

On Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory: A Critical Appreciation of Herbert Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, Fifty Years Later*

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in: *Sociological Theory* 11:3 (Nov. 1993), pp. 243-267.

Marcuse's Reason and Revolution was the first Hegelian Marxist text to appear in English, the first systematic study of Hegel by a Marxist, and the first work in English to discuss the young Marx seriously. It introduced Hegelian and Marxist concepts such as alienation, subjectivity, negativity, and the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism to a wide audience in the United States. When the book first appeared, it was attacked sharply from the standpoint of empiricism and positivism by Sidney Hook, among others. Since 1960, new critiques of Marcuse's book have been developed from varying perspectives, especially by the "scientific" Marxist Lucio Colletti, the critical theorist Douglas Kellner, and the Marxist humanist Raya Dunayevskaya. From the postmodernist camp, Jacques Derrida has discussed some of the same themes as did Marcuse, especially around the issues of negativity and difference. It is argued, however, that Derrida's reading of Hegel is more problematic than Marcuse's, especially with regard to the project of constructing a critical social theory.

Hegel and Hegelianism have lurked in the background of sociological theory from the very beginning of the sociological enterprise. In *Capital*, Marx wrote in praise of "the Hegelian 'contradiction,' which is the source of all dialectic" ([1867-75] 1976, p. 744). In a later postscript to the same text he stated "My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it" ([1867-75] 1976, p. 102). The generation of Marxist theorists who followed, and who were the contemporaries of Weber and Durkheim, tended to favor the second type of statement over the first, in part because they had not read the *1844 Manuscripts*; these were published only in 1927 (in Russian) and then in 1932 (in German). As the French sociologist Lucien Goldmann (1976) writes, the Marxist attitude toward Hegel did not begin to change until after World War I:

. . . Hegelian categories are all recovered in Marxism; and it is no accident that they were reactualized in Europe around, say, the years 1917-23: first by Lenin in the *Philosophic Notebooks*, secondly by Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness*, and thirdly, I believe, somewhat later in Gramsci's concretely philosophical analyses. Furthermore it is not accidental that in the interim, with Mehring, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bernstein, and even Lenin at the time he wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Marxism was just as positivistic as academic science (pp. 112-13).

* Earlier and much-abbreviated versions of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association held in Pittsburgh in 1992 and at the Socialist Scholars Conference held in New York in 1991. I would like to thank Janet Afary, Robert Antonio, Anna Maillow, and several anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and criticisms of earlier drafts. Douglas Kellner generously provided not only extensive criticisms of earlier drafts, but also valuable source material on discussions of Marcuse's work. I am of course responsible for any deficiencies in this article.

Thus Marx's debt to Hegel was muted nearly to the point of invisibility by the leading Marxist theorists of the turn of the century.

During this period the non-Marxist founders of sociology also were rather hostile to Hegel, and seemed to regard any lingering influence of Hegelianism as essentially pernicious to sociological theory. This was certainly true of Durkheim. In the years immediately preceding the publication of Durkheim's *Suicide*, Georges Noël's major study of Hegel, which included a sharp attack on positivism, was published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, a journal devoted both to philosophy and sociology, and in which Durkheim also published articles. In 1897 Noël's *La Logique de Hegel* was issued as a book by the prestigious Paris publishing house of Félix Alcan, who also published *Suicide* in that year (Durkheim [1897] 1951; Noël 1897). Although Durkheim never published a critique of Hegel, his statement in the preface to *Suicide* that "real laws are discoverable which demonstrate the possibility of science better than any dialectical argument" ([1897] 1951, p. 37) probably is directed at least in part against the type of Hegelianism represented by Noël. In Durkheim's view, Hegelianism contained an outdated, prescientific theory of society. Certainly it is evident today that positivism would eclipse Hegelianism in French social thought for many years, but in 1897 Durkheim could have had no way of knowing that Hegel's pernicious shadow was soon to be banished to the sidelines.

Weber seems to have regarded Hegel with greater respect, but evidently more as a rival than as a co-thinker. Donald N. Levine (1985, p. 150) writes of "Weber's silent homage to and acute consciousness of Hegel as his major intellectual antagonist" in referring to an unpublished 1909 letter in which Weber wrote "Two ways of treating things stand open: Hegel's or ours" (cited in Bruun 1972, p. 39). During this period Dilthey's influential book *Jugendgeschichte Hegels* ([1905] 1959) helped to begin a Hegel revival in central Europe. Three decades later, for example, Dilthey's work was cited frequently in Marcuse's first book on Hegel (Marcuse [1932a] 1987).

In the United States at least since the 1960s, it has become commonplace to refer to Hegelian Marxism and to regard the Hegel-Marx relationship as a key point of debate in social theory. Such was not the case in 1941, however, when Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* was first published. Below I propose to assess the importance and subsequent influence of Marcuse's pathbreaking book, a half-century after its publication.

THE ORIGINALITY OF REASON AND REVOLUTION

Reason and Revolution holds the important distinction of being the first Hegelian Marxist book to appear in English. In addition, it was the first systematic published analysis of Hegel's major works from a Marxist standpoint in any language, preceding by several years those by Georg Lukács ([1948] 1975) and Ernst Bloch ([1949] 1962). To this day *Reason and Revolution* stands as one of the major Marxist treatments of Hegel. It views Marx's work as grounded in Hegel's concept of dialectic. Theoretically, Marx's work is presented not only as a critique of capitalism, but also, at least implicitly, as the foundation for a critique of Stalinist Communism. Marcuse's book contains a critical analysis of Hegel's major works, such as the *Phenomenology of Mind*, the *Science of Logic*, the *Philosophy of History*, and the *Philosophy of Right*; it also includes the first serious treatment in English of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. This Hegelian-Marxian heritage is counterposed to what Marcuse considered to be the essentially conservative worldview of positivism, which teaches people "to view and study the phenomena of their world as neutral objects governed by universally valid laws" (1941, p. 326).

In the preface to the original edition, Marcuse (1941, p. vii) argues that “the rise of Fascism calls for a reinterpretation of Hegel’s philosophy.” One major theme of his work, he writes, is that it “will demonstrate that Hegel’s basic concepts are hostile to the tendencies that have led into Fascist theory and practice” (p. vii). A second major theme is Hegel’s link to Marx. Marcuse writes that he “tried to go beyond mere restatement” in his “survey of the structure of Hegel’s system,” in order to connect it “particularly with the Marxian theory” (p. vii). A third theme, he continues, is the critique of positivism, a theory “which undertook to subordinate reason to the authority of established fact.” Positivism counterposes itself to the negative and critical character of Hegel’s dialectical concept of reason, whereby Hegel’s “critical and rational standards, especially his dialectics, had to come into conflict with the prevailing social reality” (p. vii).

Marcuse locates Hegel’s thought as part of the heritage of the Enlightenment concept of reason and the French Revolution: “Reason presupposes freedom, the power to act in accordance with knowledge of the truth, the power to shape reality in line with its potentialities” (1941, p. 9). By drawing “history into philosophy,” Hegel culminates the journey of German idealism; at the same time, however, this historical dimension ultimately “shatters the idealistic framework” (1941, p. 16) of that tradition. Hegel’s critique of empiricism is not entirely new; it is part of the origin of German idealism, which, Marcuse writes, “rescued philosophy from the attack of British empiricism” (1941, p. 16). Kant began the counterattack on empiricism, but according to Hegel the “skeptical element of Kant’s philosophy” in the end vitiates “his attempt to rescue reason from the empiricist onslaught” (1941, p. 23). Whereas philosophers “from Hume to the present-day logical positivists” have made recourse to “the ultimate authority of the fact,” Hegel believes that “the facts themselves have no authority” (1941, p. 27) until they are subjected to the critique of dialectical reason.

Before taking up Hegel’s first major work, the *Phenomenology of Mind*, Marcuse surveys some of his largely unpublished earlier writings in the first discussion of those writings in English. He singles out the radicalism of Hegel’s early writings on industrialism and labor, in which the attack on alienation and exploitation is scathing. In Marcuse’s view, “the tone and pathos of the descriptions point strikingly to Marx’s *Capital*” when Hegel writes “The faculties of the individual are infinitely restricted, and the consciousness of the factory worker is reduced to the lowest level of dullness” (1941, p. 79). At the same time, writes Marcuse, the very manuscript that developed this critique of capitalism breaks off, as if Hegel “was terrified by what his analysis of the commodity-producing society disclosed” (1941, p. 79). Marcuse states that according to Hegel the “wild animal” which is capitalist society and its class contradictions “must be curbed, and such a process requires the organization of a strong state” (1941, p. 79). Marcuse develops this argument further when he takes up the *Philosophy of Right*.

In his discussion of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, Marcuse notes Hegel’s severe critique of the results of Enlightenment reason in the French Revolution: “Hegel saw that the result of the French Revolution was not the realization of freedom, but the establishment of a new despotism” (1941, p. 91). The central theme of the *Phenomenology*, as it moves from sense awareness through Reason to Absolute Knowledge, is that the “world in reality is not as it appears, but as it is comprehended by philosophy” (1941, p. 93). Further, according to Hegel, “Knowledge begins when philosophy destroys the experience of daily life.” The latter is only “the starting point of the search for truth” (1941, p. 103), which is based ultimately on a critique of commonsense notions of reality. Thus Marcuse identifies strongly with the specifically Hegelian critique of commonsense experience, a position for which he has been criticized harshly as a mystical idealist (as we shall see later) by more orthodox Marxist theorists such as Lucio Colletti.

Marcuse's interpretation of Hegel contains a radical concept of the subject. The "first three sections of the *Phenomenology* are a critique of positivism and, even more, of 'reification'," he writes (1941, p. 112). This is the case because "common sense and traditional scientific thought" are not subject-centered: "there is, in the last analysis, no truth that does not *essentially concern* the living subject" (1941, p. 113, author's emphasis). Marcuse links all of this interpretation to Marx's thought when he discusses Hegel's concept of labor in light of Marx's treatment of the *Phenomenology* in his "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in the *1844 Manuscripts*. There, writes Marcuse, Marx "caught the critical impact of Hegel's analysis":

The greatness of that work he saw in the fact that Hegel conceived the "self-creation" of man (that is, the creation of a reasonable social order through man's own free action) as the process of "reification" and its "negation," in short, that he grasped the "nature of labor" and saw man to be "the result of his labor" (1941, p. 115).

Eventually, however, Hegel's idealism seems to overtake both history and subjectivity. Marcuse writes that at the end of the *Phenomenology*, in the chapter on Absolute Knowledge, "pure thought again seems to swallow up living freedom" (1941, p. 120). Marcuse, however, questions whether "this solution was Hegel's last word" (1941, p. 120).

Marcuse's treatment of Hegel's *Science of Logic* in *Reason and Revolution* is particularly original and probing. It includes an interesting discussion of the famous beginning section of the *Science of Logic* on Being, Nothing, and Becoming; this section, contended Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* ([1923] 1971, p. 170), "contained the whole of his philosophy." This section of the *Science of Logic* also was important to Jean-Paul Sartre, whose *Being and Nothingness* appeared two years after *Reason and Revolution*. Marcuse argues that the "togetherness of being and nothing" in Hegel's chapter allows him "to demonstrate the negative character of reality" (1941, p. 130), and to thus develop a critical stance toward the social world.

In contrast to contemporary religious interpretations "that the world was a finite one because it was a created world and that its negativity referred to its sinfulness" (1941, p. 136), Hegel's interpretation of the problem of infinity and finitude is critical and revolutionary. Whereas religious thought counterposes a human, finite world to a religious, infinite world, Marcuse writes that for Hegel "[t]here are not two worlds, the finite and the infinite," but "one world, in which finite things attain their self-determination through perishing" (1941, p. 139). Marcuse links this notion to Marx:

Marx later laid down the historical law that a social system can set free its productive forces only by perishing and passing into another form of social organization. Hegel saw this law of history operative in all being (1941, p. 137).

Thus, according to Marcuse, Hegel's concept of infinity is rooted in the world of being, where when "a finite thing 'perishes'" it actually develops "its true potentialities" (1941, p. 137) by moving to a higher stage through a process of negating what existed before. Further, this dialectical concept underlies one of the central elements of Marx's economic theory.

Especially in his discussion of the *Science of Logic*, Marcuse focuses on Hegel's concept of the "negation of the negation." In Marcuse's view, negativity and the negation of the negation are the core of the dialectic for both Hegel and Marx (Bernstein 1988). Marcuse writes (1941, p. 26) that "Hegel's philosophy is indeed what the subsequent reaction termed it, a negative philosophy." He states further (1941, p. 27) that this is the case

because to Hegel, “the facts that appear to common sense” as the truth “are in reality the negation of truth” and that “truth can only be established by their destruction.” Robert Pippin discusses this emphasis on negativity in *Reason and Revolution*:

Most clearly, what Marcuse wants to preserve and defend in Hegel is the central place given in his system to “negativity,” the “power” of thought and action to reject and transform any putative “positive” reality, and the impossibility of understanding any such reality except in relation to this possibility. Accordingly, in *Reason and Revolution*, he again rejects in Hegel all those aspects of his thought that tend to suppress or overcome this negating potential . . . (1988, p. 82).

Pippin implies further that this rejection is due at least in part to Heidegger’s influence, as seen in Marcuse’s first book on Hegel ([1932a] 1987), even though Heidegger, with whom Marcuse had broken by then because of Heidegger’s ties to Nazism, is not mentioned in the text of *Reason and Revolution*. The only writing by Heidegger to which Marcuse refers even in the bibliography is a 1933 work on the German university, which Marcuse (1941, p. 428) lists pointedly under the heading “Philosophy under Fascism and National Socialism.” Thus, if a Heideggerian influence is present, it is subterranean and implicit.

Probably more important with regard to the concept of negativity in *Reason and Revolution* is the work to which Marcuse *does* refer explicitly there, the “Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic” from Marx’s *1844 Manuscripts*. Apparently Marcuse read this text only after he had completed his earlier “Heideggerian” Hegel book ([1932a] 1987; also see Kellner 1984). He wrote a lengthy article on the *1844 Manuscripts* immediately after they appeared for the first time in German in 1932. There, in the conclusion, he quotes the following passage from the young Marx’s critique of Hegel:

The outstanding achievement of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and of its final result, *the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creative principle*—is thus that Hegel conceives the self-creation of the human being [*des Menschen*] as a process . . . (Marx [1844] 1968, p. 574; emphasis added).

In his essay on the young Marx, Marcuse ([1932b] 1973, p. 46) already cites this point as illustrating “the positive meaning of negation.”

A decade later, in *Reason and Revolution* (1941, p. 282), Marcuse takes up this passage again, but now he spells out more explicitly the centrality to Marx of Hegel’s concept of negativity. In this text, he argues, lie “the origins of the Marxian dialectic.” Marcuse writes further: “For Marx, as for Hegel, the dialectic takes note of the fact that the negation inherent in reality is ‘the moving and creative principle.’ The dialectic is the dialectic of negativity.” Negativity is important to Marx in part because “[e]conomic realities exhibit their own inherent negativity.” Marcuse’s stress on Hegel’s concept of negativity is new and original. It disagrees with the interpretations of more conservative Hegel scholars, who tend instead to stress categories such as reconciliation and mediation. It also differs, however, from the emphasis on the category of totality in Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness*, written before Marx’s 1844 discussion of Hegel’s concept of negativity as “the moving and creative principle” had been published in any language.

Even after the *1844 Manuscripts* were published, however, official Soviet Marxists generally were hostile to any emphasis on the concept of negation, viewing it as a trace of idealistic Hegelianism. In the 1950s, for example, the Soviet ideologist V. A. Karpushin (cited in Dunayevskaya [1958] 1988, p. 62) tried to banish the issue of negativity from

Marxism; in a discussion of the *Manuscripts* Karpushin argued that Marx opposed the notion of “some kind of negativity which allegedly inherently clings to things, as Hegel put it.”

Marcuse’s discussion of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* concentrates mainly on the early chapters of that work. In his discussion of the *Science of Logic*, he follows Hegel’s text from the Doctrine of Being to the Doctrine of Essence, the middle book of the *Science of Logic*. There Marcuse discusses what he terms Hegel’s concept of “real possibility” (1941, p. 151). He writes that in Hegel’s concept of essence, the “possible and the actual are in a dialectical relation” (1941, p. 150). This idea leads Marcuse, as a Marxist, to write that according to Hegel “a new [social] system is really possible if the conditions for it are present in the old” (1941, p. 152).

Marcuse discusses more briefly the third and final book of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, the Doctrine of the Notion or concept, but this discussion is notable for its rather unusual focus on “a rough interpretation of its closing paragraphs” (1941, p. 161). Marcuse devotes seven pages to these closing paragraphs, stating that “Hegel’s chapter on the Absolute Idea gives us a final comprehensive demonstration of dialectic method,” and that even the Absolute Idea “is dialectical thought and thus contains its negation; it is *not* a harmonious and stable form but a *process* of unification of opposites” (1941, p. 165).

At the same time, however, Marcuse writes that in its closing paragraphs “Hegel’s Logic resumes the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy, a tradition that it had abandoned in so many of its aspects” (1941, p. 166). This is because “the basic concepts of idealism reflect a social separation of the intellectual sphere from the sphere of material production. . . .” Such a separation exists in a situation where “a ‘leisure class’ became the guardian of the idea by virtue of the fact that it was not compelled to work for the material reproduction of society” (1941, p. 163). Marcuse holds that although Hegel attempts to go beyond this traditional type of idealism, he is ultimately unsuccessful. According to Marcuse, then, Hegel’s Absolute Idea moves out of history and negativity and toward a purely ontological position. He also points to what he considers to be the theological aspects of the Absolute Idea, as “the Christian tradition, in which Hegel’s philosophy was deeply rooted, asserts its right” (1941, p. 167). In this connection Marcuse quotes a passage in which Hegel asserts that his concept of logic “shows forth God as he is in his eternal essence” (1941, p. 167). Yet this passage which Marcuse cites is not from the conclusion, but from the introduction, to the *Science of Logic*. Very few direct references to God or religion can be found in the Absolute Idea chapter of the *Science of Logic*, as noted by Lenin, an earlier Marxist reader:

It is noteworthy that the whole chapter on the “Absolute Idea” scarcely says a word about God . . . it contains almost nothing that is specifically idealism, but has for its main subject the dialectical method ([1914–15] 1961, p. 234).

In a somewhat similar vein, but not moving as far as Lenin in rejecting religious roots for Hegel’s Absolute Idea, Marcuse nonetheless regards Hegel’s Absolute Idea as seeking to “prove its freedom by freely releasing itself into otherness, that is, nature” (1941, p. 167). In this sense he seems to view the conclusion of the *Science of Logic* as less of a closure than the end of the *Phenomenology*.

In the text of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, in fact, Hegel writes in the last paragraph that the Idea engages in a process whereby it “freely releases itself” in part in a relationship to Nature (Hegel [1831] 1969, p. 843). To Marcuse this statement shows the “rationalistic tendencies” (1941, p. 167) in Hegel’s philosophy, even where Marcuse sees (at least to some degree) a move to theology as well. Through this free release into Nature, Hegel

has made a transition to the world of material reality, which takes us eventually to human praxis and history. Marcuse writes that Nature, for Hegel, is the transition to history, where the “identity of subject and object” is “attained” (1941, p. 168). This transition allows Marcuse to move from the discussion of the Absolute Idea at the end of the *Science of Logic* to Hegel’s political philosophy. He skips over the way in which Hegel, in the closing paragraph of the *Science of Logic*, points not only to Nature but also to Spirit (Mind), writing that the Notion “completes its self-liberation in the science of Spirit (Mind)” (Hegel [1831] 1969, p. 844). I read Hegel here as outlining the whole of his philosophical system. This system, in the form of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, would include three books: the *Shorter Logic* (a more popularized version of the *Science of Logic*), the *Philosophy of Nature*, and the *Philosophy of Mind* (Spirit). Thus he makes a transition from Logic to Nature and then to Mind (Spirit). Marcuse does not take up the latter two parts of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*.

Four decades earlier, Noël addressed somewhat differently the question of the place of Logic in Hegel’s overall philosophy. In a remark that seems to offer a critique before the fact of Marcuse’s position, Noël (1897, p. 129), whose work is listed in Marcuse’s bibliography, wrote “To treat Nature in itself, abstracted from Spirit (Mind), is that not an implicit return to the most naive realism?” Lenin ([1914–15] 1961, p. 321) attacked Noël as “an idealist and a shallow one” for this particular passage. I believe, however, that Marcuse’s avoidance of Hegel’s category of Spirit (Mind) in the Absolute Idea chapter of the *Science of Logic* seems to rob social theory of a key Hegelian category, one which indeed helps us to critique naive realism.

This point is important because, as we shall see below, critics of Marcuse such as Paul Tillich, Karl Löwith, Karel Kosík, and Raya Dunayevskaya have pointed out in different ways that Marcuse, in seeking to portray the transition from Hegel to Marx as one from philosophy to social theory, fails to discuss some of the most idealistic texts in Hegel’s work, such as his treatment of Mind, religion, and aesthetics. Marcuse’s overlooking of the more idealistic transition from Logic to Mind exemplifies the procedure in *Reason and Revolution* that these critics of Marcuse have singled out.

Resuming a step-by-step discussion of Marcuse’s text, we see that Marcuse *does* move from Hegel’s *Science of Logic* to a discussion of his political philosophy. In this discussion, Marcuse criticizes Hegel’s political philosophy and his philosophy of history, and he regards Hegel’s concept of negation of the negation, rather than Hegel’s specific writings on history and politics, as the principal link to Marx. According to Marcuse, Hegel’s appointment to the leading chair in philosophy at the University of Berlin in 1817 marked “the end of his philosophical development” at the very time when he became “the philosophical dictator of Germany” as the “so-called official philosopher of the Prussian state” (1941, p. 169). In this period Hegel composed his *Philosophy of Right*, a work that expresses “the underlying identity of social and economic relations” of “middle class society” (1941, p. 172). Thus Hegel wanted a powerful bureaucracy to create a stronger foundation for the new social order “than the interests of relatively small providers can provide” (1941, p. 176). Even so, writes Marcuse, Hegel’s determined opposition to J.F. Fries’s antigovernment German youth movement must be seen in the context of that movement’s anti-Semitism and concern with “the Teutonic race alone” (1941, p. 179); Marcuse regards this movement as a precursor of fascism. At the same time, Hegel’s state was to be “governed by the standards of critical reason and universally valid laws” and thus was “a weapon against reaction” (1941, p. 180).

In working out the analysis of social relations, however, Hegel’s philosophy of the state “loses its critical content and comes to serve as a metaphysical justification of private property” (1941, p. 189). According to Marcuse, this is the case because the “authoritarian

trend that appears in Hegel's political philosophy is made necessary by the antagonistic structure of civil society" (1941, p. 202) a society divided into classes. In Hegel's schema, three institutions—the police, the corporations, and the state itself—are to help alleviate and reconcile class conflict. This philosophy is hardly radical or even democratic, but rather is bound to the authoritarian and underdeveloped conditions of Germany in the 1820s. Marcuse writes that Hegel adopts this view because Hegel believes "philosophy cannot jump ahead of history" (1941, p. 215). Marcuse criticizes Hegel's cynicism about war and conquest between states as "oppressive" and a form of "authoritarianism" (1941, p. 221).

This chapter on the *Philosophy of Right* is crucial for Marcuse's attempt to portray Hegel's philosophy as critical and revolutionary. It has been the target of many of the attacks on the book ever since, in which Marcuse was accused of being too uncritical in his appropriation of Hegel. Yet as we have seen, Marcuse is scathingly critical of Hegel at many points in this chapter. More recently, MacGregor (1984) has attempted to portray Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as an essentially leftist work that has a strong affinity to Marx's thought, but MacGregor's statist reading of Marx, which relies on that of Althusser, diverges sharply from Marcuse's subject-centered interpretation.

Before addressing Marx, Marcuse includes a briefer but no less critical discussion of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. Once he comes to Marx, Marcuse writes that "[t]he critical tendencies of the Hegelian philosophy . . . were taken over by, and continued in, the Marxian social theory" (1941, p. 252). To Marcuse, however, this does not mean that Marx's early writings are primarily philosophical. Rather, "[t]hey express the negation of philosophy, though they still do so in philosophical language" (1941, p. 258). In this sense, he writes, the transition from Hegel to Marx is a move from philosophy to social theory.

In his discussion of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, Marcuse concentrates on Marx's discussion of alienation. Many sociological accounts of Marx's concept of alienation have focused on an elaboration of Marx's four forms of alienated labor: 1) workers are alienated from the products of their labor; 2) the work process itself lacks creativity; 3) workers are alienated from themselves as well as from other human beings; and 4) workers are alienated from their species being and from nature. This schematic elaboration, valuable as it may be in certain contexts, nonetheless fixes Marx's concept of alienated labor as a sociological description rooted in an economic relationship.

Marcuse focuses more closely on the underlying dialectical framework of Marx's argument, and on the link between the essay "Alienated Labor" and the more general statements made in the same *Manuscripts*. (See especially Marx's most fundamental concluding essay, "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic.") In his 1932 analysis of those essays, Marcuse stresses that all of Marx's economic categories are also philosophical. He notes the statement in the essay "Alienated Labor" that private property is not the basis of alienated labor, but rather the result. Although he calls this statement a seemingly "idealistic distortion" of economic facts, Marcuse ([1932b] 1973, p. 12) concludes that it shows Marx's sociological depth.

This issue is important because the central feature of capitalism then becomes not a property but a social relationship. Therefore the move from private to collective property relations alone, as (for example) under statist Communism, does not remove the problem of alienated labor and may even intensify it. Now, in *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse writes "Marx views the abolition of private property entirely as a means for the abolition of alienated labor, and not as an end in itself" (1941, p. 282).

Further, in an implicit but very profound critique of Stalin's Russia, Marcuse concludes on the basis of the writings of the young Marx that state ownership of the economy "if

not utilized for the development and gratification of the free individual . . . will amount simply to a new form for subjugating individuals to a hypostatized universality” (1941, p. 283). Marcuse roots his concept of the liberated individual in passages from Marx’s 1844 text such as the following: “One must above all avoid setting ‘the society’ up again as an abstraction opposed to the individual. The individual *is* the social entity” (1941, p. 283). Such an emphasis on Marx’s notion of the “free individual” was extremely rare in 1941. This does not mean, however, that Marcuse completely repudiated the results of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Citing the writings of the reformist social democrat Eduard Bernstein, Marcuse says “The schools of Marxism that abandoned the revolutionary foundations of the Marxian theory were the same that outspokenly repudiated the Hegelian aspects of the Marxian theory, especially the dialectic” (1941, p. 398). On the other hand, in an apparent reference to Lenin’s 1914–15 Hegel notebooks, Marcuse writes that “Lenin insisted on dialectical method to such an extent that he considered it the hallmark of revolutionary Marxism” (1941, p. 401).

As Jay (1973, p. 76) argues, Marcuse in 1941 places “the ontological significance of labor” at the center of his concept of dialectical Reason, something which his Frankfurt School colleagues Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno “were less sure about.” This idea is evident in Marcuse’s development of Marx’s concept of a revolutionary working class:

The revolution requires the maturity of many forces, but the greatest among them is the subjective force, namely the revolutionary class itself. The realization of freedom requires the free rationality of those who achieve it (Marcuse 1941, p. 319).

In this sense, the class is to be armed intellectually with the concept of dialectical Reason developed by Hegel and Marx. Marcuse’s discussion of Marx, however, concludes on a more sanguine note, stressing the persistence of radical theory even in the face of a blocked objective situation: “Theory will preserve the truth even if revolutionary practice deviates from its proper path. Practice follows the truth, not vice versa” (1941, p. 322). In this passage, which concludes his discussion of Marx, Marcuse’s stance is substantially similar to that of his Frankfurt School colleagues.

To Marcuse, positivism represents a theoretical counterrevolution against the heritage of Hegel and Marx. He writes (1941, p. 340) that Comte’s attempt to found “an independent science of sociology” is made at the price of “renouncing the transcendent point of view of the philosophical critique,” especially the negative and critical stance toward the world found in German philosophy. Comte viewed himself as focusing on “useful knowledge”—that is, knowledge useful to ruling elites—“instead of negation and destruction” (1941, p. 341). Further:

Rarely in the past has any philosophy urged itself forward with so strong and so overt a recommendation that it be utilized for the maintenance of prevailing authority and for the protection of vested interest from any and all revolutionary onset (1941, p. 345).

The problem is not that positivism “excluded reform and change” but rather that change was to take place as “part of the machinery of the given order” (1941, p. 348). Throughout, Marcuse sharply contrasts Comte’s “positive philosophy” with the “negative philosophy” not only of Marx, but also of Hegel. He also discusses some conservative German positivists, but he does not connect this critique to contemporary positivists or pragmatists or to the work of other major figures such as Durkheim. Marcuse critiques pragmatism in some of his writings in German for the Frankfurt School’s own *Zeitschrift für Sozialfor-*

schung (Kellner 1984), but he does not do so in English during this period. This reticence may have had some connection with the precarious position of an émigré scholar.

Marcuse also defends Hegel against charges, still common even today in the English-speaking world, that Hegel's thought is somehow the forerunner of fascism and totalitarianism. Marcuse argues that Nazi ideologists, far from embracing Hegel, regarded him as one of their chief enemies. The book closes with a quote from Carl Schmitt, whom Marcuse terms "the one serious political theorist of National Socialism." Schmitt wrote that on the day of Hitler's ascent to power, "Hegel, so to speak, died" (1941, p. 419). This statement is important today in light of the renewed discussion of Schmitt's political theory.

Marcuse's attack on positivism, along with his defense of Hegel as a revolutionary thinker, subjected his book to severe criticism, especially from the more empirically minded American Marxists and socialists. These scholars consider pragmatism and even positivism as having more in common with Marx's thought than with Hegel's. These attacks persist today, even while the book has become a classic as a major work of Hegelian Marxism.

REVIEWS AND CRITIQUES IN THE 1940s

When *Reason and Revolution* was first published, the harshest criticism came from the pragmatist Sidney Hook, then still a member of the Marxist left, who went to the trouble of writing two negative reviews. Hook was outraged not only by Marcuse's defense of Hegel as critical and revolutionary but also by Marcuse's attack on positivism as essentially conservative. In a review in *The New Republic*, Hook (1941a, p. 91) reproaches Marcuse for not addressing the ways in which Hegelian logic is opposed to "scientific method"—that is, positivism. In his defense of positivism against what he terms "the idealist principle" underlying Marcuse's approach, Hook writes that "positivism seeks to discover by scientific, not dialectical methods what the facts are" and advocates "testing our ideals and principles by available facts." He objects especially to Marcuse's notion that positivism is essentially conservative: "[P]ositivists can be and have been revolutionists just as dialecticians can be and have been reformists, and even stand-patters." He also maintains that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* provides "a connection between Hegel and National Socialism" (1941a, p. 91).

Hook's more academic review for *The Living Age* concentrates almost entirely on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, a work that Marcuse discussed only briefly. In this review, Hook attacks Hegel's "absolute idealism" as essentially "conservative" and defends empiricism "as a philosophical attitude" that is "essentially public and critical" (1941b, p. 595). In neither of these reviews does Hook even mention the writings of the young Marx, or Marcuse's discussion of the Hegel-Marx relationship. Hook's reviews are more an occasion for attacking Hegel than a serious grappling with any of Marcuse's arguments.

From another quarter of the American left, a less vitriolic but somewhat similar discussion was published in the Communist-oriented theoretical journal *Science & Society*. There the Marxist philosopher Vernon J. McGill (1942, p. 161) points to the "author's interesting argument to demonstrate the Hegelian component in Marx's philosophy." Here too, however, positivism was defended as scientific and therefore revolutionary, while Marcuse's pathbreaking discussion of the young Marx was ignored.

In a vein similar to Hook's, Erich Franzen's critique in the *American Sociological Review* attacks Marcuse for failing to critique Hegel's basic concepts. Franzen also suggests that contrary to Marcuse's view, a possible link existed between Hegel and fascism. Franzen's review concludes that Husserl and Simmel offer better alternatives for

sociological theory than Marcuse's "dubious expedient" of a "revivification of Hegel" (Franzen 1942, p. 128).

Marcuse's book fared much better in the pages of the *American Journal of Sociology*. In a more balanced and more respectful review, political theorist George Sabine linked *Reason and Revolution* to Dilthey's 1905 *Jugendgeschichte Hegels*, calling Marcuse's book "much the best account of Hegel in English." Sabine also identified strongly with Marcuse's refutation of the notion of a link between Hegel and fascism, stating that "Hegel's philosophy was fundamentally rationalist, while the philosophy of national socialism is fundamentally irrationalist" (Sabine 1942, p. 259). Even Sabine, however, expressed strong disagreement with Marcuse's attack on positivism.

The most curious feature of these and other early reviews by American scholars is that not a single one even mentioned the lengthy discussion of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* in *Reason and Revolution*, even though there, for the first time, Marcuse introduced to the American intellectual public such key issues as Marx's discussion of alienation. That topic did not receive attention in the United States until the late 1950s, after the *Manuscripts*, including the essay "Alienated Labor," were finally published in English, and after the new popularity of European philosophies such as existentialism had helped to undermine the hegemony of empiricism and positivism even among left-wing intellectuals.

Among German émigré scholars, Karl Löwith (whose own important book *From Hegel to Nietzsche* also appeared in 1941) and the theologian Paul Tillich each wrote an interesting critique of *Reason and Revolution* soon after it appeared. Tillich, writing in the Frankfurt School's journal *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* (formerly the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*), singles out Marcuse's emphasis on the "negative" character of Hegel's thought as the link between Hegel and Marx. Tillich views Marcuse as one of a group of younger German philosophers "whose philosophical education occurred in the period of war and revolution," a situation that drew them to Hegel and Marx (1941, p. 476). Despite his overall praise for the book as a pioneering study of Hegel from the viewpoint of critical theory, Tillich criticizes Marcuse for not discussing Hegel's writings on religion or aesthetics. Although Tillich mainly defends the need for a religious perspective, there is more to his argument; in some ways this argument resembles critiques of Marcuse made in the 1960s by the Marxist humanists Kosik and Dunayevskaya. Tillich apparently is referring to the general issue of Hegel's Absolutes and their relationship to religion, and, at the same time, to Marcuse's stress on Hegel as a political and social thinker. He writes "Even a critical social theory cannot avoid an 'ultimate' in which its criticism is rooted because reason itself is rooted therein. Otherwise criticism itself becomes positivistic and contingent" (1941, p. 478).

A somewhat similar critique was made by Löwith, who knew Marcuse from the days in the 1920s when they both studied under Heidegger. Löwith writes that the "book gives in its first part an excellent analysis of Hegel's philosophy" (1942a, p. 561), but he also takes *Reason and Revolution* to task for downplaying the religious and nonrevolutionary aspects of Hegel's work. Taking issue with Marcuse's stress on categories such as negativity, Löwith writes further that Hegel is primarily a philosopher of "progressive mediation and reconciliation." He finds fault with what he terms Marcuse's one-sided stress on "criticism of the given state of affairs" (1942a, p. 562) in his treatment of Hegel's philosophy as a critique of fascism. This review was published together with Marcuse's response and Löwith's rejoinder (1942b). Marcuse (1942, p. 565) writes in response that Löwith's statement about Hegel on "progressive mediation and reconciliation" shows that "he apparently confuses Hegel's dialectic with a shallow philosophy of progress." As to his alleged politicalization of Hegel's thought, Marcuse replies that "although Löwith is a good student of the development from Hegel to Marx," unfortunately he "deems it

incompatible with the dignity of philosophy to take sides in the great historical struggles of our time" (1942, p. 564).

MARCUSE'S 1954 EPILOGUE AND 1960 PREFACE

Many writers in the critical theory tradition have tended to downplay the importance of *Reason and Revolution*, even in Marcuse's own work. Yet as an indication of its importance to Marcuse himself, it is the only one of his works to which he added new material not once but twice: in 1954 and again in 1960. The new material that Marcuse added to *Reason and Revolution* in the 1954 and the 1960 editions also illustrates the evolution of his thought on Hegel, Marx, and dialectics. In the 1954 edition, Marcuse adds an epilogue that begins on a far more resigned and more pessimistic note than does the 1941 text:

The defeat of Fascism and National Socialism has not arrested the trend toward totalitarianism. Freedom is on the retreat—in the realm of thought as well as in that of society. Neither the Hegelian nor the Marxian idea of Reason have come closer to realization (Marcuse 1954, p. 433).

Such is the case, says Marcuse, because "late industrial civilization" has been able to transform the conditions and mental outlook of the working class, enabling it to "absorb its negativity" (1954, p. 437). This is true not only in the West but also in the East, where "the Soviet state grew into a highly rationalized and industrialized society" (1954, p. 439). In 1941 dialectical reason seemed to have a chance to appear as the revolutionary philosophy guiding working-class action toward a practically possible transcendence of alienation. To Marcuse in 1954, however, such aspirations are utopian: "The idea of a different form of Reason and Freedom, envisioned by dialectical idealism as well as materialism, appears again as Utopia" (1954, p. 439). Yet he concludes that even in a utopian form, dialectical concepts such as reason and freedom remain a distant possibility; as a result, the established forces in society propagandize endlessly against the very idea of liberation.

Marcuse's more important preface to the 1960 edition, "A Note on the Dialectic," develops further some of the concepts he introduced in the 1954 preface. Here, however, he focuses more closely on the dialectic proper than on social and economic developments after 1945. Marcuse speaks of the "power of negative thinking," as seen in Hegel and Marx, as "in danger of being obliterated" (1960, p. vii). Dialectical reason is "alien to the whole established universe of discourse and action" (1960, p. vii). Hegel's thought as a dialectic of negativity critiques the existing world on the basis of a "principle of freedom" and ends by relegating that freedom "to the realm of pure thought, to the Absolute Idea" (1960, p. ix). According to Hegel, this impasse leads dialectical thought "to become historical analysis." But how to do that in 1960, asks Marcuse, when the power of negative thought has been practically obliterated? Negativity, virtually abolished from philosophy and social theory because of the domination of positivist and empiricist thought, can be found elsewhere: in "poetic language" and "avant-garde literature" (1960, p. x). These forms help to move us toward what Marcuse terms a "Great Refusal" (1960, p. x) of industrial and technocratic society, a point he illustrates by quoting from Mallarmé, Valéry, and other French poets.

This point leads Marcuse away from Hegel's concept of dialectical reason, a concept that was one of the central threads in *Reason and Revolution*:

I believe it is the idea of Reason itself which is the undialectical element in Hegel's philosophy. This idea of Reason comprehends everything and ultimately absolves every-

thing, because it has its place and function in the whole. . . . It may even be justifiable to define Reason in terms which include slavery, the Inquisition, child labor, concentration camps, gas chambers, and nuclear preparedness (1960, p. xii).

Reason therefore is “a part rather than the whole.”

Marx’s critical appropriation of Hegel, says Marcuse, stemmed from “a recognition that the established forms of life were reaching the stage of their historical negation” (1960, p. xiii). Unfortunately, however,

Those social groups which dialectical theory identified as the forces of negation are either defeated or reconciled with the established system. Before the power of the given facts, the power of negative thinking stands condemned (1960, p. xiv).

Hegel’s concept of totality is true and yet, at the same time, not true because “[n]o method can claim a monopoly of cognition” (1960, p. xiv). Therefore there are two poles around which we can think a dialectical negation of the existing society: “‘The whole is the truth,’ and ‘the whole is false’” (1960, p. xiv).

Although the language is abstract, the message seems to be twofold: 1) The workers are no longer a revolutionary class, as Marx had concluded; thus much of his concept of dialectic is called into question. 2) The Hegelian concept of the unfolding of freedom as dialectical Reason has been blocked increasingly as well because of the pervasiveness of technological rationality in modern society. In Marcuse’s view, Western Reason has been used to create mass destruction and genocide; thus, it, too, must be questioned. The critique of society to be found in avant-garde art might ultimately be more dialectical than Hegel’s concept of dialectical Reason. Marcuse thus questions Hegel’s totalizing notion of Reason, which by now he regards as leading back toward instrumental reason, and he points to less totalizing forms of thought. Thus, to continue to be critical in a technocratic society, dialectical Reason must move outside the Hegelian-Marxian tradition while retaining many of its achievements.

In the early 1960s, second-generation critical theorist Oskar Negt in West Germany developed a view of this problem that may have a relationship to Marcuse’s 1960 position, but which is at variance with the 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution*. Negt’s study of Hegel and Comte points not only to differences, as did Marcuse’s work in 1941, but also to affinities between Comte and Hegel in their respective theories of society. In a preface to this work, Negt’s teachers Horkheimer and Adorno write that his book shows “the latent positivism implicit in the Hegelian construction of social reality, something which one would not expect because of Hegel’s own hostility to positivism” (Negt [1963] 1974, p. 8). Negt himself ([1963] 1974, p. 133) links Hegel’s concept of “objective spirit” to Durkheim’s concept of a “conscience collective.”

By the 1960s, when Marcuse had become well-known internationally, severe critiques of his work appeared from a variety of perspectives. Most of these discussions centered around his later works, such as *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), but they also addressed *Reason and Revolution*. Below I will concentrate on four representative discussions since 1960: those by the anti-Hegelian Italian philosopher Lucio Colletti, by the American critical theorist Douglas Kellner, by the Czech Marxist humanist philosopher Karel Kosík, and by the Russian-American Marxist humanist and Hegel scholar Raya Dunayevskaya.

CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS SINCE 1960: COLLETTI AND KELLNER

Colletti ([1969a] 1972, [1969b] 1973) published two major critiques of Marcuse as part of a general attack on Hegelian Marxism, which had gained wide popularity in Italy by

the late 1960s. Colletti's work was translated into English in the 1970s; along with that of Althusser, it became part of the critique of Hegelian Marxism and critical theory in the English-speaking world.

In an article titled "From Hegel to Marcuse," Colletti takes up some themes similar to those of Hook in 1941. He wants to criticize both Hegel and Marcuse from the viewpoint of "science" ([1969a] 1972, p. 131). In contrast to Marcuse's view, which I discussed above, Colletti ([1969a] 1972, p. 112) attacks Hegel's concept of infinity as an essentially mystical and religious "annihilation of the world" of facts and things. According to Colletti, Marcuse adopts this Hegelian notion of annihilation and "negativity" in a one-sided sense and creates from it a philosophy of generalized revolt against human existence. Colletti ([1969a] 1972, p. 130) links this "revolt" to what he regards as Hegel's "old spiritualist contempt for the finite and the terrestrial world." In doing so, however, he ignores Marcuse's strong arguments in *Reason and Revolution* that Hegel's philosophy is more historically based than that of other German idealists, and thus is closer to Marx.

Colletti attacks Marcuse's "idealistic reaction against science" in his critique of positivism ([1969a] 1972, p. 131). Marcuse's attack on capitalism is therefore not Marxist but "an indiscriminate attack on science and technology" ([1969a] 1972, p. 135). Colletti attempts to link this attack on science and positivism to Sartre's concept of "nausea" in regard to the material world in order to argue that Marcuse is not a Marxist thinker, but "descends from Heidegger" ([1969a] 1972, p. 131).

A fundamental problem in Colletti's discussion is that he constructs his "Marxist" view of Hegel without ever seriously discussing Marx's crucially important "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in the *1844 Manuscripts*. In this essay, as Marcuse notes in *Reason and Revolution*, Marx singles out the concept of negativity as the creative and revolutionary element in Hegel's dialectic. Colletti avoids discussion of this key essay by Marx not only in his critique of Marcuse, but even in a 50-page introduction to an edition of Marx's early writings published in association with the *New Left Review*. There, in his discussion of the *1844 Manuscripts*, Colletti (1975) addresses only the concept of alienation. Also, whereas Marcuse confronts and comes to grips with those parts of Hegel's writings, such as the *Philosophy of Right*, which create difficulty for his view of Hegel as an essentially revolutionary thinker, Colletti does not seriously engage arguments contrary to his own. In this sense his polemic against Marcuse misfires. Colletti's own anti-Hegelianism eventually led to a break with Marxism as well in the 1970s (Jay 1984; McGlone 1985).

Kellner's book on Marcuse, the most thorough theoretical study to date, expresses greater affinity for his later work than for *Reason and Revolution*. Kellner (1984, p. 133) writes that in *Reason and Revolution* "the thrust of Marcuse's interpretation is to valorize the radical components in Hegel," giving us "a powerful critique of empiricism and positivism." Kellner views these critiques as having anticipated Marcuse's later critiques of empiricism and positivism in works such as *One-Dimensional Man*. He argues that although Marcuse never directly answered Hook's polemics against *Reason and Revolution*, much of his later work was occupied with a critique of positions similar to Hook's.

In emphasizing the critique of positivism, Kellner stresses the similarities between Marcuse's book and those of other critical theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer. On the one hand, this procedure has the merit of effectively showing the link of *Reason and Revolution* to Marcuse's later work, such as *One-Dimensional Man*, and to that of Adorno and Horkheimer. On the other, it fails adequately to highlight the unique features of Marcuse's Hegelian Marxism, which had a somewhat different orientation than Adorno's and Horkheimer's both to the dialectic and to politics; this difference already was visible in 1941. Marcuse's Hegelian Marxism of 1941 helps us to anticipate one aspect of his work in the 1960s as well: his public return to a variant of the left revolutionary politics

that his Frankfurt School colleagues Adorno and Horkheimer abandoned after the early 1940s.

Kellner makes three major criticisms of *Reason and Revolution*. First, he sees problems in Marcuse's overall perspective on Hegel. He complains (1984, p. 144) that "Marcuse's appropriation of Hegel's ontology and epistemology is too uncritical" and that "he never really criticizes Hegel's philosophy as such." In Kellner's view (1984, p. 144), it is "precisely Hegel's philosophical positions" which are at the root of the authoritarian flaws in those works of Hegel which Marcuse criticizes, such as the *Philosophy of Right*. Kellner criticizes particularly Hegel's "thoroughgoing panrationalism and his concept of the Absolute" (1984, p. 144). The latter "contains mystifying overtones of finality, completeness and perfection" and leads us to the notion that "reason was realized in the Prussian state" (1984, p. 145). Kellner accuses Marcuse of having evaded these issues.

Second, on the relation of Hegel to Marx, Kellner writes that Marcuse "pictures Marx as emerging fully developed from Hegel," while "a more balanced interpretation would have indicated the influences on Marxism of French socialism and British political economy" (1984, p. 419). Thus, says Kellner, Marcuse's Marxism is too uncritically Hegelian and does not include enough political economy.

Third, Kellner (1984, p. 143) writes that in contrast to his "later questioning of the proletariat," Marcuse's Marxism in *Reason and Revolution* "is remarkably 'orthodox'" in treating the working class as (in Marx's terms) the living negation of capitalism. According to Kellner, this aspect of Marcuse's work shows *Reason and Revolution* to be almost an aberration when seen alongside his earlier and later writings:

There is a "rationalist" turn in his thought during this period where he affirms the heritage of critical rationalism and distances himself from Heidegger, existentialism, *Lebensphilosophie* and phenomenology. Later Marcuse would respond to Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of technology and instrumental reason, and in *Eros and Civilization* and other later works would reformulate the concept of reason and reconstruct critical theory (Kellner 1984, pp. 128–29).

I agree with Kellner that the Hegelian Marxism of *Reason and Revolution* is altered considerably from that of the 1940s, but I would argue that it also expresses the dialectical core of Marcuse's left radical vision. This vision, although it appeared in a different form in the 1960s, at the same time was a partial return to the left revolutionary vision of Germany in the 1920s, as seen in the writings of Lukács and Korsch.

Kellner does not fully draw together the threads of his various critiques. If Marcuse's Marxism is both too Hegelian and too orthodox, how do these two flaws fit together? The main problem in Kellner's critique, however, is that he focuses too little on what Marcuse was doing with Hegel in 1941. He tends to let the critique of instrumental reason and of positivism overshadow the other major themes in Marcuse's book.

In 1991, in the introduction to a new edition of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, Kellner discusses for the first time some recently discovered manuscripts on theories of social change. There were composed by Marcuse and fellow critical theorist Franz Neumann during the period immediately after the publication of Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* and of Neumann's *Behemoth*, a study of the social structure of Nazi Germany. Kellner writes that these manuscripts show "the typically Marcusean tendency, shared by the Frankfurt School, to integrate philosophy, social theory and politics" (Marcuse [1964] 1991, p. xxi). He argues further that *Reason and Revolution* was connected to a broader project within critical theory, one which was opposed to the solely "philosophical-cultural analysis of the trends of Western civilization being developed by Horkheimer and Adorno"

(p. xxii). Thus, despite the seemingly abstract and philosophical character of *Reason and Revolution*, apparently it served as the theoretical foundation for a more empirical study of social change.

FURTHER CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS SINCE 1960: KOSÍK AND DUNAYEVSKAYA

Since the 1960s, Marxist humanists have challenged *Reason and Revolution* on still different grounds. In his widely discussed book *The Dialectics of the Concrete*, Czech Marxist humanist Karel Kosík suggests that even Marcuse is guilty of “abolishing philosophy” within Marxism when he moves from Hegel to a consideration of Marxism as the “dialectical theory of society” ([1963] 1976, p. 104). Kosík is referring here to Marcuse’s view of the shift from Hegel to Marx as a shift from philosophy to social theory. He opposes any attempt to “abolish” philosophy within Marxism, even when this involves moving from philosophy to a critical social theory. If philosophy is abolished in this way, writes Kosík, Marx’s theory “is transformed into its very opposite” and “praxis ceases to be the sphere of humanizing man.” If we move one-sidedly into social theory, a certain “openness” is lost and “turns into a closedness.” We reach a point where “socialness is a cave” in which the human being is “walled in” ([1963] 1976, p. 106). Kosík seems here to point to a continual cross-fertilization between philosophy and social theory.

Today postmodernists have attacked the writings of Hegel and Marx as oppressive “great narratives” that radical thought should leave behind (Lyotard 1989), and a second-generation critical theorist, Habermas (1990, p. 15), distances himself from what he considers to be the “romantic socialism” of the young Marx. At such a time, Marcuse’s *Reason and Revolution* might seem to many people to be far from current concerns in its emphasis on Marx’s theory of alienation and on Hegel’s concept of dialectical Reason as a revolutionary and critical concept. Yet these are precisely among the threads which the Russian-American Marxist humanist Raya Dunayevskaya picks up from Marcuse’s work; she carries them into the theoretical problematics of today, but all the while engages Marcuse’s work very critically. Her interest in Marcuse’s *Reason and Revolution* began in the 1940s, but she continued to write about it until her death in 1987.

In 1979, at the time of Marcuse’s death, Dunayevskaya wrote of the enthusiasm with which she and her colleagues greeted *Reason and Revolution* when it first appeared:

In that seminal work, Marcuse established the Humanism of Marxism and re-established the revolutionary dialectic of Hegel-Marx, for the first time for the American public. It is impossible to forget the indebtedness we felt for Marcuse when that breath of fresh air and vision of a truly classless society was published . . . (1979, pp. 10–11).

Dunayevskaya, like Marcuse, followed Marx’s 1844 “Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic” and was drawn to Hegel’s concept of negativity. Ollman (1993, pp. 26–27) writes that “for Raya Dunayevskaya, it was the ‘negation of the negation’” which was the “pivotal” dialectical category. In the 1940s she belonged to the so-called Johnson-Forest tendency within American Trotskyism, together with the Trinidadian theorist C.L.R. James. In an unpublished letter, Dunayevskaya ([1966] 1981f, p. 13936) writes that at the end of 1941 she “read a new book, *Reason and Revolution* by Herbert Marcuse. The first part on Hegel meant nothing to me then, but the second part which dealt with Marx’s early essays opened a new world to me.”

Scattered through the published and unpublished writings of Dunayevskaya, who became a friend of Marcuse in the 1950s, are a number of interesting discussions of *Reason and Revolution*. In her *Marxism and Freedom* ([1958] 1988, p. 349), a book to which

Marcuse contributed a critical preface, she describes *Reason and Revolution* as “a truly pioneering and profound work” to which “I would . . . like to acknowledge my debt.” Dunayevskaya (1980, [1973] 1989a; also see Anderson 1986) attempts critically to appropriate Hegel’s Absolutes, the very category that even other Hegelian Marxists have tended to avoid or dismiss (Bloch [1949] 1962; Lukács [1948] 1975). To Dunayevskaya, Hegel’s Absolutes were not a closed totality but a source of “absolute negativity”; from this source could be constructed a radical concept of dialectics that would expand the traditional Marxist view of the labor movement to include new social movements of blacks, women, and youth. By the 1980s she was connecting these issues increasingly to a subject-centered feminist theory (Dunayevskaya [1982] 1991; also see Afary 1989; Johnson 1989; Rich 1986).

As part of his extensive correspondence with Dunayevskaya in the 1950s, Marcuse expresses some doubt about this procedure:

I admire your way of concretizing the most abstract philosophical notions. However, I still cannot get along with the direct translation of idealistic philosophy into politics: I think you somehow minimize the “negation” which the application of the Hegelian dialectic to political phenomena presupposes (Dunayevskaya and Marcuse 1989, p. 4).

Dunayevskaya responds:

You seem to think that I . . . minimize the “negation” . . . which the application of the Hegelian dialectic to political phenomena presupposes. But surely Hegel’s Absolute Idea has nothing in common with Schelling’s concept of the Absolute as the synthesis or identity in which all differences are absorbed by the “One” (Dunayevskaya and Marcuse 1989, p. 4).

The correspondence between Dunayevskaya and Marcuse illustrates some of their key differences on Hegelian dialectics as well as on automation and the labor process (Anderson 1989a, 1989b, 1990; Kellner 1984, 1989a, 1989b).

In 1960, later in their correspondence, Marcuse writes “The very concept of the Absolute Idea is altogether tied to and justifies the separation of material and intellectual productivity at the pre-technological stage” (Dunayevskaya and Marcuse 1989, p. 12). This statement represents a development of an aspect of Marcuse’s discussion of the Absolute Idea in *Reason and Revolution*. There, as we saw earlier, he writes (1941, p. 163) that it reflected “the social separation of the intellectual sphere from the sphere of material production.” In Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man* ([1964] 1991) this theme became central to the chapter on pretechnological thought. In that work, without mentioning his correspondence with Dunayevskaya, he treats pretechnological thought from Plato to Hegel as critical and dialectical Reason, which is counterposed to the dominant positivist, “one-dimensional,” technological thought.

In her *Philosophy and Revolution*, Dunayevskaya ([1973] 1989, p. 44) seems to respond to this argument without directly naming Marcuse when she writes “[I]t would be a complete misreading of Hegel’s philosophy were we to think . . . that his Absolute is a mere reflection of the separation between philosopher and the world of material production.”

Dunayevskaya makes two types of critique of *Reason and Revolution*: 1) She contrasts the 1941 text with the preface added by Marcuse in 1960, “A Note on the Dialectic,” and attacks the latter as an abandonment of the type of revolutionary dialectic Marcuse held to in the 1940s. 2) She criticizes Marcuse’s treatment of the Absolute Idea in Hegel’s

Science of Logic even in the original 1941 text, arguing that he stops short of a fully Hegelian Marxism by not seriously addressing Hegel's Absolutes. Dunayevskaya also critiques a few other aspects of Marcuse's discussion of Hegelian idealism, even though she agrees generally with the central idea of much of the 1941 text. The first critique is made publicly on several occasions, but often very briefly and cryptically. We can understand it most clearly by looking as well at some of her unpublished writings, including her correspondence. The second critique is never made in public, and can be pieced together only from correspondence and other unpublished writings, as well as from the handwritten marginalia in Dunayevskaya's personal copy of *Reason and Revolution* (Dunayevskaya n.d.).

In her critiques of Marcuse's 1960 preface, Dunayevskaya tends to focus on the following sentence: "I believe that it is the idea of Reason itself which is the undialectical element in Hegel's philosophy" (Marcuse 1960, p. xii). She remarks "how perverse such a conclusion will sound to dialecticians in general, and to Marxists in particular" ([1969] 1981f, p. 4410). Dunayevskaya writes elsewhere ([1982] 1991, p. 177) that in the 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse was working out the relationship of dialectics "to actual revolution," but in the 1960 edition he "added 'A Note on the Dialectic,' which pointed in a very different, 'one-dimensional' direction." By 1960, in her view, Marcuse was moving away not only from the traditional Marxian concept of the working class as subject, but also (and even more fundamentally, at a theoretical level) from his earlier view of dialectical Reason. To be sure, Marcuse's new dialectic traced its origin to Hegel and Marx, but Dunayevskaya argues that its granting of a central place to the "Great Refusal" of avant-garde art was a move away from the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic as developed in the original 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution*.

In several letters written to Marxist humanist colleagues soon after the appearance of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* in 1964, Dunayevskaya regards the 1960 preface as lying somewhere between his book *Soviet Marxism* (1958), which she had attacked for its relatively uncritical stance toward the Soviet Union, and his present position: "[I]t is his transition point from total pessimism and apologia through the mid-point of the 'Great Refusal' (1960) to the present almost-optimism of 'One-Dimensional Man,' perhaps working his way out" (Dunayevskaya [1964b] 1981f, p. 13884). She calls this preface "the philosophic point which separates us" ([1964c] 1981f, p. 13888). Apparently, in order to stress what she regarded as the most radical core of Marcuse's thought, in contrast to his later development, she titled her review of *One-Dimensional Man* "Reason and Revolution vs. Conformism and Technology" (Dunayevskaya 1964a; Greeman 1968).

Finally, in a letter written a year before her death, and just after depositing her correspondence with Marcuse in the Wayne State University archives, Dunayevskaya summarizes her view of the difference between Marcuse's 1941 and 1960 concepts of dialectic:

In 1941, Marcuse was optimistic, saw Marx as Humanism, revolutionary Humanism, inseparable from dialectics of revolutionary categories of development; in 1960 he was pessimistic and was on the way to declaring, not the "negation" of the system so much as "negation" of mankind . . . Dialectic, "negation of the negation," undergoes changed interpretation—or, like Absolute, gets omitted altogether . . . (Dunayevskaya 1986a, p. 3).

Thus the attack on the 1960s preface simultaneously expresses great appreciation for the 1941 text.

Dunayevskaya's critiques of the 1941 text itself are less frequent, and tend to center

around Marcuse's view of Hegel's Absolutes and the Hegel-Marx relationship. Dunayevskaya sees much similarity between Lenin and Marcuse in their reading of the last paragraphs of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Like Lenin in his 1914–15 Hegel notebooks, Marcuse interprets the last paragraph of Hegel's *Science of Logic* as a transition to Nature, ignoring the fact (according to Dunayevskaya) that Hegel mentions there a transition not only to Nature, but also to Mind. This point is important because Lenin had seized on this mention of Nature to conclude that it represented a transition to materialism (Lenin [1914–15] 1961, p. 234). In material added to the 1989 edition of her *Philosophy and Revolution* from some of her last writings (Dunayevskaya [1973] 1989) and elsewhere (Dunayevskaya 1989), Dunayevskaya criticizes Lenin's reading of Hegel's final paragraphs as an attempt to jump too quickly toward materialism, and thus as a truncation of the dialectic.

In unpublished 1961 notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Dunayevskaya writes that in *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse (like Lenin in 1914–15) stresses Hegel's "statement about the Idea releasing itself freely as Nature." At the same time, Marcuse points out the great difficulty of this passage of Hegel's work. Dunayevskaya complains:

But he himself doesn't attempt to overcome these difficulties. On the contrary, he disregards them, accepting the idea that it is a closed ontology and the best we can do is take this method and use it as a critical theory ([1961] 1981f, p. 2832).

In her marginal notes to *Reason and Revolution*, apparently in comparing Marcuse's discussion of the Absolute Idea with Lenin's, Dunayevskaya writes "Actually HM [Herbert Marcuse] too stops at Nature" alongside a passage in which Marcuse discusses the conclusion of Hegel's *Science of Logic* as a transition to Nature (Dunayevskaya n.d., p. 166). Here Dunayevskaya also writes in the margin of Marcuse's text: "not only Nature but also Spirit [Mind]." Apparently she is criticizing Marcuse for ignoring Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, one of his most idealistic works. Although ignored by most Marxists, this key text forms the conclusion to Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Primarily on the basis of this work of Hegel's, especially its concluding chapter on Absolute Mind, Dunayevskaya developed the most important aspects of her own interpretation of Hegel's Absolutes, not as closures but as permeated with absolute negativity and with new beginnings (Dunayevskaya [1973] 1989, 1989).

Although generally she agrees with Marcuse that Hegel's philosophy contained historical and social as well as purely ontological elements, at several points in her marginal notes Dunayevskaya criticizes Marcuse for stressing the primacy of ontology in some of Hegel's most idealistic categories. Next to a passage where Marcuse states "Hegel's dialectical process was thus a universal ontological one in which history was patterned on the metaphysical process of being," she writes "No, he derived it from actual history" (Dunayevskaya n.d., p. 314). She also writes "NO" over the word *ontological* where Marcuse argues that Hegel's philosophy, although rooted in history, "is constantly overwhelmed by the ontological conceptions of absolute idealism" (Dunayevskaya n.d., p. 161). In this sense her position may be closer to that of Jean Hyppolite's ([1955] 1969) treatment of the connection of Hegel's philosophy to history in his discussion of the relationship of the *Phenomenology* to the French Revolution. According to Dunayevskaya, the whole of Hegel's idealistic dialectic, including his Absolutes, is a historically based dialectic of freedom that can have concrete political and social ramifications.

By the late 1970s, Dunayevskaya had sharpened her critique of even the 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution*. In 1978 she wrote to a leading British labor activist that her differences with Marcuse in the 1950s and 1960s were not only over issues such as the

place of the labor movement in postwar capitalism, but also over the dialectic: “Why, however, could I not have made myself so clear to myself as to see that, much as I learned from Marcuse, we were not only on different planets ‘politically’ but philosophically?” (Dunayevskaya [1978] 1981f, p. 6433). A year before her death she wrote that Marcuse’s analysis of Hegel’s *Science of Logic* “remained in the Doctrine of Essence, at most reaching the threshold—the threshold only—of the Absolute” (Dunayevskaya [1986b] 1981f, p. 11162).

Thus Dunayevskaya critiques *Reason and Revolution* from a vantage point not only different from Colletti’s but also from Kellner’s. She identifies strongly with the Hegelian Marxism of the 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution*, but develops her own concept of dialectic by going beyond it, addressing whole areas of Hegel’s writings that even Marcuse either ignored or tended to dismiss as ontological idealism. Whereas Marcuse stresses Hegel’s concept of negativity in general, Dunayevskaya focuses more specifically on the concept of absolute negativity. In contrast to Marcuse’s (1941, p. 163) notion that the abstract character of the Absolute Idea reflects an ultimately conservative “separation of the intellectual sphere from the sphere of material production,” Dunayevskaya argues that Hegel’s dialectic is at its most critical and most revolutionary here in his Absolutes, where it is most abstract, and that Hegel becomes more conservative when he comes down to earth to develop a political philosophy:

Precisely where Hegel sounds most abstract, seems to close the shutters tight against the whole movement of history, there he lets the lifeblood of the dialectic—absolute negativity—pour in . . . [H]e has, by bringing oppositions to their most logical extreme, opened new paths . . . ([1973] 1989, pp. 31–32).

As we have seen, Marcuse also regards Hegel’s abstract works such as the *Phenomenology* or the *Logic* as more critical and more revolutionary than Hegel’s political philosophy, but he does not accept Dunayevskaya’s extensions of this notion to include Hegel’s Absolutes. For her part, Dunayevskaya tends to attack Marcuse for having moved (in her view) away from Hegelian Marxism by 1960 toward what she considered to be a non-Marxist concept, the “Great Refusal.” Meanwhile she continued in her own work to draw inspiration from Marcuse’s earlier writings on Hegel and Marx in elaborating her own position, which considered Hegel’s “absolute negativity as new beginning” (Dunayevskaya [1973] 1989, p. 3).

CONCLUSION: FACING THE CHALLENGE OF POSTMODERNISM

I am not suggesting here anything so simplistic as a notion that Marcuse, in moving away from some aspects of the Hegelian Marxism of the 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution*, ever gave up either Hegel or the dialectic. A few years before his death, Marcuse was asked whether Hegel was dead. The interviewer, Frederick Olafson, wondered: “[I]s it still possible for living philosophies to be built on the great classical authors?” Marcuse responded strongly:

I would say definitely yes. And I would definitely say that one of the proofs is the continued existence and development of Marxist theory. . . . It is, of course, a greatly modified idealism, but elements of it remain in social and political theory (Olafson [1974] 1988, p. 103).

Thus it is fairly clear that Marcuse remained a Hegelian Marxist until his death. At the same time, however, I believe it is erroneous to ignore the substantial shift in his concept

of dialectic from the 1941 text of *Reason and Revolution* to the 1960 preface and his other writings of the 1960s.

At a time when much of the debate in radical social theory is cast as a duel between (on one hand) Habermas's defense of liberal Enlightenment reason and (on the other) Foucauldian and postmodernist attacks on both liberalism and the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic, Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* offers us something different: a defense of the dialectic as a critical, rational, and therefore radical perspective.

Among the various French structuralists, post-structuralists, and postmodernists whose theoretical writings have prepared the ground for much of the recent debate in radical social theory, Derrida stands out as the one who has been engaged most seriously with Hegel. In a brief look at Derrida's critique of Hegel, I will attempt to show that his critique addresses, at least implicitly, some of the positions advanced by Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution*, but that he does not succeed in refuting either Hegel or Marcuse. Although Derrida ([1972b] 1981, p. 64) expresses admiration for "the decisive progress simultaneously accomplished by Althusser and those following him" in analyzing "the relationship of Marx to Hegel" ([1972b] 1981, p. 63), apparently he does not endorse Althusser's extreme rejection of Hegel. As is well known, Althusser ([1965] 1969, p. 116) once wrote that a task "more crucial than any other today" would be to "drive the shade of Hegel . . . back into the night" in favor of a return to a de-Hegelianized (Althusserized?) Marx.

Instead Derrida ([1972b] 1981, p. 77) argues: "We will never be finished with the reading and rereading of Hegel." This is not an idle statement: its fulfillment is evident in much of Derrida's work. One key example is found in his well-known essay "Différance," in which he works with (and against) Hegel, Saussure, Nietzsche, and Freud to develop one of his own most important concepts (Derrida [1972a] 1982; also see Norris 1987). Yet in Derrida's discussions, Hegel is most often a foil, the strongest example of what is wrong with the Western "logocentric" tradition. This view leads Derrida to two points of implicit confrontation with Marcuse's Hegelian Marxism: 1) his general rejection of the existentialist, radical humanist, and Hegelian Marxist trends, in many respects similar to Marcuse's position, which were so prevalent in French thought after 1945, and 2) his critique of Hegel's concepts of difference and negativity. The latter is, as we have seen, the central dialectical concept developed and elaborated in *Reason and Revolution*.

Derrida's major works were not translated immediately into English. Most of these works were published in French in the late 1960s or early 1970s, as follows: *L'Écriture et la différence* (1967), *De la grammatologie* (1967), *Marges de la philosophie* (1972), *Positions* (1972). This time lag obscures the political and theoretical context of Derrida's work, namely the fact that these writings were published at the height of Marcuse's influence. At that time his books were selling hundreds of thousands of copies in the United States and Europe, in the midst of the student upheavals in the United States, France, and Germany. Thus Marcuse's "best-seller," *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), was published only three years before two of the major works by Derrida listed above. The time lag in the English-language discussions of Derrida's work obscures Derrida's implicit critique of positions similar to those taken by Marcuse, a fact that was recognized when Derrida wrote.

This fact is evident in Derrida's article "The Ends of Man," first delivered as a paper to an international philosophy colloquium in New York in October 1968. Published in 1969 in the American journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, "The Ends of Man" for years was one of the very few examples of Derrida's work available in English. More than a decade later, in 1982, it appeared in a different translation in Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy*. In this often-cited paper (see, for example, Habermas 1987),

Derrida ([1972a] 1982, p. 117) identifies with what he terms “the current questioning of humanism” in French thought. He critiques what he considers to be the “uncontested common ground of Marxism and of Social-Democratic or Christian discourse,” all of it grounded in “the anthropologicistic readings of Hegel (interest in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as it was read by Kojève), of Marx (the privilege accorded to the *Manuscripts of 1844*) . . .” Derrida attacks Sartre explicitly as well as Kojève, but his targets probably include other left existentialists, Hegelian Marxists, and Hegel scholars such as Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Henri Lefebvre, Lucien Goldmann, and Jean Hyppolite. Derrida ([1972a] 1982, p. 121) attacks Hegel for subordinating his philosophy to a Christian eschatology, in which the Hegelian “we” is “the unity of absolute knowledge and anthropology, of God and man, of onto-theo-teleology and humanism.” He concludes that the creation of a truly radical philosophy “can only come from outside” the Western humanist tradition ([1972a] 1982, p. 134). The best way to create such a philosophy is “by affirming an absolute break and difference” ([1972a] 1982, p. 135) through a recourse to Nietzsche.

Derrida’s paper received a formal critique immediately after he delivered it at the 1968 conference in New York; the critique also was published in 1969 in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. In this critique the American philosopher Richard Popkin (1969, p. 63) attacks Derrida’s recourse to Nietzsche, which he terms “the extremely pessimistic conclusion of the paper.” Popkin draws a contrast between Derrida’s anti-humanist, Nietzschean stance and the radical humanist mentality, which he saw exemplified in the ferment, then taking place on American campuses, against the Vietnam war and racism.

Although Popkin defends a radical Christian perspective, he also directly poses Marcuse’s Hegelian Marxism as an alternative to Derrida’s antihumanist, anti-Hegelian perspective:

The Marxian Hegel is just beginning to be taken seriously in the form of the current Marcuse boom. We have had perhaps more direct contact with this vibrant, humanistic Hegel than France has had, since many of the leading figures in German thought of the 20’s fled to America, or fled to France briefly and then to America (Popkin 1969, p. 61).

Even though Derrida had not referred specifically to Marcuse’s work (which he may not even have read), Popkin was fundamentally right to bring Marcuse into the debate because Marcuse was a leading example of the Hegelian and Marxist humanist trends that Derrida attacked in his paper. Thus more than two decades ago, beginning with one of Derrida’s earliest entries into American intellectual debate, the question of Derrida versus Marcuse was posed publicly.

The second point, Derrida’s critique of Hegel’s concepts of difference and negativity, shows not a general but a very specific engagement with precisely those questions which occupy Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution*. (Once again, however, to my knowledge, Derrida does not refer explicitly to Marcuse’s argument when he critiques Hegel.) Derrida’s stance with regard to Hegel’s concept of negativity, which he often ties to the concept of difference, is especially interesting in an examination of the contemporary relevance of Marcuse’s Hegelian Marxism because negativity is one concept of Hegel’s which Derrida does not dismiss. Rather, he attempts to build on it while simultaneously attacking what he regards as the limits of Hegel’s concept. In *Of Grammatology*, for example, the first of Derrida’s major works to be published in English, Derrida ([1967a] 1974, p. 26) attacks Hegel as the prime example of a Western logocentric thinker, “the last philosopher of the book.” In the same paragraph, however, he praises Hegel as “also

the thinker of irreducible difference.” The British sociologist Gillian Rose (1985, p. 139; also see Rose 1981) writes of “Derrida’s equivocation concerning Hegel” in this very passage. Citing Hegel’s *Logic* on the dialectical relationship between unity and difference, she argues further: “The alternatives could be avoided by the speculative exposition of *différance* as the ‘unity and difference of identity and difference.’ But Derrida’s eschatological reading of Hegel leaves this out.”

Elsewhere Derrida ([1967b] 1978, p. 259) takes up Hegel’s concept of negativity, which he terms the “blind spot of Hegelianism.” Following the interpretation of the French Nietzschean Georges Bataille, Derrida argues that for Hegel “negativity is always the underside and accomplice of positivity.” Although Hegel created a “revolution” in thought by “taking negativity *seriously*,” Derrida concludes that in the end, Hegel works “to convulsively tear apart the negative side, that which makes it the reassuring *other* surface of the positive.” With regard to this critique, Rose (1985, p. 162) observes astutely: “It sounds as if Derrida is developing another kind of ‘conservative’ reading of Hegel’s thinking and reserving its radicality for his own thinking.” Thus Derrida ultimately reads Hegel on negativity in a manner similar to Löwith’s (1942a) earlier critique of Marcuse, viewing Hegel as fundamentally a philosopher of reconciliation and of positivity.

In this sense, Derrida’s equivocation on Hegel’s concept of negativity manages to avoid coming to grips with the type of left revolutionary reading of Hegel made by Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution*. This reading, I have argued here, centers around the concept of negativity. So anxious is Derrida to move beyond humanism and Hegelian Marxism, to affirm an “absolute break and difference” ([1972a] 1982, p. 135), that he avoids confronting fully the critical, even revolutionary ramifications of Hegel’s concept of negativity as defended and appropriated by Marcuse for radical social theory. I would argue that the fact that Marcuse’s Hegelian Marxism points to alternatives to the fetishized human relations of modern capitalist society makes it not less but more radical than the perspective defended by Derrida, who leaves us in the end with no real alternative to existing social structures.

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