# Afterword – A Return to Hegel

To be grateful…to Marx for his inversion of the Hegelian dialectic in the interest of an empirical understanding of human affairs does not preclude the possibility that…one might once more stand Marx on *his* head…. Put simply, this would imply that man projects ultimate meanings into reality because that reality is, indeed, ultimately meaningful (Berger 1969, 180).

This book is about money. More to the point, this book is a revelation about the nature and purpose of money. This might sound like a big deal but really it is not. As we see in the body of this work, there is nothing particularly esoteric or complicated about money. Despite the fact that economics texts usually do a horrible job of trying to define money, if they even bother at all, money is a simple thing. Money is abstracted labor pure and simple.

Being about money, this book is also, necessarily, a criticism, not of money per say, but of the general misuse and exploitation of money. Money is a potent means of economic exchange; but it is also easy to accumulate, and the easy way you can pile money in a mattress, lock it away in a vault, or represent it as a series of numbers, makes it a peculiar and pernicious ally of greed, graft, and corruption. As we see, the accumulation of money is the root of the world’s evil. It is the easy way that money can be accumulated that has brought us to the brink of ecological and social disaster.

Having made this book a criticism of money is not to suggest that we need to replace money. I do not propose, as some others, that we should eliminate money, replace it with “free everything,” or develop gold or resource standards of value. None of the typical solutions would work anyway because not only are they based on a profound misunderstanding of the nature of money, a misplaced sense of the root of the problems, but they are hopelessly naïve as well. On the contrary, this book is written in honour of money, and recognizes money as the motor of modern economic development, and the foundation of an advanced modern society. Unless we are content to be a world of takers, we must always exchange our labor in a fair and equitable fashion, and for that there is nothing better than money. Indeed, it is my belief that money, properly regulated, is the foundation of a future utopia. Therefore, this book argues that we should embrace money for the wonderful gift that it is, but fix the problems that money has caused.

As we see in this book, money has caused some problems. Money is powerful, but it is also dangerous. Money, or rather love of money leading to its accumulation, has been the root of centuries of suffering, violence, greed, graft, distortion, and corruption. In our day and age, we are rapidly reaching an environmental and social wall. Global warming, high rates of psychological distress in the West, obscene levels of economic inequality, suffering, global violence, and a cyclic and deepening economic crisis lead me to conclude that we either change the way we do things, or we go down with the proverbial ship. And I do not think having a lot of money in the bank is going to help very much when the ship goes down. If the food supply collapses because of a toxic meltdown in the environmental balance, the world as we know it goes away and all the money in the world won’t bring it back because, as you understand by the end of this book, all the money in the world is useless unless you have somebody to give it to.

Important to note, because this book is short, I cannot do more than point to the problems, but I do not feel there is a need to lay out a preachy and laborious tome detailing the long list of problems we face. In this age of Internet connectivity, anybody with eyes, and a modicum of sensibility, can see the problems. The main purpose of this book is simply to link awareness of the problems with awareness of the true root of the problem, which is not human genetics, internalized pathology, essential evil, Darwinian violence, or failed evolution, but money. As we see money, money, money (or rather the love of money) is the root of all evil.

Now, I am not the first one to do something like this. Karl Marx wrote a multivolume treatise on money entitled *Das Capital.* In that book, Marx pointed out the nature of money and all the distortions to which it was given. He saw the suffering and he understood the root. Marx completed a profound exposure of money. It was an exposure that must have disturbed and upset him deeply because after writing it he felt the only *solution* to the problem of money was a bloody proletarian revolution. The history of the world is the history of class exploitation, he said, and the worker must rise up and put down the ruling elites! Of course, as we know, the proletarian revolution failed. That is because the proletarian revolution, like the French revolution, didn’t solve the problem of money, it only changed the people who were accumulating it, and perpetuated the violence of elite rule over working class slaves. Instead of rich Russian monarchs oppressing peasants we had rich Russian bureaucrats oppressing workers (and now, with the transition to Capitalism, rich Russian capitalists oppressing workers). Despite calls for change, the song has remained the same.

It is not surprising to me that Marx’s call for revolution failed. You can’t make new friends while riding a spitting camel and *you can’t teach and instruct the masses with an obtuse three-volume tome.* You also can’t beget a new system with violence, because when you found a new society on violence, violent people move in and take over, and that is no good for anybody. This is the lesson of the Communist Revolution in Russia. It created a society founded on violence, rooted it in violence, and it became violent at all levels. Of course, Capitalism is no better in this regard. The point here is not to point fingers, but to simply say there are no violent solutions to the problem of money, ever.

Still, consideration of solutions is necessary. By the end of this book you hopefully see the problem. When you do, questions about solutions are naturally invoked. What are we going to do about the problem, because it is a problem. If we leave it unattended we get George Orwell’s surveillance and control nightmare, *1984*, in the interim, and an economic train wreck in the foreseeable future. Let the train run its course, the damage will be extensive, and the rich and poor will suffer alike. Those sitting in first class die first when the train hits the wall.

So what is the way forward? Personally I feel the solution is to be found in the breaking of barriers and the elimination of separation. We can’t move forward while we are at each other’s throats. We all have to realize we are all in this together and as such we have to work together to find the solution. But how is that going to happen? How do you convince the rich person to change the rules in a way that ultimately undermine their wealth, and how do you convince the working class, once they clue in to the truth, to put down their sticks and stones and let bygones be bygones.

The reality is, you can’t do that within current spiritual or scientific narratives. Current spiritual and scientific narratives are hierarchical, exclusionary, elitist, and violent (I call these narratives **old energy** narratives). Current spiritual and scientific narratives are actually part of the problem, part of **the System**, that keeps the train running on the same “old energy” track. You can’t refer to extant narratives for solutions because they either encourage separation and duality, or encourage an “us versus them mentality” that does nothing but reinforce the duality and underwrite the situation. You can’t go to science either. There are ideological components to science and these components, rooted as they are in the strong foundation of an empirically based biology, are difficult to shake. Science may be totally wrong about human nature[[1]](#footnote-1), but science’s view sticks and it will take a long time to change it. Not only that, but its view of humanity as evolving ape doesn’t lend itself to hopeful utopian reverie. At the most it lends itself towards subtle ideological justification of the strong dominating the weak. Like traditional spiritual narratives it supports the world we currently live in, and since the world we currently live in seems to be in increasingly dire straits, it is of no practical help at all.

So what do we do?

The long answer is that we have to develop new narratives and new ways of conceiving humanity. We need a new spirituality and a new science. Here I would turn back to Hegel for some clues to an appropriate narrative. Hegel, a brilliant German historian, and mentor of Karl Marx believed that humans were part of a bigger picture and that despite all our greed, graft, violence, and corruption we all worked on a bigger “plan.” Hegel did not feel that history was a random collection of events. Hegel, not a stupid man, saw rhyme and reason in history. At the risk of invoking knee-jerk rejection here, Hegel saw God unfolding in history (G. W. F. Hegel 2004),[[2]](#footnote-2) but not what most people might think of as God. For Hegel, God’s essence was FREEDOM. The purpose of history, the purpose of humanity, was the gradual understanding of the nature and essence of this freedom, and the gradual manifestation of this freedom in the polity of the people, a manifestation that would occur as a dialectical swing of history *brought humanity towards ever more precise realizations of the underlying historical Geist*. Hegel saw human history as a gradual and inexorable movement from bondage toward freedom. He rejected the noble savage view of things (i.e. the view that we had a utopian past) and pointed out bondage to the environment and to subsistence as the anti-thesis of freedom. We are not free to do what we please while we are bound to subsistence labor twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. At the risk of being accused of putting words into Hegel’s mouth, if we want freedom we need an environment, a technological infrastructure, a polity, an economy, and an archetypal system devoted to this ideal.

For Hegel it was the realization in thought, and the manifestation in reality, of the reality of freedom, the reality of God, that was the telos of human history. According to Hegel, humans struggled to realize this lofty goal. Humans struggled not only to understand freedom, to make it a part of their thinking, but also to actuate it. This gave history a trajectory and, more importantly, an end point. At some point freedom would be actuated and history, as the working out of God’s Idea, would end in full realization of the Idea in reality. It is a utopian perspective yes, but is it far more common, even in the hallowed hallways of science, than you might at first think (David Noble 1999; Clarke 1987).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Of course, looking at history, and even looking at our current situation, we can see there is a problem. How do you square the rampant inequality, global crises, and psychologically and emotionally oppressive strategies of today’s governments (indeed of any government past or present) with a grand and glorious telos? Hegel did that in a simple and elegant way by making the content of human history, a content filled with greed, graft, corruption, inequality, self-interested passion, and instinctual gratification, **the motor that drives us forward**. According to Hegel we needed to be motivated to work. More to the point, humans (or as I would say, the *human physical unit)* didn’t do anything unless it was motivated by selfish interest and passion. As he says, “We assert … that nothing has been accomplished without an interest on the part of those who brought it about. And if ‘interest’ be called ‘passion’ – because the whole individuality is concentrating all its desires and powers, with every fibre of volition, to the neglect of all other actual or possible interests and aims, on one object – we may then affirm without qualification that nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion” (Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel 2015).

For Hegel human self-interest and passion was what drove the history of this world. Hegel would say that yes, it appears, on the surface, that we are just these violent apes, these unwashed masses, the greedy and powerful “great men” and women, but underneath it all we are really working on the same thing, the realization of Freedom. God has created conditions whereby humans are driven to manifest the freedom of God. The history of the world, says Hegel, is the history of a growing global Freedom driven forward, in an admittedly counterintuitive way, by greed and selfish self-interest of a divinely driven human being.

Now Hegel had some interesting things to say about the conditions of Freedom, and I want to add some things to Hegel. Most important was that Hegel saw a strong *state* as the essential prerequisite of Freedom. People would always be engaged in self-interested behaviors thought Hegel; it was the nature of the beast. However, a strong government, i.e. a strong state, could manage and harmonize competing interests and create conditions whereby the freedom of one person did not overrule the freedom of another. The goal of Freedom, and the political precursor to advanced spirituality was, contrary to the neo-con view, a strong state. It was an essential feature. It is worth letting Hegel speak for himself here.

From this comment on the second essential element in the historical embodiment of an aim, we infer – considering for a moment the institution of the state – that a state is then well constituted and internally vigorous when the private interest of its citizens is one with the common interest of the state, and the one finds gratification and realization in the other – a most important proposition. But in a state many institutions are necessary – inventions, appropriate arrangements, accompanied by long intellectual struggles in order to find out what is really appropriate, as well as struggles with private interests and passions, which must be harmonized in difficult and tedious discipline. When a state reaches this harmony, it has reached the period of its bloom, its excellence, its power and prosperity. But world history does not begin with any conscious aim, as do the particular circles of men. Already the simple instinct of living together contains the conscious purpose of securing life and property; once this primal society has been established, the purpose expands. But world history begins its general aim – to realize the idea of Spirit – only in an implicit form (an sich), namely, as Nature – as an innermost, unconscious instinct. And the whole business of history, as already observed, is to bring it into consciousness (Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel 2015).

I have to agree with Hegel here that a strong state is necessary, at least in transitional stages; not the kind of state they had in Russia in its known modern history, but the kind of pluralistic and democratic state that ensures the interests of all groups are met. We need a pluralistic democracy and a participatory state. It’s not something we have now. Now we have a state controlled by a single group of people (the rich and powerful). We have a situation where the power of the state is used not to further the interests of God and Freedom, but a state used in the service of private interests and accumulation. This is not necessarily a bad thing, at least according to Hegel. According to Hegel history moves like a swinging pendulum, from thesis to anti-thesis and back again, always moving forward, always leading to greater understanding, and always lifting us up to the lofty telos of Freedom. If Hegel is right, at some point we’ll all wake up to the truth, realize the situation, swing left on the pendulum, and use our experiences and insight to build the state that we need, that we are driven, to build.

Beyond the development of a plural and truly democratic state, I think there are other requirements of Freedom. Education is one. We need to educate each new generation to high standards of wisdom and insight. Educating the masses has always been a problem of course. On the one hand, education is arguably an arm of the social class system with the working class being trained into subservience, and higher classes being trained into rulership (Anyon 1980). In this context, proper education means wresting control from the elites who control it. On the other hand, it costs money to educate and so education (at least higher education) has always been something that only people with a certain amount of money can enjoy. That’s changing though. Technology has reached a point where mass education of the planet is possible. As an educator myself I can see the global potential of Moodles, Moocs, and Soocs[[4]](#footnote-4) to wrest control of the education process, smash the barriers, and bring education to the masses thereby elevating the planet like never before. The potential is there. We live at the cusp of a profound revolution, but not a violent one.

Technology is another requirement of Freedom. Hegel noted that bondage to subsistence did not a freeman make, but neither did bondage to factories, or offices, or boardrooms. If humanity wants to be free to pursue its passions, the basic tasks of survival, the basic foundation of prosperity, has to be technological. Technology has to be developed to a point where the human race as a totality can be freed from the bondage of substance. That point has been reached. We live in a world where our technological prowess is enough to free the world from the bitter bondage of production. Factories and farms would still exist, but the need for long hours, sweatshop conditions, and economic bondage no longer hold. The only thing that maintains us in the vicious cycle is the continuation of regimes of accumulation. The workweek can be reduced, unnecessary activities can be dropped, and the world can be brought forward into a realm where work no longer serves the interest of accumulation, and labor is no longer alien and alienating.

State, education, and advanced productive technology—it is the development of these to the point of perfection/*alignment* that brings us to the bloom of Spirit and the end of history. The only problem is that money is easy to accumulate and this *accumulation of money,* which is also the accumulation of labor as we have seen in the main body of this essay, has led us into temptation. Not that accumulation *per se* is a bad thing. Big fat bank accounts allow capitalists to invoke massive capital projects, and these capital projects are an essential feature of a free and modern world. But accumulation is

1. out of control and
2. organized for private aggrandizement and not public benefit.

In the swing of the pendulum to the right we can see the benefits of being able to abstract, control and accumulate labor, but the arc and anti-thesis has been reached and we either swing back to the middle and end the cycle (i.e. stop swinging back and forth and step off the “checkerboard”), or we smash the train against the wall.

The question before us now is, how do we move forward from this point? I think at this point we have reached the end of history and so now the only thing for us to do is wake up, understand the Idea, actuate the full potential, and finally and forever stop the pendulum swing. And I have to say that we all have a part to play, and a decision to make. Rich or poor, black or white, male or female, we need to make a choice. We can either stay on the pendulum swing of history, moving back and forth between thesis and anti-thesis, good and evil, light and dark, struggling in that way we do to live the best life we can, or we can step of the **Wheel[[5]](#footnote-5)** and actuate utopia. If we choose to stay on the Wheel**,** then I fear the denouement is close at hand. Remnants of humanity may continue on, but the progress we have made will be figuratively and literally submerged by the ecological, emotional, and psychological disasters that loom just ahead (Russ Zimmer 2016).

On the other hand, if we choose to move forward, to admit the telos and see “**The Plan**”, then we can step off the Wheel, focus our attention on the problem (i.e. accumulation and debt) and, with a wave of the magical legislative wand, fix it and usher in utopia for all.

Ridiculous?

Balderdash?

Hopelessly naïve?

Foolishly utopian?

Certainly if one believes the propaganda, it is. If history is the random result of evolutionary chance, if we are apes emerging out of a violent and competitive past, if we are hopelessly dashing ourselves against a natural world devoid of reason and rationality, if we are ejected sinners, if we are unworthy peons of a totalitarian cosmic order, there is no hope. If this is the case, then the best we can do is hang on to dwindling hope that our “leaders” are able to mitigate the growing damage, and continue to be able to functionally support global economies despite the growing weight of debt and disaster. On the other hand, if history is more than mere random chance, if we aren’t savage apes engaged in empty evolution, if we aren’t mere ejected sinners, or karmic rejects, if there is something more that we are working towards, if there is (a la Hegel) an end to history, then maybe we can point to the world as it is now, where the technological and economic infrastructure of society is capable of delivering global satisfaction and utopia, and say this is that point, if we but make the right choice.

I prefer the “end of history” option. I prefer the notion of geist, though I have to say I am not a fan of the dialectic, which I think is just elite propaganda. I am going to go out on a limb here and say, we are at the end of history. What we have to do now is wake up and see the plan. We have to recognize we are all in the same boat and working towards the same goal, or we are going to sink plain and simple. Returning to the idealism of Hegel is a move in the right direction. Extending Hegel’s narrative, and the narrative of others, in an inclusive, democratic, egalitarian, and free direction, and eliminating old energy ideas and archetypes that continue to support the “basis of exploitation”,[[6]](#footnote-6) is the work ahead.

Of course, there will be objections. When Marx stripped Hegel’s dialectical process of the *geist* and made the dialectic a vacuous technical process, his criticisms were valid. For all his brilliance, Hegel was a bit short sighted in some areas. He viewed religion and the state as quintessential expressions of the Plan,[[7]](#footnote-7) but conveniently ignored the fact that religion and the state can be made to function like weapons against the poor.[[8]](#footnote-8) Religion is the opiate of the masses, the state is an agent of class oppression, and the history of the world is the history of class struggle. Similarly, some of his views of Spirit miss the mark, and by a long shot. Hegel was blind to the abuses of religion and power and many people are blind to the immaturity and silliness of their own spiritual faiths. But does this mean there is nothing there, or that science cannot investigate, or that the verdict is conclusively in favour of an empty physical ‘verse? Not by a long shot. Spirituality, religion, philosophical thought about the essence of our reality may often miss the mark and be about everything but what they profess to be about, but there is something there worth investigating, and I’m not the first academic to say it.[[9]](#footnote-9) Hegel said there was something “behind history” and it may very well be that *proper apprehension and expression*, *followed by cooperative manifestation and actuation* of whatever it is that is behind history, is the only way off the sinking ship.

Proper apprehension and expression of the *Geist* is way beyond the scope of this work. This work is about money and the goal of this *Rocket Scientists’ Guide to Money and the Economy: Accumulation and Debt* is simply to reveal the nature of money, the root of our collective troubles, and the simple solution. And really our problem here isn’t the solution, because as noted in the main text of this essay, that’s easy. The problem is convincing everybody that we need to put aside our differences and work together to implement the solution and bring history to its inevitable end. And please understand, there is no violent solution here. Forcing ourselves upon people and taking things from them violently only leads to more violence, the anti-thesis of Freedom and happiness. Violence means another tortuous and century long swing of the pendulum, and I do not think we’ll survive that swing, at least not in a way that any of us would find enjoyable. Therefore, it comes down to a question of voluntary choice. Having been presented with the issues clearly and having seen “the light”, the question is, what are you going to do? Do you put this book in a corner, pretend you didn’t read it, and continue on in the old ways hoping that random evolutionary advance, or divine salvation from above, is going to save this sinking ship; or do you, rich or poor, black or white, male or female, embrace the solution, embrace your power, and make the changes you need to make. There’s no point in shooting the messenger! Personally, I do not care what choice you make, because it is your conscious you have to deal with. I will say this: if Hegel was right, if there is an underlying movement to history, and if this movement is as powerful and inexorable as it must be to have brought us to this point, then I can say with a certain degree of confidence that resistance is probably futile. If the time has come to end history, the *Geist* will find a way and you can either swim over to the new ship and get on board with the program or, rich or poor, black or white, high or low, sink beneath the violent waves of an old energy reality that is rapidly crumbling away.

MS. October 26, 2015.

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1. For example, biologists have long suggested that “alpha males” naturally, inevitably, and necessarily *dominate* subordinates in their species. Scientists are however beginning to recant as they themselves begin to recognize the deep ideological nature of some of their empirical stipulations. See for example {Citation} Also see this endearing attempt to expose the truth about what Darwin really said about human nature, [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Noble does a brilliant job of identifying the spiritual geist in industrial and post-industrial science. Also notable in this regard is the science fiction writing of Arthur C. Clarke, and in particular in book Childhood’s End. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For more on MOOCs, see the Wikipedia entry. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *The Wheel* is an old energy archetype that suggests life is a randomly spinning karmic/cosmic/evolutionary cycle of good and bad, ups and down, fortune and misfortune. For more see [http://spiritwiki.lightningpath.org/The\_Wheel](http://www.thespiritwiki.com/The_Wheel) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I speak about the “basis of exploitation” and the need to revise our ideas and archetypes in the main body of this essay. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*; "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. R. Tucker(New York: Norton, 1978). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature*; A. H. Maslow, "Cognition of Being in the Peak Experiences," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 94(1959); Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge, 40th Anniversary Edition*(New York: Washington Square Press, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)