

## HEGEL AND MARX IN THE TIMES OF GLOBALIZATION

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**Lino Veljak**

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Croatia

**Abstract.** *In this paper the author will try to demonstrate that the basic assumption for understanding the actual events in the world is the conceptualization of the logic of production and the re-production of the world itself. Contrary to a series of ideologically produced and media- and publicity-mediated false alternatives and mystifications, it is necessary to embrace the wholeness of the world, in order to be able to distinguish mystifications from factually established real tendencies of our epoch. We examined whether the onto-logic, elaborated in the very beginnings of modern times by “the notorious metaphysicist and declared foe of common sense” Hegel, can offer methodical and content-adding contributions for the purpose of grasping world-historical processes as a whole. Further, we discussed the question whether the reconstruction of the logic of reproduction of the modern world, as reconstructed by Hegel’s follower and critic Marx, can actually be used for such a grasp of the wholeness of the world. Besides, there is the question of how much the contradictions of this globalized world depend upon ideologizations of Marx’s concepts and upon the downfall of the alleged realization of the ideologically disguised Marx’s teachings – and how much is the result of nihilistic trends of the era we find ourselves in.*

**Key words:** *logic of production, Hegel, Marx, ideology, methodology, globalization.*

To what extent can Hegel and Marx help us understand today’s world? That is, to grasp comprehensively and conceptually what is generally diagnosed as the global crisis? Such questions will provoke profound denial in many quarters and, in some, even derision. Some will ask rhetorically whether Hegel was not an incurable metaphysicist whose scientific credibility is absolutely compromised by his insane and illogical claims, such as the assertion that pure being and pure nothing are one and the same thing (cfr. for example: Russell 1950, especially ch. 1 and ch. 4; Carnap 1971; Popper 2002; Berlin 2003). Moreover, in well-meant evaluations, Hegel is appraised as being a naïve optimist, outmoded and quaint, a man without intelligence and critical thinking (Popper 1994, 70). Is there anything at all

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**Corresponding author:** Lino Veljak

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy, Ivana Lučića 3, HR 10000 Zagreb Croatia

E-mail: lveljak@ffzg.hr

that Hegel can tell us today? Not to mention Marx. Was Marx not the ideologist of a malignant totalitarianism whose implementation cost the lives of millions? It could be said that, in academic philosophy, academic social sciences and mainstream mass media, there prevails an almost absolute consensus of opinion of Hegel as a hopelessly obsolete and completely irrelevant metaphysicist (no longer worth mentioning except in specialized histories of dead ideas), and the opinion of Marx as an author who actualized the most malevolent potential of Hegel's metaphysics, shaping a totalitarian (in fact also criminal) ideology, which should either be ignored or exhibited as a cautionary example of how far the abandonment of ground secured by common sense and a commitment to the generally accepted values of a civil society could lead (cfr. two very mild versions of this type of criticism: Popper 1973 and Kolakowski 1978).

It seems that any further possibility for discussion ends here. However, before we abandon the idea of any possible contextualization of these two thinkers in a contemporary framework, it would be advisable to reconsider the validity of such simplified assessments.

I shall attempt to show that, contrary to the usual evaluations, Hegel and Marx's opinions provide us with profound comprehension and conceptualization of our era and the prospects of the future. The starting point of the argument lies in the insight that Hegel's logic is also an ontology (cfr. for example Marcuse 1960. and Hegel 1970, 81, but also some new different interpretations: White 1983; Hartmann 1999; Houlgate 2005; Kervégan 2008.). What comes to be does not come to be through accident or chaos (although it not infrequently has the semblance of chaos); it is not a given, but is based on the logos of the production and reproduction of being, including – and this is of particular importance in this context – the being of the historical human world (subjective, objective and absolute spirit). The self-development of the wholeness of everything that is guided by a logos which is immanent in the being and in the shaping of the spirit (cfr. Hegel 1970, 13).<sup>1</sup> The logic which guides the historical development of humankind pertains to this wholeness, while individual manifestations of the whole are differentiated from one another in accordance with a unique onto-logic.

The development of this wholeness has, understandably, its own empirical manifestations. The world is not a representation of solipsistic reason but develops in reality and its forms are accessible to our senses. However, common sense cannot adequately grasp this world because of its limitation to empirical manifestations, and it inevitably happens that it is often impossible to differentiate the true from the false. It is not sufficient for something to become objective in order for it to be true. Thus the appearance of a particular purpose also implies its objectivity – however, if the purpose is unreasonable, it cannot be true. This applies especially if the particularity is proclaimed a universality by absolutization and designation as an absolute truth. Common sense is incapable of grasping such an absolutizing elevation of the particular to the level of the universal. Specifically, in a civil world, the right of particularity of a free individual is absolutized, but the principle of particularity may have its true sense only if this particularity is reasonable (that is, if its properties are such that the contradiction between the particular and the universal, the subjective and the objective, is negated). It is not enough for a particularity to impose itself as existing objectively in order to be proclaimed a final truth. Only when such

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<sup>1</sup> In this context could be very significative the following thought: „Das Wahre ist das Ganze. Das Ganze aber ist nur das durch seine Entwicklung sich vollendende Wesen. Es ist von dem Absoluten zu sagen, dass es wesentlich Resultat, dass es erst am Ende das ist, was es in Wahrheit ist; und hierin eben besteht seine Natur, Wirkliches, Subjekt oder Sichselbstwerden zu sein“ (Ibid, 24).

particularity is reconciled with other particularities can it gain its own truthfulness. This is the essence of Hegel's search for the identity of the finite and the infinite by which he annuls the proclamation of the finite as eternal law and supplements belief in the eternal validity of that finality with a belief in the infinity of the transcendent, which is merely a projected finality (Cfr. Hegel 1970, 102). Thus the antithesis of abstract subjectivity and empty longing, the antithesis of metaphysics and empiricism, is overcome. This cannot be achieved by absolutized common sense, but by the appropriate method of comprehension of the reflexive strategy of mediation of consciousness as self-mediation of self-consciousness.

Hegel's overcoming of finality, according to the interpretation of (in my opinion) one of the best interpreters of classic German idealism Milan Kangrga, concerns exclusively the human being and the human world produced through history (Cfr. Kangrga 2004, 305–323). Milan Kangrga<sup>2</sup> was not merely an interpreter but also an original thinker who, at the end of the second and the beginning of the third millennium, developed the contemplative potential of classical speculative philosophy and formed an opinion of the future appropriate to our era, purely with respect to the human being and his products, all that mankind has produced, i.e. the human subconscious world. Admittedly, Kangrga here discusses man inadequately. That final human being is indeed a being whose determination must cease to be what it is and transform itself into the infinite (in Hegel's terminology into the spirit, but one which is not spiritual in character). According to Kangrga, this means a human being must produce himself through his own action into what, as a thinking being, he can become, and this is not something which is given in advance by nature or birth, but what the human being must struggle to achieve (Cfr. Kangrga 1983, 371–372).

The world is a human product, but its production is not arbitrary: rather, it takes place in accordance with the logic of reproduction, which is immanent in the character of the historically produced world.

Marx incorporated this logic of Hegel's into his own method. This will result in insight into the main features of the modern world. This insight is that the modern world (the civil, *bourgeoisie* capitalist world) is governed by the logic of capital, to be more precise, the logic of the production and the reproduction of profit. In the process of labor, human activity results in a change in the object of labor in accordance with the set purpose of that labor, and thus creates usability, as Marx stated explicitly in the first volume of his *Das Kapital*. The product is objectivated. The result of the labor is a product which has acquired its being: the worker spins and his product is yarn. Through living work, usable objects are produced and these become objects of exchange, commodities in the market. Upon becoming commodities, these products acquire an independent being, although this does not merely mean that they are alienated from the producer, and thence result in the reification of the human being, but also, what is most important in this context, the products are subjected to the logic of the production of exchange value, the essence of which is profit. The logic of the production of a product is thus replaced by the logic of the acquisition of surplus value,

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<sup>2</sup> Milan Kangrga (1923–2008) is an important Croatian (and Yugoslav) philosopher, unfortunately – like Marek Siemek – not enough known and valorised thinker – one of the leading thinkers in the so-called Praxis school of thought and author of many for our problems very relevant books; there are yet available only on Croatian, with the exception of his book *Praxis-Zeit-Welt*, Würzburg (Königshausen & Neumann) 2004, which was translated into German and the book *Ethics and Liberty*, translated into Slovakian, but published in Bratislava in the first days after the Soviet occupation and practically unavailable. He especially – on the basis of the speculative rethinking of relationship between Hegel and Marx – emphasized the understanding of human beings as producers humanizing nature.

although it is not a question of greed on the part of the wicked or corrupt capitalist (as it would be according to the proponents of moral criticism of capitalism who believe that current problems, e.g. the problems caused on a global scale by the recent financial crisis, would be resolved if the market protagonists were devoid of greed), but of need: those who would renounce the maximization of profit in the given circumstances would necessarily be condemned to bankrupt and ruin.

In the words of Marx, this is the supremacy of dead labor (produced products of past labor which have become commodities, and which – like the protagonists and other participants in their sale – are subject to the inevitable logic of market behavior) over live labor (which is subject to the logic of technical execution, for its own part again actually limited by market logic) (Cfr. Marx 1964, especially ch. 9). Some points of Marx's analysis of live labor may be problematic (it should be borne in mind that he lived in the nineteenth century when the automation and informatization of production were entirely inconceivable). What is not problematic, however, is the following: Ontologically speaking, production precedes exchange; usability acquires its being before the usable product becomes a commodity. However, the sense of production of any product intended for the market cannot be derived from the original ontological priority, but from its intended use, from the reason a certain product is produced at all. In this way, the sense of a particular product is derived from the logic of acquisition and maximization of profit, that is, the logic of capital. Capital is thereby expressed not only as a real subject, but also as a being of the civil world in the classical metaphysical sense of that term. Indeed, to use the once fashionable jargon of Martin Heidegger, capital is proliferated as a sense of being. This sense is manifest in the self-purpose of extended reproduction of profit. The fact that this sense is self-purpose indicates the character of the established world and particularly the logic of its reproduction. The ontological foundation of the contemporary civil world can at the same time also represent a starting point for an adequate understanding and comprehension of current trends, financial and economic crises, as well as the political and social tensions and conflicts which characterize our times. In other words, this foundation facilitates the release of superficiality and unilateral analyses and diagnoses; it is of particular importance to mention that this foundation provides a methodical basis for insight into the ideological (deceptive even) character of a significant (and perhaps the largest) part of the analyses and diagnoses we encounter in circulation today in academic circles and the mass media.

What this means is that even the best-intentioned analysis, if not founded on insight into the logic of wholeness which governs the reproduction of the human world, is doomed to being partial, in the sense of being one-sided and thus untrue: remaining on the surface of a phenomenon or process inevitably means falling into falsehood. Only if partial analyses (and that means all analyses which pertain to the individual and particular aspects and dimensions of the research process, which are otherwise essential for every serious diagnosis of the problems and difficulties characteristic of that process) are integrated into a wholeness, may it reasonably be expected that they will contribute to a real understanding and comprehension of the process in question. However, despite well-intentioned approaches that pay the price of servitude to common sense and empiricism, there are still approaches to the analysis and diagnosis of the reproduction of our world (and thus production and commodity exchange) in use (and not from yesterday but practically from the very beginning of industrialization and the initial accumulation of capital, although often in very different forms), which employ the reasoning of the common sense and empirical methods to justify establishing the manner of reproduction

as the only possible, or at least the best possible way of life. From the famous metaphor *the invisible hand* coined by Adam Smith (Cfr. for example von Suntum 2000. and Basu 2010) to the elaboration by Friedrich von Hayek and the representatives of the libertarian school of economics, whose most famous member was Milton Friedman, there have been attempts to justify this logic of reproduction as optimal or even as the only one possible. In understanding the untruth of Hayek and Friedman's elaborations (which must undoubtedly be recognized as having moved beyond mere theory to profoundly alter the modern world, from the socio-economic experiments successfully undertaken in certain Latin American countries, e.g. Chile after Pinochet's military coup in 1973, to the globalization of libertarian principles of economic and social regulation, which began at the time when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were in power, to become, at the beginning of this millennium, a process which is taken for granted on a global level) (cfr. Caldwell 2011, especially the chapter "Eleven – The Chicago School, Hayek, and Neoliberalism", 301–334; concerning Chile cfr. Valdes 2008. and Grassi 2003), we are helped by Hegel: the elevation of partial interests to the level of the general good may be carried out successfully, but its success alone does not necessarily make it true. It acquires its truthfulness only if it corresponds with to the interests of the wholeness. This correspondence existed at the time of global industrialization (although industrialization had its dark aspects, from the proletarianization of a significant part of the population to the dark sides of colonization) and, on the whole, led to the advancement of humanity and the abolition of pre-civil forms of inequality and slavery, about which Marx speaks impressively (and in the *Manifesto* at that). Finally, at the time the welfare state was established in developed countries, it led to improvements for the population of those countries. Also, however, at the time of truthfulness (not just the empirically self-evident), the elevation of partial interests to the level of the general good (whose elevation is a constant of the civil society founded on the market), Hegel's diagnosis applied to the proclamation of that correspondence when something is finally (and any social creation is by definition something final) proclaimed as eternal law – it represents a fall into the unavoidable crevice between empiricism and metaphysics. The absolutization of a limited form excludes any possibility of insight into its internal contradiction. Let us take the example of someone who is a student today. His partial characteristic, that he studies, (because in addition to studying he also eats, drinks, perhaps sometimes has some fun and even makes love) proclaims the essence of his being and this identification contains truth. If this truth, however, is proclaimed eternal, it directly implies that he will never graduate but will remain a student forever. For a student to be successful (other than merely being empirically confirmed by the fact that he is a student), he must some day graduate and thereby cease being a student.

If the correspondence of the partial and the general had a progressive and emancipating character during the period when pre-civil forms of social organization and reproduction were being eradicated, this has certainly been annulled in these days of libertarian globalization, and this abolishing (or abolition) is empirically manifested in phenomena such as what is known as financial crisis. The logic of reproduction of the society is identical and unavoidable; therefore, moral appeals against the greed symbolized by Wall Street are of no assistance. Nevertheless, in its preservation, the correspondence between the partial and the general has been lost. Unless this is understood, resignation is unavoidable. However, the cure for resignation and the surrender to nihilism must not be sought in nostalgic recollection of the times of actual socialism, because that system, based as it was on the ideologization and distortion of Marx's concept, did not succeed in

establishing a human image of socialism and contributed directly to the establishment of the libertarian variant of globalization which exists today. However, an analysis of the role of Soviet Marxism and “scientific communism” in creating the premises for the current unenviable state of mankind would require far more time than we have at our disposal here.

In conclusion: the basic assumption for understanding actual events in the world is the conceptualization of the logic of the production and reproduction of the world itself. Contrary to a series of false alternatives and mystifications produced ideologically and mediated by media and publicity, it is necessary to embrace the wholeness of the world in order to be able to differentiate between mystification and the factually established, real trends of our era. We have examined whether the onto-logic elaborated at the very beginning of modern times by Hegel, that notorious metaphysicist and declared enemy of common sense, is able to offer methodical and content-adding contributions for the intent of grasping world-historical processes as a whole. We have further discussed the question of whether the reconstruction of the logic reproduction of the modern world, as reconstructed by Marx, Hegel’s successor and critic, is actually serviceable for such a grasp of the wholeness of the world. There is, in addition, the question of the extent to which the contradictions of this globalized world depend on the ideologizations of Marx’s concepts and the downfall of the purported implementation of the ideologically disguised teaching of Marx – and how much of it is the result of the nihilistic trends of the era in which we find ourselves.

Be that as it may, it is possible to make an adequate analysis and diagnosis of today’s world on the basis of Hegel and Marx’s method, and to open a space for the pursuit of the other and the different, the pursuit of the kind of future which will resolve current contradictions, not by descending into barbarism (and such a descent appears rather certain), but by transforming the logic of profit into the kind of logic of production which will correspond to the common interests of the human race.

That is the real sense of the idea of revolution.

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## HEGEL I MARX U VREMENIMA GLOBALIZACIJE

U ovom radu autor pokušava dokazati kako se osnovna pretpostavka za razumijevanje aktualnih svjetskih zbivanja sastoji u poimanju logike produkcije i reprodukcije svijeta. Nasuprot nizu ideologijski proizvedenim i medijski posredovanim lažnim alternativama i mistifikacijama, nužno je zahvatiti cjelinu svijeta, kako bismo mistifikacije mogli razdvojiti od faktički uspostavljenih tendencija naše epohe. Razmatra se i zbog čega onto-logika koju je elaborirao u zbiljskim počecima modernog doba "notorni metafizičar i deklarirani protivnik zdravog razuma" Hegel može ponuditi methodske i sadržajne doprinose za razumijevanje cjeline svjetsko-povijesnih procesa. Nadalje se razmatra pitanje zbog čega rekonstrukcija logike reprodukcije modernog svijeta kakvu je elaborirao Hegelov sljedbenik i kritičar Marx aktualno upotrebljiva za zahvaćanje cjeline svijeta. Konačno, tu je i pitanje u kojoj mjeri kontradikcije globaliziranog svijeta ovise o ideologizaciji Marxovih koncepata i o propasti tobožnje realizacije ideologijski izopačenih Marxovih učenja – a u kojoj su mjeri one učinak nihilističkih tendencija u eri u kojoj smo se zatekli.

Ključne reči: logika proizvodnje, Hegel, Marx, ideologija, metodologija, globalizacija.