

February 7, 1961

Dear Olga:

You're on the right road. Your letter of the second breaks through on the central point, philosophically, for the new book - the question of subjectivity in the philosophic sense, especially in the Marxist sense, ~~of~~ that has absorbed objectivity. Again, I cannot overestimate the importance of seeing the new book as a recruiting weapon, and I hope that everyone studies very carefully the parts I quoted at the REB Discussion.

On the other hand, do not hurry to concretize, in two immediate a sense the Universal, Particular and Individual. I am using the word, immediate, in the Hegelian sense of something that is superficial. For example, what you say about those categories as applicable to the existentialists is correct, but is neither new nor deserves to be expressed in those profound Hegelian categories. It is not true that we begin with the ~~Existential~~ Individual and try to "derive" a Universal from it. For one thing, Individual does not mean an individual. It means the concretization of the Universal, its highest form, in the sense in which Marx said that the individual was the social entity and the individual freedom the only proof of universal freedom. And yet, Individual, as concrete, does not mean the concrete every-day kind of facts, but rather what we would call the self-developing subject. At the same time, a Universal does not always mean something great like a new society or socialism. It very often means the first, the abstract and, therefore, non-meaningful first stage of development that can be diverted, perverted, corrupted. Just as abstraction always plays into the hands of the enemy, so, philosophically, all sorts of people can hide themselves under the Universal by reading in the Absolute "like a shot out of a pistol" into it.

At the REB I gave examples of U,P,I in relationship to money as the universal medium of exchange and commodity as the concrete unit of wealth, which hid less the dual character of labor than ~~it~~ does glittering money, but nevertheless, contains the whole fetishism which Marx so masterfully exposes, as the ideology of capitalism. And I contrasted that to the labor which Marx considers the essential, not only in its degraded stage under capitalism, but that which could make it the unity of mental and manual and give the human being that new dimension which only a classless society can create the conditions for. I could give a million more "examples", but that is not really my purpose here, because it is not examples, right or wrong ones, that are important here, but only the care with which one must approach a category, any philosophic category, and especially so those analyzed by Hegel for the very highest stage of his Logic, the Doctrine of the Notion.

Johnny once told me that he takes down definitions I give of Hegelian categories one week, and the next week I give an entirely different set of definitions, and the following week I tell them to disregard them all. All I can say is, first, just read over the hell, the literal hell, Hegel gives the whole concept of definitions in Volume II of the Science of Logic, Pages 436 to 460, and yet, hold tight to the fact that all this devastating criticism comes just a few pages short of the climax of the work on the Absolute Idea. In a word, he is opposed to the method of definitions because nothing ~~can~~, in thought, or in action, can be fenced into a definition, and yet definitions are one of the stages, or more correctly, processes of getting to know a category, so that one can dispense with "knowing" and let the self-development of the idea itself "take over".

13842

This is one reason why I have stopped writing on the Phenomenology of Mind. It is not as you suppose that at one time I thought that the "Superior" to the Logic. There is in fact no such description of either work, although Marx and in fact even bourgeois philosophers have admitted that the Phenomenology as the first spontaneous (if one can use such a phrase to describe such thought-out work as the Phenomenology) work and, therefore, fresher than the systematized Logic. No, they really deal with different fields, and because the Phenomenology deals with phenomena and can so easily therefore be abused, as indeed the existentialists have done, I felt that for the time being we had better stick to objective categories before going in to social types in which those categories become "embodied". In a word, just as Marx thought that unless you begin with production relations before you bother your head about profits, you would not understand either the one or the other, so the Phenomenology only appears easier to understand, but is in fact much more difficult, and can only be understood fully after one has mastered the Logic.

You are hovering around a difference between leadership and masses insofar as unity of theory and practice is concerned, but that is not really of the essence.

On Page 3, I was very struck by your paragraph about the difference between M/F and the new work. However, the difference is not "quantitative", or as you put it, a question of "more*sharply". It is a question of entirely different population strata. I am through with setting out challenges for "theoreticians"; I am interested in the workers and in ourselves. So I will set out neither much more nor much less, concretely the challenge to the intellectuals, the challenge and the offer will be to the worker. You are absolutely right, however, that the organization is all-important. What, after all, is the science of Logic? It is an organization of thought. It has remained "dead" because the organization that undertook to supposedly to live by it was the University or the Theological Seminary, and those organizations do not live by a revolutionary organization of thought, and the dialectic is revolutionary through and through, no matter what, positivistic conclusions Hegel himself tries to foist upon it. Because it is revolutionary through and through, the dialectic demands an organization of people for its realization that are Marxists-Humanists through and through.

There may be other points that you would rather have had me comment on than the ones I chose. Please continue to write about any and all of them and do not feel that somewhere you will "go wrong". Among other things, that profound dialectician, Hegel, said, "Error is a dynamic of truth".

Yours,

RAE

13843