

Hegel: Reproduction as Production

Abstract

In Hegel's Philosophy of Right we can find an understanding of production that expresses itself in Hegel's understanding of the relation of the individual to the family, and of his or her overcoming of self-interest through the production of the "capital resources" of children. What emerges in the Philosophy of Right is an account of production grounded in reproduction. Although there has been some contemporary discussion of this account, it has mainly touched on the question of production in modern political and economic life. The paper shows that Hegel's account is entirely dependent on his dialectical view of life, presented in his Science of Logic. The paper seeks to show (1) how Hegel's understanding of the historical forms which the dialectical process of life as production is itself a critique of contemporary accounts of political economy (exemplified by Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments); and, (2) that his account of the material forms of political economy is misunderstood by his sharpest critics, especially the one who most appears to advance an understanding of production, Karl Marx. The paper concludes by asking about what light Hegel's account, both in the Philosophy of Right and the Science of Logic, throws on his account of the relationship of production to the state, suggesting that the sheer materialistic force of Hegel's argument needs to be better understood.

KEYWORDS: *Hegel; Subjectivity; Production; Dialectics; Reproduction*

Laurence Paul Hemming

*Departments of Organization, Technology and Work
and Politics, Philosophy and Religion
Lancaster University*

διὰ ταύτας τὰς αἰτίας γένεσις ζῶων ἐστίν, ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀδύνατος ἡ φύσις τοῦ τοιούτου γένους αἰδιος εἶναι, καθ' ὃν ἐνδέχεται τρόπον, κατὰ τοῦτόν ἐστιν αἰδιον τὸ γίνομενον

[The generation of living things is dependent on understanding these things – because the nature of such beings is unable to be eternal, what comes into being is eternal in the manner open to it]

Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, 731 b 31 f.

In the entirety of his oeuvre, Hegel has, it would seem, little to say about industrial production itself, and mentions the word capital barely at all, and, at least at first appearance, in no way that contributes to an understanding of anything like "capitalism" as we find it developed in Marx. And yet over the last century it has become increasingly clear that Hegel's metaphysics is the essential underpinning to one foremost among the thinkers of capital, despite, at times, fairly ferocious polemic

to the contrary (not least from that very theorist himself). That foremost theorist is of course Karl Marx.¹

The form and detail of Marx's dependence on Hegel are decidedly not the topic of this paper. What I propose to show, rather, is why Hegel's metaphysics of absolute subjectivity grounds and makes possible an understanding of modern industrial production. In contradistinction to all utilitarian and empiricist groundings of the understanding of production, Hegel explains how production is the materialization not of anything finite, but of the infinite idea. Contemporary production has certainly manifested its possibility as the promise of the materialization of the infinite. What has been overlooked in capitalism's recent euphoric expansion is the dialectical means by which the infinite is *also* manifest through its negation. Hegel's metaphysics of absolute subjectivity as an understanding of the productiveness of production necessarily entails separate moments of expansion, fulfilment, and destruction. Although we do not have the space to examine the way in which negation as the finitude of objective materialities takes shape in the development of contemporary economic activity, nevertheless, as will become clear in what follows, Hegel understands every material objectification of the life-process, including objects, institutions (and even particular states) and resources (capital) to be themselves subject to an end or "death." It is what they give to be understood *through* the processes of coming to be and passing away that is Hegel's central concern.

Let me quote Marx, which I will do sparingly – from his critique of Hegel in the *Parisian Manuscripts*, where Marx says that Hegel "grasps work as the *essence*, as the essence that proves itself, of man."² Kojève, in the published version of his lectures from the 1930s on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Geist*, thought this verdict on Hegel of such importance that he (or his editor Queneau) placed it on the frontispiece of the introductory section.³ What is it that Marx grasps of Hegel here? When we turn to Hegel's discussion of work, especially in the *Philosophy of Right*, we find that work is not understood as an essence, but precisely the opposite, as a mediation (*Vermittlung*). Hegel says "the mediation, for which *particularised* means are acquired and prepared for similarly *particularized* needs is work."⁴ Work is, for Hegel, a mediation – or rather, it is always *the* mediation of something else. As a mediation it appears through, and handles, materialities (elsewhere in the same text Hegel calls this 'resources', *Vermögen*, even capital).

What sustains and proves itself in the life of man is not work or labour, so much as production. Man, for Hegel (and indeed for Marx), is that being who produces himself through himself. The essence of man is self-confirmation *through* self-production. In this sense Hegel's discussion of work is marked by what appears at first as a quite limited understanding that seems not to go beyond Marx's taunt in the *Parisian Manuscripts* that Hegel's thought "rests on the standpoint of the modern political economists."⁵ Part of the burden of this paper will be to show that, while Hegel is in dialogue with the thinking of political economists, and understands the institutions of political economy to be the materialization of what it is he describes, nevertheless something far more fundamental, and not less material, gives rise to his standpoint and thought.

Hegel speaks of the division of labour, which appears through a process of abstraction whereby what is "general and objective" in labour, and also production, can be ever more specified and simplified, giving rise to the increase in volume of output and the mechanization of labour, so that "man himself thereby steps aside in order to let the *machine* step into his place."⁶ Hegel, in other words, understands work in the context of industrial production.

The general and objective character of work also has the effect that the satisfaction of selfish needs contributes to the satisfaction of the requirements of all others. This effect is "the mediation of the particular through the universal as dialectical movement so that, inasmuch as each earns, produces

and enjoys for himself, he thereby produces and earns for the enjoyment of others.”⁷ Here Hegel would indeed seem to be in direct dialogue with that one foremost among political economists, Adam Smith, and his ‘invisible hand’. Smith says of the rich and those who own the means of production (the capitalists, if you like) “are led by an invisible hand” to act for the benefit of all. This sentence is among the best known and most quoted in Smith’s work, but less attention is given to what Smith says immediately following: the pursuers of capital’s expansion, he says, are led by this hand, “to make nearly the same distribution of the necessities of life which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus *without knowing it*, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species.”⁸ Hegel understands what Smith describes as the consequence or effect of a dialectical process. What Smith names as something which occurs *without knowing*, Hegel describes such that it moves from unknowing to knowing (cognition, *Erkennen*), by means of a concrete, material, but nevertheless dialectical, process.

There is in this a kind of theory of industrial production, stated in fairly abstract and generalized terms. Hegel speaks of the individual having a share in the commonwealth of resources through which he is able to secure his subsistence. This capacity to share in the general resources, which is to be understood as access to resources in particular is conditioned in part through having an immediate base asset, which Hegel explicitly names as capital, and in part through possessing skills. We should note the equation of capital (*Kapital*) and skills as the different aspects of resources.⁹ In each case both the distribution of the possession of capital and of skills, together with other circumstances and arbitrariness results in “the *inequality of resources and skillfulness* of individuals.”¹⁰ The conditions and circumstances of the appearance of capital, skills, and even resources in general, are arbitrary and contingent – for which we should read “historical.” They are the way things fall out, they are an *effect*. The question will be, effect of what?

First, we should note that it is here, in the *Rechtsphilosophie*, that we find the sharpest distinction between Hegel and Marx. For Marx the inequalities and contradictions in the distribution of ‘resources’, of capital, skills and circumstances produce both an enmity between the classes of capitalist and worker, and its resolution¹ resolvable only by a full equalization of the distribution of those same resources (in communism). For Hegel, on the contrary, the circumstantial inequalities of the distribution of resources has no directly determinative effect, and exerts no *necessary* force for equalization, dialectical or otherwise, on the concrete results of history. Hegel speaks of the objective “*right of the particularity of Geist itself*” which does not sublimate (cancel – *aufhebt*) that inequality both found in nature and represented in civil society, “but produces it out of *Geist* itself and raises it up (*erhebt*) to an inequality of skillfulness, of resources and intellectual and moral formation.” Hegel concludes here “to oppose to this [i.e. the right of particularity] the demand for equality belongs to that empty understanding, which takes this abstraction and imperative of its own for the real and the rational.”¹¹

Geist has, therefore, a right of particularity, which in subsequent sections Hegel discusses through the assignment into different estates – effectively classes – which themselves are partly entered by circumstance and partly by choice. It would be easy to understand Hegel’s treatment of inequality an indifference to it, which it is not. At §§244 and 245 of the *Rechtsphilosophie*, in the context of the administration of justice, Hegel discusses the situation both of those who sink below the level of subsistence and so whose work brings them no dignity, and its opposite, where the needy are supported by others in society such that “the subsistence of the needy would be secured without the mediation of work,”¹² which is contrary to the principle of civil society and feeling of self-sufficiency and honour among its individual members.

The demand for social equality, which Hegel construes as being conditioned from an empty understanding, is so, he says, because even though it envisages itself as the general and universal, it cannot but be a particular demand, and therefore a demand in and of itself representative of an entirely arbitrary particularity. It is in this that Hegel is routinely written off as a merely conservative thinker, at worst an apologist for the Prussian Monarchy of his time. This is a grave misrepresentation of his thought – in no sense can Hegel’s understanding of political economy be written off as a merely static commitment to a present *status quo*, a prevailing political-economic or state organization.¹³

In the *Parisian Manuscripts* Marx had posited the full equalization of humanity through a term derived from Feuerbach, *Gattungswesen*, which has no easy translation into English, but which is often translated as species-essence or species-being.¹⁴ We can see immediately the parallels between this and Hegel’s reference to freedom and unity in his *Logic*. Marx concludes that “the individual and the species-being of man are not *different*.”¹⁵

For Marx species-being is something to be attained to, as a higher form of humanity, and it requires for its appearance a mode of social and economic organization other than capitalism. The implicit criticism of Hegel, therefore, is that Hegel either posits the ‘resources’ of ‘capital’ as a kind of sufficient development of human being, or that Hegel gives primacy to the ideal over the material. Hegel is in this sense a “conservative” thinker, unable to attain to a description of a higher essence of man.

Both of these interpretations misrepresent Hegel, however. Hegel does not say that the present conditions of the appearance of “resources” (*Vermögen*) are the highest and final ones. Nor, as we shall later see, does he understand the idea as in any sense other *through* its material conditions. As an aside, therefore, the suggestion is that Marx’s “species-being” is itself more of an abstract ideal (because it as yet has no materialization) than anything postulated by Hegel, including, as I shall argue in conclusion, Hegel’s notion of God. Hegel’s resolution of the appearance of ‘species’ will turn out to be far more nuanced, far more dialectical, and far more *materialistic*, than any positing of an abstract species “essence.”

We could be diverted by Hegel’s repeated use of the noun *Willkür* (arbitrariness) and its adjective *willkürlich* (arbitrary) in discussion both of the dispersal of needs through human experience and life, and in relation to the concrete conditions of resources, aptitudes, assets (capital) and circumstances. Several times Hegel stresses that the individual appears through particularity: “the concrete person who, as a particular person, as a totality of needs and a mixture of natural necessity and arbitrariness, is himself a *particular* purpose . . .”¹⁶ Again, “the individual attains reality only inasmuch as he enters into *existence* in general, and therefore into *determinate particularity itself*.”¹⁷ There is a sense in which the material conditions of the appearance of the individual are arbitrary and contingent – as *the* historical circumstances of particularity. However there is one sense in which the appearance of the individual is not in any sense arbitrary or contingent, and upon which all the others depend: as *himself* (or *herself*) a thing having been produced – as a child, and so as the outcome of a life-process.

Hegel locates the production of the child as the objectification of the formation of a family: “the family, has as person its external reality in a *possession*, in which it has the existence of its substantial personality only in the manner of an *asset*.”¹⁸ The word *asset* here, stressed by Hegel, is German *Vermögen*, which we have otherwise translated as resources, and which we have suggested could even in some circumstances be equated to capital and Smith’s “necessities of life.” The peculiarity of Hegel’s German here is ignored by the main translations of the *Rechtsphilosophie*, in particular the intrusion of the indefinite article, “a possession,” “as in an” asset.¹⁹ The oddity of this phrase, overlooked by the standard translations, is only explained in the context of the following section, subtitled “the resources of

the family,” where the specificity of this asset, the child, is stressed. Here, Hegel states clearly that the family requires resources, but it is here also that we see a further commentary on the “invisible hand”: quite contrary to Smith’s view, it is the very visibility and activity of the family, through a dialectical process that “the arbitrary moment of particular needs of the *singular individual* and the self-seeking of the flesh through abstract property transforms itself here into the care and the acquisition of a *communality*, in an *ethicality*.”²⁰ Thus the text (contrary to the main translations of it) draws attention to a property, something which both “in the manner of” – and moves beyond – being a mere asset, because the child is *the* product which itself *is* the power to initiate a new cycle of (re)production.

For Hegel the family is the place of transformation from the mere self-interest proper to the individual into mutualized concern for the interest of others. This is why the mere *demand* for equality arises from an empty understanding: because there is a more positive understanding that is itself realized and materialized, *through* the acquisition of an abstract property or a possession (the production of a child). This understanding is *not* empty, but has a very specific content. We should note here that having identified the family as the place within which this understanding takes place, Hegel subsequently extends the understanding of this locus to civil society as a whole, as the plurality of families and the point of transition from the family to the state.²¹ This higher unity is attained to through a “substantial existence”, that is through the production of children.²²

Earlier in the *Rechtsphilosophie* (at §160) Hegel had explained that the family attains completion through its formation in marriage, through its external existence as the property and assets of the family and the care exercised in them, and in the bringing-up of children, finally in the family’s dissolution. Here this process is explained as the accomplishment of a unity (marriage) which has a material product, an object (children). Hegel describes this materialisation as “a process, which itself runs in the infinite progress of self-engendering and self-presupposing generations.”²³ Hegel concludes, in a passing reference to his discussion of marriage and the family in the *Phenomenology*,²⁴ that this is how, in the finite realm of nature (by implication, from what he has said of the infinite immediately before), the infinite “simple spirit of the *Penates* represent its existence as species.”²⁵

Not a few commentators have drawn attention to the description in the *Rechtsphilosophie* of marriage and the family in great detail.²⁶ Of particular concern is Hegel’s disproportionate assignment of the relative roles of women and men, women to the familial realm (of the hearth) and men to that of civil society. Joan B. Landes repeatedly notes, however, that Hegel both allows for, and indeed provides for the development of the forms of the family, and draws attention to the fact that “In Hegel’s view, the family’s development parallels the development of subjectivity and modern economic life.”²⁷ She adds, citing §177 of the *Rechtsphilosophie*, “The individual family unit – what today might be termed the nuclear family form – supersedes the much older clan (or kinship) organization. Thus, in the modern period, the families of origin of the husband and the wife fade into the background and the clan itself becomes an abstraction, devoid of rights.”²⁸ Sally Scholz, addressing similar concerns, concludes that whilst “Hegel accepted the patriarchal family as the basic societal structure”, what she calls “our contemporary situation” points to this structure as not fixed, but also open, such that “abstracting Hegel’s thought from his patriarchal commitments”, which opens the possibility for women to enter civil society as producers (and so not be confined to reproduction and the hearth).²⁹

Edward Halper suggests that “there is some reason to think that [Hegel] even exaggerates sex differences in order to fit them into a conceptual scheme that allows him to explain marriage’s unity and morality,”³⁰ in that, for instance woman relates to particularity and man to universality, but this is a questionable interpretation of Hegel’s understanding. Hegel stresses the necessary equality of the individuals entering the marriage and familial bond, not only in the *Rechtsphilosophie*, but, as Rudolf Siebert has pointed out, from the very earliest of his writings: “According to the young Hegel, true

union or love proper exists only between living subjects who are alike in power, and thus, in one another's eyes, living beings from every point of view."³¹ Siebert notes the extraordinary continuity of Hegel's philosophical conception of marriage and the family across his early writings in Frankfurt and the Jena period to the mature reflections in the *Phenomenology* and those contained in Hegel's last work, the *Rechtsphilosophie*, noting "Hegel's complete philosophy of the family preserves in itself with astonishing consequence its earlier developmental stages."³² In other words, Hegel emphasizes the equality of the respective particularities of future husband and wife at the point at which the family is formed.

Precisely because the relative position of women in Hegel's description of the family and of his account of reproduction is historically conditioned, the status and role of women has been, and continues to be, susceptible to future historical change, without negating Hegel's fundamental account of the way in which the family forms the basis of civil society and the state. Of far more serious concern, as Joan B. Landes also argues, is Hegel's extreme privileging of the heterosexual, married, relationship as the ground of civil society and the state: she comments that for Hegel "modern civilization requires the restriction of sexual life to a single kind of sexual gratification, heterosexual love, which is itself further bound by the rigid standards of legitimacy and monogamy. For Hegel, the repression of free sexuality is a prerequisite for the achievement of ethical family life."³³ Rudolf Siebert draws attention to Hegel's antipathy even to celibacy.³⁴

What is the dialectical process which Hegel understands to be at work, which converts individual self-interest into the concern for others which mutually benefits all, which results in the emergence of civil society, and, ultimately, the production of the state? What is it which forms the very *ground* of political economy? It is significant the commentators who rightly question Hegel's assignment of the role of women *only* to reproduction (as it reflects on contemporary questions of gender equality), appear to privilege the activity of production *over* reproduction. They appear to join force with that statement of Marx's which claims "if production has a capitalist form, so then with reproduction."³⁵ But the opposite is true for Hegel: *only* insofar as reproduction takes a capitalist form, can production itself take the form it does in capitalism. Reproduction itself *is* the ground of production.³⁶

At the center of Hegel's account of the family in the *Rechtsphilosophie* is an essentially *ahistorical* account of reproduction which has the effect of functioning as the engine of the production and reproduction of the civil society in which the social and economic relations have their specific, historical, concrete and material, form. The family is in this sense the *most* material expression of Hegel's dialectical logic: it is the means by which history itself is produced. Hegel argues that "the family completes itself in [the] three respects,"³⁷ in the form of its immediate concept as union (*Ehe*), which then proceeds to its exterior existence through property and wealth, and completes itself in the upbringing of children and the dissolution of the family (which prompts the return to the possibility of further union and the recapitulation of the cycle all over again). The word I have translated as 'respects' is in German *Seite* – side, normally indicating 'one side or the other': but there are three. The third 'side' is the return to the first – the essential motion described is therefore circular, and occurs as a repetition, over time. As this repetition, it is *itself* the production of history. The production of children provides for the completion and the dissolution of the family: the family which has proceeded beyond the particular individual results in the production of a new individual, or more than one, at which point the producing family itself is free to pass away. This in turn presupposes the dialectical reproduction of the process: the movement from immediate concept, to its negation, and negation of that negation in the stages of material existence, and final resolution and (possibility of and condition for) repetition, as sublation of what went before. This, Hegel argues, is the "liveliness in its totality, namely of the reality of the *species* (*Gattung*) and its process."³⁸

In fact this brief account, which in the *Rechtsphilosophie* only alludes to the dialectical process, is fully explained in a late section of the second (1816) volume of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* (hereafter, simply *Logic*), in the chapter on *The Idea*, in a section entitled *Life*. Hegel introduces the discussion by explaining the connection of life with truth, through cognition. Here we should recall Adam Smith's *unknown* process whereby self-interest is converted into the equalization of the resources of life. Hegel recapitulates the essential thought of the entire *Logic*: because the idea itself is true (or anything is true only insofar as it is idea): "being has attained the significance of truth, inasmuch as the idea is the unity of the concept and reality."³⁹ Hegel's relentless materialism should not be overlooked: the idea is *not* merely the concept, and above all is nothing abstract, but rather is itself both manifest and known *through* its realities, its materialization. At the same time it is the material and real which make knowing itself actual, which brings it about, as the knowledge that it is.

At the same time that Hegel's philosophy is a materialism, it is a philosophy of subjectivity, of knowing oneself's knowing (recognition, *Erkennen*). Hegel adds "in nature itself life appears as the highest stage, which it attains to through its exteriority, [an exteriority] which in itself passes away such that it is sublated into subjectivity."⁴⁰ What Hegel describes here is the means by which, *through exterior and material forms, but also in their overcoming (sublation) and dying-away*, absolute knowing, truth, comes to be and unfolds.

Everything that follows in this section of the *Logic* is to be understood as the working out of the philosophy of subjectivity. It is from this that Hegel begins with "the idea of life in its immediacy is yet only the creative universal soul."⁴¹ What is worked out in its specificities in the *Rechtsphilosophie* (the relation of the family to civil society and the state), with constant references to the terms of the *Logic*, is explained as a dialectical movement in the *Logic* itself, thus as a dialectical syllogism.

Hegel explains the dialectical movement of life in three moments (paralleling the three sides of the organic process of the family): first, that of living individual that is for itself as subjective totality; second, the life-process itself, of sublating (*aufzuheben*) its presupposition and, through the negative objectivity which it comes up against and to which it stands opposed, actualizing itself as the power and negative unity of the negation that this objectivity posts to it; thirdly as the "*process of the genus*" its isolation is overcome and as its objective existence it relates itself to itself (it completes itself) – as Hegel later says, by relating its particularity to the universality of genus (*Gattung*).⁴²

The first premise of the syllogism is the purposiveness in which the concept attains to the objectivity of a purposive living organism, as 'external' and part of a manifold of members. It is in this manifold that Hegel explains the self-interest of particularity, alongside the impulse to mutual interest: in individuality we find a "*drive of each singular specific moment, to produce itself and at the same to uplift its particularity to universality, to cancel the others external to it, to propagate itself at their expense, but at the very same to cancel itself and make itself a means for the others.*"⁴³ This is the moment, described in the *Logic* (in the *Rechtsphilosophie*, of the family discovering its unity through the propagation of children), when the individual exceeds him- or herself and abandons self-interest for the sake of the interests of others. The mediation of civil society converts the self-interests of the production of resources (capital) into the administration and stewardship of resources for all. It is for this reason that civil society is only the *means* to the actual existence of the state, in which the universality of the species takes its public form. What is this moment? It is the moment of production itself, *reproduction* as production: Hegel says it is the moment of "production", of the "reflexion of the species in itself", "the propagation of the living genus," such that *Gattung*, species is *Begattung*, copulation.⁴⁴

Hegel concludes, "in copulation, the immediacy of living individuality itself perishes: the death of this life is the emergence of *Geist*."⁴⁵ As the emergence of *Geist*, it is the realization, *through* the

accomplishment of the appearance of the universal *through the particular*, of “the *idea of cognition*.”⁴⁶ It is for this reason that the ‘invisible hand’ is no unknown process, but a process that results in knowing, cognition, as such. It is this knowing, as both particular and absolute, that concludes the whole of the *Science of Logic* in the sections that follow from these.

What does production as reproduction produce? If we are Marx, we want to say “species,” as in species-being. Reproduction in this sense has a goal, a limit as a whole, or within itself. Indeed, this has remained a specific problem in Marx’s thought: Marx posits for history a definite ‘end’: the full realization of species-being,⁴⁷ at which point it would be possible to say, history itself has attained to its finality: it is complete. It is for this reason that, if you hold that liberal democracy is the goal or end of human development, then, with Francis Fukuyama, you declare ‘the end of history’. What Marx can never account for, however, is the *finitude* of the particular subject: even as (as we have seen from the *Logic*) the particular subject represents and makes visible species itself, it passes away, I die. In what manner could *individual* ‘species-being’ ever appear? For Marx, unlike Hegel, this is never explained.

It becomes clear from this why Hegel at times names the family as having become a *singular* person (and hence why the respective sex-roles within the family may have less significance for Hegel than some commentators have claimed), because the family as a unity *also* has a finitude and passes away on the death of one of the marriage-partners. Moreover, Hegel is explicit in the *Rechtsphilosophie* (§172) that through each union a new family is constituted, emphasizing, not completion, but repetition and succession. It is in repetition and re-production that species becomes visible. Species itself is not *the* object of either production or even of reproduction because species itself is *in itself* infinitely creative (*schöpferisch*). The event of the family, as a moment in the coming-to-be of species, is also the moment of transformation whereby the self-interest of particularity and individuality are themselves converted into a being-ordered to others. Both the family and the forms of being ordered towards (which attain their fulfilment in civil society) others take specific, material, and historical forms.

Production and the social and material structures of the activity of political economy are therefore both the effects, and the historical materialization, of the dialectical process of species coming to appearance, as the particular realizing the universal. They are the means by which this coming to appearance is affected. In this sense, because these forms of the family and production are historically contingent (in this sense, but in this sense alone, “arbitrary”), they are not “final” forms, but they are “actual,” and as actual they condition the forms into which they change and how they are succeeded. Thus Hegel notes that “quite rightly the proper origin and the original foundation of states has been ascribed to the introduction of *agriculture* along with the introduction of *marriage*.”⁴⁸ Moreover he stresses that this is marriage understood as the limitation of sex-relations to monogamy, i.e., its development *into* this historical form. In the *Rechtsphilosophie* Hegel goes so far as to propose a development in political economy, and so in the capitalist organization of civil society, as a political reform, namely, the corporation (as a development of the guild).⁴⁹

What then does reproduction, manifesting itself as production, produce? Again the short, but misleading, answer would appear to be “the state.” The family requires a mediating possibility, the forms of civil society, in order to make the transformation over into the universal. In introducing the discussion of the state, Hegel begins by arguing that the idea of the state “is itself the universal idea as *species* and absolute power over against individual states, *Geist* itself, which itself gives reality to the process of *world-history*.”⁵⁰ The business of political economy in its historical, contingent, form is, in materializing the production of resources and so safeguarding the welfare of all, the means of actual transformation into the state. And indeed Hegel appears to say as much: “the real idea, *Geist* itself, divides itself into the two ideal spheres of its concept, the family and civil society.”⁵¹

Were we to interpret these phrases in this way we would argue both that reproduction and what it makes possible, production, materializes and produces the state. This is the burden of Marx's critique of Hegel, especially in the writings of the 1840s – that Hegel is unable to progress beyond a doctrine of the state in accounting for the productive activity of humanity, and so maintains without possibility of alteration the essential political forms of civil society and the state. We can see however, that this is not the case, *in every case* the forms of life that arise from productiveness and creativity as such, which is the absolute idea of *Geist* and species in its concept, take on material, historical forms. This is even true of the family, which, although it appears more definite and less contingent than the forms of civil society, nevertheless, as we have seen from Hegel's historical account, itself arises at a moment in a history which itself posits the possibility of the establishment of the state. What this means is that *even the state* arises historically, and is therefore, as the materialization of the idea, and materialized into particular states, not a *necessary* form for all times.

Idea of what? For we have seen that the idea of the state is the idea as species. The idea is the idea of subjectivity, which, beginning in the particular transforms itself through the material, historical, conditions of existence (being) into the realization of absolute subjectivity. Absolute subjectivity is nothing other than cognition coming to know and recognize itself as absolute *cognition*, as knowing, knowing itself absolutely. Because Hegel's philosophical thought is entirely developed from out of the philosophy of subjectivity, any understanding of production secured on the basis of Hegel's thought will unfold as and through his philosophy of the subject.

Hegel's understanding of absolute knowledge always takes material forms, the highest of which, historically and presently, is the state. To be accurate, therefore, we would have to say reproduction makes possible that kind of production which presently manifests itself as the state, but which more properly is understood as absolute subjectivity. The state is not a necessary form; it is the material and historical expression of some other necessity. The only necessity that Hegel discusses is "in ideality, the *development* of the idea within itself,"⁵² which takes subjective and objective political forms.

In one of the most enigmatic of the passages of the *Rechtsphilosophie* Hegel speaks of the connection of the state with divinity. Religion is that which contains and expresses the foundation of the ethical realm, which specifically is "the nature of the state as the divine will."⁵³ A still more problematic phrase is in one of Eduard Gans's editorial additions to the 1833 edition of the *Rechtsphilosophie*: "the state is *Geist* itself, which exists in the world and realizes itself as such through *consciousness* . . . it is the path of God through the world . . . the force of reason actualizing itself as will."^{54,55} Walter Kaufman, in his commentary on Hegel's political philosophy expresses unhappiness with this phrase, preferring to translate it "it is the way with God in the world that there should be the state", and clearly attributing the phrase more to Gans than to Hegel.⁵⁶ It is for phrases like this, and the identity of divinity with absolute subjectivity in the *Phenomenology* that lead commentators like Sidney Hook to dismiss Hegel's metaphysics as "the autobiography of God."⁵⁷ Hook fails to understand the sheer materialism of Hegel that means that the experience of life is the experience of the concept in its material forms.

We have seen that Hegel's dialectic is anything but the autobiography of God, but, as the coming-to-appearance of the species, it is, entirely, the autobiography of humanity. Gans's reported phrase, I think, indicates all of Hegel's ambiguity towards divinity, an ambiguity that Kojève had already drawn attention to in his interpretation of the *Phenomenology*, directly attributing a kind of atheism to Hegel's historical thought.⁵⁸ In the context of contemporary production and the way in which it has taken over and captured the state, to the extent where the state itself has become, in the West at least, capitalism's banker and final guarantor, would we not better translate this phrase, and understand Hegel's description of production as the material forms of the activity of reproduction, by means of a phrase that appeared in the *New Zurich Times* on the 21st of September 1969, which talked of the modern "Hegel-renaissance" and

the ruling dialectic in making intelligible the present situation. The article then speaks of “industrial society, which means today the only and final reality”, commenting “earlier this was called God.”⁵⁹ Surely this is how we should understand the relation of Hegel’s dialectic to capitalist production. The author was that relentless commentator on Hegel’s metaphysics of absolute subjectivity, Martin Heidegger.

Endnotes

¹ The history of this debate is long, and the studies that underpin it are legion, and too many to name here. Perhaps it is enough to note that it is now broadly accepted among scholars of Marx that he has no account of historical or dialectical materialism of his own, but that Marx relies on his own employment of “the *rationale* in the method which Hegel discovered, but which he at the same mystified” Karl Marx, *Letter to Friedrich Engels of 16 January 1858* in *Briefe Januar 1856–Dezember 1859* in *Marx Engels Werke*, Berlin, Dietz, 1987, vol. 29, p. 260.

² Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (1844)* in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Berlin, Dietz, 1990 (1932), vol. 40, p. 574. “[Hegel] erfaßt die *Arbeit* als das *Wesen*, als das sich bewährende *Wesen* des Menschen.” (Marx’s emphases)

³ Alexandre Kojève, Raymond Queneau (ed.), *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel (leçons sur la phénoménologie de l’esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes réunies)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1947, p. 9. Kojève simply cites this text and places the name ‘Karl Marx’ below it, giving to indication of its provenance.

⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1986, p. 351 (referred to in this text as the *Rechtsphilosophie*). “Die Vermittlung, den *partikularisierten* Bedürfnissen angemessene, ebenso *partikularisierte* Mittel zu bereiten und zu erwerben, ist die *Arbeit*.” (Hegel’s emphases) Two translations of this text are in common use: the first, by T. M. Knox is *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952, and does not include all of Eduard Gans’ interpolated notes from the transcripts of Hegel’s lectures of H. G. Hotho and K. G. von Griesheim; the second, which does include all the interpolations that Gans published in his edition of 1833, is by H. B. Nisbet, edited by Allen Wood, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. I have at times referred to both of these texts, but all the translations here from German, including those from other texts, are my own.

⁵ Cf. Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (1844)*, p. 574 “Hegel steht auf dem Standpunkt der modernen Nationalökonomien.”

⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 353. “Der Mensch (kann) davon wegtreten und an seiner Stelle die *Maschine* eintreten lassen.” (Hegel’s emphasis)

⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 353. “[. . .] in die Vermittlung des Besonderen durch das Allgemeine als dialektische Bewegung, so daß, indem jeder für sich erwirbt, produziert und genießt, er eben damit für den Genuß der Übrigen produziert und erwirbt.”

⁸ See Adam Smith, edited by A. L. Macfie and D. D. Raphael, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 184 f. (my emphasis) For further discussion of Hegel’s engagement with Adam Smith see James P. Henderson and John B. Davis, *Adam Smith’s Influence on Hegel’s Writings* in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, vol. 13, 1991, pp. 184–204.

⁹ Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 353, §200.

¹⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 353. “Die *Ungleichheit des Vermögens* und der *Geschicklichkeiten der Individuen*.” (Hegel’s emphasis)

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 354. “Die Forderung der Gleichheit entgegen[zu]setzen, gehört dem leeren Verstande an, der dies sein Abstraktum und sein Sollen für das Reelle und Vernünftige nimmt.”

¹² G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 390. “So würde die Subsistenz der Bedürftigen gesichert, ohne durch die *Arbeit* vermittelt zu sein.”

¹³ Domenico Losurdo has detailed with great care the way in the *Rechtsphilosophie* especially cannot be read simply

at face value. Losurdo points to the self-censorship at work in Hegel's text in the face of the Prussian censors, which, he argues, to some extent limited the freedom with which Hegel felt able to speak – a freedom Losurdo believes Hegel exercised much more in the lectures on which the *Rechtsphilosophie* was based, and, Losurdo argues, which Gans's editorial addition to the 1833 (posthumous) edition, however problematic in themselves, attempted to recapture. See Domenico Losurdo: *Hegel e la libertà dei moderni*, Naples, La scuola di Pitagora, 2011, 2 vols, vol. 1, esp. pp. 27–89.

¹⁴ The term first makes its appearance not in Marx, but in Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, where Feuerbach speaks of "the essence of species, which is the absolute essence of the individual," leaving unclear how he thinks this essence is to be resolved. Marx's taking up of the term has much more to do with Feuerbach's explanation of it in the essay *Basic Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, where he says "the singular man possesses for himself the essence of mankind neither in the sense of a moral nor a cognitive essence. The essence of man is only contained in society, in the unity of man with man as a oneness, which itself, however, is only underpinned by the reality of the difference between I and you." See Ludwig Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft in Kritiken und Abhandlungen I 1832–1839 (Sämtliche Werke)*, vol. 2, p. 318. "Der einzelne Mensch für sich hat das Wesen des Menschen weder in sich als moralischem noch in sich als denkendem Wesen. Das Wesen des Menschen ist nur in der Gemeinschaft, in der Einheit des Menschen mit dem Menschen enthalten in einer Einheit, die sich aber nur auf die Realität des Unterschiedes von Ich und du stützt."

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, p. 539. "Das Individuelle und das Gattungswesen des Menschen sind nicht verschieden." (Marx's emphasis)

¹⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 339. "Die konkrete Person, welche sich als besondere Zweck ist, als ein Ganzes von Bedürfnissen und eine Vermischung von Naturnotwendigkeit und Willkür [. . .]" (Hegel's emphasis)

¹⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 359. "Das Individuum gibt sich nur Wirklichkeit, indem es in das *Dasein* überhaupt, somit in *die bestimmte Besonderheit tritt*." (Hegel's emphases)

¹⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 323. "Die Familie hat als Person ihre äußerliche Realität in einem *Eigentum*, in dem sie das *Dasein* ihrer substantiellen Persönlichkeit nur als in einem *Vermögen* hat" (Hegel's emphases)

¹⁹ Nisbet's translation (p. 208) has "The family, as a person, has its external reality in property; and only in the latter, in the shape of resources, does its substantial personality have its existence." Knox's rendering of this passage is even more interpretative, translating *Vermögen* only as capital. Both speak of 'property' as if it were a category rather than a singular thing.

²⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 323. "Das im abstrakten *Eigentum* willkürliche Moment des besonderen Bedürfnisses des bloß Einzelnen und die Eigenschaft der Begierde verändert sich hier in die Sorge und den Erwerb für ein Gemeinsames, in ein Sittliches."

²¹ Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §§182, 238.

²² G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 325. "substantielles *Dasein*"

²³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 325 f. "Ein Fortgang, der sich in den unendlichen Progreß der sich erzeugenden und voraussetzenden Geschlechter verläuft."

²⁴ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, pp. 328–342, esp. p. 330.

²⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 326 f. "Der einfache Geist der Penaten seine Existenz als Gattung darstellt."

²⁶ See especially, Rudolf J. Siebert, *Hegel's Concept of Marriage and the Family: The Origin of Subjective Freedom* in Donald Phillip Verene (ed.), *Hegel's Social and Political Thought* (proceedings of the fourth [1976] biennial conference of the Hegel Society of America), New Jersey, Humanities, 177–214; Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos, *Hegel and the Logical Structure of Love*, Melbourne, re.press, 2010 (1999); Edward C. Halper, *Hegel's Family Values in Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 54 (2001), pp. 815–858; Joan B. Landes, *Hegel's Conception of the Family in Polity*, vol. 14 (1981), pp. 5–28; Sally J. Scholz, *Reproductive Labor: The Impact of the Patriarchal Family on Hegel's Phenomenology in Clio*, vol. 22 (1993), pp. 357–368

²⁷ Joan B. Landes, *Hegel's Conception of the Family*, p. 15.

²⁸ Joan B. Landes, *Hegel's Conception of the Family*, p. 15

²⁹ Sally J. Scholz, *Reproductive Labor*, pp. 367–368.

³⁰ Edward C. Halper, *Hegel's Family Values*, p. 818.

³¹ Rudolf J. Siebert, *Hegel's Concept of Marriage and the Family*, p. 181. Siebert cites for his source of the young Hegel's writing on love Herrmann Nohl's *Theologische Jugendschriften*, Tübingen, Mohr, 1907. *The work in question, Die*

Liebe, is reproduced in G. W. F. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1986, pp. 244–250, esp. p. 245.

³² Rudolf J. Siebert, *Hegel's Concept of Marriage and the Family*, p. 203

³³ Joan B. Landes, *Hegel's Conception of the Family*, p. 24.

³⁴ Rudolf J. Siebert, *Hegel's Concept of Marriage and the Family*, p. 201. "According to the Lutheran Hegel, celibacy is unethical."

³⁵ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Berlin, Dietz, 2008, vol. 23, p. 591. "Hat die Produktion kapitalistische Form, so die Reproduktion."

³⁶ I am not trying to free Hegel from the – it seems justifiable – criticism that he is bound to the structure of the (patriarchal) family of his age; rather that this is not the central issue in the dialectical process he describes: the patriarchal family as an historical occurrence arises as a particular form of what grounds it, namely reproduction itself. Reproduction is in this sense prior.

³⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 309. "Die Familie vollendet sich in den drei Seiten."

³⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 309. "Die Lebendigkeit in ihrer Totalität, nämlich als Wirklichkeit der *Gattung* und deren Prozeß." (Hegel's emphasis)

³⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1969, p. 465. "Sein hat die Bedeutung der Wahrheit erreicht, indem die Idee die Einheit des Begriffs und der Realität ist." (Hegel's emphases)

⁴⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 471. "In der Natur erscheint das Leben als die höchste Stufe, welche von ihrer Äußerlichkeit dadurch erreicht wird, daß sie in sich gegangen ist und sich in der Subjektivität aufhebt."

⁴¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 471. "Die Idee des Lebens in ihrer Unmittelbarkeit ist nur erst die schöpferische allgemeine Seele."

⁴² G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 473. "Prozeß der *Gattung*" (Hegel's emphasis)

⁴³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 476 f. "[. . .] *Trieb* jedes einzelnen, spezifischen Moments, sich zu produzieren und ebenso seine Besonderheit zur Allgemeinheit zu erheben, die anderen ihm äußerlichen aufzuheben, sich auf ihre Kosten hervorzubringen, aber ebensosehr sich selbst aufzuheben und sich zum Mittel für die anderen zu machen." (Hegel's emphases)

⁴⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 484, 486. "Produktion", "Die Reflexion der *Gattung* in sich [. . .] – die *Fortpflanzung* der lebenden Geschlechter" (Hegel's emphasis) The section in which Hegel concludes the discussion of 'life' and the life-process, entitled *Species* begins with the sentence: "Das lebendige Individuum, zuerst aus dem allgemeinen Begriffe des Lebens abgeschieden, ist eine Voraussetzung, die noch nicht durch sich selbst bewährt ist". The individual 'proves himself' (*sich bewähren*) through the (re)productive labour of bringing forth species itself, *Gattung*. It is almost impossible not to think that this is the sentence Marx had in mind when he argues that Hegel grasps work as "the essence, the self-proving essence of man" (see note 1 above).

⁴⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 486. "In der Begattung erstirbt die Unmittelbarkeit der lebendigen Individualität; der Tod dieses Lebens ist das Hervorgehen des Geistes."

⁴⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, p. 487. "Die Idee des *Erkennens*." (Hegel's emphasis)

⁴⁷ This is a point that Marx makes repeatedly in his *Grundrisse*, that there is a finality toward which history tends. He concludes: "Resultat ist: die ihrer Tendenz und dunavmei nach allgemeine Entwicklung der Produktivkräfte – des Reichtums überhaupt – als Basis, ebenso die Universalität des Verkehrs, daher der Weltmarkt als Basis. Die Basis als Möglichkeit der universellen Entwicklung des Individuums und die wirkliche Entwicklung der Individuen von dieser Basis." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* in *Marx-Engels Werke* vol. 42, Berlin, Dietz, 1983, p. 447.

⁴⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 355. "Mit Recht ist der eigentliche Anfang und die erste Stiftung der Staaten in die Einführung des *Ackerbaues*, nebst der Einführung der *Ehe*, gesetzt worden." (Hegel's emphases)

⁴⁹ For an important discussion of Hegel's development of the notion of the corporation in the *Rechtsphilosophie*, see Cary J. Nederman, *Sovereignty, War and the Corporation: Hegel on the Medieval Foundations of the Modern State* in *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 49 (1987), pp. 500–520. The corporation, which receives a lengthy treatment in the *Rechtsphilosophie*, is a development of an existing historical phenomenon that Hegel envisages in a more advanced form precisely to enhance and contribute to the welfare of the individual and the family, such that it is a material expression of the coming-to-be of the public conversion of self-interest into the benefit of all. Hegel concludes that "after the family, the corporation, grounded as it is in civil society, is the second ethical root of the state". G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 396. "Zur Familie macht die *Korporation* die zweite, die in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft gegründete *sittliche* Wurzel des Staats aus." (Hegel's emphases)

⁵⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 404. "Die Idee des Staats . . . ist sie die allgemeine Idee

als *Gattung* und absolute Macht gegen die individuellen Staaten, der Geist, der sich im Prozesse der *Weltgeschichte* seine Wirklichkeit gibt.” (Hegel’s emphases)

⁵¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 410. “Die wirkliche Idee, der Geist, der sich selbst in die zwei ideellen Sphären seines Begriffs, die Familie und die bürgerliche Gesellschaft, als in seine Endlichkeit scheidet”.

⁵² G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 412. “Die *Notwendigkeit* in der Idealität ist die *Entwicklung* der Idee innerhalb ihrer selbst.” (Hegel’s emphases)

⁵³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 417. “Die Natur des Staats als den göttlichen Willen.”

⁵⁴ In this case from the notes of K. G. von Griesheim.

⁵⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 403. “Der Staat ist der Geist, der in der Welt steht und sich in derselben mit *Bewußtsein* realisiert . . . es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt . . . sein Grund ist die Gewalt der sich als Wille verwirklichenden Vernunft.” (Gans’ reported emphasis)

⁵⁶ Walter Kaufman, *Debating the Political Philosophy of Hegel*, New Brunswick, Transaction, 1970, p. 4. See another of Kaufman’s discussions of this text in Walter Kaufman, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 105 and n. 8.

⁵⁷ Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1962 (1950), p. 36.

⁵⁸ See Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, pp. 183 ff. “Et toute l’évolution du Monde chrétien n’est rien d’autre qu’une marche vers la prise de conscience athée de la finitude essentielle de l’existence humaine.”

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Zeichen* from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 21st September 1969, no. 579, p. 51. Reprinted in Martin Heidegger, Herman Heidegger (ed.), *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens (Gesamtausgabe vol. 13)*, Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1983, p. 212. “Die heutige Hegel-Renaissance – das herrschende Denken ist schwer aus der Mühle der Dialektik herauszuholen. [. . .] Die Industriegesellschaft, die heute als die erste und letzte Wirklichkeit gilt – früher hieß sie Gott –.”