

# Inverting Inversion

The 'Turning Point' in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*  
for the History of Thought

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That in their appearance things are often presented in an inverted way is something fairly familiar in every science, apart from political economy. (Marx 1976, 667)

The transition from 'Force and Understanding' to The 'Truth of Self-Certainty' in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>1</sup> is marked, in Hegel's words, by a fundamental 'turning point,' not just for the text itself, but for the history of thought. Since then, the structural relations between Hegel's corpus and Marx's work — via Feuerbach's 'inversion' of Hegelian terms — are well known, as is Marx's self-conscious intention to turn 'Hegel's dialectic the right way up.' Less familiar, but not of lesser significance, however, is the importance of the chapter 'Force and Understanding' for *Capital Vol. 1*, and of the Hegelian concepts of INVERSION, ESSENCE, APPEARANCE and the SUPERSENSIBLE that appear in 'Force and Understanding' in relation to Marx's employment of them in his discussion of commodity fetishism and of commodified social relations.<sup>2</sup>

In the history of thought, it was due to Marx's critique of Hegel in *The German Ideology*<sup>3</sup> that the conceptual space was opened for Marx

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1 *PS* hereafter.

2 The latter being Kantian categories, which are fundamentally transformed through Hegel's phenomenological method operating as a functional replacement for the transcendental method.

3 In which all philosophy is idealist and materialism is the critique of philosophy, such that any philosophy after Hegel's Absolute (or totality), can only ever be par-

to be able to retroactively read through Hegel, producing the ground for 'Frankfurt' critical theory. For Hegel's transposition of the problematic of epistemology into self-consciousness entailed that, for the Frankfurt school, epistemology would only be possible as critical social theory, and that therefore Marxist social theory broadly construed would be the solution to the problem of epistemology. However, the examination of the possible relationships between the chapter on 'Force and Understanding' and Marx's adoption of it has been deferred due to the character of the chapter itself, a chapter that Stewart has described as 'one of the most opaque pieces of philosophical argumentation in the entire tradition of German idealism.' From the standpoint of the present, therefore, and following in the footsteps of Marx and the Frankfurt school, what follows is an attempt to render the movement of 'Force and Understanding' less opaque, in order to allow for a consideration of its importance for *Capital Vol. 1*.

### Prospect

Experience, for Hegel, is consciousness knowing its own movement as it appears to itself (*phainomena*); a dialectical movement self-produced by consciousness, affecting both knowledge and its object (PS §86). The unity of experience is not therefore punctual or atemporal, but it is the unity of a developmental process the result of which cannot be separated from the process that produced it. Consequently, philosophical truth in the *PS* cannot be presented by summarising or refuting a series of competing philosophical positions, but is only disclosed through shapes of consciousness as it passes through the *Bildung* of natural-consciousness. To discuss and evaluate 1 section of the *PS*, therefore, is to render its truth partial to the standpoint of that shape of consciousness. However, the transition from 'Force and Understanding' to The 'Truth of Self-Certainty' is marked by a fundamental 'turning point' within the *PS*, which can be tabulated thus:

1. Hegel transposes the problematic of epistemology into self-consciousness. What for Kant would be a transition

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tial from this standpoint.

internal to epistemology, is, for Hegel, the logical necessity of the self-defeating character of consciousness as an epistemic presupposition.

2. 'Force and Understanding' is the first section of the *PS* to immanently derive a concept that is *explicitly* internally dynamic, namely FORCE, which operates throughout its movement as a critique of reification.
3. Natural-consciousness is first confronted, in 'Force and Understanding', by appearance (*Schein/Erscheinung*) as an experience constitutive of Hegel's phenomenological method.

### Retrospect, Prospect

The transition from 'Perception' to the new shape of consciousness in 'Force and Understanding' begins in 'Perception', where the object for perceiving-consciousness has become *intrinsically* self-contradictory, and therefore irresolvable for it. For observing-consciousness, the division of the object into what it was FOR-ITSELF as the internal relations of its properties that unified it, and FOR-ANOTHER, as the external relations to other Things enabling its discreteness, has collapsed. The experience of the object for perceiving-consciousness has exhibited 2 moments, each the opposite of its other: insofar as it is 'for-itself,' it stands in relation 'for-another,' and it is 'for-another' in virtue of being 'for-itself,' (*PS* §128). However, what emerges in the experience of the perceptual object is the truth of perception, the collapse of the object's different moments into a 'single unity.' The unification of the previously contradictory moments — the Thing's being-for-itself and its being-for-another — bring forth the new object for observing-consciousness, the 'unconditioned (*unbedingt*) absolute universality,' (*PS* §129). Previously, the One and its universal properties were 'conditioned' by their 'sensuous being,' but the unconditioned (*unbedingt*) universal is now literally — according to

German etymology — ‘un-Thinged.’ The self-negation of the 2 opposing moments of the perceived object marks the withdrawal of the ‘sensuous being’ that had conditioned them. The unconditioned universal is, for observing-consciousness, imperceptible, and therefore, as a unity of the 2 opposing moments of the perceptible object, it can only be conceived of as dynamically internal to it. That is, the new object for *observing*-consciousness emerges in and through the experience of the dialectical movement of the 2 opposed moments in perception. Perceptive-consciousness, however, withdraws from this result, and attempts to rescue the contradiction in its object with what Hegel calls the ‘sophistry’ of the ‘insofar as’ (Houlgate 2013, 56). Instead of overcoming the contradiction in the object, perceiving-consciousness rhetorically insists upon the DISCRETNESS of the Thing ‘for-itself’ insofar as it is ‘for-another,’ and it is ‘for-another’ insofar as it is discreet (PS §130). Perceptive-consciousness therefore makes discreet what is not, and is commanded by what Hegel calls the ‘play of abstractions,’ (PS §131).

By disavowing the result of the developmental movement, perceptive-consciousness also disavows the dialectical movement self-produced by it, which has affected both its knowledge and its object. For observing-consciousness, this result has 2 consequences in the transition to ‘Force and Understanding’. First, although it is unconscious of it, the standpoint of perceiving-consciousness is doubled, and becomes PERCEPTUAL-UNDERSTANDING (*wahrnehmender Verstand*). Second, following the transition it renders explicit why it is ‘we therefore [who] have to step into its [natural-consciousness’s] place and to the concept that works out what is contained in the result,’ (Hegel 2013, §133). The initial movements of ‘Force and Understanding’ will therefore be experienced by observing-consciousness adopting the double position of perceptive-understanding, *not* by observing-consciousness observing natural-consciousness as this doubled standpoint.

### The Appearance of Force ‘For-Us’

At the beginning of ‘Force and Understanding’, Hegel recapitulates the result of the movement of observing-consciousness by noting that the ‘Understanding, without knowing itself therein, plays no part in

its free realisation,' (PS §133). 'For *us*,' the unconditioned universal that unifies the 2 moments of the perceivable object is a 'unity of being-for-self and being-for-another'; (PS §134). both moments merely pass over into their opposite. The identity of the object for observing-consciousness can therefore sustain both the unity of the independent One 'reflected into itself' as its medium, and the subsistence of universal properties of the Many that Hegel now re-codes as 'independent matter's (*Materien*),' (PS §136). As perceptive-consciousness continues to disavow the truth of perception, it maintains, that the 2 moments of its object are discreet: 'in this respect' the One, 'in this respect' the Many. However, for observing-consciousness, the independent matters merely reveal itself to be its medium, and the medium is revealed to be merely the 'plurality' of its matters. That is, the universal medium supplying the One's unity and the independent matters as 'posited', are mutually self-sublating:

'The 'matters' posited as independent directly pass over into their unity, and their unity directly unfolds its diversity.' (PS §136)

Although re-coded, these 2 moments remain, for perceiving-consciousness, the 2 moments of the Thing. As it adopt the standpoint of perceptive-understanding, the medium of universal matters is, for observing-consciousness, the preservation of the medium from perception, but the universal properties are now 'posited' independent matters, thereby revealing the double-position being assumed. Independent matters are *both* manifestations in the domain of sense and perceivable in 'their [immediate] being,' but they are also 'posited' by the Understanding (PS §136). However, for observing-consciousness, the movement from unity to diversity and vice versa cannot be 'posited' as separate, because the self-negation of unity and diversity is a *dynamic* unity (Hyppolite 1974, 121). Only observing-consciousness *understands* that, for perceptive-understanding, the Thing is not *merely* a Thing, but a locus of movement (Houlgate 2013, 53).

This movement, for Hegel, 'is what is called Force [*Kraft*]: 'Called', because Force serves as an *explanandum* for what observing-consciousness has thus far experienced in the fluctuating alternation of the Thing.

One of its moments, the dispersal of the independent 'matters' in their [immediate] being, is the expression of Force; but Force, taken as that in which they have disappeared, is Force proper. (PS §136)

Although observing-consciousness has partially resolved the contradiction in perceptive-understanding, it is not yet the 'concept of Force.' When *we* perceive of independent matters dispersing in the 'expression' of Force, and subsequently contracting into 'Force proper,' both moments are *understood* to be movements of Force itself. It must necessarily express itself for it to be Force, but it must also necessarily contract into its unity to be Force. Force, then, is its own self-expression, and is *only* coherent as dynamic and relational, because the very *essence* of Force is that it persists in and through its self-movement. Force is both these movements and is preserved as Force in all instances, but for observing-consciousness, this movement can *only* be preserved 'in thought' (PS §136). Force cannot *be* Force except in its relation to itself in any of its moments, such that its unity is 'posited' as a concept with its moments of expression as difference inhering in it (Hyppolite 1974, 121). At this stage, Force for observing-consciousness, with the latter adopting the standpoint of perceptive-understanding, is objective, and 'it regards objective Force as a unity and does not see the difference between force and its expression as something real,' (Houlgate 2013, 60). Observing-consciousness qua perceptive-understanding has rendered the 'play of abstractions,' the objective unity of Force's 2 moments, as the unconditioned universality that has proven to be Force. Although observing-consciousness has achieved this for perceptive-understanding, Hegel writes:

Here, these two sides are moments of Force; they are just as much in a unity, as this unity, which appears as the *middle term*<sup>4</sup> over against the independent extremes. (PS §136)

From the double standpoint of perceptive-understanding's understanding, observing-consciousness has revealed that independent

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4 Hegel will use this 'middle term' to reunite the 2 extremes of Force by means of solicitation.

'matters' are *perceivable* as the expressions of Force, whereas 'Force proper' can only be *conceived of*. This results in 'matters' which were 'the objective side of Perception, turn into the *phenomenal* side of Understanding,' (Harris 1997, 267). The perceiving standpoint of perceptive-understanding perceives the expression of Force in matters, while the understanding standpoint conceives of Force as the objective, unified Force *proper*. This results from observing-consciousness's animation of the transition from 'Perception' to 'Force and Understanding' by adopting the standpoint of perceptive-understanding. Having done so, perceptive-understanding has been divided by the distinction made by the Understanding between Force proper and Force that expresses itself in matters. For perceptive-understanding, then, there are 2 forces. FORCE EXPRESSED is a substantial dynamic, active in the domain of phenomena. FORCE PROPER is a concept determining the field of phenomena.

This distinction leads Hegel to introduce 'Force that solicits and Force that is solicited,' (PS §141). The matters in which Force finds its expression must 'solicit' Force proper, in order for the latter to express itself in these matters, however, this solicitation must return to itself as a unity *separate* from its expression. This movement is the recapitulation of the *movement* from One to Many in perception, and the fluctuating alternation first registered by observing-consciousness from the standpoint of perceptive-understanding. Both forces must solicit their other and *be solicited* by their other, so that 'these forms at the same time appear only as a vanishing moment,' (PS §138). The Understanding has made a distinction for perceptive-understanding, but each standpoint of perceptive-understanding insists upon its object: *perceivable* matters, and *conceived* Force proper, respectively. Force is now divided for each side of perceptive-understanding, but for observing-consciousness it is a distinction without difference; force both solicits and is solicited by its other. So the distinction collapses into an interplay of force in reciprocal solicitation, 'where each is solely through the other': what Hegel calls the 'play of forces' (PS §143).

In its strictest sense, perception proper cannot alone perceive the movement of the passing over to its opposite in the Thing. Nor can perception discern the movement of force as it is conceived of by the Understanding alone 'in thought.' However, the Understanding can

conceive of this movement of passing over into its opposite, and so, is conscious of Force in perceivable Things. It understands 'the matter or properties that constitute such things to be the expression of the force within them,' (Houlgate 2013, 63). At this stage, there is a shift in priority for perceptive-understanding, because perception alone cannot discern the movement of things passing over into their opposite, so the Understanding begins to break with perception, wherein lies the beginning of the division of the SENSUOUS and the SUPERSENSIBLE.

### The Appearance of Appearance

What is immediate for understanding-consciousness is the mere 'play of forces,' or what Hegel had previously called the 'play of abstractions,' but its 'realisation of force is at the same time the loss of reality,' (PS §141). The unity in the *concept* of force is the unification of differing *moments* of Force, as it passes from its expression and into contraction. What is true for the understanding-consciousness is no longer the 'immediate' unconditioned universal, but what mediates — the 'middle term' — between the interplay of Force in substance and Force as concept. The understanding-consciousness still holds to the result of perceptive-understanding, i.e. that Forces are active within the perceivable, but the *unity* of Force is located beyond the domain of the perceivable. With this conception, the Understanding formally breaks with perception, since it no longer has the capacity to supply a unity to resolve the interplay of Forces that merely pass over and vanish into one another, and which 'collapse unresistingly into an undifferentiated unity,' (PS §141). Because Force collapses into an undifferentiated unity, it is a unity beyond the perceivable, which the Understanding locates in 'the inner being of things'; it thus becomes the first object of the Understanding *alone* (PS §142). In locating the unity in the 'inner being of things,' the Understanding has contradistinguished the play of Forces *qua* dynamic vanishing difference with that of immutable unity (Houlgate 2013, 64).

This distinction opens a 'permanent beyond' between 'the sensuous world, which is the world of *appearance*, [and the] *supersensible* world,' thereby constituting the supersensible — the inner being of



things — as the ‘true world’ (PS §144). Having made this contradistinction, the Understanding attributes to itself the capacity to project through the mediating [middle term] play of forces, which is the mere surface show of things (*Schein*) — a domain of movement, vanishing forces and self-cancelling difference (*Erscheinung*) — to the ‘true background of things’ (PS §143). However, for Hegel, there is nothing ‘behind’ appearance, no noumenal domain; what is *true* is the movement of the arising and passing away of appearance that constitutes ‘the actuality and the movement of the life of truth’ (PS §47). Yet what is true for the Understanding ‘behind’ appearance, is for Hegel, merely a ‘void’ — the thing-in-itself.

Just as the One and Many were for perception, and Force proper and independent matters were for perceptive-understanding, Hegel again recapitulates the dialectic of unity and difference at the level of the supersensible and the ‘totality’ of the world of appearance respectively. That is, what Hegel has been undertaking since the beginning of the consciousness section, explicating how, if consciousness is taken to be an epistemic presupposition, it will attempt to fix ‘difference in a different sustaining element’ to resolve the dialectic of identity and difference (PS §160). The opening of a ‘permanent beyond’ is what the movement of the Understanding has necessitated in order to *explain* appearance. But the truth of what arises and passes away is that it continually disappears. The constancy of its disappearing is not merely ‘the opposite of disappearance, rather it is the truth of disappearance,’ (Gadamer 1971, 40). For observing-consciousness, the Understanding merely ‘posits’ the supersensible qua identity, to *explain* difference in the arising and passing away of appearance. Observing-consciousness cannot find itself in the ‘inner being of things,’ or the supersensible, ‘for it is merely the nothingness of appearance’ and is therefore unknowable (PS §146). This enables Hegel to write that ‘the supersensible world is simply the truth of ... appearances,’ and as such, ‘the supersensible is therefore appearance qua appearance,’ (PS §147) Appearance is nothing other than appearance, it is not the contradistinction of the supersensible, but the *truth* of the supersensible, that it is merely appearance (Gadamer 1971, 41). The supersensible was posited *in thought* as the *explanandum* for difference in appearance,

and hence its explanans, but it was initially appearance as the play of forces — the middle term — that initiated the analytic distinction between it and the supersensible (Stewart 1998, 89). That is, both the ‘undifferentiated unity’ of the supersensible beyond the play of forces, and the difference in the arising and passing away of appearance, reciprocally determine one another. For observing-consciousness, it is a distinction without difference; the supersensible *is* appearance, and appearance *is* the supersensible. The analytic distinction drawn through the Understanding’s attempts to know collapses into an explanatory tautology. Inner being is only a unity *qua* identity in virtue of the negation of appearance *qua* difference, and vice versa; a movement anticipating the inverted world.

Just as perceiving-consciousness attempted to resolve the contradiction of its object in the object itself, Hegel now transposes the Understanding into the standpoint of 18<sup>th</sup> Century scientific-consciousness, in an attempt to explain the flux of appearance (difference) and law (identity). However, this transposition can only occur by the Understanding’s maintenance maintaining the distinction between appearance and the supersensible. For the Understanding, the law will be a unity determining the totality of appearances; for observing-consciousness, the law of appearance will be merely a tautologous explanation.

### The Appearance of Law

Hegel incorporates the knowledges of non-philosophical sciences into ‘Force and Understanding’ by representing their contents as immanent self-determinations of conceptual forms, with the implication that the self-development of the Concept proper is merely a progression of conceptual forms, insofar as the concept of form is the presentation of the immanent shape of content. Hegel’s use of scientific examples is historical in *content*, but logically immanent and necessary to the partial development of the Concept in *form*. Regardless of scientific content, each example given exhibits the same logical form as the *concept* of law to ‘explain’ dynamic and particular phenomena. That is, the *concept* of law in relation to phenomena is the reworking of the dialectical movements of identity and difference thus

far, however, law is here deployed as determining what stays the same in change; it combines both unity and difference within itself, and, as the Understanding conceives of it, can explain both the expression of difference and unify all differences that it subsumes and expresses. The law of  $x$ , therefore, maintains and has the status of determining the previous distinction between the perceived world of appearance and the unity of the 'beyond.'

the supersensible world is an inert *realm of laws* which, through beyond the perceived world — for this exhibits law only through incessant change — is equally *present* in it and is its direct tranquil image. (PS §149)

From the standpoint of observing-consciousness, law may be posited to explain the mutability of a phenomenon as an identity with difference *internal* to it, but the law as such is not adequate to the phenomenon it is meant to explain (Lauer 1976, 85). It is, what Hegel terms, a 'stable image of unstable appearance' (PS §150). Even if law is itself *in* appearances, the flux of appearances exceeds the explanatory capacity of the law itself. If scientific-understanding makes recourse to further laws in to account for the inadequacy of a singular law, then the multiplicity of laws renders the singular law 'superficial' as an explanation of appearances. If the multiplicity of law is unified under a universal law, then, due to the inadequate explanatory capacity of the multiplicity of laws, the universal law is also inadequate for its purpose. It merely 'expresses no other content than just the mere *Concept of law itself*,' (PS §140). What observing-consciousness has discovered in the Understanding's adopting of the standpoint of scientific-consciousness is that, regardless of the specificity of the law, the *truth* of the law is not in the law itself, but in the *concept* of law. That is, the law of gravity cannot maintain its identity, as it is in-itself, but must necessarily be expressed in terms of difference: force, weight, time, space, &c. (Lauer 1976, 86). Scientific-consciousness may be able to explain phenomena by means of law, but as a mode of knowing, it cannot know its *truth*. Without truth in knowing — when epistemic-consciousness becomes conscious of its self-distinguishing of itself from its object — scientific explanation is tautology in that 'the law is nothing more than a single

instance in its abstraction,' (Stewart 1998, 95) 'When law (unity) passes over into phenomenon (difference), the differences in the manifestation of the law are mere instances of the *unity* of the law, without contributing anything to it. If the *explanandum* for the law of gravity is its *explanans* — the force of gravity — nothing has been added to the result and the movement is circular. In each moment, the *concept* of law as *explanandum* and the phenomena as *explanans* are identical without difference.

The experience of this tautologous movement necessitates that the Understanding revisit the concept of law, that is, the concept of the understanding. As the faculty of distinctions, the Understanding becomes the movement of distinctions which, in the act of distinguishing, are not distinctions, and merely transition to their opposite (Houlgate 2013, 74). The Understanding's movement, for observing-consciousness, is a positing of 'difference which is not only *not* difference for us, but one which the movement itself cancels as a difference,' (PS §155). The Understanding has now become inadequate as a faculty; it can no longer fix 'differences in a different sustaining element' (PS §160) independent of it, reaching its logical outcome: the INVERTED WORLD.

### The Appearance of the Inverted World

For observing-consciousness, the law of the inverted world is difference, but where 'differences arise which are no differences,' (PS §156). When the law of scientific-consciousness determined appearance from unity, it accounted for what stayed the same in change. The second law, in contrast, is the inversion of the first, and dictates that the domain of appearance is mutable and unstable (Houlgate 2013, 76). The first law was itself in appearance but inadequate to it, and therefore in contention with the law's unity. But since the flux of appearance is now governed by a law grounding its very mutability, it is the inversion of the first law, and:

What is like in the first world is unlike to itself, and what is unlike in the first world is equally unlike to itself, or it becomes like itself. (PS §158)

The law of inversion states that whatever  $x$  is in the first law turns into its opposite. The first law is the inversion of the second law, and the second law is the inversion of the first, such that the law of inversion undermines the opposition between the 2 laws (Houlgate 2013, 78). Because the law of inversion can equally invert any law into its opposite, and invert this inversion back to what it was previously, the law of inversion ‘encompasses the first law within itself,’ (Houlgate 2013, 78).

The law of inversion itself undermines the Understanding’s distinctions between the sensible and the supersensible, the law and appearance, &c. However, the Understanding cannot conceive of a single unified world because appearance is now governed by 2 laws, each the inversion of the other (Houlgate 2013, 77). The very essence of the ‘2’ worlds is that they persist in and through the movement to their opposites. Put formally, the Understanding registers 2 worlds that are in-themselves self-identical opposites. But, as each is for-itself, it can only be for-itself if it is for-the-other, and so it enters into a relation with what it is not. Both therefore determine one another reciprocally, a determination achieved through their difference as inverted opposites. However, because the law of inversion inverts both worlds to their opposite, the distinction between the 2 worlds collapses.

The inverted world is the inversion of its first world, but the opposite world which has been inverted by the first is the inverted inversion of the first world. What is black in the first world, in the second is white; but black in the first world is the inversion of white and white in the second world the inversion of black. The *truth* of the inverted world, therefore, is that there are not 2 worlds, but 1, 1 world to which both worlds are internal, entailing that the division into 2 oppositional worlds — each merely inverting to its other — is merely the self-relation of 1 world to itself (Gadamer 1971, 49): ‘The ‘2’ worlds made ‘superficially’ distinct by the Understanding are but a self-identical One, which is ‘itself and its opposite in one unity,’ (PS §160).

The previous distinction made by the Understanding between the play of forces and the inner of things, between the sensible and the supersensible, &c., has revealed to the Understanding its truth. The first supersensible world was merely the universalisation of the sen-

sible world — ‘the immediate raising of the perceived world into the universal element’ — and the inverted world is an inversion of the phenomenal world: ‘it had its necessary counterpart in this perceived world which still retained *for itself the principle of change and alteration,*’ (PS §157). It follows, therefore, that the inverted world is also the inversion of the supersensible world (Stewart 1998, 98). The inverted world can no longer be an independent object for the Understanding, because, as the latter is a faculty of distinctions, all distinctions made that define oppositional terms as different merely invert to their other. The inverted world *is* the Understanding’s world, where it ‘inverts itself into itself and whose every determination is its own contrary,’ (Hyppolite 1974, 146). Its world has finally become in-and-for-itself for consciousness, and the Understanding’s independence from it has become necessarily and logically untenable.

The ‘2’ worlds are a unity with the movement of difference through distinctions internal to them, such that the ‘Concept of inner difference’ is merely the *movement* of the Understanding. This movement of inversion falls within the movement of the Understanding that can no longer ‘fix differences in a difference sustaining element,’ (PS §160). That the inverted world inverts all things to their opposites is precisely natural-consciousness’s experience of consciousness as an epistemic presupposition thus far, where, at each stage, the self-defeating character of epistemic-consciousness has attempted to reify movement in an independent object. Consciousness, therefore, has lost its presupposition, and its independent object has collapsed into itself as the ‘absolute concept,’ or infinity, which is now its *true* object. Within the ‘absolute concept,’ all difference-constituting distinctions the Understanding makes self-cancel in an infinite whole.

### Retrospect/Prospect

All the previous movements that had failed to resolve identity in difference and difference in identity in an independent object reach their terminus in the ‘absolute concept,’ where the identity of infinity is constituted by the necessary relations of all differences in their instances, each of which is what it is only in virtue of its relations to others and

is therefore comprised of the whole it is a moment of. A self-identical identity, in which every inhering difference is the Understanding's own 'movement of self-supersession,' which, as Hegel states, has been from the beginning 'the soul of all that has gone before,' (PS §160).

Natural-consciousness has necessarily become conscious of its own movement in its attempts to know an independent object. This *experience* of consciousness reveals its dialectical structure: 'I know something — the subjective in-itself — and 'I know that 'I know — the objective for-itself. Consciousness becomes conscious of distinguishing itself from its object as its own production, while structuring a relation no longer to an 'independent' object, but to itself (PS §164). To think, therefore, is to open this difference, enabling consciousness to *know itself knowing*. Not to know *qua* knowledge, but to know the *truth* of knowledge, wherein the truth of 'Life' is the self-movement of itself within itself, but is not yet the certainty of it.

### Retrospect/Prospect

The terminus of the section on 'Force and Understanding' concludes with natural-consciousness becoming self-conscious of its own movement, whilst still lacking an immediate certainty of it. The transition from 'Force and Understanding' to The 'Truth of Self-Certainty' therefore departs from the immediacy of individual (*Erkennung*) consciousness knowing its own movement, but this movement is now linguistically and conceptually internal to the concept of recognition (*An-erkennung*). To be certain of its own self-consciousness, it must be mediated by its other, infamously leading to the section on *Lordship and Bondage*.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 3 primary traditions have attempted to explicate the relationship between Hegel's philosophy and Marx's critique of political economy. The first was the attempt to transpose the formal categories derived from Hegel's *Science of Logic*, partially or comprehensively, to the categorical developments in *Das Kapital*. The reception of the Hegel—Marx relation in this regard is often reliant on incidental remarks made by Marx or Engels concerning the *Science of Logic*, (Engels, 303.) which were sedimented when Lenin declared,

'Aphorism: it is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!' (Lenin 1976, 180).

The second was the transition from understanding to self-consciousness, which was for Kant a transition internal to epistemology, but which was for Hegel the logical necessity of the self-defeating character of consciousness as an epistemic presupposition. The importance of this 'turning point' in the transition from 'Force and Understanding' to The 'Truth of Self-Certainty' is that it structures the conceptual field which allowed Marx to be read retroactively through Hegel, at this very 'turning point' in the foreclosure of the possibility of epistemology: Marx's critique of Hegel in *The German Ideology*, where all philosophy is identified as idealist, and where materialism is established as the critique of philosophy, producing the ground for Frankfurt School critical theory. For, when Hegel transposes the self-defeating character of consciousness as an epistemic presupposition into the social, epistemology only remained possible for the Frankfurt School as critical social theory, and Marxist social theory became the solution to the problem of epistemology.

The third, in its French variant, derives solely from the reception of the *Lordship and Bondage* section in the The 'Truth of Self-Certainty', beginning with Kojève's lecture series at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* during 1933–1939 (Kojève 1969),<sup>5</sup> which was a self-professed continuation of Marx's 'inverted Hegelianism.' The French reception of Hegel's thought was later intensified by Hyppolite's first 1946 French translation of, and commentary upon, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de L'Esprit de Hegel*, and by his 1963 text on Hegel's logic (*Logique et Existence*), but it owed much to his role as teacher and then director of Philosophy at the *ENS*; through his lectures, he introduced a generation of thinkers to Hegel's

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5 The lecture series was compiled from notes and transcriptions taken during his lectures, collected and edited by the poet and novelist Raymond Queneau, and published in French in 1947 as *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel*. The first English language edition was published by Basic Books Inc., and appeared in 1969.



thought during the '50s and '60s, including Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida. Kojève's lecture series was later compiled from notes and transcriptions, and published in French in 1947; it was the first attempt to cross-code the *Lordship and Bondage* section with a political problematic which passed from Kojève to Bataille, via Derrida, to Butler and Malabou. Although key texts have been produced from both of these trajectories, each has contributed to the obscuring of the Hegel–Marx connection, in 2 of its etymological senses: coming from the Latin *tradere*, tradition denotes 'delivery,' 'passing down,' but also betrayal.

In an attempt to reorient the reception of the Hegel–Marx relation in these concluding, but nonetheless brief, remarks, I intend to indicate a possible trajectory departing from 'Force and Understanding' to *Das Kapital Volume 1*.<sup>6</sup> Thus, we will read the movement of 'Force and Understanding' together with the inaugural section of *Das Kapital* which Marx undertakes in a particularly Hegelian mode. Interrogating what comes first for consciousness in capitalist sociality, the commodity, and the epistemological problem of appearances, are the departure point for the critique of political economy.

In the first paragraph of *Kapital*, Marx introduces the 'given concrete and living whole,' which is his problem and the aim of his critique; 'the capitalist mode of production'; and the initial mode in which the whole appears in a particular as a 'immense collection of commodities.' Within the whole, the 'individual commodity appears (*erscheint*) as its elementary form,' (Marx 1976, 125).. In previous English translations, the word *erscheint* was rendered into 'presents,' or 'presents itself,' but the German translates literally as *appears*. *Erscheint* shares a common root with *Schein* (appearance, or reality), and *Erscheinung* (appearance, or phenomenon), all of which are categorical terms systematic to both Kant and Hegel's thought, as we have seen above.

That the term *Erscheint* appears twice in the opening paragraph to Capital is not incidental, but it is an invitation for the reader to follow Marx's inquiry into what may lie behind phenomenological appearances. The commodity affords Marx a conceptual form of

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6 This considers Marx's remarks, in the 1844 Manuscripts, that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is 'the true birthplace and secret of Hegelian philosophy.'

identity (commodities in general) and difference (the multiplicity of existent commodities) that already abstracts from the commodity itself. Marx's procedure therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity as the nomadic form of capitalist economy, but also as what appears *first*, prior to unreflected consciousness. For, in the phenomenological interrogation of what comes first to consciousness, the commodity form is the immediate, unaltered, and aconceptual being of an object of production. However, the immediacy of the commodity is consumed by the pure appearance of the 'immense collection of commodities,' such that knowledge of the singular commodity can only be knowledge of the immediacy of the appearance, and must, therefore, be analysed further.

The immediacy of the commodity is given to consciousness as a unity *qua* identity, but is nonetheless indeterminate, and not yet mediated by its relations to other commodities in the capitalist mode of production. It is, as Marx notes, a 'social hieroglyphic' whose essential 'secret' still needs to be 'deciphered... through continued critique and sustained analysis,' (Marx 1976, 166-167). The critique of political economy can then only proceed by disclosing what remains concealed behind the enigmatic character of the reified Thing-ness of the commodity-form as it appears. A first phenomenological movement, constitutive of Hegel's dialectical method in the PS; consciousness knowing its own movement as it appears to itself (*phainomena*), a movement self-produced by consciousness, affecting both knowledge and its object. Whereas natural-consciousness in 'Force and Understanding' attempted to resolve identity and difference in an independent object, Marx begins the analysis of political economy by inquiring into an independent object constitutive of capitalist sociality, the COMMODITY. But as soon as the appearance of the commodity is interrogated, it splits into its double character.

The first appearance of the commodity divides, therefore, into USE-VALUE and EXCHANGE-VALUE, neither of which is empirically visual in a strict sense, although both can be assumed from the commodity. 'The usefulness of a thing,' Marx notes, can best be conceptualised as a 'use-value,' but in the 'form of society to be considered here,' commodities 'are also material bearers [...] of [...] exchange value.' The der-

ivation of the 2 categories of the commodity can be reflected upon in the same mode in which Hegel had derived the relations between the One and the Many in the perceivable thing, as the 'unity of being-for-self and being-for-another' (PS §134) begins to appear contradictory.

In analysing the ways in which commodities exchange value, the commodity first 'appears' to be 'something accidental and purely relative'; together with the notion that 'an intrinsic value, i.e. an exchange value that is inseparably connected with the commodity, inherent in it,' it is nonetheless 'a contradiction in terms,' (Marx 1976, 126). The commodity is in principle commensurable with anything else, and commodities *move* throughout a system of exchanges, but there is nothing inherent and necessary in the independent object to render it exchangeable. If the unity of exchange value does not inhere in the commodity itself, but is produced through the movement of commodities whereby the use-value of 1 commodity is exchanged in its other, 'exchange-value, must therefore be reducible to a third thing,' (Marx 1976, 127). The commodity is a contradictory structure, but this very structure allows it to be circulated; if commodities were not circulated, surplus capital would not be produced. What Marx calls the 'third thing,' and what Hegel had called 'the middle term,' unites the 2 extremes of use-value and exchange-value into what inheres in the independent object. The commodity is the bearer of human labour embodied in their production; not the temporality of CONCRETE labour, but 'human labour in the abstract,' (Marx 1976, 128).

The unity in the concept of the commodity is the unification of differing instances of human labour, contracted ('materialised') into the commodity as 'phantom-like objectivity,' (Marx 1976, 128). Its value is 'expressed' in exchange-value as 'the necessary mode of expression, or form of appearance, of value.' Recall Hegel's derivation of the concept of Force from the fluctuating alternation of the independent object between the One and the Many. The unity in the concept of Force is the unification of the differing moments of force (human labour), 'contracted' in the commodity, wherein it finds 'expression' in exchange-value. The domain of appearances in capitalist sociality is the 'phantom-like objectivity' called value, but exchange-value is the expression and representation of human labour that unites the 2 ex-

extremes of use-value and exchange-value. The dual aspect of the commodity is that it cannot be a commodity without its other. The heterogeneous material character of the commodity is the difference in its use-value; the exchange-value is homogeneous and quantitative, and is the expression of a commodity's identity, but its value in socially necessary labour time is immaterial and relational.

Recall from above that the entire *movement* of the 'Force and Understanding' section can be distilled into an immanent critique of reification that can be seen in Marx's treatment of the Thing-ness of the commodity. In any attempt to stabilise identity and difference in an independent object, each term merely inverts to its other, as value cannot exist without exchange-value and exchange cannot exist without value. In empirical reality use-value are existent both spatially and relationally, whereas exchange-value is only rendered intelligible by the movement of exchange of commodities. The internal opposition between use-value and exchange-value, as Marx's notes, is 'hidden within the commodity, is therefore represented on the surface by an external opposition' (Marx 1976, 128). What is hidden in the commodity begins to crystallise out in the totality of exchanges between commodities: the 'universal equivalent,' or the 'money commodity' (Marx 1976, 162-163). Without exchange, the money-form would not have been produced.

The identity of the commodity is formed by its relations to the differences in all commodities, but the contradiction between the multiplicity of commodities and the expression of their value is the externalisation of what hitherto lay 'hidden,' internal to the commodity itself. Once externalised, the double character of the commodity internal to it (use-value/exchange-value), becomes the relation between the money-form and the commodity that is the product of the internal contradiction in the Thing, or commodity. The emergence of the money-form from the analysis of the identity and difference internal to the commodity, produces the money-form as the universal equivalent. The sensuous experience of a commodity, for what Hegel would call perceiving-consciousness, cannot register the use-value of the commodity. The commodity is both for Marx, 'sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible,' or what Hegel would call

the double-standpoint of the commodity. It is given both the perceiving-consciousness, and the understanding-consciousness as the doubled standpoint; perceived, but abstracted from by the understanding, simultaneously in 'perceptual-understanding (*wahrnehmender Verstand*).'

What is socialised in exchange when the exchange of commodities occurs in social relations, then, is the cost of the commodity as a symbolic representation of its value. But hidden behind the appearances of commodities are the social relations that have produced the commodity and the dynamic, relational system of exchanges that has determined its price at that time. The 'living whole' of capitalist exchange, then, is an identity much like Hegel's infinity, where the identity of the 'living whole' is constituted by the necessary relations of all possible exchanges between commodities; in their individual instances, each is what it is only in virtue of its relations to others, and is comprised of the relational whole of which it is a moment (the capitalist mode of production). This is the repetitive, monotonous stasis of capitalism's dynamic core, as a system for the reproduction of social relations. Its repetitive sameness (identity) is constituted by the totality of exchange relations (difference) that immanently posits its own historical horizon of endless accumulation, or the progressive freedom of ever greater consumption.

What may be useful, if anything, in rereading *Capital Vol. 1* with *Force and the Understanding*, is both the fact the *Capital Vol. 1* addressed the prevailing social conditions of the past, which have significantly changed, but also that, as a text, the autonomy of *Das Kapital* continues to oppose prevailing social conditions as non-identical, and does not therefore reconcile itself with empirical reality. However, receiving cultures have to adapt and reinterpret the text in order for it to be able to address changes in the social conditions of the present, such as the renewed development and planetary universalisation of capital accumulation as the basis of social development. To address the spatio-temporal dynamics of capital accumulation, 'Force and Understanding' may offer an equally dynamic concept, Force, which may prove adequate to the latter analysis.

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