

Everything that belongs to a whole constitutes
an obstacle to this whole insofar as it is included
in it

January 7, 1975

Old Hegel split in two—Scission, determination, limit—Space and
outplace—Deviations on the right and left

1

There are two dialectical matrices in Hegel. This is what turns the famous story of the shell and the kernel into such a dubious enigma. It is the kernel itself that is cracked, as in those peaches that are furthermore so irritating to eat whose hard internal object quickly cracks between one's teeth into two pivoting halves.

In the peach there is still a kernel of the kernel, the bitter almond-shaped nut of its reproduction as a tree. But out of Hegel's division, we will draw no secondary unity, not even one stamped with bitterness.

We must understand what Lenin repeated a bit all over the place: the retrospective good news that Hegel is a materialist! It is worthless merely to oppose an (acceptable) dialectical kernel to an (abominable) idealistic shell. The dialectic, inasmuch as it is the law of being, is necessarily materialist. If Hegel touched upon it, he must have been a materialist. His other side will be that of an idealist-dialectic, in a single word, which has nothing real about it, not even in the register of an inverted symbolic indication (standing on its head, as Marx said).

So at the heart of the Hegelian dialectic we must disentangle two processes, two concepts of movement, and not just one proper view of becoming that would have been corrupted by a subjective system of knowing. Thus:

- a) A dialectical matrix covered by the term of alienation: the idea of a simple term which unfolds itself in its becoming-other, in order to come back to itself as an achieved concept.
- b) A dialectical matrix whose operator is scission, and whose theme is that there is no unity that is not split. There is not the least bit of return into itself, nor any connection between the final and the inaugural. Not even 'integral communism' as the return, after the exteriorization into the State, to the concept of which 'primitive communism' would be the simple immediacy.

Yet things are far from being so simple.

2

Let us begin with an empty notion, at once limited and prodigiously general: the notion of the 'something', which is the first form of being—there in Hegel's *Logic*:

Hegel's objective, with his 'something', is nothing less than to give rise to the dialectic of the One and the many, of the infinite and the finite, that is, the principle of what we orthodox Marxists call quantitative accumulation, which, as everyone knows, is reputed to produce a qualitative leap.

The mystery, moreover, is that all of this in Hegel's *Logic* can be found under the heading of 'quality', which in the order of exposition precedes quantity.

However, it is Hegel who is right, as always, because nothing can be said of the One without engaging the qualitative and force. This is why one of the objectives of what we are saying here is to establish that the famous 'leap' from the quantitative to the qualitative, far from being the measure that makes all the thermometers explode, includes the effect of a subject.

Hegel in any case is at pains to engender the multiple, the denumerable, insofar as his idealist propensity pushes him always to obtain everything on the basis of a simple term. How can the multiple proceed from the One, and from the One alone? This is a question as old as philosophy, but it has always held more punch for someone who claims to historicize the Whole, instead of merely giving us the law of its fixed order. Already with the Church Fathers, those great founders of conceptual history, it was necessary to account for the fact that God, the absolute form of the One,

was able to pulverize a universe of such lasting multiplicity. To prove God by the marvels of nature—from the frog to the unicorn (except that the unicorn rather proves the existence of the Devil)—is one thing; to prove the marvels of nature by God is much more complicated, since God is necessarily the marvel of marvels.

Hegel is the modern conjurer of this ecclesiastical question. Instead of saying that there is creation of the Whole by the One, Hegel will show that the Whole is the history of the One, so that the space of the multiple is the effect of the time required for the concept. For the *coup de force* of the miraculous Creator, he substitutes the work, the suffering, and the circular duration of a kind of self-exposure, through which the absolute arrives at the completely unfolded contemplation of itself. And it is this journey through the galleries of the One that is the whole of the world.

Of course, the initial *coup de force* that is thus glossed over shows up again in every subsequent paragraph. Just as it makes the heavy machinery of the global system advance, it is the very accumulation of these arbitrary local decrees that everywhere gives form to the acute and partial framework of Hegel's materialism.

3

From the start, Hegel does not posit the 'something' all on its own, but the difference between something and something other (*Etwas und Anderes*). What is thus recognized is that no dialectic is conceivable if it does not presuppose division. It is the Two that gives its concept to the One, and not the other way around.

Naturally, there are all sorts of contortions on Hegel's part that serve to mask this recognition. Everything happens—especially in the first edition from 1812, which is the most idealist because the old Hegel, contrary to what is sometimes said, always holds on to a reality principle—as if the 'something else' were the post-position of the 'something', its categorial becoming. But this is a smokescreen. In fact, Hegel is going to study the scission of the something in a movement that is prestructured by a first scission, which is in a way hidden *because it is essentially repetitive*: it is what repeats the something in the position of itself as other, as something-other. This is exactly the operation of the very beginning of the *Logic*, where being and nothing are the same thing posited twice. Here, too, one can 'track down' the becoming-split of a category only because one gives

oneself, whether secretly or publicly, this minimal primary differential: two times One.

I say that it is 'the same thing' posited twice because alterity has here no qualitative support. We are, if you will, at the dawn of the qualitative, at its structural skeleton. *This* only differs from *that* by the statement of the difference, by the literal placement. One could name this infamous stasis of the contradiction the indexical stasis. There is A, and there is A_p (read: 'A as such' and 'A in another place', namely, the place p distributed by the space of placement, or P).

It is the same A twice named, twice placed.

This will more than suffice for them to corrupt one another.

For you can consider A either in its pure, closed identity, or in its indexical difference from its second occurrence. A is itself, but it is also its power of repetition, the legibility of itself at a distance from itself, the fact that at a place, p, the other place, it is still A itself that is read, albeit 'other' than there where it stands, even if it is nowhere, since it is seen there *too*.

Hegel names these two determinations the something-in-itself and the something-for-the-other. The 'something', as a pure category, is the unity of these two determinations, the movement of their duality.

This is proof that in order to think anything at all, something no matter what, it must be split in two.

What is the meaning of the something-in-itself and the something-for-the-other? Pure identity and placed identity; the letter and the space in which it is marked; theory and practice.

The givenness of minimal difference (something *and* something else) necessarily contracts into the fixed term of the difference, the 'thing', whether it be some- or else. A, we said (and A is the thing), is at the same time A and A_p whereby A_p is the generic term for any placement of A. Indeed, this can be A_{p1} , A_{p2} , A_{p3} . . . with all the P_1 , P_2 . . . , P_n . . . belonging, for example, to P. This is what we will see later on: there are an infinity of places. A_p is A in the general-singular of placement. Now, it is always in this way that A presents itself (it is always placed) and refuses itself (because, as placed, it is never only itself, A, but also its place, A_p). Furthermore, this is true of anything whatsoever—of something in general, of such-and-such a thing.

We must thus posit a constitutive scission: $A = (AA_p)$.

The index, p, refers back to the space of placement P, the site of any possible reduplication of A. Note that this does not have to be spatial or geometrical: a reduplication can be temporal, or even fictive.

What Hegel does not state clearly is that, fundamentally, the true initial contrary of the something, A, is not something else, not even the same A 'placed', A_p . No, the true but camouflaged contrary of A is the space of placement P: it is that which *delegates the index*. The givenness of A as being itself split into:

- its pure being, A
- its being-placed, A_p

(Heidegger would say: into its ontological being and its ontic being) is the effect on A of the contradiction between its pure identity and the structured space to which it belongs, between its being and the Whole. The dialectic divides A based upon the contradiction between A and P, between the existent and its place. It is this contradiction, whose latent theme is Mallarméan ('Nothing will have taken place except the place'), which, introjected into A, founds its effective being as scission.

All of this is too much of an anticipation, because the contradiction between A and P opposes a force to a system of places, and we have not reached that point yet.

Let me throw just a little flash of light, one that moreover is perfectly excessive.

The true contrary of the proletariat is not the bourgeoisie. It is the bourgeois world, imperialist society, of which the proletariat, let this be noted, is a notorious element, as the principal productive force and as the antagonistic political pole. The famous contradiction of bourgeoisie/proletariat is a limited, structural scheme that loses track of the torsion of the Whole of which the proletariat *qua* subject traces the force. To say proletariat and bourgeoisie is to remain within the bounds of the Hegelian artifice: something and something else. Why? Because the project of the proletariat, its internal being, is not to contradict the bourgeoisie, or to cut its feet from under it. This project is communism, and nothing else. That is, the abolition of any place in which something like a proletariat can be installed. The political project of the proletariat is the disappearance of the space of the placement of classes. It is the loss, for the historical something, of every index of class.

You will say: and what about socialism? Socialism where, in fact, bourgeoisie and proletariat are more than ever at loggerheads, including in the guise of unprecedented revolutions, the cultural revolutions? Socialism does not exist. It is a name for an obscure arsenal of new conditions in which the capitalism/communism contradiction becomes somewhat

clarified. Socialism designates a shifting mutation of the space of the place-ment of classes. Socialism is P' in the place of P. If there is a major point in Marxism, which this century confirms almost to the level of disgust, it is that we should certainly not inflate the question of 'socialism', of the 'construction of socialism'. The serious affair, the *precise* affair, is communism. This is why, all along, politics stands in a position of domination over the State, and cannot be reduced to it. And you will never reduce all of this to the binary poverty of the contradiction, term against term, of proletariat/bourgeoisie. Marxism begins beyond this contradiction.

4

With Hegel we thus posit the scission $A = (AA_p)$, the effect of the completely veiled conflictual relation between A and the distributor of places to which it is connected. Everything that exists is thus at the same time itself and itself-according-to-its-place.

Now Hegel says that what *determines* the split term, what gives it the singularity of its existence, is not of course A, the generic term closed in on itself, indifferent to any dialectic. It is rather A_p . A according to the effect of the whole into which it is inscribed.

Consider, for example, that if the working class is internally split, including during those heady times marked by mass movements, between the onset of its true political identity, on one hand, and, on the other, its latent corruption by bourgeois or imperialist ideas and practices, then it is surely owing to the effect of that which *still* disposes it in a Whole, whether national or global, governed by capital and empires. This is what holds together two otherwise so contrary paths in the practical unity of an uprising, and which makes of the pure emergence of itself a process of purification in the divisible contact with its opposite.

This is true even under socialism. In 1967, in China, armed factions resist in all the large factories. Mao declares: 'Nothing essential divides the working class.'¹ Does this amount to the factual observation of a fixed place? No. This is a directive for combat, meaning that the proletariat must take the lead of the revolution, and that such is the historical guiding thread it must hold onto for its unity, that is, *for its existence* (as political class).

All that is relates to itself at a distance from itself owing to the place where it is?²

If $A = (AA_p)$, this is determined by the indexical effect of P on A. We will thus write $A_p(AA_p)$ as the first notation of the determination of the scission, the first algorithm of the unity of opposites.

In other words, what Hegel calls *Bestimmung*. *Bestimmung* is, in turn, divided by what it unifies. It is a major strength of the dialectic to grasp how the One of the unity of contraries supports contrariness in its very being.

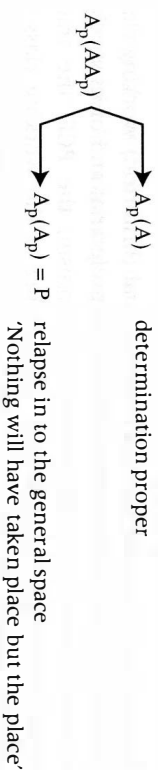
Let us begin with our example: the practical (historical) working class is always the contradictory unity of itself as proletariat and of its specific bourgeois inversion (today, modern revisionism, the PCF, the trade unions, everything that organizes the rallying of the working class to imperialist society, or even to the idea of leading this class for the direct benefit of the working aristocracy, partially authorized by bureaucratic state capitalism). This unity of opposites is determined (in the sense of the Hegelian *Bestimmung*) by the general bourgeois space, which bears the possible unity of the politically active (Marxist) proletariat and of the working class as Place of the new state bureaucratic bourgeoisie (revisionism). Thus, $A =$ the working class, $P =$ contemporary imperialist society. This gives us $A_p =$ modern revisionism, and the algorithm: $A \rightarrow A_p(AA_p)$, in which is indicated that what determines the dialectical actuality of the proletariat today is its internal purification from modern revisionism.

But what does 'determination' mean? Two things:

- On the one hand, that the combative Marxist core of the working class is determined by the new revisionist bourgeoisie. This is dialectical determination in the strong sense, which can be written $A_p(A)$.
- On the other hand, that revisionism, in the final analysis, and more and more so, is never anything but the specific and homogeneous form, adapted to the working class, of the general bourgeois and imperialist space, or P. In the struggle to purify itself of this, the proletariat *umwelts* (this is the authorized term) the part of itself that is engaged in revisionism, and posits it as an integral part of the external antagonistic term, which, as we saw, is not the bourgeoisie but imperialist society of which the PCF, the unions, and so on, are the modern, effective, and active standard-bearers. As such, determination only reconvoques—repeats—the space of placement, the general alterity P of which p is the index for A. We will write: $A_p(A_p) = P$. This is a sort of dead branch of the dialectical process, the reminder that the determination of the scission $A(AA_p)$ originates from the fact

that A only exists in the site P. This is the inert, divisible part of the total determination—with the other part, marked $A_p(A)$, truly being the intimate core of the determination *for* A.

In general, we can say that the determination of any split ex-sistent is distributive:



Does Hegel really speak of these dead branches of the process? Absolutely. He calls them ‘relapses’ (*Rückfälle*). They are the shadow cast by the place in its pure, evocative dimension. Determination, on the other hand, is the new.

We thus obtain, at this stage, the following great dialectical concepts, endowed with an absolutely general ontological import:

- Difference* of itself from itself, A and A_p , commanded by the *contradiction* between force A and the space of placement P, of which A_p is the indexical instance for A. An important point to note is that it is the contradiction that commands difference, and not the other way around.
- Scission* as the only form of existence of the something in general: $A = (AA_p)$.
- Determination* as unity of the scission, thinkable only from the indexed term (and not from the pure term): $A_p(AA_p)$.
- The scission of the determination according to what it determines:
 - determination of the new, $A_p(A)$
 - relapse: $A_p(A_p) = P$.

The essence of the relapse is the space of placement, the place.

A remark on terminology: if one opposes force to place, as I shall continually do, it will always be more homogeneous to say ‘space of placement’ to designate the action of the structure. It would be even better to forge the term *splacé*. If, on the contrary, one says ‘place’, which is more Mallarméan, we will need to say, in the Lacanian manner, ‘place-holding’ or ‘lieutenancy’ for ‘place’. But ‘force’ is then heterogeneous to designate the a-structural topological side. It would be more appropriate to say: the *outplace*.

The dialectic, in the sawdust-filled arena of the categorial combat, is the outplace against the splacé.

5

The relapse is the inert negative of strict determination only if $A_p(A)$ includes a specific resistance of the term A to allowing itself to be exhaustively determined by its indexical instance A_p . If not, $A_p(A)$ would be swallowed up in A_p . In other words, *there would only be relapses*. This is the principle of structuralism in all its forms.

But neither I nor Hegel are structuralists. I think, for example, that, in its antagonistic determination that is specific to the new revisionist bourgeoisie, the proletariat emerges as a positive newness. This happens, timidly, during May ‘68 in France, and, with great uproar, in January 1967 in China—for instance, in the guise of a thoroughly transformed Marxism (Maoism). The interiority proper to A thus comes to *determine the determination*. After all, in the Cultural Revolution, it is the people in revolt who designate the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie as the global determination of the revolutionary antagonism itself. Unless what is new in the dialectical process is annulled in the pure relapse into P, the place or space of placements, it is thus necessary to posit a determination of the determination, namely: $A(A_p(A))$.

This is a process of torsion, by which force reapplies itself to that from which it conflictually emerges.

The determination of the determination splits itself in a distributive manner just as much as the determination does. Indeed, it can be a simple reaffirmation of the pure identity of A: $A(A)$, that is, a pure emergence of itself, against (but outside of) determination, and this in a strict parallelism to the relapse into P. Thus, a revolt without a future that would pit the combative fraction of the working class against the new bourgeoisie of the PCF and the unions solely in the name of lost purity, hence against the treason of the PCF—without perceiving the internal newness of the new bourgeois phenomenon. This is largely what happened in May ‘68, leading many to dream either of a ‘renewed’ PCF or of a working class re-purified following the school example of its great ancestors of the nineteenth century. The intimate force of A is thus called upon again in the illusory repetition of its closure onto itself and in the inability actively to support the determination.

There is the deviation 'to the right', which leads back to the objective brutality of the place P in order to deny the possibility of the new inherent in the old. But there is also the ineluctable deviation 'to the left', which vindicates the original and intact purity of force while denying, so to speak, the old inherent in the new, that is, determination. The schemas for these two deviations are $A_p(A_p) = P$ and $A(A) = A$.

But if what is at stake is not this reconvoation of essential origins, it is the effective process of the limitation of determination, the work of force on place, the differential of A turning back upon its own indexation in order to reduce its necessary import. This is $A(A_p)$, the direct, limiting application of the efficacy of A onto the determination that it is.

Everything that is of a place comes back to that part of itself that is determined by it in order to displace the place, to determine the determination, and to cross the limit.³

Hegel gives the name of limit (*Grenze*) to this counter-process, which must be understood in the sense of the 'limitation of bourgeois right'—nothing less, for example, than the reduction of the gaps between intellectual and manual labour, city and countryside, agriculture and industry. Limit and limitation are the essence of the labour of the positive.

*Everything that belongs to a whole is an obstacle to this whole insofar as it is included in it.*⁴

This is why 'totalitarianism' does not exist. It is a pure, structural figuration without any historical reality. It is the idea that in this world only the necessary rightist relapse and the impotent suicidal leftism exist. It is $A_p(A_p)$ or $A(A)$ intermittently, that is, P and A in their inoperative exteriority.

The State and the plebs.

But the true terms of all historical life are rather $A_p(A)$, determination, and $A(A_p)$, the limit, terms by which the Whole affirms itself without closure, and the element includes itself therein without abolishing itself.

Action, manor of the subject

January 14, 1975

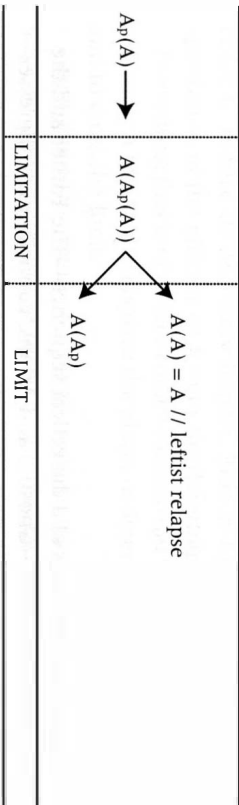
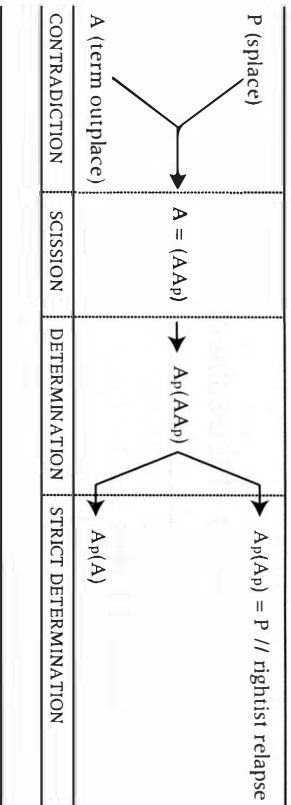
Structural synthesis of a dialectical sequence—The Father and the Son, consubstantial—Gnostics and Arians, councils and congresses—Circularity and periodization—Everything must be taken up again from scratch

1

You can see below the schema of any dialectical fragment whatsoever, such as we deduced it last time from the chapter on the 'something' in Hegel's *Logic*:

We must clearly understand that the contradiction A/P is only given as a structural horizon. It always opposes a term to its place. Any contradiction is fundamentally asymmetrical, in that one of the terms sustains a relation of inclusion to the other. The including term, which is to say the place, the space of placement, is named (particularly by Mao) the dominant term, or the principal aspect of the contradiction. The one that is included, for its part, is the subject of the contradiction. It is subjected to the other, and it is the one that receives the mark, the stamp, the index. It is A that is indexed in A_p according to P. The inverse makes no sense.

Does Hegel say this? No. Hegel conceals the principle of dissymmetry. Or, rather, he links it back to the idea of an integral whole that would retrospectively index each sequence. We shall come back to this. Rigorously speaking, contradiction does not exist. How could it exist,



since to exist (to ex-sist) is precisely to be 'something', that is, to support the scission-effect of which contradiction is the cause? Contradiction is a pure, structural principle. It insists in the index p of A, it marks the repetition of A, but nowhere do you have a real, existing conflict between A and P as constituted and isolatable terms. P, the splace for all isolation and all repetition, cannot be isolated any more than it can be repeated. A, the outplace, is repeatable only as split by inclusion in the splace.

Contradiction has no other mode of existence but scission.

In concrete, militant philosophy, it is thus indispensable to announce that there is only one law of the dialectic: One divides into two. Such is the principle of observable facts and of action.

What does the opposition of imperialist society and the revolutionary people amount to in the order of facts? It is the political division of the people, because the two modes of politics, bourgeois and proletarian, possess reality only insofar as each one of them organizes the people on its own terms. A politics 'without people', not based in a structured mass, does not exist. Thus, the principal contradiction in a country like France, between the proletariat and imperialist society, between proletarian politics and bourgeois politics—a contradiction, it must be said, still completely embryonic in its form—has no effective content other than the historical movement of the division of the people.

This is why the strong and fully deployed existence of the political proletariat can never do without the revolutionary civil war. This is why it is always essential to pay attention not only to the state bourgeoisie, but also to the civil bourgeoisie and its tight popular ramifications.

We must repeat with force that the existence in action of the contradiction between splace and outplace, whatever they are, is the scission of the outplace. Scission is that by which the term is included in the place as out-of-place. There is no other content to the idea of contradiction.

2

Regarding my examples, some could voice the suspicion that all these dialectical algorithms and theorems stand in a relation of absolute dependence to the contents which they organize—the proletariat, imperialist society, revisionism, and so on—and that this is a syntax of little interest from the moment that the semantics of it is forced.

To this I will object:

- *primo*, that this is a matter of indifference to me. Because as a Marxist, I in fact posit that the contents drain the forms, and not the other way around. What is certain is that the dialectical formulations are rooted in an explicit political practice.
- *secundo*, that this is not true. The 'model' on which Hegel implicitly works is Christianity. And I will establish right away the appropriateness of this theological model.

Take P as the splace of the finite, and A, God as infinite, hence, as radical out-of-place.

As such, this contradictory duality has no dialectical meaning, and thus no meaning at all.

What gives it meaning is its historicization in scission, which makes the infinite ex-sist in the finite. Therein lies the necessary stroke of genius of Christianity. For this to happen, God (A) is indexed (A_p) as specific out-place of the splace of the finite: this is the principle of the Incarnation. God becomes man. God divides into himself (the Father) and himself-placed-in-the-finite (the Son). A is the Father, and A_p the Son, that historic son by whom God ex-sists. God thus occurs as scission of the outplace, A = AA_p, God = Father/Son, a scission that the Council of Nicea, the first of the great modern politico-ideological conferences in history, will designate

as sole existence—as unity of opposites—in the well-known dialectical axiom: ‘The Son is consubstantial with the Father.’

From this starting point, our dialectical fragment unfolds in its entirety:

– $A_p(A)$ designates the determination of the (infinite) identity of God by its marking in the space of the finite. The radicality of this determination is the Passion: God *qua* Son dies. The infinite climbs up the Calvary.

– $A(A_p)$ designates the counter-determination (the limit of death) by the infinity of the Father: the Son is resurrected and rejoins (Ascension) the Father’s bosom, which represents a figurative outplace.

The consubstantial duality Son/Father, that is, the Incarnation, the death of the infinite (the Passion), and its non-death (the Resurrection) are the immediate theological contents of scission, determination, and limit.

At the end of this redemptive adventure, you find in heaven a God who reconciles in himself, in his historical self-unfolding, the finite and the infinite. And on earth, what subsists is only the simple *empty trace* of the completed process: namely, the tomb of Christ about which Hegel—mysteriously symbolizing the effacement of the trace, the abolition of the abolished—will say that consciousness has ‘learned from experience that *the grave* of its actual unchangeable being has *no actuality*’ (Ph 132).

Except for this funereal, aleatory waste, to which Mallarmé will consecrate so many of his poems, the affair here comes *fill circle*. The ascensional limit redistributes the space and the outplace in the fusion of Glory. Seated to His own right side, God (the Son) is no more than the immutable intercessor for the tribunal of God (the Father). The revolution is dissolved into the State. The space, for its part, declares this lure of being illuminated from within by force, as for those who fetishize the socialist State.

Such a stopping point and such a circle are only the advantages of the imaginary and of theology. To enjoy them to the fullest, the heretics must be burned. Which is, it must be admitted, quite real.

3

Indeed, our relapses ‘to the right and left’ have obviously marked the whole ideological history of Christianity.

$A_p(A_p) = P$ is the reconvoation of the purely finite identity of the Son, the rejection of any torsion in the space of the world. These are the heresies

that underline unilaterally the humanity of Christ, his exteriority to divine transcendence. In short, the heresies that give in to the objective heteronomy of the finite and the infinite, and break with the axiom of Nicea—that God is the split identity of Father and Son. For Arianism, in fact, the Son is only the first in the hierarchy of beings that the Father engenders.

Naturally, this rationalist deviation ‘to the right’ annuls the essence of the Christian dialectical proposition.

Symmetrically, those who posit the reconvoation $A(A) = A$ unilaterally unfold the divine infinity, and reduce the determination $A_p(A)$, that is, the death of God as the finitude of the infinite (the Passion of Christ), to being nothing but a semblance, an appearance. The first in history of a long list of Gnostic heresies, Docetism, posits that the Son is *absolutely* divine, which prohibits him from having a real body, from truly dying on the Cross, from having a sexed and precarious being. It is only in appearance, for the fable’s revelatory virtue, that God took on the figure of the finite. Gnostic radicality maintains an ironclad divergence between the original purity of the divine Father and the blemishes of sex, the world, and death. If God comes to *haunt* the world in order to indicate the true way, he cannot establish himself therein in his essence.

Obsessed by the pure and the original and violently inclined toward Manichaeism, this ultra-leftist heresy blocks the dialectical fecundity of the message just as much as the rational and peaceful hierarchical ordering proposed by the Arians.

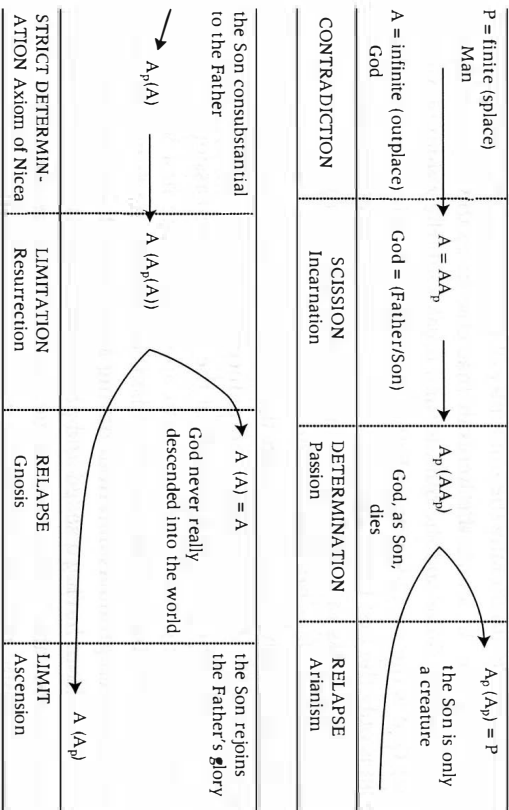
In this respect, Hegel helps us establish the rule of the orthodoxies against the objective recurrence of the space (Arianism, right-wing opportunism) as well as against the fanaticism of the outplace (Gnosticism, left-wing opportunism).

Against Liu Shaoyi and economic objectivity; against Lin Biao and ideological fanaticism.

Gnostics and Arians have not finished obstructing—and nourishing—the path of the new. Every party congress, like every council, speaks out against them.

4

Let us take a close look at the dialectical fragment in its religious instance. The following schema is in fact circular since at the end of it all we obtain only the pure scission of the Father and the Son as integral concept of the



redemptive absolute. $A(A_p)$ ultimately does not exceed $A = (AA_p)$: it only leads back to it.

This is one of the great problems of our dialectical fragment. How does it continue? Where are we going? After all, the limit is not, and cannot be, only the result-concept of scission. The proletariat, subjectively constituted, is not the accomplishment of the internal concept of the bourgeoisie. Maoism cannot be reduced to the concept of revisionism.

We do not sit on the right side of the Father. Hegel, on this point, must be divided once again. He must be divided in terms of the procedures he proposes for looping back the whole process. To be brief, we will oppose (materialist) *periodization* to (idealist) *circularity*.

In order to put this opposition to work, let us place ourselves in the echo of three Hegelian statements:

- a) 'The objective element, into which conscience exposes itself *qua* acting, is nothing other than the Self's pure knowledge of itself' (Ph 481-2, trans. modified).
- b) 'The absolute idea has shown itself to be the identity of the theoretical and the practical Idea' (L 824).
- c) 'Action is the first inherent scission of the simple unity of the concept and the return out of this scission' (Ph 482, trans. modified).

Where do these three statements converge? They gesture toward the idea that action is what shows itself when one is in the vicinity of completion. The Hegelian absolute, which is the name of the procedure of looping back the dialectical process, turns out to be the fusion of the process as concept and the process as effectuation.

When in any active reality the reflection upon its own history comes to the surface, it is because this reality has run its course. There is nothing left but to absolve it: the absolute gives it its blessing.

This is the reason why Minerva's bird, the owl of patient knowledge, only takes flight at dusk, with its silent wing saluting the contrary light of the Truth.

If it does take flight, however, it is so as to go eat some mice. But where then is the mouse in the absolving benediction of the absolute?

This is where Hegel vacillates, namely, in the vicinity of this rock that we Marxists call the 'primacy of practice', and Lacan the real. A rock, let us specify this right away, which is neither clear nor obviously marked, and which is entirely similar to the one that Mallarmé talks about in *A Dice Throw*: 'some rock/ a false manor/ suddenly/ evaporated in mists/ which laid/ a limit on the infinite' (CP 175, trans. modified). Which gesture is evaporated in the mists, manor of the subject, if not the rare action about which nobody knows anything other than the real that it changes, the effect which unrepresents it, the infinite of the dream at last delimited?

At issue is the irreducibility of action. Hegel is standing on both edges of the knife—two dialectical matrices, as always. The general idea is that a dialectical sequence approaches its closure when the practical process carries its theory in its own wake, when it possesses in itself the active clarity of its temporal trace. But this can be taken in two senses:

- Either in the sense of the theological circularity which, presupposing the absolute in the seeds of the beginning, leads back to this very beginning once all the stages of its effectuation, its alienation, its going-outside-itself, and so on, are unfolded. Thus, the dead Son reintegrated into the divisible immanence of the Father *completes* the world-concept of the Christian God, which is the holiness of the Spirit.
- Or in the sense of the pure passage from one sequence to the other, in an irreconcilable, unsurtable lag, where the truth of the first stage gives itself to begin with only as the condition of the second as *fact*, without leading back to anything other than the unfolding of this fact.

In the periodizing (or spiralled) view, we are allowed to say that the second sequence sets in when the conditions for the theoretical assessment of the first are accumulated. However, we must add that the very existence of this assessment is purely practical. All that is needed is for one of the terms of the new contradiction, the one whose outplace the space was unable to *keep* hold of, to become the bearer of the intelligibility of the preceding sequence.

It is here, we shall see later on, that it comes about as subject.

But, of course, the emphasis then falls entirely on discontinuity, even on failure. Thus, Lenin's Bolshevik party is certainly the active bearer of an assessment of the failures of the Paris Commune. This is what Lenin seals by dancing in the snow when power is held in Moscow in 1917 for one day longer than had been the case in Paris in 1871. It is the rupture of October that periodizes the Paris Commune, turning a page in the history of the world. And what took place was the Party as subject. It is the least of things to say, with Hegel, that it 'exposes itself *qua* acting' or that it is the 'first scission'—from the Mensheviks, no doubt. To say that it is the unity 'of the practical and the theoretical Idea' is what will be repeated ad nauseam in the time of Stalin: the party is the fusion of Marxist theory and the real workers' movement.

But that still does not work out quite yet. It does not work out very well. Because in all this, we have produced *only one term* of the new sequence: the one that 'detains' the balance sheet of the preceding sequence. And, thus isolated, it is the Hegelian absolute, now no longer the outplace of a space, but quite properly the space of places.

Indeed, circularity is nothing other than the fact of this annulment—the outplace finds a space in the place.

How to think of the gap between the periodization and the circle without producing a pure centre?

Throughout the world the Third International has sung the paeon of the 'just and glorious' parties, simply because they were the party. At the stage where we are at—that of the Cultural Revolutions—we see better what a rat's nest the party of the Third International can also be, to the point where it becomes exemplarily unjust and without glory, in the form of the new bureaucratic state bourgeoisie.

The underlying philosophy for accepting such trajectories amounts to positing the space as the general foundation of the dialectic, of which the outplace is the motor, but only fictively speaking. The place from which the outplace was excluded—the index from which it was purified—comes

back to it at the end of the journey. Then the mystery of lack is retrospectively unveiled: within the space there was the unaffected, *supernumerary* index, which the outplace turns to its advantage at the end. There was the right hand of the Father, as invisible place from which the outplace took its appearance of the excluded, whereas in its essence it is much rather the founder of all inclusion.

Now, nothing in the real corresponds to this machinery. Nobody has ever encountered such circles, without their failing and their inflating at the same time being the ironic stigmata of their scant reality.⁵

May this serve as an invitation, once this structural trajectory is completed and now that Hegel has been given the proper salute, for us to take things up again from zero. For we must think periodization through to the end. We must keep steadily out of place.⁶

This is not feasible without the redoubling of the place by that which is no longer of its order and which is no longer spatially figurable.

That is to say, force after place.