PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION

From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao

By RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

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Marxism and Freedom—from 1776 until Today

Philosophy and Revolution

From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao

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. . . When the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc., of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature—those of his own nature as well as those of so-called "nature"? What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution—i.e. the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previously established yardstick—*an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?*

KARL MARX

NEW INTRODUCTION TO THE 1982 REPRINT

> "I love all men who *dive*. Any fish can swim near the surface, but it takes a great whale to go downstairs five miles or more; and if he don't attain the bottom, why, all the lead in Galena can't fashion the plummet that will. I'm not talking of Mr. Emerson now—but of the whole corps of thought-divers, that have been diving and coming up again with blood shot eyes since the world began."
>
> —Herman Melville

The near revolution that was aborted at its highpoint—Paris, May 1968—became an inducement for some intellectuals who had branded the 1950s as a period of "the end of ideology" to refurbish that characterization as what distinguished the quiescent 1970s from the turbulent 1960s. But, just as the East European revolts of the 1950s proved the end-of-ideology proponents to be totally wrong, so the 1970s saw, not the death of thought, but new beginnings both in thought and in fact. Just as the new movement *from practice*

that had begun with the 17 June 1953 East German revolt extended itself, in the 1960s, to the birth of a whole new Third World as well as a new generation of revolutionaries, so out of the theoretical developments came the birth of new studies of Hegel and Marx. This was further extended to a study of Lenin's philosophic break in 1914, seen in his *Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic*. Although my translation of Lenin's "1914-16 Philosophic Notebooks" was the first to be made available to the English-speaking world (in 1957),* it was not until 1970 that Lenin's relationship to Hegel became a highly debatable subject. That year was the 200th anniversary of the birth of Hegel and the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lenin, and many of the conferences on each criss-crossed on a global scale.

I was especially proud of the fact that the paper I presented to the First International Conference of Telos, "The Shock of Recognition and the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin,"‡ was reprinted in a special issue of the philosophic journal of Yugoslav dissidents, *Praxis* (5/6—1970). In 1973 a new, expanded version of this study became an important chapter in my *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*. I had embarked on this work directly after the aborted May 1968 revolution, precisely because my view of the situation was the exact opposite of that of the end-of-ideology proponents. I felt that digging into Marx's new continent of thought and revolution would first reveal new beginnings for the 1970s. That required returning to Marx's deep roots in the Hegelian dialectic, which Marx had recreated as the dialectics of revolution when he traced the spontaneous development of workers' revolts. To work out the relatedness of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic to the

*This was included as an Appendix to *Marxism and Freedom*.

‡The first presentation of my ideas on the subject appeared in the Spring 1970 issue of *Telos*. This was expanded at that October 1970 conference, the papers for which were published in book form in *Towards a New Marxism* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1973).

problematic of the 1970s became the aim of my work.

Part One—"Why Hegel? Why Now?"—begins with Hegel and continues with Marx and Lenin, stressing the fact that, just as Lenin had to return to Marx's origins in Hegel, not for scholastic reasons, but because World War I was a crisis also of *established* Marxism, so World War II, following the Hitler-Stalin Pact, made it imperative to remove the perversion of Hegelian Marxism from *established* "Marxism-Leninism." It was, after all, not the "mysticism" of Hegel's "negation of the negation" that made that state-capitalist land that called itself Communist (Russia) attack "residual" Hegelianism in the young Marx. Rather, Hegel became worrisome to the Russian theoreticians because it was not just the young Marx but the mature Marx who had recreated "negation of the negation" as "revolution in permanence"—and they were witnessing its recreation on the historic scene in East Europe.

Beginning with the very first chapter, "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning, the Ceaseless Movement of Ideas," Hegel is analyzed both "in and for himself" as I cover his major philosophical works—*The Phenomenology of Mind, The Science of Logic,* and *The Philosophy of Mind,* especially his final three syllogisms—and is examined in the context of today's ideological debates on Hegel.

This point I reiterated also to a Hegel scholars' conference* that was devoted to strict textual analysis of Hegel's work (and for which I therefore delivered a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis of the final chapter of Hegel's *Science of Logic,* "The Absolute Idea"). I held that it did not matter "whether the enduring relevance of Hegel has stood the test of time because of the devotion and analytical rigor of Hegel scholars, or because a movement of freedom surged up *from below* and was followed by new cognition studies." The point is that

*See the papers delivered at the 1974 convention of the Hegel Society of America, in *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980).

"there is no doubt that *because* Absolute Negativity signifies transformation of reality, the dialectic of contradiction and totality of crises, the dialectic of liberation, Hegel's thought comes to life at all critical points of history, which Hegel called a 'birth-time of history.'"

Two very different kinds of criticism were directed toward *Philosophy and Revolution.* One came from young revolutionaries; the other from Hegel scholars like Prof. George Armstrong Kelly.

The young revolutionaries wanted to know why I began with the chapter on Hegel instead of with Chapter 9, "New Passions and New Forces." It seemed to them that the latter would have been more correct, both because that chapter is concrete, is "today," and because they would definitely find therein a point of affinity, which would make it easier for them to then grapple with Hegel. I must confess that—although I hold fast to the structure of the work, which begins with Hegel because that was the development historically and dialectically—I nevertheless have advised some activist youth who have found it difficult to grapple with Hegel to read Chapter 9 first; they, in turn, have told me that reading Chapter 9 did help them to tackle Chapter 1. But the truth that there would have been no new continent of thought and of revolution without Marx's deep roots in the Hegelian dialectic. In fact, what is needed now is to see that it takes both the movements from practice to theory and from theory to practice to work out a philosophy of revolution.

On the other hand, Hegel scholars have acted as if I subverted Hegel, or, rather, followed Marx, who did so.* This was expressed most succinctly by Prof. George Armstrong Kelly in his book *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis:*‡ "For the complex linkage of culture, politics and philosophy

*See Louis Dupre's "Recent Literature on Marx and Marxism," in *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Oct.-Dec. 1974.

‡Princeton University Press, 1978. The pages in parentheses in the following text refer to this edition.

within the matrix of 'absolute Idea,' Mme Dunayevskaya proposes to substitute an unchained dialectic which she baptises 'Absolute Method,' a method that 'becomes irresistible ... because our hunger for theory arises from the totality of the present global crisis' " (p. 239). Professor Kelly, I feel sure, knows that the expression *absolute Methode* is an expression not of mine, but of Hegel's. There is no doubt whatsoever that he is more adept than I with knowledge of the direct references to that expression. Therefore, he must have meant to say that "an unchained dialectic" is not something that Hegel would have considered his second negativity (which he called "absolute Method") to be. It nevertheless remains a fact that absolute negativity is not something I "baptised" Absolute Method, but Hegel did; and that Marx's singling out "negativity as the moving and creative principle" was precisely because of his profound comprehension not only of economics and politics, but of culture and philosophy—and revolution. And it was again at a period of world crisis, this time World War I, that Lenin singled out that section as "not at all bad as a kind of summing up of dialectics."

Where Professor Kelly stresses Hegel's statement, "Once the realm of thought is revolutionized, reality can scarcely hold out," I would call attention to Hegel's statement on his praise of the Idea because of its relationship to reality, "the pivot on which the impending world revolution turned..." (*Philosophy of Right*, p. 10). In a word, what we are disagreeing on is today, and our attitude to philosophy and revolution, when in the contemporary world it becomes philosophy *of* revolution. Professor Kelly himself calls attention to the fact: "If Hegel has not literally been to the barricades of strife-ridden cities, or explosive rural *focos*, he has been in the thick of current ideological combat" (p. 224).

Professor Kelly may not have made his statement as "proof" of any integrality of philosophy and revolution for the 1970s or the 1980s. In *Philosophy and Revolution*, however, I have used such manifestations of ideological

debates about Hegel and Marx on two levels. In Part Two, "Alternatives," I analyzed the theories of revolutionaries of the stature of Trotsky and Mao as well as the Existentialism of Sartre, whom I called "Outsider Looking In." In Part Three, "Economic Reality and Dialectics of Revolution," I covered actual revolution in relationship both to the objective economic situation and to the new passions and forces active in the revolution, whether they concern "The African Revolutions and the World Economy" or "State-Capitalism and the East European Revolts." Indeed, I am especially proud of the fact that the very first paragraph of Chapter 8 begins with the spontaneous upsurges of 1970 in Gdansk and Szczecin, since they set the foundation for what is happening in the 1980s. That East European dissidents helped to write that chapter played no small part, of course, in the result that it still sounds *au courant*.

The particular chapter that the activist youth were anxious to read first because they identified with those "New Passions and New Forces" (not only the Black dimension and the anti-Vietnam-War movement, but also Women's Liberation and the challenge from the Left in China, called Sheng Wu-lien*) was deceptively simple precisely because the struggles were so familiar to them. The truth is, however, that philosophy was as present there as it was in Chapter 1. Take the most exciting color and freedom aspiration of the 1960s—Black—and read Frantz Fanon's profound articulation of the African freedom struggles as being "not a treatise on the universal but the untidy affirmation of an original idea propounded as an absolute." He certainly was not leaving it to others to work out a philosophy of revolution. A rereading of *The Wretched of the Earth* will show how very crucial Fanon considered that challenge both in thought and in practice. Fanon pleaded for a national consciousness that

*See pp. 168-187 of this book. The destruction of Democracy Wall in post-Mao China shows the continuity between Mao and Deng when it comes to fighting against young revolutionaries.

would not stop at any national boundaries but extend itself internationally as the struggle for all, with a new banner and a new concept of humanity: "This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism both for itself and for others." It is this work that was read by Steve Biko and the revolutionary Black youth of South Africa; it became the foundation for a new Black Consciousness Movement of global dimensions.*

That Black revolution was present in the United States as well, and here, too, it raised questions that went beyond the immediate needs and demanded to know what would happen the day *after* the revolution. The reader will find especially cogent the fear that the Black women's liberationist expressed that "when it comes to putting down the gun" she might once again have a broom shoved into her hands. The problematic of the day, indeed, is contained in that question, "What happens the day after the revolution?" That is precisely the uniqueness of today's forces of revolution, which is its Reason as well, whether it be the Women's Liberation Movement, white and Black, or the youth.

Take the question of the new form in which what was the anti-Vietnam-War youth movement has reappeared in the antinuclear movement of the 1980s. This very day (10 October 1981), more than a quarter of a million youth have been marching in West Germany. This was preceded by the week-long confrontation at Diablo Canyon, as well as by massive demonstrations throughout West Europe. In a word, the continuing, persistent, never-ending revolts into the 1980s—whether in East Europe or the Black revolution; whether Women's Liberation or the antiwar movement or the very latest unemployed youth revolts, white and Black, in Great Britain—signal a new stage also of cognition.

*See *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*, by John Alan and Lou Turner (Detroit: News & Letters, 1978).

This can by no means be limited to a mere "updating" of Marx's Marxism, if one is to find a trail to the 1980s.* Finding that trail is the indispensable foundation, but not the whole. To work out the problematic of our age, Marx's Marxism must be reworked anew on the basis of both the actual freedom struggles in our age and a new stage of cognition. Whether we call it Absolute Idea as new beginning, or a new relationship of theory and practice, the point is that it is only a new unity of objective and subjective that can release vast untapped creative energies.

Only when the ideal of a new classless society no longer remains simply an "underlying philosophy" but becomes social *practice*—at one and the same time uprooting the exploitative, inhuman capital-labor relations as well as creating totally new human relations, beginning with the Man-Woman relationship—can we say that we have met the challenge of our age both in philosophy and in revolution. It is to this that I hope *Philosophy and Revolution* has made a contribution.

—Raya Dunayevskaya

Detroit, Michigan
10 October 1981

*See my new work, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, which further develops this idea on the basis of previously unknown writings from the last decade of Marx's life.