

May 25, 1983

Dear Teodor Shanin:

Thank you for transmitting through Anne the four parts of your work for me: Marxism and Vernacular Revolutionary Traditions, The Marx-Zasulich Correspondence, The People's Will, and The Late Marx: Gods and Craftsmen. Is your book off the presses yet?

Ever since I came across your magnificent study of Marx and the Peasantry in the History Workshop, I've been searching for an encounter with you. I hope this letter will be but the beginning, not the end, of a dialogue between us.

It is hard for me to grasp why such a serious work as yours, filling so crucial a need not only in Marx studies but for revolutionaries' perspectives, should be so vernacularly (your expression) titled as "Gods and Craftsmen." No doubt the fact, though both of us focus on the same period of Marx's life, ~~his~~ mine is written as a challenge to all post-Marx Marxists accounts for my more combative style in entitling one centrepiece as "The Unknown Ethnological Notebooks, the Unread Drafts of the Letters to Zasulich, as well as Undigested 1882 Preface to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto."

But your less combative style surely cannot be due to your thinking that the Marx epigones, and worse--worse because, to me, the Russian, Chinese, etc. statist ideologues are not Marxists but state-capitalist ideologues--are really bent on deifying Marx, making all follow the "Scriptures" when, in fact, when Marx was still very much a ~~life~~ and experienced great "New Moments"--different worlds, different paths to revolution, Promethean vision extended to an "absolute movement of becoming"--, they already looked at him and slandered the decade as a "slow death", then rushed into press, not with his most profound new vantage points, but their own narrow visions as "Marx bequests", making sure through all these decades that those works stay buried while they mummified him, so that even today, in the Marx centenary year, it took a non-statist, non-"orthodox" Lawrence Krader finally to transcribe his Ethnological Notebooks? (Is it this work you refer to as "Chronological"?)

There must be a more fundamental reason for our different "styles". Will you forgive me if I ~~come~~ ~~back~~ to that very much misused and iconized word, but nevertheless is so very true--the Dialectic--that, no matter how many times Marx broke with that Hegelian methodology, no matter how fundamentally he transformed that revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution, he kept returning to it, with ever a newer recreation of it as a Marxian dialectic. (Of course, we need to keep in mind when we use the word, return, that, to Hegel, return was not a repetition of the prayer you said as a child, but as you thought of it after a whole lifetime of experience, knowledge--and ~~yes~~ revolution though that was restricted to revolution in thought.)

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It certainly is not due to the fact that you pay much more attention to the Russian Populists than I do. It is not any type of sectarianism that paid less attention to them. I certainly enjoyed your chapter and meticulous scholarly detail. I know of all the close relations of Marx with the Populists and at various times made clear that Marx preferred them to Plekhanov and such "orthodoxy." Where I nevertheless disagree with you is where you, I feel, (and I hope I'm wrong feeling thusly) mistake facts that they furnished to Marx for Reason which was the cause of the return to Hegel. Take the question of "uneven development" which you attribute to Populists analysis. Don't you think that as a dialectical development and its principle of transformation into opposite, of every unity having the opposite within itself, and, above all, the fact, too, that it was in Grundrisse, 1857, long before he learned Russian and encountered Russian revolutionaries, that he first "discovered" pre-capitalist societies and ^{that} that far back began having all that appreciation of craftsmen, and seeing the multilinear and multiplicity of the paths to revolution, including a self-development of each individual so that he defined the future as "absolute movement of becoming"?

For that matter, on peasantry too ^{Marx} he had a greater appreciation--a revolutionary appreciation, despite his many references to "rural idiocy"--of the role of the peasantry as he was laboring to develop the ~~the~~ perspective of a "revolution in permanence" right after the defeat of the 1848-9 revolutions and asking Engels to please study the peasant revolts of the 15th and 16th century and see their historic revolutionary role--and that, again, even before 1852 and the 18th Brumaire statement on the "peasant chorus" without which the proletariat's "solo song becomes a swan song in all peasant countries". And let's not forget that Lenin, when he finally returned to the dialectic "in and for itself", "the dialectic proper" to fight the betrayers of the 2nd Int., it was the transformation into opposite, the unevenness of development, the counter-revolution ^{designate} within the revolution which had him ~~see~~ the Irish and national liberation movements in general as revolutionaries, the bacillus for the proletarian revolution and, to go further, perhaps even "If not through Berlin, then perhaps through Peking" we can first open the path to world revolution.

Is your softness on Engels in any way related to disregarding the Women's Liberation, not just as Movement of today, but as concept in Marx's 1844 E-P Manuscripts to which he returns in the 1880s? I call a trail to the 1980s? I thoroughly disagree with your statement that "On a number of issues it was Engels who lead and indeed often taught Marx, especially insofar as political and military issues were concerned." Again,

I must return to that word, dialectic, which Engels most assuredly never fully got, be it in CAPITAL and the French edition he did not follow or as "The General." What is the use of knowing the technique of the military when you can get so overwhelmed about the Southern Generals who were far superior to those of the North that he feared the South would win. And think of the ~~genuine~~ genuine simplicity AND FEEL FOR HUMAN AS FORCE AS WELL AS REASON as Marx assures him that "One single regiment of Negroes would do marvels for Southern nerves."

I was glad you brought out the remark Marx made in comparing Plerovskiy's book on the "labouring classes" in Russia as "the most substantial book since your Conditions of the Workingclass in England". Sorry to be so sharp against Engels. He certainly wouldn't have had Vols. II and III of CAPITAL without him. He certainly not only never betrayed, but he was closest collaborator of Marx. Nevertheless, he was no Marx, and not only because of the pale Hobsbawm remark that they certain weren't "Siamese twins." (Hobsbawm is such an empiricist and so hostile to the Hegelian dialectic that, though as "historian" he appreciate the Pre-Capitalist Societies and in that respect sees Marx's latest direction, he dares also to excuse the failure to grapple seriously with Grundrisse because Marx was still so Hegelian "in language", that he excuses all--Russians and academics--for not having grappled with Grundrisse when first it became available.)

No, not only were Marx and Engels no "Siamese twins"; Engels started all on that unilinear road and determinist and, by golly, considering Morgan a veritable "Historical Materialist", just a little later on the scene than Marx. (And, by the way, Anti-Duhring, though Marx was still alive is no work of Marx's. I hope you know of that magnificent expose by Terrel Carver--a meticulous work, though he thinks Engels was an original.) Like all other old Marxists who considered for so many years that Marx and Engels were "one", I was brought up on that horrid Origin of the Family. Ah, well, I better stop here, except do permit me one more quote from Hegel vs. your crediting Engels with "capacity to present complex issues with simplicity". That kind of "simplicity" is what Hegel called "Darkness of thought water to clearness of expression."

Finally, thank you very much for working to get me from under being an unperson and trying to get reviews of my ROBA LUXEMBURG, WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Yours,



Faculty of Economic and Social Studies
 University of Manchester/Manchester/M13 9PL
 Telephone: 061-273 7121
 Department of Sociology
 From Professor Teodor Shanin

TS/OAW

21st June 1983

Dear Raya

Thank you for your letter. I hope indeed that we meet each other in not too long a time. I shall be in US from December 1983 to August 1984 (at the Wilson Center in Washington and, probably often enough, with my friends in New York). This should give us the opportunity to do so.

The difference of 'style' has doubtlessly to do with the audience we aim at. For the last 2 decades I was working with the academic environment, British academic environment at that, and learned from experience the usefulness of overstatement of form, provided of course, that there is no compromise as to the contents. Nobody can doubt what I think and believe in when I write, as frequent furious attacks on me have proven. At the same time the audience 'in the middle' will read me and being poison will seep into its bones. All that means 'the academic environment', but then I don't believe that any other environment will at this stage address itself to the issues which interest us both.

The 'chronology' I am referring to is not the stuff which Krader has (very usefully) translated, but what Bershev refers to (see my footnote). My type of people are not permitted to see it in Moscow, but his description is exact enough to be used in evidence.

Concerning the godliness of Marx you find unnecessarily stressed may I say that I find traces of his deification in the best works done and, arguably in your own letter. You clearly find it difficult to accept that Marx has learned anything at all from Engels, which would be impossible remembering the extent of the contacts, (my critical attitude to Engels is obvious, but that is beside the point). More importantly, you are not ready to grant Marx's learning from the Russian theorist and activist while it is enough to compare what was said by them and Marx's developments of approach, for that to come out clearly. Marxist dialectical training and performances made him more open to the understanding of it and broadened it but the idea of uneven development as a major explanation of social transformation, has its roots in Chadaev (transferred to Marx by the populist). May I remind you also that it was Marx who crossed out the passage about 'peasant chorus' from the second edition of his own writings.

In so far as the problems of women liberation are concerned, I do know too little about the theoretical side of it and you may have a point, I would have to think about it. You refer to a study by Carver which I do not know. What is it about?

All the best

Yours

Teodor Shanin

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MS
 Shanin

see reference
to Perishner
and Cradoer in Shanin's letter
6/21/82

July 8, 1983

Dear Teodor Shanin:

It's great news that you are coming to this country, and for a long enough time so that we will absolutely be sure to meet. In fact, I wish you were going to be here in September as I will be in New York that month at the "Conference on Ideology, Bureaucracy and Human Survival" -- and we could begin battling at once; I'm forever embroiled in polemics. But how could you think that I wouldn't give due credit to a Populist or anyone else who was supposed to have inspired Marx? So why, then, did Trotsky call me an anarchist? And you, of all people, think I deify Marx? Ah well, when you add up all the decades I have been a unperson and all the names I've been called, you will understand why I am the only one who understands Lenin's statement that "we Bolsheviks" add 2 and 2 and come up with 50.

Do you get Africa Today? The current issue carries a review of my three major theoretical works and has entitled it: "Insightful Marxist Analysis: Dunayevskaya's Perspective on Africa." When will the History Workshop carry their review? Is your work published? Can I quote from it?

Yes, do read Ferrell Carver's piece on "Marx, Engels and Dialectics" in Political Studies, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1980). In addition to this essay on Anti-Duhring, I found his book, Karl Marx, Texts on Method (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975) quite valuable, but despite all his writing on dialectics, he is a thorough pragmatist.

Yours,

6/10/84, Mike,

how about making one other new point about the 1875 ed. where (col.3, 1st par.,) you speak of the 1940s, 'cutting out last sentence of that par, "Wouldn't it be more pertinent....phil.of rev.?"

INSTEAD, add a new par.on this order:

It is, after all, a fact none of the present authors take note of, that the theory of state-capitalism was then (1941)being worked out by Raya Dunayevskaya having been inspired by that French edition of CAPITAL as she labored over original Russian empiric documents of the Five Year Plans. The specific new paragraph she refers to that Marx added was in the section of accumulation of capital that analyzes the law of concentration and centralisation of capital reaching its ultimate "in the hands of a single capitalist or capitalist corporation. Long before either Marx's EN were known, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ much less our age's creation of the concept of the Third World, Dunayevskaya was taking issue with Rosa Luxemburg's critique of Marx's theory of the accumulation of capital, Luxemburg preferring to contrast to it the reality of imperialism. By developing the dialectics of economics with the ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~a~~ ^a dialectics of revolution, she concluded, ~~after 16 years~~ ^{in a} sumup of 16 years of development of the theory of state-capitalism in ~~MARX'S~~

(pp.132-137)
AND FREEDOM(1958)/what she had written in 1944 in the section of

that
Appearance and Reality, ~~is~~ Marx's 1883 legacy indeed pointed a direction
for our age,

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Mike, this, after which you can return to the final 2 pars.of your thesis, is too long, add ^{to your} a footnote 1, a couple of sentences of wishing here to call attention to RD's M&F where the same Fr.ed. that is so preoccupying all now that we have EN,how dialectically RD developed it both in the 1940s and 1950s for her theory of s-c., giving same pp.132-135 of M&F.