

The New Dialectic

My research project is part of a new Marxian paradigm that has emerged in recent years, which is labelled ‘the New Dialectic’, or ‘Systematic Dialectic’. (See my *The New Dialectic and Marx’s ‘Capital’*, Brill, Leiden 2004.)

What, then, is ‘New’ about this dialectic? What is implicitly referred to here as the ‘Old Dialectic’ is the Soviet school of ‘Diamat’, rooted in a vulgarized version of the ideas of F. Engels and G. Plekhanov. It was presented as a universal ‘world outlook’ and universal method. Engels was especially influential in drawing attention to the importance of dialectic and in elaborating his own version of it. He put forward ‘three laws’ of dialectic: namely quantity into quality, interpenetration of opposites, and the negation of the negation. Engels proceeded by applying these abstract schemas adventitiously to contents arbitrarily forced into the required shape. The result consisted of a set of *examples* and it lacked *systematicity*. But if it turns out that Marx’s *Capital* has a systematic dialectical exposition, this should not be because it applies abstract universal formulae, but because the movement of the *material itself* requires it.

Systematic dialectic draws on Hegel’s work. This interest in Hegel is unconcerned with recovering the grand narrative of Hegel’s philosophy of history and relating it to historical materialism; rather it is focused on Hegel’s *Logic* and how this fits the method of Marx’s *Capital*. The effort is to deploy a systematic dialectic in order to articulate the relations of a given social order, namely capitalism, as opposed to a historical dialectic studying the *rise and fall* of social systems.

Now, where the interpretation of Marx’s *Capital* is concerned, I also draw upon a relatively new tendency in Marxian theory, which emphasizes Marx’s notion of the ‘value-form’. It is the peculiar *form* of commodity-exchange that is theorised as the prime determinant of the economy rather than the *content* regulated by it. The developed form of value (commodity, money, capital) is the characteristic social form of present economic relations. Hegel is a natural reference for value-form theory because his logic of categories is well suited to a theory of forms. Moreover Hegel’s systematic development of categories is directed towards articulating the structure of a totality, showing how it supports itself in and through the interchanges of its inner moments. This presupposes that the totality is structured by internal relations; by definition so in the case of a logic of course. But I argue capital is just such a totality.

As we know Marx acknowledged the influence of Hegel's Logic on his work. Some, such as Althusser, dismiss this influence as merely stylistic, picking on a phrase where Marx said he flirted with modes of expression peculiar to Hegel. But I think it is worth taking the relevance of Hegel seriously. My original research project was to see if I could show this textually. However I concluded that this was not easy to do because I do not think Marx himself understood why he found his arguments relying on Hegelian figures. So my current ambition is to reconstruct Marx's work in the spirit of a systematic dialectical logic.

Systematic dialectic

So let me now expand upon Systematic - as opposed to Historical - Dialectic. There are two different type of dialectical theory in Hegel. Famously there is a dialectic of history. Hegel believed there is a logic of development underlying world history. But there is a second sort of dialectical theory, found in writings such as the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Right*. This may be termed 'systematic dialectic' because it is concerned with the articulation of categories designed to conceptualise an existent concrete whole. The expositional order of these categories does not have to coincide with the order of their appearance in history. Hegel says that determinations of the concept that precede it in the scientific development of the Idea do not come before it as shapes of its temporal development. Exactly the same point is made by Marx when he says it would be wrong to let the economic categories follow one another in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. So I draw a distinction between systematic dialectic (which is a method of exhibiting the inner articulation of a given whole) and historical dialectic (which is a method of exhibiting the inner connection between stages of development of a temporal process).

However, Marx's great systematic work, *Capital*, has suffered from a virtually universal misreading, originally sponsored by Engels, Marx's editor. Engels's account conflated the two dialectics. Thus for Engels, Marx's mode of exposition, while 'logical', was yet nothing else but the historical method, only stripped of history's fortuities. He put forward what came to be known as the 'logical-historical method', according to which the logical structure of *Capital* is simply a corrected reflection of the historical stages of development of the capitalist system of production. But in this it was clear that the historical is taken to be precedent, the 'logical' part consisting merely in tidying up the history by disentangling pure forms from contingent deviations.

In discussions of dialectic generally it is most often taken to be a *historical* process; indeed it is frequently reduced to a type of efficient causality. A contradiction is said to 'produce' a resolution in much the same way as a cause 'produces' an effect. Now if paradigmatic works by Hegel and Marx, such as *The Philosophy of Right* and *Capital* are not historical works, any such interpretation is clearly irrelevant. What is characteristic of these works is that they treat a *given whole* and demonstrate how it reproduces itself: thus the ordering of the categories is in no way determined by the recapitulation of a historical chain of causation; it is articulated on the basis of purely systematic considerations.

Let us turn then to a detailed account of the meaning of system. While categories mark ontological unities, and are thus required to render reality intelligible, they must themselves form a coherent whole; they must 'hang together' so to speak. Hegel's *Science of Logic* shows how the categories may be systematically related to one another in such a manner that their exposition shows how each category gains systemic meaning by virtue of its positioning with respect to the other categories and the whole. Taken in isolation, in abstraction from its systematic placing, a category is imperfectly grasped.

Importantly, systematicity is of the essence where the object of investigation is a totality. Dialectic grasps phenomena in their interconnectedness, something beyond the capacity of analytical reason and linear logic. As Hegel argued, since what is *concretely* true is so only as *totality*, science in treating such a totality must take the shape of *system*. The system comprises a set of categories expressing the forms and relations embedded within the totality, its 'moments'. Since all 'moments' of the whole exist synchronically all movement must pertain to their reciprocal support and development. While this motion implies that moments become effective *successively*, the movement winds back into itself to form a *circuit* of reproduction of these moments by each other. The task of systematic dialectic is to organise such a system of categories in a definite sequence, deriving one from another logically.

Now, if a whole is built up in this way, the systematic ordering of its categories may be understood both 'forwards', as a progression, and 'backwards', as a retrogression.

Although it is natural to read a systematic exposition as one in which later categories are developed from their antecedents — at least in the sense that the latter must be analytically presupposed — in Hegel's view this cannot be the whole story; for he rejects any dogmatic founding category. The progressive development is therefore not securely established on a *given* presupposition.

There is, however, another consideration. Since the categorial progression cannot be validated as a deduction, it can only be *reconstruction* of the totality. The whole, as the most concrete, complex and complete reality, sustains all the elements that make it up, and thereby retrogressively justifies the logical sequencing from this viewpoint. Insofar as Hegel's dialectics finish with something 'absolute', its absolute character grants validity retrospectively to all the stages of its exposition, and their dialectical relations; if 'the truth is the whole', as he puts it, the moments of the whole gain their validity within it; if the lower categories lead on to the highest, the reason is that the lower categories are only abstractions from it. It is the whole alone which is self-subsistent.

This approach raises the question of the *logic of transition* in the exposition. The exposition employs a non-deductive logic. Each move deploys minimum sufficient conditions for a further stage of development of the whole. There is a problem, requiring an innovative solution generated through a 'leap' to a new form, but with the minimum of new notional material. Generally the basis of the advance is that each category is deficient in determinacy with respect to the next and the impulse for the transition is precisely the requirement that such deficiency must be overcome. Interrogation of the category reveals its limits and leads to the determining of a further category to complete it; successive categories are always richer and more concrete. So the sequence of categories has to be read in both directions, as a disclosure, or exposition, progressively, and as a grounding movement retrogressively.

If it is presupposed that the whole system of categories is complete and internally self-sustaining, then it is possible to reconstruct its order precisely through moving sequentially from categories deficient in such respects (that is in being inclusive and self-sustaining) to ones less so, until the system as a totality is thereby exhibited as such.

Moreover the method of presentation articulates the categories in such a manner as to show how the logic of the system tendentially ensures its completeness through 'positing' all its presuppositions. The presentation ends when all the conditions of existence needing to be addressed are comprehended by the entire system of categories developed.

Thus in a dialectical argument the significance of any element in the total picture cannot be concretely defined at the outset. As the presentation of the system advances to more complex and concrete relationships, the originating definition of a concept shifts accordingly, normally towards greater determinateness. Thus the dialectical method remains open to fundamental reorganisations of the material so far appropriated, as it gets

closer to the truth of things in the perfected system. Such a system is complete only when it returns to, and accounts for, its starting point. Because any starting-point is severed from the whole, as abstracted thus it is necessarily ungrounded.

In sum: At the methodological level *systematic dialectic* emphasizes the need for a clear order of presentation, which, however, is not a linear one, for the starting point is not empirically or axiomatically given but in need of interrogation. Ontologically it addresses itself to totalities and thus to their comprehension through *systematically* interconnected categories, which are more or less sharply distinguished from *historically* sequenced orderings; the presentation of the totality in thought is a systematic dialectic of categories. But it is important to underline that *Hegel's* dialectic is not understood by him as primarily *methodological* but as *ontological*. The logical scaffolding of the real, its 'Idea', is its very truth, not its abstract shadow. Thus, when the philosopher develops one category from another, they are simply reflecting the *self*-determination of the Idea. 'Method' itself in Hegel is simply the rhythm of this unfolding of the Idea by itself.

The Idea of Capital

Substantively *systematic dialectic* reexamines or reconstructs Marxian theory in the light of the above protocols. (Indeed, it is striking that those who have attempted such a rigorous dialectical systematisation of Marx's work have generally found it necessary to *reconstruct* it to some degree.)

Here the problem to be explored is why and how a categorial logic drawn from Hegel could possibly be relevant to a critique of political economy. When Marx acknowledged the influence of Hegel's dialectic on his *Capital* he failed to explain how an idealist logic could assist a materialist science. It is my belief that Marx himself was not clear about the answer to this question; and the relatively sketchy, and enigmatic, methodological remarks in his Prefaces may be a sign of this. In the *Afterword* to the second edition of *Capital* Marx rightly said that his method had been little understood; but this second edition was not understood either, not least because the *Afterword* raised more questions than it solved, especially with regard to some notoriously ambivalent and opaque remarks on dialectic. He says that his dialectical method is the opposite of Hegel's. 'With him', Marx says, 'it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.' But *what* exactly is to be inverted? Marx left the impression that one could preserve a logic while inverting its ontological presuppositions. But this introduces a dichotomy between form and content which is itself undialectical.

In my opinion what has to be understood as inverted is not only Hegel's 'Idea' but *capital itself*. It is because capital is upside-down, so to speak, that an upside-down philosophy applies to it. How does a domain of material reality become inverted? Well, in the first place it is because the logic of exchange imposes the same identical abstract form on all goods, namely the value-form, which then develops to capital as the form of self-valorising value. I hold that there is a peculiar affinity between the articulation of Hegel's 'Idea' and the structural relations of commodities, money and capital. Moreover, since the human bearers of the structure of capital are reduced to personifications of its categories, *the capitalist*, *the wage-laborer*, and so on, we find the same kind of *self-acting* forms as those in Hegel's logic. Of course, they cannot be forms of *thought* as they are in Hegel. Nonetheless I believe that the capitalist system does indeed consist in part of logical relations. At bottom this is because of the way exchange abstracts from the heterogeneity of commodities and treats them as instances of a universal, namely value. This *practical* abstraction parallels the way the abstractive power of *thought* operates; and it gives rise to a homologous structure to logical forms, namely the forms of value.

Alfred Sohn-Rethel (in his *Intellectual and Manual Labour*) was the first to draw attention to the crucial importance of the process, and result, of 'real abstraction' in the critique of political economy. (As an aside I think it is necessary to replace Sohn-Rethel's term 'real abstraction' with that of 'practical abstraction'. This is because purely mental abstractions may yet have real effects if people act on them, and do so only because they are really present in their heads so to speak.) Commodities brought to market are incommensurable as use-values because their particular qualities are adapted to different uses. What happens in the formation of exchange value is an abstraction from such specificity, and the negation of this difference of use-value. It is not necessary for the parties to the exchange to know what they are doing in this respect. But as a consequence of this *practical* abstraction from the specificity of the use-values concerned, which is 'suspended' for the period of exchange, the commodities acquire as a new determination the universal form of exchange value, and they play the role of *bearers* of this determination imposed on them while passing through this phase of their life-cycle.

Moreover Sohn-Rethel analysed the *form* of value as such which springs from exchange as such, bracketing any labour content. Theoretical priority must be accorded to 'form analysis', because it is the practice of exchange that establishes the necessary social synthesis in the first place before labours expended may be commensurated in it.

What is at issue in the value-form abstraction is by no means the same sort of abstraction as natural science employs, when it studies mass, for example, and treats bodies under this description regardless of their other properties. For mass is indeed a given property of the bodies concerned, inhering in each. But, as Marx says, value has ‘a purely social reality’, not ‘an atom of matter’ enters into it. Whereas in the mass case ‘the principle of abstraction’ may quite properly be used to say that two bodies, balancing each other on a scale, share the same mass, in the case of value this principle operates in reverse so to speak: because we equate the commodities as values we in practice impute to them the same value *as if* value were a property *inherent* in them. The fetishism so posited is an objective phenomenon, not a confusion of social consciousness.

I go further than just drawing attention to methodological lessons from Hegel’s systematic ordering of categories, as do others. I draw also on his ontology. Hegel is the great expert on how an ideality has to build itself up, moment by moment, into a self-actualising totality, an ‘Absolute’. If then, as I believe, capital has in part an ideal reality, then if it can be shown to incarnate Hegel’s blueprint it may be self-sustaining in the same way. My view is that Hegel’s logic can be drawn on in such a study of capitalism because capital is a very peculiar object, grounded in a process of practical abstraction in exchange in much the same way as Hegel’s dissolution and reconstruction of reality is predicated on the abstractive power of thought. Abstraction is ‘out there’.

Conversely I interpret Hegel’s self-actualising Idea as the ontologic *specific* to capital, because it has relevance only to an inverted reality reproduced by self-moving abstractions. Epochally capital has made good its claim to be Absolute through developing its wealth and power. In subsuming all otherness as a moment within it, capital seems a self-identical totality. ‘Post-modernists’ deny the validity of the category of totality, as if Hegel and Marx were at fault for using it, whereas they reflect (Hegel uncritically and Marx critically) the totalising logic of the value-form which *really* imposes itself in such a manner that material and social relationships become inscribed within it. But capital as an *ideal totality* cannot account for what is in excess of its concept of itself, the concrete richness of social labor, not to mention that of Nature.

However, what is striking is that the dialectic of capital is pretty much parallel to the dialectic of Hegel’s Idea. It is as if Hegel, in his philosophy, absolutised the specific dialectic of capital, although his factual knowledge of fully functioning capital was gained second-hand, in his readings of classical political economy and the English newspapers.

This 'elective affinity' is more striking than the parallel of Protestantism with 'the spirit of capitalism', as suggested by Weber. At any rate I argue that the object of critique should be the *Idea* of capital. I do not mean by this 'ideas *about* capital', but that the reality confronting us *is* itself Idea in the Hegelian sense of an identity of concept and reality.

Yet, whereas Hegel abstracts from everything through the power of thought, exchange abstracts only from what is presented to it, a delimited sphere of use values. So we have in the dialectic of capital one that is less general than Hegel's in its *scope*, but within its own terms equally *absolute* in so far as it is founded on all-round abstraction to leave quasi-logical forms. Hegel's philosophy is encyclopaedic, and it has hundreds of categories accordingly. Capital, compared with the universe as a whole, is characterised by a poverty-stricken ontology, in which the qualitative is generally less prominent than the quantitative. This means that in my development of its categories I shall use only some of Hegel's. A trivial instance, in my project, is that under quantity I shall need 'number' and 'ratio' only, but not 'degree'. (Value does not come in degrees, only in amounts.) Under judgement and syllogism I shall neglect most of Hegel's effort to comprehensively situate all the logical paradigms of his day. Only the 'syllogism of equality' is needed for transitive pricing.

On the Table appended I give some indication of the *correspondences* I see between the divisions of Hegel's logic and the three forms of value: commodity, money, capital. The logic of Being is one-dimensional; its categories are merely descriptive; just so the parallel categories define what it is to *be* a commodity. The logic of Essence is two-dimensional in that its categories consider how things are hidden behind appearances, yet explains how this happens; the parallel categories trace how value originally implicit in commodity relations becomes actual in money. The logic of the Concept is three-dimensional in providing categories of reflexivity culminating in the self-positing Idea; the parallel categories show how money in motion returns to itself with more money. The 'truth' of value is achieved only in its fully articulated Concept.

Notice that I use up the categories of the logic simply to reach the Marxian category of the General Formula for Capital. Why is this?

Now the logic is only *part of* Hegel's system of philosophy, and it is precisely that part in which, because thought deals only with itself, there are no obstacles to its free movement; it is in its native element. But this is certainly not true of the other domains Hegel

attempts to ‘logicize’; here there is always to be reckoned with otherness, contingency, finitude, and alienation. The Absolute wins its freedom *in the real world* (not in self-contemplation), and it does so only *through* overcoming obstacles. It must engage in ‘the labour of the negative’, says Hegel.

If one maps Marx’s *Capital* on the *whole* of Hegel’s philosophy, the obvious first move is to ask: where does value move freely in its own element? If there is such a sphere this is where the pure forms of logic are likely to find their correlates. The answer is surely the sphere of *circulation*; in such phenomena as the exchanges of commodities and money, value deals only with itself in its various expressions. The crucial turning point in Marx’s *Capital* is when we see the general formula of capital includes the emergence of a monetary increment, but where circulation alone cannot explain its source. Then, Marx says, we must leave the sunlit sphere of circulation and enter the hidden abode of production. In other words capital must transform materials, and for that it needs labor, which remains opposed to capital even under conditions of ‘real subsumption’. In my opinion this turn to production in the exposition of the dialectic of capital is parallel to Hegel’s move from the perfect freedom of thought to spirit’s engagement with the real world in which it becomes lost to itself, and becomes what it is only through emerging from this otherness having recognized itself in it, having always already incorporated it. Indeed on one reading the Idea has to *create* Nature and History if this congruence is to be guaranteed.

Of course, if the Absolute Idea is really absolute then the notion that it freely releases from itself Nature and History has plausibility. But however strongly the Idea may aspire to such a content it cannot, in truth, create it. Rather, Hegel should have argued that the emptiness of the logic, as a science of pure form, culminates in an *abstract* Idea (as he confesses in a lecture aside, *Encyclopaedia* paragraph 377, *Zu.*), its apparent freedom of movement is achieved only because it is abstracted from the realm of finitude. It requires, in order to unite thought and being, a transition to a complementary reality. If this is right, only the ‘big triad’, logic/nature/spirit, is that which really is an unconditioned whole, that is, Absolute. It is a mark of Hegel’s idealism that he insists the logical Idea is perfectly whole, and hence “freely” turns to the other spheres that complement it. In truth, as merely the logical aspect of the full triad, the Absolute Idea is only the abstract Absolute, the mere thought of an Absolute.

In passing let us note that Hegel’s prejudice in favour of a logical Absolute is complemented by a striking disdain for Nature. Alone of the three parts of the

Encyclopaedia, the *Philosophy of Nature* does not finish with an Absolute, but with Death! If one were to write a *Philosophy of Nature* today, in a more generous account of it, the culminating category should surely be a quasi-absolute, namely Gaia, the thought of an all encompassing, homeostatic organism of organisms, from which it is only a step to a whole with a comprehensive consciousness of itself, namely Spirit.

Returning from this excursion on Nature, I believe that there is an unremarked sleight of hand in Hegel's *Logic* itself. Let us look at how the logic is related to the real world.

What is striking is that this is thematised by Hegel in the part *preceding* the Absolute Idea, namely *cognition*. Here there *is* a discussion of how, in theory and in practice, the Idea both discovers, and creates, itself in what seems other than it. Yet by thematising this *before* the logical Absolute, Hegel makes it appear that success is guaranteed in advance. So I think that cognition should come at the end of the *Logic*, encapsulating the ambition of the concept to make itself Idea through uniting thought and reality, but with the job itself still to be done in the following parts of the *Encyclopaedia*. Cognition is surely the *hinge* of the logical and the real.

Transition from the logic of the value-form

This worry about Hegel is relevant to my reconstruction of the logic of capital. The difficulty capital has in practice in achieving its hegemony over the material sphere of production has some analogy with the philosophical problem Hegel has in making this turn from logic to reality; for in both cases pure form has to show itself active in a variety of contingent circumstances.

The category homologous with Cognition is that of Formal Determination. This differs from material determination in that it refers to the way in which the material metabolism is inscribed within social forms that determine its lines of interchange and development. It is congruent with cognition because cognition is about how logical categories inform the real world; and for me the value-form equally takes possession of the real economic process and informs it with the purposes of capital. The important thing is that the culmination of the logic of the value-form, so far from the achievement of logical perfection, collapses into outright contradiction. When commodities are valued, they are to be found standing in relations of equivalence according to their law, yet must contain non-equivalence to realise capital in its concept. Marx of course stated this problem and turned to a study of production for its resolution. I follow him in this. The problem of how the relation of commodity circulation can result in both identity and non-identity is to be

resolved in turning to what is itself both identical and non-identical with it, namely commodity production by capital. In this, the Formal Determination of *production* itself, by the demands of valorisation, results in the formal, and then the real, subsumption of it to capital, which appears therewith as a self-identical totality.

The dialectical movement of such a Subject/Object identity rests on the activity of the Subject. It is the activity of the Subject that is *constitutive* of objectivity. Thus it finds itself in its *own* world. So here capital is the constitutive subject that builds a world for itself, but on material foundations, including human labour, that are in excess of its concept of itself, and potentially destabilising of it. The counter-subject, labour, is trapped in the capital relation, which is played out in a counterpoint such that it is the very same movement that engenders both the self-constitution of capital and the self-negation of labour. (In 1844 Marx stresses the latter but in *Capital* the former.)

In the final sections of this paper I address two radical qualifications of my Hegelian Marxism.

A Structure of Essence?

In applying systematic dialectic according to a rigorous Hegelian scheme, a problem emerges as to contradiction and closure. According to Hegel the Idea of the modern State achieves final harmony, resolving all opposition. Marx, on the other hand, thinks capitalism is riven with unsurpassed contradiction, between use and exchange, capital and labour, forces and relations of production. So how is it possible to argue, as I do, that capital has the structure of the Hegelian Idea? One Hegelian Marxist, namely Tony Smith, argues against me that only communism could incarnate a harmonious unity of social forms: capitalism falls short of this, being riven by conflict and opposition. In his account it is characterised by categories drawn from Hegel's Doctrine of Essence, not by those of the Concept (*The Logic of Marx's 'Capital'*, SUNY Press, New York 1990, p. 64).

However, while I believe capital is an Hegelian Idea, I also admit that in the last analysis, it is not unreasonable to characterise capitalist society as a *structure of essence*, along the lines of the middle part of Hegel's logic, that characterised by antitheses, and that it cannot achieve the self-transparent unity of the Concept. How so? At the outset of my whole system I show it originates through the exchange abstraction, which introduces a primal split between the logical forms and the useful products of social production. This split is never healed, no matter how much adequation of each side to the other is achieved; so there remains throughout my exposition a context in which the capital system is always

to be understood as alienated from human sociality. Hegel gives a general characterisation of the doctrine of essence as a sphere of relatedness and opposition, rather than identity or unity. In this sense, we may think of capitalism as ‘a structure of essence’.

On the other hand it is incontestable that capital has the logic of the concept, for its movement is marked by ‘teleology’; it has an infinite aim, namely accumulation, a category basic to Hegel’s Concept.

In reconciling the two views (namely that capitalism has the structure of essence and that capital has the shape of the Idea), let us consider Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. There are many examples throughout it in which wills conflict (albeit ultimately reconciled); yet each will is itself immanently shaped by the moments of the Concept along the lines Hegel presented in the Introduction. Therefore, it is acceptable for me to consider the *form* of capital itself follows the logic of the Concept, even though the opposition between capital and labour can never be harmonised; even though in truth the value-form and the material inscribed within it are never fully identified. Nonetheless, capital *acts as* an autonomous power. It is not just a mistake by us to treat it *as if* it were standing over against us dictating our possibilities. So it embodies the logic of the Concept. Moreover insofar as it has successfully subsumed labour under itself it is *effectively* the ruling Idea of our epoch.

The Standpoint of Capital?

The second concluding argument takes as its premise that capital does indeed have the shape of the Idea. But does that amount to the endorsement of it? Surely any dialectic of the Hegelian type gets ever closer to the truth of things, all contradiction is finally resolved in the Absolute; it is essentially *affirmative*: yet Marx from the outset and throughout is always critical of capital, in a sense it is itself falsity writ large. However, it is quite possible to argue that money, for example, makes possible an enormous expansion of economic activity beyond that of barter, while at the same time arguing that the money system further subjects us to the sway of alien forces. (–A point made by Tony Smith.)

Nonetheless this presents a difficulty for exposition. If one traces the logic through which *capital* affirms itself, it is difficult not to identify with its standpoint. (Marx often dealt with this difficulty by resort to biting irony.) There is the risk that the exposition of a reified system of self-moving abstraction appears itself as a reified dialectical theory

unrelated to human practice. (Long ago E. P. Thompson raised this issue, claiming that even Marx himself allowed his discourse to be trapped by the infernal logic of capital. M. Lebowitz suggests the one-sidedness of Marx's *Capital* would have been corrected if he had ever produced his promised book on 'Wage-Labor'.)

The affirmative dialectic of capital shows how it subsumes under itself all elements of economic life, becoming absolute in the sense of conquering and shaping production and consumption. However, capital faces two 'others' of itself that it cannot plausibly claim - in Hegelian fashion - to be merely aspects of its own self. Its external other is Nature which capital is degrading at frightening speed thus undermining its own material basis. Its internal other is the proletariat, capital's own creation, which is potentially capable of overthrowing it.

The points I made just now do not invalidate a method of exposition based on systematic dialectic. What it means is that this dialectic is immanent to capital, it is capital's vindication of *its* freedom and individuality that is exhibited; to this human ends are properly subordinate, human beings are merely the *bearers* of the economic movement. Indeed, that the *presentation* of the commodity-capitalist system should be at the same time a *critique* of it follows from the observation that it is precisely its homology with the forms of Hegel's logic that shows it is an inverted reality systematically alienated from its bearers. In its 'spiritualisation' of material interchange and practical activity into the movement of pure forms it incarnates the Hegelian 'Idea'. Capitalism stands condemned *just because* it instantiates an idealist logic.

Conclusion

To sum up. The paper aims to justify a research programme in which capital is to be reconstructed with the method of systematic dialectic. It is to be expected that Hegelian categories, and their relations, will prove appropriate in this project.

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Table of Correspondences

Hegel *Encyclopaedia* §18

- I. Logic: the science of the Idea in and for itself
- II The Philosophy of Nature; the science of the Idea in its otherness
- III The Philosophy of Spirit; as the Idea come back to itself out of that otherness.

Arthur

- I. Circulation: as the science of Capital in its general formula
- II Production: Capital sunk into its otherness
- III Accumulation: unity of Circulation and Production

Hegel *Enc.* §83: Logic falls into three parts:

- I. the Doctrine of Being
 - II the Doctrine of Essence
 - III the Doctrine of the Concept and Idea
- That is, into the Theory of Thought:
- I In its immediacy: the concept implicit and in germ.
 - II In its reflection and mediation: the being-for-self and show of the concept.
 - III In its return into itself, and its developed abiding by itself: the concept in and for itself.

Arthur: The dialectic of the value form falls into three parts:

- I. Commodity
 - II. Money
 - III. Capital
- That is, into the theory of exchange
- I In its immediacy: value implicit and in germ .
 - II In its reflection and mediation: ‘value for-itself’, the showing forth of value.
 - III In its return into itself, and its development of itself: self-valorisation.

Hegel: <i>Logic</i>	Arthur: <i>the Value Form</i>
I. The Doctrine of Being	I. Commodity
A. Quality	A. Exchangeableness of commodities
B. Quantity	B. Quantity of commodities
C. Measure	C. Exchange Value of commodities
II. The Doctrine of Essence	II. Money
A. Ground	A. Value in itself
B. Appearance	B. Forms of Value
C. Actuality	C. Money
III. The Doctrine of Concept	III. Capital (General Formula)
A. Subjectivity	A. Price
B. Objectivity	B. Metamorphoses of commodities (CMC)
C. The Idea	C. Capital (MCM)