

January 19, 1964

Dear Mr. Gregor:

Since you suddenly (your letter of 12/16/63) accuse me of accepting, or seeming to accept "much of the Hegelianism that Engels is largely responsible for", and also state that you haven't seen "any convincing account" of what you call "sophisticated" and "concrete" materialism "in the Marxist literature", you will forgive me if I start out this letter with a statement of the structure of my MARXISM AND FREEDOM. (I assume that, contrary to bourgeois and Communist conspiracy of silence around my book, you will be no part of it.)

If you will consult especially p.89, ("He who glorifies theory and genius but fails to recognize the limits of a theoretical work, fails likewise to recognize the indispensability of the theoretician. All of history is the history of the struggle for freedom. If, as a theoretician, one's ears are attuned to the new impulses from the workers, new 'categories' will be created, a new way of thinking a step forward in philosophic cognition.") and pp.148-9, "Marx removed the question of value from a dispute among intellectuals and transformed it into a question of the struggle of the proletariat for a new society. The material and the ideal are never too far apart....There was no difference between Marx the Hegelian and Marx the revolutionary, nor between Marx the theoretician and Marx the practical organizer. He finished CAPITAL and turned to the Paris Commune not merely as 'activist' and 'materialist' but as idealist." The first quotation is from the impact of the objective situation on the structure of CAPITAL and the second is the impact of CAPITAL on the objective situation not only as concerns Marx's times but through Luxemburg's revision of Volume III, which she did under the guise of fighting the alleged inadequacy of Engels's editing, our own depression as well as the state-capitalism of the Collective Leadership under Khrushchev, Inc. I call attention to these chapters because I'm the only one who has dealt with the structure of Marx's greatest theoretical work both in its totality and its dialectic structure which, of course, includes CAPITAL not only as we know it, that is, as published by Engels (Vol.II and III) and by Kautsky (Vol.IV or Theories of Surplus Value) but as they exist in manuscript form in German and in Russian.

Naturally it is your right to disagree with this interpretation, but you cannot do so merely by stating that Marx differed from Engels. He most certainly did, but by being more, not less, Hegelian than Engels. I know some Hegelians who see this, but rest their argument mainly on the Grundrisse, because it is so much easier to prove Hegelianism as a great deal more than just "coquetry" by vast quotations of Hegelian passages from that work. I, on the other hand, believe that CAPITAL is more Hegelian in its finished form where the phraseology is less Hegelian but the content, the dialectic, the movement, the re-internalization (such as Marx said Lassalle never grasped and therefore could not show any true dialectic grasp other than by school childish quotations) of ~~the~~ Hegelianism (which Marx called "the source of all dialectic") is the young Marx, the Mature Marx, the non-F Feuerbachian-because-truly-humanist (rather than merely anthropological) Marx. Far from using the Hegelian "laws" of dialectic as merely "descriptive", the Marxian dialectic is a recreation, and, therefore, a transcendence. This transcendence of the Hegelian dialectic was achieved by Marx not merely by standing Hegel "right side up", giving his methodology a materialist base, vulgar or "sophisticated", but by making materialism as well as naturalism, scientism as well as historicity human.

That is why the same critique applied to Feuerbach: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the object, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively." I cannot see how, after this thesis on Feuerbach, you can maintain that Marx remained Feuerbachian and you'll forgive me if I accuse you who seem to have so much animosity to Engels of being Engelsian in attributing to Marx an awe of Feuerbach. It was a stage, a transition point, in Marx's development from young Hegelian (which he likewise never was in truth) to the Marx we know. Your essay

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on Feuerbach's influence on Marx was exciting because it divided Feuerbach, and showed it was the young Feuerbach who influenced the young Marx. But when you now try to transform Marx back to a Feuerbachian, you are only revealing your own preference for "anthropological realism", and, in your neutrality (?) on "political implications", escaping from the humanism of Marxism.

You'll need to forgive me also for saying that you are seeing Lenin through the eyes of those who today call themselves "Leninists", but that is very, very far from what Lenin was. How can you say that Lenin attempted "a synthesis of Hegel through the looking glass of Engels" and mean, not the Lenin of the vulgar Materialism and Espirio-Criticism, but the Lenin of the Philosophic Notebooks when Lenin clearly writes: "The correctness of this side (contradiction, etc) of the content of dialectics must be tested by history of science. This side of dialectics as a rule receives inadequate attention (e.g. Plekhanov).....The same is true of Engels. But with him it is 'in the interests of popularisation....')"

Why, may I ask, is there all this antagonism to Engels? Isn't it really a way to hit at Marx? You will recall that in one of my first letters to you, I said, let's leave Engels out of this. He is not Marx and we want to deal with Marx alone. I said this not only for the obvious truth, but because both the Hegelian Marxists like Marcuse hit out against Engels because they want to keep Marx as a "historian" rather than a natural scientist which he never claimed to be, and, in turn, those who really oppose Hegel (as you obviously do) try to make out that Engels was the Hegelian. Engels, as he well knew, and said, was "at most talented" whereas Marx was a genius, an original thinker, a founder of philosophy and a movement to realize it. I am an anti-Luxemburgian from way back and it began because of her attitude to Engels's editing, not because I disagreed that Engels didn't do the job Marx would have done, but because it was not a very brave way of challenging Marx. (When I find my series of articles on her "Accumulation of Capital" somewhere I'll send it to you; I may have the Italian translation which I do not guarantee.) As for good old Anglo-Saxon empiricists, I remember Joan Robinson got so mad at the "mystical Hegelian language" in Marx's CAPITAL that she told me she wished Marx had told "all" his ideas to Engels and had Engels, instead of himself, write it!

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The truth is that the dialectic, ~~which~~ in Marx's hands and even in Hegel's, issues out of the empirical sciences and returns to them. Again, if you'll permit me, I'd like to quote from my work (p.287) "Philosophy springs from the empirical sciences and actual life, but incorporation of these laws and generalizations into philosophy, Hegel showed, 'implies a compulsion of thought itself to proceed to these concrete truths.' Hegel knew whereof he spoke when he told the intellectuals of his day that 'the sense of bondage springs from inability to surmount the antithesis, and from looking at what is and what happens as contradictory to what ought to be and happen.' 256."

Thank you for returning the manuscripts. Did I tell you that a paperback edition of my work, with a new chapter, "The Challenge of Mao Tze-tung", is due off the press here and in Japan at end of February? Because this is what I was working on I am late in responding to yours of last month; sorry.

Yours,

*Raymond Williams*

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