

HEGEL, SCHELLING AND SURPLUS VALUE

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This is a short speech to propose two theses handled from an uncommon point of view. § 1) Criticism of political economy in Marx's Capital was built taking into consideration, in a very precise form (and to a greater extent than that commonly accepted), Hegel's framework, specially of his Logic. § 2) However, he produced a total reconstruction of Hegel's categorical system, introducing a new category, starting from Schelling (whether directly or indirectly influenced is not the point), in the absolutely essential subject of "surplus value" (November 1857). The constant irruption of surplus value ex nihilo (aus Nichts: from the nothingness of capital) gives the reproduction of capital a very special qualitative physiognomy.

§ 1. THE CATEGORIAL ORDER IN HEGEL'S "LOGIC" AND MARX'S "CAPITAL"

The similitude of "order" of categories in Hegel's Logic and Marx's Capital is more surprising than what was normally considered. In Hegel's Logic and in Marx's Capital they arrange their categories in the following "order":

a) Being and value. In the first place, "the doctrine of Being",¹ because everything starts from the Being: "Pure Being makes the beginning".² The Being of capital is for Marx the "value" (Wert). Since the Grundrisse³ one can see how Marx went from money as the "beginning" (Anfang) -against Proudhon or Marimon- to place value as the absolute "beginning" of the critical discourse. In Capital we read: "The value-form [...] is absolutely without content and simple"⁴ as the Being. The Being is for Hegel "the Foundation" (Grund),⁵ and Marx frequently repeats that production, labour, value is what one returns to "as into its foundation" (zurück als in ihren Grund).⁶ The Being is (for both Hegel and Marx) permanency and process: The Being is and becomes (value remains and develops as "valorization of value" (Verwertung des Werts)).

b) Being and "this-Being" (Dasein) and value and commodity. For Hegel the "Being" (Sein) becomes "this-Being" (Dasein).⁷ The "determinate Being" is the "Being-there" (Da-sein) as "something". For Marx the "Being-there" (Dasein) of the value is the commodity: "Our analysis has shown, that the form of value (Wertform) or expression of value (Wertausdruck) of commodity originates in the nature of value".⁸ The value (the Being and Foundation) shows in the commodity (the Being and appearance: Dasein).⁹

c) Quality and use-value. For Hegel, the first determination of Being is "Quality": "A Being (Dasein) is the Being (Sein) with a determination, that as unmediated and as determination is Quality".¹⁰ Quality determines the Being as this-Being, something, with certain content. For Marx the first determination of the Being (value) is the use-value: "Every useful thing¹¹ [...] may be looked at [...] quality [...]. The utility of a thing makes it use-value [...]. The use-value is the material content (stofflichen Inhalt) of wealth".¹² The Hegelian "quality" is then the "value of use" in Marx's economic criticism.

d) Quantity and exchange-value. The second determination of Being, in Hegel, is "Quantity".¹³ "Quantity" is a summary of the Being (with itself). Likewise, for Marx the "exchange-value" is the second determination of value: "Exchange-value [...] presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are

¹ Enzykl., § 84ff, Hegel, 1971, v. 8, pp. 181ff; Engl. ed. pp. 123ff. Reference is made to Hegel's Encyclopaedia to simplify references.

² Ibid., p.182; p.124.

³ See Dussel, 1985. There we read: "Capital is nothing more than simple value". Grundrisse II, Marx, 1974, p.177; p. 265.

⁴ Capital (1867) I, Preface, Marx, 1975, MEGA II, 5, p.12; p.19; in German: "Die Wertform [...] ist sehr inhaltslos und einfach". In the Great Logic, Hegel writes on the Being: "[...] ganz Form ohne allen Inhalt", Hegel, 1971, v. 5, p. 6. Hegel himself speaks equally of the simplicity of the Being: "das Unmittelbare [...] einfach", Ibid., p.79.

⁵ Hegel, Enzykl. § 121ff, Hegel, 1971, v. 7, pp. 247ff; pp.175ff.

⁶ Grundrisse II, p.166; p.255.

⁷ Enzykl., §§ 89ff; p. 193ff; pp. 133ff.

⁸ Capital (1872) I, 1, 4, Marx, 1975, in MEGA II, 6 (1987), p. 92; p. 66.

⁹ See Dussel, 1988, Chap.1, pp. 27ff. Marx writes that commodity has "its character (Charakter) as Being (Dasein) of the exchange value", Manusc. 61-63, 1; Marx, 1975, MEGA II, 3, 1, p. 15.

¹⁰ Enzykl., § 90; p.195; p.134 (I translated the text to English).

¹¹ Here "thing" (Ding) is no longer simply the "Being" (Dasein), but developed: Dasein -> Existenz -> Ding, time on the third part of the Logic, but it would be to extensive to explain all the subject's development.

¹² Capital I, 1, Marx, 1975, MEGA II, 6, p. 7; p. 44 (I translated the text to English).

¹³ Enzykl., § 99ff.

exchanged for those of another sort".¹⁴ What is interesting is that exchange-value is not the value: only a "mode of expression" (Ausdrucksweise) or "form of manifestation" (Erscheinungsform) (a phenomenon, a Being: Dasein) of value (the Being: Sein).¹⁵

e) Measure and Money. The new moment in the development of Hegel's Logic is constituted by "the Measure" (das Mass):¹⁶ "in Measure quality and quantity are [...] in immediate unity".¹⁷ Likewise, for Marx, "Money as a measure of value (Wertmass) is the necessary apparition form (Erscheinungsform) of the immanent measure of value of commodities, which is the labour-time".¹⁸ Money is the measure of the use-value of a commodity for the exchange-value of the other: it is a quantitative-qualitative relationship.

f) Passing over (Ueergehen)¹⁹ from Being to Essence; transformation from Money to Capital. Hegel must "pass" from Being to Essence. Essence is the reflection unto itself of the Being: it is the Being of Foundation (Grund), World of Appearances (Welt) and Reality (Wirklichkeit). For the time being, we are interested in the "pass over" from Being to Essence. For Hegel it is a "pass over" without difficulty: one "passes" from the Same (Being) to the Same (Essence). For Marx, the transformation (Verwandlung) (the "pass over": Ueergehen) from Money to Capital is a jump to infinity: it is an absolute change of nature.²⁰ In § 2 we will return to this fundamental question. For the time being let us observe that Marx, following Hegel, "passes" from value (Being) to capital (Essence).

g) Essence and Capital. "Essence" for Hegel is permanence and process; it is a totality with many determinations, with different depth levels (such as: Identity and Difference, Foundation and Existence-Thing (Ding) or World of Appearances, Reality and Substance,²¹ etc.). The "structure" of Hegel's Essence is the paradigm from which Marx developed the "structure" of the Concept (Begriff) of capital. The determination of the Essence of Capital is Money, Commodity, Labour, Means of Production, Product, etc. They move as a permanent process (production, accumulation, circulation, rotation, reproduction, etc.). A circle, a circle of circles, a growing spiral, the valorization of value (Verwertung des Wertes): a hurricane being globalized:

"Value is here the subject (Subjekt) of a process, in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it at the same time changes in magnitude [...] The original value, in other words, it valorizes itself (selbst verwertet)."²²

However, the difference lies in that for Hegel Essence is "identical with itself";²³ Essence is the original Identity. On the other hand, for Marx capital is not identical with itself. At the time of the accumulation (B) there is more value (surplus value) than in the original (A) production process. Capital-A is not identical to Capital-B. As we shall see, this non-identity is the basis of the distance between Hegel and Schelling.

h) Foundation and production. For Hegel the Essence is the Foundation (Grund).²⁴ For Marx the "fundamental" moment of capital is the process of production.²⁵ Production is the Foundation of exchange-value, of circulation, of market, of price, etc. Marx takes from Hegel the Foundation concept and applies it to production:

"We therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface (Oberflaeche)²⁶ and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden (verborgne)²⁷ abode of production".²⁸

The sphere of production is the foundational level of capital.

¹⁴ Capital I, 1, p. 70; 44.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 72; p.46 (I translated the text to English).

¹⁶ Enzykl., § 107ff. In the Great Logic he does not consider the "degree", but goes directly to the "measure". See Hegel, 1971, v.5, pp.387ff, the text Marx studied with greatest care.

¹⁷ Enzykl., § 108; pp. 22-226; p. 158.

¹⁸ Capital I, 3 (1872), p. 121; p. 97 (I translated the text to English).

¹⁹ Enzykl., § 84: "their further determination (the dialectical form [die Form des Dialektischen]) is a passing over (Ueergehen) into another", p. 181; p. 124.

²⁰ We have analyzed this "transformation" in all my works (Dussel, 1985, pp. 137ff; 1988, pp. 57ff; 1990, pp. 138ff).

²¹ In this sense "labour is the substance of value", because: "The substance is cause" (Enzykl., § 153). It is the causality, the Thing (Sache) that causes an effect (the value).

²² Capital I, 4, 1 (4); p. 172; p. 152.

²³ Enzykl., § 115; p. 236; p. 166.

²⁴ Enzykl., "The Essence as Ground of Existence (das Wesen als Grund der Existenz): §§ 115ff.

²⁵ Capital I, Sect. 3-5, Chap. 5-16 (7-18); pp. 163ff; pp. 173ff.

²⁶ The "surface" is the market, the World of Appearances, the phenomena, the Difference.

²⁷ The "hidden" is the Ground, invisible, the Essence, the Identity.

²⁸ Ibid., Chap. 4, 3 (6); p. 191; p. 172.

wanted to prove that even before the Being, there is Reality, as a prius of Thought and of Being, when he asserts, from a creationist doctrine: "The Absolute consists in being the Lord of Being (Herrsein über das Sein), and it is the greatest function of philosophy to pass over from pure Being (tò ón) to the Lord of Being (Herrn des Seins)."³⁹

For Schelling, thus, there is a "creative source of Being from nothingness",⁴⁰ which through "positive revelation" manifests itself in history as a "source of knowledge" (Erkenntnisquelle),⁴¹ "which must not be represented as unfounded knowledge, but of which one should more correctly say that it is the best founded of all".⁴² Thus, following an old tradition, we are handling the beginning of all philosophical discourse from the Absolute itself.⁴³ Starting from the neoplatonics, it makes reference to Nicolas de Cusa's doctrine on the contractio Dei. Schelling does not assert absolute Identity; he shall defend the non-identity of Being and Reality. The Absolute operates as the creative Source from nothingness. Being is the Foundation, but beyond Being is the creative Source (Quelle) of Being. Being is an effect of the creative Source. Marx uses those types of categories in his critique of Political Economy.

b) Production and Creation of Value. Value is the Foundation (Being) of capital. This Foundation is in process: it is the valorization of value. Labour is the substance (in Hegelian sense) of all value. When a worker works, he "reproduces" the value of salary in the necessary time. The reproduction of the value of salary is production from the Foundation of capital (the value of salary is from capital). But in the surplus-time of the surplus-labour the worker creates from nothingness capital, because he has no value-capital Foundation (works without a salary). This kind of "making" a product (commodity) without being founded in capital is what Marx technically calls: "creation of value" (Wertschoepfung). Marx systematically begins his discourse, in Chapter 1 on the "Transformation of money into Capital", of Manuscripts 61-63 and also in Manuscripts 63-65, which shall become Chapter 2 in 1866 and in Section 2, Chapter 4, in 1872:

"Our friend, Moneybags, must be so lucky to find [...] a commodity whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a Source (Quelle) of value, whose actual consumption, therefore, is itself [...] a creation of value (Wertschoepfung)."⁴⁴

The "living labour" is this "Source" (Quelle) from which the "creation" (Schoepfung) of value derives. It is the Schellingian subject to which we have made reference. It is the creationist theory turned into critical economy. Marx writes that "the creation (Schoepfung) of this value, which he appropriates above and beyond the reproduced capital, is not presented as the Source (Quelle) of the surplus value".⁴⁵ Or: "The worker [...] has the possibility of beginning it again from the beginning, because his life (Lebendigkeit) is the Source (Quelle) in which his own use value constantly confronts capital again in order to begin the same exchange anew".⁴⁶ So, surplus value is creation "from nothingness" (ex nihilo, aus Nichts)⁴⁷ of capital. Or, and this is my theses:

"What it produces in addition is not reproduction (Reproduktion), but rather a new creation (neue Schoepfung) and, more specifically, the creation of new value (neue Wertschoepfung), because it is the objectification of new labour time in a use value."⁴⁸

c) Negativity of poverty. Only from the positivity of living labour (which in addition includes the dignity of "corporeality" [Leiblichkeit], "personality lives" [lebendigen Persoenlichkeit]),⁴⁹ can one understand the sense of the first "negation", as a condition of the possibility of capital:

"Labour posited as not-capital (Nicht-Kapital) as such is: [...] Not objectified labour, conceived negatively [...] not-raw-material, not-instrument of labour, not-raw-product [...] This living labour (lebendige Arbeit) [...] This complete denudation, purely subjective existence of labour. Labour as absolute poverty (absolute Armut): poverty not as shortage, but as total exclusion (voelliges Ausschlissen) of objective wealth."⁵⁰

Categorially, before the capital, the "system" or totality (of the "Being" or the "Foundation"), in its Exteriority by

³⁹ Ibid., XII, p. 172.

⁴⁰ See this subject in my already mentioned work, Dussel, 1974, pp. 116-128. In this sense also. "God (the real and creator) is beyond the absolute idea", Schelling, 1927, vol. 5, p. 744.

⁴¹ Schelling, 1927, v. 6, p. 398.

⁴² Ibid., p. 407. Schelling writes that "the negative philosophy tells us of what beatitude certainly consists, but it does not help us to achieve it."

Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie, II, lec. 24; Ibid., v. 5, p. 749, note 4. Are we not reminded of Marx's Thesis 11, the Thesis on Feuerbach?

⁴³ See Habermas, 1963, Chap. 5, pp. 172ff.

⁴⁴ Capital I, 4 (6); (1872) p. 183; p. 164.

⁴⁵ Grundrisse II; Marx, 1974, p. 451; p. 553.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 194; p. 283.

⁴⁷ See Capital III, Chap.1; MEW 25, p.48: "...Schoepfung aus Nichts...".

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 264; p. 359.

⁴⁹ Capital, pag.cit.

⁵⁰ Grundrisse II, Marx, 1974, p. 203; pp. 295-296.

anteriority, we already find the pauper ante festum.⁵¹ in its absolute negativity: it has nothing outside its own living personal corporeality, its empirical materiality (starting and arriving point of Marx's "ethic materialism"). Criticism, thus, starts from the first negativity of the victim: the future creator of wealth has nothing; or only has "an objectivity which [not] falls outside the immediate existence (Dasein) of the individual himself":⁵² it is a naked poor;⁵³ it is "nothingness"⁵⁴ or anterior negativity, fruit of abandonment of the "rural community" and entrance to the strange urban "social" relationship.

d) The positive creative Source of surplus value. The living labour, being on the one hand the "absolute poverty", is, on the other, the "creative Source" of all surplus value:

"Not-objectified labour, not-value, conceived positively [...] is the subjective existence of labour itself. Labour [...] as activity; not itself value, but as the living Source of value (lebendige Quelle des Werts)".⁵⁵

Capital, in its totality, is value from which surplus value is "valorization of value". But this "valorization" is a creation from nothingness of capital, from the living Source of new value: from the living labour and not from capital. The fetish claim of capital is to be the creative Source of surplus value (and profit):

"It [capital] relates as the foundation (Grund) to surplus value, as producer of value. It relates as the foundation to surplus value as that which is founded (Begründetem) [...] Surplus value appears no longer to be posited by its simple, direct relation to living labour (lebendige Arbeit) [...] It [capital] relates to surplus value [...] as Source (Quelle) of production, to itself as product."⁵⁶

I believe I have sufficiently suggested the thesis that living labour is the creative Source of surplus value, essential subject in which Marx inspires himself in Schelling (directly or indirectly) and ontologically separates from Hegel, for whom the Essence (the capital) is the same as the Being (value) in all its process.⁵⁷ For Marx the capital in the beginning of the production process is not the same than at the end. In the process of production capital subsumes a creative Source of surplus value, living labour that creates in capital something from the nothingness of capital. Beyond the Foundation of capital, living labour as originating Source creates surplus value.⁵⁸

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⁵¹ See my work: Dussel, 1985, pp.137ss, where we comment in detail all these texts.

⁵² Grundrisse II, p. 203; p. 296. It seems as though we were reading Kierkegaard: "of the individual himself (des Individuums selbst)".

⁵³ Metaphore used by Marx, in the Book of the Death of Egypt or, afterwards, by Emmanuel Levinas. The immediately naked corporality of the skin: "The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the Other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but -a hiding." Capital, I, Chap. 4 (1972); Marx, 1975, MEGA II, t. 6, pp. 191-192; p. 172).

⁵⁴ "The abstract existence of man as mere workman who may therefore daily fall from his filled nothingness (Nichts) into the absolute nothingness (absolute Nichts)." Manusc. 44, II; Marx, 1956, MEW 1 EB, pp. 524-525; p. 122). The first "nothingness" (the filled) is the one of the worker in the Previous Exteriority, in poverty, hunger, the danger of death, if not "bought" for some money. The second "nothingness" (the absolute) is the effect of the "subsumption" within capital (active negation: properly said, alienation).

⁵⁵ Grundrisse II, p. 203; p. 296.

⁵⁶ Grundrisse VII; pp. 631-632; pp. 745-746.

⁵⁷ In politic economy it would be said thus: a) For the Hegelian ontology, capital has as Ground the value and profit is produced from this Ground. For Marx, in difference, capital has as Ground the value, but profit is not produced from this Ground; profit is the appearance of surplus value created by living labour, the creative Source of new surplus value, beyond the Ground of capital.

⁵⁸ The living labour (lebendige Arbeit) is not the labour force (Arbeitsvermoegen or Arbeitskraft). The "labour force" has value (it is founded in capital and it is reproduced by salary); but the "living labour" has dignity, no value; it is the substance of value (and because of that it can have no value) and the creative Source of surplus value: "Labour is the substance, and the immanent measure of value, but has itself no value (keinen Wert)." Capital I, Sect.VI, Chap.17; MEGA II, 6, p. 500; p. 503).

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