

Raya Dunayevskaya's remarks from the floor on November 4, 1984, at
Class Number Two on Perspectives, after presentation by Lou Turner, Chicago
(transcript not checked by Raya)

I'm very glad Lou spent so much time on the dialectic structure of
Capital, and on what Stalin did in ~~perverting~~ perverting it. But I want to
specify. I don't want to make just a generalization. Because I think
that what is important for us in this class, or in any class or in any
objective situation you're in, is to be able to grasp methodology in such
a way, very concretely as well as universally, that you can apply it the minute
you see a headline in the paper on anything.

So let's take up what sounds very, very strange: the dialectic structure
of Capital. What was it? And why did everything begin to fall ~~apart~~ apart
once Stalin demanded that we disobey that structure. He didn't say disobey a
that dialectic structure but he said, "Throw out chapter one of Capital.
That was done by Marx because the poor man was all alone and no one believed
in him, but now we have such a great world(?) and so forth. So he said to
begin at the beginning. But we all know the commodity(....), and we're going
to take that out."

What was really involved? The dialectic structure means that Marx
not only followed Hegel's dialectics, but he transformed it completely. In
other words, he followed its movement and transformed it. So what was it
that Hegel did? Hegel has three sections in the Logic: Being, or phenomenology
or appearance, ~~or~~ whatever you want to call it; Essence, what is really at
stake, not what it looks like or appears like, but ~~what~~ what is really
at stake; and Notion, that's supposed to be the height, the Absolute Idea,
the fact that you now have the Self-Thinking Idea.

Here is ~~what~~ what Marx did with that. He said, "Let us start with the
thing(Ding) of capitalism. That happens to be the commodity. And I wrote
alot on that." He says that in the first section only, which is commodities

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as we all know have an exchange value and a use value and that is what you think it is. Well, it isn't. It appears to be that. But, what is really at issue is how it became that. And how it became that was through labor. There are two kinds of labor. "And you'll pardon me, but I will bring labor right in here into commodities, because that's all it means to the capitalist society, the commodity. That's what they've made it into. But really if you look at it, this use labor means that every person has some ability. (Now how does it happen however?) You know you're a miner or a tailor or you're a production worker. Now, how does it happen that all labor, no matter what the hell it is, it only counts as simply human labor and what its ^{value} ~~value~~ or its surplus value. (is)?"

And at that point, he says, "Now nobody has ever seen abstract labor. How in the heck could we become abstract? We're not abstract. So the transformation into abstract - making you all be the same irrespective of what you did - that is insane, that is capitalistic, that is because there is a factory clock there and that tells you just produce so much, in such and such time." So in other words, he brings in Essence, right in that first chapter, section two. He says, "I'll explain it further when we come to production but meanwhile you must know it."

He then goes into the market - you're going to bring it to market and it's going to sell and so forth, with its equivalent value, and he goes on through a lot of it until he comes to money, as the essence of everything, right? You'd do anything for profits, no?

He's got another surprise. What does he do in the last section? It took him a long time and that's the section he wants changed in that French edition. He has it, in any edition. Now first is what he had, and why it is so unusual and that will really tell you... Section two and the final section tells you why Stalin was so anxious to throw it out, to break it up...

And it's also look at Engels. Engels was trying to show you that you do need philosophy, but making it very general. It's still not really what is concretely so on how you can apply it. So Engels said, "Look, if you ~~read~~ (he's ~~talked~~ talking to Smith and Carey(?)) read Capital and you read Logic, here's what you have to do: You have Being, so that's commodities and money. You have Essence, that's your production system and that's really what counts". O.K., what happened to Notion? And mind you, he was talking about the whole Capital. That supposedly was just because Marx was a ~~revolutionary~~ revolutionary and said make the revolution.

Notion is the objective and subjective ways of really transforming it finally. So what does he do on that fetishism of commodities? First he explains to you why it is so ~~crazy~~ crazy that we keep (Marx) - everyone who believes with him that it's an exploitative ~~society~~ society...And then if you don't accept this analysis...well you know you're exploited. Everyone knows that you're a living worker. You're living, you're not dead, you're not a commodity. So how did it happen that you're treated as one, you're bought and sold? What is this labor power? It's not labor, it's just the ability to labor, all right? So what gave it the form of a commodity? And the whole point of this becomes then, the whole purpose becomes at that point, the fact ~~that~~ you have to see how it became that, at the point of production. How you're made to produce only that....

In order for him to explain how it became that before he even gets into production and shows you the exploitation, speed-up and so forth, he says, "Commodity is a fetish. I know this man is alive. Why am I who know this man is alive and exploited, why the hell do I say commodity? What was it in this capitalist society which I'm in that I could follow, repeating words that I don't really believe it?" So the fetishism will make you look at what a fetish is to begin with.

I think it's even lower than God, right? It was just a scult. You worshipped it, a cow or whatever the heck you worshipped, before you found one God or something.

So the fetish makes him go into all the old, primitive societies. So high from the fetishism of commodities is what was it in slave society, what was in in other societies, the human relations at the point of production, whatever their production was? And what he had to begin with was to say it was a fetish, right? In 1867 he knew it was a fetish, and he told them. And it followed in a certain sense Hegel, with Notion. You go to the Absolute Idea, you try to go to some sort of freedom, whether it's freedom from God, or what Marx means, actual liberation and freedom from yourself.

So the whole idea becomes what he suddenly finds it (suddenly in 1873) when he begins working on the French edition. And what happened between this period when he wrote the first and the second? The Paris Commune. Right? So he says, "Oh my, the workers have discovered the way to break down this society altogether. They have shown you that it is not the state will do it for you, it is what you will do. And what you did, my dear workers, was to establish the Paris Commune. So the communal form of freely associated labor is going to show you that thing.

Now first of all he includes Being, Essence, Notion and its transformation into a totally new freedom, and not the freedom just to worship one God, all in ~~the~~ chapter one.

What did Stalin find in 1943? Why did he need so ~~badly~~ finally to do it? He discovered the belt line from Ford. You see you were very dear friends (laughter), United States and Russia, and they learned a couple of things from our mode of production. And he decided that this time, because all the masses are with him to fight against fascism, this time he can throw it out. He actually did it when he established the five year plan, but he didn't tell you he did it. Now he said, "We can take that out, because, you see, it isn't true that it's only characteristic of capitalism (commodities). It's characteristic of all societies. It was before capitalism. It will be ~~after~~ after ~~the~~ capitalism, and we are ~~not~~ socialists, or ours is a socialist society."

So you have to see that the dialectic structure isn't just a phrase, or ~~some~~ something beautiful. And somebody will ~~say~~ say no he didn't, that it's just a matter of teaching, because that's the way they presented it at first.

Now let me show you what happened in that year 1943, as against only 1871, when there was the ~~the~~ Paris Commune. In 1943 in the USA there was a miners' strike. Now there have been millions of ~~miners'~~ miners' strikes. They're the most militant people. There's always a miner's strike. But this one was the first ever when a war was going ~~on~~ and the miners were saying, if you the Senators want ~~the~~ coal, go dig ~~it~~ it.

The Blacks in Detroit, Harlem, all throughout the United States were saying, if this is the ~~thing~~ thing I'm fighting for (freedom), and I

can't even have a house in which to live, you can all go to hell. And they riot.

What else happened at the opposite? At that time we were Trotskyists, had been separated from Trotsky, but not broken with the party, so to speak. We broke only with the theory that it's a socialist society and you have the right to say it's a capitalist society.

But we took advantage of the fact to say that this riot is not 1917 or 1919 when red blood was all over St. Louis and Chicago. This riot is workers doing it in the factories and everywhere else right (again) during the war, and it isn't escaping from the KKK, it is challenging you, the government, to give me a home, so to speak.

So that whether it was Black, and we said it was a new stage; whether it was labor; whether it was the ideas, the self-thinking ideas of one group of Marxists that were finally arriving to the situation that that would count - that's what it was. Whether it was the dialectic structure as Marx conceived it in 1867, as a matter of fact, it's from 1843 to 1883.

And pardon me Stokely Carmichael. 1943 to 1963 is taken up in the first edition (of ACOT), which he had. Yes, he bought it the last time. But he didn't understand it, because he said he learned all there was to be learned about dialectics from CLR James. And he did. Yeah, (laughs), he learned all he did, I take it all back.

So the idea always is that, whether you consider the objective situation, or the subjective, you have to have a certain way in which you realize at all times that there is a movement. Not only is there a double rhythm in revolution, the one of breaking down the old and

creating the new. There is also a double rhythm that you have to have, a unity of thought and of revolution.

Otherwise it isn't going to be ~~xxxx~~ successful. And I want to say one more word in relationship to the whole idea of how you suddenly aren't it. Last week Diane I think ~~xxxx~~ raised the question, "Did Grenada, that is the leaders, ever discuss the question of socialism before the ~~xxxx~~ counter-revolution started?" The answer is yes and no, especially no. Yes in the sense of mentioning the word. No in the sense of serious discussion.

Look at the precise things that happened within the last two months. No, it was less than two months. It was only one month, just before Coard shot Bishop. ~~They're~~ They're discussing socialism in very bland terms. Coard is supposed to know ~~more~~ more or something, and he has the plan, and he wants a single party state and he wants to vanguard party ~~xxxx~~ and all kinds of junk ~~xxxx~~ that he keeps ~~xxxx~~ repeating from that. And Bishop says, "Look, I am first of all a socialist, and secondly the masses like ~~x~~ me because I know how to speak to them and they ~~xxxx~~ know that I listen to them, and ~~thirdly~~ thirdly I'm the one that made the revolution, the ~~xxxx~~ first overthrow of the British imperialists and ~~xxxx~~ Gairy. I have no time to go arguing with you. I have a date in Czechoslovakia"...or wherever ~~the~~ hell he is ~~xxxx~~ going in ~~xxxx~~ East Europe...

In other words he ~~xxxx~~ pays so little attention to what is really involved in the socialism that you're supposed to be. If you're really for the masses and you really have ~~xxxx~~ made the revolution, which he did, then you have to pay attention that it shouldn't be taken over by ~~xxxx~~ someone who thinks ~~xxxx~~ that he has the vanguard ~~xxxx~~ party or something, because he's got six people who will go with him into this study. So the ~~xxxx~~ question

was never seriously (discussed). What I'm trying to tell you is you have to have the question not just at level of, "I'm a socialist". No, you have to apply it and practice it every single day of your life. And you have to realize that it isn't only the objective situation but the subjective. And you means Bishop, in that case, or whoever the revolutionary is.