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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024

June 14, 1967

Raya Dunayevskaya
4482-28th Street
Detroit, Michigan 48210

Dear Miss Dunayevskaya:

In a few hours I depart for London, so this must be a much briefer note than I would have preferred to send you after reading your illuminating first chapter on Hegel. I found it provocative and enlightening.

Unfortunately, I cannot detail my comments on it as well as I would like, or, even better, engage in a conversation with you about it. However, let me just state one or two initial reactions. First, don't you go a little far in emphasizing Hegel's commitment to the movement of reality, a movement which somehow transcends his best efforts to describe it? True, there is not a sufficient emphasis in most commentators on the dynamic, as opposed to the static, syllogistic Hegel. You are certainly right in pointing this out. However, Hegel, as a philosopher is committed to stating what reality is, i.e., to description. He has no quarrel with this aim of philosophy, only with the manner in which it has heretofore been carried out (Aristotlian). Consequently, however dynamic the dialectic is in Hegel's hands, it remains a tool of description. Its usefulness, in fact, lies in its ability to capture what really is, according to Hegel. If Hegel were to hold that something about reality and movement transcend the categories he establishes for the purposes of description, why would he not have mired himself in the same bog with Kant, where reality transcends 'appearances'?

Since Marx is committed to description as an instrument value, and not an intrinsic value, useful only from the vantage of (action) the notion that the movement of reality eludes our attempts to describe it is much less of a problem. It is, in fact, a 'problem' only from the standpoint of

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systematic philosophy.

Also, the problem of why, in periods of crises, we return to Hegel needs to be explored further, it seems to me. Is it, as you imply, because reality is the way Hegel perceived it, a series of endless revolutions; Or is it because of similar historical forces and circumstances which recur from time to time, but for specific, and perhaps wholly contingent reasons; Or, is it that we have adopted Hegelian categories for viewing reality, perhaps even without knowing it? This is badly stated, but the point does need some clearer statement from you, I think.

Or
Contingent
Or

There is more I should like to say, but for lack of time I will have to cut this short. I have included my written comments on the chapter we discussed, for whatever use they may be to you. Perhaps when I have more time in the Fall, we could continue our discussions.

I am certainly looking forward to the completion of your work.

With my best regards.

Sincerely,

Richard Ashcraft

Richard Ashcraft

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