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POPPER AND DIALECTICS

II. DIALECTIS AND HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE*

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The difficulty arising from the fact that the awaited fulfillment of a „historicist” theory is accompanied, on the part of its representatives, by a policy of waiting and doing nothing is not bound, as has been claimed in the first part of this paper, to lead us to anti-Marxist consequences. The theoreticians who definitely opposed such a policy, together with a determinist interpretation of Marxism, clearly saw the difficulty. In proposing to examine their way of confronting this problem, I shall also have the opportunity to return to, and discuss more in details, the possibility of an absolute *and* historical knowledge, refuted dialectically by Popper.

The problem of how the socialist revolution would take place as well as what kind of attitude people might or should assume about it was to become of primary importance in any case, once there emerged a revolutionary situation. But how can we know for sure that there is a revolutionary situation? A number of objective factors are evidently not difficult to be ascertained, but that is not enough. The point is that, in so far as Marxism is held to be a social theory investigating the development of the society with *scientific* means, we are supposed to possess an absolute certainty as to the maturity of the conditions. But once such enormous claims are advanced, we are likely to fail to meet them because the absolute empirical verification of theoretical expectations is clearly impossible. The fact accounting for it is that all kinds of verifying, falsifying, corroborating, etc. procedures involve an element of *decision*, as was shown by Popper himself⁶³. The presence of this difficulty (also) in the field of a revolutionary theory of society was clearly discerned by Lukács who wrote:

* The first part of this paper („Popper and Dialectics. I. Dialectical Elements in Popper’s Criticism of Dialectics”) see in Tomus XVII of these *Annales*: Budapest, 1983, pp. 251 – 272.

⁶³ This was the highly important *negative* result of Popper’s philosophy of science. He clearly demonstrated that not only the verification, but also the falsification of a scientific theory cannot wholly be performed by purely *scientific*, that is, by *rational*, means, but that it involves *decision*: “Every test of a theory, whether resulting in its corroboration

"The argument most frequently put forward in discussions regarding Bolshevism, that is, whether the economic and social situation has become 'mature' enough for the immediate advent, points to an unsolvable problem; in my opinion there can never be such a situation in which this might, *with all certainty and in advance*, be known: the *will* for immediate accomplishment constitutes no less an integral part of the 'maturity' of the situation than the objectivated conditions."⁶⁴

The purely "objective", "scientific", "empirical" verification of the maturity of the conditions for a revolutionary intervention, that is, the widely expected scientific attitude to remain completely aloof, or "passive", is impossible in such a situation precisely in so far as the "willingness" or "inclination" of certain groups to carry out the revolutionary advent constitutes an integral part of the "objective" maturity of the conditions. This point is emphasized elsewhere, too:

„Der theoretische Unterschied zwischen den sozialdemokratischen und den kommunistischen Parteien offenbarte sich also hauptsächlich in der Bewertung der Kräfteverhältnisse des imperialistischen Finanzkapitals und des Proletariats in der richtigen oder falschen Erkenntnis der letzten Phase des Kampfes um seine Befreiung[. . .]
[. . .] Eine Überzeugung war hier von vornherein unmöglich, weil die tiefste Quelle der Überzeugung mit keinem Argument erfaßbar war: nämlich der einheitliche und entschlossene Wille des Proletariats, die Gewalt an sich zu reißen. Denn alle anderen Anzeichen, die sich als

or falsification, must stop at some basic statement or other which we *decide to accept*. If we do not come to any decision, and do not accept some basic statement or other, then the test will have led nowhere." (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. p. 104.)

"From a logical point of view, the testing of a theory depends upon basic statements whose acceptance or rejection, in its turn, depends upon our *decisions*." (ibid, p. 108.)

The circularity of the verifying or falsifying process is clearly stated by Popper in his example of the "trial by jury":

"In the case of the trial by jury, it would be clearly impossible to *apply* the 'theory' unless there is first a verdict arrived at by decision; yet the verdict has to be found in a procedure that conforms to, and thus applies, part of the general legal code. The case is analogous to that of basic statements. Their acceptance is part of the application of a theoretical system; and it is only this application which makes any further applications possible." (ibid. pp. 110 – 111.)

The difficulty singled out here by Popper is eminently of a *metaphysical* kind: it is the incapacity of our (human) consciousness to find a "particular" totally corresponding to the "universal":

„Diese Zufälligkeit findet sich ganz natürlich in dem *Besondern*, welches die Urteilskraft unter das *Allgemeine* der Verstandesbegriffe bringen soll; denn durch das *Allgemeine unseres* (menschlichen) Verstandes ist das *Besondere* nicht bestimmt; und es ist zufällig, auf wie vielerlei Art unterschiedene Dinge, die doch in einem gemeinsamen Merkmale übereinkommen, unserer Wahrnehmung vorkommen können. Unser Verstand ist ein Vermögen der Begriffe, d.i. ein *diskursiver* Verstand, für den es freilich zufällig sein muß, welcherlei und wie sehr verschieden das *Besondere* sein mag, das ihm in der Natur gegeben werden, und *das* unter seine Begriffe gebracht werden kann.“ (I. KANT, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 77.§. in: Kant, *Ästhetische und religionsphilosophische Schriften*, Leipzig, 1924. p. 302.)

⁶⁴ G. Lukács, *A bolsevizmus mint erkölcsi probléma* ("Bolshevism as an ethical problem"), in: Lukács, *Történelem és osztálytudat*, Magvető, Budapest, 1971, p. 11.

Beweis für die Reife oder Unreife der Verhältnisse aufbringen lassen, bewegten sich an der Oberfläche. Einzig und allein der einheitliche Wille des Proletariats kann die alte Gesellschaft zerstören und die neue aufbauen. *Die Verhältnisse wären also zur Vernichtung des Kapitalismus herangereift, als dieser entschlossene Wille im Proletariat zum Bewußtsein erwacht war.*"⁶⁵

In his undertaking to re-interpret "determinist" Marxism, Lukács directs attention to the following fact:

"Marx's philosophy of history has seldom been separated with sufficient awareness from his sociology. That is why it has been overlooked by many that the two cardinal parts of his system, the class struggle on the one hand, and the socialist state putting an end to the class structure and to all oppression on the other, are not products of the same *Begriffsbildung*. The first is an epochmaking *diagnosis* provided by Marxian sociology[. . .] The second is the utopian postulate pertaining to the Marxian philosophy of history: an *ethical* aim for a new world to come." "The fact that the liberation of the proletariat will do away with capitalist class oppression, does not in the least imply the elimination of *all* class oppression [. . .] From the point of view of pure sociological necessity, it implies only a change in class structure: the oppressed become oppressors. That it may not come about, but that the epoch of real freedom shall be introduced, is greatly conditioned by the victory of the proletariat [. . .] but this is no more than a *negative condition*. The birth of real freedom is made possible, in the last analysis, by something that goes definitely beyond sociological laws and matters-of-fact, and is not deducible from them: it is the *will* to create the new world."⁶⁶

Lukács even admits in parentheses that:

"Marx's Hegelianism, which brings the different levels of Being too much on one level, has to some extent contributed to the elimination of this difference"⁶⁷,

an element that, in Popper's terms, may rightly be called "historicist". As a complement and support of the above arguments, Lukács is engaged in an attack against empiricism in a manner not quite unlike Popper's:

„Der bornierte Empirismus bestreitet freilich, daß die Tatsachen bloß in einer solchen – je nach dem Erkenntnisziel verschiedenen – methodischen Bearbeitung überhaupt erst zu Tatsachen werden. Er glaubt, in jeder Gegebenheit, jeder statistischen Zahl, jedem factum brutum des ökonomischen Lebens eine für ihn wichtige Tatsache finden zu können. Dabei übersieht er, daß die einfachste Aufzählung, die kom-

⁶⁵ G. Lukács, *Partei und Klasse*, in: Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, Werke 2, Luchterland Vlg., Neuwied und Berlin, 1968, p. 75 f.

⁶⁶ A bolsevizmus mint erkölcsi probléma, in op. cit. p. 12 f.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

mentarloseste Aneinanderreihung von ‚Tatsachen‘ bereits eine ‚Interpretation‘ ist: daß schon hier die Tatsachen von einer Theorie, von einer Methode aus erfaßt, aus dem Lebenszusammenhang, in dem sie sich ursprünglich befunden haben, herausgerissen und in den Zusammenhang einer Theorie, eingefügt worden sind. Die gebildeteren Opportunisten — trotz ihrer instinktiven und tiefen Abneigung gegen jede Theorie — bestreiten dies auch keineswegs. Sie berufen sich aber auf die Methode der Naturwissenschaften, auf die Art, wie diese durch Beobachtung, Abstraktion, Experiment usw. ‚reine‘ Tatsachen zu ermitteln und ihre Zusammenhänge zu ergründen fähig sind. Und sie stellen den gewaltsamen Konstruktionen der dialektischen Methode ein solches Erkenntnisideal gegenüber.“⁶⁸

The second part of the argument begins to draw the theoretical conclusions inherent in the practical attitude of rejecting the policy of waiting and doing nothing, and of calling for a revolutionary advent. In this sense it represents a radical re-interpretation of Marxism which may be summed up like this: “science” as a cognitive undertaking of man represents the world as the sum-total of wholly “objective facts”, completely alien to, and independent of, the “subjective” interests, aims, efforts, etc. of man. The procedures destined to decide upon the “scientific” character of hypotheses require, in the mean time, an attitude of total “passivity” on the part of the subjects of scientific inquiry (an attitude of waiting and doing nothing, as it were); an attitude which corresponds to, and at the same time, conceals the evident fact that the subjects, not only of scientific discovery, but also of the society, who are actually active and whose specific (economic and other) activities contribute to the maintenance and to the development of society, are living under alienated conditions. It conceals this fact precisely in so far as science’s picturing the world presents the world in the manner described above; and it corresponds to this fact because, being a part of society, in its view of the world (duality of subject and object, the independence of the latter, etc.), the same alienating forces “show themselves” as in society itself. This latter realization is, of course, no more possible from a *scientific*, but only from a *dialectical* or *historical* viewpoint. Thus, to understand the working of history as well as of society, we have to dispense with the scientific standpoint and have to adopt a dialectical methodology (the viewpoint of “totality”), which, in its turn, alone is capable of unmasking science’s distorted description of the world.⁶⁹ The very interpretation of Marxism as “science” is, therefore, the product of alienation. It is, of course, no mere accident because capitalism has a structure such that it conceives Marxism, which was originated from it,

⁶⁸ G. Lukács, Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus? in: *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, op. cit. p. 176.

⁶⁹ The metaphysical presuppositions of “traditional theory” are opposed to those of “critical theory” in a similar manner by Horkheimer: cf. M. Horkheimer, Traditionelle und kritische Theorie, in: Horkheimer, *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp, 1968., vol. II. 137–192.

and, by describing it adequately for the first time, points to another society, within the framework of its own alienated structures. (If capitalism functions within the range of structures that permeate the whole of society, included its “self-consciousness”, that is, science, too, then the dialectical viewpoint must, by definition, be somehow above the society, and thus a paradox is beginning to be outlined. I shall return to it later on.) Science is a kind of “false consciousness” (to put it in the framework of the Hegelian metaphysics) which by necessity pertains to, and may be explained by, the stage of objective development the world (or the “substance”) has reached so far. This stage is such that the substance’s objective structure has not yet coincided with its own self-consciousness; in other words: its self-consciousness is still “lagging behind” inasmuch as it represents the world not as it is in itself, but in an inadequate way.

The scientific (that is, the determinist) interpretation of Marxism is thus rejected. It is again interesting to remark that the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*, in the sense of my above reconstruction of his interpretation of Marxism, might, by and large, have subscribed, without raising many objections, to Popper’s criticism of Marxism, for it is exactly the *scientific* or *determinist* interpretation of it that he most definitely opposed. There is, however, an essential theoretical difference (apart from those concerning practice): for Popper scientific knowledge is the only form of human knowledge, beyond which no independent “philosophical” knowledge is possible, whereas for Lukács such knowledge may be provided by dialectical philosophy. Popper’s claim, however, that science is the only form of (systematic) human knowledge, paradoxically, supports and justifies Lukács’s criticism of science. For the dialectical charge that science, or a philosophy conceived with an eye to science, cannot seize upon the “active subjectivity” (a fact hardly deniable), may be seen justified in Popper’s philosophy by the fact that, though his conception of science ends up in “irrational decisions” (and *deciding* is definitely something *active*), he nevertheless has no conceptual means to treat them theoretically.⁷⁰ Therefore, the very “gaps” of Popper’s philosophy speak in favour of Lukács’s dialectical claims.

But if dialectics claims to possess a form of knowledge outside and beyond science, what kind of comprehension of our world can it convey to us? Hegelian metaphysics, as we have seen, amounts, in the last analysis, to the thesis of the identical subject-object, or as Popper puts it: “The

⁷⁰ “Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not down to any natural or ‘given’ base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for a time being.” (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. p. 111.)

Science or human knowledge, in a later formulation, is seen to increase our ignorance. The more we know, the more we become conscious of knowing nothing. cf. *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*, Luchterhand, Darmstadt und Neuwied, 1969, p. 103. ff.

mind *is* the world”⁷¹. It is a metaphysical proposition *sui generis*, not to be proved empirically (nor to be refuted). Not that science could dispense with metaphysical presuppositions. The thesis that the world is *not* a historical identification of subject and object, but something eminently independent of man, amounts to a similar metaphysical assertion. (And if, unwilling to make metaphysical assertions, we deny both of them and declare to ignore metaphysics, thus reducing science to a phenomenal level, it will not in the least alter the fact that the concealed metaphysical presuppositions of science will go on exerting their influence.) The dialectical comprehension of our world following from the thesis of the identical subject-object is summarized by Marcuse in the following way:

“The sole object of philosophy is the world in its true form, the world as reason. Reason, again, comes into its own only with the development of mankind. Philosophic truth, therefore, is quite definitely concerned with man’s existence; it is his innermost prod and goal. This, in the last analysis, is the meaning of the statement that truth is immanent in the object of philosophy[. . .] Existing in truth is a matter of life (and death), and the way to truth is not only an epistemological but also a historical process.”⁷²

That the world *is* reason should not, of course, be taken as an immediate identity, but as an identification to come about at the end of the historical progress. The fact that this identification in Hegel’s system takes place in the realm of Absolute Spirit, a domain outside and above history, shows that there are immanent difficulties in the construction of this identification. The insight into their intimate connection may nevertheless urge us to take practical measures. In fact,

“. . . with the recognition goes the doing.” Man “will try to put this truth into action and *make* the world what it *essentially* is, namely, the fulfillment of man’s self-consciousness.”⁷³

Dialectical knowledge thus, in the last analysis, amounts to the demand that we should look upon the world *as if* it were intrinsically identical with man, and should act accordingly.

What man will precisely do *empirically* “to put this truth into action”, cannot, of course, be wholly determined. The recognition of man’s identity with the world might just as well go with a conservative attitude (“if the

⁷¹ Cf. What is Dialectic?, in op. cit. p. 326.

⁷² H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, pp. 99 f.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 113. — That Hegel’s philosophy served, after 1818, to support the Prussian Monarchy is an undeniable historical fact that may partly be considered as his own „*Veröhnung*” with the reality of his age. But this in itself is no reason to assert that “the philosophy of identity serves to justify the existing order” (*The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. p. 41.). Popper apparently overlooks the fact (although elsewhere he is of the same opinion) that the interpretation of a philosophy in terms of what political interests it may have supported is hardly satisfactory. Here he adopts a “vulgar-sociological” viewpoint.

world is essentially reason, nothing is left to be done”), as was the case of Hegel. Metaphysical (or dialectical) knowledge in this sense does not contain empirical precepts.⁷⁴ This problem shows that the Kantian – Fichtean conceptual framework (duality of phenomenon and noumenon, of necessity and freedom, science and ethics), violently dispensed with in the scheme of a philosophy of history, is automatically revived the very moment we intend to put dialectical knowledge into action.

The “empirical” difficulty of transplanting dialectical knowledge into reality, however, can be touched upon also *within* the framework of the dialectical theory itself. It becomes manifest, and acutely felt, in the theoretical task of characterizing, by conceptual means, the transition from the “kingdom of necessity” to the “kingdom of freedom”. The interpretation of Marxism along determinist lines suggests that no conscious human action is required (or possible) to bring about the new society, but that it will be produced by apparently “transcendent” forces. Popper singles out this problem, for it definitely speaks against his theory of “piecemeal technology”:

“Marxists [. . .] contend that this kind of intervention is impossible since history cannot be made according to rational plans for improving the world. But this theory has strange consequences. For if things cannot be improved by the use of reason, then it would be indeed an historical or political miracle if the irrational powers of history by themselves were to produce a better and more rational world.”⁷⁵

The same point is stressed, but, of course, with a pro-Marxist accent, by Marcuse:

“The laws of capitalism work with ‘iron necessity towards inevitable results’, Marx says. This necessity does not, however, apply to the positive transformation of capitalist society. It is true, Marx assumed that the same mechanisms that bring about the concentration and centralization of capital also produce ‘the socialization of labor’ [. . .] Nevertheless, it would be a distortion of the entire significance of Marxian theory to argue from the inexorable necessity that governs the development of capitalism to a similar necessity in the matter of transformation to socialism. When capitalism is negated, social processes no longer stand under the rule of blind natural laws. . . . It is the realization of freedom and happiness that necessitates the establishment of an order wherein associated individuals will determine the organization of their life [. . .] There can be no blind necessity in tendencies that terminate in a free and self-conscious society [. . .] Marxian theory is, then, incompatible with fatalistic determinism.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Popper hits upon this point and its historical effects with great vehemence; cf. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. p. 83 ff.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 143.

⁷⁶ H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, op. cit. pp. 317 – 319.

Marcuse's conception is originated from, and goes hand in hand with, the Lukacsian standpoint. The development from capitalism to socialism, Lukács claims,

„kann jedoch keine Folge automatischer Gesetzmäßigkeit von blinden gesellschaftlichen Kräften sein, sondern nur eine Folge des freien Entschlusses der Arbeiterklasse.“⁷⁷

Socialism, therefore, is no more characterized by the blind rule of economic forces, but by conscious and free human action.⁷⁸ The transition from capitalism to socialism is produced by *both* objective economic forces *and* conscious human action. The relation of these two factors, on Lukács's view, is this:

„Wir betonen [. . .], daß der Übergang aus der alten Gesellschaft in die neue eine notwendige Folge objektiv-ökonomischer Kräfte und Gesetzmäßigkeiten ist. Dieser Übergang ist aber — bei aller objektiven Notwendigkeit — eben der Übergang aus der Gebundenheit und der Verdinglichung in die Freiheit und Menschlichkeit. Und darum kann die Freiheit nicht bloß eine Frucht, ein Resultat der Entwicklung sein, sondern es muß ein Moment der Entwicklung eintreten, wo sie zu einer der treibenden Kräfte wird, ihre Bedeutung als treibende Kraft muß ständig zunehmen, bis der Augenblick gekommen ist, wo sie völlig die Leitung der nunmehr menschlich gewordenen Gesellschaft übernimmt, wo die ‚Vorgeschichte der Menschheit‘ aufhört und ihre wirkliche Geschichte beginnen kann.“⁷⁹

The relation between the two factors is, in the last analysis, one of “objective possibility”: the development of the economic forces are held to have reached the degree which makes it possible for the proletariat to change the society.

But it should be stressed repeatedly that

„Das ‚Reich der Freiheit‘ ist aber doch kein Geschenk, das die im Banne der Notwendigkeit leidende Menschheit als Belohnung für standhaftes Leiden, als Gabe vom Schicksal empfängt“⁸⁰; „Diese Verwandlung selbst kann aber nur die — freie — Tat des Proletariats selbst sein“⁸¹.

The theoretical difficulty outlined above may be summed up as follows: (1) There is a radical and absolute difference between capitalism and socialism in so far as the former is directed by blind laws of economic

⁷⁷ G. Lukács, Die Rolle der Moral in der kommunistischen Produktion, in: *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, op. cit. p. 92.

⁷⁸ G. Lukács, Régi kultúra és új kultúra (“Old Culture and New Culture”), in: *Történelem és osztálytudat*, op. cit. p. 40 f.

⁷⁹ Die moralische Sendung der kommunistischen Partei, in: *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, op. cit. p. 107.

⁸⁰ Der Funktionswechsel des historischen Materialismus, *ibid.* p. 428.

⁸¹ Die Verdinglichung und das Bewußtsein des Proletariats, *ibid.* p. 397.

forces, whereas the latter, inversely, by realizing man's rule over economy, creates the “kingdom of freedom”. (2) The transitional period, that is, the socialist revolution is characterized by the presence of both factors: society is still under the rule of blind necessity, but “freedom”, as it were, has already become self-conscious in a part of it. The whole description of the transition from necessity to freedom cannot dispense with an “irrational hiatus”; the moment at which necessity, by a “jump”, turns into freedom. This moment, far from lending itself easily to theoretical description, does, in fact, resist to all kinds of conceptual characterization. In order that freedom (or socialism or a better world) may begin to exist, it is supposed, so it seems, to be already in existence in men's consciousness, for otherwise, “the irrational powers by themselves” would have to produce “the better and more rational world”, which is *eo ipso* impossible, for it would contradict the concept of freedom (it would be a freedom without men's consciousness of it). If so, however, then the radical “newness” of socialism (or any thing at all) cannot be seized upon or elucidated by conceptual means — even by those of dialectics.⁸² Thus the following alternative is arrived at: the case is either such that in order to exist in the future, socialism (or freedom, reason, etc.) is already “present”, in which case however we find ourselves perplexed in facing, again, the problem of having to search for “empirical precepts” as to how to put the idea into reality (and our verifying the practical fulfillment of the idea is again conditioned by our firm and continuous *decision* to look upon the different “basic statements” as verifying instances); or is such that we persist in claiming the radical newness of socialism and thus consider it as not yet existing in the present, in which case however we either completely renounce formulating the problem (and the concept of socialism) in theoretical terms, or (which is not quite different) we resort to a “determinist” interpretation. Of course, both latter possibilities were dismissed by the thinkers mentioned, since the historical situation pressed them to formulate the problem of the revolution in explicit terms. Thus, a paradox is outlined: either we are already free, and then have not to become free; or we are unfree, but then we cannot possibly become free. *It is possible to be free or unfree, but impossible to become free.*⁸³

⁸² It is a problem inherent in Hegelian dialectics and may be formulated like this: “in order that something may begin to exist, it must, by necessity, have existed because otherwise it will never exist. This is meant by the somewhat “mystic” formulations that everything that is, has been, or everything that is contained at the end of the world's development (or of Hegel's philosophy), was actually inherent in it at the beginning (for example: „Das Resultat ist nur darum dasselbe, was der Anfang, weil der Anfang Zweck ist” — *Phänomenologie* op. cit. p. 22). It follows then that nothing radically new can happen in the world, or it is beyond our cognitive capacity to conceive it as *totally* new. Thus, dialectics' most specific aim to be capable of grasping “change” is questioned.

⁸³ In the Kantian-Fichtean conceptual framework it is impossible to become either, for we are — already and for ever — both (unfree phenomenally, free noumenally). — This directs attention to the difficulty of carrying out the task which Marcuse speaks of, that is, to “make the world what it *essentially* is” (see footnote 73.). For, either the world is already what it essentially is, and then there is no need to make it what it is; or the world is not what

If "not the slightest natural necessity or automatic inevitability guarantees the transition from capitalism to socialism"⁸⁴, then, it seems, the transitional period cannot conceptually be distinguished from the "kingdom of freedom"; in fact, it coincides with it. Freedom, it appears, cannot, be developed or "deduced" dialectically. Once it comes into being, it exists wholly and totally. (The instant at which socialism is being created, it has been created, or when society is being transformed, it has been transformed, as it were.) The dialectical theory of "*mediation*" seems to break down at this point.⁸⁵ The fact that the "jump" from necessity to freedom cannot be wholly conceptualized by dialectical means illustrates the revival of Kantian—Fichtean elements in the midst of the dialectical theory itself. So, the previous analysis regarding the "empirical" difficulty of transplanting dialectical knowledge into reality (an examination eminently "extrinsic") has, I think, been shown to be logically complementable with an "intrinsic" criticism.

* * *

From the above problem a further implication may be arrived at if we now dispense with the question of whether and to what extent the mediation between necessity and freedom lends itself to conceptualization. The examination of it will lead us to the problem of the status of the theory *within* the theory—a question so far only partly touched upon, but indispensable for the discussion of the possibility of absolute *and* historical knowledge.

it essentially is, and then it is impossible to make it what it is. Something, apparently, is either this or that, but hardly both or neither. The difficulty, to a certain extent, can be explained away by the Hegelian distinction between "an sich" and „für sich“: „Wenn der Embryo wohl *an sich* Mensch ist, so ist er es aber nicht *für sich*; für sich ist er es nur als gebildete Vernunft, die sich zu dem *gemacht* hat, was sie *an sich* ist.“ (*Phänomenologie*, op. cit. p. 22.) Again, in order that "one make himself man", certainly a number of *empirical* actions are required; but it can hardly be determined which and how many. What is important is that one should, at last, win the consciousness of having made oneself "man".

⁸⁴ H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, op. cit. p. 318.

⁸⁵ This brings to light an unsolved problem inherent in the conceptual framework of Hegelian dialectics. It emerged actually in connection with the metaphysical demand, first laid by Schelling to explain, in philosophical terms, the process in which the world proceeds from the Absolute. Schelling clearly saw that from the Absolute, conceived by him as the total indifference of opposites, the first "differentiation" cannot be "deduced" by *philosophical* concepts, but may be described only by more or less *mythological* images. (Cf. Schelling, *Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Prinzip der Dinge*. Ein Gespräch. 1802.) Hegel attempted to counter this problem by introducing his concept of "mediation" (*Vermittlung*), stressing that the subject and object of mediation are the same, so it is a kind of "sich bewegende Sichselbstgleichheit" (*Phänom.* op. cit. p. 21.) which means that something mediates itself with itself via itself. (That is why beginning and end, though through a series of mediations, coincide.) This concept, however, preserves an irrational residuum (that of its birth, as it were), which resists to being "said", but somehow only "shows itself". The Hegelian solution of Schelling's problem is then problematic. Hegel tried to, and did, in fact, conceptualize something that cannot quite lucidly be conceptualized. Thus, what was declared by Schelling to be beyond the realm of rational concepts, was integrated by Hegel into his "rational" concepts, which, in their turn, became slightly impenetrable. It is to be noted that Schelling vehemently rejected the Hegelian conception of the "self-motion" of

Let us suppose, for easiness' sake, that the transition from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom can sufficiently be described in dialectical terms, and concentrate upon the subjects of the revolutionary transformation.

Capitalism, as we know, is a form of society under the working of blind "natural" laws, of which, however, at a certain moment, a part of the society, the proletariat, becomes conscious, and sets out, with free decision, to realize the kingdom of freedom. Winning self-consciousness means, of course, that they become aware not only of the fact that themselves as well as the society they are living in are under blind necessity, but that they are also essentially free. (Becoming conscious of being free, they come to know that they *have* been free, but it is now irrelevant.) Winning the consciousness of being free must, therefore, be an atemporal event, catalysed perhaps by external circumstances, but wholly irreducible to them. Thus, in the course of winning self-consciousness, the subjects of the revolutionary transformation, together with their attitude to the world, change also their way of picturing the world. First, they conceived the world and themselves as being ruled by blind and necessary processes, then, by gaining consciousness of their freedom, they set out to work them, by conscious and rational actions, into a "kingdom of freedom". Thus, the meaning of the Marxian theory undergoes a considerable change. First, it appears to them as the true or adequate description of the alienated conditions. (However, if they stop now and confine themselves to merely expecting the longed-for new world, they are taken captives by the conditions themselves.) At a second step, setting out to "negate" capitalism, they are somehow to negate its most adequate description, that is, Marxism, too. So, in order that the subjects of the revolutionary transformation shall accomplish their mission, they have to get rid not only of their past being, but also of their past consciousness.⁸⁶

This characterization of the conceivable, and hoped for, transformation that the consciousness of the revolutionary subjects is to undergo in viewing the world marks the radical difference in the self-interpretation of Marxism. It is true, the representatives of the dialectical theory might have argued to counter Popper's charge⁸⁷, that the fact that Marxism does not provide precepts for the building of the new society would clearly be an insufficiency only if we were to conceive a theory's relation to its object in the traditional, that is, in the "scientific" way, rather than dialectically. In the former case, the theory and its object are only extrinsically related; it is with the help of a pre-conceived methodology, that the theory examines its

concepts, the basic thesis of Hegel's *Logic*, based wholly on the theory of *Vermittlung*. This remains one of his central objections to Hegel (cf. F. W. J. Schelling, *Werke*, herausgegeben von M. Schröter, München, 1927–54, Hauptband. 5. pp. 210 ff.)

⁸⁶ The change of the meaning of the theory is not quite unlike Wittgenstein's "ladder" to be thrown away after one has climbed it. (Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, prop. 6. 54.)

⁸⁷ Cf. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. p. 83 f.

object. Since the methods are conventionally prescribed, and their objectivity preliminarily justified, they constitute a priori, as it were, the object they become applied to. The theory is an instrument to predict events falling within its scope, and in so far as the events predicted come about, the methods can be considered to be efficacious. Whether the theory describes its object adequately, cannot surely be known, for the "objectivity" of the methods is guaranteed prior to, and independent of, the cognitive process. Thus, the established and preliminarily justified methods "discover", as it were, the object to be known. Moreover, the methods can be applied to any kind of object for an indefinite range of time in so far as they provide successful predictions. Thus, the theory and the object which it describes cannot permeate each other. This sort of scientific procedure, in addition, points to a certain metaphysical background (duality of object and subject, the impossibility to know the "in itself", etc.) which is, nevertheless, constantly and systematically concealed under the pretext of the theory's opposition to metaphysics.

The theory applied to its object only extrinsically and remaining true "for ever" while a concealed metaphysical background supports and underlies it — this, the dialecticians may argue, is the way in which a theory's relation to its object is conceived in science. Dialectics differs from this conception in several ways: it does not conceal its metaphysical (or ontological) presuppositions (the identical subject-object, the historical process towards identification, etc.), it does not hypostatize methods but conceives them with an eye to the object they become applied to (that is what the clumsy definition: "dialectics is a method inseparable from its object" means), etc. So, rather than an independent methodology, or an independent ontology, we have reciprocal permeation of the two.

In the above characterization of the Hegelian metaphysics (see *Annales*, 1983, pp. 260 ff.) we have seen that to each stage of development of the substance pertains, by necessity, a degree of self-consciousness of the substance which, inadequate as it may be, fully corresponds to the degree of development reached by the substance at that moment. That it is inadequate *objectively*, however, remains completely concealed before itself at the moment. (The internal contradictions of the particular consciousness "show" for itself, as it were, *subjectively* its own inadequacy.) Objectively it becomes clear only *for us* who have reached the point of "absolute knowledge" (that is, science), and view the development of the world retrospectively in a manner appropriate to it.

It may be sufficiently clear by now what the dialectical thesis that science (or any form of knowledge) is inseparable from its object means. This metaphysical system actually provides an answer to Popper's objection that "if we were to admit laws that are themselves subject to change, change could never be explained by laws"⁸⁸. The dialectical conception

⁸⁸ *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 103. — Of course, there still remains something obscure about it, for, as I have indicated in footnote 85, the Hegelian concept of *Vermittlung* conceals its inadequacy to explain "change" totally. Popper's objection might be countered

regarding the "adventurous" development of the substance unfolding through the interaction of objective and subjective processes is the base argument (which amounts to a meta-theory) is built upon.

There is, however, a point in Hegelian metaphysics which the dialectical interpretation of Marxism, so long as it wished to observe the basic tenets of Marxism, was to dispense with. It is the Hegelian thesis of the end of history (or the conception that reason and reality have become identical). The elimination of this thesis required, of course, a radical methodological re-arrangement of the theory. If reason and reality have not yet become identical, or the substance has not reached full self-consciousness, we cannot claim to have obtained "absolute knowledge" (or science), either, which, in its turn, alone can guarantee our claim that our retrospective view of history seizes upon the really objective laws. Thus, in the framework of Hegelian dialectics, the present stage of development is still prior to the "Versöhnung". Of course, retrospective knowledge of the world is possible not only from the standpoint of absolute knowledge, but, in fact, it is present at each moment of the development of consciousness. Moreover, the forms of "false consciousness" possess not only a (false) retrospective knowledge of the world (always appropriate to the given degree of objective development), but, by virtue of the fact that the world is not yet "over" and their inner or subjective contradictions push them ahead, they also frame a kind of knowledge about the future. (At the standpoint of absolute knowledge, all knowledge is retrospective.)

In view of the dialectical consideration that theory and its object are inseparable, the dialectical re-interpretation of Marxism's self image has led to the consequence that Marxism is not an "objective science of history" whose laws are eternally valid. To conceive it as such would be to overlook its dialectical character and to change it for a "scientific" theory. This is the mistake, Lukács contends, Vulgar Marxism commits: its

„Anwendung des historischen Materialismus ist in denselben Fehler verfallen, den Marx der Vulgärökonomie zum Vorwurf gemacht hat: er hat bloß historische Kategorien, und zwar ebenfalls Kategorien der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft, für ewige Kategorien gehalten.“⁸⁹

by answering that we may admit laws subject to change provided we can find certain "meta-laws" accounting for, and directing, the change of laws. This answer, however, is unsatisfactory because then we would have to assume that these "meta-laws" are not subject to change, and finally we would be involved in an infinite regress. The fact that Hegel's solution (in his *Enzyklopädie*) was much of this sort indicates the extent to which he was unable to meet *his own* dialectical claims. (See the subsequent analysis of Lukács's criticism of Hegel, footnote 105.) But then, an intrinsic criticism is needed.

⁸⁹ G. Lukács, *Der Funktionswechsel des historischen Materialismus*, in op. cit. p. 415 — italics mine.

Thus, in applying historical materialism to historical periods preceding capitalism we should be cautious, for:

„In der vorkapitalistischen Gesellschaften hat es jene Selbständigkeit, jenes Sich-selbst-als-Ziel-Setzen, jene Ingeschlossenheit, und Selbstherrlichkeit, jene Immanenz des wirtschaftlichen Lebens, wie es in der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft erreicht worden ist, noch nicht gegeben. Daraus folgt, daß der historische Materialismus auf die vorkapitalistischen sozialen Gebilde nicht ganz in derselben Weise angewendet werden kann, wie auf die der kapitalistischen Entwicklung.“⁹⁰

It logically follows then that “historische Materialismus in seiner klassischen Form[. . .] bedeutet *die Selbsterkenntnis der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft*”⁹¹, for:

„Die inhaltlichen Wahrheiten des historischen Materialismus sind so beschaffen, wie Marx die Wahrheiten der klassischen Nationalökonomie betrachtet hat: sie sind Wahrheiten innerhalb einer bestimmten sozialen und Produktionsordnung. Als solchen, aber nur als solchen, kommt ihnen unbedingte Geltung zu. Aber dies schließt nicht das Heraufkommen von Gesellschaften aus, in denen infolge des Wesens ihrer sozialen Struktur andere Kategorien, andere Wahrheitszusammenhänge gelten werden.“⁹²

Marcuse, in his turn, fully agrees with this view in so far as he claims that

“it is not permissible to impose the dialectical structure of pre-history upon the future history of mankind.”⁹³

The latter thus cannot apparently be the object of theory; once freedom has become reality, history will be directed not by blind laws, but by the conscious actions of free individuals.⁹⁴

This recognition, which is methodologically based on the assumption that science (or a theory) and its object are inseparable, turns up, interestingly enough, in one of Popper's analyses too:

[. . .] the scientific treatment of society, and scientific historical prediction, are possible only in so far as society is determined by its past. But this implies that science can deal only with the kingdom of necessity. If it were possible for men ever to become perfectly free, then historical prophecy, and with it, social science, would come to an end”⁹⁵.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 414.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 404.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, op. cit. p. 317.

⁹⁴ H. Marcuse, *Philosophie und kritische Theorie, Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* VI. n. 3. Paris, 1937.

⁹⁵ *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II, p. 104.

That the kingdom of freedom cannot sufficiently be conceptualized, has been seen above; what Popper shows at this point is that Marx's concept of freedom, in so far as “in his writings there are even traces of hatred and contempt for the material”⁹⁶, still preserves a kind of spiritual character. This characteristically indicates *contrary* to what it was conceived. And Marcuse's conclusion is that as soon as reason, happiness and freedom, from their mere concepts, turn into reality, they will, by necessity, become radically different from what was contained in their concepts.⁹⁷

To sum up. The implication of all these considerations is that Marxism is no “absolute knowledge” or science. It is not in a twofold sense: first, its description of our past history cannot be considered to have discovered *the* objective laws of history (it is to be doubted, for example, that feudalism was under the rule of economic laws); secondly, the knowledge it provides about the future (socialism) is also inadequate and insufficient. On the other hand, however, its view of past history is in full accord with, and fits completely into, the conditions of the objective development of the day, that is, capitalism. In *this* sense, it may even be called adequate knowledge. As regards knowledge of the future, the insufficiency appears to be twofold (if we recall the fact that each form of consciousness pertains, by necessity, to an objective moment of being underlying it): first, since socialism does not yet exist and Marxism is the self-consciousness of capitalism, we do not know what precisely the objective conditions of socialism will be like; secondly, and for the same reason, we do not (and cannot) yet possess a socialist “consciousness”. (To possess it we should already be living in socialism.)⁹⁸ The methodological self-reflection of the theory appears to lead to the restriction of its validity. The theory which described history has found its place within the (described) historical process, and thus arrived logically even at the apparently paradox thesis of its self-negation. The methodological re-examination of the dialectical theory seems to have overcome successfully the difficulty arising from the elimination of the basic Hegelian tenet concerning the end of history. The re-statement seems to be consistent because it draws the methodological conclusions following from this modification: it does not consider itself to be absolute knowledge any longer, but treats its own knowledge of past and future history as a kind of “false consciousness” or “ideology”, adequate only so long as linked up with its historical basis; it systematically refrains from giving

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 103.

⁹⁷ H. Marcuse, *Philosophie und kritische Theorie*, cit.

⁹⁸ In the light of the fact that each form of consciousness pertains by necessity to an objective condition of Being (as its “other”), it may be contended that the neither retrospective nor future knowledge is possible. This objection, I think, can be countered in purely Hegelian terms, answering that each form of consciousness contains in itself the whole of history, only in different ways (the “ways” correspond then to a degree of objective development); so, for example, the “first” form of consciousness already contains all the subsequent forms (and very vaguely also their “others”). If it does not, then radically new forms of consciousness can hardly come into being (see footnote 82).

positive characterization of the future society.⁹⁹ Viewed more closely, however, it becomes clear that, in spite of its self-restriction, the theory still preserves the remnants, as it were, of the allegedly rejected "absolute knowledge". For, at a first step, the theory provided a picture of history, and only at a second step did it assign its own place within this history. It is only in the latter sense that the theory has "degraded itself", and has, accordingly, transformed itself (refraining to speak about what cannot yet be spoken about), and not in the first. The theory has thus reconstituted itself in view of its preliminary view of history — a view that was also framed by itself. This *preliminary* theory, however, was never touched; indeed, it is the necessary pre-condition of the theory's subsequent re-interpretation of itself. It transformed itself *qua* theory within a (preliminary) theory. The preliminary theory which was not touched constitutes the frame of absolute knowledge, in the light of which the self-degradation is conceivable at all. Thus, the Hegelian dialectics finishing up in the identification of subject and object, and, accordingly, in absolute knowledge is a necessary prerequisite and a methodological framework which not only makes the transformation possible, but, from the standpoint of absolute knowledge, it serves to guarantee that the theory's self-degradation is adequate. So, on its way to modify the Hegelian framework, the theory has got only as far as (to use Hegelian terms) the "first negation", and not the "negation of the negation". The modified dialectical theory is then still based upon, and captive of, Hegel's way of founding his system. (The modification may be seen as a small-scale adjustment, and not a radical one.) Clearly, if we carry out the "negation of the negation", that is, if we dispense with the preliminary conception ending up in absolute knowledge, the theory becomes wholly unfounded. (This is what has been alluded to in Part One, pp. 262f. Nothing is then left to support even the "temporary" truth of our "phenomenal" knowledge.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The impossibility to give such a characterization was most consistently recognized by Adorno, who, in the light of this fact, re-interpreted radically even the concept of dialectics and arrived at his "negative dialectic", or at the dialectics of non-identity — a methodological conception eminently self-destructive in that it, by definition, makes its own positive constitution impossible. The dialectics of non-identity, accordingly, is put into action in the concrete analyses in such a way that its categories, through their self-negation, point towards something which, logically following from the basic methodological position, cannot be "said", but only "shown". (Cf. T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M. 1966. Einleitung.) — To justify this method, Adorno shows that all the concepts with which Kant characterizes freedom are adopted from the "phenomenal" world, that is, from the kingdom of necessity. He further adds that no *positive* concepts of freedom was elaborated in classical German philosophy, which is, of course, no mere accident, since all *our* concepts are rooted in an objective moment of Being (cf. *ibid.* pp. 231, 244f., 250, 262). Freedom as such may only be pointed to by the *lack* of appropriate concepts, and by the negation of the existing ones rooted in necessity.

¹⁰⁰ Phenomenal knowledge cannot account for itself. It will be enough to remember Spinoza's famous thesis: "Veritas est index sui et falsi". Phenomenal knowledge always points to an "objective" or "absolute" knowledge. If the place of the latter is left empty (as is the case of Popper), then this may give rise to various ambiguities. It may occur, for example, that phenomenal knowledge, in lack of its "other", becomes transformed quite

My examination of the problem concerning the status of the theory leads then to the conclusion that the modified dialectical theory cannot dispense with its essentially Hegelian foundation in case it claims to be founded at all. In other words: history is not yet over, but (by a later point) it *will have been over*. So, the end of history is, as it were, projected ahead. (A derivation of this problem is also the paradox, elucidated above, that when socialism is being created it has already been created.¹⁰¹) The assumption that history is over may be seen to tacitly exert its influence even after its explicit dismissal.

* * *

Before proceeding to a re-examination of the problem of absolute historical knowledge, it will be in order to collect the various themes and paradoxes discussed above, all of which, though from different angles, point to this direction. In my analysis of the problem situation giving rise to dialectics (Part One, pp. 258ff.), I wished to argue that the specific constitution of dialectics *qua* dialectics was derived from the demand to construct a *philosophical* theory of history, that is, a theory which not only gives to some kind of description of history in terms of certain laws, but conscious of itself *qua* theory, realizes that *there have been other theories*, and in order to found itself, tries to conceive a "methodology" upon this fact. This methodology *qua* dialectics was shown to have been thus conceived in view of the recognition that we always look upon the world through the prism of various theories, and, accordingly, its task was seen to frame not only a theory of history, but with it also a theory of the history of theories. This demand was seen to lead up to a conception of history being moulded in the interaction of two asymmetrical (an objective and a subjective) processes, and to the thesis that history is over. (Derivative results of the conception are the assumption that the objective and subjective moments, at each stage, are "one", and the thesis that the epistemological process is also an ontological one.)

The thesis that history is over is, as will have been seen, the logical conclusion (and a necessary presupposition) of the theory that intends to meet both these claims. Nevertheless, knowing the "empirical facts", one is, to say the least, reluctant to accept this thesis. It is somehow an undeniable fact

unobserved, into objective knowledge. Popper's theory of the three worlds may be seen as a similar kind of "ontological" turn in his thinking. (Cf. *Objective Knowledge*, op. cit., especially chapters 3 and 4.)

¹⁰¹ This paradox may be an argument in favour of Hegel's criticism of Kant's *Sollen*, which may be summed up like this: "What only ought to be, in fact already is"; cf. *Enzyklopädie* . . . I; § 60. p. 142. in op. cit., and *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I. Theorie Werkausgabe Band 5, Suhrkamp, pp. 142 — 148.

A strikingly similar answer is provided by Heidegger: "[...] *ist* [...] das Dasein, solange es ist, je schon sein Noch-nicht". „Das Dasein *ist* nicht erst zusammen, wenn sein Noch-nicht sich aufgefüllt hat, so wenig, daß es dann gerade noch mehr ist. Das Dasein existiert je schon immer gerade so, daß zu ihm sein Noch-nicht *gehört*“ (M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, M. Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1967, pp. 243 f.).

that history was not over at the time it was supposed to be over, nor does it seem that it is about to be over soon. Accordingly, if history still goes on, it is a fair claim to examine the *lot* of the theory within history (and not only the lot of history within the theory). We see then that, at a first step, the theory establishes itself, at a second, it becomes inserted into history. The theory's reaction upon the continuation of history may be either to constantly re-adapt itself (in this case we obtain a series of different theories, rather than *one* intelligible whole, whose unity can be found only in an extrinsic methodological principle, rather than in the theories themselves); or to stick rigidly to its original tenets (it is not relevant now if among these is that of the end of history or not), but in this case the fact that history still goes on will contribute to making the theory more and more inadequate. (This is what I tried to illustrate by my example of the "philosopher and the book" in Part I, p. 270.) This, of course, becomes clear only *for us*, who adopted an "extrinsic" point of view, and not for the representatives of the theory. (However, the immanent difficulties, elucidated above, to see their theory gradually verified somehow "show" them the newly emerged "objective" contradictions.)

But what is the relation between these two levels of analysis? First, we examined the constitution of history within the framework of a philosophical theory which takes into account the existence of other theories. In order to carry out its task successfully, this theory implied the somewhat strange thesis concerning the end of history. Secondly, we examined, from an "extrinsic" standpoint, the theory's becoming part of history and found that since history proceeded beyond the point of the theory's rise (having incorporated into itself also the theory as part of it), or, to put it differently, since history grew out of the concepts of the theory, the theory became gradually more and more inadequate. In showing this fact, paradoxically enough, we have not, for a single moment, given up dialectical methodology; in fact, the whole demonstration was based upon it (especially on the thesis that the knower and the process of knowing constitute part of the object to be known, or that epistemological processes are at the same time ontological). The only modification was that, by virtue of our privileged historical position, we were able to compare the theory with subsequent history (something eminently inaccessible for the theory). From this standpoint we could again confirm the result reached at the end of the first ("intrinsic") analysis. There we have realized that the thesis concerning the end of history was indispensable for the theory to meet its claims; here, the same holds true, although in a negative sense, for the becoming inadequate of the theory was due to the fact that history was not over.

These, then, are the fully developed implications of the introductory contention that Popper's criticism of dialectics (and historicism) contain eminently dialectical elements (and historicist, too). His refutation of historicism as formulated in the preface of *The Poverty of Historicism* already utilizes, as we have seen, dialectical considerations, although in a somewhat formalized form. As to his examination of Marx and the history

of Marxism, I have attempted to give theoretical reconstruction to the problems which underlie Popper's empirical historical analyses, and are, thus, present, but nowhere explicitly formulated. In the course of this reconstruction I have arrived at the thesis that, formulated in explicit terms, the refutation of dialectics rests on dialectical grounds. Thus, dialectics seems to be *self-destructive* or *self-falsifying* (for it can be refuted by its own presuppositions), and at one and the same time *self-verifying* (for even after its refutation it remains valid). This paradoxical situation requires the re-consideration of the concept of "absolute and historical" knowledge, one of the major themes of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*.

If we are ever to get rid of the paradox, we are first to revise the Hegelian methodology and see if it does not perhaps contain certain "dogmatic" elements. Is it really true, we may ask, that Hegelian dialectics arrived at the point of "absolute knowledge"? Lukács's answer is definitely negative.

The major question Lukács examines in an important chapter of his *History and Class Consciousness* is this¹⁰²: "Is it possible to conceive reality as Being *and* totality?" His answer is that nearly all philosophers from Descartes on dispensed with this demand; reality was conceived by them as a kind of "phenomenal" world, and totality was declared to be an antinomical concept. It is not difficult to see that the demand of conceiving reality as Being and totality coincides with the demand of absolute knowledge. For it requires knowledge of *all* the world in such a way that nothing is left out. Such a knowledge, furthermore, is to be eminently historical, so its task is to describe reality as a historical process. To conceive reality in such a way, of course, requires a method which is capable of permeating wholly its object. The insufficiency of mathematical, formal logical, that is, "scientific" methods, Lukács claims, is that they remain "extrinsic" to their field of application; they amount to an independent net, as it were, which is brought to cover a "matter" or a "substratum" completely irrational *in itself* (that is, prior to the knowing). The methods do require the existence of something as their "substratum", but cannot account for it¹⁰³. It follows then that for scientific methods, the *genesis* and *perishing* of the *contents* of

¹⁰² Cf. G. Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* („Die Verdinglichung und das Bewußtsein des Proletariats. II. Die Antinomien des bürgerlichen Denkens"), op. cit. pp. 287–331.

¹⁰³ See my analysis above: pp. 77. f. — Popper clearly formulates the essence of this problem without, however, seeing a difficulty:

"... we have two different constituents, two different kinds of statements which together yield a complete causal explanation: (1) *Universal statements with the character of natural laws*; and (2) *specific statements pertaining to the special case in question, called the 'initial conditions'.*" (*The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 123; see also *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. pp. 59 ff.)

Now, it is exactly the "initial conditions" or the "singular statements" that fall wholly outside science. Their existence is, of course, a necessary pre-requisite for the working of scientific methods, but remains a contingent fact. Popper admits in this connection that existential statements are metaphysical (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. p. 69.); or, what complements this from another viewpoint, that the particular, the unique cannot be accounted for by scientific methods (*The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II, p. 245.).

their concepts are something utterly inexplicable. Historical becoming as such turns out to be definitely beyond the reach of science (and also of philosophies conceived with an eye to science)¹⁰⁴, built, in its turn, on mathematical methods. (Thus far Popper might completely agree with this argument). Now, dialectics responded exactly to the claim of explaining historical genesis, by trying to conceive a method (or a logic) of explaining history. The greatness of classical German philosophy consisted precisely in the fact, Lukács claims, that it fully accepted the *irrationality* of the "given," or of "matter", but still persisted in its attempt to build up a (rational) system over and beyond this seemingly unsurpassable difficulty.

However, Lukács goes on to argue, even Hegel's dialectics could not fully meet this demand. If dialectics was to be wholly historical, Hegel's philosophy should have constructed his identification point in *history*. However,

„[...] indem es ihr unmöglich geworden ist, das identische Subjekt-Objekt in der Geschichte selbst aufzufinden und aufzuzeigen, ist sie gezwungen, über die Geschichte hinauszugehen und jenseits der Geschichte jenes Reich der sich selbst erreichten Vernunft zu errichten, von dem aus dann die Geschichte als Stufe, der Weg als 'List der Vernunft' begriffen werden kann. Die Geschichte ist nicht imstande, den lebendigen Körper der Totalität des Systems zu bilden: sie wird ein Teil, ein Moment des Gesamtsystems, das im 'absoluten Geist', in Kunst, Religion und Philosophie gipfelt.“

But since „die Geschichte ist viel zu sehr das natürliche, das einzig mögliche Lebenselement der dialektischen Methode, als daß ein solcher Versuch glücken könnte“, Hegel's system became filled up with ambiguities:

„Einerseits ragt die Geschichte – nunmehr methodisch inkonsequenterweise – dennoch entscheidend in den Aufbau jener Sphären hinein, die methodisch bereits jenseits der Geschichte liegen müßten. Andererseits wird durch diese unangemessene und inkonsequente Stellung zur Geschichte diese selbst ihres gerade für die Hegelsche Systematik unentbehrlichen Wesens entkleidet. Denn erstens erscheint ihre Beziehung zur Vernunft selbst nunmehr zufällig[...]Mit dieser Zufälligkeit fällt aber die Geschichte in ihre eben überwundene Faktizität und

¹⁰⁴ Popper wholly agrees with this Lukácsian view. His refutation of historicism is based on his contention that historicism claims to be a science, and that this claim is unjustified. To the question: "Can there be a law of evolution?", Popper's answer is negative. He then goes on to argue:

"My reasons are very simple. The evolution of life on earth, or of human society, is a *unique historical process*. Such a process, we may assume, proceeds in accordance with all kinds of causal laws [...] Its description, however, is not a law, but only a *singular historical statement*." (*The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. pp. 107–108., italics mine) As a conclusion, he quotes H. A. L. Fischer's remarks: "Men [...] have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern [...] I can see only one emergency following upon another [...], only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations." (ibid. p. 109.) Now, dialectics' attempt was exactly to conceive a historical methodology to counter the difficulty unsurpassable for science.

Irrationalität zurück [...] Zweitens zwingt das ungeklärte Verhältnis zwischen absolutem Geist und Geschichte Hegel zu der sonst methodisch schwer verständlichen Annahme *eines Endes der Geschichte*, das in seiner Gegenwart, in seinem System der Philosophie als Vollendung und Wahrheit aller Vorgänger eintritt [...] Drittens durchläuft die von der Geschichte losgelöste Genesis ihre eigene Entwicklung von der Logik über die Natur zum Geiste. Da aber die Geschichtlichkeit sämtliche Kategorienformen und ihrer Bewegungen bestimmend in die dialektische Methode hineinragt, da dialektische Genesis und Geschichte objektiv wesensnotwendig zusammengehören und hier bloß infolge der Ungelöstheit des Programmes der klassischen Philosophie getrennte Wege gehen, ist es unvermeidlich, daß dieser als übergeschichtlich gedachte Prozeß Schritt auf Tritt die Struktur der Geschichte aufweist.“

The ultimate paradox is this: "indem die abstrakt-kontemplativ gewordene Methode dabei die Geschichte verfälscht und vergewaltigt, wird sie ihrerseits von der nichtbewältigten Geschichte vergewaltigt und in Stücke gerissen"¹⁰⁵.

Thus, the fact that Hegel could not conceive the conciliation in history led him to transplant it into the realm of "Absolute Spirit", a domain wholly fictitious, outside and beyond history. But since dialectics is a method wholly intertwined with its object, that is, with history, the theoretical construction of the realm of the Absolute Spirit was, at least partly, to be historical, although its relation to history became, by necessity, contingent. But then, if we cannot satisfactorily explain the historical genesis of the products of Absolute Spirit, if their relation to their historical substratum becomes loose, then history, again, assumes an irrational character. History, compelled artfully to fit into the concepts of the method, takes its revenge by refuting the theory. What is most relevant for us in Lukács's argument is his contention that the thesis of the end of history not only could not secure absolute knowledge in Hegel's system, but actually, it was the logical consequence of a theoretical inconsistency – an inconsistency which, once incapable of finding the identical subject-object in history, Hegel somehow could not *do without*, if he was to build a system at all. So, the thesis of the end of history is the principle or presupposition which, under the given historical circumstances, made the dialectical system possible at all, but which, at the same time, made it impossible for it to be consistent. And indeed, if there is no conceivable transition from the Logic to the Philosophy of Nature, nor is there one between Objective and Absolute Spirit.¹⁰⁶ It might be said then that the thesis of the end of his-

¹⁰⁵ Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, op. cit. pp. 329 f.

¹⁰⁶ Marcuse even goes so far as questioning the extent to which Hegel seriously meant the conception of the end of history:

"At the close of the book [i.e. the *Philosophy of History*], Hegel writes, after a description of the Restoration, 'This is the point which consciousness has attained'. This hardly sounds like an end." (*Reason and Revolution*, op. cit. p. 227.)

tory and, in strict correlation with it, that of absolute knowledge is a postulate which is indispensable for constructing the dialectical system, but whose constitution shows a conceptual vacuum in Hegel's dialectics. Absolute knowledge is not "deduced", as it were, but dogmatically presupposed. That is why it becomes, at the moment of its coming into being *qua* absolute knowledge, contemplative, thus negating its own presupposition that the knower as well as the process of knowing are part of the object to be known. This explains the fact that its point of view becomes, in the last analysis, again "extrinsic" and ahistorical.

I think Lukács's criticism is valid. But the conceptual framework his criticism is built upon has some strange consequences. First, in so far as Lukács himself adopts this very dialectics in the parts of *History and Class Consciousness* discussing bourgeois society and its science, his criticism becomes also "extrinsic". If capitalism is such that even its science cannot describe it adequately, then his dialectical viewpoint must be *eo ipso* "extrinsic". (This accounts for the paradox outlined on p. 70 f.) Second, Lukács's solution is his contention to have found the identical subject-object in history. The very moment it sets out to "make" history, its acting will be free and conscious, and as such, incapable of being theoretized. Thus, so long as we can conceive history in terms of theories, we are apparently still unfree! (A thesis wholly agreed upon by Popper.) Dialectical theory negates itself at the moment of its consummation, that is, as soon as men begin to create their real history. What Lukács tends to suggest after all is the self-negation of the theory rather than the theoretical task to elaborate a more consistent dialectics. Theory should become praxis. An absolute historical knowledge *qua knowledge* is then really impossible.

Lukács's preliminary question concerned the possibility to conceive reality as Being and totality. Absolute knowledge is, by definition, knowledge of the totality (conceived as a historical process). If absolute historical knowledge is impossible, knowledge of the totality is impossible, too. But it is perhaps impossible only in the sense of a *consistent theory*, and not otherwise?

Let us take up our example of the "philosopher and the book". The difficulty arrived at seemed to speak, from a purely methodological point of view, against the possibility of absolute knowledge. But is there really no way to counter the difficulty? A possible solution, if any, should be looked for, as we have seen, in the direction of conceiving a theory of which the theory itself is part. How can this be conceived? Well, one may perhaps suggest that in case the book contains, say, ten chapters, the last of them should be about the book itself. This, it might be argued, counters the objection that we find "in the world" at least one more object than we do in the book. But clearly, it could be retorted, this is no solution at all. The difficulty indicated above now penetrates into the system itself, but apart from this, nothing is changed. For, anyway, what can the tenth chapter be about? Evidently about the previous nine. But is there anything to account for the tenth? So, it might be said: "Your book contains ten chapters, but when you describe your book (as an object among many others in the

world), you speak only about nine-tenth of it. Now I no more have to compare the world as it is with the world as described by your book, but have to compare the book as it is with the book as described by the book, and I again see an inadequacy. In the first case I find ten chapters, in the second only nine. So, something is left out. Your description of the world is defective in that there is at least one object which is characterized insufficiently."

So, no purely "quantitative" attempt at solving the problem is possible, but rather, a radical qualitative re-arrangement, as it were, is required. The book should then be conceived in such a way that each sentence of it is to refer to an object of the world, and, at one and the same time, to the sentence itself which "performs" the description. But is it not sheer absurdity? I think not. First, we know that language may be used not only in a descriptive but also in a performative way;¹⁰⁷ such utterances *are* performed. Second, the Hegelian definition of Spirit (conceived as the unity of itself and its "other"¹⁰⁸) attempts to describe this very structure.

What are the implications of this re-arrangement? Following from the fact that a performative utterance cannot be traditionally "true" or "false", we have to give up our demand to verify or falsify the theory by way of comparing it with something "in the world". Indeed, there remains nothing "external" to compare it with.¹⁰⁹ Our theory should then be constructed as a long unique performative utterance. But what about its intelligibility? If it does not "describe" (in the traditional sense of the world) anything, how are we to understand it? How can we know what it is about once it is about itself (and its other)? Does not it amount to no more than saying: "this is my viewing the world"? These are difficult questions, and I do not claim to possess ready-made answers to them¹¹⁰. It seems as though all such a theory could do were to "show itself", or paraphrasing Wittgenstein's metaphor: "the theory is rushing ahead and so cannot also observe itself rushing ahead;" all it could do were to *show* its rushing ahead¹¹¹.

But if Hegel was apparently aware of this difficulty, how is it possible that in the last analysis he failed? To answer this question we have to return to the problem of the identical subject-object once more. So far, it has been

¹⁰⁷ Cf. J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, Oxford University Press, 1962.

¹⁰⁸ Of. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, op. cit. p. 24.

¹⁰⁹ It is to be noted that Hegel seemed to be aware of this fact. His recognition that an ultimate "verifying" procedure is in many cases impossible for the lack of an "external object" to compare our knowledge with may be exemplified by the following passage:

„Das Zeugnis des Geistes vom Inhalt der Religion ist Religiosität selbst; es ist Zeugnis das bezeugt; dieses ist zugleich Zeugen. Der Geist zeugt sich selbst und erst im Zeugnis; er ist nur, indem er sich zeugt, sich bezeugt und sich zeigt, sich manifestiert" (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, I. in: Werke, Theorie Werkausgabe, Suhrkamp, Band 18, p. 94).

It is, of course, no mere accident since Spirit is, after all, the only existent, and, therefore, in its self-generation it manifests itself to itself (it has nobody and nothing — to paraphrase § 457 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* — "to go up to").

¹¹⁰ Apparently, the very questions still preserve traditional scientific "prejudices". But, then, it is difficult to see how it is possible *not* to ask them.

¹¹¹ Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 456; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972, p. 132.

discussed only from a methodological point of view regarding its function to secure absolute knowledge. We should now give a brief positive characterization of its structure. This may be done, in the simplest possible way, by comparing "human" and "divine" consciousness as viewed by a number of great dead philosophers. Human consciousness, as viewed by them, is such that in order to perform its cognitive (that is, most human) function properly, it needs external objects, "empirical manifold", "the given", etc. to work on. These objects human consciousness finds "there", they are "given", wholly independent of its working, not created by it. *Per contra*, for a divine consciousness to create objects and to know them is one and the same act. For man, to create (to act, to do) and to know are two distinct processes. That is why human knowledge is by necessity *a posteriori*. Human consciousness, moreover, (as opposed to the divine) is not creative. If I imagine a dragon, it will not, for the mere fact of my imagining it, spring into existence. (There is, however, at least one field in which human consciousness resembles definitely the divine; in mathematics to create and to know is the same process.) Now, an identical subject-object is supposed to have exactly this "divine" constitution; in it the act of creating and of knowing coincide. But how can the world-constitution of this subject-object be conceived? Kant thought that although we need to frame the concept of it in order to understand, in opposition to it, the structure of our own human consciousness, nevertheless we should not make conjectures about its positive constitution. (Although he himself did not always remain faithful to this urge.) Hegel made an attempt to conceive the world as the (self-) constitution of the identical subject-object, but it was admittedly an *a posteriori* reconstruction. This implies that to grasp the identical subject-object *in acting* is altogether impossible with conceptual means. Its world-constitution may at best be theorized from a retrospective point of view. I think this is the reason for Hegel's failure, though, of course, it was necessary once he was to construct a philosophical system (otherwise he would have "performed" what he wrote his Spirit was "performing"). Again, that is the reason why Lukács and Marcuse dismissed the theoretical possibility to characterize positively the kingdom of freedom, deed of the identical subject-object.

But if it is evidently absurd to claim that man is an identical subject-object (or a creative consciousness), nor is it true that he is wholly not. Every attempt at conceiving human consciousness as a "passive reflection" of an already "given" world, if elaborated with sufficient coherence, leads to ambiguities and paradoxes¹¹². Moreover, it dismisses preliminarily to respond to the challenge, felt intuitively justified, to seize upon the "active

¹¹² This is clearly seen in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* which is wholly based on the assumption that language is a passive description of atomic facts and their combinations. This common sense view, however, is developed with great logical rigour up to the basic paradox of the work — the thesis that, following from the basic epistemological presupposition, the work itself ought not to have been written. This proves in a negative sense (since the work was still written) that human consciousness (or language) is somehow active or creative.

human subjectivity". The undeniable fact that man is capable of making performative utterances illustrates the creativity of human consciousness. I think that the theory of performativity can be adopted to the examination of self-verifying or self-falsifying (that is, eminently paradoxical) theories, or to what Popper calls "historical predictions". For, as we have seen, the case is far from being such that the theory becomes compared with reality, and is thus corroborated or refuted, but rather, by virtue of its mere existence, it contributes to bringing about certain events. A prediction, Popper writes, "may, in extreme case even *cause* the happening it predicts [...] A social scientist may [...] predict something, foreseeing that his prediction will cause it to happen. Or he may deny that a certain event is to be expected, thereby preventing it."¹¹³

From this point of view, historical predictions may be considered to stand in between purely "scientific" theories and performative utterances. When a historical prediction or a prophecy is uttered, something has definitely been *done* with words. Those assisting the "performance" may act in favour of, or against bringing about it (remaining aloof is also a deed). Nevertheless, since the question of truth may still be applied to them, they cannot be called performative utterances proper.

Thus, in so far as our "theory" begins to assume performative character, it loses in theoretical force. It becomes a kind of identical subject-object which, by virtue of its eminent self-reference, can only "show" its meaning, but no more "say" it. Of course, it *will* say a lot of things about "external" objects, but its ultimate meaning will be only pointed towards, as it were, since the theory finally returns to itself. And all this process should be conceived in such a way that, far from being distinct temporal sequences, the two moments (speaking about external things and itself) are wholly intertwined in each part of the theory. As Heidegger puts it: "Dasein spricht sich aus; *sich* — als entdeckendes Sein zu Seiendem". A comparative verifying process is all the more inconceivable because certain presuppositions cannot be swept away with:

„Weil zum Sein des Daseins dieses Sichvoraussetzen gehört, müssen wir' auch ‚uns', als durch Erschlossenheit bestimmt, voraussetzen.“

Absolute *theoretical* knowledge, or knowledge of the totality is impossible precisely to the extent to which:

„Im Dasein steht, solange es ist, je noch etwas aus, was es sein kann und wird [...]

¹¹³ *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 15.

[...] muß das Dasein, solange es existiert, seinkönnend je etwas *noch nicht sein*. Seiendes, dessen Essenz die Existenz ausmacht, widersetzt sich wesenhaft der möglichen Erfassung seiner als ganzes Seiendes.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit. pp. 223f., 228., 233. – Not that Heidegger could avoid facing the paradox of all theories aiming at absolute knowledge. The above fact seems to doom all his undertaking to failure. He clearly sees the difficulty and gives a tentative answer on page 244 (see footnote 101. above) in sheer contrast to the above cited passage. It cannot be my task to dwell upon this problem here, but it is of utmost importance for our examination to point out that the continuation of *Sein und Zeit* could not be provided by conceptual means (not even by those of Heidegger). The lack of a second volume can thus be considered as the self-negation of the theory. To be sure, the continuation of *Sein und Zeit* was written by (“the second”) Heidegger, but hardly in foundational or theoretical terms.