

June 1, 1978

Dear Dr. McGovern:

Thank you for allowing me to read two chapters on Marxism from your projected work on MARXISM AND CRISTIANITY: A REAPPRAISAL. Forgive me, however, for not writing, comprehensively and hurriedly; I did not realize that you are to be gone June 11th when I will not be here as I leave for Canada tomorrow.

My remarks will center around a single topic--methodology, dialectics--whether that be on as simple a matter as separating primary from secondary sources, or on as basic a fundamental as not separating matter from soul. (I do not, of course, mean it in a religious way.) In my view method is not just tool, and essence is not just the opposite of appearance--Essence that must appear--both are integral to the Absolute (again not in the "orthodox" view) which is a unity of theory and practice, a totality, but not as a mere summation, but totality as new beginning.

Now then, to Marx. I assume much of what I say may have been dealt with in a chapter I did not see, but in any case what is new, (and therefore precious) is that you consider the American aspect central to your thesis, so how does it happen that my work, MARXISM AND FREEDOM, whose central task was to bring out the American roots of Marxism as well as its humanist world ramifications is not only not mentioned, but nowhere seems to enter your thought and yet it remains the only work that, to this day, as distinguished from, or in addition to its day of writing, 1957, first traces its Marxist deep roots in the Additionist movement, brought in centrally to the restructuring of Marx's CAPITAL, and then made it ever more concrete and regional for our day and place, as Detroit automation? Please, understand me, this has nothing whatever to do with Ego; if it were that, I would just have let it wrangle me and say "not a direct word. No, I say it so openly, because it is not ego; it is related to one of your main thesis, and it is that if Subject is separate from History, and the dialectic is only a matter of dialogue, that it is absolutely inescapable that one does not "skip" history-in-the-making. (In any case, I both include my latest pamphlet which reproduces those 3 historic chapters on the restructure of Marx's CAPITAL on Civil War in the U.S., Paris Commune, Marx's break with theory as a bourgeois concept of debating ideas with other theoreticians, and goes directly to relations of production and listening, listening, listening to that movement from practice. Also, my critique of American young version of "Critical" Marxism and RD 1941-48 Archives on Marxist Humanism in America I deposited with Labor Archives of Wayne State University.)

Still, on Marx, I should mention that whereas 1957-8 was still the 1st appearance in America of Marx's Humanist Essays and Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, as Appendices to Marxism and Freedom, I actually first translated them in 1947 but had to produce them as mimeographed Bulletin since I could get no publisher to be interested. I will say one among many great attributes of Christian Humanists that both the head of Religious Studies at Yale University--Dupre--in the 1970s recognized that my dialectics was very different from and invited me to address the Hegel Society of America, and way, way back in 1947 from that same university bought the original 1947 mimeographed Humanist Essays. And when I worked with some worker-priests in Paris in 1947 there was that same appreciation of Marx's genuine Humanism.

14539

And before I go over to Lenin, may I mention that your bibliography should separate primary from secondary works and when you do quote Marx, I cannot see why credit Tucker or whoever instead of merely noting that the Marx statement was quoted by such and such a source?

I was glad to note in your covering letter that you intend to introduce some changes in your Lenin chapter. Since central not just to me, but to what I call the Great Divide in Marxism, is Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, may I suggest that you do not handle it only "in passing", but show the great changes the dialectical principle of transformation into opposite meant as it affected all his works after reading Hegel's Science of Logic, first Imperialism so that it wasn't only capitalism that got transformed into opposite, from competitive to monopoly; but the proletariat,--aristocracy of labor, to betrayal of leadership, etc.; 2ndly, in State and Revolution as both masses from below--"non-party masses"---. What I am trying to say is that the reader must feel, that no matter what your views and criticisms of Lenin are, something happened to Lenin that changes the vulgar materialist-idealist to the "all power to the Soviets" rather than the elitist vanguard party-ist of What Is To Be Done?

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I naturally take exception to your calling Stalin "dogmatic" Marxism that's bad enough, but he has as well as the truth, perversion and transformation of Marxism and the whole workers' state into a state-capitalist society. There is something missing when one discusses theory separate from practice. It isn't that one has illusions--I am positive you have not a single illusion about that tyrant Stalin--it is that methodological concept which does not take duality so inherent in every single unit as critical, refuses to see only the dialectic as methodology, etc. that where there should be diremption--and there is diremption in Stalin's "dogmatism" even before he ever became what he was in power--sees synthesis. Perhaps I am wrong, but if I am, why is it that, in theory, you skip over where Stalin directly laid hands on Marx's CAPITAL, in 1943, and broke its dialectic structure as well as revised the basic law of capitalism--law of value and surplus value--and suddenly declared law of value operative in Russia? After all that debate lasted a whole year in an American and bourgeois journal as AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW--one of the few times that journal ever bothered with Marxism?

Please forgive the scribbles on your folder; I'm so used to do that as I read I forgot, it wasn't mine. One thing I did love in your thesis--and I do hope you develop it more in your revised version--is the original thought on p. 52: "One could also characterize Critical Marxism by its use of sources." It is surely not a matter of just sources but philosophy, so why lower your original thought to recommending that 4th rate secondary source "The Unknown Dimension"; gosh those youths don't have an original thought in their heads tho they know all "sources" except when their philosophy is so opposite to another source that suddenly their erudition disappears. Sometime I would like to have an hour with you and that work and show you all they skip.

Best of luck with your work and finding a publisher.

Yours sincerely,

[Handwritten signature]

14540