

October 1, 1944
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Dear Bess and Eugene:

I wish to continue with some of the philosophic problems of the new book. This time I have an outline of one of the parts. The very fact that I say "one of the" parts rather than the first part shows the problem. If it were for us, it would be definitely part one; for the public, however, I cannot begin straight off with a problem in philosophy; I must show the objective world first so all can see the obvious before I begin saying the not-so-obvious. But that is not the only problem--where to put this part which I shall call "Why Hegel? Why Now?" The other, and greater problem, is that philosophy is "unprovable" except, of course, in life; otherwise, it remains a task, a task Marxist-Humanists would accept; others will not. That is why, originally, in '47-'50, ~~xxx~~ originally I mean way back in 1947 when we first got an inkling that the problems of our age are "in The Doctrine of the Notion" whose categories relate to freedom or "subjectivity"; and then again in 1953 when I first broke down the Absolute Idea, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Mind as "the new society", by which time I had no collaborators left at all.) we intended tackling indirectly, by showing what Bukharin at each crisis did was undialectic and what Lenin did was true dialectics. Now the problem is not Bukharin but Trotsky, and Trotsky was neither as serious a theoretician (so that we do not have lengthy theses on each problem) nor a Bolshevik, that is to say, he did not tackle very same problems as did Lenin and therefore there are no parallels. And yet Trotskyism will most assuredly be dealt with me; the problem is to see how I can deal not only politically, but philosophically, with Trotskyism, despite the absolute barrenness of any expression, serious expression, on the dialectic.

Now then the outline of the part, "Why Hegel? Why Now?" It has 3 subsections: 1) Marx's Debt to Hegel, 2) Lenin's Shock of Recognition and Ambivalence toward Hegel and 3) The Task Before Us

1) Not because Marx was a "Left Hegelian" as a student, but because the Hegelian dialectic speeded him on his voyage of discovery of a totally new philosophy ("thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism") Marx never forgot his indebtedness to Hegel. From the first to the last of his writings, which recreate the dialectic, not as "a science of logic", but "science" of revolution, Marx's works show how it is impossible to "shake off" Hegel, as he easily enough shock off classical political economy once he transcended it and his "economics" in every respect, from value and surplus value through rent as it applies to landlord class to accumulation of capital and collapse of capitalism discerned in its law of motion, was, not a new political economy, but Marxism, a philosophy of human activity.

his relationship to It was otherwise with Hegel, despite the fact that his break came first from Hegel, and for a while indeed, in his struggles with utopians, particularly Proudhon, he was hardly more than counterposing political economy as the "real" against the "bourgeois idealism" of philosophy. Thus, his very first, and most thorough and profound attack on Hegel, the very one which led to nothing short of his greatest discovery--the materialist conception of history--was, however, by no accident, via A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. A lesser man, a lesser Hegelian than Marx would have finished at that point. Marx, on the contrary, proceeded

at that point directly to Hegel's rigorous and non-political strictly philosophic works, PHENOMENOLOGY OF MIND and ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF PHILOSOPHIC SCIENCES, breaking off just as he got into the last section "The Philosophy of Mind." But, though "that dismal science"--political economy--never gave him rest enough for the rest of his life to be able to tackle in consistent form, or as he put it, "rational form of the dialectic", he kept returning to Hegel every time he came to a turning point in political economy: in 1858 when he writes Hegel that his "accidentally" finding Hegel's works gave him some "new developments" for his Critique of Political Economy; then in 1861-3, when he first reworks the structure of CAPITAL in order to part company with Ricardo on land rent and make the most crucial decision insofar as "economics" is concerned--to take out what was to become Volume III of CAPITAL and put it as Volume III, rather than as a part of Volume I, which would intervene between capital and before he came to wage labor as if the landlord class was still the fundamental class; and finally, after the entire restructuring on basis of The Working Day in 1866, actual publication in 1867, and nothing short of the Paris Commune which so illuminates the "form" of value--the fetishism of commodities and perverted relations of dead to living labor--he chooses strictly Hegelian language.

(*Marouse makes me laugh, as one of the only, if not the only, Hegelians who do wish to remain Marxists, trying to excuse themselves for not seeing all there was to see in Marx because the Grundrisse, the first form of CAPITAL which Marx discarded, (except for the 2 chapters that became Critique of Political Economy) had not been available to them. First, the Grundrisse, which uses more Hegelian language, is still in the "application" not creative stage; is still without all he learned from the workers' own struggles which led him to the break with bourgeois conception of theory. Secondly, and above all, --at least it should be above all from their point of view--the strict use of form not as opposite to essence, but form as "the universal" which combines form and essence as the form of the future and undermines totally the form of the past, and not only in actual relations of production, but in thought --occurs, not in 1858, but in 1867, then in 1872. This is precisely why Lenin wrote that it was impossible to understand CAPITAL "especially its first chapter" without the whole of Hegel's Logic. It is that first chapter where you need Hegel most; it is that first chapter which Stalin decided in 1943 should be thrown out as any first in "teaching" of Capital; it is that first chapter with all that is perverse in actual relations nevertheless assuming "the fixity of a popular prejudice" in the highest bourgeois thought, classical political economy, which is exactly what perverts philosophy into nothing but an "ideology", that is to say a false consciousness.)

Therefore I will be obliged to divide this chapter of Marx's debt to Hegel into what he meant to Marx at each stage since the break from bourgeois society: (1) in 1844, as expressed in the Essays, and as our age should help us see through the realization that had not been otherwise, Marx's materialist conception of history would hardly have been more than a species of determinist materialism, which is exactly what the Second International made it out to be. (2) 1857-8 when dialectic was "applied" rather than recreated from class struggles. (3) 1863-73, from "turning everything around" to the new in fetishism of commodities, not only, as I go to great pains in M&F to show, as that which results from the Paris Commune, but as, in thought, it returns to the Hegelian dialectic. Let us call it, in strict Hegelian language, "the self-developing subject", and name it, with Marx, the masses or "human power", the positive Humanism beginning from itself, or "second

negation" for it is that second negation which answers not only the ultimate which we expressed as "what happens after" each revolution, but the daily of our age, which will allow us to transcend each negation of the immediate, through unity of theory and practice.

Finally, we must deal also with why, at certain points, the abstract can help more than the concrete. CAPITAL is concrete and therefore "exhausts itself" in that one topic. But LOGIC is without "concretion" of sense and "applies" to all "sciences" so when a new stage is reached, you need yet another aspect, as Lenin, who knew CAPITAL very well long before he read "the whole" of LOGIC, saw the minute "self-movement", "self-activity", "self-transcendence" suddenly began to mean something NEW to him. What I am trying to say is that the minute the actual cannot be expressed in old terms, it is because a new stage in cognition has not kept up with the new challenge from practice, and philosophy then opens new avenues, and only then can you also see the "old" but concrete terms in CAPITAL in a new way as monopoly capital not only as a "stage" of centralization of capital, but as a "transformation into opposite."

Lenin's

2) Ambivalence to Hegel and Shock of Recognition

The duality in Lenin's heritage can no longer be put into a footnote, as it was in M&F. It is this duality that has ~~permitted~~ allowed Trotsky, and then Trotskyism, from bringing those Notebooks to the public in 1948 when I first translated them and was all too willing to give them to the Trotskyists. This is not a simple problem nor a "fractional one"; it is what has laid the foundation for Trotskyism tailoring Communism on the question of Marx's Humanism as something Marx "passed through." Above that, it has allowed the Communists to pervert them by quoting both Lenins alongside of each other as if they were one and the same.

Once, however, this is expressed clearly, then it is precisely Lenin who allows us to jump off from the 20th rather than 19th century precisely because all his greatest aphorisms were expressed in "Subjective Logic" and had him identify subjectivity with freedom. Also, we had not heretofore, paid great attention to Lenin's emphasis on the fact that philosophy (Logic, 1813) expressed "the universal movement of change", and only after that (1847) did Marx express it in the C.M., or "social science", whereas natural science (Origin of Species, 1859) came last. Also his statement that "The continuation of the work of Hegel and Marx consist in working out dialectically the history of human thought, science and technology." This allows us to jump off from "Cognition not only reflects but creates" to our age and how it will be able to restate Marxism for its age only through a return also to Hegel.

3) Why Now then would take off from something like Freedom as the innermost dynamic of life has pushed itself to the surface where all can see it, as actuality, and still that brave it as philosophy. Perhaps the title of the new book could be PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN LIBERATION.

Yours,



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