

The Problem of Becoming

(Continued from last issue)

NOW, Hegel perceived three stages in the process of thought-growing and reality; 1, a positive or affirmative; 2, a negative; and 3, a negation of that negative stage. These stages are also known as the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis; the latter being similar to, yet more developed than, the first; and this third step Hegel called "the negation of the negation." A famous example of this process is given by Marx in chap. xxxii, of "Capital," vol. I. This constitutes another uprising against the hard and fast conceptions of "formal" (Aristotelian) logic; for the latter regards nature's series of causes and effects as being an indefinite and infinite progress in a straight line of entirely new and unreacting phenomena. The truth is, says Hegel, that an effect B is not only the cause of C, but B also reacts back upon its cause, A. That is, A would not be a cause if it did not effect B; therefore, it is owing to (or because of) B, that A is a cause at all. Parents, for example, are the cause of their children; and children (the effect) in turn are the cause of their parents being parents—as the latter in these modern times of much emancipated youthhood, are frequently made all-too-painfully aware!

Since the effect, because it reacts upon it, is only relatively pre-determined by its cause, the causal series in nature is not a straight line drawn out to endlessness, but a curved line that returns to its starting point; that is, says Hegel, it is a circle. But we Socialists having in view, among other things, humanity's social origin at Primitive Communism, and our certain development towards a modern advanced machine—founded Communism, hold rather that the line of progression is spiral instead of circular, because while, like a circle, the spiral returns back towards its point of origin, yet the latter finishes above this at a much **Higher Plane**.

The reciprocal reaction of the effect upon the cause increases the importance of the effect because it gives it a character of relative freedom that is lacking in those philosophies which consider that effects necessarily depend upon their pre-existing causes; whilst, in reality, they are only in a certain measure effects, and merely relatively determined. Hence, the Socialist materialistic conception of History recognises that if we are the creatures and the effects of material conditions, we on our part have the power and inclination to turn around and revolutionise those surrounding to suit ourselves. There is neither in the beginning, in the middle nor in the end of the causal series, a cause distinct from all the rest, nor absolute with reference to the others. The absolute is not to be found in any particular part of the causal chain; it resides in the sum-total of the particular relative causes. The latter are not forced slaves of a first cause that excludes all other causality and with regard to which the relative causes are as nothing; but each cause takes part in the absolute. Each is relatively absolute, none is absolutely absolute. No one cause has an exclusive claim to omnipotence; the sum of individual energies or, everything that exists through causal power, constitutes all existing power. The two spheres into which being is divided when it becomes essence and phenomenon, are reunited in reciprocal action, and thus become logical totality. Nevertheless, though Hegel began by proclaiming the absoluteness of reason, he subsequently and doubtless reluctantly confessed that there is alongside of the rational element in nature, an illogical element which presupposes a principle different from reason. Hence, says Prof. Weber, even the most decided monists advance a relative dualism.

A valuation of Hegel's philosophy is supplied by the introduction to Dietzgen's "Positive Outcome of Philosophy" from the pen of Dr. Pannekoek; who states that "the Hegelian philosophy was finally superseded by dialectic materialism which declares that absolute truth is realised only in the infinite progress of society and of scientific understanding.

This (says the Dr.) does not imply a wholesale rejection of Hegelian philosophy. It merely means that the relative validity of that philosophy has been recognised."

Along with a number of other rationalist forerunners, Hegel held that what is truly essential, original and fundamental in us and the universe, is Thought. But Schopenhauer (died 1860) taught that it is Will, whereas thought is but a derived or secondary phenomenon, an accident of will. We are essentially will, and the entire universe, considered in its essence, is a will that objectifies itself, that is, gives itself a body or a real existence. The form that this universal will takes, is a desire-to-be or will-to-life. As with him, the will is a perpetual desire-to-be, it is around that, which creative evolution revolves. The Darwinian principle is, that the physical and mental characteristics of all creatures have been chosen by nature in rendering them fittest to survive. With Schopenhauer the reverse is the case—it is through the creature's own desire that it possesses sharp teeth or beak, huge claws, strong muscles, active legs, etc., etc. Therefore, Schopenhauer really was, what Ramsay Macdonald falsely stated Marx to be; namely pre-(before)-Darwinian, although to a certain extent he believes in Nature's struggle for existence. But he denies, as pantheism does, that the will principle is a person. Schopenhauer regards will as the unconscious force that produces specific beings, individuals living in space and time. This Will is that which when not-being, strives to be; becomes life, objectifies itself in individual existence: it is, in a word, the well-to-be. As long as there is a will, there will be a universe. Individuals come and go; but the will, the desire that produces them, is eternal, like the specific types according to which it produces them. Birth and death do not apply to the will, but only to its manifestations. Our innermost essence, the will, never dies, and therefore death is not a subject for grief. All this might be said to be forms that Becoming assumes.

In opposition to the last-named, Nietzsche denied that the universal principle is a will-to-life. He held that it is, especially as regards organic life, a deliberate and conscious Will-to-have-power. But as power is necessary to complete living, one might almost infer this from the will-to-life. Nietzsche's main point, however, was to reveal how the sick, the inferior and the degenerate in general, if they can not be dominant in true, good and superior respects, will nevertheless assert themselves in modes of thought and action in very unpleasant agreement with their undesirable limitations. Hence, he enlarges upon such manifestations of power or powerlessness, as what he calls "master-morality" and "slave-morality."

Our business, however, as Socialists, is to get the Workers and all intelligent persons to use their wills in every possible manner, whether openly or secretly along Socialist lines. United action in this way would irresistibly move mountains of the greatest Capitalist obstacles and finally sweep them entirely away!

In concluding his "History of Philosophy," Prof. Weber refers to numerous philosopher authorities, right back to Aristotle, all of whom hold that the Will is at the basis of everything. Nature, or the will, he insists, undoubtedly strives after being; but does so in order to realise through this relative end, an absolute end—the Good. He then continues as follows:

"If it (the will) had no other end than being, it would find complete and supreme satisfaction in life, even without morality. Now experience superabundantly proves that the man who lives simply for the sake of living, becomes surfeited; and that he alone is not surfeited with life, who lives for something higher than life. Besides, a will that is supposed to strive, necessarily and fatally, for being and nothing but being, could not turn against itself, as happens in suicide, and as Schopenhauer himself

urges it to do in his doctrine of the negation of the will, although otherwise condemning the "autocheiria (taking the law into one's own hands). Finally if the ground of things were the will-to-live at any cost, we should be utterly unable to understand the voluntary death of a Leonidas or a Soerates; and of all such in whom there is something mightier than the will-to-live. We may, it is true, refuse to believe in the disinterestedness of these sacrifices, in the good desired and done for its own sake—in a word, in duty. But we may, with equal right and with no less reason, deny the reality of the world and treat existence itself as an illusion. We must confess, there is no other proof for the existence of a world apart from ourselves, than the imperative of the senses, the self-evidence with which reality forces itself upon our sensibility. Now, in fact, duty is no less evident than the imperative of the senses.

The illusions of sense which philosophy detected at the very beginning of its history, do not hinder the world from being a reality; quite different, it is true, from that which the senses show us, but still a reality; and in so far the senses are veridical (believable). Similarly, however variable and fallible conscience may be in the matter of its prescriptions, their very form compels us to recognise a moral order as the essence and soul of the universe. Whatever part anthropomorphism may play in the vocabulary of Kantian ethics, we must agree that this form is imperative; that there is something even behind our will-to-live, that there is above our individual will, a higher and more excellent will, which strives after the ideal, "Wille Zum Guten." This and not the "Wille Zum Leben" (will-to-life) of Schopenhauer, is the true essence and the first cause of being, "substantiasive deus" (substance or God—Spinoza)."

The immediately foregoing passage from Prof. Weber, simply states, in philosophical detail, what Shakespeare affirms through the medium of his Hamlet who, in relating the plot against his life which he discovered when sailing to England, makes this comment: "Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting that would not let me sleep: methought I lay worse than the mutines in the bilboes (mutineers in chains). Rashly, and prais'd be rashness for it: let us know, our indiscretion sometimes serves us well, when our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us, There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

The Professor then proceeds to his conclusion: "Thus freed from the wholly accidental and passing alliance formed with pessimism in Schopenhauer's system, the monism of the will is the synthesis towards which the three factors which . . . co-operate in the development of European philosophy are tending. These factors are: reason, which postulates the essential unity of things (Parmenides, Plotinus, Spinoza); experience, which reveals the universality of struggle, effort, will (Heraclitus, Leibniz, Schelling); and conscience, which affirms the moral ideal, the ultimate end of the creative effort and universal becoming (Plato, Kant, Fichte).

"Nature is an evolution, of which infinite Perfection is both the motive force and the highest goal (Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel)." PROGRESS.

The End.

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