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NOTES ON A SERIES OF LECTURES:

LENON ON HEGEL'S
SCIENCE OF LOGIC

For "The Materialist Friends of
the Hegelian Dialectic"

BY

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LENIN on HEGEL'S SCIENCE OF LOGIC

Lecture I, Introductory

These notes are addressed more to the teachers than to the pupils. Since, however, each member of the class is both teacher and pupil, it is addressed to all and the demands that each person, who is to lead a class, has to read these notes and the relevant material before the session begins. The notes are hardly more than indications of where to look for the problem. There are no "illusions". At best they hope to lead to a conception of method which one can practice.

The great difficulty of plunging into Hegel directly makes it necessary to establish the historical points of departure, not only for Hegel but for our life and times. We have, in fact, four points of departure: (1) the French Revolution, which formed Hegel's point of departure, although he most often would refer to the writings in philosophy during that period rather than to the period "in and for itself". There is no doubt, however, both in his historic writings and in the Phenomenology of Mind that it is the historic event that he considered the greatest and the measure of philosophy itself. (2) The 1848 revolutions and the 1871 Paris Commune which were the great historic events of Marx's time. (3) From World War I to 1924, the decade from the time Lenin began to re-read Hegel's Science of Logic until his death. And, (4) our own post-World War II world.

A good way to prepare ourselves for both the historic periods and Lenin's notes as well as Hegel himself is by way of reading the following sections in Marxism and Freedom:

(1) "The Philosophers and the Revolution: Freedom and the Hegelian Dialectic", (pp. 33-37) which relates Hegel to the French Revolution and cites Marx on Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind.

(2) "Hegel's Absolutes in our Age of Absolutes," (pp. 37-43), especially the references to Russian Communism's 1947 revisions on the dialectic and its 1955 attack on Marx's Humanist Essays.

(3) "Lenin and the Dialectic: a Mind in Action" (pp. 168-172) dealing with the break in Lenin's thought caused by the outbreak of World War I and the collapse of the Second International.

(4) "The Irish Revolution and the Dialectic of History" (pp. 172-176) which is the historical instance where Lenin applied his new conceptions of the dialectic to an actual revolution and formed the center of his theories on self-determination of nations, that is of the essence for our own age.

(5) Above all, you must read through, as a whole, without stopping to see whether you "really" understand, Lenin's Notes on Hegel's Science of Logic as they are abbreviated in the first edition of Marxism and Freedom (pp 327-355).

The two-fold reason for reading through the whole Abstract without questioning one's understanding of any single point in it is this: (1) to have at least a glimpse of the whole, it is important to get the rhythm, to follow the movement. (2) Since all of the rest of the month or six weeks will be taken up in the detailed studying of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, alongside the actual passages in Hegel, to which Lenin referred in his Commentary, it does not matter, in a first reading, that we have let many undigested passages pass us by. The important thing is to hold on to some reality, to the concrete as one works his way through the underlying philosophy, not to let oneself get bogged down by the Hegelian "language". Remember, always, that it was not an abstruse philosopher but a practicing revolutionary who felt the compulsion to go to the original sources of Marxism in Hegel's own Works at the very moment when the world was collapsing all about him in the holocaust of World War I.

When Lenin asked the editors of Under the Banner of Marxism to constitute themselves as a "Society of Materialist Friends of the Hegelian Dialectic" and to print excerpts from Hegel's own works, he did not mean anything as simple as the vulgar explanation of the necessity for standing Hegel "right side up". The materialist reading of Hegel, the need to stand him "right side up" meant to Lenin that Hegel, although he had been standing on his head, had so great and objective a validity in and for himself that he simply must be read, must be allowed to speak for himself, no matter how difficult he sounds, but the editors could help this process, must help because, as he put it, "dialectics is the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism."

Let us round out this very crowded evening of discussion by grappling with three quotations from Hegel's Preface to the Science of Logic. The first is a challenge to the structure of logic to re-organize itself:

The complete transformation which philosophical thought has undergone in Germany during the last five-and-twenty years and the loftier outlook upon thought which self-conscious mind has attained in this period, have hitherto had but little influence on the structure of Logic. (Hegel*, p. 33, I.)

The reference to the 25 years refers to Kant's work on the eve of revolution and after the revolution, but in fact he is referring, as is clear from the following, to all of the philosophic writings:

... there are no traces in Logic of the new spirit which has arisen both in Learning and in Life. It is, however (let us say it once for all), quite vain to try to retain the forms of an earlier stage of development when the inner structure of spirit has become transformed; these earlier forms are like withered leaves which are pushed off by the new buds already being generated at the roots. (Hegel I, p.35).

Hegel then spells out that a philosophical meeting of the challenge of the times demands a totally new method:

* In these notes, Hegel will always stand for Science of Logic, Volumes I and II and Lenin will always refer to his Philosophic Notebooks, which constitute Vol.38 of his Collected Works.

... this movement is the Absolute Method of knowledge and at the same time the immanent soul of the Content of knowledge. It is, I maintain, along this path of self-construction alone that Philosophy can become objective and demonstrated science. (Hegel I, pp 36-7)

The movement, the imminent or inherent, and what we will get to know as "the path of self-construction" will from now on form the pivot of all that we will study in the rest of the course.

* * * * *

LECTURE II. -- The first book of the Science of Logic: The Doctrine of Being

It is necessary to establish the limitation of this Course on the relationship of Philosophy to Revolution. It is, of course, impossible to deal with Hegel's Work in so brief a time as we have allotted ourselves. Therefore, instead of dealing with it in terms of its own development, we are, in fact, limiting ourselves to reading only those passages which Lenin singled out, and even these in very abbreviated form. Lenin, in turn, gave very unequal space to the various books (the two volumes of Science of Logic constitute three books, the Doctrine of Being, the Doctrine of Essence and the Doctrine of the Notion).

Thus, Lenin's Notes, plus the quotations from Hegel constitute 159 pages whereas the two volumes of Hegel number nearly one thousand pages, especially when you consider that Lenin included also certain quotations from what is known as the "Smaller Logic". (Hegel's Logic in the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences) Lenin gives 15 pages to the prefaces and introduction which take up some 45 pages. Yet the whole of Book I, 325 pages, take up only 25 pages of Lenin. To Book II (190 pages), are given 40 pages of Lenin; while to Book III (275 pages) Lenin devotes as much space as to all the others combined, 70 pages. Clearly, not every section was of equal importance. What is most important to us of the twentieth century is that Lenin devoted the most time to the Doctrine of the Notion, or what I have called the method, the way in which a new society is born. Since the last section of that book, the Absolute Idea, will be the point of concentration in the new book, Philosophy and Revolution, it is as well that we begin with a quotation from part II -- Why Hegel? Why now?

The structure of the Science of Logic shows no straight line to the Absolute. It is a circle in which each realm -- Being, Essence, Notion -- has its own absolute, and each starts afresh on new ground. What is of the essence is that each group of categories "perished" because it could not express the concrete totality. Thus new "names" weren't merely superimposed upon them. Rather they emerged out of the objective pull of history. Insofar as Hegel is concerned, to accept any category at face value is an "uninstructed and barbarous procedure." Conceptually, the absolute that arises for any period has a relative in it even as there is an absolute in every relative. This is so, not because the absolute in say the Doctrine of Being is of a rather lowly kind -- Absolute Indifference -- which, though a transition

to Essence "does not attain to Essence." Even when we have done with the categories of Being -- Quality, Quantity, Measure -- and reach the Doctrine of Essence, there too the absolute is relative. The new categories -- Identity, Difference, Contradiction, Ground, Appearance, Existence, Actuality -- no doubt express the essential nature, as against what we may call a market appearance, nevertheless the Absolute here can, again, not just be "taken over" by the Doctrine or the Notion. And this despite the fact that the final section, Actuality, begins and ends with Absolute, it is not this Absolute which "carries over" into the Doctrine of Notion, "the realm of Subjectivity or Freedom."

Without understanding why this is so, the tendency would be to dismiss Hegel's Absolutes either as being no more than a "natural" for each "pinnacle" reached, or to consider that the movement to the Absolute is no more than a regression to the absolute idealism of philosophers who hide from reality. The truth is that, precisely because it is the pull of objective history toward real freedom, each subsequent age reads Hegel differently.

We are finally ready to turn to Hegel himself, beginning with where we ended in the first lecture on the movement and the path of self-construction that Hegel himself underlines as critical and that Lenin singles out as the quintessential directly after Hegel's statement, "it is the nature of the content and that alone which lives in philosophic cognition" (Hegel I, p. 36). When Hegel writes that "it is along this path of self-construction alone that Philosophy can become objective, demonstrative science," and talks about the movement of consciousness "like the development of all natural and spiritual life", Lenin writes:

Turn it around: Logic and the theory of knowledge must be derived from "the development of all natural and spiritual life." (Lenin, p. 88)

In the preface to the second edition of Hegel's Work -- two full decades separate the first preface from the second, written at the end of his life -- he speaks about the rise of philosophy presupposing "a long stretch of road already traversed by the mind of man" so that, on the one hand, "those interests are hushed which move the lives of people and individuals" and that, on the other hand, these categories of logic are indeed "abbreviations", words that epitomize "the endless multitude of particulars of external existence." This universalism of a category stirs Lenin's mind and will bring forth the first reference to what is concrete for Lenin: Marx's Capital, expanding Hegel's expression of the relationship of the universal to the particular and stressing:

A beautiful formula: "not merely an abstract universal, but a universal which comprises in itself the wealth of the particular, the individual, the single" (all the wealth of the particular and single!!! Tres Bien! (Lenin, p. 99)

Lenin had already summarized to himself the first "definition" of what a category is:

Logic is the science not of external forms of thought, but of the laws of development "of all material, natural and spiritual things," i.e. of the development of the entire concrete content of the world and of its cognition, i.e. the sum-total, the conclusion of the History of knowledge of the world. (Lenin pp 92-93)

In a word, in studying the categories, the principles of logic, we are, in fact, studying also the objective movement of history itself, and Hegel himself keeps talking about "the strong knots", the "foci of the arrest and direction" that are formed in the mind out of a whole web. Lenin asks himself:

How is this to be understood? Man is confronted with a web of natural phenomena. Instinctive man, the savage, does not distinguish himself from nature. Conscious man does distinguish, categories are stages of distinguishing, i.e., of cognising the world, focal points in the web, which assist in cognising and mastering it. (Lenin, p.93)

Where the significance of categories preoccupied Lenin as he read the preface to the second edition, the question of what Hegel called "the necessity of connection" and "the immanent emergence of distinctions" is what appears to him most important in the Introduction:

Very important!! This is what it means, in my opinion:
1. Necessary connection, the objective connection of all the aspects, forces, tendencies, etc. of the given sphere of phenomena;
2. The "immanent emergence of distinctions" -- the inner objective logic of evolution and of the struggle of the differences, polarity. (Lenin, p.97)

Riding becomes much tougher for Lenin as he approaches the specific sections of the Doctrine of Being than when he read the more generalized prefaces and introduction. But he keeps being very pleasantly surprised, after the many notations to himself that he is reading Hegel "materialistically" that he finds germs of this materialism in Hegel himself. It is Hegel who writes: "What is first in science has had to show itself first, too, historically." And it is Lenin who writes: "It sounds very materialistic".

There are passages when it would seem that Lenin already knew the whole of the Logic since what will appear at the end, that is to say, if one had to summarize the dialectic in a single sentence, it would be sufficient to say it is the unity of opposites, is said right here:

Dialectics is the teaching which shows how Opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they become) identical, under what conditions they are identical, becoming transformed into one another, -- why the human mind should grasp these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living, conditional, mobile, becoming

transformed into one another. (Lenin, p. 109)

And yet, it would be totally wrong to think that he had grasped all the ramifications of what he had written. We are, after all, only the realm of Being which, translated in terms of economics would be the "market" or commodity exchange rather than in production. He himself realized that, despite the "correct definition" of the dialectic as the unity of opposites, he had then not worked out all the implications of this. This is why he had written to the editors of the Russian Encyclopedia, Granat, to whom he had just submitted the essay "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism" which had, indeed, been the first time that a popularization of Marx contained so much on the philosophy of Marxism, asking the Encyclopedia editor whether they could not return the essay to him for some new additions on dialectics. And it is indeed only when he comes to the realm of Notion that he will insist that it is impossible to understand Marx's Capital "especially Chapter I without understanding the whole of the Logic."

What is comprehensively grasped in this first section of Book I is movement and all-sidedness of the dialectic:

Hegel analyses concepts that usually appear to be dead and shows that there is movement in them. Finite, that means moving to an end! Something, means not that which is Other. Being in general, means such indeterminateness that Being-not-Being. All-sided, universal flexibility of concepts, a flexibility reaching to the identity of opposites, that is the essence of the matter. This flexibility, applied subjectively = eclecticism and sophistry. Flexibility, applied objectively, i.e. reflecting the all-sidedness of the material process and its unity, is dialectics, is the correct reflection of the eternal development of the world. (Lenin p.110)

The most important new "discovery" that Lenin makes in this section is the relationship of the ideal to the real. We must remember that Lenin is reading this at the outbreak of World War I, when the betrayal by the Second International made it clear that it just wasn't enough to be "materialists", that something was very wrong in having concentrated on the "economics" of Marxian doctrine and to have acted as if idealism is purely "subjective" rather than a unity of the subjective and objective. Indeed, in a certain sense, it could be said that it was the new appreciation of the significance of the ideal that had sent Lenin to read Hegel's Logic. Thus, it is not only the history of man, but the history of thought which has significance for Lenin and he notes how many "Observations" Hegel makes after he has stated a certain position in order to relate that position to all of the other thinkers. The first chapter of this book, for example, has only three short paragraphs, called Being, Nothing, Becoming, after which Hegel makes no less than five observations stretching over 25 pages, tracing philosophy from the Orient to the Greeks to Spinoza and Kant. In Chapter III, Being For Self, which happens to be where we are now, it is the observation on the Ideality of Leibnitz (Hegel I, pp 173-176) that makes Lenin speak out both for the profundity of the transformation of the ideal into the real and against vulgar materialism:

The thought of the ideal passing into the real is profound: very important for history. But also in the personal life of man it is clear that this contains much truth. Against vulgar materialism. NB. The difference of the ideal from the material is also not un-

conditional, not inordinate.
Obviously, Hegel takes his self-development of concepts, of categories, in connection with the entire history of philosophy. This gives still a new aspect to the whole Logic. (Lenin p.114)

(I should also add, since we are doing a great injustice to Hegel by skipping so much in this book and by not going into the categories themselves, that I do have complete outlines of each of the major works of Hegel and it will be possible for those who wish to study the work in greater detail after finishing this course to consult these notes. In the case of Science of Logic, the outline was made on January 26, 1961)

The final section of Book I, Measure, is where Lenin makes the greatest leap forward. I am not copying Mao but Lenin himself, who, in this section as he approaches the Observation on Nodal lines, writes the word "Leaps!", repeats it three times, further stresses it by writing: "interruptions in gradualness", and further surrounding these with all sorts of intricate lines I cannot describe (look them up yourself in Lenin, p. 123) and the essence is contained in the following quotations:

It is said natura non facit saltum, and ordinary imagination when it has to conceive an arising or passing away, thinks it has conceived them (as was mentioned) when it imagines them as a gradual emergence or disappearance. But we saw that the changes of Being were in general not only a transition of one magnitude into another, but a transition from the qualitative into the quantitative and conversely; (Hegel I, p. 389)

Here what we should hold in mind is that the leap is where quantity reveals that it is just quality superceded and absorbed but not annihilated even as, to use words we know better, abstract labor degrades the concrete laborer but cannot destroy him, for he is "Subject", that is to say, the active human being whose "quest for universality" is only the more intense by this degradation of the capitalist process of production. The point is that even before you come to the essential process of production (or what in Hegel is the Doctrine of Essence), the dialectic of development, the transformation of quality into quantity and quantity into measure (which is on the very threshold of essence) is present.

You will see Lenin get along swimmingly as soon as we reach Essence, and so, I hope, will we.

Lecture III - Book II, The Doctrine of Essence
"or"
Actuality and the Theory of Knowledge

I decided to put a sub-title that is not in Hegel because Lenin keeps stressing the relationship of the theory of knowledge to actuality. It is characteristic of Hegel that, where others would have considered that, with Essence, they have reached what is "behind" appearance, Hegel not only emphasizes the relationship of the two, but the one flowing out of the other on the way to a still further self-development:

Essence is midway between Being and Notion; it is the mean between them, and its movement constitutes the transition from Being to Notion ... Essence first shows into itself or is Reflection; next it appears; thirdly, it manifests itself. (Hegel, II, p.17)

In a word, every stage, even unessential show, is not to be disregarded. Or, as Lenin explains Hegel's statement that "Show then is the phenomenon of skepticism" (Hegel, II, p.22):

i.e. the unessential, seeming, superficial, vanishes more often, does not hold so "tightly", does not "sit so firmly" as "Essence." Approximately, the movement of a river -- the foam above and the deep currents below. But even the foam is an expression of essence! (Lenin, p.130)

And again:

This N.B. Hegel is for the "objective validity" (if it may be called that) of Semblance, "of that which is immediately given" (the expression that which is given is generally used by Hegel.) The more petty philosophers dispute whether essence or that which is immediately given should be taken as basis (Kant, Hume, all the Machists). Instead of or, Hegel puts and, explaining the concrete content of this "and". (Lenin, p.134)

The profundity of Hegel lies precisely in this, that even when he dealt with what is unessential, what is mere show, he disclosed its objectivity. Appearance is a higher stage than show but at that point, too, we are yet to get to Essence. One of the most pregnant sentences in Essence is that, despite the distinctions and even oppositions between Appearance and Essence, the crucial is not the opposition between the two, but the fact that Essence, too, must appear. In a word, no stage can be "skipped". Each of the stages is a necessary "moment", an element of the very development of the essential, of the contradictory development. In Hegel, far from opposites never meeting, it is the ceaseless meeting of opposites that is the essential movement in life, in theory, in practice. Hegel has nothing but scorn for "the law of the excluded middle", whereupon Lenin comments:

Hegel says wittily -- it is said that there is no third, There is a third in this thesis itself. A itself is the third, for A can be both +A and -A. "The Something thus is itself the third term which was supposed to be excluded." (Hegel, II, p.65) -- This is shrewd

and correct. Every concrete thing, every concrete something stands in multifarious and often contradictory relations to everything else, ergo it is itself and some other. (Lenin, p. 138)

The real leap, as we have known for sometime and have constantly quoted, comes with the reading of the section on the Law of Contradiction:

Movement and "self-movement" (this NB! arbitrary (Independent), spontaneous, internally-necessary movement), "change", "movement and vitality", "the principle of all self-movement", "impulse" (Triebe) to "movement" and to "activity" -- the opposite to "dead Being" -- who would believe that this is the core of "Hegelianism," of abstract and abstruse (ponderous, absurd?) Hegelianism? This core has to be discovered, understood, rescued, laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels did. (Lenin, p. 141)

From now on, Lenin shows the highest appreciation of the idealism in dialectical philosophy. The thought has its own dialectic and what is crucial here is that Lenin is not merely saying: Let's read Hegel materialistically. Let's never forget that for Marxists, for revolutionaries, the highest contradiction is that between capital and labor, the class struggle. By now he has taken that for granted philosophically as well as in life, and, instead stresses that the idea of universal movement came first with Hegel, then in Marx and finally with Darwin:

The idea of universal movement and change (1813 Logic) was conjectured before its application to life and society. In regard to society it was proclaimed earlier (Communist Manifesto) than it was demonstrated in application to man (Origin of Species). (Lenin, p. 141)

He will not develop this thought, in full, until the third book which deals with Notion, and we, too, do not want to rush ahead. Instead, it is important to show how all the Stalinists and, later the Maoists revisions, centered precisely around contraction. That is to say, the counter-part to their class compromiser actions in life was the revisions introduced into the Hegelian law of objective contradictions. By claiming that there no longer were any classes in "socialist lands", they concluded that "therefore" there were no contradictions. When Mao introduced the concept that there were no contradictions among "people", that in China, "therefore" what differences that there are can be handled by a "correct policy". The headlines throughout the world that he earned with that speech on how to handle contradictions among people, happened to have been uttered just as the first edition of Marxism and Freedom went to press and here is the footnote (#17) that I added:

The lowest of all today's sophists is the head of the Chinese Communist Party and State, Mao Tse-tung, who recently (June 18, 1957) caused a world sensation with his speech, "On Contradiction", in which he proclaimed, "Let a hundred flowers bloom. Let a hundred schools of thought contend." Mao has ridden this single track, which he calls "Contradiction", ever since 1937. At that time, he directed his attack against "dogmatists" who refused to reduce all contradictions in the anti-Japanese struggle and submit to "the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek." In 1952, Mao introduced a new set of definitions into "Contradictions," this time

applying it to those who opposed the Chinese Communist Party taking sole power in China. By June 18, 1957, after editing with a heavy hand the speech he delivered on February 27th to the Supreme State Conference, he reduced the struggle of class against class to a contradiction among "the people" while he became the champion, at one and the same time, of the philosophy of a hundred flowers blooming and one and only one Party, the Chinese Communist Party ruling. Outside of the exploitative class relations themselves, nothing so clearly exposes the new Chinese ruling class as their threadbare philosophy.

The concrete that Lenin had in mind, the one that he refers most often to is Marx's Capital. He will soon be saying on the whole relationship of Ground to Condition, or the relationship of history to thought: "and purely logical elaboration? It coincides. It must coincide, as induction and deduction in Capital." (Lenin, p. 146)

The point is that Lenin, throughout this first section "Essence as Reflection in Itself", is stressing the critical importance of contradiction, without which it is absolutely impossible to understand any development. Anyone who blunts contradiction to either the point of mere difference or to not seeing the transition from one to the other has no conception of what Hegel means by negativity or the inherent self-movement:

NB*

(1) Ordinary perception grasps the difference and the contradiction, but not the transition of one to the other, but this is the most important.

(2) Intelligent reflection and mind. Reflection grasps the contradiction, expresses it, brings things in relation to one another, compels the "concept to shine through the contradiction" but does not express the concept of things and their relation.

(3) Thinking reason (Mind) sharpens the blunted difference of variety, the mere manifold of imagination, to the essential difference to Opposition. Only when the contradictions reach the peak does manifoldness become regular and lively in relation to the other -- acquire that negativity which is the inner pulsation of self-movement and life.

Again, the stress is both on life and thought. Hegel himself concludes the section, not with the law of contradiction but with the movement from that first to Ground, then to Condition, which could be translated as history itself. It is impossible to develop at length these quintessential points in so brief an outline. For the time being, it will have to suffice to stress two things. One, that Lenin here brought in, as we already quoted, the relationship between inductive and deductive method in Capital. And, two, to keep in mind that what Hegel is arguing for is the need to get rid of the concept of Ground as a sub-stratum and to know that when you have got rid of this concept of something being "behind" the immediate, the apparent, you have by no means gotten rid of the fact that the immediate, too, is the result of a mediating process. Hegel relentlessly

* I have used my own translation (MSF p. 331) because the "official" translation (Lenin, p. 143) uses here non-philosophic terminology in the question of perception, reflection and mind. There are other places it is equally "loose" in its translation but for uniformity's sake, I have used their translation generally.

restates his theses that "The Fact Emerges Out of Ground." And that "When all the Conditions of a Fact are present, it enters into Existence." (Hegel II, p. 105) whereupon Lenin comments:

Very good! What has the Absolute Idea and Idealism to do with it?
(Lenin, p. 147)

Also let us not forget that when Lenin referred to Capital, he at one and the same time, stressed what was great about Hegel's concept of Ground and Condition -- "The universal all-sided, vital connection of everything with everything and the reflection of this connection in human concepts." And then pointed to the direction in which both the work of Hegel and Marx must continue:

Continuation of the work of Hegel and Marx must consist in the dialectical elaboration of the history of human thought, science and technique. (Lenin, p. 146-147)

We are, first, now, in section 2, Appearance, which, in turn, is divided into Existence, Appearance, and Essential Relation. Though we can, by no means, claim to have dealt with it in the few references we made to it in the first section, we nevertheless must here limit ourselves to but two questions, that of the Law of Appearance and the world of appearance. If you wish to practice dialectic by going off into your own analysis in the real world, let me give you a hint: Lenin's "playing down" of the importance of law is due to his underlying critique of the economism; thus, on the one hand, he shows that law is the "enduring (the persisting) in appearances" but is not beyond appearance; and, on the other hand, that "Appearance is now r i c h e r than law." (Lenin, p. 152) Let Lenin sum it up for us:

The essence here is that both the world of appearances and the world in itself are moments of man's knowledge of nature, stages, alterations, or deepenings (of knowledge). The shifting of the world in itself further and further from the world of appearances -- that is what is so far still not to be seen in Hegel. N.B. Have not Hegel's "moments" of the concept the significance of "moments" of transition? (Lenin, p. 153)

The most exciting part in the Doctrine of Essence is Section III, Actuality, which Hegel defines as the "unity of Essence and Existence" (Hegel, II, p. 160) Unity is not, however, "synthesis"; it is the very apex of contradiction.

The greatness of Hegel is that he wrote Logic freed from anything concrete and yet it contains the essence of all concrete. Thus, if you are an economist, a Marxist economist, think of Actuality as capitalist crises and you will discern some absolutely magnificent developments and truths and think it couldn't possibly mean anything else. But if you think of philosophic terms, say like a Marcuse, the concrete that preoccupies you is that you are finally freed from being enmeshed in phenomena, tied only to "observable facts", are capable of grasping reality as a totality and you would be just as right as when you thought Actuality applied only to capitalist crises.

When you'll be flying on your own, and will have to trace a development, be it in literature, the self-determination of nations, or a general strike, you will at once recognize that the conflict is no longer a question only of opposition between the existent and the as yet non-existent forces, but between two co-existing

antagonistic forces that simply cannot continue to co-exist endlessly. And of course you'll be right -- and in all fields.

The point is that you simply cannot limit the "uses of this self-movement through contradiction." Lenin himself began to free himself from all residue of taking the empiric fact as the actual. You see Actuality first as contingency, then substance and when you come to cause and think you "really" get it this time, Hegel first tells you that effect and cause are not poles apart at all. Let us therefore follow Lenin and note also that at this point he goes back to the "Smaller Logic" where "the same thing is expounded very often more clearly, with concrete examples" (Lenin, p. 157) and he quotes from it (p.262) the paragraph on Possibility:

Whether a thing is possible or impossible depends altogether on the subject matter: that is, on the sum total of the elements in Actuality which, as it opens itself out, discloses itself to be Necessity. (Hegel, p.262) Lenin comments: "The sum-total of the elements in Actuality, which in its unfolding discloses itself to be a Necessity. The unfolding of the sum-total of moments of actuality NB = essence of dialectical cognition." (Lenin, pp. 157-158)

(One thing is sure, it is much easier to read the "Smaller Logic" than the Science of Logic and you now deserve to make it a bit easier for yourself, so start reading, especially the section on Actuality.)

Lenin singles out the expression, "necessity is blind only insofar as it is not understood." When Lenin reaches the section analysing the relationship of Substantiality to Causality, he sums it up in two ways:

On the one hand, knowledge of matter must be deepened to knowledge (to the concept) of Substance in order to find the causes of phenomena. On the other hand, the actual cognition of the cause is the deepening of knowledge from the externality of phenomena to the Substance. Two types of examples should explain this: 1) from the history of natural science, and 2) from the history of philosophy. More exactly: it is not "examples" that should be here -- comparison is not proof -- but the quintessence of the history of both the one and the other + the history of technique. (Lenin, p. 159)

And again:

When one reads Hegel on causality, it appears strange at first glance that he dwells so relatively lightly on this theme, beloved of the Kantians. Why? Because, indeed, for him causality is only one of the determinations of universal connection, which he had already covered earlier, in his entire exposition, much more deeply and all-sidedly: always and from the very outset emphasising this connection, the reciprocal transitions, etc., etc. It would be very instructive to compare the "birth-pangs" of neoempiricism (respective "physical idealism") with the solutions or rather with the dialectical method of Hegel. (Lenin, p. 162)

You can actually feel Lenin bursting forth, on his own, prepared to engage the real world as he approaches the end of the Doctrine of Essence and Hegel states that Book III, the Doctrine of the Notion, is "the realm of Subjectivity or of Freedom" (Hegel, II, p. 205). Lenin writes joyously:

NB Freedom = Subjectivity
("or")
End, Consciousness, Endeavour
NB

(Lenin, p. 164)

Lecture IV -- Book III* Subjective Logic or The Doctrine of Notion

With the Notion, we reach, at one and the same time, that which, in philosophic terms, is oldest, most written about, and purely intellectualistic; and, from a Marxist point of view, least written about, most "feared" as idealistic, unreal, "pure" thought, in a word, a closed ontology.

And yet, it is the Doctrine of the Notion that develops the categories of Freedom and, therefore, should mean the objective and subjective means whereby a new society is born. It is true that, consciously for Hegel, this was done only in thought, while in life all contradictions persisted. But what Hegel did "consciously" does not explain away the objective pull of the future on the present, and the present as history (the French Revolution for Hegel), and not just as the status quo of an existing state. Be that as it may, let's follow Hegel himself. A sweeping and concrete historic sense saved Hegel from both the introspection and empty absolutes of his philosophic contemporaries and from Kant's Critique that, nevertheless, kept object and subject worlds apart:

It will always remain a matter for astonishment how the Kantian philosophy knew that relation of thought to sensuous existence, where it halted, for a merely relative relation of bare appearance, and fully acknowledged and asserted a higher unity of the two in the Idea in general, and, particularly, in the idea of an intuitive understanding; but yet stopped dead at this relative relation and at the assertion that the Notion is and remains utterly separated from reality; so that it affirmed as true what it pronounced to be finite knowledge, and declared to be superfluous and improper figments of thought that which it recognized as truth, and of which it established the definite notion. (Hegel, p. 226) Vol. II

On the relationship of Hegel to Kant, Lenin wrote:

Essentially, Hegel is completely right as opposed to Kant. Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract -- provided it is correct (NB) (and Kant, like all philosophers, speaks of correct thought) -- does not get away from the truth but comes closer to it. The abstraction of matter, of a law of nature, the abstraction of value, etc. in short: all scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect

* Book III is with Book II in Volume II; hence the reference to Hegel's Science of Logic will continue to be, simply, Hegel, II p.

nature more deeply, truly and completely. From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice, -- such is the dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality. Kant disparages knowledge in order to make way for faith: Hegel exalts knowledge, asserting that knowledge is knowledge of God. The materialist exalts the knowledge of matter, of nature, consigning God, and the philosophical rabble that defends God, to the rubbish heap. (Lenin, p. 171)

On the very next page, Lenin again shows that the concrete he had in his mind in reading Hegel was Capital and its economic categories. Thus:

"Here, too, Hegel is essentially right: value is a category which dispenses with the material of sensuousness, but it is truer than the law of supply and demand." (Lenin, p. 172)

Indeed, where, in the Doctrines of Being and Essence, Lenin had two references to Capital, here in the Doctrine of Notion, he has no less than 13 references. Not only that, the references move from seeing parallelisms between Logic and Capital to the break with all (including himself) previous interpretations by Marxists. It is here that Lenin will write the categoric aphorisms:

Marxists criticised (at the beginning of the twentieth century) the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Büchner) than of Hegel. (Lenin, p. 179)

It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!! (Lenin, p. 180)

But we are forcing Lenin to run ahead of himself, so we better retrace our steps to the end of the introductory section, "On the Notion in General", as he enters Section I, Subjectivity. The first thing he meets the specific categories in Book III -- Universal, Particular, Individual -- and notes: "These parts of the work should be called: a best means of getting a headache!" But he no sooner said it than he began developing all sorts of new concepts:

Obviously, here too the chief thing for Hegel is to trace the transitions. From a certain point of view under certain conditions, the universal is the individual, the individual is the universal. Not only (1) connection and inseparable connection, of all concepts and judgments, but (2) transitions from one into the other, and not only transitions, but also (3) identity of opposites -- that is the chief thing for Hegel. But this merely "glimmers" through the fog of extremely abstruse exposition. The history of thought from the standpoint of the development and application of the general concepts and categories of the Logic -- That's what is needed! (Lenin, p. 177)

By the time he has reached the third chapter (The Syllogism) in that section where Hegel could be said to have broken down the division between objectivity and subjectivity, it is as if a whole new world has opened up before Lenin. He reads Hegel's statement: "All things are a Syllogism, a universal which is bound together with individuality through particularity; but of course they are not wholes consisting of three propositions" (Hegel II, p.307) Lenin not only draws the parallel between Capital and Marx, and rejects previous interpretations

of Hegel, insisting that (as we quoted previously) it was impossible to understand Capital without understanding the whole of the Logic; but he also gets a new appreciation of the Logic as something that can be used for his age!

NB: to be inverted. Marx applied Hegel's dialectics in its rational form to political economy.

The formation of (abstract) notions and operations with them already included idea, conviction, consciousness of the law-governed character of the objective connection of the world. To distinguish causality from this connection is stupid. To deny the objectivity of notions, the objectivity of the universal in the individual and in the particular, is impossible. Consequently, Hegel is much more profound than Kant, and others, in tracing the reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions. Just as the simple form of value, the individual act of exchange of one given commodity for another, already includes in undeveloped form all the main contradictions of capitalism, so the simplest generalization, the first and simplest formation of notions (judgments, syllogisms, etc.) already denotes man's ever deeper cognition of the objective connection of the world. Here is where one should look for the true meaning, significance, and role of Hegel's Logic. This NB. (Lenin, pp.178-179)

For us to be able to see those objective world connections, we must tarry a bit more with those categories -- Universal, Particular, Individual. They characterize not only the movement of the Logic as a whole and in its individual parts; they also characterize the movement of all development in theory and in life. If you write, for Universal, Socialism; and for Particular, you assume a specific historic period in which, say, the Russian Revolution took the form of nationalized property; and for Individual, that is to say the concrete realization of a Universal, you write the self-activity of man which makes the population "to a man" the controllers of their own destiny in production and in the State; you can see what a very big gap there is between not only the Universal and the Individual, but between the Particular and the Individual, so big a gap, in fact, that the Particular may never reach the Individual, may get transformed into its very opposite. That is why Lenin, even before he summarized the dialectic as the unity of opposite, paid so much attention to transitions:

The transition from the syllogism of analogy (about analogy) to the syllogism of necessity, -- from the syllogism of induction to the syllogism of analogy, -- the syllogism from the universal to the individual -- the syllogism from the individual to the universal, -- the exposition of connection and transitions (connection is transition) that is Hegel's task. Hegel actually proved that logical forms and laws are not an empty shell, but the reflection of the objective world. More correctly, he did not prove, but made a brilliant guess. (Lenin, p.180)

It is not as easy to follow through the transitions, to work out the relationships of Universal, Particular, and Individual as it appears when someone else has worked out something that has already been proven by history. A revolutionary like Leon Trotsky "got stuck" in that Particular form because it was a necessary form and the actual historic appearance in the Russian Revolution. It is this which has

us by the throat or rather had Leon Trotsky by the throat, and he never did return to test what the Individual was either logically or in the concrete life of the population; he merely took for granted the Universal and concluded that "therefore" it was also so in the concrete, or was on the way to being so.

Measure your comprehension of the logical development against a concrete subject. For example, we consider the question of self-determination of nations now, related to what Lenin wrote about it after he had gone through the Logic (read those articles either in the Selected Works, Vol.V, part IV, or in the Collected Works, Vol. XIX.) And then reread it all, after you have completed the Logic, always keeping before you Hegel's statement in the Absolute Idea, "the self-determination in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak."

Now return to Lenin on the Logic as he comes to Section II, Objectivity. You must read for yourselves, pages 187 to 188 since this is one of the times when he divides a page in two and on one side writes directly what Hegel says, and on the other side, "translates" it into Materialist Dialectics. I can only quote one phrase from it:

At the beginning, man's ends appear foreign("other") in relation to nature. Human consciousness, science ("der Begriff"), reflects the essence, the substance of nature, but at the same time this consciousness is something external in relation to nature (not immediately, not simply, coinciding with it.) (Lenin, p. 188)

which again gets translated into:

In actual fact, men's ends are engendered by the objective world and presuppose it, -- they find it as something given, present. But it seems to man as if his ends are taken from outside the world, and are independent of the world("freedom").

((NB All this in the paragraph on "The Subjective End." NB)) (217-221)
(Lenin, p. 189)

The point throughout Section II, Objectivity, is that, in his "translations" now, Lenin, far from stressing that he must read Hegel "materialistically" now emphasizes that "the germs of historical materialism" are in Hegel. Thus, Lenin capitalized and bold-faced, and wrote: "Hegel and Historical Materialism" alongside the statement from Hegel: "In his tools man possesses power over external nature, even although, according to his Ends, he frequently is subjected to it." (Hegel II, p.388). Once again he relates the categories of Logic to human practice:

When Hegel endeavours -- sometimes even huffs and puffs -- to bring man's purposive activity under the categories of logic, saying that this activity is the "syllogism" (Schluß), that the subject (man) plays the role of a "member" in the logical "figure" of the "syllogism", and so on, THEN THAT IS NOT MERELY STRETCHING A POINT, A MERE GAME, THIS HAS A VERY PROFOUND, PURELY MATERIALISTIC CONTENT. It has to be inverted: the practical activity of man had to lead his consciousness to the repetition of the various logical figures thousands of millions of times in order that these figures could obtain the significance of axioms. This nota bene.
(Lenin, p. 190)

and again:

Remarkable: Hegel comes to the "Idea" as the coincidence of the Notion and the object, as truth, through the practical, purposive activity of man. A very close approach to the view that man by his practice proves the objective correctness of his ideas, concepts, knowledge, science.
(Lenin, p. 191)

This does not mean, as Mao has interpreted, that all that remains is practice. Quite the contrary. Lenin no sooner reaches the third section, the Idea, when he stresses that (1) this section contains "the very best of the dialectic," and (2) that not only for Hegel does practice refer to practice in the theory of cognition, but for Marxists the theoretic has an objective validity all its own; indeed, without it, the practice would be insufficient to bring about a successful revolution. (Be sure to read pages 304 to 308, "The Philosophy of the Yenan period: Mao perverts Lenin" in Marxism and Freedom.)

Although we will leave the last chapter of this section to a separate lecture, it is clear here that Lenin no longer counterposes subjective and objective as the twain that never meets:

Logical concepts are subjective so long as they remain "abstract", in their abstract form, but at the same time they express also the Things-in-themselves. Nature is both concrete and abstract, both phenomenon and essence, both moment and relation. Human concepts are subjective in their abstractness, separateness, but objective as a whole, in the process, in the sum-total, in the tendency, in the source. (Lenin, p. 208).

Because of this profound grasp of the inter-penetration of objective and subjective, Lenin makes the leap to recognizing the creativity of consciousness: "Alias: Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it." (Lenin, p. 212), which he further extends to the transformation of reality: "that the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity." (Lenin, p. 213). Again and again, he relates activity to transformation and on that note will approach the Absolute Idea:

The activity of man, who has constructed an objective picture of the world for himself, changes external actuality, abolishes its determinateness (= alters some sides or other, qualities, of it), and thus removes from it the features of Semblance, externality and nullity, and makes it as being in and for itself (= objectively true). (Lenin, p. 218)

Lecture V -- The Absolute Idea

A full lecture is being devoted to a single chapter, the last in the Logic, because the working out of this is the task of our age and not only the task of the book, Philosophy and Revolution. This separates us from others, all others, including even Lenin. It is true, of course, that we could not begin to carry out this task had Lenin not left us all those stepping stones. It is true that we must first internalize what Lenin had done with the chapter before we can make any steps on our own. But it is equally true that no one can work out the problems of another generation. That task has remained for us.

Speaking strictly philosophically, the working out of this chapter in 1953 is what led, on the one hand, to the split in the State-Capitalist tendency, and, on the other hand, to the extension of that analysis into Marxist Humanism. In a word, even though we ourselves were not conscious of it at the time (as can be seen from the fact that the Letters on the Absolute Idea of May 12 and May 20, 1953 were addressed to a co-leader in the State-Capitalist tendency) it is, in fact, this grappling with the Absolute Idea which led to our singling out the Humanism of Marxism as the emblem of ourselves as a theoretically independent tendency, and as the unique expression of the age. Therefore, it will be important for you to consider those letters as part of these notes. If you still find it too difficult to follow that paragraph by paragraph interpretation of the Absolute Idea (as well as the chapter on Absolute Knowledge from the Phenomenology of Mind) then study only those paragraphs which are the subject of Lenin's notes.

Hegel begins the chapter with this sentence:

The Absolute Idea has now turned out to be the identity of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea; each of these by itself is one-sided and contains the Idea itself only as a sought Beyond and an unattained goal; each consequently is a synthesis of the tendency, and both contains and does not contain the Idea, and passes from one concept to the other, but failing to combine the two concepts, does not pass beyond their contradictions.
(Hegel II, p.466)

And in the next paragraph, Hegel has a statement which we singled out last as the underlying thought which should guide your study of self-determination: "The self-determination therefore in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak." Despite all that Lenin, in 1916, that is to say, the year after completing Hegel's Science of Logic, had written on self-determination of nations, it was not this sentence that he singled out in 1915. What he was concerned with was the dialectic as the whole which first, now, after nearly a thousand pages, was once again summarized by Hegel. As he was to express it at the end:

It is noteworthy that the whole chapter on the "Absolute Idea" scarcely says a word about God (hardly ever has a "divine" "notion" slipped out accidentally) and apart from that -- this NB -- it contains almost nothing that is specifically idealism, but has for its main subject the dialectical method. The sum-total, the last word and essence of Hegel's logic is the dialectical method -- this is extremely noteworthy. And one thing more: in this most idealistic of Hegel's works there is the least idealism and the most materialism. "Contradictory," but a fact!
(Lenin, p. 234)

It is this dialectic method, which at this point Hegel calls the Absolute Method, which preoccupies Lenin throughout the chapter, and which allows him to summarize it for himself in 16 points, that stresses the totality as well as objectivity, unity as well as struggle of opposites, co-existence and causality as well as transition from one to its opposite until the whole self-movement appears to be but a return to the old, but is, in fact, the negation of the negation. Studying the whole 16 points very carefully (Lenin, pp221-222 or in Marxism and Freedom, pp 349-350), he is then ready to summarize all of the 16 points into a single one: "In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics, but it requires explanations and development."

It is necessary, once again, to return to those categories: Universal, Particular, Individual, keeping in mind also the definition Hegel gives of Individuality in his final work, the Philosophy of Mind* "individuality ...purified of all that interfere ... with freedom itself." In the Science of Logic he wrote:

In the absolute method, however, the universal does not mean the merely abstract but the objectively universal, that is, that which is in itself the concrete totality, but not as posited or for itself. Even the abstract universal considered as such in the Notion (that is, according to its truth) is not only the simple: as abstract it is already posited as affected with a negation. For this reason there is neither in actuality nor in thought anything so simple and abstract as is commonly imagined. Such a simple entity is a mere illusion which is based on ignorance of what in fact is given. (Hegel II, p.471)

Once again, Lenin keeps stressing to himself that there is here a "clear, important sketch of the dialectic," singling out the following Hegelian principle:

To hold fast the positive in its negative, and the content of the presupposition in the result, is the most important part of rational cognition; also only the simplest reflection is needed to furnish conviction of the absolute truth and necessity of this requirement, while with regard to the examples of proofs, the whole of Logic consists of these. (Hegel II, p.476)

Upon which Lenin comments:

Not empty negation, not futile negation, not sceptical negation, vacillation and doubt is characteristic and essential in dialectics, -- which undoubtedly contains the element of negation and indeed as its most important element -- no, but negation as a moment of connection, as a moment of development, retaining the positive, i.e., without any vacillations, without any eclecticism." (Lenin, p. 226).

*The Philosophy of Mind is Volume III of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences of which Volume I was published as Hegel's Logic; Volume II, the Philosophy of Nature has never been translated into English; and Volume III, or the Philosophy of Mind, is published separately.

The next two pages in Hegel, Lenin copies pretty nearly in full, stressing constantly that it is: "the kernel of dialectics, the criterion of truth (the unity of the concept or reality)". What he is referring to especially is Hegel's description of the second negativity as the turning point of the whole movement, and yet the self-movement and the objectivity predominates in Lenin so that when he comes to the sentence in Hegel that we have reached the transition of the Logic to Nature, Lenin notes "it brings one within a hand's grasp of materialism ... this is not the last sentence of the Logic but what comes after it to the end of the page is unimportant." (Lenin, p. 234) We will be retracing our steps to the second negativity just as soon as I show what it is that I wrote in my letter on the Absolute Idea under Lenin's above quoted remarks:

But, my dear Vladimir Ilyitch, it is not true; the end of that page is important; we of 1953, we who have lived 3 decades after you and tried to absorb all you have left us, we can tell you that. Listen to the very next sentence: "But this determination is not a perfected becoming or a transition..." Remember how transition was everything to you in the days of Monopoly, the eve of Socialism. Well, Hegel has passed beyond transition. He says this last determination, "the pure Idea, in which the determinateness or reality of the Notion is itself raised to the level of Notion" is an absolute liberation, having no further immediate determination which is not equally posited and equally Notion. Consequently there is no transition in this freedom... The transition here therefore must rather be taken to mean that the Idea freely releases itself in absolute self-security and self-repose. (p.7, Letter dated 5/12/53)

Now then, let us return to the second negative as Hegel expresses it:

The negativity which has just been considered is the turning point of the movement of the Notion. It is the simple point of negative self-relation, the innermost source of all activity, of living and spiritual self-movement, the dialectic soul which all truth has in it and through which it alone is truth; for the transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality, and that unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone.

The second negative, the negative of the negative which we have reached, is this transcendence of the contradiction, but is no more the activity of an external reflection than the contradiction is: it is the innermost and most objective moment of Life and Spirit, by virtue of which a subject is personal and free. (Hegel II, pp 477-478)

Where Lenin stressed the objectivism, we added emphasis on "personal and free". Where Lenin had next emphasized the materialism, we stressed that "the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality ... rest upon this subjectivity alone." And where Lenin stopped a paragraph short of the end of the Logic, we proceeded to show that Hegel's anticipation of Volumes II and III of the Encyclopedia was similar to Marx's anticipation in "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation" in Volume I of Capital, of the movement of the law of motion of capitalism in Volumes II and III. We concluded that what Hegel is showing in the movement from the Logic to Nature to Mind was this: The movement is from the logical principle or theory to nature or practice and from practice not alone to theory but to the new society which is its essence. (Letter, dated 5/20/53, p.4)

It is this discovery that there is a movement from practice to theory as well as from theory to practice upon which the whole of Marxism and Freedom is built. No wonder that, though Marxism and Freedom was only an idea in my head in 1953, I had written: I am shaking all over, for we have come to where we part from Lenin. I mentioned before that, although in the approach to the Absolute Idea, Lenin had mentioned that man's cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it, nevertheless within the chapter he never developed it. Objective world connections, materialism, dialectical materialism, it is true, is what predominates, not the object and subject as one fully developed.

And it is why I had also written, in that letter: Now stand up and shout, Personal and Free, Personal and Free, Personal and Free, as Lenin had shouted, Leap, Leap, Leap, when he first saw dialectical development as the development of both the objective and subjective world. It is true that Lenin, too, had written: "This NB: The richest is the most concrete and most subjective" alongside Hegel's statement: "The richest consequently is also the most concrete and subjective, and that which carries itself back into the simplest depth is also the most powerful and comprehensive."

But the subjectivity, the self-activity of the proletariat first became concrete and predominant when Lenin prepared himself for the November revolution as the February had broken out. It was never to leave him again. There was not a single important writing of his that did not breathe the spirit of freedom, population to a man, worker as subject, masses as subject, from then until the day of his death. Since this meant not only "in general", as against capitalism, but concretely even against his co-leaders, it is of the utmost importance that this lecture be concluded with: (1) the sections on the Trade Union debate (pp 194-210), which includes also Lenin's Will; (2) the debate against Bukharin, that is to say the pamphlet, State-Capitalism and Marxist Humanism, or Philosophy and Revolution. Finally, (3) you should now be able to get along swimmingly with the chapter "Hegel's Absolutes as New Beginnings" in Why Hegel, Why Now?

In fact, why not practice all you have learned and more by writing Philosophy and Revolution?

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