

ON AN EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA
AND NON-MARXIST HEGELIAN SCHOLARS

January 7, 1987

Dear Colleagues,

Because differences in Hegel's Science of Logic and the Encyclopedia versions impinge on my changed perception of Lenin's philosophic ambivalence, I feel that I should give you a sense of the scholars' critique on the Idea of Cognition.*

First, the critics deny that there is a conflict between the Smaller Logic (Paragraph 235) and the Science of Logic, since the Absolute Idea makes clear that each category--theory/practice--is one-sided by itself. The Absolute is a great deal more than the achievement of "Will"; that only "leads to the Absolute Idea." Paragraph 236 was quoted to show that it's the unity of Subjective and Objective and that that alone "is the Absolute and all truth." And of course they were happy to announce that "neither Logic supports Lenin's interpretation."

It is at that point where the critique began against my interpretation of Absolute Spirit, holding that there "is a more complex issue. I do not think, though some interpreters do, that the Absolute Spirit can be so radically identified with the Absolute Idea as I thought you were willing to do."

Surprisingly, one of those non-Marxist-Humanists did agree with my interpretation that the eternal idea is ceaseless motion, but then very strongly disagreed: "But I no longer follow you, when you call the eternal idea 'revolution-in-permanence'. Your social interpretation is, in my opinion, not supported by Hegel's text." The letter ended with a rejection of my interpretation of the final syllogism, Para. 577, as being any source of "entrance to the new society. I would rather read it as an entrance into philosophy."

Yours,

Raya

P.S. I also enclosed excerpts from my 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea, calling attention to these sentences from the letter of May 12, 1953: "I am shaking all over for we have come to where we part from Lenin. I mentioned before that, although in the approach to the Absolute Idea Lenin had mentioned that man's cognition not only reflects the objective world but creates it but that within the chapter he never developed it." And from the May 20, 1953 Letter, I sent my analysis of the three final syllogisms; Paragraphs 575, 576, 577.

*I'm referring to A.V. Miller's translation of Science of Logic, pp. 775-823, and to Hegel's Smaller Logic, Paragraphs 226-235, which includes "Volition."

TWO LETTERS FROM RAYA TO NON-MARXIST HEGELIAN SCHOLARS

July 3, 1986

Suddenly I remembered when we first met at the University where I talked on Philosophy and Revolution. We continued the dialogue after the formal talk. I believe it set the ground for my paper on "Hegel's Absolute Idea as New Beginning," which was accepted for the 1984 Hegel Society of America conference. Don't you think that in a way we have had a continuing dialogue since? At any rate, I consider you a very good friend. I hope you agree. Or do you think that the sharpness of my critique of Hegel scholars who are non-Marxists goes beyond their critique of Marxism? I seem always to get friends -- Marxist as well as non-Marxist -- who consider me a friendly enemy rather than a friend. That friendly enemy relationship continued, for example, with Herbert Marcuse for three long decades, and we still never agreed, specifically on the Absolutes. That's where I want to appeal to you, even though we do not have the same interpretation either.

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), paragraphs 225-235, with focus on paragraphs 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 paragraphs 236-244, and that paragraph 244 in the smaller Logic was the one Lenin preferred** to the final paragraph of the Absolute Idea in

* I am enclosing an excerpt from my May 20, 1953 letter on Absolute Mind.

Science of
** All the references to Lenin are to his Abstract of Hegel's / Logic, as included in Vol. 38 of his Collected Works, pp. 87-238. Concretely the subject under dispute here is on the Doctrine on the Notion, Section Three, Chaps. 2 and 3, "The Idea of Cognition" and the "Absolute Idea."

the Science, has had 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 B, "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 paragraph 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 paragraph 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 paragraph 213. When Lenin completed Chapter 2, "The Idea of Cognition," he didn't really go to Chapter 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 Chapter 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.

Thus when Lenin writes that he had reached the end of the Absolute Idea and quotes paragraph 244 as the true end, because it is "objective," he proceeds to the smaller Logic and reaches paragraph 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 vollständige Ausbildung des unaufgelösten Widerspruchs, jenes absoluten Zwecks, dem die Schranke dieser Wirklichkeit unüberwindlich 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." (Page 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 solle. 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?

To fully follow out this question we need, in one respect, another journey back in time -- to 1953 when, in the parting from Lenin on the vanguard party, I had delved into the three final syllogisms of the Philosophy of Mind. You may remember that in my paper to the Hegel Society of America in 1974, where I critique Adorno's Negative Dialectics

-- which I called "one-dimensionality of thought" -- I said that he had substituted "a permanent critique not alone for absolute negativity, but also for 'permanent revolution' itself." I had become so enamoured with Hegel's three final syllogisms that I was searching all over the "West" for dialogue on them.

Finally in the 1970s, after Reinhart Klemens Maurer had published his Hegel und das Ende der Geschichte, which took up those final syllogisms, I tried to get him involved, his sharp critique of Marcuse notwithstanding. Maurer was anxious to establish the fact, however, that he was not only non-Marxist, but not wholly "Hegelian." In any case, he clearly was not interested in any dialogue with me, and he told a young colleague of mine who went to see him that "I am not married to Hegel." But as I made clear at the 1974 HSA conference, I do not think it important whether someone has written a serious new study of those three final syllogisms because of a new stage of scholarship, or because of the "movement of freedom surged up from below and was followed by new cognition studies."

The point is that as late as the late 1970s, A.V. Miller wrote me calling my attention to the fact that he had not corrected an error in Wallace's translation of paragraph 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." (Paragraph 573.) In the following paragraph 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" those 33 years hasn't exactly earned me applause either from the post-Marx Marxists, or from the Hegelians, who are busy calling to my attention that the final syllogism (paragraph 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." George Armstrong Kelly, in his book, Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis, said that "for the complex linkage of culture, politics and philosophy, within the matrix of the 'Absolute Idea,' Mme. Dunayevskaya proposes to substitute an unchained dialectic which she baptizes 'Absolute Method,' a method that 'becomes irresistible... because our hunger for theory arises from the totality of the present global crisis.'"

The "eternal Idea" in Philosophy of Mind not only reinforced 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 consider that Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence" is the "eternal Idea."

Raya

December 8, 1986

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 as 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 continued 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.

It is here that I saw a different concept of Organization when it comes to the Church than 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 the 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." (Paragraph 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 Paragraph 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 (paragraph 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, we're back at the Dialectic and it's only after that (paragraph 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." (Paragraph 77) Freedom and Revolution (which word I "borrowed" from Hegel's very first sentence on "The Recent German Philosophy") will hew out a new path. 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.