

Sept. 21, 1986

Dear G. and J. (copy to the REB/NEB)

Because welcoming new members to the REB/NEB is a spelling out of leadership responsibilities and outreach for creativity from the new continuators of Marxist-Humanism, the focus of this first letter to you allows me to specify more precisely both central topics of the REB on ramifications: collectivity, and the significance of how we named ourselves -- National Editorial Board/Committee. This is all the more important because you two are young in relationship to what we talk about when we say the historic birth of Marxist-Humanism, i.e. the post WWII world.

Put differently, the question of form-content-idea -- Methodology -- has so many inter-connections between philosophy, politics, organization, as well as relationships with other tendencies and organizations, that I feel a need for greater precision on that point:

Take a few of the inter-connections at our birth and you will see that even when you list a single point of departure, it turns out to be a multiple point. Thus, 1950, is most often given by us because it is the Miners' General Strike. But actually not only was it activity, articles, new human relations which become integral to Marxism and Freedom, 1957, but you really have to return back a full decade to 1947. In taking 1947 to '49 as the point of departure you see that a trip to France to present the state-capitalist position meant meeting that magnificent Camerounian, and learning about the spontaneous outpouring of the whole of Yaounde. And at the same time we learn of the great contradictions in Palestine about to become Israel. And at the same time I am digging into methodology both in Marx's Capital and that in our age of state-capitalism. And, again at the same time, I am wrestling with the categories of Hegel's Science of Logic, which all ended in a series of Absolutes. To see, in the Absolute, not a system, not a hierarchy, but new beginnings, new beginnings of such phenomenal importance as to become the determinant of the end -- an end that will only come to the future, when masses-in-motion become Reason, -- No need to belabor the point that this is very far from anything "accidental." It signals a new historic epoch, a new relationship of capital to labor, race to class, man to women, youth both in action and as the future in the present.

To Marxist-Humanism it poses the task of developing what this sudden outpouring meant. What Marx called "eminent historic sense" -- meant organizational responsibility, though all the specific instance was about was asking a former 1848 Communist League member for writing exposing Vogt's slanders against Karl Marx.

Now then, at the REB, I concentrated so totally on the task of editing, focused on the bi-weekly, that it may have almost sounded as if the REB was just a "senior" type of PTC. No doubt it would have been more precise if I used, instead of the word editing, a form of correspondence, where we had both recording of new voices and their philosophic meaning, which requires the knowledge of history, both past and in-the-making. The point is that in our sense -- and that's why we preferred always to talk of the missing link of philosophy, rather than some kind of leadership, as if leadership were only a question of "leaders and ranks" instead of both leaders and ranks actually participants in shaping a new world -- it is such a totality that it can't mean just editing, whether it is editing a paper or pamphlets, or, for that matter, the kind of hard labor that goes into

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composing a book. In a word, it -- and "it" here means REB/NEB -- is such a totality that it includes Methodology and Aim to the point where there is no separation between universal and individual. (Please let me quote here the precise way Hegel expressed that (Para. 481): "...An individuality, however, also purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e. with freedom, itself."

Let me end with a word on the letter I just wrote Adrienne Rich. Because I don't yet want to give that the appearance of being a public letter, I am not sending a copy of it to the locals yet. I am however enclosing a copy for you. What I want to call attention to is the fourth paragraph on page 2: "You have hit the nail on the head when you wrote: 'If, indeed, Marx was moving in such a direction, we can't leap forward from Marx without understanding where he left off and what he left to us.' That's what I thought I was doing when I concretized the task as the need to work out the new signalled by the 1950s that I had designated as a 'movement from practice that is itself a form of theory.'" Here, I would say, is exactly where my problem begins because, I am sure without any intention of wanting to throw me a curve, that is what AR does. It is natural for one very preoccupied with a specific problem as she is on the question of women, not only in general but very specifically lesbians, that one suddenly poses one's problem for others to solve. Because we are Marxist-Humanists and do not attribute to others some kind of narrow subjectivity, I know the objective drive that is motivating her series of questions on sexuality, and thus didn't want to leave her questions merely at the point of saying "That's your problem."

Rather, I wanted to show why both objectively as well as theoretically it is her problem which is not to say that Marxist-Humanism bows out. On the contrary. Because Marxist-Humanism aims for totally new human relations, its dialectics is of the essence to any new voice, any new strain or tendency that wishes to work out the meaning of its life rather than being just an experience it describes. I ended with the fact that Marxist-Humanism, from the moment Marx, himself called his philosophy "a new Humanism" is that which remains the ground for all because it signals the "total uprooting of all forms of capitalism, state as well as private, including capitalist-imperialism. That is first when the Self-Bringing Forth of Liberty brings the Self-Determination of the Idea to maturity and the dialectic is unchained."

I don't know whether you would wish in any way to work out a relationship between the problem of organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism on two such totally different spheres as the REB on the one hand, working out ramifications of the Convention, and correspondence with intellectuals, who even when they have as much affinity as Adrienne Rich, end by throwing a curve or whatever, ^{when} you wish to single out the contradiction rather than the affinity. But in any case you here get a whiff of the complexities of some of the problems that will be sure to confront you now that you are part of the REB/NEB.

Yours,

Raya

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