What's interesting about "The Capital/Logic Debate"

1. How would you explain the central contribution of the two-volume work to an intelligent reader who has never heard of the Capital/Logic debate?

   Whether you like them or not, Marx and Hegel are among the most influential systematic thinkers of our time. It has long been recognised that Marx's *magnum opus*, *Capital*, was methodologically based on Hegel's *magnum opus*, *The Science of Logic*. In *The Capital/Logic Debate*, I review 12 of the most widely respected living writers on *how* the two books are related. I show that none of them have a plausible explanation, mostly because none of the writers have taken Hegel's *Logic* seriously, in particular, none of them looked at how Hegel applied the *Logic himself* in his work on the sciences. I point to the work of two now long-dead Marxists who *did* take Hegel seriously – Vygotsky and Ilyenkov – and show that the essential idea that Marx took from Hegel and applied in Political Economy was "the germ cell method." Vygotsky applied it to Psychology and his work has stood the test of time. The germ cell method can be used to discover novel approaches to any complex problem or science, especially human science. The second book, *Marx's Capital. Hegelian sources*, demonstrated in detail exactly how the method was applied by Marx across all three volumes of *Capital*.

   But understanding the germ cell method is not a substitute for real research in a discipline. The germ cell method must be coupled with *immanent critique* of the existing science, and *genealogical analysis* of the development of the object, where relevant, and the science itself.

2. What are the three biggest misconceptions readers usually have about the work before they engage with it?

   Few writers are scholars of *both* Marx *and* Hegel. Hegel scholars are usually contemptuous of Marx and have not participated in this issue. Generally speaking the remaining scholars, Marxists, have only a superficial knowledge of Hegel, and no knowledge at all of Hegel's work on the sciences. Readers coming to this debate are likely to believe that the writers have actual knowledge of Hegel. But this is not the case. Hegel wrote about science at a time when science as we know it barely existed. As a result, Hegel is not credited with any insight into science at all, and his *Logic* is treated as a kind of verbalism, with no use beyond clever arguments.
   Logic concerns only human practice in general; every science, however,

has a definite content, and content that is contained in the 'germ cell' of the science. This obvious, but profound insight has been lost, and without it, no sense can be made of the relation between Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Capital* at all.

3. If a serious reader finishes both volumes and fully understands your argument, what is the most important idea or insight you would hope they carry forward?

   I hope that their thoughts turn immediately to the discipline or problem where they have some degree of expertise, and they ask themselves: what is the 'germ cell' here? Could I write my own *Das Kapital* of ... whatever?

4. Apart from Marx, Hegel, and Vygotsky, are there any thinkers, disciplines, or communities that you believe would naturally benefit from understanding the germ cell method?

   I have written already on collective decision making – there is a discipline called "Deliberative Democracy" that is unaware of the ethical issues that underlie that discipline. and could benefit from use of the germ cell approach.
   One of my reviewers immediately turned to the problem of the germ cell in International Relations, and I think he can make progress in that area.
   I am currently writing on the problem referred to in popular discourse as "agency" – if and how and individual can have a meaningful say in public affairs, and the germ cell approach was essential here.
   It is a pity that those who wrestled with the foundations of Quantum Physics a century ago didn't have the germ cell method at their disposal. It might have saved the time and despair it cost many physicists.
   All sorts of problems like the housing crisis, felt in many countries currently, could be tackled. The germ cell method is essential in Mathematics education. Education in topics like the Environment, Design, Architecture (I used this approach many years ago in the design of teaching spaces at the University of Melbourne), and Ecology I believe would benefit from a germ cell approach though I won't pretend to have answers without doing the necessary research. Any science or practice is open to the approach, but especially complex sciences with 'wicked' problems.