

Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. By Raya Dunayevskaya. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities, 1982. Pp. + 234. \$10.95. ISBN 0391025694. LC 81-24063.

This book is neither a biography of Rosa Luxemburg, nor a detached, objective study of her thought. The reader unfamiliar with Luxemburg's life or writings will vainly look for the missing pieces or the balanced evaluation. As we know from her previous works, Raya Dunayevskaya does not believe in critical detachment. She writes in the kind of polemical style, introduced by Marx and since Lenin carried to ever higher pitch, which features invective as its principal figure. As for the form, her book, in spite of continuously numbered chapters, consists of three different essays of which the first is connected with the other two only by occasional statements of the main subject's position (however marginal) on women's liberation and on the significance of Marx's dialectic.

Despite this problematic presentation Dunayevskaya's work conveys fresh insight into both Luxemburg and Marx. Rosa Luxemburg occupies a rather unique position among twentieth century Marxists in that she not only broke with the leaders of the Second International but also, on a crucial issue, opposed Lenin himself. Radically internationalist, she resisted all nationalist liberation movements as well as the German Socialist Party's 1914 support of the war. Active feminist, she nevertheless refused to grant the emancipation of women a priority in revolutionary theory or practice.

Theoretically she is mostly remembered for her critical study of Marx's theory of the reproduction of capital, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals* (Berlin: Singer, 1913). Marx deemed a continued accumulation of capital possible even in the closed market economy of a single country, because, so he argued, capital creates its own consumption. For Rosa Luxemburg, on the contrary, the capitalist economy is able to continue its expansion only because of its exploitation of noncapitalist, underdeveloped countries.

On these premises only an imperialist policy can preserve capitalism from collapse through underconsumption. Confronted with the perplexing choice between loyalty to her Marxist subject and loyalty to Marx himself, Dunayevskaya opts for her master. Luxemburg, she argues, is forced to introduce revolution as an external element, resulting from a "revolutionary will" rather than from the very laws of capitalist production. But to attribute the collapse of the capitalist system to any cause other than the "contradictions" inherent in surplus labor, as Luxemburg does, is to abandon the main thesis of Marx's theory. To be sure, no one would deny the revolutionary ardor of a woman who broke with Kautsky's German Socialist Party because of its "evolutionary" doctrine, and who, among the first, predicted the coming of a revolution in Russia that would initiate a world revolution. But Dunayevskaya raises the question: "Does the solution come *organically* from your theory or is it brought there merely by 'revolutionary will'?" (p. 45). A pertinent question indeed! But is her own thesis, that Marx's model for the collapse of capitalism is a correct one, more than an assumption for which only the truest believers in Marx's doctrine succeed in finding any evidence?

Readers of *The Owl* will probably be most interested in the third part of this book, on the dialectical element in Marx's theory. Here, once again, the writer aligns herself with those "leftist" Marxists who stress the Hegelian philosophical element in their theory. With Lenin, Dunayevskaya asserts that Hegel's dialectic "needs to be studied in and for itself." She is not satisfied with Luxemburg's defense of the dialectic as "the method of thought" in the revolutionary movement, or even with Marx's own note to Engels that Hegel's *Logic* "has been a great service to me as regards the *method* of dealing with the material [for the writing of *Capital*]" (p. 135). No; for her Marx's historical materialism is nothing less than "the self-determination of the Idea" (p. 125). The transition from theory to practice signifies a philosophical move, rather than the abandonment of philosophy. Did the young Marx himself not write that "the *practice* of philosophy . . . is itself theoretical. It is criticism which measures the individual existence against essence, particular actuality against the idea" (p. 146). Contrary to most other interpreters, Dunayevskaya considers this early position one which Marx never changed. The assumption of such a continuity allows her to justify the reappearance of Hegelian language in the *Grundrisse*, the preparatory notes for what was to become *Capital*. Against those who assume the existence of a break between the early and the mature Marx, the author considers the later period the one in which Hegel's dialectic was more fully assimilated.

Dunayevskaya's interpretation may rest on a rather selective reading of Marx's texts. Yet the continued impact of Hegel seems, indeed, undeniable. It is supported by her instructive analysis of the long first chapter of *Capital* in the light of Hegel's *Logic*. I doubt whether any commentator since Jean Hyppolite has succeeded better in such a Hegelian interpretation of *Capital*. Nor does Dunayevskaya consider this chapter a mere "imitation" of Hegel's doctrine of the notion—as Lenin termed it. Quite the contrary! Nowhere does Marx's theory oppose Hegel's intentions more radically than here.

It is the Great Divide from Hegel, and not just because the subject is economics rather than philosophy . . . No, it is the Great Divide because, *just because*, the Subject—not subject matter but Subject—was neither economics nor philosophy but the human being, the masses . . . This dialectic is therefore totally new, totally internal, deeper than even was the Hegelian dialectic which had *dehumanized* the self-development of humanity in the dialectic of Consciousness, Self-consciousness, and Reason. (p. 143)

Few students of Hegel will agree that his dialectic can be "deepened" or even preserved in Marx's reinterpretation of it. (I have developed some of the major difficulties confronting such a position in chapter 3 of my recent *Marx's Social Critique of Culture*.) Marx presents us something altogether *new*. Dunayevskaya rightly denies that Marxism simply "applies" Hegel's dialectic, as orthodox communist doctrine would have it, but she herself errs in considering its theory continuous with Hegel's thought.

Dunayevskaya remains the liveliest, probably also the best informed, theoretician of the far left, deeply committed to her Marxist cause, yet remain-

BOOK REVIEWS

19

ing herself independent—even with respect to her own heroes, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, and, most exceptionally, Marx.

Louis Dupré
Yale University

11312