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Sept. 26, 1986

Dear GAK:

Suddenly I remembered way back when your Idealism, Politics and History was first published. I was so very impressed with it, specifically with the section on Reconciliation, that I actually had a young colleague of mine, who was going to Germany, search out Reinhart Klemens Maurer because your footnote recommended his "excellent explications of the three concluding syllogisms of the Encyclopedia..." Unfortunately, all he would say was, "I am not married to Hegel!" What I didn't know was whether he really meant Hegel, or a Marxist speaking on Hegel, since he kept asking questions about how it happened that I am interested in his views, when he so sharply attacks Herbert Marcuse. In any case, I have met you. And you know me enough to know that I seem to disagree with Marxists, whether orthodox or dissident; I'm forever chasing the Self-Thinking Idea. At the end of the 1960s, what excited me in your work was the way you ended that section on Reconciliation, first with references to Hegel's Phenomenology on 'moments of mind', and then ending with "Marx, while accepting Hegel's logical procedures, saw very clearly that in terms of the world, of actual life, this mentalized 'diversity of the content of truth' might be the deception or 'ideology' of an inadequate world-historical perspective." Presently, I'm appealing to non-Marxist Hegel scholars like you for help in my departure from Lenin-- not Lenin as Lenin, but Lenin as he uses a loophole Hegel created for him with the difference in the way he articulated the Idea of Cognition in the Science of Logic and the Encyclopedia.

Now then, may I delve into what is presently my problem with Hegel? Along with the battle I'm currently having with myself on the Absolutes (and I've had this battle ever since 1953, when I first "defined" the Absolute as the new society), I am now changing my attitude to Lenin-- specifically on Chapter 2 of Section Three of the Science of Logic, "The Idea of Cognition". The debate I'm having with myself centers on the different ways Hegel writes on the Idea of Cognition in the Science of Logic (hereafter referred to as Science), and the way it is expressed in his Encyclopedia (smaller Logic), ¶ 225-235, with focus on ¶233-235. The fact that the smaller Logic does the same type of abbreviation with the Absolute Idea as it does with the Idea of Cognition, turning that magnificent and most profound chapter of the Science into ¶ 236-244, and that ¶244 in the smaller Logic was the one Lenin** preferred to the final paragraph of the Absolute Idea in the Science, has had

* I don't know whether Johns Hopkins University has the microfilm edition that Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs made of my Archives, (the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, 12 vols.), so I am enclosing an excerpt from my May 20, 1953 letter on Absolute Mind.

** All the references to Lenin are to his Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic, as included in Vol. 38 of his Collected Works, pp. 87-238. Concretely, the subject under dispute here is "The Idea of Cognition" and the "Absolute Idea".

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me "debating" Lenin ever since 1953. That year may seem far away, but its essence, without the polemics, was actually given in my paper at the 1974 Hegel Society of America conference.

Whether or not Lenin had a right to "mis-read" the difference in Hegel's two articulations in the Science and in the smaller Logic, isn't it true that Hegel, by creating the sub-section, "Volition", which does not appear in the Science, left open the door for a future generation of Marxists to become so enthralled with Ch. 2, "The Idea of Cognition"-- which ended with the pronouncement that Practice was higher than Theory-- that they saw an identity of the two versions? These Marxists weren't Kantians believing that all contradictions will be solved by actions of "men of good will".

There is no reason, I think, for introducing a new sub-heading which lets Marxists think that now that practice is "higher" than theory, and that "Will", not as willfulness, but as action, is their province, they do not need to study Hegel further.

Please bear with me as I go through Lenin's interpretation of that chapter with focus on this sub-section, so that we know precisely what is at issue. Indeed, when I began talking to myself in 1953, objecting to Lenin's dismissal of the last half of the final paragraph of the Absolute Idea in the Science as "unimportant", preferring ¶244 of the smaller Logic -- "go forth freely as Nature"-- I explained that Lenin could have said that because he hadn't suffered through Stalinism. I was happy that there was one Marxist revolutionary who had dug into Hegel's Absolute Idea.

Now then, when Lenin seemed to have completed his Abstract, and writes "End of the Logic. 12/17/1914." (Vol. 38, p.233), he doesn't really end. At the end of that he refers you to the fact that he ended his study of the Science with ¶244 of the smaller Logic-- and he means it. Clearly, it wasn't only the last half of a paragraph of the Absolute Idea in the Science that Lenin dismissed. The truth is that Lenin had begun seriously to consult the smaller Logic at the section on the Idea, which begins in the smaller Logic with ¶213. When Lenin completed Chap. 2, "The Idea of Cognition", he didn't really go to Chap. 3, "The Absolute Idea", but first proceeded for seven pages with his own "translation" (interpretation). This is on pp. 212-219 of Vol. 38 of his Collected Works.

Lenin there divided each page into two. One side, he called "Practice in the Theory of Knowledge"; on the other side, he wrote: "Alias, Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it". I was so enamoured with his "Hegelianism" that I never stopped repeating it. Presently, however, I'm paying a great deal more attention to what he did in that division of the page into two, with these "translations". Thus, 1) "Notion=Man"; 2) "Otherness which is in itself= Nature independent of man"; 3) "Absolute Idea= objective truth". When Lenin reaches the final section of Ch. 2, "The Idea of the Good", he writes, "end of Ch. 2, Transition to Ch. 3, 'The Absolute Idea'". But I consider that he is still only on the threshold of the Absolute Idea. Indeed, all that follows p. 219 in his Notes shows that to be true, and explains why Lenin proceeded on his own after the end of his Notes on the Absolute Idea, and returned to the smaller Logic.

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Thus when Lenin writes that he had reached the end of the Absolute Idea and quotes ¶244 as the true end, because it is "objective", he proceeds to the smaller Logic and reaches ¶244, to which he had already referred.

Although he continued his commentaries as he was reading and quoting Absolute Idea from the Science, it was not either Absolute Idea or Absolute Method that his 16-point definition of the dialectic ends on: "15) the struggle of content with form and conversely. The throwing off of the form, the transformation of the content. 16) the transition of quantity into quality and vice-versa. (15 and 16 are examples of 9)." No wonder the preceding point 14 referred to absolute negativity as if it were only "the apparent return to the old (negation of the negation)."

Outside of Marx himself, the whole question of the negation of the negation was ignored by all "orthodox Marxists". Or worse, it was made into a vulgar materialism, as with Stalin, who denied that it was a fundamental law of dialectics. Here, specifically, we see the case of Lenin, who had gone back to Hegel, and had stressed that it was impossible to understand Capital, especially its first chapter, without reading the whole of the Science, and yet the whole point that Hegel was developing on unresolved contradiction, of "two worlds in opposition, one a realm of subjectivity in the pure regions of transparent thought, the other a realm of objectivity in the element of an externally manifold actuality that is an undisclosed realm of darkness", (Miller translation, p. 820), did not faze Lenin because he felt that the objective, the Practical Idea, is that resolution. Nor was he fazed by the fact that Hegel had said that the "complete elaboration of the unresolved contradiction between the absolute end and the limitation of this actuality that insuperably opposes it has been considered in detail in the Phenomenology of Mind". (The reference is to p. 611ff. of the Phenomenology, Baillie translation.)

In the original German the above sentence reads: "Die vollstandige Ausbildung des unaufgelosten Widerspruchs, jenes absoluten Zwecks, dem die Schranke dieser Wirklichkeit unüberwinlich gegenübersteht, ist in der Phänomenologie des Geistes (2 Aufl., S. 453ff.)".

Nothing, in fact led Lenin back to the Idea of Theory and away from dependence on the Practical Idea, not even when Hegel writes: "The practical Idea still lacks the moment of the Theoretical Idea... For the practical Idea, on the contrary, this actuality, which at the same time confronts it as an insuperable limitation, ranks as something intrinsically worthless that must first receive its true determination and sole worth through the end of the good. Hence, it is only the will itself that stands in the way of the attainment of its goal, for it separates itself from cognition, and external reality for the will does not receive the form of a true being; the Idea of the good therefore finds its integration only in the Idea of the true." (p. 821, Miller translation).

In German this sentence reads: "Der praktischen Idee dagegen gilt diese Wirklichkeit, die ihr zugleich als unüberwindliche Schranke gegenübersteht, als das an und für sich Nichtige, das erst seine wahrhafte Bestimmung und einzigen Wert durch die Zwecke das Guten erhalten sollte. Der Wille steht daher der Erreichung seines Ziels nur selbst im Wege dadurch, dass er sich vom dem Erkennen trennt und die äußerliche Wirklichkeit für ihn nicht die Form das wahrhaft Seienden erhält; die Idee des Guten kann daher ihre Ergänzung allein in der Idee des Wahren finden."

I cannot blame Hegel for what "orthodox Marxists" have done to his dialectic, but I still want to know a non-Marxist Hegelian's viewpoint on the difference of the two articulations on the Idea of Cognition and the Absolute Idea in the Science and in the smaller Logic. What is your view?

What is most urgent to me now is Philosophy of Mind and the views of non-Marxist Hegel scholars in the 1970s and 1980s on it. In the late 1970s, for example, A.V. Miller wrote me, calling my attention to the fact that he had not corrected an error in Wallace's translation of ¶575 of Philosophy of Mind. He pointed out that Wallace had translated sie as if it were sich, whereas in fact it should have read "sunders" not itself, but them. That, however, was not my problem. The sundering was what was crucial to me; the fact that Nature turns out to be the mediation was certainly no problem to any "materialist"; the form of the transition which was departing from the course of necessity was the exciting part.

In introducing those three new syllogisms in 1830, Hegel first (#575) poses the structure of the Encyclopedia merely factually-- Logic-Nature-Mind. It should have been obvious (but obviously was not) that it is not Logic but Nature which is the mediation.

Paragraph 576 was the real leap as the syllogism was the standpoint of Mind itself. In the early 1950s I had never stopped quoting the end of that paragraph: "philosophy appears as subjective cognition, of which liberty is the aim, and which is itself the way to produce it." It justified my happiness at Hegel's magnificent critique of the concept of One in the Hindu religion which he called both "featureless unity of abstract thought," and its extreme opposite, "long-winded weary story of its particular detail." (¶573). In the following ¶574 we face Hegel's counter-position of what I consider his most profound historic concept-- and by history I mean not only past, or even history-in-the-making, the present, but as future-- "SELF-THINKING IDEA".

My "labor, patience, and suffering of the negative" these 33 years hasn't exactly earned me applause from either the post-Marx Marxists, or from the Hegelians, who are busy calling my attention that the final syllogism (¶577) speaks about the "eternal Idea", "eternally setting itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute Mind," fairly disregarding what is just a phrase in that sentence: "it is the nature of the fact, which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition."

It is here that I'm in need of your commentary both on Absolute Idea in the Science of Logic and on Absolute Mind in the Philosophy of Mind. The "eternal Idea" to me is not eternality, but ceaseless motion, the movement itself. Far from me "subverting" Hegel, it is Hegel who made Absolute Method the "self-thinking Idea". Of course, I know your critique of me in Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis, where you write: "For the complex linkage of culture, politics and philosophy within the matrix of 'Absolute Idea', Mme. Dunayevskaya proposes to substitute an unchained dialectic which she baptises 'Absolute Method', a method that 'becomes irresistible... because our hunger for theory arises from the totality of the global crisis'" (p. 239). And I did submit my answer to you, which I used in the 1982 edition of Philosophy and Revolution.

The "eternal Idea" in Philosophy of Mind not only re-inforced my view of Absolute Method in Science of Logic, but now that I am digging into another subject for my new work on "Dialectics of Organization", which will take sharp issue with Lenin, both on the Idea of Cognition and on the Absolute Idea, I hold that Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence" is the "eternal Idea".

Enclosure

Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Raya', is written below the typed word 'Yours,'.

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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21218

HUMANITIES CENTER

6 October 1986

Dear Raya:

I have been very remiss in writing to thank you for various mailings and in pursuit of our old intellectual conversations. You must forgive these vagrant ways: it is not indifference; it is mostly work and fatigue. But it is laziness as well (Kant said that is why we are not aufgeklärt). Anyway, having received your monumental, complicated, and interesting letter of 26 September, I would be insufferably lâche if I did not take some stab at your question.

The first thing to say about all this is that I am not, as you know, a Leninologist and have not read his notes on Hegel's Logic for quite a few years. Nor can I afford the time right now to do so. But what you recount about Lenin's deviation from Hegel's treatment of cognition-Denken-theory-Absolute Idea, etc. strikes me as correct, because practice and volition were of higher value to him than "the Absolute" or, indeed, Das Denken.

Secondly, it will not be possible for me at this time—but we will continue—to match the thoroughness and precision and intelligence of your 30 years of exploration. The best I can do for now is to record some observations of my own.

When I say that I subscribe to your critique of Lenin in view of his misuse of Hegel, this does not of course mean that I endorse your interpretation of Hegel, who, for me, is not a revolutionary philosopher in the sense of comprehending the Absolute either as "the new society" or as "ceaseless motion... the permanent revolution." He is a revolutionist in his claims for knowing and the manner of those claims; and they cannot be denied a presumed impact on society. Gott mit uns is, from one angle, Hegel's message; and * God is not fully Geist unless or until He is in His community. But there is no need here to rehearse our old debates.

What I've just suggested, however, opens up the speculative problem of the relationship between "objective" and "absolute" in Hegel. For him, "objective" (earlier called wirkend) is the sphere of the political, the social, the collective, and of history. As such, it seems a part of nature, even preponderately so, and lends itself to the Marxist "reinverson." In contrast, the "absolute" is the objective infused with free will, with spirit, with memory and imagination, and with completed understanding. It is desire quenched and brought to rest in the mind's power, the power of self-knowing knowledge—in * E.S. Eliot's words, "the still point of the turning world." It is the consummation of the logic-cognition, now filled with the plenitude of spirit—and, in this sense, Marx is right to claim that "Hegel's true interest is not the philosophy of right but logic. The philosophical task is not the embodiment of thought in determinate political realities, but the evaporation of these realities in abstract thought [these last words are not well put]. . . . Logic is not used to prove the nature of the state, but the state is used to prove the logic (Critique, O'Malley trans., p. 18). When Lenin writes "Absolute Idea-objective truth," he muddles "absolute" and "objective" in a non-Hegelian way; for he is obsessed with "objectivity" as established through will and practice and conforming to Marxist "science."

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Raya Dunayevskaya--2

Regarding that latter, Hegel wrote very clearly (PH, Rechts, para. 13a):
"Diejenigen verstehen daher wenig von der Natur des Denkens und Willens, welche meinen, im Willen überhaupt sei der Mensch unendlich, im Denken aber sei oder gar die Vernunft beschränkt. Insofern Denken und Willen noch unterschieden sind, ist vielmehr das Umgekehrte das Wahre, und die denkende Vernunft ist als Wille dies, sich zur Endlichkeit zu entschliessen." This is directed against Kantians, but it also applies to Lenin's "voluntarism."

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Cieszkowski was the first, to my knowledge, to try to make Hegel into an apostle of will (or revise him as such), submerging his logic totally within the demands of a philosophy of history, in which praxis would be the dominating Geist of the third, consummating age. Although Cieszkowski was no revolutionary, the way he deploys his materials could well stimulate Marxist adventures in an "objective-absolute." However, with the general secularization of history and social science shortly afterward in Western academic thought, the need for a mediating-consummating "absolute" is scarcely felt; and one gets the Diltheyan division of Naturwissenschaften and Geisteswissenschaften, the latter assimilating the Hegelian absolute into the objective (into history), leaving nothing beyond. It is, I would guess, because of this intellectual climate, whether revolutionary or bon enfant, that Lenin's encounter with the "absolute" in Hegel's logic is so diffident and so "objective."

That is all I can say for now; and it's off the top of my head. But I'll get back to you soon, at least when there is a little time to spare on those mind-boggling syllogisms that so arrest you.

I see you have a new address. I had my latest book sent to the old one-- will it be forwarded?

Warmly,

George (G.A.K.)

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December 8, 1985

Dear GAK,

Despite the acknowledged gulf between us on the Absolute Method, may I discuss with you (and may I hope for a comment from you?) my latest self-critique on Organization? On that question I also see Hegel in a new way. That is to say, the dialectical relationship of principles (in this case the Christian doctrine) and the organization (the Church) are analyzed as if they were inseparables. All this occurs, not in the context of a philosophy of religion so much as in the context of the great dividing line between himself and all other philosophers that he initiated with the Phenomenology of Mind, on the relationship of objectivity/subjectivity, immediacy/mediation, particular/universal, history and the "Eternal." This addition to the Logic--the Third Attitude to Objectivity--I see in a totally new way.

I can't hide, of course, that though it's not the Absolute, I'm enamored with that early section of the Encyclopedia outline of Logic, because it was written after Hegel had already developed Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Idea, Absolute Method.

Here history makes its presence felt, by no accident after the Absolutes both in the Phenomenology and in the Science of Logic, as well as in anticipation that he is finally developing the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Mind. Indeed, that to me is what made possible the very form of compression of those innumerable polemical observations on other philosophers and philosophies into just three attitudes to objectivity.

This time, as we know, a single attitude, the first, embraces everything preceding the modern age. Further emphasis on this compression is evident when Hegel comes to the modern age and includes both empiricism and criticism in the Second Attitude.

My attraction to the Third Attitude was not due to the fact that it was directed against those who placed faith above philosophy--the Intuitionists. (I'm not renewing our old debate, just because I'm an atheist; atheism, to me, is one more form of godliness, without God.) Rather, the attraction for me continues to be the Dialectic. Far from expressing a sequence of never-ending progression, the Hegelian dialectic lets retrogression appear as translucent as progression and indeed makes it very nearly inevitable if one ever tries to escape regression by mere faith.

Here again, history enters, this time to let Hegel create varying views of Intuitionism, depending on which historic period is at issue. Intuitionism is "progressive" in the period of Descartes because then empiricism opened the doors wide to science. On the other hand, it became regressive in the period of Jacobi.

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It is here that I saw a different concept of Organization when it comes to the Church than either in all of Hegel's many oppositions to the clergy's dominance in academia. Do please follow my strange journeys that I identify as the self-determination of the Idea.

The Third Attitude begins (paragraph 61) with a critique of Kant whose universality was abstract so that Reason appeared hardly more than a conclusion with "the categories left out of account." Equally wrong, Hegel continues, is the "extreme theory on the opposite side, which holds thought to be an act of the particular only, and on that ground declares it incapable of apprehending the Truth."

In praising Descartes, Hegel points not only to the fact that empiricism opened the door to science, but that Descartes clearly knew that his famous "Cogito ergo sum" wasn't a syllogism, simply because it had the word 'therefore' in it. This becomes important because Hegel's critique could then be directed against the one-sidedness of Intuitionists, for equating mind to mere consciousness, and thus "what I discover in my consciousness is thus exaggerated into a fact of consciousness of all, and even passed off for the very nature of mind." (Para. 71) That too is by no means the whole of the critique. What excited me most about this attitude to objectivity is the manner in which Hegel brings in Organization. As early as para. 63 Hegel had lashed out against Jacobi's faith, in contrast to Faith: "The two things are radically distinct. Firstly, the Christian faith comprises in it an authority of the Church; but the faith of Jacobi's philosophy has no other authority than that of personal revelation." As we see, Hegel now has suddenly equated Organization to Principle, Doctrine: "And, secondly, the Christian faith is a copious body of objective truth, a system of knowledge and doctrine; while the scope of the philosophic faith is so utterly indefinite, that, while it has room for faith of the Christian, it equally admits belief in the divinity of the Dalai Lama, the ox, or the monkey..."

Hegel proceeds (para. 75) "And to show that in point of fact there is a knowledge which advances neither by unmixed immediacy nor unmixed mediation, we can point to the example of the Logic and the whole of philosophy."

In a word, dear GAK, we're back at the Dialectic and it's only after that (para. 76) that Hegel uses the word reactionary in relationship to the whole school of Jacobi, that is to the historic period, "The Recent German Philosophy." "Philosophy of course tolerates no mere assertions or conceits, and checks the free play of argumentative see-saw." (para. 77) Freedom and Revolution (which word I "borrowed" from Hegel's very first sentence on "The Recent German Philosophy") is the path that will open the road for us.

In this way I see the dialectic flow in the third attitude to objectivity from a critique of the one-sidedness of the intuitionists to organizational responsibility.

Yours,

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163 East 81st Street
New York, NY 10028

17 April 1987

Dear Raya -

Your latest word makes me blush and puts me in mind of my silence and my promise to write you something concerning those famous Hegelian "Schlüsse" at the end of the Enzyklopädie. I have no really good excuse except fatigue and a melancholy mixture of flu and bronchitis that has gripped me, with only two remissions, since Christmas. My energy level has been zip - and I have been really struggling to do the things I really had to do or had set out to do - creditably. The retracement continues for at least another month, but, in the meantime, the sun should shine and the trees should blossom.

Today is Good Friday - I am preparing to go to church on the bleakest day of the Christian calendar (where "speculative Good Fridays" are not in vogue) - and the weather is suitably horrible - rainy and wind-lashed. Miserere nobis, Marxiatini!

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2 I do promise to write you about Hegel, but I have not felt up to confronting your big questions without a couple more and thought. When I prepare for my next term's seminar on the Phenomenology during the early summer, I shall be fit for intellectual correspondence.

In the meantime, I work fitfully - between the drops - toward a new study of 19th century French liberalism. If I receive a little more finance, it should be set forth by the end of this year. Sometimes I like what I have done so sometimes I hate it. But I think I have what I am doing. I have also been writing a more imaginative story called Wicks, which has entered this symposium in a political mode from his to back Rankin - more, of course, left a paragraph. As that was it is from this part of the explicit jungle, dear Ray. Thanks for thinking of me.

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Ever sincerely,
George

typed copy of handwritten

17 April 1987

Dear Raya--

Your latest word makes me blush and puts me in mind of my silences and my promise to write you something concerning those famous Hegelian "Schlüsse" at the end of the Enzyklopadie. I have no really good excuse except fatigue and a melancholy mixture of flu and bronchitis that has gripped me, with only two remissions, since Christmas. My energy level has been zip -- and I have really been struggling to do the things I really had to do or had set out to do creditably. The ratrace continues for at least another month, but, in the meantime, the sun should shine and the trees should blossom.

Today is Good Friday-- I am preparing to go to church on the bleakest day of the Christian calendar (where "speculative Good Fridays" are not in vogue)-- and the weather is suitably horrible-- rainy and wind-lashed. Miserere nobis, Marxistici!

I do promise to write you about Hegel, but I have not felt up to confronting your big questions without ample time and thought. When I prepare for my next term's seminar in the Phänomenologie during the early summer, I shall be fit for intellectual correspondence.

In the meantime, I work fitfully-- between the drops-- toward a new study of 19th century French liberalism. If I regain a little more pizzaz, it should be substantially done by the end of this year. Sometimes I like what I have done; sometimes I hate it. But I think I know what I am doing. I have also been writing a more imaginative essay called "Veils", which discusses this symbols in a political mode from Isis to Jack Rawls-- Marx, of course, gets a passage.

So that's how it is from this part of the asphalt jungle, dear Raya. Thanks for thinking of me.

Ever sincerely,

George

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