

Mike,

The New Left Review edition of Karl Korsch's Marxism and Philosophy which was first published in 1970 is a translation of what was first published in 1923 in Germany and includes also both the 1922 KK Introduction to Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme (which I will include in these notes both because it is the same year and in an important sense on the same topic), as well as his 1930 Anti-Critique in which he tried to answer the attacks on his Marxism and Philosophy, which likewise I may comment on, although the 1930 Korsch is a very different Karl Korsch than the 1922 one. I don't know whether German students of Korsch refer to these writings in their edition of Marxism and Philosophy.

Actually, it is not a book but an essay, and in this 56 page essay the point that was both original and created the biggest attack on him by the Third International was the singling out of the revolutionary nature of the Hegelian dialectic in Hegel and "therefore" in Marx. He quotes Hegel's own relationship of the objective revolutionary age to German idealism when that was revolutionary: "Revolution was lodged and expressed as if in the very form of their thought." (pp 38-39), and it is the repetition of that phrase as he defends and projects further the rootedness of Marxian dialectic in it that intensified the debate against him. It is Korsch's greatest contribution to Marxism in that very period.

"The greatest thinker produced by bourgeois society in its revolutionary period regarded a 'revolution in the form of thought' as an objective component of the total social process of a real revolution." This is further footnoted by a reference to Kant "also" having expressed that in a way in his ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ analysis of Conflict of the Faculties ^{and elsewhere} which he quotes: "The revolution ^{of} in an intellectually-gifted people, such as the one we are witnessing today, arouses all onlookers* (who are not themselves directly involved) to sympathize with it in a way that approaches enthusiasm". "Such a phenomenon in the history of mankind is never forgotten."

(Kant's works, Vol. I of Politische Literatur der Deutschen in 18. Jahrhundert, (1847!) edition Geismar, pp. 121 ff.)

The whole emphasis is always on philosophy and since he is very conscious of the fact that the philosophy and philosophers he is quoting are bourgeois he never stops referring, when he quotes Marx, to the fact that Marx is a materialist and that his philosophy is materialist philosophy. This is so much over-emphasized that even when he quotes Marx's critique of materialism he makes the latter equivalent to "science", and "Scientific Socialism". The trouble is that though it is revolution that is predominant and that is constantly used to show that the collapse of the Second International, ^{revisionism} the GSD's/betrayal was due to their having abandoned revolution, suddenly the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ revolutionary element is always in the objective stage and not in the subjective

except when the subjective becomes a "science": Viewed in this perspective, the revolutionary movement in the realm of ideas, rather than abating and finally seizing in the 1840s, merely underwent a deep and significant change of character. Instead of making an exit, classical German philosophy, the ideological expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, made a transition to a new science which henceforward appeared in the history of ideas as the general expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat: the theory of 'scientific socialism' first founded and formulated by Marx and Engels in the 1840s." (p. 41)

We're now on p. 41 and we're still really not into Marxism and yet he summarizes (p. 42) what he considers as the 4 different trends he was analyzing: "The revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, idealist philosophy from Kant to Hegel, the revolutionary class movement of the proletariat, and the materialist philosophy of Marxism as four moments of a single historical process." And this is footnoted by a ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ reference to the Communist Manifesto which KK says reformulated Hegel's concept of the ^{dialectical} relationship of philosophy and reality "XXXXXXXXXX" which Marx expressed in a rational form: "The theoretical conclusions of the communists a... are only general expressions of the real relations of an existing class struggle, of an historical movement that is going on before our eyes."

Karl Korsch is still self-conscious enough about the defense of philosophy that he feels compelled for very nearly all the rest of the essay to the defensive stand that it is true that it appears that "Marxism itself is at once superseded and annihilated as a philosophical object." (p. 43) Not only that, but quite obviously, by considering Marx and Engels as one, he is constantly quoting Engels' Anti-Duhring and Engels' Ludwig Feuerbach as if they were Marx's works, and thus falls into the trap of Engelsian "positive science" ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ as developed in Anti-Duhring: "That which still survives independently of all earlier philosophies is the science of thought and its laws -- formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history." (ftn. 24, p. 46)

That such Engelsianism could create such a revolution in ~~the~~ Communism in 1925 is due not to any philosophic revolution but to the need for a political one. And indeed, it becomes very revolutionary because from there on (p. 48) the attack on orthodoxy is all based on the need for revolution, on the fact that the Second International's orthodoxy was seen precisely in the fact that they didn't wish to abolish the state and therefore quoting heavily from Lenin's State and Revolution, which stressed that the major theoreticians of the Second Int'l hardly concerned themselves with ~~the~~ the question of rev'n

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ in the State or "problems of revolution in general hardly concerned them." (S&R)

In a word, it's the conquest of state power which Lenin put on the agenda and which led to a successful revolution, which was all directed of course against the Second International and yet when repeated in 1923-24 makes the Third International on the eve of Lenin's death quite nervous. AND rightly so. Very obviously, the heavy quotations from S&R didn't save either Korsch or Lukacs. The fact that dialectics then gets reduced to historicism likewise doesn't save them but what is interesting is in the historicism as it relates to what Korsch calls the "three major stages of development ^{through} in which Marx's theory has passed since its birth..." These he lists as 1. 1843-1848; ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ 2. 1848 at the point when the revolution was crushed ~~IN~~ ^{which Marx masterfully describes in} ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ his inaugural address at the founding of the First International ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ in 1864, and evidently lasts to the end of the century. 3. Begins in 1900 and is still going on.

This is so crazy (that is to say, so illogical) a division of Marxian theoretical development, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ both the second phase which makes it appear that everything stopped in 1864 and since Marx so masterfully described the period of reaction and he is not going into the development of "the social history of the working class as a whole, but only with the internal development of Marxist theories in its relation to the general class history of the proletariat", he is

leaving out "the less important divisions" which actually means the full development of Marx's Marxism, so that we see neither an important change between Marx's death and the Second International. And to make it even worse a concept he is extending the third phase from ~~1900~~ ¹⁹⁰⁰ ~~1900~~ all the way to the present. So where can we see the Great Divide in Marxism with the outbreak of WWII? And wasn't 1905 a revolution? Contrast this to the fact that I actually considered the Second International dead as of 1907 because they had not put the 1905 Revolution on the agenda. (Please reread the second section of ~~the~~ chapter 9 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ which is entitled "The Beginning of the End of the Second Int'l: New Form of Worker's Organization, the Soviets."

My point was that once the 1905 Revolution had not been put on the agenda, and once the new movement from practice which established the original and unusual and spontaneous form of organization, the Soviet, it signalled its end as a revolutionary organization or developing a revolutionary theory and why it was that I called revolutionary theory a hard task-master. It is true that I'm talking with eyes of 1957 and it's easy enough to talk with hindsight. It is also true that obviously Korsch did not know the great philosophic division once the outbreak of WWI compelled Lenin to ~~study~~ study Hegel, ~~any~~. But it is also true that the very same year KK was writing, so did Lukacs and everyone, including KK seems to have thought there was a great affinity of ideas between Lukacs and Lenin, that Lukacs' concept of

the Hegelian dialectic is so much more profound that that's exactly the point that shows ~~MM~~ how Lukacs saw a great difference between Marx's concept of the dialectic and "Engels' arguments in the Anti-Duhring (which) decisively influenced the later life of the theory."

from p. 3 of Lukacs

p. 59 in Korsch

Once Korsch turns to Marx's own works, the revolution becomes ~~the~~ ^{not only} predominant but also inseparable from philosophy, and he returns to Marx's words: "Philosophy cannot be abolished without being realized." (Rework also p. 69.)

It's at that moment also that Korsch finally does have a criticism of Engels: "...ⁱⁿ his later period to make the mistake of sometimes approaching it (self-criticism) in an incorrect and undialectical way." This applies to all the passages in Anti-Duhring and Ludwig Feuerbach and especially in Engels' later letters ... In Hegel's terms, he retreats from the height of the concept to its threshold, to the categories of ~~reaction~~ reacting and mutual interaction, etc.

Once revolution and theory do permeate an argument,

KK does know how to single out the point of departure. This is especially true in relationship to organization, where he shows that Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program holds just as

February 7, 1983

Dear Mike:

Although "A 1980s View" of the new book on Luxemburg makes it clear that the challenge is to all post-Marx Marxists, since I begin with Engels (and, indeed, that reference to Engels includes the period when he was Marx's closet collaborator), I nevertheless suddenly feel that the section should be expanded because it is very important to expand reference to the so-called Western Marxists, especially Karl Korsch, who, I believe, invented that term. Because, however, preparation for the tour around our trilogy of revolution leaves me no time to develop this, I will limit myself to a few notations in the form of this letter to you. (I'll include an extra copy, should you wish to send this letter to Kevin, who is the one who is going to Germany this Spring and who may very well run into "Western Marxists.")

Ironically one reason I consider it necessary at once to establish the fact that the reason for seeing chronology, too, as philosophy and not as facticity, it precisely because the two greatest "Western Marxists" — Georg Lukacs and Karl Korsch — *the very ones*, in a word, whose greatest contribution to Marxism was to re-establish the dialectic as the revolutionary element, which the Second International, *evaded* and thus became reformist. I'm naturally referring to the early 1920s when both Lukacs and Korsch, independently of each other, had written their most exciting essays on the importance of philosophy which created so great a stir in Russia, though both of them were by then Communists. Why then haven't they acknowledged that they were not the first, that Lenin not only was the first to return to the Hegelian dialectic but did it in a very much more profound and comprehensive form (that is to say, took up the whole of Hegel's Science of Logic, rather than merely singling out a single factor, be it alienation or the dialectic)? If you answer that "they didn't know Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic back in 1914", that is what I call citing chronology as facticity rather than as philosophy. Here is what I mean:

While they didn't know the work Lenin did, they did know Lenin's 1922 letter to "Under the Banner of Marxism" (which Korsch uses, in fact, as the quote prefacing his Marxism and Philosophy) and clearly that quotation insists on "a systematic study of the Hegelian dialectic." You remember that I was so anxious to give Korsch credit for re-establishing the revolutionary nature of the Hegelian dialectic that I reproduced his quotation from Hegel, "Revolution was lodged and expressed as if in the very form of their thoughts", stressing that Korsch presents it "as an objective component of the total social process of the real revolution." It is this reference, in Philosophy and Revolution that, when I reread it, in Korsch's Marxism and Philosophy, made me very conscious of the fact that he had altogether too many qualifications both in relationship to materialism, materialism, materialism, and in presenting Hegel in the company of other German Idealists, especially Kant. Thus, he no sooner stated the Hegel quotation than his in 13 carried a lengthy reference to Kant's Conflict of the Faculties.

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"The revolution of an intellectually gifted people, such as the one we are witnessing today, arouses all onlookers (who are not themselves directly involved) to sympathize with it in a way that approaches enthusiasm." "Such a phenomenon in the history of mankind is never forgotten."

Furthermore, and in this Lukacs is more guilty than Korsch because he never left the CP and wrote extensively on Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, not only as if it were the same as Lenin's vulgar Materialism and Empirio-Criticism but also as if Stalin also continued that philosophic revolutionary tradition by becoming the "Marxist of the Age of Imperialism." -- the dialectic gets reduced to historicism, "science", "scientific socialism". What I am trying to say is that the actual, serious philosophic framework is that of revolution vs. reform. To have that content, not on the eve of the Social-Democratic betrayal, not to mention the eve of social revolution, reveals that, at best, dialectic meant the first negation with no approach to second negativity. No wonder that Korsch uses orthodoxy as if the Second International really was fully Marxist up to the day of betrayal, and then uses orthodoxy also for the Third International even after he has broken with it. That is the real point, the case of retrogression which comes from treating Marx and Engels as one.*

Let me restate and expand that pivotal last point: The period I am concentrating on is 1914 to 1924. The Great Divide that Lenin drew because the objective situation compelled him to see that the betrayal could not possibly be just a political betrayal but must be rooted, rooted very deeply, in the very form of thought. In a word, Lenin began to doubt the philosophic ground on which he stood and therefore returned to Marx's roots in Hegel by seeing what the Hegelian dialectic was "in and for itself." There is nothing that Lenin has written after that 1914 encounter with Hegel that doesn't emerge out of the new interpretation of revolution itself that you cannot possibly really overthrow capitalism unless you have a vision that the social revolution will upset everything from the State to the ideology so that the overthrow of capitalism, far from being "a takeover" of the State by the workers, is such a total destruction of the State that it must at once have workers not only as revolutionary force but as Reason.

When, therefore, Lenin's slogan of "Turn the imperialist war into a Civil War" gets to the eve of a social revolution, he begins to see that Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme and Civil War in France demands a recreation, which he makes in State and Revolution. Now when I saw that Korsch is so very thrilled with the work of Lenin and, in turn, reproduces Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, with his own introduction, and that was in the same year when he wrote Marxism and Philosophy in which he refers to the Critique as crucial, I thought I would finally see his appreciation of dialectics as not being limited to revolution vs. reform but seeing the development of revolution, at once and the

same time as Reason and yet facing the possibility of counter-revolution from within the revolution.

Neither in Marxism and Philosophy nor in the Introduction to Critique of the Gotha Programme does Korsch go one step beyond Lenin on the question of organization. I'm not saying (now that I have the hindsight of 60 years later, that he could have seen, in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, that Marx's most profound development of the relationship of philosophy to both revolution and organization, what I developed in my latest work in the chapter entitled "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization." What I am saying is that Korsch was so thrilled with Lenin's State and Revolution because he did fully reject reformism and he did fully approve of the destruction of the State, but instead of seeing that Lenin was writing on the eve of revolution when the slogan was "All Power to the Soviets", and Lenin therefore kept far away from saying a word about the Party, Korsch, himself, who was writing when the German Revolution had been defeated, not only didn't see the counter-revolution within the revolution in Germany nor did he have anything to say on the relation of organization to revolution.

Mike,

1983

Altho "A 1980s View" section of the new work (RL WL KM) makes it clear that the challenge to post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Engels, includes so-called Western Marxists, I nevertheless suddenly feel it necessary to make the latter reference more explicit especially as it relates to Karl Korsch. Perhaps the fact that Kevin will go to Germany this spring is what made me think of Korsch's homeland. Since, however, preparation for my lecture tour around all three works this Marx centenary leaves me no time for me to work out a Political-Philosophic Letter, I'm using the form of a note to you to express my thoughts informally.

1

Ironically, one reason I consider it necessary to expand the challenge to post-Marx Marxists by focusing on "Western Marxists" is that Lukacs and Korsch were the very ones who did put the Dialectic's revolutionary nature as inseparable from actual revolutions; who did tightly relate the Second International's reformism that ended in outright betrayal once World War I erupted, were nevertheless the very ones who, as revolutionaries, accepted Lenin's revolutionary politics without ever relating it to his ~~philosophic~~ strictly philosophic re-organization. Why? Why had they never seen any significance, what Lenin achieved in 1914, that they first worked out in 1919-1923? How could the Great Divide in Marxism, with the outbreak of world war, in Lenin be left at the political level without the search for Lenin's return to the Hegelian dialectic "in and for itself"?

2

~~This is not an answer to the question of the dialectic~~
 In my view, ~~to evade an answer~~ by saying "But Lukacs and Korsch didn't know of Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic since he kept it private when they did their grappling with the Hegelian dialectic in the specific milieu of German Marxism" is a way of ~~viewing~~ viewing chronology as facticity rather dialectic sequence. The proof of that can be seen in the fact that in all the years since the publication of Lenin's 1914 Philosophic Notebooks they still didn't dig deep into that Great Divide.

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a much deeper and more comprehensive ~~return~~ ^{review} to dialectic

It is true they didn't know, when they were writing on the imperativeness of a revolutionary return to the Hegelian dialectic, that Lenin had ^{achieved} achieved with his Abstract. But they did know of the 1922 popular Letter Lenin had addressed to the editors of a new "Under the Banner of Marxism" which called for "systematic study of the Hegelian dialectic from a materialist standpoint." Indeed, Korsch used that specific quotation as frontpiece of his Marxism and Philosophy without ever sensing any philosophic discontinuity between the Lenin of 1908 who had given the green light to vulgar materialism with his Materialism and Empirio-Criticism and the Lenin of 1914-23 who had produced the dialectical Abstract. ~~By not~~ digging deep into the philosophic Great Divide also within revolutionary Marxism, they proceeded on their own merry individualistic way. ~~Nevertheless,~~ as you know, I was anxious enough to give Korsch credit for re-establishing the revolutionary nature of the Hegelian dialectic to reproduce (in Philosophy and Revolution) Korsch's way of quoting Hegel's formulation, that "Revolution was lodged and expressed as if in the very form of their thoughts, in order for Korsch to stress that this was "an objective component of the total social process of real revolution."

5

Heretofore I had allowed Lukacs' and Korsch's disregard of Lenin's deeper penetration of the dialectic and its ~~we~~ today-ness, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Lenin's philosophic ambivalence when it came to the question of organization, i.e., his concept of "the party to lead" rest in peace as if so-called Western Marxists are entitled to some sort of special privileges. Now that, with the completion of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution which could present the Marx oeuvre as a totality and ~~and~~ ~~and~~ the true revolutionary giants--Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky--most critically, ~~there is no reason~~ let such as Lukacs and Korsch escape the challenge to post-Marx Marxists. ~~By repeating~~ Korsch's reference to Hegel as I quoted it in ~~1981~~, I became very conscious of the fact that he had altogether too many qualifications of the Hegelian dialectic as he kept repeating, over and over again, materialism, materialism, materialism.

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Korsch on the other hand, far from seeing ~~that~~ that Marx had credited "idealism" (i.e. Hegelian dialectic) with having developed the "active" side of human activity and not materialism, reduced ideas to being hardly more than the mirror ~~image~~ image of the materialist underpinning by introducing qualifications into the Hegelian dialectic and focusing on its "similarity" to other German idealists, especially Kant. Thus ~~he~~ he no sooner ~~lighted~~ ^{lighted} that Hegel quotation we re-quoted than he footnoted it with a lengthy reference to Kant "Conflict of the Faculties":

"The revolution of an intellectually ~~gifted~~ gifted people, such as the ones we are witnessing today, arouses all on-lookers (who are not themselves directly involved) to sympathize with it in a way that approaches enthusiasm."

^{As necessary} The qualifications ^{introduced} are not only toward the Hegelian dialectic which, ~~reflected~~ ^{reflected} "the heroic revolutionary period of the bourgeoisie", but to the Marxian ^{to Korsch} since, ^{to Korsch} hardly more than the mirror image of a new objective situation, ~~thought~~ ^{thought} this is of a new class altogether the proletariat. ~~the emergence of Marx's theory is, in Hegelian-Marxist terms, only the 'other side' of the emergence of the real proletarian movement; it is both sides together that comprise the concrete totality of the historical process."~~ ^{the emergence of Marx's theory is, in Hegelian-Marxist terms, only the 'other side' of the emergence of the real proletarian movement; it is both sides together that comprise the concrete totality of the historical process."}

Korsch has a peculiar way of describing the life/death of German idealism:

"Instead of making an exit, classical German philosophy, the ideological expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, made a transition to a new science which henceforward appeared in the ~~the~~ history of ideas as the general expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat: the theory² of 'scientific socialism' first founded and formulated by Marx and Engels in the ~~the~~ transformation of reality most certainly didn't stop in Marx's day, but came alive in Lenin's politicalization as he grappled with the dialectical principle of movement through contradiction as each unit disclosed the opposition within itself, and which he expressed

as "turn the imperialist war into a Civil War". The objectivity of this ~~subjective~~ ^{subjective} ~~result~~ ^{result} is what results in totality. Yet, ~~Lukas~~ ^{Lukas} who, "in general" made totality ^{as} an all-pervasive philosophic category ~~hardly~~ ^{hardly} concretized it as Subject, ~~that was~~ ^{that was} Marx's determinant. ~~that~~ ^{that} transformed Marx's Promethean vision into

a whole new continent of thought and of revolution ^{his} from his very first break with bourgeois society in the early 1840s all the way to his last writings ^{the last decade of his life} ~~and it is not~~ ^{Marx made the subject} ~~of this anniversary~~ ^{but the anniversary of his last writings} ~~but~~ ^{at the} For it is then, after all of his great works which included his greatest theoretical work Capital, after forty long years of labor at which point he first produced the Critique of the Gotha Program that Marx was still discovering new moments in the

Ethnological Notebooks as well as in the letters which actually leave a trail for the 1960s.

Clearly, it is not out of any concern for firsted-ness that I wish to set the record straight. The necessity for correcting the factual arises, not from facticity, but from the ambience of the dialectic. If we are not to narrow the dialectic either only to the objective or only to the subjective, the attitude to chronology cannot, must not be reduced to facticity. When all is said and done, it is the objectivity of that historic momentous event of a world war and collapse of established Marxism which compelled the militant materialist, Lenin, to turn to the "subjective", the "idealist" Hegel. Marx's Marxism was rooted therein not only as "origin" but as a continuous dialectic which

spells "return" out as re-creation. The transformation of reality most certainly didn't stop in Marx's day, but came alive in Lenin's politicization as "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war." The objectivity of the subjective is what became totality. Yet Lukacs who, "in general" made totality into an all-pervasive philosophic category hardly concretised it as Subject. The crucial relationship of subjective to objective is preoccupied Marx as he discovered the new continent of thought and of revolution that he revealed to us (in the 1844 Economic Philosophic Manuscripts than he at once followed it with (in the very 1st of the 11 Theses on Feuerbach): "The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the object or perception, but not as sensuous human activity, praxis, not subjectively. Hence, in opposition to materialism the active side was developed by idealism...Feuerbach wants sensuous objects actually different from thought objects; but he does not comprehend human activity itself as objective...Consequently he does not comprehend the significance of "revolutionary", of "practical-critical" activity."

Handwritten notes on the left margin:
- A circled scribble at the top left.
- "the need for a new relationship" (circled)
- "1 of revolution"
- "again, 3rd time"
- "uncover the new moments of the last generation" (circled)
- "In the writing of activities & the last EN which all..."
- "Marx's Marxism as a new continent of thought"
- "The relationship of subjective to objective is preoccupied Marx as he discovered the new continent of thought and of revolution that he revealed to us (in the 1844 Economic Philosophic Manuscripts than he at once followed it with: (in the very 1st of the 11 Theses on Feuerbach):"

