

November 11, 1970

Dear Friends:

Because Chapter 2, "Marx's Transcendence of, and Return to, Hegel", will, like the other chapters of this final draft, not be available for circulation but will have to be read a central place (office or organizer's home), I'm asking Olga to please send this covering letter out to each individual member. In that way we will be able to continue a dialogue on this happy occasion which will finally make you see the completed Part I, Why Hegel? Why Now? as a totality. Moreover, I believe that this chapter, along with Chapter 3 (the one on Lenin published, as experiment, in Telos) will make it possible for you to return to that most difficult of all chapters, Chapter 1 on Hegel. (More on that later.)

You'll note easily enough that before you read even a sentence of this new chapter the three quotations which precede the text set "the whole thesis — inseparability of black dimension from "The Idea" and of both from Marx. The quotation from Nat Turner is, indeed, on the same level of freedom as is the dialectics of liberation, and it is exciting, indeed, that the young Marx, even before he became a Marxist and broke from bourgeois society, was moving precisely in that direction by making a "psychological law" out of the transformation of the freedom of mind into "practical energy."

What may not be as easily recognizable are the new elements in some of the ideas that have always characterized us. Thus, section 1 on the 1840's is entitled "The Birth of Historical Materialism." Now, it is true that, throughout, in our emphasis on the Humanism of Marxism we meant that, since we have never separated the young from the old Marx. But to be able to express it that simply as birth of materialism shows how far the attacks of Communists, Trotskyists, Anarcho-Syndicalists have led to the clarification not just of our ideas but of what, precisely, Marx was doing when. Also, you will note that, throughout, whether in actual text or only in footnotes, I keep bringing in the today-ness of the subject. For example, there is no more vulgar materialist than the Communist fellow-traveling professor Donald Clark Hodges, who is working day in and day out to reduce Marx's theory of alienated labor to economist, legalist, vulgarian phraseology: "In the manuscripts of 1844, alienation involves a specific economic transaction between an aliener and alienee." This, in 1966! By referring to that date in 1844 I hope I bring the problems of today into historic-philosophic problems of yesteryear.

On the other hand, the transition point to Section 2 on the Grundrisse, or Economic Notebooks of 1857-8, brings the chapter back to the rigors of logic with its simultaneous ceaseless process of change in the dialectic. There, therefore, I show not merely that Marx, when he was supposed to have become finally "scientific economist", had not at all departed from the Hegelian dialectic. On the contrary, it was precisely because he remained dialectician that, in the very process of discussing money, capital, wage labor, he asks: how did the worker get to have nothing but his ability to labor to sell just when he became "free", and thereby is off on pre-capitalist formations — only to arrive at revolution, the revolt in China, the T'aiiping Rebellion.

At the same time, it is the analysis of the Machine, and its opposite, resistance of workers to it, that has given in our day of Auto-

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mation, birth to all the nonsensical ideas of one-dimensionality of man. Thus, once again, I reach into today, taking up both Herbert Marcuse and the wild dreams of Communists to somehow do away with revolts of workers. As for the pseudo-anarchists who are so busy being for "the act" as to skip over philosophy altogether and muckrake (at this late date!) about that reactionary Prussian philosopher, Hegel, they have yet to answer why, when philosophy and revolution do not unite -- as they do in Marx -- do we have nothing but aborted revolts, not to mention mindless terrorism. In the cases of both the technologists (and that's all philosophers of one-dimensionality are!), and men and women of the "pure act" there has resulted both the throwing out of the proletariat as revolutionary force and substitution of themselves for it, and the death of the dialectic. For, as Mao should know, who tried it in the so-called Cultural Revolution, if you see only one aspect (be it subjective or objective) of a problem, and reduce the intern and objective contradiction to something manipulable, there is no forward movement.

Finally, section 3 on the "Adventures of the Fetishism of Commodities" -- an interpretation of which is as specifically Marxist-Humanist today as it was uniquely Marx's after he witnessed the greatest mass act of creativity of his day, the Paris Commune. We arrive at the integrality not only of economics and dialectics, but also of mass action and individual genius able to set that historic act of creation down in a way that we can get a glimpse of the future -- not because Marx was prophetic, but because he left us his historic insights as task for us to shape for our day.

Now then, I have two suggestions to make, one for a public act and one for ourselves. Since I believe that with this chapter you will be able to grapple with that first chapter, to which you'll have to return with each new part and only fully grasp in the very last part on economic reality and dialectics of liberation, let me say, and not only as excuse, that beginnings are always difficult for they have the "temperament" of cutting from virgin rock even when it is Marx you're recreating and not something originally us. Still, how many have bothered with the actual works of Hegel, and from the point of today, and on the basis of a movement from practice? In any case, if you follow the subheadings rather than those "scary" works of Hegel so that Phenomenology of Mind becomes "Experiences of Consciousness"; Science of Logic is read as "Attitudes to Objectivity"; and The Philosophy of Mind as "A Movement from Practice", we'll all be on the way to a comprehension that will create a direction for the actions of today.

The practical proposal I wish to make is that you schedule, as the very first public educational (I assume by then you will have completed the classes on American Civilization on Trial) of the new year, a presentation of Chapter 2, and call it something like WHAT HAS MARX TO SAY TO US TODAY? And, though you need to deal with it on a theoretical plane, I believe you can make it concrete, for theory too must be practiced. Good luck.

Yours,
RAYA

P.S. I suppose there is no need to say that the ending of the chapter on Lenin's Philosophic Ambivalence will not be the same as in Talos not merely because 1970 will be gone by the time the book is finished, but, more importantly, because the chapter must lead to Part II, which is to deal with Alternatives -- Trotsky, Mao, Sartre -- against the objective background of the 1930's and 1940's. I decided, nevertheless, to add the brief postscript so that you keep before your mind's eye the historic periods we're covering from Hegel to the Marxist-Humanism of our day -- that is to say, from the French Revolution through the Russian to those of our day.

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