

December 7, 1954

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Although I do not know you in person, you are of course familiar to me for your "Reason and Revolution." I was so impressed with the work at the time it was published that I then got your address from Meyer Schapiro and intended to write you. I intended also to visit you, but you were then living in Washington, D.C. and I in Pittsburgh. I hope when next I come east, there will be an opportunity to meet you in person.

Now let me introduce myself. I am Raya Dunayevskaya. You might have read my translation of "Teaching Economics in the Soviet Union" that appeared in the September, 1944, issue of the American Economic Review. The introduction that I wrote to it, "A New Revision of Marxian Economics," caused sufficient stir to hit the front page of the New York Times at the time and to prolong the debate in the AER for a whole year at which time I came back with a rejoinder, "Revision or Reaffirmation of Marxism," in the September, 1945, issue of the AER.

Then I turned to philosophy and translated Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks. However, as you know, they are strictly notebooks and need an introduction, a lengthy one. When I got down to work on that I found that I wanted nothing less than the work on Marx on which I had been working for no less than a decade to serve as that "introduction." I also wished to include other material from Marx's Archives, including "Chapter 6," or the original last chapter for Capital which I had translated for my own benefit into English. You can sense how elaborate the project became and I never got to finish it, and here is why:

I became interested instead in some live philosophy, a working class view of the world, and the newspaper projected by a group of workers and intellectuals to be called Correspondence absorbed all my time. In fact, I am the only intellectual who has a regular column in that paper (TWO WORLDS: Notes From a Diary). Up to a couple of months ago I was not in correspondence with any intellectuals and, of course, the workers around Correspondence have next to no contacts with intellectuals - it is a paper written mainly by workers. Each section - Labor, Women, Negro, Youth - is edited by the local committee, and there is no distinction made between committee members and "outside" workers either in the articles or the Readers' Views which occupy the full center pages as well as each separate section. Now, however, when the paper got into straits, I decided also to reestablish my contact with intellectuals for it seemed inconceivable to me that intellectuals would appear indifferent to this grass roots journalism. Also, I cannot see any work on Marx except one addressed to the workers, instead of limited to the intellectual audience, and hence I felt that, although I have delayed my work for over a year, I may actually be able to return to it and on an entirely new level.

At this time, however, my absorbing interest is Correspondence, which I consider a demonstration of the dialectic in the concrete. Under separate cover I have sent you a copy of "The Correspondence Booklet," several back issues of Correspondence and my article on "The Human Personality in Class Conflicts," which appeared in this paper. I hope you will find the time to comment on these.

Sincerely yours,

9889

February 12, 1955

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Another tour had been in the offing for me when I received your letter of last month, but that has been called off for the time being. Perhaps you know that complications with the authorities arose. If you do not, then in good time you will. I still think it will be possible for me to get to New York in a month or so and if so, please tell me how often you get to New York and how easy it would be to contact you. Please note my change of address:

Raya Dunayevskaya, c/o J. Dwyer, 4993-28th Street, Detroit, 10, Mich/

This, then, is mere acknowledgment of your letter, not a dispute with points we definitely disagree on--relationship of worker and intellectual--or those we might find greater agreement with. I was looking forward especially to meet and talk with you precisely on that question of dialectics for I had been working for quite some time on the Absolute Idea, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Mind which, to me, is "to be free" rather than merely "to have freedom" and answers the question of the man on the street who wants to know whether in this totalitarian age: can man be free? We have indeed reached the age of absolutes that are not in heaven but concretely in life when the question that bothers philosophers is the same that the ordinary worker asks in his everyday workaday world.

Forgive the hurried and unclear nature of this but when you have a paper and the daily routine of administration there is no time for careful phrasing.

Yours sincerely,

Raya Dunayevskaya

9890

April 3, 1955

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

I'm a bit late with sending the Two Worlds which tried to catch the impulse on automation and the automation articles themselves. But when I returned to Detroit I found that the owner of the paper is trying to take advantage of his ownership to exclude most of the worker writers and intellectual features which have lent the distinctive features to Correspondence. No doubt we will come out again, even if it takes some time to regroup, but you can imagine my mind had wandered from the book on Marxism after putting out what might be the last issue of the paper (Vol. II, No. 7). That's another story.

Meanwhile here are the articles I promised. I didn't do very well, but that in any case is what I mean by impulse that is new and that I wish to surround myself with in writing any work on Marxism. The twin poles to me of any fundamental work there must have, automation at one end, and the absolute idea or freedom at the other end. I'm very anxious to hear your reaction to those two letters where I first posed the question of the absolute idea in terms of a movement from practice to theory as well as from theory to practice.

I would also like to hear from you what in general you thought of prospects of publishing a work on Marx in the historical setting in which I placed the one chapter I left with you on the second edition of Capital and the Paris Commune.

It was indeed a pleasure to have finally met you and I'm only sorry that it was so brief that we barely got to know each other and I could not meet your friend. But I feel sure that now that we have met it will not be the last time.

I told the editor (John Zupan who is with me in this break or evident break with Correspondence and also Charles Denby the author of Workers Journal that always appears on the front page as well as two women production workers) about meeting you and the fact that you might wish to come here when your school semester was over and they all felt they would like that very much, so the invitation to you stands.

Do let me hear from you.

Yours, as ever,

Raya Dunayevskaya, c/o Dwyer
4993-28th Street
Detroit, 10, Mich.

9891

COPY

Waltham, April 14, 1955

Dear Raya Dunayevskaya:

I have now read the notes on Hegel which you lent me. This is fascinating, and I admire your way of concretizing the most abstract philosophical notions. However, I still cannot get along with the direct translation of idealistic philosophy into politics: I think you somehow minimize the "negation" which the application of the Hegelian dialectic to political phenomena presupposes. I would like to discuss these things with you, and I hope that we can do so in the near future; I shall let you know as soon as there is a chance.

As to the Sixth Chapter* I wonder whether it is really novel enough to warrant publication. Someone should check how much of it is already contained in the Theorien über Mehrwert.

Please let me know when you come again to this area.

Your papers are enclosed.

Many thanks.

With best wishes & greetings,

Yours, Herbert Marcuse

*That is the original Ch.6 of Capital which in its first draft was the last chapter, as distinct from Accumulation of Capital, which is now the last part of Capital, and which I translated unfortunately from the Russian. I had originally intended that that chapter and the Philosophic Notebooks of Lenin which I likewise translated be part of the book I would write. Now I conceive of it as much simpler presentation.--R.D.

9892

May 5, 1955

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Now that the school season is drawing to a close perhaps you will take that trip to Detroit, and thus see that it is not a question of "my" direct translation of idealistic philosophy into politics, but the dialectical development of proletarian politics itself as it struggles to rid itself of its specifically class character in its movement to a classless society. That is why I "translated" Absolute Mind as the new society. You seem to think that I thus minimize the "negation" which the application of the Hegelian dialectic to political phenomena presupposes. But surely Hegel's Absolute Idea has nothing in common with Schelling's conception of the Absolute as the synthesis or identity in which all differences are absorbed by the "One". Lenin sort of put a period in that chapter when Hegel speaks of the Idea as Nature, pointing out that Hegel was stretching a hand to materialism. That was as far as 1915 could reach. It was far enough for his transformation of everything into its opposite was no abstraction but the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war.

But this is 1955, and if 4 decades does not mean all new, we should surely start at least not with Lenin on the eve of revolution but Lenin after conquest of power. 1922-3 shows how hard Lenin labored to find the something which would make his Universal--that everyone "to a man" run production and the state--a reality. He came up with the notion that what is needed is that "the work of the party must be checked by the non-party masses". No small thing for the creator of the party as the knowing of the proletariat!

30 years later when neither the state withered away nor the party checked itself but, on the contrary, turned into the one-party state, we must see that the point to day is the liberation from the party. The withering away of the state (Doesn't Hegel's phrase about the "falling off" of the Idea remind you of this?) is no overnight job and the party not in power does remain the knowing of the proletariat and hence a much more complex job, its withering away or "falling off". But in that contradiction does lie the movement toward liberation and theoreticians can least of all allow themselves to be enslaved by any divisions between philosophy and politics. In truth, only when you do have the "translation" in mind, and posit the proletariat, the freely associated proletariat, as the Notion, can you hear the Idea at all. What is it that Hegel phrases it? "The self-determination in which alone the Idea is to hear itself speak!"

Do I sound brash when I say: do come here and listen! Without this new impulse from the proletariat the theoretician is not just the absentminded professor inhabiting an ivory tower. He is dead and doesn't know it. What is needed in this age of absolutes is not the separation of politics from philosophy but its integration. We must in fact go a step further than Lenin and where he first saw that his Marxist colleagues, himself included, had not really understood Capital before 1915 for they had not understood the dialectic and urged us to see Capital as our Logic, we must include in that logic also history and politics. I don't go in for quantitative distinctions which is the worst evil--the Kautskyans always "teaching" Marx or the Stalinists "applying". 1955 compels that where Hegel made it the job of philosophy to elicit necessity under the semblance of contingency, today's intellectuals must elicit the new society present in the old by seeing the human freedom totally unfolded in freely associated labor alone deciding its own fate.

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Yet when I tell my theoretical brethren that I want the two poles of the book on Marx to be that of automation and the absolute idea, they look at me as if I were talking a foreign tongue not yet invented, which is a polite way of saying I talk gibberish. But the worker, in his opposition to automation, is counterposing his full development which is at the same time the only total technological development to the mechanical solution (mechanism and chemism) the industrialists and engineers seek to make of automation. The reason this is the age of absolutes is that the objectivity, all objectivity, is now in the proletariat himself. That is how I read Hegel on the Absolute Idea freely releasing itself.

Enough! I don't know what got into me unless it is the fact that it is a beautiful morning to have evoked this outburst from me. When I sat down to the typewriter it was only to welcome you here.

Or is the outburst just an evasion of writing an actual outline of the book itself? I doubt I will have time to do anything like that before the fall. (Does that end your publisher's possible interest in it?) However, I do want you to see not alone the strictly philosophical letters that I showed you, but some of the economic ideas as I ~~presented~~ outlined them when I intended to write the work on state-capitalism that I spoke to you about for all my writings are built on the necessity, nay, urgency, of not treating dialectics as if it were an adjunct to Marx's economic theories. I enclose the outline of that work, which I will ask you to please return to me.

Would you be so good as to send me the name and address of that friend of yours you wished me to meet when I was in NY? I mislaid the piece of paper and thus have been unable to write to him; it was impossible to see him in person as I left but a few hours after I left you.

Has your book, including corrected proofs, gone to press and are you now a free man?

Yours ,

June 22, 1955

Dear R. D.

I am still in the middle of moving from New York to Boston - which explains my utter negligence in answering your letters. I still can't do it: I am unpacking 50 cases of books, and my files are hidden somewhere. Let me just tell you that I read your draft re Marxism and State Capitalism and found it most needed and useful. The whole idea is excellent - but my publisher just wouldn't undertake such a project for the time being. Be sure that I keep after him, and that I shall discuss the problems with you as soon as I get around a little better.

Your answer to my brief remarks re Hegel does not satisfy me. Certainly you do not suspect me of ignoring the substantive connection between philosophy and praxis. BUT it is - sit venia verbo - a dialectical connection, not an immediate one. What is the meaning of the explicit or implied "is" in your statements: "the dialectic of the Absolute Idea is the dialectic of the proletariat or whatever it may be? Is this a mere analogy? An equation or identification? You cannot just "apply" Hegel's text to an essentially different sphere without demonstrating why and how...

But this is not supposed to be an argument - just to show you that I am really thinking about these problems. Since you requested return of your draft, I am enclosing it - hoping that at a later time I shall have another opportunity.

With best wishes and greetings,

Yours

Herbst

9895

June 28, 1955

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Thanks for the letter and the return of the MSS; I will be in a position to send it back to you in a week since you do seem interested. This is not, however, the form of the book I intend to write now. I had done it as State Capitalism in Marxism in 1947 when there was a possibility that Oxford University Press would publish it and I had already completed a study of the Three Five Year Plans of Russia from original sources and in general written a whole series of articles on the French edition of Capital, the revisions of Marxism going on in Russia during the war, and the concrete data of this stage of capitalism.

When Oxford University Press backed out and I turned more to philosophy than economics, I wrote only isolated chapters of the work on Marxism. I enclose one such brief chapter on Lenin's method after 1915 along with a letter on his Philosophic Notebooks that I had written at that time. Although these are very rough sketches, you can see how comprehensively I try to deal with the transformation of Lenin's mode of thought after 1914 for that is the crux. Not the betrayal, nor even the stage of monopoly capitalism that was the economic foundation for the transformation of the Second International that had been going on for years and burst forth into betrayal, but, above, all, the mode of thought which allowed for no self-movement or impulse from the masses. You know I'm sure that he didn't treat monopoly as just one more stage in the development of capitalism, but as a new category, a new absolute from which all else flows. That is why "transformation of one thing into its opposite" meant so much to him, why he did not leave that truth only in its economic guise as transformation of competition into monopoly but in its social and human form as the breakdown of the International.

Naturally I do not mean when I go further in the Logic and say the Absolute Idea "is" the proletarian self-emancipation or liberation from the party that there is such a direct relationship between the laws and movement of the logic and the field of human freedom. It is always a dialectical relationship and will need to be developed in all its manifoldness. But that "is" is an absolute necessity to cut through not alone detail and the gibberish of so much that passes for Marxism these days but to open up those closed intellectual ears of ours to the fresh impulses from the workers. That is why I dropped any work on the book for two years and came here to work on the paper. As soon as NEWS & LETTERS gains a certain momentum of its own, I will return to the work. But note how I mean to return to it so that you will see what I mean by method of work and impulse from the only theoretically new thoughts from the proletariat itself. This is not simple movement from theory to practice—I'm sure you above all know that in both Hegel and Marx—but one from practice to theory not as mere verification of the latter but its creator.

In any case, here is my plan: In fall I will prepare a series of 4 lectures on what I see the book as. These are to be given not on campuses but to small groups of workers and intellectuals, mainly workers, and given in a form where they know that that is not a definitive piece of work but will be greatly changed by what they have to say. I will begin in West Virginia where we have some miners who are

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interested, then to Detroit and L.A. (I hope also to stop in New York especially if you can be there for I consider you very integral to all this and I would like to spend more time than just on the fly. Does your move to Massachusetts mean you will not be in NY or what?)

By December when I have studied all the back and forth that went on in these talks I ought to know how I wish to cast my work on which I have been at over a decade. At that time I could work out an outline of the actual work for any publisher and begin to work on the book itself. It is not, I believe, a very long job--6 months ought to do it.

Would you know where I can get hold of a Chronique of Marx's life, in Russian preferably but I will accept it in French or German if I can't get the Russian. It is a very good reference work but I have been unable to obtain a copy for myself and to photostat it from the Slavic Division copy would cost a bit more than I have money to spare at the moment. I would be very grateful if you could direct me to a place where I could obtain--perhaps your own library. I sympathize with your trials and tribulations of moving a library--I'm always on the go and that ~~is~~ is the one thing that gets heavier with each moving. I trust you will like Cambridge. I lived there in the Depression days--in fact taught a group of Russian students English. But when they found out I was "some creature called a Trotskyite" and informed Moscow about it that was the end of my earning my livelihood. I did succeed in selling a complete set of Trotsky's Opposition Bulletin to the Harvard Library that grim year of 1931.

Yours,

September 5, 1956

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Now that the summer is over with its heat, flood, hurricanes and general resistance to any consistent study which necessitates "the patience, labor and suffering of the negative," I trust I will hear from you and that we finally will be able to get together. There is, however, a change. It turns out that my tour begins on the West Coast rather than the East and that I will not reach New York till the middle of November. I hope I will hear from you long before then. (I leave Detroit September 12th)

Dr. Robert Cohen, who tried to get me a publisher for a "package" of Marx's Early Essays and untranslated chapter from first version of Capital, as well as Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, writes that the project has fallen through: the Early Essays are being brought out in England and the American publisher did not feel the Philosophic Notebooks would have a paying audience. I would hate to think that when I get my book done there will still be no English translation of Lenin's Notebooks and that I would thus be limited to quotations from original sources. That is a privilege that intellectuals can both allow themselves and can utilize, but the public that I am aiming at cannot.

Incidentally, I have not seen the new edition of your Reason and Revolution so do not know whether you had grappled with Stalinism and its violent attempts in 1943 and 1947 to break Marx from Hegel and transform the Hegelian dialectic from development through contradiction to an idealistic totalitarian development of "criticism and self-criticism". That of course will be integral to my work.

If I hear that you are interested I will correspond with you from the various places of lecture-discussions on the work and tell you how in fact this movement from practice to theory that I am always harping on is actually working out on the concrete question of the book.

Yours,

The News & Letters this issue is carrying a notice of Dissent just in order to call attention to your article in it.

9898

October 27, 1955

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

The amazing thing about this tour on the book is the accidental feature rather than the planned for groups of workers and intellectuals. It turned out that some universities on the coast had heard that I was coming and invited me to speak before various classes. Although my articles that they were acquainted with (American Economic Review) were a decade old, they were being used as standard text reference both in the history of social thought classes and in the classes on economics and economic systems. They are starved for any non-Communist Marxist views. I told them that my interest had shifted to the philosophic foundations rather than the economic aspects and even that did not seem to surprise them because they said that they gathered from my economic articles the philosophic interest and saw a prediction in them: where I spoke of the Stalinists violating the dialectic structure of CAPITAL I said it was not for pedagogic reasons but what they taught and that by 1947 when it was followed up by Zhdanov's saying that Russian theorists better find "a new dialectic law" rather than the one of contradiction since the "classless society" operated only on "criticism and self-criticism", etc.etc.

In any case, in Berkeley I spoke to a small seminar on The Philosophic Foundations of Marxism. I was amazed that they had not heard of your Reason and Revolution and recommended highly there as everywhere else. The Professor (Oscar Landauer) it then asked me whether by any chance you were the son of Julian Marcuse whom he knew well in Germany and who has since died. I told him I would find out. By the time I reached LA and spoke to UCLA, SO and Occidental, I convinced not only the economics and sociology classes but a philosophic seminar to let me speak to them on Hegel's Absolute Idea: A Marxian Interpretation. I thought it was strange of me to address a metaphysics class but 4 professors came just to hear what it is a Marxist would say on Hegel, especially since various seminars they tried holding on Hegel's Works fell apart before ever they reached their end. Here, on the contrary, the excitement was as genuine as in the topical classes and no one could make the students leave when the bell rang. They thought it was my "pedagogic talents" but I assured them it was the topic itself and if you really believe in the dynamism of ideas, especially in the dynamism of the dialectic, that the whole self-movement adds a greater dimension to the human being than any Cinemascope invention. They thanked me for giving them "a new frame of reference" to make Hegel's abstractions more concrete.

All this and the book itself as I now think of it I would like to discuss with you. I have not heard from you so do not know when or if you can get to NY when I reach there Nov. 15th. I doubt I could make it to Boston unless some university there invites me and pays fare from NY to Boston. I will be back in Detroit by the time you get this letter, so please let me know there your plans.

Yours,

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