When all capital, all production, and all exchange are concentrated in the hands of the nation, private ownership will automatically have ceased to exist, money will have become superfluous, and production will have so increased and people will be so much changed that the last forms of the old social relations will also be able to fall away... Through society's taking out of the hands of the private capitalists the use of all the productive forces and means of communication as well as the exchange and distribution of products and managing them according to a plan corresponding to the means available and the needs of the whole of society, all the evil consequences of the present running of the system of large-scale industry will be done away with (Engels 1976: 352).

Neither this document nor Engels' earlier 'Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith' (June 1847) emphasizes that the abolition of private property is but a step towards the transformation of the labour process; the underlying sense of the need to effect a second negation, which is present in Marx's text, does not come out from Engels's. At least at this stage in his development, Engels appears to have held a divergent position from Marx on this issue. Whether or not this was true of the later Engels, many contemporary Marxists continue to show a lack of comprehension concerning the real object of Marx's critique of capital. Even after the experience of this century has made it painfully evident that the abolition of private property without the abolition of the value-form of labour leads to the most horrific of despotisms, as aptly proven by the experience of the state-capitalist regimes which called themselves 'Communist,' we

still have 'independent' radicals arguing that 'The attack on all private property in the means of production sets the proletarian revolution apart from its predecessors... it is because the finished forms of the socialist order cannot be generated within the boundaries of private property that the tasks and historical rhythm of the socialist revolution differ so markedly from those of its predecessors!' (Ehrenberg 1998: 88). It is one more expression of what happens when the concrete categories discussed by Marx are treated empirically, without regard for their relation to the underlying dialectic of negativity.

The need to look beyond the immediate forms of oppression is so central to the *Manifesto* that it underlines its very definition of the role of communists. Marx spells this out in Part 2 of the *Manifesto*, dealing with 'the relation of communists to the proletarians as a whole.' Most discussions of the *Manifesto* tend to emphasize the importance of Marx's belief in the need for a political party of the proletariat independent of other class formations. Marx, however, does not limit himself to defining the role of communists as calling for independent proletarian political action. He singles out the distinctive contributions of communists as: 1) Internationalism instead of nationalism;⁵ and 2) 'always and everywhere [they] represent the interests of the movement as a whole.' He spells this out further as, 'The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement' (p.518). So much for the claim that Marx's hostility to utopianism meant he opposed projecting a vision of the future! Marx's discussion of this indicates that his concept of organization is broader than most

assume, in that he ties organizational responsibility to the projection of a vision of the future.

Marx made this statement on the future as a conclusion to a section of the *Manifesto* which distinguishes the position of communists from that of other tendencies in the radical movement. The power of negativity is here directed not at the class enemy, at capitalism, but rather at those tendencies *within* the workers' movement whose negation and transcendence become imperative to ensure the full development of the workers' struggle. In doing so, the *Manifesto* resonates with the need to break from all which stands in the way of a *second* negation, which he had earlier projected in the 1844 Manuscripts.

Clearly, this is not projected abstractly, but on the basis of actual forces of liberation. It underlines Marx's projection of the historical initiative and creativity of the proletariat. It also underlines his focus on the liberation of women. In the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx wrote that the man/woman relation reveals 'the extent to which the human essence has become nature to man... from this relationship one can therefore judge man's whole level of development' (Marx 1975: 296). Though some have viewed this as a reiteration of Fourier's view, it is more accurate to view it as a position specific to Marx. As Simone de Beauvoir noted in *The Second Sex*, 'Fourier confused the emancipation of women with the rehabilitation of the flesh, demanding for every individual the right to yield to the call of passion and wishing to replace marriage with love; he considered women not as a person but only in her amorous function' (De Beauvoir 1953: 103). Marx is suggesting something quite different from Fourier's view of the 'natural relation' between the sexes, in that he is focusing on the *social* relation between men and women

as the *measure* of how free any society truly is. The existence of inequities in that relation, Marx says, is proof that the negation of private property has been only an 'abstract negation' (Marx 1975: 295) which leaves the inner structure of alienation untouched. The *Manifesto* does not contain any expression on the man/woman relation as striking as in the 1844 Manuscripts. Yet it does contain a powerful critique of the family as well as the statement that 'the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.' As against the notion that all social ills are 'rooted in private property and falls with it,' the *Manifesto* posits a *total* uprooting of the old by singling out the need to uproot the division of labour, as well as the family, the division between town and country, and even the entire 'class culture.' This reflects the depth of his concept of revolution as demanding a total and continuous uprooting.

The *Manifesto* can thus be seen not as a departure from the perspective unfurled in 1844 as much as a concretization of it in light of pressing political realities. But this does not mean it represented the final or complete concretization of the philosophic moment of 1844. It contains many formulations and ideas that Marx later modified or completely changed, such as the notion that capitalism brings about an absolute immiseration of the working class. The *Manifesto* also suggests that capitalism makes social relations more transparent, as seen in his statement 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind' (p.487). This is quite different from what Marx will later develop in the famous chapter on the fetishism of commodities in *Capital*, where he shows that the 'perverse' character of capitalist production acts as a *camera obscura* upon social relations. Far

from the 'holy' being 'profaned,' Marx tells us that to comprehend the specificity of the material process of production in capitalist society 'we must take flight into the misty realm of religion' (Marx 1976a: 165). Relations between people appear to take on the form of social relations between things because 'that is what they really are' in a society in which the capital-relation is the universal medium of social interaction.

No less important, the *Manifesto* clearly suffers from Eurocentrism, as seen in Marx's praise of the bourgeoisie for bringing 'even the most barbarian nations into civilization,' China included. This is not simply an expression of personal prejudice on Marx's part or lack of familiarity with realities in the technologically underdeveloped world. It most of all reflects Marx's view in this period that capitalism was a necessary stage of development for any and all societies hoping to achieve a socialist future. This is a perspective that Marx will radically change, starting in the 1850s with his writings on the Asiatic Mode of Production and the *Grundrisse* and even more so in his work of the 1870s and 1880s, as seen in such works as his Letters to Zasulich and *Ethnological Notebooks*. By the time of the 1882 Preface to the Russian edition of the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels declared, 'If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development.'⁶

The *Manifesto* also is far from Marx's last word on the peasantry. Whereas the *Manifesto* says 'The peasants...are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history,' a different perspective is developed in his writings on the Russian village commune, India, and

Javanese society in the 1870s and 1880s. A shift in his attitude toward the peasantry is already evident long before then. At the time Marx wrote the *Manifesto*, he conceived of the workers' movement as functioning as an independent political entity that would nonetheless need to act in the coming period as a critical ally of the liberal bourgeoisie. By June 1848, however, the massacre of the workers by the liberals made it clear that the time had come for a total break with them. As the events of 1848-49 unfolded, and the revolution suffered serious reverses, Marx went in search of new allies of the workers' movement, including among a section of the rural populace. In his March 1850 Address to the Communist League, he said 'Just as the democrats combine with the peasants so must the workers combine with the rural proletariat.' In posing the need for this alliance, Marx concludes by insisting that from now on, the 'battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence' (Marx 1978: 287).

This projection of 'revolution in permanence' is the red thread which ties together Marx's appropriation of the dialectic of second negativity in 1844 and his call for a total uprooting in the *Manifesto*. That such a concept would be projected in 1850, *after* the *Manifesto* was written, *after* Marx had participated in the 1848 Revolutions, and *after* those revolutions had already suffered defeat, indicates that the *Manifesto* itself did not submerge, cut off, or impede the further projection of the concept of self-movement through second negativity. Marx had unfurled a new, universal concept of liberation in 1844, but it was still 'abstract,' in that it was in need of political concretization. Yet its concretization in the *Manifesto* in turn gave the concept new life, as seen in his explicit projection of 'revolution in permanence' in 1850.

It is not possible here to trace out how the concept of 'revolution in permanence' was developed by Marx in the years after 1850, nor is it possible to detail the numerous times he returned to and further concretized the concept of 'the negation of the negation,' especially in the development of his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*. We do need to single out, however, Marx's further development of one of the central insights of the *Manifesto* in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*.⁷ By the time of the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, it was no longer necessary to emphasize the importance of the independent political organization of the working class; that had already long been achieved. Indeed, one of its manifestations was the party led by Ferdinand Lassalle! When the 'Marxist' Eisenachists merged with the Lassalleans in 1875, Marx hit out sharply against his own followers by singling out the same two points which he had earlier posed as defining the role of communists in the *Manifesto*: 1) the question of internationalism and 2) the need to bear responsibility for a vision of the future. As against the Gotha Program's emphasis on national organization, Marx insisted that any compromise with the international standpoint represented a 'regression' from the highpoint reached with the Paris Commune. And as against the Gotha Program's compromise with Lassallean 'principles,' Marx issued his most comprehensive projection of what the new society would be like *after* the transcendence of value production:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the

all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully be left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (Marx 1989: 87).

It is hard to find a more comprehensive expression of what happens *after* the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and *after* the period defined by the 'birth pangs of the new society.' Though the phrase 'revolution in permanence' does not appear in the *Critique*, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Marx is further concretizing his notion of revolutionary transformation as not stopping at first negation. That he is doing so in a document which critiques an organizational program suggests that being responsible for a vision of revolution rooted in *second* negation, in a concept of what happens *after* the revolution, is at the heart of Marx's very concept of organization.⁸

Throughout the history of Marxism, many have returned to Marx's 1875 *Critique* as part of confronting and transcending the crises of their times; Lenin's *State and Revolution* especially comes to mind. Yet few, Lenin included, read the *Critique* as representing the projection of a distinctively Marxian concept of organization.⁹ Even fewer have seen the *Critique* as representing a return, on new ground, to Marx's unfurling of a banner of a total uprooting in his 1844 Manuscripts. The realities of our age, however, defined as they are by the stultifying impact of an array of revolutions and revolutionary movements which failed to move beyond the mere political overthrow of the bourgeoisie, has made it newly imperative to emphasize the concept of 'revolution in permanence' as the very ground and *raison d'être* of revolutionary organization. Dunayevskaya spoke to this in commenting

on what she considered the 'untrodden path' in the entire Marxist movement—the inseparability of dialectics from organization:

The burning question of the day remains: What happens the day after [the revolution]? How can we continue Marx's unchaining of the dialectic organizationally, with the principles he outlined in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*? The question of 'what happens after' gains crucial importance because of what it signals in self-development and self-flourishing—'revolution in permanence.' No one knows what it is, or can touch it, before it appears. It is not the task that can be fulfilled in just one generation. That is why it remains so elusive, and why the abolition of the division between mental and manual labour sounds utopian. It has the future written all over it. The fact that we cannot give a blueprint does not absolve us from the task. It only makes it more difficult (Dunayevskaya 1987: 11).

III. Marx's Philosophy of 'Revolution in Permanence' as 'the Absolute Challenge to our Age'

It should go without saying that each generation has to reinterpret Marx's work for itself, as against merely repeating formulas and conclusions from a bygone era. The critical question is not what Marx said in 1843 or 1883, but what Marx's Marxism means for *today*, in light of our contemporary problems and challenges. And the foremost challenge presented by today's reality is the need to overcome the legacy of the revolutions and revolutionary movements which stopped dead at the first negation, the mere abolition of private property or elimination of the personifications of capital, without moving on to

the abolition of capital itself. In light of the stultifying legacy of Stalinism in Russia, East Europe, China and much of the Third World, it is no longer sufficient to focus on the immediate object of oppression while leaving 'until later' the question of how to surmount the nature of capital itself. After all that has transpired in the aborted and unfinished revolutions of the twentieth century, it is hard to imagine that masses of people will feel impelled to transform society on the basis of perspectives which focus simply on abolishing private property, unequal distribution and 'the anarchy of the market.' It can be argued that what has become utopian today is not the projection of a liberating vision of the future that points beyond the negations of these phenomena, but rather the assumption that we can afford to delay doing so for the sake of focusing on a critique of the immediate objects of oppression. The need to *begin* from the *second* negation has become concrete. The question facing radical thinkers and activists today is will we respond (as Hegel would put it) to 'spirit's urgency' by working out a perspective of social transformation rooted in working out a new beginning from the dialectic of second negativity, or will we instead cling to the stagified models and perspectives which have characterized post-Marx Marxism?

This is not to suggest that the abolition of capital can today be *immediately* achieved after the destruction or undermining of state power any more than in Marx's day. Whether or not the very notion of 'seizing' state power has become obsolete, it should be clear by now that abolishing the alienated character of value production is a prolonged and many sided process.¹⁰ The abolition of capital involves the transformation not only of the social process of production, but also of the alienated relations between men and women, between the races, and within

society as a whole. Precisely because commodity production is the *geist* of capitalism, the fetish which pervades *all* its human relations, it cannot be truly uprooted without the transformation of human relations at the point of production, in the family, and within the social community as a whole. Capital must be abolished in the totality of its manifestations; otherwise, it cannot be changed. This does not undermine, but only further amplifies, the need for any effort to reconstitute Marxism to root itself in a *concept* which makes explicit the need to work out a new beginning from the dialectic of absolute negativity. Without such an explicitly-spelled out philosophic concept, the struggle risks being left without a compass to guide it through the many stages of negation and mediation it must suffer through in the effort to reach the goal.

This where the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism takes on new importance. In response to the crises emanating from the aborted and unfinished revolutions of our time, Dunayevskaya explored with new eyes the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic, both in light of how Marx transformed Hegel's dialectic and in terms of the Hegelian dialectic in and for itself. Beginning in the 1940s, together with C.L.R James (her co-leader in a dissident tendency within the U.S. Trotskyist movement, called the Johnson-Forest Tendency), she embarked on new studies on dialectics by exploring Lenin's Hegel Notebooks of 1914-15, Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, and Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Unlike many other Marxists, who dismissed the culmination of the Hegel's system in 'the Absolute Idea' as proving Hegel's 'mystical' idealism, by the late 1940s James and Dunayevskaya posed the need for a direct confrontation with Hegel's Absolutes in light of the problems facing the contemporary revolutionary movements. As James put it in his 1948 *Notes on Dialectics*,

'We have to get hold of the Notion, of the Absolute Idea, before we can see this relation between organization and spontaneity in its concrete truth' (James 1980: 119). However, by the early 1950s James began to move away from this approach in favour of a more conventional, 'materialist' approach to dialectics. He never again commented either on Hegel's Absolutes or the concept of absolute negativity, restricting himself to such better-known dimensions of Hegel such as the master/slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Mind*.

Dunayevskaya took a different approach. Beginning with a series of philosophic letters written in 1953 (which marked the beginning of the end of her association with James) she argued for a direct return to Hegel's Absolutes in order to work out the central question of our age—'can man be free' when we have witnessed outright counter-revolution emerge from within revolution itself (Dunayevskaya 1989b: 40). On the basis of such proings, from the mid-1950s through the late 1980s she developed an original body of thought that spoke directly to the need to work out a new and deeper return to the dialectic of second negativity. It is most fully expressed in her unique contribution as a Marxist-Humanist philosopher, the concept she called 'absolute negativity as new beginning'.¹¹ As she argued in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*,

Without such a vision of new revolutions, a new individual, a new universal, a new society, new human relations, we would be forced to tailend one or another form of reformism just when the age of nuclear Titans—the United States and Russia—threatens the very survival of civilization as we have known it. The myriad crises in our

age have shown, over and over again, from Russia to China, from Cuba to Iran, from Africa to Pol Pot's Cambodia, that without a philosophy of revolution activism spends itself in mere anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, without ever revealing what it is for. We have been made to see anew that, just as the movement from practice disclosed a break in the Absolute Idea that required both a new relationship of practice to theory, and a new unity of practice and theory, so that new unity is but a *beginning*: Absolute Idea as New Beginning. Clearly, along with the actual struggles for the self-determination of nations, we need what Hegel called 'self-determination in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak'... Every moment of Marx's development, as well as the totality of his works, spells out the need for 'revolution in permanence.' This is the absolute challenge to our age (Dunayevskaya 1991: 194-95).

It is true, as many have argued, that Marx will retain his relevance so long as capitalism remains with us. But the persistence of the objective conditions analyzed by Marx is not enough to reconstitute Marxism as a social movement, as a living struggle that succeeds in *transforming* reality. As Georg Lukács (1973) argued long ago in *History and Class Consciousness*, the soul and substance of Marxism lies in the dialectical relation between objective and subjective. Once that dialectical linkage is broken, Marxism gets reduced to either a mechanistic or voluntarist theory which cannot provide direction for transforming reality. Relying on the objective conditions to provide for a resurrection of Marxism is one-sided and inadequate; the task just as much hinges on developing the subjective side—the forces of opposition and the theoretical perspectives which can give their struggles a direction. For this reason we

need to return to Marx, not simply as political theorist or economist, but as a philosopher of revolution who was deeply rooted in Hegel's dialectic of *second* negativity.

With that said, I would argue that it isn't only the dominance of such political tendencies as Stalinism and Social-Democracy which explains why Marx's revolutionary vision has been subsumed for so long. What also explains the failure to project Marx's Marxism as a philosophy of 'revolution in permanence' is the tendency to separate

Marx's work from its deep-rootedness in Hegel's dialectic of second negativity in post-Marx Marxism as a whole. In this sense, to restate Marx's Marxism for our era will require posing not simply a *political* line of demarcation between genuine Marxism and other alternatives, but also a *philosophic* one that combats the endemic hostility to dialectical philosophy which inheres in so many Marxists of our time. More than 150 years after Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, it is surely as good a time as any to work out a new beginning.

Notes

1. These comments, by Enzensberger 1998 and Hobsbawm 1998 respectively, are but two of many such expressions raised in recent symposia.
2. For a critique of Mészáros' book on this score, see Hudis 1997.
3. Marx's exact phrase is 'Communism still political in nature—democratic or despotic ... yet still incomplete, being still infected by private property' (Marx 1975: 296). Not surprisingly, this phrase is virtually never cited by those who have argued that the ills of established Communism in this century could be ameliorated simply through a change in the *political* structures of Stalinism.
4. I am using Raya Dunayevskaya's translation of the 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic' as it appeared as an appendix to the first edition of her *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1957) because it is superior in many respects to the translation found in the Marx-Engels *Collected Works*.
5. Marx's projection of internationalism did not mean he neglected the importance of struggles for national self-determination, as can be seen in his singling out of the importance of the Polish national struggle in the *Manifesto*.
6. In the period after the death of Marx, differences between Marx and Engels' approach to a number of issues, including the role of property forms in humanity's social development, came to the surface. It is most vividly expressed in Engels's famous footnote to the 1888 English edition of the *Manifesto*, in which he said that Marx's statement 'the history of all history is the history of class struggles' applies only to the period of 'written history.' Engels said that in light of the work of authors such as Henry Lewis Morgan, Marx's statement needed qualification. Marx, however, had read Morgan's work several years before drafting the Preface to the 1882 edition of the *Manifesto* (Marx asked Engels to study Morgan as early as 1878; Engels did not get to do so until after Marx's death) and saw no reason to amend the famous first sentence. By adding the qualifying phrase, Engels gave the impression that Marx's historic call for the negation of all forms of class society, both incipient and fully developed, did not apply to that section of humanity still living in pre-literate societies. This position, in my view, is not consonant with Marx's own perspective, as outlined in his *Ethnological Notebooks* and other writings from his last decade.
7. In the very period in which he wrote the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in the 1870's, Marx reaffirmed his debt to Hegel's dialectic. As he wrote in a manuscript for Vol. II of *Capital* that Engels left out of the published version, 'My relationship with Hegel is very simple. I am a disciple of Hegel, and the

- presumptuous chattering of the epigones who think they have buried this great thinker appear frankly ridiculous to me' (quoted in Rubel 1968: 528).
8. This also suggests one of the major differences between Marx's concept of 'revolution in permanence' and Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution.' While Marx emphasizes in several places the question of continuous or permanent revolution in regard to the process by which a revolution in an underdeveloped country bypasses or shortens the period of proceeding through the bourgeois-democratic stage, his concept of 'revolution in permanence' has a broader significance of moving beyond the immediate forms of oppression toward a second negation. Trotsky's theory lacks this broader significance, and was developed outside the context of any relation to Hegelian dialectics. For a contrasting of Marx and Trotsky's theories, see Dunayevskaya 1991: 158-74.
 9. Mészáros is one of the few who have discussed the *Critique of the Gotha Program* as projecting a concept of 'revolution in permanence' and as expressing Marx's concept of organization, in chapters 13 and 18 of *Beyond Capital*. Dunayevskaya is the first writer to my knowledge to have singled out the *Critique* as posing the concept of 'revolution in permanence' as ground for organization, in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.
 10. As John Holloway and others have noted, such new social movements as those of the Zapatistas in Chiapas fully understand 'that social transformation cannot be brought about by the conquest (be it 'democratic' or 'undemocratic') of state power' (Holloway and Peláez 1998: 187). The Zapatistas may be returning, on new ground, to the perspective which emerged from the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37, where workers and peasants posed the occupation of the factories and fields as the path to social revolution, rather than viewing it only as a *result* to be achieved after the seizure of state power (as occurred in Russia in 1917). In this sense, the newest forms of spontaneous mass revolt makes the question of how to abolish the capital-relation of greater immediacy, not less. The question is whether revolutionary theory will rise to the challenge posed by such developments.
 11. See Dunayevskaya 1989a for her most comprehensive development of this concept.

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