

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Sir:

I wish to take issue with a statement in the report by Dr. Max Rieser on the International Congress for the Philosophy of Science, which appeared in the October 1955 issue of your journal. It reads: "As for an explanation of the unexpected absence of the scholars of the satellite countries, it should be borne in mind that they were all educated and grown up before the communist revolutionary upheaval and therefore naturally more susceptible of defection from the Marxist orthodoxy than the Russians. . . ."

Whether or not one agrees with Marxism, the use of the phrase, "Marxist orthodoxy," as if that was synonymous with Russian Communism, is inexcusable in a theoretical journal. Precisely because the Russian philosophers are what they are—mouthpieces for the political regime—it behooves us who are not "state philosophers" to be most scrupulous in our analysis of any philosophy, especially that of an opponent. In 1943 the Russian theoreticians admitted that all teaching of Marxian political economy had ceased. (See translation of article from *Pod Znamenem Marxizma* in the *American Economic Review*, September 1944.) They proposed that in resuming the teaching of political economy they no longer follow the sequence of Marx's *Capital*. In my commentary, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," as well as in my rejoinder a year later, "A Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxian Economics?" (see the *American Economic Review*, September 1945) I pointed out that this revision in the Marxian doctrine of the law of value and surplus value involved nothing less than a break with the dialectical structure of Marx's greatest theoretical work, *Capital*. It was not long thereafter that Russian Communism broke with the whole of dialectical philosophy. In 1947 A. A. Zhdanov addressed a congress of "philosophical workers" and demanded of them the discovery of nothing less than "a new dialectical law—criticism and self-criticism" to substitute for the Hegelian law of development through contradiction. Between 1947 and the appearance of the Russian delegates at the 1955 International Congress for the Philosophy of Science, their departure from "Marxist orthodoxy" should be obvious to anyone who does not confuse what the Russians say about Marxism with what Marx himself wrote.

The Russian totalitarian state has very compelling reasons for wishing to usurp the name of Marx. The whole might of the regime is mobilized to force an identity between the two opposites—Marxism, which is a theory of liberation, and Russian Communism, which is the practice of enslavement. Why, wittingly or unwittingly, become a part of that conspiracy with such loose formulations as "Marxist orthodoxy" when what was evidently meant was adherence to the Russian Communist Party line?

Yours sincerely,
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**"Mr. Rovit
is way out,
but he is
also way in."**

HIRAM HAYDN

**THE
PLAYER
KING**
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A bold new approach to

3. If Mr. Belsnick is right about the homosexual argot, and if the pun was intentional, then the play is even worse than I thought it was.

SARTRE

To the Editors:

With the perceptivity and historic sweep characteristic of his study of Marx, George Lichtheim, in his review of Wilfrid Desan's *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, (Jan. 28) has covered considerable ground beyond both Sartre's and Desan's realms of reference, and included "a perfectly genuine, and very interesting, three-cornered debate among Marxists, Catholics, and Existentialists in France." This writer is familiar with the new debaters, but thinks that they have created as closed an intellectual milieu as the Communist Party has in its domain. It has become fashionable to consider only those who are not Marxists by conviction to be the true exponents of Marxism. Your journal, I trust, will allow a Marxist-Humanist to express her views, especially as one of the themes in Mr. Lichtheim's present review is but a variation of the one he made in his commentaries on my *Marxism and Freedom* (NYR, Dec. 17, 1964). There Mr. Lichtheim accused me of an inclination "to overrate his (Lenin's) intellectual accomplishments (notably his rather amateurish Hegel commentaries)" Here he credits Sartre with "an interpretation of Marx far above the level of the crudities of the Leninism school," by which he means not only Communism (which I consider a euphemism for state-capitalism), but Lenin as thinker.

There is an undeniable duality in Lenin's philosophic heritage between his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908), which gave the green light to vulgar materialism, and his *Philosophic Notebooks* (1914), which broke new ground in interpretations of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. But this should not give any one license to dismiss the significance of Lenin's historic break from his own philosophic past, much less to hold up Sartre's quite painful forcing of Marxism into his existential mold as a genuine interpretation of Marxian philosophy, or, for that matter, Hegelian dialectics. I have yet to see today's Marxologists, East or West, grappling with Hegelian dialectics in as bold a manner as the "amateurish" Lenin who wrote exhilaratingly: "Subjectivity-Freedom . . . Alias: Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it." The minute Mr. Lichtheim can name any "Marxists,

Catholics, and Existentialists" who do not shy away from Hegel's relevance for our day, I shall instantly prick up my ears, and most respectfully at that. Until that day, can't we carry on debates by rules other than those of the jungle where all is fair in war (and love) and which, for purposes of downgrading Lenin, permits the upgrading of the argumentations of Sartre "far above the crudities of the Leninist school" in the very same breath in which one cogently describes Sartre's "libertarian posturing in the service of totalitarianism."

Raya Dunayevskaya

Detroit

To the Editors:

I was astonished to read George Lichtheim's statement, in his review of *The Marxism of Sartre*, that phenomenology is a form of Platonism. I agree that this is a pleasantly convenient way of explaining why Sartre will never bridge the gap between existentialism and Marxism—Platonism being a doctrine of "ideas" and Marxism of historical "realities." I object only because it happens to be the wrong explanation of why Sartre finds himself in difficulties.

Phenomenology is primarily a method. Most phenomenologists in the world today would reject Husserl's notion that it is a science of essences. This includes Sartre, who began his career by throwing out all the "metaphysical" elements in Husserl, and leaving only the method. Whether you accept the "metaphysics" (which, admittedly are vaguely Platonist) or not does not matter; phenomenology is mainly the method. This method could be simply defined in the injunction: Do not theorize: describe. It is mainly a way of keeping some of the grosser errors from creeping in.

Sartre's difficulties are basically psychological rather than philosophical. Using Husserl's method, he arrived at completely nihilistic conclusions in *Being and Nothingness*—life is meaningless, human aspirations are all illusions designed to cloak selfishness, etc. All this came out of his rejection of Husserl's "transcendental ego"—but this is too complicated a subject to pursue here. His rejection of Husserl's metaphysics springs from a curious fear of "emotionalism," a longing for the cleanness of pure abstraction—which can be seen so clearly in *Words*. It is as logically impossible to get from this kind of nihilism to a Marxist ethic as to square the circle—that is where the trouble lies.

Colin Wilson

Gorran Haven
Cornwall, England

George Lich

I suppose or time arguing derstood Husserl of the still wedded inherent in I er it really son rightly s: plex for an ence. I do marks about proach, but what I said cations of stood by its course there it matters, I method and Hegelian cor hollow. One menology is describing " and that lig on social pi still waiting this respect pointing as ers of the wholly due bles.

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