

## The three paths Chinese scholars have followed in studying the Marx-Hegel-relationship – and a proposal for a new path

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The intellectual relationship between Karl Marx and G. W. F. Hegel has long been a key issue in the field of Marxist philosophy. What is at stake here is the understanding of the source of Marx's thought and the way he developed his own theory based on Hegel's philosophy. With this topic we touch upon important currents of both Hegelian and Marxist studies. Since the 20th century, the revival of Hegelian studies and the vigorous development of Marxist studies have forced us to pay attention to the intellectual origins of these two thinkers.

In general, the existing research on the relationship between Marx and Hegel in China focuses on the idea of understanding Marx's thought through Hegel's thought ("from Hegel to Marx").

More specifically, Chinese researchers have so far followed three distinct paths, the path of *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, the path of *Wissenschaft der Logik* and the path of *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. If the "de-Hegelization" of Marx is seen as a kind of Marx-Hegel-relationship,<sup>1</sup> then this may be regarded as another important research path, including the attempts to position Kant as Marx's main source of inspiration<sup>2</sup>. Each one of these paths corresponds to a relatively fixed group of texts by Marx and Hegel. In terms of the development of Marx's thought, his initial engagement with Hegel was *The Philosophy of Right*. However, in China this engagement was the last to be discussed, mainly due to two reasons: first, modern political philosophy in general only emerged as a field of study in China in the 1990s; second, Chinese scholars have gradually realized the importance of investigating the sources and multiple dimensions of Marx's early thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Exemplary in the West: Galvano Della Volpe's *Rousseau and Marx*, Lucio Colletti's *Marxism and Hegel*.

<sup>2</sup> Exemplary in China: Wang Nanshi 王南湜. Exemplary in the West: Kojin Karatani and Sabu Kohso's *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*. In these footnotes, only the names of leading Chinese scholars are mentioned.

### The path of *Phänomenologie des Geistes*<sup>3</sup>

The path of *Phänomenologie des Geistes* focuses on how Marx critically inherited Hegel's theories of the identity of subject and object,<sup>4</sup> labor,<sup>5</sup> alienation,<sup>6</sup> and self-consciousness.<sup>7</sup> This research path stresses the importance of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and underlines the influence of Engels, Hess and Proudhon on Marx in developing his position of humanistic materialism as a critique of alienated labor and political economy, with the latter being seen as a theoretical expression of the former. Marx's concept of communism is described as the direction of development towards a future human society that overcomes private property. Regarding Hegel, Marx's thought is reflected as primarily a critique of the methodology implied in Hegel's theory, who is seen as the intellectual mother of the Young Hegelians, especially Bruno Bauer.

The concept of humankind, which Marx emphasized in this period, corresponds to the essence of the absolute spirit in Hegel's theory and hence to the essence of history. Only when Marx gained insight into the concrete and practical reality of humankind and the process of material production as laid out in the co-authored manuscript, *The German Ideology*, was Marx able to leave this abstract and a-historic concept of humankind behind.

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<sup>3</sup> In the West: Georg Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* and *Ontology of Social Being*, Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, Martin Heidegger's *Holzwege* ; Alexandre Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*; Hyppolite's *Studies on Hegel and Marx*.

<sup>4</sup> Zhang Dun 张盾.

<sup>5</sup> Wang Jinlin 王金林; Wang Daiyue 王代月.

<sup>6</sup> Zhang Yibin 张一兵; Yang Haifeng 仰海峰.

<sup>7</sup> Han Lixin 韩立新.

### The path of *Wissenschaft der Logik*<sup>8</sup>

The path of *Wissenschaft der Logik* focuses on Marx's *Economic Manuscript of 1857-1858* as well as *Das Kapital*, and mainly discusses Marx's sublation of Hegel's dialectics, paradigmatically reflected by the relation of the chapter logic in Marx's *Das Kapital* and Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*.<sup>9</sup> Marx is seen as reversing Hegel's dialectics.<sup>10</sup>

The path of *Wissenschaft der Logik* counts as the narrative expression of Marx's analysis of bourgeois society, following his creation of historical materialism and his in-depth study of political economy.

Marx at this time emphasized the materialist adaptation and application of Hegel's dialectic, critically analyzing the contradictory nature of the capitalist mode of production on the one hand, and the relations of production and exchange on the other hand. Chinese scholars who followed this path assumed that Marx's aim of this dialectic analysis was to clarify the historicity of bourgeois society and its temporary character.

### The path of *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*<sup>11</sup>

The path of *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* is concerned with Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, *Introduction to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, and *On the Jewish Question*. Based on these texts, Marx's sublation of key concepts of Hegel's theory is discussed, from which Marx's political philosophy, critical social theory<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In the West: Christopher J. Arthur's, *The New Dialectic and Marx's 'Capital'* and *Dialectics of Labour: Marx and His Relation to Hegel*, Tony Smith, *The Logic of Marx's Capital and Dialectical Social Theory and Its Critics*, Louis Althusser's *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*.

<sup>9</sup> Tang Zhengdong 唐正东.

<sup>10</sup> Zhang Wu 张梧; Sun Leqiang 孙乐强; Wang Nanshi 王南湜.

<sup>11</sup> In the West: R.N. Berki's *Perspectives in the Marxian Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, K.-H. Ilting's *Hegel on State and Marx's Early Critique*, Domenico Losurdo's *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns*, Herbert Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution*, Jürgen Habermas' *The Philosophy Discourse of Modernity*.

<sup>12</sup> Zhao Dunhua 赵敦华; Li Shumei 李淑梅.

and related issues of philosophical revolution<sup>13</sup> are derived: civil society,<sup>14</sup> the concept of the state,<sup>15</sup> as well as the relationship between reality and idea.<sup>16</sup>

Scholars who emphasize Marx's encounter with Hegel's *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* regard this period as the first time Marx critically confronted Hegel's views, and more precisely the concept of the "rational state" and the speculative idealism that lay behind this concept. In doing so, Marx made use of Feuerbach's natural materialism. Through his historical research, as reflected in the *Kreuznach Notebooks*, Marx revealed private property as the driving force behind the political state and turned his attention to civil society, i.e., to the examination of concrete bourgeois society.

### A new path: From Marx to Hegel

We think it is necessary to reverse the direction of research, that is, to understand Hegel through Marx's perspective ("from Marx to Hegel"). Such research focuses on Marx's and Hegel's philosophy of history, since this is the philosophical field in which Marx sought to transcend the whole Hegelian system. The discussion of the relationship between Marx and Hegel in the sense of "from Marx to Hegel" with its perspective on the philosophy of history, provides a new way of examining Marx's sublation of Hegel's historical theory, deepens the understanding of the nature of Marx's historical materialism, presents the connotation and effect of Marx's philosophical revolution, and, last but not least, promotes the study of the intellectual relationship between Marx and Hegel in a new way.

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<sup>13</sup> Han Lixin 韩立新; Zou Shipeng 邹诗鹏.

<sup>14</sup> Zhang Shuangli 张双利; Chen Hao 陈浩.

<sup>15</sup> Wang Daiyue 王代月; Long Xia 龙霞.

<sup>16</sup> Zhao Dunhua 赵敦华; Wu Xiaoming 吴晓明.