

11/22/48

Dear G:

You cannot imagine what a thrill it has been for me to type this--I am sure no teen-ager reading Forever Amber could be more excited. And now, in a day or so, I will get to Essence. I am sure that for the others of us who are reading it, we would like to sink our teeth into it, without having the extra disturbance of following your handwriting (It always has had that type of effect on me at least, and that whether it is clear or unclear; following the exotic curvatures, the uncrossed t's and undotted i's has constantly kept me out of breath, and only after I got over that hurdle could I go back for a second reading as for content.), so I typed it, despite your admonitions to the contrary. However, just in case there is some profound reason for your stubbornness that I did not divine, I have sent the copy to no one, until I get your o.k. Incidentally, without the typing they would also have neg the benefit of many a passage from Hegel that you were too exhausted to copy out, and no one but us three have Hegel.

Last week I was so stimulated by the prefaces that I went over the contents, and tried to find some logic to the two different Logics, and also to why all the conclusions in Accumulation of Capital. I ventured ~~ix~~ out with a hypothesis--it must have been one of those plunges where you land with your head on the cold concrete since I have not had a comment from Grace as to my brassness. Here is what it was. Comparing the contents of the two Logics, and that of the French edition of the Marx's Accumulation, I thought that in either case it might not be just to make it easier for the reader (or the reason I held to in the case of Marx, which was that he felt he would die before finishing the 3 volumes, and thought to include all the conclusions plunk in Vol.I), but that there might be a logic to the different approaches. Since in the Smaller and later Logic Hegel includes his conclusions plunk in the beginning, Preliminary Notice, I felt that although you might not be able to get the concrete truth in all its richness until after you have gone through the whole dialectic with him stage by stage, nevertheless he might be willing to introduce you in a preliminary way to his conclusions, once you were acquainted with the Introduction or past history of philosophy. In the case of Marx, once you got the basic principles and movement.

If it is logic, and not pedagogy or approaching death, that has been the cause of the different form of Logic<sup>2</sup> and of Accumulation, then I have many other developments that would flow from it, but I would not wish to venture out into these ~~ix~~ if I am on the entirely wrong track.

Will be in NY Christmas and look forward to seeing you. How have you found ~~ix~~ How is she? And ~~ix~~ My very best to both of them--the one in person, the other in embryo.

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1/5/49

Dear Grace:

I have just managed to shake the cold with which I returned to NY and so can first now put to paper the ideas I had on the train regarding us two. I wish to propose that we begin a correspondence regarding that oft (and not by accident) postponed article on Capital, and in the spirit of the new me, I propose no such abstract title as the Materialism and Dialectics of Capital, but the dialectically concrete The Significance of Capital for Our Day. And this proposal includes within it the conception, not that you write on dialectics and I on materialism, but that we each write both. You have no idea what Jimmie's Notes on Dialectic have accomplished--they have literally released thousands of little self-creating germs (are there such geni) which pop all over my head and expand every old idea to such new heights, that it begins to look like I understood nothing before. Let me give you an example. I have often quoted Marx's statement that Ricardo by a "violent abstraction" transformed rate of surplus value into rate of profit. I would add that without showing how this was done meant the failure to work out the relation between the labor theory of value and the phenomena of the market, and so the labor theory of value floundered until Marx who was not inhibited by a "bourgeois skin" showed the answer and thereby created his theory of surplus value.

Now watch. No doubt if I had to "prove" that I would have dealt into great minutiae of this how, and of how profit is a relation to total, not just to variable, capital, etc. etc. And where in all this would there have been a connection between the "violent abstraction" of Ricardo and the true abstractions of Marx? But presently I can say that it was necessary to descend from the violent abstraction to the concrete transformation of surplus value into profit not in order to "prove" the difference (in truth there is no difference since all profits equal all values and we are interested in the totality and not in the individual deviations) BUT IN ORDER TO RISE TO HIGHER, and THEREFORE true abstraction, which is that Surplus value is a given magnitude, etc. etc.

Or the example I gave on Luxemburg. Where previously I would merely counterpose, instead of also correlate, history to logic, I could with the new eyes, say that she substituted for "Marx's" universal, capitalism, imperialism, creating laws from this notion-determination, i.e., the fixed particular (imp.) in which the true universal (capitalism) happened to be at the time. You more than any one can understand the approach. Or, to be more correct, you having ~~Marx's~~ dialectic as part of your knowledge all along, can finally shed your inhibitions in talking to a mere woman of understanding, and so proceed soon to the actual draft of the article.

~~Marx~~ has long wanted to finish that unfinished/<sup>last</sup> chapter of Vol. III--we will let him give us all his ideas, but I propose not to include him in this correspondence (I will send him copies of letters I send you, and you do the same, but I want us to do this thing on our own, and involve him only as we approach the actual stage of rewriting).

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Here are some of the preliminaries. Although we will talk of Capital (and Theories), we must, of course, have in the back of our mind, his early economic manuscripts. It seems to me that what has been happening is that the early economic manuscripts and the concept of the alienation of labor have attracted, to the little extent that they are alive in America, the sectarians. Karsaus who tried to get them out of the sectarian context and show that alienation of labor was not a mere humanitarian "adjunct" to his "real" economic theories fell far short of the task because he did not know how to use the dialectic not merely in abstract form, but concretely, by dialectically combining that is the concept of alienation with the actual economic laws of production analyzed by Marx. Say like (what a say!) Marx was able dialectically to combine the thesis "production creates its own market" with the "workers cannot buy back, etc." by showing the latter to be a necessary component of value production. The minute we try to show alienation and value as equivalents, we will be sat upon by the underconsumptionists, for the economist tendency is a much more potent factor in the movement than is the sectarian. But we must remember that whereas in the '30s the underconsumptionists were the main enemies, in the '40s the planners are the chief enemies. Where planning was subordinated to "buying back", the Trotskyist, as distinguished from the Keynesians could yell No, plan is more important, and appear revolutionary. But now that everybody, from Truman to Reuther, from Mevin to Haston, all yell plan, even the quantitative distinctions fade--where we must reestablish plan by "free social individuals". In any case, what do you say to writing an analysis of the early economic manuscripts PLUS that early last chapter of Volume I that I will send you registered. (Remember it is the only precious copy; what a damn fool I was rebelling against typing of all inconsequential things!)

Another preliminary phase. We have never seriously analyzed the various drafts of Capital, to the extent that we know them. From the introduction of Engels to Vol. II, we can see, if you watch carefully the pagination of that first draft, that this is how Capital would have looked:

- I. Commodities & Money and Transformation of Money into Capital.
- II. Theories of Surplus Value
- III. Capital and Profit, Rate of Profit
- IV. Production of Surplus Value, all the way to the end of ~~XXXXX~~; Vol. I, more or less.

In other words, Marx would have stuck to appearance, the being of capital, commodities; and then again to the appearance, the form of surplus value, not to speak of arguing with all other bourgeois theorists (for some 752 pages), before he got down to the labor process, in the speedy manner in which he gets to the essence in Vol. I as we know it. His little footnote in Vol. I, that he who wishes to know all about profit before he has learned all about value, will know neither the one nor the other, was a generalization arrived at not merely by looking at "man of understanding" but by going through the entire process himself in the actual writing! When in one of his letters he therefore sums up the entire meaning of Capital in two pithy formula: dual nature of labor, and separation of value

from profit, he sums up both the value of dialectic and his original contribution. We must go into this. (NE The Stalinists in the current Bolshevik announce a new book, ~~in~~ Russian, of Marx's letters on Capital; it seems a hefty volume and might be a complete version finally. Check immediately with Four Continents, also with the stand on 42nd St.. The full title is "K. Marx, F. Engels. Letters about Capital (Pisma of Kapitals) Institute M-E-L, under RCP (B), 1948, 336pp.) it is reviewed in the Bolshevik, Oct. 16 (#19)

I wish to ask you a question regarding the permissibility of calling the Part on Accumulation of Capital the Notion. If you remember my subdivisions of Capital were 3, not 8, parts, by incl. Parts I & II as Phenomena or Being of Capital, Parts III-VI (with 6 occupying a subordinate position as result of value prod. as the Essence or Labor Process of Capital, and then not daring to call Part VII or Accumulation of Capital the Notion, I called it the Law of Motion (Part VIII as the primary accumulation was treated by Marx as a mere chapter of Part VII in the final version and we will treat it thus too). Now I have felt that Vol. I indeed contains all 3 volumes, and in that order. What do you think? Remember that in the Accumulation he summarizes Vol. II, telling us not to get dazzled by the milliard transactions of individuals, and thus tells us that where in Vol. I he dealt with the individual capital, Vol. II will deal with the social capital, and then he summarizes Vol. III by connecting the lot of the workers with the organic composition of capital, and if the accumulation of capital and the degradation of the worker, is not the complete unity of absolute idea plus practice, ~~maximization~~, that I do not know where else ~~max~~ you would find so concrete a notion of capitalism.

Of course in the context of the 3 volumes, Vol. III or the study of the decline in the rate of profit and crises, is the Notion, but I am confining myself now to Vol. I.

One final word of preliminaries. The immediate post-Marx period revolved around Vol. I, and the revisionist was one who denied crises and wanted to reform capital. The fight around Vol. II has a two-fold enemy: in Russia it is the Narodniki who think that without market Russia cannot develop capitalistically; in Germany where imperialism rises, Luxemburgism--not a reformist becomes a revisionist; but a revolutionist now occupies that role--that is how strong are the impulses from the objective development; it complicates the task, even as counter-revolution becomes complex. We live where Vol. III is the problem, but we must remember, as I mentioned earlier, that whereas in the 30s the underconsumptionists were the enemy, in the 40s it is the planners. That is because the problem of our age being stratification of production and stratification of the proletariat, both the Stalinist "bureaucrat" and the labor bureaucrat are all readying plan to suppress the revolutionary proletariat. I would like us to take the illustrations Marx gives for the law of accumulation, which we have heretofore passed up as old statistics, and combine it with last few chapters in Vol. III, and think all the time of 1948, and see what would result from "The Revenues and their Sources"; the aristocracy of labor (yes Marx mentions them) and labor bureaucracy facing crises.

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1/27/49

Dear J:

G.M. JOHNSON

Here are extracts from Lenin's "Notes on Hegel's History of Philosophy", which pretty fairly summarizes the 53 pages. Gene is the exhilaration I felt in reading and commenting upon the Logic; here L is quite sharp with Hegel, accusing him of slandering materialism, glossing over idealism, hiding weaknesses as well as vacillations that one (Aristotle) philosopher experienced between idealism and materialism, ignoring the materialism of Democritus and giving us "mystical cross thin gruel" of Plato, etc. etc.

What is of great importance is the manner in which that man(VII) mastered the dialectic. He takes Hegel's analysis of the Eleatic school: "We find here the beginning of dialectic, i.e., simply the pure movement of thought in Notions: likewise we see the opposition of thought toward appearance or sensuous Being, or of that which is implicit to the being for another of this implicitness, and in the objective existence we see the contradiction which it has in itself, or dialectic proper." (P.240)

And he proceeds to work out these two determinations of the dialectic ("pure movement of thought in Notion", and "in the objective existence we see the contradiction which it has in itself, or dialectic proper") which can be summed up, I think, in his statement that dialectic "proper" means seeing contradiction not only in appearance but in essence. That is easy enough to see when it is applied to capitalism; we know there is contradiction not only in commodities--use-v & v, but in value itself--concrete and abstract labor. But when it comes to applying this same principle to revolution, we shy away from this contradiction in essence, and wish to fight only capitalism. Lenin taught us to fight also Menshevism, so we agree to the familiar and the proven. But Trotskyism has gotten particularly stuck there since the Stalinists are "for" revolution--and so they merely can say but they are not "really" for while the Trotskyites are "really" for, instead of getting a different notion-determination of revolution where it means in essence only "to a man", and nothing else is "really" or not really "for".

Why I feel sure that that is what Lenin is hitting at is the fact that suddenly he stops the general analysis and comments to himself: "Work out:

Plekhanov wrote on philosophy (dialectic), probably nearly 1,000 pages...There is nothing about the larger Logic, about it, its thoughts (i.e. dialectic proper as a philosophic science!!)" In other words, Lenin has decided that not only can you not understand Capital without the Logic but you cannot understand philosophy without the Logic--not even if you have all other works of Hegel, with the possible exception of Phenomenology since that is what he used for Imperialism. It is either logic "proper", or you write bosh for 1,000 pages and make every one think you are learned. And he ends with dialectic also when he

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ends his comments on scepticism whose dialectic is "accidental". He quotes Hegel, giving incidentally a much better translation of that passage than the one found in Haldane; where that translator uses the word "concern", Lenin uses "wrapped up in", thus:

"These sceptical tropes in fact concern (wrapped up in--VII) that which is called dogmatic philosophy (by nature it must revolve in these forms--VII)--not in the sense of its having a positive content, but as asserting something determinate as the absolute." (363)

And Lenin circles around his conclusion, with two deep heavy lines: "against the absolute of Hegel! Here is the embryo of dialectical materialism."

Now "asserting something determinate as the absolute" Lenin uses against Hegel here and also in another place where he shows that Hegel the dialectician was "incapable of understanding dialectically the transition from matter to movement, from matter to consciousness--especially the second. "And then he weakens a little toward Hegel: "Marx corrected the mistake (or weakness?) of the mystic." We know the lack of understanding was due to not seeing the role of labor which likewise was not so clear in Hegel's day as in Marx's, but what are we to think of our own day Marxists who keep on "asserting something determinate as the absolute".

But here I wish--this is addressed to Graco--to develop this not in relation to nationalized property - socialism, but (1) in relation to plan, and (2) in relation Barton's (remember him--Van) interpretation of the changed structure of Marx's Capital. That for another time when it isn't so late in the night. Have fun with Lenin meanwhile.

Yours

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1/31/49

Dear ~~XXXX~~:

Several unrelated things that need comment.

First, I was very glad to get your report on the City Convention; it disclosed you grown to organizational responsibility within a real, instead of merely an ideal context. Excellent.

The Lucien matter I will handle by sending at least one package in my own name; I cannot see how an urgent appeal could be ignored. All you need to is turn his name into the EWRelief; they may have it on the list already, or they may handle all through Paris. He was very highly regarded when I was there, but he also had many deviations. I'll keep away from Robin.

About ~~XXXX~~; if you can write as you please, by all means you should. Your name established there would mean a lot to us. I had been thinking of your connection with him lately, also in the following respect. Since I would just appeal to Am. Council of Learned Society's Russian Tr. Prog. cold, we would not naturally have the best results. I understand that that program or at least society has some relationship to Weiss's magazine; they reprint material, etc. etc. On the basis of the Notes on Science of Logic that you translated and the ones on His. of Phil. I sent you, could we formulate a letter which he would be willing to sponsor to that program? Let me know since I believe that would be a better way to handle the matter, if possible.

Regarding the letter to C. I personally believe the letters should be written from NY; they have an uneven look of necessity when handled as we did. Nothing fatal, you understand, but just uneven and the other way is better I think. Since I was asked to write this one, and since I showed I meant to write a brief one, the suggestion on Gp-Sp that came in, though necessary and that is why I put it in, was quite overwhelming. If one point is 6 pages, when the rest and most important part is 2-3, there can be no avoiding that overwhelming impression by putting, as you suggested, the matter at the end. I felt on the contrary that by putting it at the end it would even be more out of context, and seem to say, I wrote you a letter, but really I meant, etc. etc. At least withingontext it would appear, though wordy, not as if the afterthought was more important than the content. I repeat, nothing is serious, but I do think letters should be sent from NY, and so show this paragraph to J.

Intend to draft a letter about the Philosophic Notebooks tomorrow, but perhaps I should first wait for your comment about involving Weiss.

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Feb. 1, 1949

Dear [redacted]:

Hegel's analysis of the "infinite in the finite" because it is really the infinite which is real, and Lenin's emphasis on the profundity of the transformation of the ideal into the real have clarified for me the place of crises, as the Actuality, rather than the Notion (which is Law of Accumulation which includes in crises the degradation of the worker), of capitalist production.

Consider this: when the ideal of capitalism--infinite production--becomes the reality, then we have complete chaos--1929. Marx did this for us theoretically when he showed that the planned production of Vol. II ended in the general contradiction of capitalism in Vol. III. Hence we must now analyze plan and chaos not only as no true opposites (except, of course where it is a class question), but as inseparable moments of the general contradiction of capitalism.

Take on the one hand Hegel, Vol. II, p. 160: "Actuality is the unity of Essence and Existence; shapeless Essence (value?) and unstable Appearance, (boom and bust?) or indeterminate persistence and non-persistent multiplicity, in it have their truth. Although Existence is immediacy which has emerged out of Ground, form is not yet posited in it. It determines and forms itself, and in this process is Appearance; this persistence is determined only as Reflection-into-other, and, as it develops itself into intro-Reflection it becomes two worlds, two totalities of content, one of which is determined as reflected into itself, and the other as reflected into other. Essential Relation represents their form-relation, the perfection of which is the Relation of Inner, and Outer, where the content of both is one identical foundation and equally one identity of form." (85/vc?) And also take up pp. 178-179: "As immediate unity of the form-determinations this Necessity is Actuality; but its unity now is determined as indifferent to the distinction between the form-determination, that is, between itself and Possibility; and so this Actuality is one which has a content. This content, as indifferent identity, contains form too as indifferent, that is, as merely a variety of determinations and is manifold content in general. This Actuality is Real Actuality. "At this point Real Actuality as such is the Thing of many properties, the existing world..."

On the other hand take Marx in Vol. III, first page 283 where he states the law of the decline in the rate of profit as promoting at the one and the same time, concentration of capital, and overproduction, speculation, crisis, surplus-capital with surplus population. Then the very difficult and crucial definition of "the general contradiction of capitalism", pp. 292-3, the essence of which resides in the conflict between expansion of production and creation of values. Add to this the section in the Theory of Surplus Value where he speaks of production without regard to values residing within production itself. In this context reconsider his statement that the peculiar barrier testifies to the finiteness and the historical, merely transitory character of capitalist production." (my emphasis). To me it seems to say: if ~~the~~ infinite production is the real, then the finiteness

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of capitalist production is that it cannot be real, it cannot plan, because it is conditioned (Ground?) on (1) class relations, (2) self-expansion of existing values. In other words, planning, social planning, can only exist when not grounded within class relations.

When it is thus grounded, the answer to planning is Yes and No. Yes, planning is essential to capitalism and has always characterized the factory production and production relationship for it is the wherewithal of extraction of greatest amount of surplus value. No, planning is not essential, chaos is, because while within production there resides the tendency to go outside the limits of production, class relations and existing values impose a limit on it which expresses itself in the anarchy of the market. At the same time capitalism can never really plan because its law of motion is impelled by reproduction according to s-n-l-t set by world market, and thus even if all conditions are met as to planning in factory, external planning as to market, and labor paid at value, the incessant revolutions in production of necessity mean "development of productive forces of labor at the expense of the already created productive forces".

We must now break up plan according to its historical appearance. Contrast appearance of plan in the USA and USSR. First appearance in America in 1896 after the defeat of populism and rise of USS. Technology has given this money-mad impulse to capitalists, and at the same time created a job for the scientist for scientific RESEARCH is now given problems to solve. The first statement of plan, then, is monopoly. The second statement of plan is statification and it takes shape in war of 1914. The third statement, still USA, is 1933-1948, where the decline in the rate of profit, plus rationalization of production and the belt system as the reigning mode of labor, plus one world-ness creates the constant state of crises and insolubility of under-consumptionism except through war and insolubility of crises even through war and planning. Barbaric planning we might call it.

In the USSR, on the other hand, first appearance of plan comes with revolution itself. In other words the Single Plan and the Declaration of the Rights of Toilers are inseparably one, and this is seen in fact that the Economic Council is subordinate to Council of Labor and Defense. Slogans retain this unity: electricity plus workers power, etc. 1920's significance we know. (Here I wish only to call attention to the fact that when LT proposed plan administratively, he of necessity also reevaluated capitalism for he stated that its unity was maintained "by supply and demand"! And wished to make of plan under workers state "an organizational-technical task" which retained capitalism "mechanism" "but of course excluded class struggle"!)). Second statement of plan is 1928-35, the transition to capitalist relations where value appears shapeless; and capitalist agriculture in instituted differently in form than defeat of populism in USA in 1896 but where the general law of development is similar. Third Statement of Plan combines 2nd and 3rd in USA. In a sense the move from Stakhanovism to State Labor Reserves (1938-1940) is the move from monopoly to state, and 1943 and the belt system completes the process. Our favorite passage from Vol. II, p. 120: "But it is clear that capitalist production can only exist and endure, in spite of the revolutions of capital-value, so long as this value creates more value, that is, so long as it goes through its cycles as self-developing value, or so long as the revolutions in value can be overcome and balanced in some way." That some way is the complete degradation of worker-- R

2/10/49

Dear ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~:

An analysis of the general contradiction of capitalism, in dialectic terms, still remains unwritten, but in the process of laboring on it I came across the section in *Determinate Being* on Barrier and Ought which I believe poses the problem. I want your help in transposing it to Vol. III of *Capital* both as relates to p.292 on the general contradiction and p.568 on the so-called last cause of all crises.

Let me first state it in political terms. One of the limits of capitalist production is the consumption of the proletariat paid at value. That is the alpha and omega of the underconsumptionists. But the real barrier says Marx is capital itself. Now heretofore we have used the terms practically interchangeably; underconsumptionists saying it is consumption and the decline in rate of profit theorists saying, no it is capital; but neither side made any distinction between limit and barrier. Now, with the help of Hegel, let us introduce that distinction.

SL, p.144: "But since, further, otherness is itself determined as limit, or negation of negation, the otherness immanent to Something is posited as the relation of two sides;

("otherness immanent to Something" is capital to production, and the relation of two sides is c/v)

"and the self-identity of Something to which both determinations and modifications belong is its introverted relation..."

("the self-identity" is constant capital and variable capital, both capital that is, and the introverted relation is Marx's famous the means of production consume the laborer, not the laborer the means of production)

Skip a couple of lines on same page and we come to "The proper limit to Something, thus posited of it as something negative and also essential, is no longer limit as such but Barrier." We have here then not just limit of laborer paid at value or "the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses", but the barrier, capital itself, which consists of the preservation of the existing capital, self-expansion, unconditional production--that is, all contradictory and mutually exclusive.

Hegel continues: "But Barrier is not only that which is posited as negated; the negation acts both ways, since that which it posits as negated is limit; (now production following crises with same limitations, B) for this latter is that which is common to Something and Other, and also is the determinateness of the Being-in-Self of the determination as such. This Being-in-Self is then the negative relation to its limit (which is also distinct from it, or to itself taken as Barrier: that is: Ought."

This "Ought", or unconditional development of productive forces, meets, in Marx, with the following "Thus, while the capitalist mode of production is one of the historical means by which the material forces of production are developed and the world-market required form them created, it is at the same time in continual

conflict with this historical task and the conditions of social production corresponding to it."

Here, historical, is both finite and infinite, finite as a passing mode of production and infinite as unconditioned production. Since the infinite is the true reality of production as full development of productive forces, and this particular finite, capitalist production, is incapable of it, the system must go, etc. and will when negation of negation is not merely constant crises negating existing limits to establish other limits which are real barriers; but when the self-identity of something ~~breaks~~ breaks up by variable capital throwing off capital and transforming the Ought to an Is by transposing the introverted relation; that is by object becoming Subject.

In working this out, will you also tell me whether it isn't true that the being, or commodity, of Capital, first chapter, isn't different from being, or profit, of Capital, Vol. III, and therefore whether III isn't existence as contrasted ~~to~~ or "expansion" of being.

Incidentally, in Determinate Being I also found something that you no doubt know and are having in the back of your mind in working out the Unhappy Consciousness of the Phenomenology, but since it was new to me, I like restating it: (pp. 182-3) "The determination of finite things is none other than their end. Understanding persists in this sorrow of Finitude by making not-being the determination of things, and also making it at once enduring and absolute." I do not know of a better analysis of Shachtman's sorrowful conception of Russia as not a workers state, which non-being, named Stalinism, he promptly turns around and makes it "at once enduring and absolute" and ~~perhaps~~ I might add, global.

February 14, 1949

Dear Rae.

Forgive me for writing in long hand rather than typing. I'm in  
being the typewriter, and I want to send off this note to you. As I  
wrote you last, I want to deal with some of the points you have raised -  
in the course of the outline that I am working on of the Phenomenology.  
At this stage I have to concentrate on that - develop the limited  
time that I have. But all the points you are raising are worthy  
of thinking, and I hope to get to them soon.

The points you made in the letter I received today require  
much thinking. I think you are on the track of something. But I  
want, for the moment, to move more slowly. This much can be said,  
however, at once.

Marx and Lenin never missed a moment. That capitalist  
production was a definite, a determinate mode of production,  
and had to be treated as such. Therefore, as well, the dialectic  
characteristic of <sup>any</sup> determinate being is applicable to it. This would,  
however, enable us to find not the specific contradictions of  
capitalist production in the dialectic of determinate being, but  
rather the specific contradictions of determinate <sup>being</sup> in capitalist  
production as an <sup>object</sup> determinate being.

What are the contradictions of any determinate being?

Any determinate being not only is something which is, but is a something  
which has being, i.e. moves and has its being, precisely in  
relation to other. Capitalism moves and is something by virtue of  
its relation to other modes of production - feudal or socialist.  
These relations to other are not only affirmative but negative,  
i.e. it appears being by its relation to other but it cannot  
appear into these others without giving up itself. Such a  
relation between things, as both negative and affirmative  
is the relation of limit.

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At first the relation of limit is a relatively passive relation or negation, by each something of the other something "but when this negation is developed to show that the opposites between the determinate Being and negation as its moment limit, is itself the Being-in-itself of something, and that this relation is in itself just becoming, then these facts constitute its Intuition."

At first, or immediately, finite appears merely as something with therefore transition to nothing. Hegel goes on to show however that finite is itself a process. We are dealing with a determinate something, whose limit is also determinate, and proper to the something. I.e. its method of relation to the other or its modification is not external but essential and proper to it. Such a proper limit is a barrier. A barrier then is a continual passing beyond the limit which is nonetheless a suffering <sup>or passage</sup> of the something, its essential nature. Its own determination is its barrier, or to put it another way, limit is a new abstract form of barrier.

Now it is certainly true that without the experience of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution behind him, Hegel could never have developed this logical conception of the relation of the categories of limit and process to one another. Nonetheless, I would be very wary of fitting these logical categories with the specific class relations of capitalist production. I would rather rest for the moment with the use of these categories to analyze the transitory character of any determinate Being.

I hope this helps.

As ever,

① — 9221

2/17/49

Dear ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~:

Your letter did help, and I hope you do not think that my boldness is beginning to border on brazenness if I nevertheless try to pursue the point. Naturally we must be very wary before we rush to fill the logical categories of Hegel with specific class content, and it is surely true that the "ought and the Barrier" of the Determinate Being which fit capitalist production are rather due to the fact that that is one of the forms of determinate being than to the fact that the dialectic of the specific contradictions of capitalist is akin to the dialectic of determinate being. But you yourself show the limitations of Hegel who had not lived to see the ever greater contradictions of capitalist production. Nevertheless:

Against

(1) Hegel's "backwardness" in contending that though "in developed civic society aggregates of individuals belonging to different trades are in a certain relation to one another", still "this yields neither laws of Measure nor peculiar forms of it" (I, 350),

(2) there is not only the dialectic theory which he developed in all its complexity and motion, but his ever present consciousness of its history. Thus he speaks of the inapplicability of the form of Plato's dialogues to his day because of the "unrest of modern consciousness". The profundity of the Hegelian dialectic you are more acutely conscious of than I so I need not belabor that point, but rather proceed straightway, with the help of Marx\* and Lenin\*\* to probe whether I am on the right track.

Marx not merely "applied" the dialectic to the economic laws of capitalism, and not merely criticized Hegel for seeing only the positive side of labor because to him labor was spiritual labor, but he worked on the important assumption that Hegel had the point of view of "modern political economy" which, as we know, reduced wealth to labor but failed to break up labor into concrete and abstract. That would seem to warn me against filling these logical categories with specific class relations, especially the categories of Being when we are dealing with Crisis which I believe is the Actuality of capitalism, and thus are dealing with a lower dialectic than that of essence and notion. But that never stopped Marx and the fact that he could not work out (I mean died before he could) the dialectic of crisis in as precise a manner as he had in commodities should not keep us from venturing forth.

We have, moreover, Lenin who "translated" a good deal of Hegel for us and is extremely persistent in seeing laws and motions everywhere so that even where Hegel says concept (not things but concept), Lenin says "not things, but the laws of their movement, materialistically speaking." And surely Hegel himself to whom identity was an "unseparated difference" will not bite us when we do try to deepen the difference between limit and barrier. Perhaps in working out the logical conception of this relationship we will achieve the true dialectic of the general contradiction of capitalism.

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\*I am referring here only to Marx's Critique of the Dialectic.  
\*\*Lenin's Notebooks I am translating in toto since excerpts I

From the simple point of view of language, limit is a boundary which I dare say you might get shot trying to cross, but it is at least physically possible; barrier, on the other hand, bars your way physically as well, say a mountain barrier, and even in the popular mind we think of barrier not as a simple boundary but as something that obstructs progress. You put it philosophically when you said limit proper is barrier; Lenin always likes to emphasize dialectic proper while Jimmie likes the emphasis on the definition of proper as "out of itself". "the inner necessary connection" and the "transition" are two other elements of the dialectic proper we like to emphasize. Lenin breaks up the "necessity of connection" and "the immanent emergence of the difference" into the necessary tie-in of tendencies, and the objective/evolution which results in the struggle of the differences of polarity. The tendencies in capitalist production whose evolution result in the general contradiction are in constant struggle between the tendency to expand and the tendency to preserve the existing values. Our problem is when does the limit of underconsumption turn into the barrier of self-expansion. I will not myself ride further, but I know I hit upon something in the ought and barrier and I would like to see you develop in logical context. There is no urgency about this, but keep it in the back of your head, and I might be able to enter the arena again as I reach the dialectic of essence and notion.

Just one incidental word as to laws. It seems to me that that two degrees of validity which corresponds to degrees of economic development and the forms it takes in our concepts or ideological development. The "kingdom of laws" of which Hegel speaks in the Phenomenology that I referred to and that you are working out now as part of your essay on the Phenomenology is a rather low form and false and hence my reference to its applicability to the Russian state of ideological development. Law of development, on the other hand, is an opposite concept, and gives us the notion of development of society irrespective of the consciousness of man. A more popular way of stating this is to show that economic laws describe economic behavior just as philosophic laws deal with the behavior of cognition. Likewise the connection of everything is through laws and we have the unity, identity, inseparability of opposites. At a "lower" ~~III~~ stage the moments of law could be identified as measure. What I am driving at is: if the moments of quality are being and non-being, and those of quantity, continuity and discreteness, and the unity of quality and quantity the measure of things, could we say that measure is a law of being and any one mechanically transposing that into essence and notion is so innocent of the contradictions in life that his thinking has reverted to so primitive a stage that it can be compared with nothing higher than mythology, or the invention of gods for every element incomprehensible to him, i.e., that he has not mastered--and he has not mastered any, from thunder to lightning to air to water, etc. etc.?