

PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION - FOUR LECTURES

To meet the challenge of our times and work out theoretical preparation for revolution, historically as well as philosophically, it becomes necessary to dig deep in order to bring out the boundless possibilities inherent in Marx's works, especially the final unfinished work -- the Ethnological Notebooks. That is not all that is needed as ground for the leap ahead. What is equally indispensable is to call upon the new forces and new Reason of revolution for our day.

To that end, this series of talks begins, at one and the same time, with the French Revolution and Hegelian dialectics as well as with the 20th century new forces and new passions. This is carried through with the 1848 and 1871 revolutions and Marx's new continent of thought. When we approach the 20th century, the series delves into not only WWI and WWII as well as the birth of the Third World, but, above all, the new forces and Reason that have emerged in the last decade -- Rank-and-File Labor, the Black Dimension, Women's Liberation, and Youth.

You are invited to actively participate with us in the following series of four concentrated lectures:

I.

WHY HEGEL? WHY NOW? AND 20TH CENTURY NEW PASSIONS AND NEW FORCES

Required reading:

Raya Dunayevskaya, Philosophy and Revolution
Ch. 1, "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning:
The Ceaseless Movement of Ideas and of History"
Ch. 9, "New Passions and New Forces: The Black
Dimension, the Anti-War Youth, Rank-and-File
Labor, Women's Liberation"

Suggested reading:

Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind
Smaller Logic
Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks
Rudi Bakro, The Alternative
Charles Denby, Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal

Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness
The Young Hegel
 George Armstrong Kelly, Hegel's Retreat From Eleusis
 (see especially pp.238-249)

II.

MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION (1843 to 1883):
 From Philosophy to Politics of Revolution, and
 From Practice to Philosophy of Revolution

Required reading:

Philosophy and Revolution, Ch. 2, "A New Continent of Thought:
 Marx's Historical Materialism and
 Its Inseparability from the Hegelian
 Dialectic"

Marx, The Ethnological Notebooks (Marx's unfinished last work)

Suggested reading:

Marx, Civil War in France

Grundrisse

Roman Rosdolsky, The Making of Marx's 'Capital'

III.

DIALECTICS OF THE CONCRETE VS. FALSE ALTERNATIVES:
 Lenin, Luxemburg, Karel Kosik vs. False Alternatives --
 Trotsky, Mao, Sartre

Required reading:

Philosophy and Revolution, Ch. 3, "The Shock of Recognition and
 the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin"
 Ch. 4, "Leon Trotsky as Theoretician"
 Ch. 5, "The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung"
 Ch. 6, "Jean-Paul Sartre: Outsider
 Looking In"

Trotsky, The Permanent Revolution

Karel Kosik, Dialectics of the Concrete

Suggested reading:

Sartre, Search for a Method

Mao, On Contradiction

Wen-sui documents on the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" ("Long Live Mao Tse-Tung Thought")

The Revolution is Dead, Long Live the Revolution: Readings on the
 Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution from an Ultra-Left Perspective,
 especially Sheng-Wu-Lien, Whither China?

IV.

DIALECTIC METHODOLOGY AND DIALECTICS OF LIBERATION
A Review

Required reading:

Philosophy and Revolution, Ch. 7, "The African Revolutions and the World Economy"
Ch. 8, "State Capitalism and the East European Revolts"

Frantz Fanon, Soweto, and American Black Thought (a News & Letters publication)

Raya Dunayevskaya, Dialectics of Liberation

Marx's Letters to Vera Zaslavitch, 1881 Marx's 'Capital' and Today's Global Crisis
(editions of the four drafts of the letters may be found in Marx and Engels: Selected Works (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1970), Vol. III, p.152; Marx and Engels: Selected Correspondence (Moscow, Progress, 1975), p.319; and The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx)

Suggested reading:

Fanon, Wretched of the Earth

Erich Fromm (ed), Socialist Humanism

News & Letters, American Civilization on Trial

Revolutionary Feminism

Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution

J. Kuron and K. Modzelewski, "An Open Letter to the Party"

Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (both the 1940 and 1960 editions)

The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism, Its Origin and Development in America, 1941 to Today (available from the Labor History Archives of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan)

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ADDITIONS TO THE SYLLABUS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION CLASSES

The replacement of an "and" by two prepositions — "from" and "to" — in the title of the last talk in our series of classes in Philosophy and Revolution, which is now to read: FROM DIALECTIC METHODOLOGY TO THE DIALECTICS OF LIBERATION, summarizes and pinpoints what has developed from the classes. Thus, in the first talk — "Why Hegel? Why Now? And 20th Century New Passions and New Forces" — we added to the required reading, at one and the same time, the essay on Absolute Negativity as New Beginning from the NEW ESSAYS pamphlet, and Frantz Fanon's THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH. This focused not only on the fact that we were combining Chapter 1 and Chapter 9, but the motivation for that combination — its concretization to the point where we no longer had to fear that readers would skip Chapter 1 and run to the present moment without ever grappling with dialectic methodology. Everything thereby moved directly from Hegel's revolution in philosophy to Marx's philosophy of revolution. The present as the test and the "proof" was carried to the suggested readings as well by adding our pamphlet on FRANTZ FANON, SOVIET AND AMERICAN BLACK THOUGHT.

More important was the need shown, in Lecture two on "Marx's Philosophy of Revolution", for not separating PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION from MARXISM AND FREEDOM. By adding to the required reading Chapters 3, and 5 through 8, from MARXISM AND FREEDOM, history became not only the way it affected Marx's restructuring of CAPITAL, but what happened objectively, from the Civil War in the U.S. to the Paris Commune. Moreover, we moved GRUNDRISSE into the required reading so that we had the opportunity to bring in the Orient without needing to wait for the 20th century revolutions to appreciate Marx's new continent of thought as well as revolution. To the suggested readings we added considerable emphasis on the American roots of Marxism: AMERICA'S FIRST UNFINISHED REVOLUTION as well as the pamphlet on THE FIRST GENERAL STRIKE IN THE U.S. On the other hand, I didn't wish to leave the contemporary scene only for Part III, and therefore suggested we add the critique of Ernest Mandel ⁱⁿ the pamphlet on MARX'S CAPITAL AND TODAY'S GLOBAL CRISIS, as well as my "Two Worlds" column on Roman Rosdolsky. Also added was the special Jan-Feb 1979 issue of NEWS & LETTERS, with my critique of Engels.

The third lecture on "Dialectics of the Concrete vs. False Alternatives" took nearly two hours — and believe me, I left out much that I had intended to talk about before I felt the time¹ flying.² Of course it covered a great deal of ground, but there was no other way to comprise the whole book into four talks.

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In any case, we also had to add to the required reading: first and imperative, LENIN'S PHILOSOPHIC NOTEBOOKS (Vol. 38 Collected Works)³; secondly, Gramsci's PRISON NOTEBOOKS, especially the articles on Dialectics and the Critique of Bukharin; and thirdly, Rosa Luxemburg's GENERAL STRIKE.⁴

Also added to the readings was Hegel's Smaller LOGIC. Besides the constant references to the Second and Third Attitudes to Objectivity which you will hear on the tapes, constantly related to Leon Trotsky and Mao, I felt it imperative to call attention to Lenin's reading of the SCIENCE OF LOGIC. Two points especially were important to emphasize: the point where Lenin finds Hegel reaching the Absolute Idea — (Johnson and Struthers translation, Vol. II, p. 465) "not, however, merely as objective world without the subjectivity of the Notion, but as objective world whose inner ground and actual persistence is the Notion"; and (Vol. II, p. 477) the point where Lenin, in developing at length that final chapter of Hegel's work, sees "contradictory terms are held apart ... and thus come before consciousness without mutual contact," and describes the latter as "the essence of the anti-dialectic." I felt strongly that this is, indeed, the essence of the anti-dialectic and covers not only Trotsky, and Mao, but all alternatives of today whom Lenin anticipated as he concluded that he had no one to leave his mantle to and had to write the Will as he did.

Finally we come to what I began with — the final talk. For the first time, in a talk at a university which, though under N&L Youth sponsorship, was nevertheless not totally ours, I introduced the organizational question. Not only that, it was introduced as the third and conclusive point as "The Concretization of the Absolute Idea", saying that instead of ending, as usual, with the two final paragraphs of PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION, I wanted those two paragraphs to become the task not that "remains to be done" but that we would begin doing. And we had begun doing it in 1953 with the Letters on the Absolute Idea, expressed it in organizational form in 1955 with News and Letters Committees, and it was time to stop keeping it as our organizational "secret". Rather, just as Lenin had concretized the Paris Commune as "All power to the Soviets" in 1917, we had better continue with the "Self-bringing Forth of Liberty" we had been doing the past quarter century. If we are serious about the unity of theory and practice as totality, then that totality cannot exclude collectivity as N&L Committee form where all work out the dialectic as the theoretical preparation for the American Revolution.

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Finally, on the Syllabus itself, where Suggested Readings include Herbert Marcuse's Reason and Revolution, please change what is in the parentheses to read: (the 1941 edition and Preface to the 1969 edition contrasted) — and add our N&L Bulletin on "The Newness of Our Philosophic-Historic Contribution", originally published in 1969. That is where I first stressed our originality as centering on those words "as new beginning" and it certainly should be part of this class.

Because I believe our comrades should know that this is the way these lectures end, I'm sending this out now and asking you to attach it to your Syllabus.

May 1-2, 1979

RAYA

Notes:

- 1) Besides LABOR as "summation" for all the categories of Marx, I include time, since I believe the absolute opposite, that really tells what Marxist-Humanism is, is to contrast Marx's analysis of labor-time as that horror of the factory clock that pounds you into an abstraction, against Marx's definition of "time is space for human self-development."
- 2) I wish someone would volunteer to type from the tapes, what I said in these four lectures for which I have no notes — provided only a single copy is made and that one is only for me, so that I can edit and at some time in the future have the four talks as a bulletin. *
- 3) We should show that it is not the whole of Vol. 38 which the Stalinists most deliberately tried to pretend is a "continuity" of Lenin, whereas the Philosophic Notebooks (the Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic) and the work he did in 1914-1915 is a break with his own philosophic past.
- 4) I just decided to look into Paul Frolich's ROSA LUXEMBURG as it was published by Monthly Review Press and to my surprise found MARXISM AND FREEDOM listed. That set me off to thinking that perhaps we should really also include the talk on Rosa Luxemburg I gave on International Women's Day. It certainly is great that a book on Rosa Luxemburg lists M&F and that a book of letters is coming out that I will have advised readers to study.

* Mariana has already begun to transcribe both Lectures 2 and 4, and Eugene has volunteered for transcribing as well. Any who wish to volunteer for this experience should let us know which they will be doing so the work can be shared.

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