

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

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

I

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_{p_1} , A_{p_2} , A_{p_3} . . . 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 placement 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.

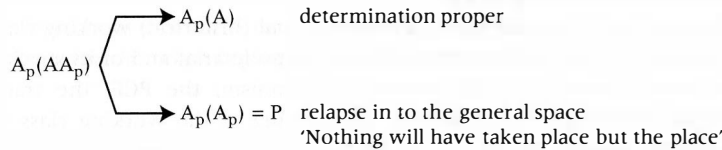
Let us begin with our example: the practical (historical) working class is always the contradictory unity of itself as proletariat and of its specific bourgeois inversion (today, modern revisionism, the PCF, the trade unions, everything that organizes the rallying of the working class to imperialist 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 *unmasks* (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 ex-sists 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:

- a) *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.
- b) *Scission* as the only form of existence of the something in general: $A = (AA_p)$.
- c) *Determination* as unity of the scission, thinkable only from the indexed term (and not from the pure term): $A_p(AA_p)$.
- d) 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 *splace*. 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 splace.

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 reconvoction 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

I

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,