

INTERPRETATION

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THREE CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM:
KANT – HEGEL – MARX

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We have entered a period when nearly every political movement, every government, every party, and even the churches seek to appear to be partisans of freedom. No one admits being its enemy in this age in which, paradoxically, the majority suffers from oppression and a lack even of the basic human rights. Freedom today is like motherhood; everyone favors it, at least verbally. Nevertheless people today are being persecuted, imprisoned, and tortured in the name of freedom. Five to six centuries ago, the love of neighbor was used by the tormentors of the Inquisition to justify their cruelties and the persecution of creative minds. Today, the idea of freedom is used to embellish the chains of slavery. The world becomes increasingly hypocritical, but let us remember that after all—as la Rochefoucauld observed—hypocrisy is a tribute which evil pays to virtue.

It would be relatively easy to establish the main sociological and political reasons which have made it necessary to praise freedom in order to restrict it. There also are intellectual reasons which make it easy for politicians to pervert and abuse the idea of freedom; there are so many notions about freedom that there is even confusion as to its elementary meanings and problems.

Kant, Hegel, and Marx are three authors whose philosophies represent three contributions to the evolution of the idea of freedom. Within less than a hundred years these three very sophisticated theories of freedom were elaborated. They represent three stages in the evolution of civilization. They are qualitatively different from one another, yet at the same time they are related. In most writings of these authors, the Hegelian *Aufhebung* is in evidence. Their ideas complement each other, they deny each other, they are at the same time precursors and continuators of each other, because the sequence of time becomes unimportant in the case of dialectical interdependence. Kant, Hegel, and Marx try to answer the eternally recurring, fundamental questions of the philosophy of

freedom. The problem did not originate with them, their answers are not conclusive, they pose the questions in a new way and add new queries to the old list. They arrive at the theoretical limitations previously established, but as Hegel observed, one who approaches the frontier has in fact already passed beyond it.

The three authors are among the world's most controversial. In fact, Kant's theory of politics, morality, and freedom, generally is dismissed as unrealistic and of no practical significance. Hegel and Marx on the other hand are among the most unpopular philosophers in Western academic centers; whereas in Communist countries they are acclaimed officially while being flagrantly misinterpreted. They are branded as adversaries of freedom in the West, as partisans of dictatorship, violence, and bureaucracy. They are accused of every vice inimical to the very foundations of freedom.

These three thinkers have made a truly historic contribution to the philosophy of freedom. Without it, the modern, rationalistic concept of freedom would not have developed as it has and the mere notion of freedom would have been poorer. Many contemporary philosophers will not admit that Kant, Hegel, and Marx have been sources of their intellectual endeavors because such an intellectual heritage is looked upon with disfavor by so many. It is the more urgent therefore to vindicate the historical truth, to a certain extent at least.

I

Kant's concept of freedom is central to his theories of politics, law, and morality. Many of his ideas are open to various interpretations, leading to an ever-growing philosophical and political literature on the subject. One thing seems to be indisputable: An analysis of Kant's concept of freedom should start with his distinction concerning the dual nature of the human being, namely that man is a *phenomenon* and a *noumenon* at the same time.

The phenomenal human being is part of the physical world and in this world man is subject to the laws of nature. He is part of the chain of cause and effect. As a physical being man cannot rightly be regarded free.

But man is also a "thing-in-itself." He is a noumenon and as such he has freedom of choice. This freedom is the most important and

the most characteristic feature of his humanity. The concept of freedom is connected with the existence of reason. Kant goes so far as to say that freedom is man's only birthright. All other rights are acquired.

For a human being freedom means that he is not dependent upon the will of any other human being:

Freedom is independence of the compulsory will of another; and in so far as it tends to exist with the freedom of all according to a universal law, it is the one sole original inborn right belonging to every man in virtue of his humanity.¹

Because man is born free, it follows that there exists an "innate equality belonging to every man," which consists of his right "to be independent of being bound by others to anything more than that to which he may also reciprocally bind them. It is consequently the inborn quality of every man in virtue of which he ought to be his own master by right (*sui juris*)."²

Because freedom is a "birthright," Kant writes, one must assume that man also has "the natural quality of justness" attributable to a man as an unimpeachable natural right, because he has done no wrong to any one prior to his own juridical actions. In this complicated manner a well-known juridical idea was rediscovered and defended, the presumption of innocence.

Kant draws the concept of freedom of contract also from the idea of freedom as a birthright: "there is also the innate right of common action on the part of every man, so that he may do towards others what does not infringe their rights or take away anything that is theirs unless they are willing to appropriate it . . ."³

We observe one of those marvelous coincidences which are so characteristic of Kant's philosophy: He draws conclusions corresponding to practical, social, political, and juridical experience from pure reason, allegedly not influenced in any way by the external world of phenomena. The ancient Greeks and Romans already knew that in order rationally to enter into a civil contract the equality and free will of each partner are presumed. They also knew that an organized society could not function well without a presumption of innocence. In criminal procedures under absolutistic and terroristic regimes of course, this presumption is not consistently followed, but it is never wholly denied to society as a whole nor indiscriminately to all its members.

Kant is right when he combines freedom with the presumption of individual innocence. In practice, in political life and juridical procedure, however, these two ideas do not always appear together. History knows many examples of regimes which officially proclaimed their adherence to the presumption of innocence, but at the same time democratic liberties were almost reduced to a nullity.

On the other hand, Kant writes, human freedom should also be limited because it is subject to reason. As controlled by reason, freedom cannot be identified with license or unbridled desire. According to Kant, freedom can be conceived only as *rational* freedom, that is, subject to the "laws," and "requirements," of reason; it is the freedom to use one's reason at all times.

Kant calls man free by the mere fact that he has the power of reason. Nathan Rotenstreich calls this aspect of freedom the "cosmological aspect of the concept of freedom."⁴ Freedom in the cosmological sense is independent of time and of all sensible factors. In the Preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant writes that the mere existence of the pure practical faculty of reason establishes the existence of a transcendental freedom, which he also calls freedom in the absolute sense. Freedom proved by the apodictic law of practical reason is the keystone of the whole system of pure reason and even of speculative reason. There are three basic elements of pure reason: God, immortality, and freedom. But freedom is the only idea of speculative reason whose possibility we know *a priori*, for this idea is revealed in the moral law.

Kant's explanation of this complicated problem is as follows:

To avoid having anyone imagine that there is an inconsistency when I say that freedom is the condition of the moral law and later assert that the moral law is the only condition under which freedom can be known, I will only remind the reader that, though freedom is certainly the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the latter is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. For had not the moral law already been distinctly thought in our reason, we would never have been justified in assuming everything like freedom, even though it is not self-contradictory. But if there were no freedom, the moral law would never have been encountered in us.⁵

The most important conclusion to be drawn from these thoughts is that freedom, an indispensable and inalienable attribute of mankind, also is the foundation and source of moral responsibility.

Without freedom the categorical and practical imperatives would make no sense.

A reasonable man knows what he *should do* and once he knows it, he *can do* it. This Kantian conclusion has spawned many misunderstandings. Very often it is expressed in the sentence, "ought implies can." Kant wanted to express a very simple idea which is basic for his system: If you have a duty, you *can* carry it out.

If, however, one is ordered by a legitimate superior to do an act contrary to one's consciousness of duty based on the categorical imperative one should reject such an order and act according to one's true duty instead. He who acts according to his duty (based on the categorical imperative) is free, even if he is persecuted by the author(s) of immoral orders.

One explanation is necessary: For Kant, "can" means the capability of the free will; it does not mean that any real results will occur in the world of phenomena.

Kant's freedom, as something which belongs to the world of the noumena, is truly abstract. From the point of view of traditional empirical philosophy, it is also subjective. Kant regards freedom as a potential existing in every individual rather than as a reality in social relations. His concept of freedom is independent of human activity but depends on subjective human thinking.

Freedom of the will is very far from the true freedom of the individual. According to the tradition of ancient philosophy, which was rejuvenated during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, an individual is free when he can act according to his desires, will, and talents. True human freedom must be expressed in social activity and not limited to the process of thinking, even the most rational. This is the basic deficiency of Kant's philosophy of freedom: He does not bind freedom to free human activity. His concept of freedom is theoretical, whereas the chief problem of freedom is practical: how to free people to do good deeds. Nevertheless, Kant tries to draw political conclusions from his concept of freedom.

Kant writes that even the most absolute ruler is interested in preserving freedom of thought and speech because he wants to know the real situation existing in his country and the opinions of his subjects. Therefore, pure reason requires the preservation of the freedom of conscience, thought, speech, writing, and publication in

every country and under every form of government. Kant deduces the need for and right to these freedoms from reason itself.

This approach demonstrates how wholly impractical Kant's thinking was. History knows many rulers who were wholly indifferent to the true opinion of their people, even though they may thereby have remained ignorant of the existing situation. If despotic rulers want to know what is going on in their countries, they use other means to gather information, such as secret police and informers. Deception, camouflage, and lies are inherent in such regimes. They fear free speech and a free press more than they do being misinformed. It could be argued that Kant is right that reason requires freedom of thought, speech, and press: but everybody knows that these requirements and rights can exist in reality only in a more or less democratic country. Rulers are not motivated by reason alone. In his time, democracy was even rarer than it became in the following centuries. His conclusions were logical, but have not been proved until recent times.

Kant's belief that intellectual freedom can balance political terror is unrealistic. Despotic and terroristic governments must suppress intellectual freedom as an essential part of any comprehensive system of control. There can of course be brief periods when an oppressive government may tolerate free speech and a free press; such a regime might even tolerate free speech and press more than freedom of association. Every despotism has its own peculiarities and periodically may allow limited forms of criticism as a safety valve. But, as all experience shows, anti-democratic terroristic regimes will never be overthrown by intellectual freedom alone. The belief that they might is an illusion possibly nourished by Kant's admiration for the "enlightened" Prussian ruler, Frederick II. History shows that there have always been many more unenlightened despots than enlightened.

Notwithstanding his impracticality however, Kant had an impact on the development of the theory of freedom and morality, and even on individual behavior and attitudes.

On July 23, 1943, Kurt Huber, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Munich, Germany, was executed. He was condemned for the crime of high treason against Hitler's regime.

In his final statement to the judges of the People's Court, he

referred to Kant's philosophy as the inspiration for his opposition to the Nazis:

... I deem it to be not only right, but also my moral duty to speak out against political misconduct. . . . It had been my endeavor to awaken the student body to an awareness of existing conditions, to appeal to moral reflection, a return to clear-cut ethical principles, to a politics of right, to a preservation of the dignity of man. . . . I have asked myself with a view to Kant's categorical imperative, what would happen if these subjective maxims of mine were to be made universal law. . . . There is but one answer: There would be order, security, confidence in our government. Every morally responsible voice would be raised against the threat of rule of sheer might over right, of simple caprice over the will of the morally good, against the wanton trampling upon the rights of self-determination of principalities all over Europe, against the inhuman fostering of distrust of man against man so that the very foundation of human relationships has been undermined and neither father nor neighbor feels secure before his son.

Every external legislation reaches its ultimate limitation through untruth and immorality, through overt transgressions of right, through the covert cowardice which prevents open criticism of such practices and smothered exhortations to a return to the moral order with accusations of treason. . . .

I am jeopardizing my life with this defense of my inner convictions. I have acted through my convictions in accordance with the dictates of that inner voice. . . . I am accepting the consequences of my actions, accepting the responsibility therefor. . . . I demand that freedom be restored to our people, that they be released from their chains of slavery. . . . I am convinced that the relentless course of history will vindicate my willing and acting. . . .⁶

This example shows how influential Kant's ideas still are. At the same time, this moving example indicates that Kant's influence never extended beyond a narrow circle of intellectuals.

Kurt Huber remained free in the Kantian sense till the last moment of his life. He was murdered as a *free* human being; this is the paradox of Kant's subjective, purely intellectual, view of freedom.

It would seem that Kant is a follower of the tradition of subjective freedom. It was St. Augustine who drew the most amazing political conclusions from the concept of subjective freedom: a slave can be freer than his master, provided that he has been liberated from his passions. St. Augustine argues that it is better to be a slave of one

(human) master than of many (passions). Such sophistry was used for immediate political purposes throughout the centuries: Slaves, serfs, servants, and the poor who had no rights were told they had no reason to rebel against their legitimate masters.

Kant's political and social ideas were different, but more moderate than those of his contemporaries, his French, English, and Polish counterparts.

According to Kant, the idea of freedom must be placed at the foundation of the constitution of every state and of every law issued by a government. The ideal should be: "A constitution allowing THE GREATEST POSSIBLE HUMAN FREEDOM in accordance with laws by which THE FREEDOM OF EACH IS MADE TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THAT OF ALL OTHERS—I do not speak of the greatest happiness, for this will follow of itself—it is at any rate a necessary idea, which must be taken as fundamental not only in first projecting a constitution but in all its laws."⁷

Kant understands that this ideal will not be reached without obstacles. These obstacles do not necessarily arise out of human nature, but rather out of previous legislation. No true philosopher would argue that the ideal is unattainable because of adverse previous experience. If there has been such bad experience, then Kant argues, we should be even more energetic in our endeavors to harmonize legislation and government with the ideal.

Kant writes that he would be prepared to accept Plato's ideal as his own: a society in which punishment is unnecessary and therefore non-existent. He says that it would be impossible to achieve this ideal but he insists that we should have an archetype, a standard against which to measure all existing laws and governments. It is possible to improve laws and governments. No one after all can say how wide the chasm should be between the ideal and reality. No one can say where the development of human nature and its perfectibility will stop. Because of these unknowns, we should agree "that it is in the power of freedom to pass beyond any and every specified limit."⁸

It is obvious that Kant distinguishes between an ideal of political freedom and the reality of political freedom. The ideal should be an absolute harmony between the freedom of each and the freedom of all. But he knows that reality is far from the ideal. Kant distinguishes various levels of perfection of actual freedom. The ideal of freedom is unchangeable; the reality of freedom however is always in a state of transformation.

In this way, Kant prepared the ground for the Hegelian dialectics of freedom. Kant's *a priori* idea of freedom was easily transformed into the absolute idea; the rest depends on logic and profound studies of the historical realities. This historical task was performed by Hegel.

II

There are fervent adversaries of Hegel's philosophy in the Western as well as in the Eastern world. Even now, a hundred and fifty years after his death, Hegel is still attacked as a living antagonist. Such animosity usually is founded on preconceived ideas and simple ignorance. One might say the same about Hegel that Jean Paul Sartre wrote about the Jewish people: They have many passionate and powerful enemies and a few friends who defend them without enthusiasm.

Bertrand Russell was attuned to the temper of Anglo-Saxon prejudices and ignorance when in one of his "unpopular Essays" he wrote:

It follows from his metaphysics that true liberty consists in obedience to an arbitrary authority, that free speech is an evil, that absolute monarchy is good, that the Prussian state was the best existing at the time when he wrote, that war is good, and that an international organization for the peaceful settlement of disputes would be a misfortune. . . What he admired were . . . order, system, regulation and intensity of governmental control.⁹

Nearly every word of Russell's evaluation is incorrect.

Hegel's reputation was not much better in Eastern Europe. There was a short period during the 1920s when Hegel's philosophy gained an officially sponsored popularity. The Soviet philosophers associated with Deborin vigorously promoted Hegelian studies. Deborin and his friends often quoted Lenin's famous statement that without serious study and understanding of the Hegelian dialectic it would be impossible truly to understand *Das Kapital*.

Hegel became one of the first victims of Stalinism in the 1930s. Neither the right-wing, nor the left-wing dogmatists could endure Hegel's dialectic and his views about freedom.

It was Stalin himself who gave the official interpretation of Hegel's philosophy to the socialist world in the 1930s. He stated that Hegel expresses the spirit of the Prussian *Junkers*, militarists, and expan-

sionists. He considered Hegel's philosophy to be a reaction to absolutism, feudalism, and the French Revolution. Every one of Stalin's views was wrong.

It would appear that both Russell and Stalin regarded Hegel as the propounder of all or very many social and political evils, including Nazism, against which they had been struggling.

The antipodes—Russell and Stalin—spoke about Hegel in almost the same manner. When two antagonists come to the same conclusion, usually both are mistaken.

There are many good reasons why the knights of the kingdom of darkness, in the East and in the West, in Communist and in non-Communist countries, wish to push Hegel, the controversial philosopher, into the closet of oblivion. Hegel's ideas are too great for the minds of present-day politicians and too deep for many modern conservative philosophers and political scientists, both in the East and in the West.

Hegel writes that most people equate freedom with arbitrariness. They think that they are free when they are able to act according to their impulses. The most frequently repeated definition of freedom, according to Hegel, is that freedom is the ability to do what we please. One who thinks in this way, Hegel argues, reveals "an utter immaturity of thought."¹⁰ Why? Because those who identify freedom with the ability to do what they please disregard the nature of social life, of right, of morality, of law, as well as the needs of everyday life. Freedom must be connected with understanding, responsibility, and an awareness of moral obligation at all stages of development.

In this way Hegel approached one of his most important statements, namely, that freedom is necessity understood; hence there are two elements in freedom: the subjective and the objective. Man can be free not from the laws of nature, but thanks to the laws of nature. The more he understands, the less he is subject to the caprices of the external world. When man understands, he can control.

The history of mankind is the history of the acquisition of knowledge. Hegel therefore describes the history of the world as the "progress of the consciousness of freedom."¹¹ He continues: "The Idea of freedom . . . is the absolute goal of history."¹²

Whenever Hegel writes about history, he means the history of the people who struggle for survival, have their own interests, passions,

and ambitions. Every individual tries to attain his own goals, but what he achieves usually is contrary to his intentions, particularly in political and social life. People build their future in the same way architects build houses. They use the forces of nature and the raw material provided by nature. The result is that the house stands against the forces of nature, against the violence of rains, floods, winds, and fire. The situation is similar in society: people develop law and order but ultimately these measures work against them. The history of mankind is: "the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of States, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized."¹³

Such is the history of mankind, according to Hegel. He means that the idea of freedom was a product of battles in the social jungles, where freedom was hardly a welcome guest. On the other hand, whenever happiness prevailed, history was uneventful. As a matter of fact, periods of happiness are blank pages; they are the periods of harmony. The contribution of these periods to the idea of freedom is minimal.

Whenever people feel satisfied and happy, they discontinue struggling and their energy drops; their imagination decreases. Most energetic are unhappy people whose perception of the prevailing evil is the source of their new ideas and their attempts to broaden their possibilities, to achieve, to augment, and realize their freedom.

We now have approached the problem of the dialectic of freedom which is part of Hegel's general dialectic.

The essence of the Hegelian and Marxian dialectic is the concept of the struggle of antagonistic forces. A thesis exists in unison with its antithesis. The forces are antagonistic, but the one cannot exist without the other. It would appear that there is an absolute difference between light and darkness, but in reality the existence of darkness would be impossible without light. One cannot see anything, either in absolute darkness or in absolute light. It is the same with good and evil. The existence of good presupposes the existence of evil, and *vice versa*. Without evil people the existence of the good would be senseless. Without the existence of sin the concept of reward would be unnecessary. A kingdom of heaven does not make sense without a purgatory and hell. And finally, the idea of freedom was elaborated because people were not free and did not feel free.

If the history of mankind is the history of the development of the

idea of freedom, then one can say with the same justification that the history of mankind is the history of various kinds of slavery, of unfreedom. In every successive epoch forms of slavery, of unfreedom, have become more sophisticated and refined. The ideas of freedom therefore also became more developed and refined. Hegel feels that in his epoch the people finally began to understand the idea of freedom and that in his philosophy of freedom, the idea finally found itself. There are philosophers who argue that Hegel regarded his own system of philosophy as a closed one. They cannot be right. Hegel's dialectical method can never be regarded as closed. Although Hegel did not wish to predict the future it would accord with the spirit of his dialectical method to state that in the future gigantic struggles between the idea of freedom and the forces of unfreedom would still occur. This conflict will never be resolved.

The realization of the idea of freedom, according to Hegel, as we already mentioned is the essence of the history of mankind.

If one should wish to translate this statement into more comprehensible language, one would have to say that the highly acclaimed individual freedom is not a state or a condition enjoyed by individuals, societies, and nations. Freedom is always a process of fighting for freedom, of the struggle for its own expansion in the face of forces which, consciously or unconsciously, oppose it vigorously. Freedom is a way of life and of struggle; it is the expansion of human possibilities and powers. It is a way of operating in order to make maximum use of an individual's talents and skills.

A man cannot find freedom, Hegel argues, in a non-societal state of nature. It would be nonsense to think that savages could be free. Hegel writes: "The savage is lazy and is distinguished from the educated man by his brooding stupidity."¹⁴

When Hegel writes about savages, the word "savage" should not be interpreted in the narrow sense of the savage who lived in primitive society thousands of years ago. A savage is any person who is not educated up to the level of our civilization. In other words, a savage is any person who mixes his subjectivity with objective possibilities, his unreasonable wishful thinking with reality. This species of brooding stupidity has not yet disappeared by any means.

"Slavery is in and for itself injustice, for the essence of humanity is freedom; but for this man must be mature."¹⁵ When will man mature? According to Hegel, that will happen in the very distant

future. He will mature and the forms of freedom will mature with him in an endless historical process.

Will he become happier when he becomes more educated, civilized, and mature?

One could argue that there are misfortunes and sorrows which are well known to our civilized society which were unknown to savages. Consequently it would be better for man to remain ignorant. This alleged advantage is merely negative, Hegel writes: "While freedom is essentially positive, it is only the blessings conferred by affirmative freedom that are regarded as such in the highest grade of consciousness."¹⁶

This is one of the most important contributions of Hegel's philosophy of freedom, that freedom is essentially positive, that its blessings consist of affirmative activity not in isolation from society. Freedom does not consist of erecting walls around spheres of influence separating one person's sphere from that of his neighbor, as is argued in the Kantian philosophy of freedom. This is the basic difference between Kant and Hegel: Hegel insisted that one should approach the problems of freedom from the positive, affirmative point of view and not the negative.

The extent of freedom, at any stage of the historical development of society, is determined by the totality of the objective and subjective conditions; by the totality of the economic and social relations; and by the consciousness of the people, their understanding, beliefs, and prejudices.

External superiority in power can achieve no enduring results: Napoleon could not coerce Spain into freedom any more than Philip II could force Holland into slavery.¹⁷

This observation of Hegel either has been underestimated or forgotten; it is a key to understanding many puzzles of the political life of our day.

Let us try to penetrate this observation: The reality which determines the historical content and limits of freedom is a totality of objective and subjective elements, that is, of the economic, political, and social conditions plus the way of thinking of the people, their inclinations, their obsessions, their emotions, prejudices, their experience, and their ability to think critically, their fears and their civil courage. Economic welfare and poverty also influence

popular thinking, but in various directions, for and against freedom, for progress and for conservatism, if not reaction. One could put it even more bluntly: If the people who are given a free choice in a universal election do not use common sense they will end up with a government that will not help to create the conditions required to extend the scope of freedom. If people do not use their powers of judgment to evaluate the changing material possibilities, the reality of freedom, its contents and frontiers, must be delimited and they must wait a long time for the next step in the historical process that might again foster the dialectical evolution of freedom.

Why does Hegel assert that Catholic Spain could not have been forced to be free? The reason is that the people of Spain did not understand and did not want to understand the reality of their own condition; they did not think freely and creatively because they had become accustomed to autocratic dogmas and did not feel the need for change. Every attempt to impose reform and liberty on them was doomed. At the beginning of the 19th century the people of Spain had not been enlightened, they were intellectually and morally primitive. They were not prepared to accept new ideas and institutions. The French words "liberty, equality, and fraternity" were unknown to them; the words were unfamiliar, therefore empty and what is worse, perhaps inimical to them. People cannot be compelled to use their minds and when they refrain from thinking, or fail to do so, they will have difficulty understanding necessity, i.e., the objective conditions in which they live; they will face obstacles in attempting to accept freedom.

It was not possible to impose slavery on the Netherlands, Hegel continued. Why? Because a reformation of minds had taken place in the Netherlands; because people had come to reject the old dogmas and had started to think creatively and critically; they refused to accept what others regarded as unshakable, absolute truths.

The same observation which Hegel made might be applied to Communist countries today. All Communist countries today have authoritarian governments; the absolute rule of the centralized party apparatus; the will of the party bosses have the force of law; the security police is omnipotent; censorship is unlimited. And yet there are differences and degrees of slavery, servility, and freedom in each of those countries. There is an obvious difference in the atmosphere in Poland from that which exists in the Soviet Union and East

Germany. Polish literature, art and the press are perspicuously more creative and interesting than they are in any other Communist country. Why? *Because the social pressures, the intellectual and moral standards of the nation* do not allow authors and artists to be as dull, faceless, and corrupted as are those of their counterparts in the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. Polish intellectuals feel traditionally connected with the Enlightened West, whereas the Russians traditionally regarded the West as a hotbed of moral corruption and liberal decline. The Poles never viewed their government as a source of inspiration. Up to the end of the 18th century when they had been free, they had favored a weak, limited government. Afterwards, when they were under Russian, German, or Austrian rule, they regarded it their duty to fight the foreign occupier. This national tradition, this way of thinking, this rejection of political supremacy bordering on anarchy, the traditional abhorrence at having to collaborate, all these are reasons why Polish reality, although essentially the same, is yet so different from the Russian, German, Rumanian, or Bulgarian realities.

And what is real is also an objective necessity. A person with the ability to choose who votes for stupidity is not free but a brooding savage even if he be dressed in silk clothing.

It is well known that Hegel is accused of being a philosopher who extolls and praises the state. His sentence that the state is the "*Gang des Gottes in der Welt*," incorrectly translated as the march of God in the world, is often quoted.¹⁸ Hegel wanted to express the very simple idea with this sentence that without the state and its law it would not be possible to put limits to the brutal passions and deeds of violence of the people. There must be a ruler whom the people fear. Hegel does not deify any specific form of the state and obviously he does not deify the Prussian state. Every form of the state, according to Hegel, is limited in its efficiency and cannot be eternally reasonable. The best form of the state is the one which coincides with the social relations. When these relations change, and such a process is inevitable, the form of the state must change. The state which once was reasonable, becomes unreasonable and must necessarily be "*aufgehoben*," which means that some elements will be rejected and forgotten and some elements will remain under the new relations. Every form of state, according to Hegel, is only a moment in the history of mankind. The state is necessary for the

realization of freedom, but when some of its forms become hostile to freedom, then, sooner or later, they must be abolished. The state must exist, but the government in power has only relative and temporary importance.

Freedom, or necessity understood, differs in every country because the reality differs in each and therefore the process of understanding and transformation must differ as well. With every change the process of freedom gains new friends and creates new adversaries; the eternal struggle to preserve freedom continues.

III

What Marx wrote about freedom might be termed an *Aufhebung* of Hegel's philosophy. He affirms, continues, and negates Hegel's philosophy. Marx was particularly impressed by Hegel's view that freedom has a concrete content and form at every stage of history: Marx understands, as Hegel did, that limitations on freedom were necessary in all previous societies. The most important stages in human development, primitive society, feudalism and capitalism, he regards as the stages in the development of exploitation, oppression, and of free human activity within society. These were not, however, as Hegel implies, different stages in the development of the idea of freedom, because Marx absolutely rejects absolute ideas. For Marx the ideas of freedom developed according to the evolution of civilization, of the economic bases and political institutions which constitute the superstructures of all societies.

All this notwithstanding, Marx and Engels still write that it was Hegel who made the greatest contribution to the philosophy of freedom because he had established that freedom was necessity understood. They firmly believe that anyone who disregards Hegel's philosophy of freedom will fall into the errors of previous times and then will be obliged to start from the beginning. They reiterate that neither scientific socialism nor modern times can be grasped without a knowledge of Hegel.

In undertaking an analysis of Marx's theory of freedom, we must define his particular contributions which went beyond Hegel's philosophy. It is also well to distinguish between Marx's philosophy of freedom and the primitive theories now being promulgated by

“Marxists” who unceremoniously falsify Marx’s theory for their own political advantage.

The situation is especially complicated with Marx. He claims that philosophy, political theory and practice should be one; he proclaims that it is not enough for a philosopher to explain the world but that he should truly seek to change it. There is an obvious gulf between Marx’s predictions concerning the future Communist state and the practical application of his theories in the 20th century.

It is significant that the first political and philosophical article published by Marx under his name concerned the problem of censorship. He never disowned the points he raised in it. They cannot be regarded as products of youthful romanticism as Stalinists and neo-Stalinists usually declare, for they were many times repeated by the “adult” Marx.

According to Marx, no government should ever impose restrictions on freedom of thought and publication. The democratic freedoms of conscience, speech, and publication should not be restricted under any circumstances. Every restriction, every censorship, is the cry of a “dirty conscience,” according to Marx. Needless to say, these words have never been quoted in Communist countries and several attempts to remind people of them in the Communist bloc were requited with reprisals against such rash “heretics.”

In a speech in his own defense, when he was tried for publishing articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx said: “It is the function of the press to be the public watchdog, the tireless denouncer of the rulers, the omnipresent eye, the omnipresent mouth of the spirit of the people that jealously guards its freedom.”¹⁹

He concluded his speech with these words: “. . . once and for all it is the duty of the press to speak up for those oppressed in its immediate vicinity. . . . It does not suffice to fight general conditions and the higher authorities. The press must decide to enter the lists against *this* particular gendarme, *this* procurator, *this* district administrator.”²⁰

Marx expressed these ideas in March 1849, one year after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*. Here speaks the “mature” Marx, not a “young” Marx. He regards freedom of the press as the guarantor and defender of freedom in general. The press should be the “public watchdog” and the “tireless denouncer” of rulers. The

press should defend the weak against the oppression of higher authorities and should protect those within its purview.

Could Marx have foreseen that freedom of the press could have been so drastically curtailed after the socialist revolution? He characterizes the socialist society, that is, society in the first stage of Communism, as a society which would bear all the afflictions, all the "dirt" of the past. In order to clean out this "dirt," and in order to assure the growth of freedom, civil liberties, free press and freedom of assembly, must be expanded, he insisted.

Whatever Marx's vision of the dictatorship of the proletariat might have been, one thing seems certain: He never anticipated that such a system would be accompanied by the triumph of censorship and the abolition of the civil liberties enjoyed under parliamentary democracies. There is nothing to indicate that Marx and Engels believed that the future state would be a centralized, despotic bureaucracy. On the contrary, in analyzing the Paris Commune of 1871, Marx stresses that under that system every official had been freely elected by the people and could have been recalled at any time:

The commune . . . must . . . safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials, by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any moment.²¹

Marx writes that the Commune had to protect itself against its own servants; the newly acquired freedoms had to be defended against their own defenders and the Commune therefore made use of two "infallible" means:

In the first place, it filled all posts—administrative, judicial and educational—by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors. And, in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only wages received by other workers. . . . In this way an effective barrier to place hunting and careerism was set up. . . .²²

Unfortunately, the two devices which Marx and Engels regarded as "infallible" were of doubtful value. Neither has ever been employed in any Communist country for a long period. Although we have no direct evidence to judge their efficacy, we have every reason to believe that had these devices ever been consistently tried in Communist countries, they would not have effectively protected the people against the cancer of a centralized bureaucracy.

It is impossible in any modern state with millions of inhabitants to fill the thousands of administrative, judicial, legislative, economic, and even educational posts by election. Such an election would be a farce because no one could conceivably be familiar with so many candidates. Instant recall is even more likely to lead to the same dead end as Recall, which is now part of the constitutions of many Western states. Lenin did impose the "Party-maximum" pay for officials at the central level and built up his dictatorship upon the power-seeking officials who served him at modest salaries.

The socialist revolution did not take place in any highly developed European, industrial countries, as Marx and Engels predict; it did not take place in Germany where the workers had a better understanding and interest in theory; instead, it succeeded in a country whose majority was illiterate and did not even understand the word theory. Hegelian freedom for them was a meaningless concept.

The predictions of Marx and Engels concerning freedom could therefore not become a reality in Eastern Europe and in Asia, even had their theory been otherwise feasible.

The real attitude of Marx and Engels towards political freedom is expressed in their prediction that the Communist state would wither away, not, as Stalin and his successors declared, many generations after the Communist revolution. According to Marx and Engels this process was to start immediately after the socialist revolution. The first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat was to be the first day of the withering away of the state. Each day, more and more of the functions of the state will be eliminated and day by day the interference by the state authorities will narrow. Ultimately, all the state's functions and institutions will be sent, as Engels writes, to the museum of pre-historic mankind.

The state exists, Marx writes, solely to limit the freedom of individuals; that is its purpose. When it withers away, individual freedom is won. It is one of the greatest ironies of history that the most despotic totalitarian states were built in the name of Marx, who so carefully developed a theory of the withering away of the state.

There is no question that Marx regards all the democratic liberties proclaimed in Western constitutions and enjoyed by the nations under parliamentary regimes to be beyond any need of justification. The withering away of the state, for Marx, contains no restrictions upon individual liberties, but rather their maximum expansion. With

the withering away of the state, the areas free of state interference must inevitably increase.

In these political circumstances, truly human freedom will be realized. An analysis of the political freedom is not the same as an analysis of philosophical freedom. Let us therefore go deeper into the philosophical notion of freedom. In *Anti-Duehring*, which was written by Engels, but corrected by Marx, the following elaboration of Hegel's concept of freedom, and especially the appreciation of necessity, is developed:

Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards a definite end. . . . Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with the real knowledge of the subject. Therefore the freer a man's judgment is in relation to a definite question, with so much the greater necessity is the content of his judgment determined. . . . Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity. . . . The first men who separated themselves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in civilization was a step toward freedom.²³

This is a clear continuation of Hegel's dialectic of freedom, of freedom's being a result of the interdependence of objective and subjective elements. An ignorant person cannot be free because judgment and choice based on ignorance are not free. Ignoramuses usually are self-confident, make their own decisions quickly and freely; they live in a world of their own illusions, but they are not free. In order truly to be free one must know reality and by knowledge exercise control over it. To be free, a person must live in a society in which the results of activity conform with reasonable expectations. To be free, a person must live under circumstances which allow personal effort to bring forth desired effects.

Marx and Engels believe that the ideal of individual freedom will only be attained in a society without a state and without a government, without private property, and without wars. Such is the Marxian vision of the kingdom of freedom, described by his adversaries as utopian, and by Marx himself as a scientific prediction of the future.

Men's own social organization which has hitherto stood in opposition to them . . . will then become the voluntary act of men themselves. The objective,

external forces which have hitherto dominated history, will then pass under the control of men themselves. It is only from this point that men, with full consciousness, will fashion their own history; it is only from this point that the social causes set in motion by man will have, predominantly and in constantly increasing measure, the effects willed by man. It is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.²⁴

As we see, for Hegel and Marx freedom is not static. A free man is not passive; he is a social being continually overcoming objective and subjective difficulties along the path of his development. Man is not born free; he may become free. Freedom does not lie in a separation from society; man is not a monad living in a cell separate from all others; he can realize and extend his power over external circumstances only in cooperation with other free people. Freedom is not a subjective feeling, as St. Augustine would have it; freedom is a result of the combination of subjective and objective elements. Man cannot be liberated by a mechanical transfer from the country of bondage to the kingdom of freedom. Mere institutional, social, and economic changes by themselves cannot truly liberate people. Prior to and during liberation the minds of the people must be reformed and adjusted to the new circumstances in which they can make their own decisions and choices with maximum consciousness.

Hegel wrote that man used the forces of nature (water, fire, gravity) in order to build shelters against the ravages of the forces of nature. Marx and Engels write that man must use the social forces, evolutionary tendencies to serve as the material with which to build a society in which an individual can be the master of his own destiny instead of being like a die which is being thrown about by blind, inscrutable forces.

The man of the future, the free man, will be educated, civilized, and disciplined. He will voluntarily observe the moral norms and accepted rules of social behavior. He will not regard them as a burden, they will be self evident for him. They will not restrict freedom but be its precondition. In this society man will be able to develop all his natural talents and reasonable inclinations. Not everyone will have the talent of a Raphael or a Leonardo da Vinci, Marx observed, but everyone possessing such a genius will be given an opportunity to develop it for his own and the public's benefit.

The gist of Marx's considerations on freedom is:

In Communist society, where no one has any exclusive sphere of activity, but

each can be accomplished in any branch he wishes, production as a whole is regulated by society, thus making it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, in accordance with my inclination, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.²⁵

Marx's prediction that division of labor will disappear in the future society is one of the weakest elements of his theory; it is an obvious utopian vestige.

On the other hand, one aspect of this theory should not be overlooked: In order to develop his personality a truly free human being should be given more opportunities to use fully *all* his latent talents and dormant interests. Marx interpreted social freedom as a liberation of the individual. That individual will be conscious of social needs, he will understand that he must work for society, but not in the sense of self-deprivation or asceticism. The liberated individual would nevertheless remain an individualist and a hedonist.

An individual in the future Communist society will on the one hand be disciplined, on the other however he will resemble the "anarchistic" intellectual. His way of life will constantly change, together with his profession and his artistic tastes. He will lose private property, but he will have the right to satisfy his reasonable personal drives and desires.

IV

Hegel ridicules Kant's philosophy of pure reason. He compares this kind of knowledge with that of persons who wish to learn how to swim without entering the water. Hegel writes that if no one can know the thing-in-itself, as Kant argues, then one cannot even be sure that the thing-in-itself exists. He refers with contempt to those who admire Kant for having taught the art of philosophizing, but not philosophy. For Hegel, that is tantamount to teaching carpentry without teaching how to make a table, or a chair, or a door.

And still, Hegel is a direct continuator of Kant's grand notion of freedom. Hegel's point of departure is a strange amalgam of Kant's *a priori* ideas: freedom, infinity, and God. Hegel's Idea of Eternal Freedom is abstract, and it is a God-creator. Man becomes more and more enlightened, according to Kant; he becomes more and more critical, outgrowing the age of nonentity, of tutelage, and eventually

reaching a clearer understanding of what freedom means. The horizons of understanding incessantly broaden, Kant writes.

How similar, and yet how different, Hegel sounds when he speaks of the history of the Idea of Freedom (which he identifies with the Absolute Idea). It is the authentic history of mankind and conversely, the history of mankind is the history of the transformation of the Idea of Freedom. This is so because the Absolute Idea is the demiurge of history.

It was Kant who prepared the way for the Pure Idea of Freedom in Hegel's philosophy.

The supersensuous world being the fountainhead of the idea of freedom is one of Kant's philosophical foundation stones. This notion was incorporated in Hegel's writings and connected with his ideas on dialectical contradictions. The abstract idea of freedom thus became alive and concrete. Hegel ultimately will forget that his idea of freedom once was an abstract notion and whenever he analyzes it, he does what a true historian should do, he analyzes the whole economic, political, and cultural situation of a given society. The enlightened reader should simply ignore Hegel's assumptive use of the idea of freedom and concentrate on his superb analysis of how societies struggled each in their own circumstances and how the manner in which he affirms or denies the concrete freedom of historically real individuals was realized.

In this way Hegel prepared the ground for Marx's sociological notion of freedom and simultaneously became a contributor to Marx's return to Kant.

Marx begins his considerations on freedom with an analysis developed by Hegel: The notion of freedom has a different meaning in every different social epoch. Hegel asserted that the evolution of the idea of freedom was the cause of the changing social and political relations; according to Marx the ideas of freedom are determined by those relations, by the "real," "material" basis of those relations.

As he declares, Marx turned Hegel's idealistic dialectic upside down and thereby made the idea of freedom come out feet first.

According to Hegel the idea of freedom went through four basic periods: oriental despotism, the Greek and Roman states, Christianity, and the German societies. According to Marx the ideas of freedom were different under each of these socio-economic systems: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and once again

the future communist society. According to Marx there were two basic philosophies of freedom under every society based on exploitation: that of the oppressed exploited masses and that of the exploiters. In the future Communist society, lacking class antagonisms and political oppression, when the state and law will wither away, the freedom of each individual will be compatible with the freedom of all—and this is the Kantian “powerless” (Engels) ideal. There will be no law, Marx continues, meaning that there will be no external restrictions or commands; they will be replaced by the conscious discipline of highly educated, enlightened, self-disciplined, and unselfish members of the communist society. These members will govern themselves, ultimately expressing the Kantian ideal of self-legislation (not Hegel’s *boese Wirklichkeit*).

Communist society will realize the Kantian ideals as forecast by the science of Marx. Kant, however, doubted that his optimum state of self-legislation could be attained. Marx and Engels had no doubts. For them such a future was not a speculative ideal of pure reason, but the inevitable stage which society must reach in accordance with the iron laws of its development. Marx and Engels were more Kantian than Kant himself.

What about the Hegelian dialectical contradictions which are the soul of the social sciences and social development? They will become non-political, Marx asserts, they will cease to be poisonous and vicious because the free non-antagonistic society can easily overcome them. It would appear that the Hegelian concept that freedom is a process of self-realization and always is a state of strife for self-preservation and expansion will also find its place in the “museum of antiquity” next to the state, law, and religion.

Hegel’s theory of freedom acted as intermediary between Kant and Marx, and between Marx and Kant.

¹ George Tapley Whitney and David F. Bowers, eds., *The Heritage of Kant* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 257.

² *Ibid.*, p. 257.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁴ Nathan Rotenstreich, *From Substance to Subject* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 34.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1956), p. 4.

According to Kant’s philosophy we can think the ideas of God and the world *a priori*, but we can know neither God nor the world. Why not? Because they are

on the other side. But the idea of freedom is "susceptible in itself of no presentation in intuition, and consequently of no theoretical proof of its possibility." (Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Gulik, p. 383). This concept of freedom is obviously connected with the concept of man as a noumenon which, according to Kant, logically presupposes the existence of freedom as well as the fact that reason influences free decisions.

⁶ Erwin De Haar, ed., *Im Zeichen Der Hoffnung*, (Muenchen: Max Huber Verlag, 1962), pp. 333-34. Trans. and abridged "Kurt Huber, Schlusswort vor dem 'Volksgerichtshof'" by I. E. Previti (manuscript).

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 312.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁹ Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 239.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 16.

¹¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), p. 19.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁴ Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 132.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, VI. The quote is my own translation from the original German text which reads: "Aeußere Uebermacht vermag nichts auf die Dauer: Napoleon hat Spanien so wenig zur Freiheit, als Philip II Holland zur Knechtschaft zwingen koennen." Band "Die Deutsche Welt" (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1944), p. 932.

¹⁸ Cf. Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*. A correct translation of this sentence would have to read "It is the way of God in the world, that there should be (literally: is) the state." What Hegel meant to say was not that the state is the "March of God" on earth or anything of this nature, but that the very existence of the state is part of a divine strategy, not a merely human arbitrary artefact. (Pp. 176-77).

¹⁹ Karl Marx, *On Freedom of the Press and Censorship*, trans. and ed. by Saul K. Padover (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 142.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²¹ Marx & Engels, *Basic Writings on Politics & Philosophy*, ed. by Lewis S. Feuer (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Anchor Books, 1959), p. 360.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 361.

²³ Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duehring*, C. P. Dutt, ed., trans. by Emile Burns (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1970), pp. 125-26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-10.

²⁵ Karl Marx, *Selected Writings in Sociology & Social Philosophy*, eds., Bottomore and Maximilian Rubel (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964), p. 95.