The Polis Transfigured: Aristotle's Politics and Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right

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Chapter Two

The Polis Transfigured: Aristotle’s Politics and Marx’s Critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right”

David J. Depew

In the preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), Marx says that his Critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right” (1843; henceforth referred to in this chapter as CHPR) was the first fruit of what was to be his lifework. The purpose of this autobiographical preface was to show that “my views, no matter how they may be judged and how little they conform to the interested prejudices of the ruling classes, are the outcome of conscientious research carried on over many years.” Marx says it was in the CHPR that he first concluded that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended by themselves, on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life, the totality of which Hegel, following the example of English and French thinkers of the eighteenth century, embraces within the term “civil society”; and that the anatomy of this “civil society” has to be sought in political economy.

In this text Marx makes his own development more linear, and more theoretically oriented, than it actually was, whiggishly projecting later into earlier works. The historical materialism of which he speaks in the preface doesn’t begin to appear in recognizable form until The German Ideology (1846); and the use of political economy to analyze civil society doesn’t show up until the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. These interpretive tools do not even appear in the introduction to CHPR, which Marx wrote some months after the critique itself. The introduction was composed in a mood of deep disenchantment (subsequently well justified) with Marx’s earlier hope that the German burghers
and middle-class professionals would make a revolution against the stultifying political domination of the pre-modern feudal classes. The introduction contains his first attempt to propound, somewhat desperately, the radical Jacobin (communist) view—of which he had only recently even heard—that a genuine and effective revolution must await the development of a proletariat, which, by being totally excluded from civil society, would alone have the gumption to destroy it by eliminating the secret bond of interest that linked burgher and aristocrat against peasant and worker: private property (141–42). There is at least the beginning here of something that will eventually become historical materialism and a critique of political economy. But not even this proposal is in the CHPR itself, although it is motivated by what is in it.

I

CHPR is a commentary on paragraphs 261–313 of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (henceforth PR), in which Hegel discusses the institutional mechanisms of the state. It was written in the spring and summer months of 1843, mostly during Marx’s honeymoon in a little village up the Moselle Valley called Kreuznach. (Jenny Marx’s views about this odd way of spending a honeymoon are unrecorded.) Marx shows, or tries to show, that Hegel does not achieve what he sets out to achieve, or thinks he has achieved, in those paragraphs. Hegel wants to show that while the “state is . . . an external necessary and higher authority” vis-à-vis family and civil society, it is also “the end immanent within them” (PR, par. 261), and hence is justified by way of what we might call teleological rationality. Marx says that Hegel, despite his fancy talk, in reality leaves an “unresolved antinomy” (60) between the “particular interests of individuals” (PR, par. 261) as burghers—members of civil society (bourgerliche Gesellschaft)—and their role as citizens. The state is not an expression of their real life, which was Marx’s vaguely Left-Jacobin ideal of participatory democracy.

In saying this, Marx does not argue that Hegel’s defense of the state is an ideological justification of premodern, regressive politics. That particular slur goes back to Rudolf Haym, and was revived by Karl Popper in the context of his Cold War attack on totalitarianism. On the contrary, as Shlomo Avineri and other scholars have recognized, Marx thinks well enough of Hegel to recognize that he is trying to portray a modern state, and in many ways does. “In modern states,” Marx writes, “as in Hegel’s PR, the conscious, true actuality of public affairs is merely formal, or only what is formal constitutes actual public affairs. Hegel is not to be blamed for depicting the nature of the modern state as it is, but rather for presenting what is as the essence [Wesen] of the state” (64; my emphasis).

Thus, Hegel makes much of a market-centered civil society in which careers are open to talents and in which citizens are possessors of rights under a regime based on law (Rechtsstaat). But in his eagerness to preserve remnants of the past—for example, a hereditary monarchy, political representation by estate, entailed property, guilds (corporations)—as buffers against the abstract but deadly terrors of the revolutionary era and the atomizing tendencies of modernity more generally, Hegel papers over the tensions and conflicts in the sort of modern state he portrays. These incoherences are hidden from view. Marx thinks, by Hegel’s mystifying linguistic practices. His habit of reversing subject and predicate—of saying, for example, “The sovereignty of the state is the monarch” instead of “The monarch has the sovereign power” (25)—makes his picture of the modern state look more rational than it actually is. Marx deconstructs this appearance of rationality by using the techniques he had recently learned from Feuerbach for turning Hegel’s predicates back into subjects and his subjects into predicates. Feuerbach had used these techniques to deconstruct religion. Marx now adopts them to deconstruct Hegelian political theory. “Accordingly,” Marx writes in his belated introduction, “the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics” (132).

Plenty of Hegel scholars, including some well disposed to his philosophical project, concede that Hegel’s theory of the modern state is unpersuasive. Z. A. Pelczynski says, “It is obvious that [Hegel] failed in his self-appointed task.” K. A. Ilting writes, “One hundred and fifty years after the first publication of the Philosophy of Right we cannot avoid stating that Hegel’s theory of the modern state has been a failure.” Hegel regresses, Ilting claims, from the republican ideals that form the conceptual background of his political theory to an incoherent defense of monarchy. One might think, then, that such scholars would have found Marx’s critique insightful and useful. For Marx, too, hits Hegel’s monarchical doctrine forcefully. Nonetheless, the same scholars have tended to conclude that Marx doesn’t really lay a glove on Hegel. Ilting, for example, argues that Marx “consistently ignores Hegel’s intentions and train of thought. He seems scarcely to have understood the meaning of important parts of Hegel’s text. He reproaches Hegel with mistakes which the latter simply has not made.” Hegel’s recognition that the state seems external from the perspective of the private interests of the burgher, Ilting says, just reports a fact about how any modern Rechtstaat that isn’t full of lobotomized neo-Spartans will look to truly free citizens—whose freedom is itself preserved, in many ways, by the apparently external state. He also argues it is untrue that Hegel’s state is “only a parenthesis to logic,” as Marx would have it. Hegel is not guilty of neo-Platonically spinning the state out of abstract logical concepts instead of following the logic of lived experience. Hegel’s idealist metalanguage is just a façon de parler. For Ilting, Hegel’s problem is not lack of concreteness, but, in many respects, too much of it—conformity to contingent, historical constraints on his theoretical consistency. He may not have
wanted to justify the Prussian state as premodern, irrationalist, and protofascist. But he did want to justify the Restoration monarchy, and he couldn’t do it in ways that were consistent with his republican former (and presumably better) self.9

Nonetheless, Marx’s critique has had its defenders. Avineri is certainly among them.10 For his part, Manfred Riedel claims that the CHPR “remains the only commentary on Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* in nineteenth century Hegel studies which stands on the same level as Hegel’s own discussions.”11 I am sympathetic to this view. But in this chapter I will not try to decide between these opposing interpretive perspectives. Rather, I will look at an aspect of Hegel’s PR and of Marx’s critique of it that seems to me to put both thinkers in a more flattering light. What Marx meant when he claimed to be producing an internal critique of Hegel’s PR was that Hegel had failed to achieve what he set out to do. In part, I will argue, what he set out to do was to produce a new version of Aristotle’s *Politics*, in which the various contradictions, tensions, antinomies, and dualisms that Aristotle could not avoid from a perspective in which only “some are free” are resolved by acknowledging—as the first principle of social and political thought—that “all are free.” Hegel’s own dualisms, Marx now argues, testify that neither he nor the modern state he more or less accurately portrays has ascended to that lofty perspective either. PR is even more riddled with dualisms, antinomies, and tensions than Aristotle’s *Politics* is.

Marx was able to see Hegel’s political project in the light of Hegel’s latter-day Aristotelian project because he was a well-trained (but subsequently underemployed) historian of philosophy in Hegel’s own tradition, who knew that Hegel’s feet were planted firmly in the soil of Attic political theory, and was well acquainted with that world himself. If things had gone differently with his friend and mentor Bruno Bauer, Marx would have wound up teaching the subject in a university. His *Dissertation* was an interpretation of post-Aristotelian philosophy. He got interested in the topic because he thought that his own and his contemporaries’ position, in the wake of Hegel, was analogous to the position of Stoics, Skeptics, and Epicureans in the wake of Aristotle. At one point he even thought about writing his dissertation on Aristotle’s *De Anima.* Marx thus worked from the outset within a framework formed by Hegel’s analogy with Aristotle, in which Hegel claimed to be standing to the now disintegrating feudal world as Aristotle had stood to the *polis*. I think it can plausibly be shown that in CHPR Marx is making a case for his insight that Hegel regresses to the very sorts of difficulties Hegel himself so acutely spots in Aristotle. Marx soon came to think—the theme is explicit in the *1844 Manuscripts*—that Hegel’s failure to resolve the issues posed by Aristotle’s political philosophy sprang from his decision to cut through the tension between Aristotle’s naturalism (his sense that humans are intelligent animals) and Aristotle’s theoretical or contemplative ideal (his privileging of *theoria* over *praxis*) in favor of the latter. This meant that Hegel distanced himself from the very aspect of ancient Greek philosophy that Marx, ever since his *Dissertation*, had taken to be its best feature: its materialism. This led Hegel to the apparent logicism and neo-Platonic emanationism of the PR.

If we ask what a modern Aristotle to Marx’s liking would have been like, we may infer that his Aristotle would have taken the other road. He would have developed Aristotle’s naturalism in a consistent direction by reversing Aristotle’s hierarchy of kinds of knowledge, so that *poiesis* informs praxis, and praxis informs *theoria*. This would have been a perspective favorable to a genuine participatory democracy. Most people work, and are no less rational, moral, wise, or aesthetically sensitive for that, whatever Aristotle may have thought to the contrary. This is, in fact, precisely the philosophical position Marx works out in the *1844 Manuscripts*. In some ways, moreover, this position falls within the range of what can be called Aristotelian theories—theories that use an Aristotelian conceptual matrix, but relate its variables differently or assign different values to these variables.13 Nor is it entirely fanciful that Marx might have actually construed his work as a new form of consistently naturalistic Aristotelianism. In a published letter to Ruge, written while he was working on CHPR, Marx wondered aloud what “a German Aristotle who wished to construct his politics on the basis of our society” would make of the nature of humans from the data in front of him.14 Aristotle was clearly on Marx’s mind. But what Aristotle would make of the nature of humans in Marx’s time would be that man is “a social but wholly unpolitical animal”—a herd animal. This is certainly not what Marx thought. So it is unlikely that Marx ever thought of himself as a new Aristotle, succeeding where Hegel had failed—even if his own work, as well as Hegel’s, is Aristotelian in the broader sense I have mentioned. From the beginning, Marx had wanted a philosophy of action and thus saw himself as living in a *post*-Aristotelian, and *post*-Hegelian, frame of reference. He would have had a hard time imagining any Aristotle who did not look at things from a theoretical or contemplative point of view, from which contempt for and underestimation of the masses is inevitable and distorting, since it means missing a great deal that is only discernible from a praxical point of view. Thus, while Marx would readily have allowed Hegel—with his heavily theoretical point of view—to think of himself as Aristotle reborn, he would also have been prone to deny that Hegel did or even could achieve what his *Aristotles redivivus* was to do: portray the political world in its most developed and harmonious form. Perhaps Marx dates his professional career from this time because it was here that he first truly freed himself from the paralyzing power of Hegel’s contemplative gaze.

II

Marx wants to argue that Hegel doesn’t meet the criteria he himself lays down for success in political philosophy. We must, then, understand
what these criteria were. They spring from Hegel's lifelong ambition to overcome the fragmentation of the individual's experience. He shares this goal, as many scholars have lately pointed out, with the Romantic expressivists of his generation. Like them he is opposed to both Christian otherworldliness and Enlightenment mechanism. Unlike them he is unwilling to abandon the concept of Reason as the medium in which the experience of wholeness—individual, social, and cosmic—is realized. Accordingly, Hegel regards the persistence of dualisms (on the ontological side), and the inability to resolve antinomies in a higher synthesis (on the epistemic side), as sure signs of failure to comprehend rationally a given range of phenomena or subject matters. At the individual level there is the dualism between a Hobbesian body pushed around by its drives and compulsions, and a free but disembodied Cartesian mind. On the cosmic scale, mind-body dualism instantiates the larger dualism between matter and spirit, between this world and a better one. In social and political thought, finally, there is the dualism between self and other. The ego negotiates with "other minds" on behalf of its own interests. Its experience is fundamentally introspective and acquisitive. Hegel sees in this "possessive individualism" the root defect in all modern political theory. He thinks that Rousseau wanted to transcend it but couldn't. He thinks that Kant could have transcended it, but—in his attempt to preserve the Christian account of human life in an otherwise mechanical world—didn't want to. Beginning, however, with Schiller's *cri de coeur* for expressive, aesthetic wholeness in this world, Kant's idealist successors intensely sought to overcome personal, political, and cosmological dualisms, and—by developing the dialectical resources first employed by Kant himself—thought they could do so. Hegel agreed. But he did not think that dialectics was at its best when it was put in the service of fuzzy romantic feelings of wholeness (Schelling) or of egoistic self-assertion (Fichte). It was at its best when it was an instrument for revealing the rationality of the world. To reveal, and defend, the rationality of the political world is the aim of Hegel's PR.

Hegel thought it was precisely the task of the modern state to provide a site for overcoming the constraints on mutual recognition that were, in his view, the causal source of these theoretical and psychological dualisms and antinomies—or at least to initiate a self-sustaining project in which they were henceforth to be overcome in an open future whose horizon promises that "all are free." Working as he did on the edge of a putative reconciliation between Athens and Jerusalem, Hegel was committed to an interpretive or hermeneutic assumption to this effect: *Epistemic antinomies and ontological dualisms are indexes of constraints on mutual recognition.* Like "the Greeks," Hegel does not believe that the personality can exist outside a concrete, this-worldly context of recognition by others. To be is to be recognized. But like "the Christians," he does not believe that mutual recognition can be achieved if some members of society—or, at the horizon, any humans—are seen as so different from the norm that they are assigned a different ontological status, as the Greeks thought of slaves, barbarians, and even free women. Christians had long affirmed the second idea only by denying the first. They protected the inviolable worth of the individual by limiting the recognition of that worth to God's private love for all his children, whose social status as free or slave, as man or woman, was a matter of external social roles or mere physical facts rather than of one's true identity. The facts would be manifest only in the afterlife. To thus cosmologically project and universalize familial categories such as parent and child was precisely and intentionally to delegitimate ancient politics, which restricted those categories to the household (*oikos*). But this solution intensifies the experiential dualisms of classical life—slave versus free, body versus mind, reason versus passion—into full-fledged ontological mind-body and matter-spirit dualisms. Distinctions among aspects of experience, culminating in the "unhappy consciousness" of late antiquity, soon become—as they did for Augustine and later for Descartes—reified into distinct *substances*. Experiential tension becomes metaphysical dualism. (This is how Christianity became, as Nietzsche shrewdly put it, "Platonism for the masses.") Thus, for Hegel, the task of modernity—of which the revolutionary breakthroughs of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were portents—was to incarnate the Judeo-Christian conviction that "all are free" in a real social and political world, and not to defer it to an afterlife, and so to dissolve the philosophical dualisms that have their source in experiential tensions about mutual recognition. The repoliticization of Europe was and would continue to be the vehicle through which this was to be achieved. The crucial point of intersection, and the most important site for full mutual recognition, was bourgeois life, including its economics of individual industriousness in and through market activity, of which the ancients had taken a dim view. Thus, the ancient dichotomy between *oikos* and *polis* gives way in PR to a threefold sociopolitical structure—family, civil society, and state—within which the *aporias* (dilemmas) of classical politics are to be dissolved. It is in this respect above all that Hegel's PR is a modern rewrite of Aristotle's *Politics*.

Whether Hegel does or, as Marx claims, does not pull off this job can be judged, however, only when we approach the issue with a more concrete sense of Hegel's project than the simple desire he shared with his contemporaries to overcome dualisms through extending the scope of interpersonal recognition. To say that is not to say enough. What Hegel wanted to overcome were not only the large dualisms that the Christian world view had embraced and that Kant had tried to recode as philosophy, but the more subtle dualisms that Hegel came increasingly to recognize in ancient thought and ancient life as well. As long as these persisted, Christians would be justified in refusing to come down to an unjust earth. A successful modern political theory will test itself by its persuasiveness in overcoming these legitimate claims to apoliticism.
It is here that Aristotle enters the picture in a substantive way. It has long been recognized that Hegel took Aristotle as his chief guide to ancient thought. Aristotle, Hegel thinks, lived at a time when he was in a position to gather together the threads of the classical experience into a rich theoretical vision. This occurred just as the polis was inevitably breaking up into what Hegel called “particularity.” Aristotle wanted to preserve the reality of ancient life by recoding it into thought. In Aristotle the Owl of Minerva took flight. So it was to Aristotle’s Politics that Hegel turned as his compendium of Greek political thought, just as he treated Aristotle’s other treatises as epistles of ancient thought in almost every field. But one should not infer from this that Hegel ever saw in the Politics an ideal, if unrecognizable, picture of social life. On the contrary, he increasingly saw in Aristotle’s portrait of the vanishing city-state an experience of Sittlichkeit (community norms) being gnawed at by subtle contradictions that could never be transcended as long as social reality was based, as Aristotle frankly based it, on the naturalness of the master-slave relationship. The lopsided constraint on universal mutual recognition and mutual dependence encoded in Aristotle’s doctrine of natural slavery was, for Hegel, the chief causal source of antinomies and dualisms that show up everywhere else in his philosophy, undermining his claim to have captured the harmonious rationale of the world order (or, alternatively, limiting him to having captured the rationale of an underdeveloped cultural order).

It is important to recognize that what distinguishes Hegel from his fellow post-Kantian idealists was his deeper understanding of cultural history, and his commitment to making the philosophical machinery of his “system” serve as an instrument of cultural heuristics in the service of a project of liberation. That explains why Hegel’s philosophy has enjoyed a longer life in subsequent cultural history than that of his fellows. There wasn’t much more to Schelling’s system than the system. There is a good deal more to Hegel’s system than his system. This consideration also explains why Hegel would be especially interested in interpreting earlier thinkers who, in his view at least, had had a similar conception of their philosophical work, conceiving of philosophy as “its time apprehended in thought” (PR, preface). That, in any case, was how Hegel saw Aristotle. He had read the Nicomachean Ethics in the Gymnasium in Stuttgart, and most of the rest of the corpus during his years in Tübingen. The development of Hegel’s Logic shows at every point the attention he paid to Aristotle’s Metaphysics. Hegel’s theory of psychology, in the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, is self-consciously a rewrite of Aristotle’s De Anima. Hegel envisioned his lectures on art, religion, and philosophy, moreover, as developments and expansions of the disciplinary histories with which Aristotle prefaced most of his treatises. Nor can there be any doubt that the primary hermeneutic source of Hegel’s political philosophy was Aristotle’s Politics. "The influence of his reading of the Politics," writes Riedel, "shows itself repeated in the early writings of the Jena period." 18

It is especially important to recognize that Hegel’s famous master-slave dialectic, which reaches full flower in The Phenomenology of Mind, is a sustained meditation on the doctrine of natural slavery laid out in Politics, book I. In it Aristotle’s attempt to whistle his way past the problem of mutual recognition by arguing that the master can be recognized and constituted as a person without recognition by the slave came under increasing scrutiny as Hegel reflected more and more deeply about ancient and modern politics (Pol. I.1254a9–13, 1278b32–39a1, 1254b16–19; cf. Nicomachean Ethics 1161b3–9). 19 Only a foreshortened conception of recognition—defended by the suppression of cultural in favor of natural (animal and plant) categories—allows that to happen, Hegel came to think. So the Phenomenology tells the rest of the story in a way that traces the deepening ascendency of cultural categories, and the recession of naturalistic ones. This makes Hegel’s history of consciousness more geistlich and less natürlich than Aristotle’s, and genuinely historical in contrast to Aristotle’s myth of eternal return. Aristotle’s explicit commitment to the view that only “some are free” stands, for Hegel, behind Aristotle’s decision—in a cultural environment in which this previously unquestioned assumption threatened to be brought fatally to consciousness—to describe and justify various social and cultural practices in explicitly biological terms. In this way he could defend slavery by reducing slaves to the status of domestic animals and living tools (Pol. I.5.1254b25–26, 1278a12). (It must be borne in mind that Greek uses the same word for organ and tool: organon.) Thus in PR Hegel writes, “The alleged justification of slavery . . . as well as the justification of slave-ownership as simple lordship in general, and all historical views of the justice of slavery and lordship, depend on regarding man as a natural entity pure and simple” (PR, par. 57, remark).

By embracing this naturalism, Aristotle can take the pressure off his commitment to slavery; but in so doing, Hegel thinks, he cannot avoid overextending the legitimate sphere of application of biological categories. He thereby generates a whole range of paradoxes, contradictions, antinomies, and dualisms that ripple through his entire philosophy. Aristotle not only assimilates people he clearly recognizes as human beings to the status of animals—already a contradiction—but in the process pulls the entire sphere of work—of production, exchange, and consumption, in which slave and unleisured freedom both engage—down into an animal-like and slavish world. Poises, in contrast to praxis and theoria, is a sphere of activity closed to the kind of virtue and rationality that brings freedom or intrinsic value. Only those free from the need to work, Aristotle says, can be virtuous enough to be active citizens. “The life of mechanics and shopkeepers is . . . ignoble and imimical to virtue” (Pol. VII.9.1326b38–40). The market, in which producers exchange their products, thus fails to appear as a sphere of free self-expression and mutual
recognition. Indeed, the market appears as a threat to the rationality and value system of the traditional order, which limits mutual recognition to the leisureed and cultured. In a fully legitimated ideal state, therefore, (farm) labor must be assigned to slaves, and craftsmanship and trade must if possible be assigned to noncitizens (Pol. VII.10.1330a25–28, 1331a30–b3). In Politics, book VII—his portrait of an ideal state—Aristotle wishes that all such matters were handled by a resident-alien community living at a port some distance from the polis proper. But that is a mere dream—a tacit confession, Hegel says in his remarks on Aristotle’s Politics in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy (from which I have been paraphrasing) that “Greek democracy had by then completely fallen into decay, so that Aristotle could no longer ascribe any merit to it.” Instead, he gives way to reveries about a lost world. In the real world, however, on which he always had one eye trained, Aristotle clearly recognized that free workers had everywhere sustained their claim, by birth, to be full citizens. A democracy that embraces such claims to active citizenship—and in Aristotle’s time there were plenty of them—was not, then, for Aristotle, the happy outcome of Greek political development, but a deviation from an unavailable natural state, to be justified pragmatically at best. Aristotle thus treats the mass democracies of his day as “deviant constitutions [παρεκκλησίες]” analogues of deformed and monstrous organisms (τερατα) (Pol. III.7.1279b4–9). As a result, Aristotle’s claim that “the state comes to be and exists by nature” (Pol. 1.2.1252b30–34) as the outcome of a teleological and rational process of development applies paradigmatically to an unreal and ideal social arrangement, while actual states are construed as “sports and products of nature that depend on chance and the caprice of individuals,” such as ruthless or lucky tyrants. Something has clearly gone wrong in this contrast between natural form and actual fact.

The contradictions persist when Aristotle comes to normative recommendations about what to do under these circumstances. To reverse the trend toward deviant states, under conditions where political virtue is an increasingly scarce commodity, the ideal of natural aristocratic rule is to be preserved by making a permanent dynastic monarch—a πανσάλητος—the custodian of the norm of rotational rule of equal over equal (Pol. III.11.1288a16–29)! Here is yet another paradoxical and even self-contradictory idea. “Here Alexander is doubtless in Aristotle’s mind,” writes Hegel, “as one who must rule as though he were a god, and over whom no one, not even law, could maintain its supremacy.” But according to Hegel these tensions within the political world and practical philosophy—all of which could be alleviated by getting rid of the category of “natural slave”—also generate antinomical and dualistic tensions in theoretical philosophy. Given Hegel’s guiding interpretive principle, in which ontological distortions are keyed to constraints on mutual recognition, this is precisely what one would expect. Three such points of tension are the following. First, in spite of Aristotle’s drive toward hylomorphic naturalism, and his resistance to Plato’s dualism, entities like God and the more intellectual aspects of rational soul are pried off their biological foundations. Ontological dualism enters by this route back into Aristotle’s psychology and ontology. As a result, God—rather than being the intelligible reality of the world qua intelligible, as Aristotle at his best intends the divine to be—becomes a particular (or set of particulars, such as stars) in the world. Similarly, the rational soul becomes an entity separable from the body. Second, it is well known that an axiomatized, deductive system of propositions based on self-evident principles proper to each field expresses Aristotle’s ideal of science in his logical works (Organon), but that nothing of the sort is seen in his own scientific treatises. Hegel thinks that the rich working up of the materials in each of the various substantive treatises is by far more valuable than the formal logic of the Organon. It is here, he says, that we can see Aristotle as “truly speculative” and “dialectical.” But Aristotle’s inability to integrate his own criteria of scientific completeness with the material on which he is reflecting is a sign of insufficient mastery of “the concept” over “empirical material.” Given Aristotle’s reductive naturalism in the service of an ideological project, Hegel asserts, he cannot shoehorn his rich and concrete conceptual analyses into an impoverished set of categories. (Hegel’s Logic will thus attempt to be a transcending and negating completion of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, in which conceptual richness and completeness will merge with logical and dialectical validity. This is the project Fichte and Schelling had inherited from Kant.) Third, Aristotle’s failure to unify theory and practice in a higher synthesis is grounded in his unmediated separation of the productive from the practical and the practical from the theoretical. The intelligibility of production and exchange, and their positive relationship to rational virtue, are underestimated because of their connection to slavishness. As a result the practical is pulled down into the merely pragmatic, as in Aristotle’s constitutional theory, while philosophical reflection tends to fly off into otherworldliness. There are severe tensions between what Aristotle says in Nicomachean Ethics, book X, about the primacy of the theoretical life and his usual more robust sense of knowing and acting as dimensions of an engaged and thoroughly worldly life of virtuous activity (NE X.7–8.1177a11–1179a35). But even in his worldly moods, Aristotle writes off as accidental and purely contingent whole spheres of intelligibility—from market economics to the trajectory of world history—precisely because he cannot see the necessary and the rational in them, Hegel will attempt to recover these as patterned and meaningful. Indeed, Hegel’s own philosophical aims take their overall shape as attempts to overcome just these defects. Perhaps it is because he wants to do better that Hegel actually exaggerates Aristotle’s difficulties. However that may be, it is in this connection that Hegel now comes to think of himself as a new Aristotle whose job is not to move the political and theoretical world
back to Aristotle’s, but to complete and thereby to cancel Aristotle’s project—to swallow it up historically and hermeneutically into his own.

The key to this completion and cancellation is Hegel’s concept of right. In his description of Aristotle’s political philosophy in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Hegel writes,

The Greeks were still unacquainted with the abstract right of our modern states, which isolates the individual, allows of his acting as such, and yet, as an invisible spirit, holds all the parts together. . . . Because the individual is really held to be a person, and all his concern is the protection of his individuality, he works for the whole without knowing why . . . . as in a factory no one makes a whole, but only a part, and does not possess skill in other departments. . . . In modern times the individual is free for himself as such and enjoys citizen freedom alone in a sense of a bourgeois and not a citoyen. . . . This is a moment unknown to ancient states. It is the perfect independence of these points, and therefore the greater independence of the whole, which constitutes the higher organic life [my emphasis]. After the state received this principle into itself, the higher freedom could come forth. 26

The source of this higher freedom and deeper conception of organicity is Christianity. In PR, Hegel writes,

The right of the subject’s particularity, his right to be satisfied, or in other words the right of subjective freedom, is the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times. This right . . . is given expression in Christianity and it has become the universal effective principle of a new form of civilization. Among the primary shapes this right assumes are love, romanticism, the quest for eternal salvation of the individual; moral convictions and conscience; and finally . . . the principle of civil society. (PR, par. 124, remark)

The firstfruits of this spiritual change are the delegitimation of slavery and, thereupon, the development of an adequate concept of property, which depends on separating property from personhood:

The false, comparatively primitive phenomenon of slavery is one which befalls the mind when it is only at the level of consciousness. . . . It is only about a millennium and a half since the freedom of personality began through the spread of Christianity to blossom and gain recognition as a universal principle. . . . It was only yesterday, we might say, that the principle of the freedom of property became recognized in some places. This example from history may serve to rebuke the impatience of common opinion and to show the length of time mind takes for progress in self-consciousness. (PR, par. 57, remark, and par. 62, remark)

These developments allow Hegel to dissolve Aristotle’s asymmetrical recognition conditions between master and slave, and at the same time to portray a more differentiated, more articulated state than Aristotle could—a state in which unrestricted claims to mutual recognition will be honored and guaranteed, and in which individuals will be genuinely individuated by ceasing to be assimilated to generic biological kinds. Yet this will be a state that fulfills Aristotle’s own requirement of organicity (as identified by Hegel in the Lectures, and quoted above): “It is the perfect independence of these points, and therefore the greater independence of the whole, which constitutes the higher organic life. After the state received this principle into itself, the higher freedom could come forth.” 27

This remark illuminates Hegel’s claim that “Aristotle’s Politics contains points of view even now full of instruction for us, respecting the inward elements of a state.” 28 It was Aristotle—and not Plato—who applied his rich sense of organic self-differentiation, and of conceptual analysis, to politics. For this reason, “if we would be serious about philosophy, nothing would be more desirable than to lecture on Aristotle, for he is of all the ancients the most deserving.” 29 Aristotle’s general principle is that the higher the organism the greater can be the independence of the parts, for the whole is held together by way of more subtle and powerful psychic forces as we go up this scale. Hegel simply proposes to take this line of thinking further. He will transcend Aristotle by recognizing that culture is not merely nature, but spirit; not merely substance, but subject; not merely consciousness, but self-consciousness. It is by extending the scope of mutual recognition to all humans that Hegel proposes to deduce (in Kant’s sense) the modern state by way of a genetic-analytic account (in Aristotle’s sense). This account will retrace how humans have slowly come out of nature by ceasing to construe members of their own kind, and the relationships in which they stand to one another, in naturalistic terms. This is what the dialectic between lordship and bondage, especially as it is presented in the phenomenology section of the Encyclopaedia, is all about. Hegel reiterates the point in PR:

The dialectic of the concept and of the purely immediate consciousness of freedom brings about the fight for recognition and the relationship of master and slave. But to ensure that objective mind, which is the content of right, should no longer be apprehended merely subjectively, and consequently that man’s absolute unfitness for slavery should no longer be apprehended merely as an “ought to be”—this is something that doesn’t come home to our minds until we recognize that the Idea of freedom is genuinely actual only as a State. (PR, par. 57, remark)

This is certainly an Aristotelian sentiment. But the fulfillment of the Aristotelian extension of organic conceptions to social and political relations is at the same time their transcendence and cancelling by way of “the higher kind of organism” that lets individuality flourish in a more differentiated and articulated modern state. It is also a transcendence and cancelling of the modern theory of natural law and natural right, from
Hobbes to Rousseau and Kant, which, on its “empiricist” side, uses natural categories to encode the particularity of individuals, but generates, on its “rationalist” side, its own antithesis to protect the autonomy and intrinsic value of persons from naturalistic reductionism—thereupon falling as a whole into fierce antinomies and unmediated dualisms. Hegel’s political philosophy presents itself as a critique of all modern natural law theories—its first draft was the essay The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law of 1802—as well as a recovery of the ancient ideal of Sittlichkeit. But its vision of Sittlichkeit is predicated on highly differentiated and articulated social structures that foster individuality within a framework of spiritual recognition, rather than betray it by naturalistic reductions. It is civil society—the sphere of work, exchange, and legal rights—where this mutual recognition is crucially achieved, transforming family and state in the process, the former into a sphere of love rather than of production and the latter into a protector of rights rather than an instrument of violence. Hegel’s civil society thus opens up and transforms what to Aristotle was the simple relation between oikos and polis, from which what we would call civil society had been excluded as unnatural and corrosive.

III

It is important to see how clearly Marx recognizes that Hegel has made the dissolution of dualisms the test of his theory of the modern state. CHPR is in part a catalogue of such dualisms and antinomies in the PR itself, which, in Marx’s view, had been covered up by Hegel’s reversal of subject and predicate. The argumentative significance of this catalogue will escape any reader not fully aware of the relevant background in Hegel’s project and self-understanding as Aristotle’s successor. When it is viewed against this background, Marx’s catalogue constitutes a powerful challenge to Hegel. To see just how vulnerable Hegel is to Marx’s attack, however, we will first have to trace Hegel’s changing designs for a modern state, and his changing relations to his ancient models, from the beginning, roughly in 1802, until the publication of PR in 1821. The researches of Manfred Riedel have proved especially useful guides in this connection.

Hegel’s PR lies at the end of a long road in which Hegel began to rewrite Aristotle’s Politics under the interpretive self-understanding I have described in the previous section. Hegel recognized quickly that in his early writings in Berne and Frankfurt, such as “The Positivity of Christianity,” he had made a mistake in thinking he wanted to return, after the long cultural evolution of individualism, to the provincial collectivism of ancient civic life much cultivated by the revolutionary Rousseauans of his generation. By the time he moved to Jena in 1800 Hegel had begun to form a postrevolutionary program. He no longer envisioned a return to ancient “civil religion” and a total break with the fideistic Christian interregnum between ancient and modern rationalism, but saw instead a synthesis between aspects of ancient civic life and forms of individualism that, in Hegel’s view, had been first and irreversibly articulated by Christianity. The road begins in his essay The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, published in 1802–3 in the journal Hegel and Schelling wrote and edited in Jena. As Riedel remarks, the essay has an “antique cast,” in which “Hegel submits modern natural law theory to devastating criticism from the standpoint of classical politics.” But as Hegel reworks the material that appears here, first in the “System of Ethical Life” (1802–3) and then in the two versions of his Jena lectures on “The Philosophy of Spirit” (1803–4 and 1805–6), tendencies are already apparent that culminate in the crisis of The Phenomenology of Mind (1807), when Hegel makes what George Kelly calls his “retreat from Eleusis” and what Judith Shklar calls his “elegy for Hellas.” Hereafter, in the Nürnberg Propaedeutic, the Encyclopedia (1817), and finally in the Philosophy of Right (1821), the balance is fully tilted

1. toward (Protestant) Christianity and away from antiquity: the problem of “civil religion” is resolved in favor of what amounts to a Protestant-ethical view of the conceptual foundations of political legitimacy;
2. toward a positive evaluation of the moral and political significance of economic activity, and the importance and influence of political economy as a discursive genre, and away from Aristotle’s strictures against market economies;
3. toward a preference for encoding his deductions of sociopolitical institutions in the form of a rational psychology—a rewrite of Aristotle’s De Anima (which Hegel greatly admired, but thought underarticulated due to naturalistic biases) in a way that makes “will,” a concept unknown to naturalistic classical antiquity, the pivotal concept from which the categorical deduction of social-political institutions is to proceed in the PR;
4. toward a theoretical view of politics and away from the primacy and autonomy of Aristotelian practical reason both as the distinctive virtue of the ruling class and as the intellectual medium in which political theory itself is conducted. (From Riedel’s point of view, Hegel’s alleged “unity of theory and practice” is a subversion of the classical concept of practical philosophy. Thus Hegel, who had been the last great articulator of that tradition in his earlier works, now becomes its executioner.) This shows in PR as the attempt to deduce political institutions from the Idea of freedom in accord with categories taken from Hegel’s articulated ontology, the Logic. This primacy of theoria over praxis is a deeper way of talking about what Marx discerns in Hegel as the inversion of subject and predicate.
The key to Hegel’s Natural Law essay is his concept of “absolute ethical life.” Through confronting and overcoming the danger of death, “an individual proves his unity with the people.” A people (Volk), as a community (Gemeinwesen), achieves its identity vis-à-vis other peoples in and through the acts of these risk takers, who form a distinctive political class, the locus of both the origin and functional justification of the state. “The task which Aristotle assigns to this class,” writes Hegel, “is what the Greeks call politeuein, which means living in and with and for one’s people, leading a general life wholly devoted to the public interest—or else to the task of philosophizing.” From this perspective, Hegel establishes the significance and necessity of war: “In war there is free possibility that not only certain individual things but the whole of them, as life, will be annihilated and destroyed for the absolute itself or for the people. Therefore war preserves the ethical health of people in their indifference to specific institutions.”

The institutions toward which the absolute class is indifferent are what Hegel calls the “system of needs,” to which the “relative (conditioned) class” of artisans and merchants—and, more distantly, peasants and slaves—are relegated by their inability to put their biological lives at risk (as the warrior-politicians do), clinging to what Aristotle calls “mere life” (zen) in contrast to “living well” (eu zen) (Pol. 1.2.1252b29), and thus to what humans share with animals and plants. In this early version of the master–slave dialectic, “bourgeois life” is presented as a calm that “corrupts” a people, ratified by Stoic cosmopolitan ideals of “perpetual peace.” It doesn’t take much guessing to see who Hegel is arguing against here. More generally, he is arguing that modern natural law theory, from Hobbes to Kant, cannot justify the institutions that must obtain if a state is to be “organic.” It can justify only the limited state as a function required by a civil and, largely commercial, society. Ancient states are Hegel’s models precisely for this reason. From this perspective, he is concerned not only with the justification of war as a means of communal self-identification, but with the justification of practices and institutions of punishment. An adequate political theory must yield a rather enthusiastic account of both. With respect to punishment, Hegel wants a retributivist theory of punishment that doesn’t degenerate into revenge, and an educational theory that requires separation from the community, repentance, and reintegration. (Hegel continues to insist on this point in PR. Cf. the remark to paragraph 99.) Modern natural law theory cannot meet these requirements. This is because, as a genre, natural law theory represents the perspective of the relative class, focused—as Kant himself was—on what Hegel calls “Moralität” rather than Sittlichkeit. The problem of politics for the Hegel of 1802 is, then—as he thinks it was for Plato and Aristotle—to keep the system of needs subordinate to the viewpoint and actual power of the absolute class, “to prevent this system from becoming a self-constituting and independent power.” He sees the collapse of the hegemony of the absolute class as the worm in the apple of antiquity (and of the feudal aristocracy). He argues that Tragedy was a public enactment of this potential loss and was hence, like philosophy, an attempt to prevent that loss and to renew traditional Sittlichkeit in another, more reflective medium. Comedy is its opposite—a defense of bourgeois life against the empty pretenses of the corruptible military class, and hence a medium for undermining the state. Beaumarchais is a modern Aristophanes.

All of these themes are found in Politics, books VII–VIII, in which Aristotle portrays an ideal state that retains its ethical integrity precisely by disenfranchising the middle class and by using public art as its most powerful medium of education. I take Hegel to be reflecting on these texts as well as on Plato’s ideal-state constructs and on Montesquieu, Aristotle’s most insightful modern successor. Nonetheless, in characterizing and justifying the system of needs as a subordinate element of social and political life, Hegel—under the influence of Sir James Steuart—already recognizes in market economics an autonomous social sphere exhibiting an intelligible pattern that can be, and indeed has been, codified in the science of political economy. This is to depart from Aristotle, for whom the market, in contrast to the natural economy of the self-sufficient household, has an accidental, contingent, and disruptive character. Recognizing the intelligibility of the market sphere, and hence the relative autonomy of the burghers, gives Hegel a certain promise of being able to keep civil society subordinate by proper political management—rather than by repression, luck, or wishful thinking, as Plato and Aristotle tried to do—and hence of producing a political theory that rectifies what is unstable in the ancient paradigms. This tactic shows Hegel already moving toward a more articulated, differentiated version of an organic state (in which the stability of the whole is measured by its capacity to keep subordinate spheres have a relatively autonomous place in the whole), even if his work is still heavily tilted toward his ancient models. It also shows the root source of Hegel’s well-known interest in Scottish economics.

In the “System of Ethical Life,” the “First Philosophy of Spirit,” and the “Second Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit,” Hegel pushes further and further toward a more coherent and articulated organic theory by trying to show how market economy rationally emerges out of, and hence is justified by reference to, the dynamics of the natural economy of the household. To do this is explicitly to contest Aristotle’s theory of the market. By a prolific (indeed baroquely elaborated) use of Schelling’s philosophical machinery, Hegel explores this subject by way of the following categories: desire, need, sex; labor, tool, speech; master–slave, husband–wife, parent–child; surplus, exchange, property; contract, crime, punishment. By 1805 many of these categories are condensed around the triad of language, labor, and love. Jürgen Habermas has seen in this categorial triad an anticipation of Marx’s anthropology. His idea is that Hegel’s claim that laboring by the use of tools in a cooperative
setting mediated by speech on behalf of those one loves is constitutive, in the Kantian sense, of the objective world of the human being. In reality, however, what Habermas sees as proto-Marxist arises from Hegel’s hermeneutic reflection on the structuring concepts and themes of Aristotle’s theory of household economics in *Politics*, book I.44 This is most clearly evident in the “System of Ethical Life” (1802–3),47 which is little more than an extended—and brilliant—commentary on *Politics*, book I. For Aristotle, tool use and speech articulate a set of natural household relationships: man–woman, master–slave, parent–child. Surpluses due to natural inequalities among different households and regions may be exchanged, and money is legitimate as a convenient medium for redressing these natural inequalities. But this system of exchange ceases to be natural when production is engaged in for the sake of exchange—when, as Marx puts it at the outset of *Capital*, exchange changes from C–M–C (commodity–money–commodity) to M–C–M’ and then to M–M’. It is precisely here that Hegel departs from Aristotle. He lets the system of exchange develop freely toward M–C–M and M–M’. As a result the concept of property is removed, analytically and genetically, from Aristotle’s *oikos*—where it means little more than a collection of equipment, including slaves—and is relocated in civil society, where it becomes a medium of recognition precisely through its exchange. “Property enters reality,” Hegel writes, “through a plurality of persons involved in exchange and mutually recognizing each other.” The basic idea is that you can’t exchange unless you recognize your partner as owning what she is about to alienate. Dialectically considered, this means that the act of exchange itself constitutes the category of property. This is the crucial recognition that Aristotle had tried to suppress, and that Hobbes and Locke failed to understand as irreducibly intersubjective.

This analysis has other effects that soon begin to make themselves felt. First, when production and property are relocated beyond the household, the master–slave relation is delegitimated. As a result, the household—no longer anchored in productive relationships—becomes a sphere of love rather than force. Animal desire is transformed into romantic sex and care for children. This is how Aristotle’s theory of the *oikos* gets transformed into Hegel’s theory of the family. Hegel clearly presupposes a connection between the anti-slavery movement of his own time and the rise of this sentimental theory of the family. His approval of this vision of the family is still evident in PR. What he does not approve of is the tendency—once economic activities proper to civil society have been discriminated from the *oikos*—to push the categories proper to civil society back down into the family by seeing it as a small civil society. In this connection, Hegel constantly reiterates his claim that Kant’s theory of marriage, in which it consists in a civil contract for the mutual use of one another’s bodies, is disgusting.48 If this is an unavoidable consequence of modern natural law theory’s universalization of the categories of civil society, so much the worse for modern natural law theory.

Second, another effect of Hegel’s opening to modern economics is that for him the intelligibility of the market does not rest—as it does for the British political economists—on its self-equilibrating, quasi-Newtonian character, but on its educative role. Hegel never takes seriously the notion that an economy is a self-regulating machine, even after he started reading Adam Smith rather than James Steuart. But the complexity of exchange under conditions of an ever-expanding division of labor does lift the members of civil society above the narrow horizons of their own lives, allowing them *by the use of their minds* to grasp and to participate in a vast and complex system for the satisfaction of needs. This is Hegel’s main strategy for refuting Aristotle’s claim that rationality does not sufficiently interact with production and exchange for these to become a site for the development or expression of virtue, so that, for Aristotle, those who engage in production and exchange must either be or become vulgar.50

Third, this shift begins to force changes on Hegel’s own earlier theory of the state. The state, initially composed of a military aristocracy conceived as an “absolute class,” now acquires a new function. It must supervise civil society (*politeia* = polite = politeia) not only by limiting economic activity to the civil as opposed to the familial and the properly political sphere, but by compensating for the disequilibrium of market dynamics. Hegel had never doubted that a market economy requires political intervention to foster it and protect it as well as to provide remedies for its defects, such as cycles of boom and bust and extremes of wealth and poverty. As a result, Hegel’s old dichotomy between the conditioned and the absolute classes bifurcates, by the 1805–6 lectures, into four classes: free peasants (replacing slaves) and burghers, on the one hand; state officials or bureaucrats and military officers, on the other. Civil society, rooted in exchange, thus mediates between family and state. The elaborate mediation of these spheres is, in fact, a central task of PR. In PR, civil society is divided into a triad of classes. The agricultural class, including both lords and peasants, is rooted in the slow rhythms of nature and tradition, and so stands close to the family. The business class is free from those constraints, sending its children off into the big world to make their way afresh in each generation—but for that very reason requiring stabilization by a class of public officials. The problem of regulating and mediating civil society now leads Hegel to make the bureaucrats alone the “universal class,” the class whose function is to protect society as a whole. This is a far cry from the absolute class of the *Natural Law* essay.

Fourth and finally, the historicity of Hegel’s new account of the state becomes more apparent. Mutual recognition through labor and exchange represents a path out of the state of nature. This yields a decisive difference between antiquity and modernity. Time and cultural history, as well as the master–slave dialectic, now open out into a linear path, departing further from the “antique cast” of the ideal presented in the
Natural Law essay. With this development, Hegel prepares himself to make his farewell to the "beautiful" world of Greece. In the Phenomenology he does so. But as a consequence, Hegel's early decision to make his post-Kantian deduction of the state closely resemble Aristotle's genetic-analytic account of the natural development of the state from the household and village must also be severely modified. Cultural development is not a natural development in Aristotle's sense. It requires categorical deduction from Hegel's abstract rational psychology and ontology. The irony is that Hegel's deduction of the state in PR, which is motivated by his widened sense of historicity, takes on a markedly nonhistorical form—a form that obscures its own origins in a quasi-Aristotelian genetic-analytic narrative of lived social experience, which initially differed from its model only by including economic development within the pattern of natural development.

This idea of a deduction of social and political institutions requires comment. In the "Second Jena Lectures," the phenomenology of lived experience out of which the categories of family, civil society, and state are elicited coexists uneasily with a different framework in which the justification of social institutions and concepts is predicated on a dialectical deduction of psychological categories—initially, intelligence and will. By the time of the Nürnberg Propaedeutic, the psychological model of categorical deduction has pretty well triumphed over the phenomenological. Thus in both Encyclopædia and in PR, Hegel develops the concept of the state out of the concept of the will.45 For spirit, which is the proper sphere of intersubjective cultural practices and institutions, is freedom, and freedom is the exercise of will—precisely because it is the opposite of nature and emerges by bursting nature's bounds (PR, pars. 4–32). Aristotle and the Greeks knew nothing of this pure, disembodied, nonliberative concept of free choice, of *liberum arbitrium*—what Hegel, in the "Second Jena Lectures," describes as follows: "Volition simply wills, that is, wants to posit itself, make itself as itself its own object. It is free, but this freedom is the empty, the formal, the evil."52

The first phenomenological descriptions of willing in these terms are found in Augustine's Confessions, which is a commentary on St. Paul’s psychic adventures and an explicit rejection of classical culture. Hegel's new attention to this phenomenon—his project of justifying institutions to the extent that they provide conditions in which willing as such can incarnate itself—testifies to his tilt toward Protestant Christianity (itself a meditation on Augustinian and Pauline psychology) and away from Hellenic corporateness. In the "Second Jena Lectures," Hegel begins with will, and almost immediately tries to deduce the old categories of desire, labor, activity, and recognition out of it as providing conditions in which will can embody itself and achieve its ends. The road is considerably longer in PR, and the old themes are hidden much deeper, but the task is still there—with an additional dialectical overlay in the deduction of the psychological categories of the "Second Jena Lectures" and the Propaedeutic from the ontology of the Logic.53

PR begins in earnest when Hegel writes, "The basis of right is, in general, mind; but its precise place and point of origin is the will. The will is free, so that freedom is both the substance of right and its goal; while the system of right is the realm of freedom made actual" (PR, par. 4). PR proceeds by imagining a world of abstract right, in this sense, and then wondering what concrete institutional conditions have to hold if rights are to be recognized and realized. The procedure is no longer phenomenological or genetic-analytic, but more nearly Kantian: a transcendental analysis of the conditions under which the application of a given concept (freedom) can be justified. Hegel goes on to show that abstract right requires internalized morality as a condition of its stable instantiation. The ground from Hobbes to Kant is brilliantly retraced, particularly in development of the concept of private property as a phenomenon of mutual recognition in culture rather than seizing things in the state of nature. But morality, in Kant's sense, cannot be acquired except through a criminal break with the law, and then by a process of repentance and reintegration—an old theme, now recast in an Augustinian–Lutheran, more than a Sophoclean, way. This is a signal that Hegel's early sympathy for ancient corporate civil religion has been replaced by Protestant Christianity as the civil religion of a fully articulated state. It is precisely at this point, however, that Hegel's old reworking of Aristotle reenters in a novel and transformed way. The good will must be reintegrated after crime by way of social feedback—what the Greeks called *ethismos* and Hegel had earlier called *Sittlichkeit*. Morality—and hence abstract right and free will—cannot, then, be actualized unless a thick cultural world of concrete mores, practices, and traditions stabilizes it, interprets it, prevents it from remaining in or falling into self-deception, hypocrisy, false and empty attempts at universalizing one's maxims, and all the other delusions that, even more than other members of his generation, Hegel came to see in the French Revolution (PR, pars. 139–56). Community life is thus essential even to the moral point of view strictly considered. The chief discursive medium of this reintegration, moreover, is religion, whose (functional) rationality is thus assured and whose importance to society is recognized by its establishment as a civic practice (PR, par. 270, remark).

The problem of realizing the world of abstract right by appealing to concrete social practices is made particularly severe because the actual sphere of activity of the possessor of rights is civil society. Activity in that sphere presupposes internalized morality, in accord with which one recognizes—as a good burgher—the rights and duties of others as well as one's own. But civil society, in its competitiveness and mutual exclusion, tends to undermine the very sense of mutual recognition and mutual constraint through which civil society itself coherently functions. In civil society, "particularity is given free rein in every direction to satisfy
needs, accidental caprices and subjective desires, and thereby destroys itself and its substantive concept” (PR, par. 185). Since recognition is achieved by way of property ownership, the cost of failing in capitalist competition is alienation and nonrecognition as a person—perhaps a greater threat than the merely physical inconveniences that the unsuccessful possessive egoist of Hobbes and Locke might suffer. In this connection, Hegel provides an account of the fate of the poor, and of the state’s only partially successful attempts to alleviate it (poor relief, work, colonization)—an account that provides the permanent background of Marx’s subsequent investigations (PR, pars. 241–49). All these attempts to buffer the atomizing tendencies of civil society depend most deeply, however, on the stable, noncompetitive sense of self and values that is fostered within the loving family (as Hegel had earlier analyzed it) and on a host of mediating social and political institutions (including religious practices and corporate membership), most of which are inherited from the past. These induce group identities and foster charity. They also prepare burghers to be citizens. It is, in fact, as a further expression of the other-regarding, corporate mentality that is supposed to arise in these mediating institutions, and as a coordinator of domestic agencies of well-being, that the state is now rationally justified. The state must be distinguished from civil society and must transcend it, because it is to constrain and thus perfect civil society by stabilizing the conditions for it, especially as compensating for the side effects of competition (PR, par. 249). This is a very important aspect of Hegel’s teleological justification of the state in the passage from which Marx begins his commentary (PR, par. 261). In this role the state appears as a condition that makes civil society itself possible, or rather actual, just as morality made abstract right actual at an earlier phase of the argument. Because these relations are transitive, moreover, Hegel concludes that the conditions for realizing abstract right—for actualizing it, in the Aristotelian sense (entelechia, energia)—require a state that integrates much of the only superficially irrational past that the Enlightenment had tried to reject. In this brilliant deduction, the state’s capacity to define the boundaries of the community in relation to other states by war and the threat of war, which was prominent in the early Hegel, takes a backseat.

To this end, even within the world of the market Hegel now insists that each person be a member of a corporate guild (PR, pars. 250–56). He further demands that representation in the legislature be not as a purely private person, but through one’s corporate identity, that is, by way of estates: agrarian, business, and bureaucracy (PR, pars. 301–4). Peasants and lords (in times of war, cannon fodder and military officers, respectively) are to be represented by the same people, as are employers and employees—thus blunting class conflict. Owners of entailed landed property sit by right in an upper house. This arrangement reinforces the political power of the agrarian estate. Close to nature, rooted in the family and tradition, the agricultural estate provides a political force of conservationism, operating like a flywheel to damp down the rapid “fluctuations” of the business estate, which is driven by short-term self-interest (PR, pars. 305–7). The middle class is further constrained by the fact that it must share power in the lower house with the bureaucracy—the “universal” class that can be counted on to know what is good for the state (PR, pars. 308–13). Finally, in order to ensure that the state does not regress into a mere bargaining agency for a purely civil society, Hegel inserts an inherited monarchy presiding over a group of ministries and the military. The monarch does not deliberate, as the legislature does; nor does he execute, as do the bureaucracy and the military. Rather, in his freedom to express his will by what looks like (and may well be) caprice, the monarch is a symbol that Hegel’s fully articulated state recognizes and prizes the freedom, individuality, rights, and will of its citizens (PR, pars. 279–81).

Hegel admits (referring to the Restoration) that “one of the results of more recent history is the development of a monarchical constitution with succession to the throne firmly fixed on hereditary principles in accord with primogeniture,” and that “with this development monarchy has been brought back to the patriarchal principle in which it had its historical origin.” But, he argues, “the determinate character [of the monarchy] is now higher, because the monarch is the absolute apex of an organically developed state” (PR, par. 286, remark). The monarch, Hegel argues, conceived as pure liberum arbitrium, is an emblem of the claim that Hegel’s “organic state” is so well articulated that it can allow the freedom and individuality of each person to flourish without threatening the unity and solidarity of the whole. The monarchy is a symbol that individualism can be accommodated at the heart of the system. That, we recall, is precisely what Aristotle could not do, even when he invoked his paibasileus to turn back the tide of economism and individualism. Aristotle’s naturalistic conception of organic unity—rooted in his doctrine of slavery—could not rationalize and absorb the element of caprice, contingency, accident that, according to Hegel, Aristotle already recognized as existent in real states and their leaders. Hegel has now proved to his own satisfaction, however, that his nonnaturalistic conception of an organic state is solid enough to allow such contingencies to express themselves at the heart of the state itself.

In this new portrait of a modern state, Hegel has certainly come a long way from his earlier attempts to insert a modern economy into an ancient polis. In doing so, however, Hegel has not abandoned his conception of himself as a new Aristotle. Rather, he has gradually reconceived the task of the new Aristotle as synthesizing the Christian world of individual freedom with the corporate world of ancient Greece by way of a more complex organicism. An appropriate challenge to this idea is to test whether it is as organic as it looks. This is precisely the challenge Marx takes up in CHPR.

The thrust of Marx’s argument in CHPR is that the socioeconomic
dynamics of an actual modern civil society are too strong to sustain the Pollyannaish picture of resolved social and political harmony that Hegel wants to paint. Marx thinks that in the Middle Ages the social—the corporate life to which Hegel wistfully harks back—was, or at least took the place of, the political, in contrast to ancient Greek poleis where “the res publica was the real private concern, the real content of the citizen” (32). But, Marx argues, the medieval socialization of the political (in guilds and other forms of social corporatism) was actually the antithesis of the political. Because of its universalization of dependency, it was a “democracy of unfreedom” (32). The modern state, in rejecting dependency, presents itself as a rebirth of political freedom. But the economic institutions of civil society to which the modern state gives legal and political form actually eat away the substance of the communal interests they are ostensibly designed to foster and protect, by the unleashing of competitive egoism. Marx thinks that Hegel correctly sees civil society as a Hobbesian bellum omnium contra omnes (42). It is understandable that Hegel would seek ways to blunt this battle of wills by locking into place a range of premodern institutions and practices. But rather than constraining the war of all against all, Marx argues, these institutions and practices are themselves transformed by it into even more powerful instruments of the self-interest of the old ruling classes, notably of the landed aristocracy, as well as of a new class: the propertied bourgeoisie. Premodern claims to property, which depended on tradition and on tacit promises of actual social benefit to dependent persons, are now transformed by the pseudorationalizing legal institutions of the modern state into pure private property, and hence into legitimations and expressions of pure egoistic acquisition stripped of all social responsibility. This feature of the modern state is all the more effective because it is hidden under the mystique of premodern corporatism, especially in Hegel’s account. The modern state, which prides itself on freeing humans from premodern dependency by ensuring their abstract freedom in an abstract political state, is thus in reality a state even more hostile to the “real life of the people” (33) than the old paternalistic regime. It simply cannot function as an expression of the citizen’s identity as a real person, with real material interests, and hence as a legitimate agency of universal mutual recognition.

This is a powerful line of reasoning. It seems at first sight somewhat odd, however, that Marx would concede that Hegel’s state is in fact the very model of a modern state. Hegel’s state continues to favor the interests of the landed classes by reducing peasants to quasi-animal status, by protecting primogeniture and entailed property, by restricting the franchise, and so forth. The private property of burghers is assimilated to and justified on the model of landed entitlement. By “private property” the Marx of CHPR means, paradigmatically, entailed and inherited property and, more remotely, property whose owners’ claims are mutually recognized, negotiated, constrained, and stabilized by craft corporations (guilds) and their analogues in every sphere of civil society. Marx even claims that “at its peak private property appears as inalienable landed property” (107). Hegel’s state thus operates against the interests of marginal artisans, workers, and peasants in what was, after all, still a largely premodern society. Germany, Marx seems to imply, isn’t yet bourgeois enough—a theme that, as a crusading newspaperman in the Rhineland, he had already got himself considerably worked up about. Marx appears as the hero of the little people and as a defender of petty bourgeois Jacobinism. Would not a truly modern state serve these little people by actually destroying premodern forms of property that oppose their interests? Would not such a state give a bigger, rather than a diminished, role to the market?

Marx certainly does anticipate a modern state that is the heir of ancient participatory democracy, in which “the political state appears as the genuine expression of the material state,” that is, of the real, concrete social life of all the citizens (32). Direct democracy—he argues—rather than Hegel’s elaborate pastiche, is indeed the essence (Wesen) of the state precisely because it is not something separable from the lives of the citizens (30–31). Marx is much incensed at Hegel’s contemptuous dismissal of the democratic claim that “every single person should share in deliberating and deciding on political matters of general concern” on the ground that the nose counting involved in this is “superficial thinking which clings to mere abstractions” (PR, par. 308; CHPR, 115–20). Marx thinks that this way of posing the question is itself based on abstracting political form from civil reality. Marx wants to politicize the civil. The Marx of 1843 still believes, that is to say, in the state rather than in its withering away—albeit a radically democratic, and not a merely representational, legal state (Rechtstaat). He believes quite literally in a social democracy, in a synthesis of medieval socialism and ancient participatory democracy. He may even believe (as Jacobins tended to) in widely redistributed forms of private property in which the independent artisan owns his own means of production and the peasant owns his own land, in accord with distributional principles adopted and enforced by the state rather than by way of prepolitical entitlements. Nonetheless, Marx thinks that the state Hegel portrays, when stripped of the mystified justifications in which it falsely appears as the essence of the concept of State, is in fact a good—if perspectivally skewed—representation of the tension-ridden modern state as it has actually come to exist. The “actually existing state” looks this way for Marx primarily because of Hegel’s shrewd recognition—in contrast to British theories of civil society—that commercial societies are not self-equilibrating, Newtonian systems in which private vices produce public virtues. Freeing up more opportunities for production, exchange, and consumption will not create and spread wealth ever more widely and deeply. On the contrary, it will produce increasingly lopsided accumulations of wealth protected by entailment, inheritance, monopolization, and other devises for amassing capital. This
is why Marx defines private property the way he does. Thus a modern economic system, for both Hegel and Marx, needs political constraint. Marx, however, thinks it needs much more of it than Hegel does, because for Marx accumulating wealth also means accumulating political power to protect one’s wealth. What Marx is doubting, then, is precisely whether Hegel’s recipes for constraining commercial society, by retaining bits and pieces of premodernity, will actually do the trick. The appearance of a pleasing balance between premodern and modern institutions doesn’t mean that balance is what is actually going on. A state may appear to have tamed the quasi-feudal institutions that modernity opposed, by turning them into buffers against the atomizing and fragmenting tendencies of civil society; but in reality it will convert these revered institutions into ideological props for a hegemonic and all-too-modern civil society in which narrow self-interest penetrates every sphere of life, concentrating wealth within family and corporate systems (as nineteenth-century realistic novelists have all too vividly shown). Hegel serves this purpose by giving it philosophical form.

Marx is then left with the problem of how to turn this situation into one that actually realizes the “essence” of the concept state as he understands it. No invisible hand can achieve this. An unconstrained economy is an economy that all the more quickly shifts power to those who already have it. The political mechanisms that appear to blunt or reverse this process actually foster it. CHPR thus vividly poses a problem to which it offers no obvious solution. In the introduction, however, we begin to hear about the extreme Left-Jacobin or communist theory that Marx soon actually encountered in France. The theory began as far back as Babeuf’s Conspiracy. It was designed to explain the defeat of “the people” in the Great French Revolution. It is a theory according to which all forms of private property necessarily render all forms of state a dependent variable of ownership relations, with the result that the real social community (Gemeinwesen) can be preserved only by way of a class dictatorship that destroys both the state and private property. The atomism and divisiveness among people, which has been induced both by private property and the formal state, will give way to fellow feeling, to what Marx soon calls the “species being” proper to naturally political animals. For Marx to become a communist meant for him to convert to this thesis. In 1843 he had not yet done so. But the reader of CHPR begins to see how Marx gets from that work to the introduction, then to the other writings of the 1843–44 period, and eventually to the full-blown theory he describes in 1859. The aporias of CHPR throw a special light on the essay “On the Jewish Question,” written at the very end of 1843, where Marx argues, with particular attention to the United States, that the continued existence of a state and of religious ideology in a country that appears to have undergone a genuine democratic revolution signifies that in fact inequality in private property still constrains and distorts social democracy.

In turning to the argumentative strategy of Marx’s CHPR, an initial remark is in order. It is easy to make altogether too much of Marx’s Feuerbachian techniques of analysis. The reversal of subject and predicate is not, as such, much of a criticism of Hegel. While Marx would doubtless deny that Hegel’s emanationist deductivism is a mere façon de parler, his criticism is not that Hegel is a neo-Platonist. Rather, Hegel’s grammar suggests—at least to anyone as hermeneutically suspicious as Marx—that to see what is actually going on in PR the critic must begin by stripping off the dreamlike deductive film from Hegel’s discourse. Marx devotes the first parts of his critique to doing this. When the appearance of rational deductivism is stripped away, Hegel’s claims can be given their proper weight. Some apparently profound remarks are revealed as tautologies or truisms. Others are shown to be self-contradictory. But what removing the deductivist appearance, and hence the clanking machinery of the Logic, substantively does is to expose to view the next discursive level down in the PR: the psychological. It is at this level that much of Marx’s most effective criticism is conducted.

I have claimed above, with Riedel, that Hegel increasingly relied on psychological categories as the medium in which his deduction of social and political institutions was to be carried out. In this connection Hegel’s desire to be a new Aristotle shifts from rewriting the Politics to rewriting the De Anima. What one finds in the parts of the Encyclopedia that are on Subjective Mind is, in fact, an Aristotelian conception of what a psychological capacity is, together with a vastly expanded and much more subtle range of psychological differentiations and categories than in the De Anima, as well as an interpretive assumption to the effect that an inadequately articulated set of psychological categories will manifest itself in the form of experiential tensions, ontological dualisms, and epistemological antinomies, all of which are variously correlated with constraints on recognition and self-recognition in social reality. Aristotle had situated soul or psyche entirely within a functionalist, biological framework. Animals have functionally interlinked sets of capacities—sensation, desire, imagination, locomotion—that allow them more freedom of action than plants. Similarly, the rational souls of humans give them more autonomy from environmental determinism than animals. Hegel agrees. He thinks, however, that Aristotle’s naturalism blinds him to the inner, experiential, subjective side of psychic capacities and to the potential that all humans have to develop out of nature into culture. His alternative account implies a different conception of the scala naturae, in which increasingly deep psychic capacities are not only correlated with increased diversity and independence of physical parts, but play a causal role in organic differentiation—as if a more geistlich center can generate a deeper, more subtle, more differentiated, degree of organic unity. This Naturphilosophie—which gave rise to the now largely discredited tradition in German biology that correlates ontogeny with phylogeny, as well as a more mediated and psychologized conception of hylomorphic composition between body and soul—is also supposed by Hegel to map onto
sociopolitical development. Thus for Marx to show that the allegedly complex and differentiated kind of hylomorphic composition that Hegel portrays in PR is in fact riddled with very marked forms of psychophysical as well as sociopolitical dualism is to challenge Hegel’s main thesis by reference to its most cherished criteria for success.

Marx, it should be noted, does not question Hegel’s organic conception of the state. On the contrary, “it was a great step forward,” he writes, for Hegel “to have seen that the political state is an organism, and that its various powers are...the product of living, rational division of function” (66). But neither the sociopolitical structure nor the direct experience of those living in it is as organic as Hegel portrays it. This theme is particularly pronounced in Marx’s criticism of Hegel’s monarchy. The Hegelian monarch is presented as a pure will, a liberum arbitrium—so much so that his decisions and actions are severed from the deliberative and executive functions assigned to other parts of the government. The monarch’s arbitrary actions are, and are intended to appear as, expressions and symbols of the “caprice” and “free rein of particularity” that Hegel sees in civil society. It is just these features, it will be recalled, that Hegel thinks Aristotle could not comprehend as rational. By embracing arbitrariness at the very heart of a state, Hegel is asserting that these expressions of pure individualism, both on the part of the monarch and in the myriad self-regarding acts of individual members of civil society, cannot threaten a state as highly articulated and mediated as the one he portrays. “Hegel takes pleasure,” Marx comments acerbically, “in having demonstrated the irrational to be absolutely rational” (33).

But Marx also notices that this conception of the pure will is correlated with a particular conception of the body—particularly the hereditary monarch’s body:

Hegel thinks he has proven that the subjectivity of the state...is essentially characterized as “this individual,” in abstraction from all his other characteristics, and that this individual is raised to the dignity of the monarch in an immediate, natural fashion, that is, through his birth in the course of nature. Sovereignty, monarchical dignity would thus be born. The body of the monarch determines his dignity. Thus at the highest point of the state bare Physis rather than reason would be the determining factor. Birth would determine the quality of the monarch as it determines the quality of cattle. . . . The two moments are: the contingency of the will, caprice; and the contingency of nature, birth. Thus His Majesty Contingency. Contingency is the actual unity of the state. (33–34)

This is a conception of the mind–body relation, Marx implies, that is more Cartesian than Aristotelian. For Aristotle, hylomorphic composition means that the body becomes the expressive medium for the distinctive life-activities of the organism. The body is vivified in terms of intentionally construed life activities, the sophistication of which is correlated to degrees of ontogenetic articulation. For the human being in particular—who is a political animal by nature—these life activities are essentially tied to common activities in cooperation with others (Pol. I.2, 1253a3, 7–9; History of Animals I.1, 488a8–13). With his rejection of Aristotle’s naturalism as a constraint on mutual recognition, Hegel seems to promise to make the body even more expressive of shared life activities than Aristotle had. In reality, however, Hegel moves in precisely the opposite direction, at least according to Marx. The relation between body and soul is not, in the first instance, constitutive but possessive: the soul has or owns a body in which it resides as a pure, disembodied capacity for arbitrary choice. But a body in which a disembodied mind resides in this way is not a body that expresses a person’s distinctive life-activities, engagements, goals, social relationships, or way of life. It is merely a body that is born, grows, and replicates. It is a body that, far from expressing the rationality distinctive to the “species life” of human beings, is limited to the lowest level of Aristotelian psychic function, which humans indifferently share with animals and even plants—what Aristotle calls the “nutritive-reproductive” or threptic soul, and what Marx calls here “bare Physis.” Hegel’s analysis thus construes the body not as a visible and interpersonally defined expression of the activities of the soul (as Aristotle would have it), but as a merely growing and reproducing entity tied to a disembodied and irrational will—a simple biological nexus between two generations.

Marx goes on to suggest that this dualistic conception of the monarch is a fitting symbol of institutions for accumulating and protecting private property. Primogeniture, entailment, inheritance of family capital, restriction of access to trades to the children of members of guilds, private control over the inheritance of public offices—all these institutions and practices rest on accidents of birth, on mere biological contingencies, on the reductionistic materialism that is inseparable from the linkage of property relations to particular bodies and accidents of birth. The institutions and practices symbolized by the monarchy thus refer generally to sociopolitical arrangements in which there exist entitlements to possessions that can be passed on through mere biological transmission rather than through objective, shared, publicly made and renewed agreements about distribution—agreements constructed by the speech or rationality (logos) that is supposedly, for Aristotelians of all stripes, the distinctive mark of human beings. The political legitimation of private acquisitiveness is, for Marx, the social analogue of the merely reproductive soul.

What is clearest in the monarch radiates through the entire society, manifesting itself in the dualism that every person must experience between his or her ostensibly public-minded institutional social role and the egoism of each person’s secret designs. The burgher in each person is related to the citizen as the monarch’s body is related to his will. One’s body is the locus of a series of spiritually unexpressive drives to acquire and pass on property that are in no genuine way connected to one’s
ostensible role as corporate member or citizen. One’s mind, hidden from public view, is a theater in which Balzacian schemes for acquisition compulsively flourish. The citizen in the “actually existent modern state” thus lives an ideal life in a wholly factitious political, legal, and mental realm that is disconnected from his or her real-life activities. He or she is a practicing dissembler. Marx thus argues that the bureaucrat—a member of the “universal class” charged with protecting the good of society as a whole—is, as a member of civil society, a mere careerist focused on “the pursuit of higher posts, the building of a career” (47). In the upper house, representatives of the landed class may think of themselves as sage defenders of the traditional order—descendants of the warrior-aristocrats of yore. In reality their political activities are designed to protect their holdings from the threats that market forces (and their own dependents) might put on it, and to acquire more. In the legislature, representatives of corporations may like to think of themselves—and like to have others think of them—as looking after the interests of fellow craftspersons, traders, or bankers. In reality they use the political system to protect their private interests and to undermine those of others. In every case, Marx thinks, there is an experiential dualism that belies Hegel’s portrait of resolved harmonies. Marx’s sense of what is wrong with Hegel is not restricted, therefore—as Pelczynski and Ilting would have it—to an unjustified, perhaps last-minute, insertion of a conservative monarchical doctrine into a political theory whose deeper roots lie in Hegel’s former republican self. Marx thinks that the doctrine of the monarchy is in fact systematically related to the whole confection. The monarchy is a fitting symbol of sociopolitical structure in which formal political life is as divorced from the actual material life of its citizens as pure unembodied will is divorced from an unexpressive body. What creates the gap between the two is the fact that material life is organized by way of the absolutization of private property in civil society.

Marx thinks that Hegel himself should have seen this because of his own professed commitment to what he might refer to as social hylo-morphism. This is a way of putting Marx’s point that he is giving an internal critique of Hegel’s theory—a critique that doesn’t shoot from the outside, but carefully thinks through the implications of Hegel’s own principles. Alternatively, one might reasonably claim that Marx has done nothing of the sort, that he has instead given what is now called a “strong misreading” of Hegel’s theory, which leads him to twist Hegel’s sense and intentions in the way Ilting claims. Without going this far, I do think that on at least one essential point Hegel and Marx can be shown to begin from irreconcilably different principles and must, therefore, reach irreconcilably different conclusions. They agree that a state should be organically construed and closely interrelated to society’s actual life. But they differ wildly about what a dialectically mediated, organic conception of the state looks like—and indeed on what, more generally, will count as a successful dialectical mediation. On this point a great deal that is relevant to evaluating the merits of their competing accounts hinges.

For Hegel the contradictions and discomforts of social and political life are not to be resolved by creating a world in which each individual’s experience is or even should be full of harmony. Hegel does not have to hold, on pain of self-contradiction, that the egocentric self-seeking of the business class will disappear when that class is firmly fixed between civil servants and landed gentry. He does not even have to hold that all bureaucrats must be genuinely public spirited. All he has to hold is that the system itself is a stable distribution of tensions across a supple self-maintaining whole. This sort of dialectical resolution can appear, of course, only from a distance—precisely the distance that Hegel’s civil servants and state professors are to attain by meditating on “the Concept.” That theoretical vantage is the point where theory and practice meet. From this height the intelligentsia will not tell people what to do (after the fashion of Platonic philosopher-kings or Enlightenment social engineers), but will simply express confidence that the social and political system is, or is evolving toward, a capacity to do things as well as they can be done, and that the last thing needed is the intervention—as distinct from the blessing—of philosophers. Thus, Hegel resolves the tension in Aristotle between the theoretical and practical perspectives by extending the theoretical view to aspects of experience that Aristotle had accorded to autonomous practical reason. For Hegel, this was mere makeshift pragmatism, destined to give way to a more holistic and coherent view when social reality matured.

For Marx this theoretical perspective is just the problem. From a perspective closer to the lived experience of the individual agent—that is, from a perspective of praxis and its intimate relation to the poïēsis of people who make a living—Hegel’s dialectical resolution looks like compromise, hypocrisy, ideological cover-up. Marx begins from Aristotle’s recognition that humans are through and through political animals, that all their life-functions are carried out in and through their relationships with their fellows. Many years later he put this point eloquently in the Grundrisse (1858) when he remarked that “Man is a zoon politikon” precisely in the sense that “he individuates himself in and through his relationships with his fellows.” From the beginning, this is what Marx meant by human “species life.” Marx is working from Aristotle’s definition of political animal in History of Animals: “Political are those [animals] for whom something one and common comes to be the work of all” through the social division of labor (488a8—10). Marx, like Aristotle, contrasts political to herding. This is the implication of his disappointed definition of German society as full of “social [herding] but not political animals” in his letter to Ruge. It is also why he takes great pains in the Theses on Feuerbach (1845) to say that the human essence is not “a dumb generic universality that naturally unites many individuals” by subsuming them as indistinguishable instances of undifferentiated univ-
ersals or class-inclusion terms (thesis 6). Dumb instantiation of a common essence is all that can be seen, of course, from a theoretical point of view. That is the point of view from which Hegel (and Feuerbach too, as Marx now comes to see) falsely claims to be able to grasp social reality. It is only from a participatory, praxical point of view that the conditions of individuation implicit in the idea that humans are essentially political animals can be either seen or attained. The fact that Aristotle acceded autonomy to the praxical point of view was thus more correct than Hegel's phony synthesis of theory and practice. Aristotle's mistake was to sever praxis from poiesis in order to block reciprocity, recognition, and mutual constitution as persons from reaching across the gap between citizens and slaves, and citizens and free workers. That is what drives Aristotle's own regression to theoria. Aristotle's difficulties, therefore, have been not alleviated or mitigated or dialectically synthesized by Hegel, but made worse. The imposition of pure private property separates all the members of society from one another—and not just some—in a way that deprives all of them of the conditions for their individuation and flourishing as persons, that is, as "political animals." What looks to Hegel like a universal medium of recognition is instead a condition of universal alienation, separation, and personal impoverishment. Hegel's replacement of social discourse and praxis as the privileged medium in which these matters are to be situated with abstract psychological and logical categories and deductions is a telling witness to his conception of human nature as apolitical and of the human essence as "dumb generic unity" under which instances are subsumed.

Is there any way to resolve this conflict in favor of Hegel or Marx? My own view is that this question can no longer even be asked. Assuming that Aristotle is right in saying that we deliberate only about what is open to us to do (Nicomachean Ethics III.3.1112b31–34), history has deprived both Hegel and Marx of a place in our deliberations through a process alternately tragic and comic. They have receded as a yoked pair to a place where they have joined the pantheon of other valuable textual instruments of our deeper reflections about the conditions in which we live, move, and have our being. They are as inextricably hermeneutically tied to each other now as Plato is to Aristotle. In that joint role, they can inform us that the organic conception of state and society is not nearly so silly as the liberal tradition makes it out to be. Much of the structure and dynamics of our own societies can profitably be discerned and explicated in the long and glowing light of the Aristotelian tradition to which they both clearly belong.

Notes

1. References to CHPR, and its Introduction, are to page numbers of the translation by Joseph O'Malley: Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right" (Cambridge; England: Cambridge University Press, 1970). CHPR itself was not published until 1927. References to G. W. F. Hegel's Philosophy of Right (PR) are to T. M. Knox's translation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).


5. K. A. Ilting, "Hegel on the State and Marx's Early Critique," in Pelczynski, State and Civil Society, pp. 98–100. Pelczynski also makes this claim repeatedly.


7. Ibid., p. 105.

8. Ibid., p. 109.

9. This is the force of Ilting's argument that Hegel distorted his own views in order to conform to changing political winds that were blowing strongly to the right on the eve of the publication of PR. Ibid., pp. 98–104. Cf. also his "The Structure of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Pelczynski, Hegel's Political Philosophy, pp. 90–110.


11. Manfred Riedel, Between Tradition and Revolution: The Hegelian Trans-

12. A trace of that idea can be found in Marx’s annotated translation of De Anima II, in Marx—Engels, Historisch-Kritisich Gesamtausgabe (MEGA) IV (1) (Berlin, 1927– ). Marx’s proposal was to refute Trendelenberg’s interpretation of Aristotle, which he regarded as “merely formal,” whereas Aristotle was (as Hegel has insisted) “dialectical.” The incident is discussed by David McLellan, Karl Marx: His Life and Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 39.

13. I have explicated the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 in these terms in “Aristotle’s De Anima and Marx’s Theory of Man,” Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal, New School for Social Research, 8, 1/2 (1982), pp. 133–87.


17. Hegel writes, “The books of Aristotle on the soul . . . are . . . still by far the most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work of philosophical value on this topic. The main aim of a philosophy of mind can only be . . . to reinterpret the lesson of these Aristotelian books.” G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller, in the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, part III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 3.

18. Riedel, Between Tradition and Revolution, p. 9, n. 10.

19. Textual references to Aristotle are to pages of Bekker’s edition (Berlin, 1831), which are still standard for all editions and translations.


21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. Doubtless Napoleon was as much on Hegel’s mind as Alexander was on Aristotle’s.

23. Ibid., p. 229.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid, p. 134. In this connection, I am arguing strongly against Pelczynski’s claim that “Hegel’s primary source of inspiration and model of political community . . . is to be found in Plato.” See: Z. A. Pelczynski, “Political Community and Individual Freedom,” in Pelczynski, State and Civil Society, p. 57. Pelczynski claims that “Hegel respected Aristotle as a metaphysician and in several ways was deeply influenced by him, but he thought poorly of his practical philosophy. In Hegel’s Lectures in the History of Philosophy, Hegel gives Plato’s Republic twenty-six pages of print, compared with less than four that he gives to Aristotle’s Politics. He regarded Aristotle’s main political work as a common sense but pedantic and largely empirical treatise, while the Republic seemed to him a work of true genius and the most profound theory expressing the essence of Greek society and culture” (PR, preface). Pelczynski, p. 57. No one who reads what Hegel says about Aristotle in these Lectures can agree with these remarks. Of Aristotle’s philosophy as a whole, Hegel says, “The further we go into its details the more interesting it becomes.” Hegel, Lectures, vol. II, p. 224. “He was one of the richest and deepest of all scientific geniuses that have as yet appeared—a man whose like no later age has ever yet produced” (p. 117). Hegel nowhere invidiously contrasts Aristotle’s practical with his theoretical philosophy in the way Pelczynski suggests. The argument from relative page count is blunted by the following remark: “Because we possess so large a number of his works the extent of the material at hand is proportionately greater; unfortunately I cannot give to Aristotle the amount of attention he deserves” (p. 117). Nor can a single passage be found in which Aristotle’s political philosophy is said to be merely commonsensical, pedantic, or empirical. Pelczynski fails to see that when Hegel points out Aristotle’s regressions to empiricism, particularity, and pragmatism, he is not dismissing his political philosophy, but showing that Aristotle cannot solve problems that he himself poses. Central among these is finding a place for real and unrestricted individuality within the social and political order (p. 228). He says that Plato has the same problem (p. 229). Nor does the preface to PL bear out Pelczynski’s contention that Hegel prefers Plato. Hegel thinks that Plato and Aristotle understand the Greek polis in generally the same way. In the preface he says that Plato’s genius was to have recognized the problem of its ethical corruption in a particularly compelling and pathos-laden way (PR, par. 10). But he thinks that Plato’s proposed solution, and so far forth his positive theory, is externalistic and ineffectual. He mentions Plato in connection with his tirade against Jacob Fries and other theorists who “presume to tell the world how it ought to be.” In the Lectures this complaint is clarified in a way that favors Aristotle. “In Plato the universal is made the principle in a somewhat abstract way, as the unmoved Idea. In Aristotle, on the other hand, thought in activity became absolutely concrete as the thought which thinks itself” (p. 227). Thus whereas Plato thinks of good politics as theory applied by experts to an external object, Aristotle sees politics as manifesting internal self-differentiation and development in and through the activities of autonomous political agents. I cannot help but suspect, more generally, that Pelczynski’s interpretation of Aristotle’s defects as a political thinker is affected by his incomplete understanding of what Hegel is up to as Aristotle’s successor.

31. See note 11.


38. Ibid., p. 100.

39. Ibid., p. 93.

40. Ibid., p. 132.

41. Ibid., p. 94.

42. Ibid., pp. 104–8.

43. Ibid., p. 94.


48. Ibid., p. 121.

49. Ibid., p. 128.

50. The idea that the “whole [of an economic system] does not lie beyond the possibility of cognition” can be found in Hegel, “System of Ethical Life,” trans. Harris and Knox, p. 168. It is developed further in the “First Philosophy of Spirit,” the version of Hegel’s philosophy of spirit that he worked up in the following year (1803–4). He writes there, “Labor, *qua* the laboring of a single [laborer] for his own needs is at the same time universal and ideal” (trans. Harris and Knox, p. 247). This labor is still seen there as deadening and stultifying (pp. 248–49). The positive, educational role is somewhat more explicit in the 1805–6 lectures, where the dialectic of mutual recognition is stressed, and exchange becomes a site for mutual recognition. But the most positive evaluation of the educative role of the market is found in PR, pars. 197–98. There Hegel minimizes the defects of labor and treats the universal dependency of members of civil society on one another’s labor as a stimulus for learning about the big world of which one is a part, thus inducing the large-minded attitudes required for political life.


53. In this chapter I am forced to set aside (with relief) the important question of how the categories of the Logic map onto PR.


55. This amounts to a cavil directed against Avineri’s account in Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*.

56. See Hegel’s remark in note 17 above.


58. Cf. works by Itzing and Pelczynski cited in notes 3–9 above.

59. See note 6 above.