
The
**Philosophic
Moment**
of
Marxist-Humanism

two historic-philosophic writings

by

Raya Dunayevskaya

- Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy, June 1, 1987
 - Letters on Hegel's Absolutes, May 12 and 20, 1953
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<https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/archives/11723.pdf>
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/archives/11733.pdf> &
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/archives/11753.pdf>

Then checked against the primary digit scan of the original text which is on the Raya Dunayevskaya Archive, available at:

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The original pamphlet was published by News and Letters Committees in 1989, the year after Dunayevskaya passed away.

Preface

"There truly is no separation between theory and practice, and this indeed was shown as our unique characteristic from the original 1953 breakthrough on the Absolute Idea as comprising the unity of both the *movement* from practice that is itself a form of theory and the movement from theory that is itself a form of philosophy and revolution".

- Raya Dunayevskaya [1](#)

In the last year of her life, 1986-87, Raya Dunayevskaya, founder of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, was at work on a new book she had tentatively titled "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'Party' and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity".[2](#) In the course of this Work, Dunayevskaya turned once more to a re-examination of her May 12 and 20, 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes. In her Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987, Dunayevskaya created a new philosophic category, singling out these 1953 Letters as the "philosophic moment" which had determined her development of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism from the 1950s to the 1980s. She there wrote, "In Hegelian dialectics, the philosophic moment is a determinant; even if the person who was driven to articulate the Idea of that 'moment' was very nearly unconscious as to its depth and its ramifications, it remained the element that governed the concretization that follows the laborious birth that poured forth in a torrent nevertheless". We have chosen to issue this publication in its present form - with the Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy appearing first, followed by the 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes - because it is Dunayevskaya's 1986-87 view of her 1953 Letters which enables us to see what she called the "many Universals inherent" in them for today.

Integral to Dunayevskaya's work of 1986-87 was her concentration on a crucial problem of our era - the relation between the search for non-elitist forms of organization and the dialectics of philosophy. That relation is crucial to work out if we are to overcome the legacy of unfinished, aborted, transformed-into-opposite revolutions. In singling out these 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes as the "ground and roof" for overcoming the separation of philosophy from organization, Dunayevskaya's June 1, 1987 presentation speaks to all those searching for pathways to overcome the division between theory and practice in the struggle to uproot this racist, sexist, class-divided society.

The depth of today's objective-subjective crises has brought new challenges to the task of transforming reality. As Dunayevskaya wrote in her last "Theory/Practice" column, "The abysmal lower depths that the Reagan retrogression has sunk the world into throughout the seven years of this decade has polluted the ideological air, not only of the ruling class, but has penetrated the Left itself. Such a deep retrogression urgently demands that, along with the economic and political tasks facing us, we look for philosophic new beginnings".³

Each of Dunayevskaya's "trilogy of revolution" - *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until today* (1958); *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973); and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) - was written to meet the need for such philosophic new beginnings. Each of these works represented a concretization of, and a return to, the 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes. In her Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987, Dunayevskaya re-examined this 1953 philosophic breakthrough once more, this time in relation to the dialectics of organization and philosophy - in Marx, in post-Marx Marxism, and in Marxist-Humanism. In this presentation, which had three parts - *The Philosophic Point*; *Dialectics of Organization*; and *Untrodden Paths in Organization* - Dunayevskaya created a whole new philosophic category, pinpointing her 1955 Letters on Hegel's

Absolutes as the "philosophic moment" from which all Marxist-Humanist originality has sprung. The challenge that is issued by Dunayevskaya's last writings is to work out philosophic new beginnings by re-creating Marxist-Humanism on the basis of the new illumination that the category of the 1953 Letters as the "philosophic moment" sheds upon her entire body of ideas.

Since Dunayevskaya's death on June 9, 1987, meeting this challenge has become even more urgent - and more difficult - than ever before. What makes it possible to meet this challenge is that Dunayevskaya's June 1, 1987 singling out of her 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes as the "philosophic moment" profoundly illuminates the unique historic-philosophic contributions of Marxist-Humanism.

The 1953 Letters were written in the midst of a new objective-subjective turning point in the post-World War II era. It was a period of rich theoretic development on the part of Dunayevskaya, who had been involved in a decade long exploration of Hegel's dialectic and its relation to Marx and Lenin.⁴ At the same time, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, new stirrings for freedom by the masses were emerging. In the U.S., the introduction of Automation into industry was being met with new workers' revolts, while in Russia it was the period following Stalin's death, which would soon be followed by new revolts.

On the very day that Stalin died, March 5, 1953, Dunayevskaya wrote an analysis arguing that an incubus had been lifted from the minds of the Russian masses and that new revolts were sure to follow. When she asked Charles Denby, the Black production worker who became editor of *News & Letters* in 1955 until 1983, to find out the reaction of workers in his plant to Stalin's death, he reported one worker's statement: "I have just the man to take his place - my foreman". It became a jumping-off point for a series of articles by Dunayevskaya on the world ramifications of Stalin's death, which sparked intense debates within Correspondence Committees (of

which she was a co-leader, along with C.L.R. James and Grace Lee Boggs).

So deep was Dunayevskaya's search for an absolute opposite to this age of state-capitalist totalitarianism that, as she put it in 1983, "I was not satisfied with the economic and political analysis, but wanted to work out the philosophic ground. All these happenings couldn't be accidental; nothing that historic could be without reason; I felt I had to work this out".⁵

Of crucial importance was Dunayevskaya's dialogue with Hegel's dialectic throughout the years 1941-53, which included studies of Lenin's 1914 commentary on Hegel's "Doctrine of the Notion" and Marx's re-creation of the Hegelian dialectic in both his 1844 "Humanist Essays" and *Capital*. Her dialogue with Hegel reached a new philosophic stage with her May 12, 1953 Letter focusing on the "Absolute Idea" in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and May 20, 1953 Letter focusing on "Absolute Mind" in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*. As she later wrote, "I turned to philosophy and saw, in the Absolute Idea, the breakdown of the division between theory and practice - the movement to total freedom".⁶ Her philosophic breakthrough preceded by six weeks the first mass upsurge from within Communist totalitarianism, the June 17, 1953 East German workers' revolt.

These 1953 Letters, Dunayevskaya wrote in *Philosophy and Revolution* (p. 300), "proved to be a new divide within Marxism" between those who stopped at the economic analysis of Russia as state-capitalist and herself, as she proceeded to develop the Humanism of Marxism for our state-capitalist age. Following the break-up of Correspondence Committees she established News and Letters Committees in 1955.

The 1953 Letters were the "ground and roof" from which Dunayevskaya developed Marxist-Humanism philosophically, organizationally, and politically; indeed she had included them in the first publication of News and Letters Committees in 1955, in the

mimeographed pamphlet *Philosophic Notes*. Nevertheless, News and Letters Committees never published them in a widely circulated form. At its Labor Day, 1988 Convention, News and Letters Committees voted to publish the 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes first in the pages of *News & Letters* newspaper, and then in this printed form along with Dunayevskaya's Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987.

What compels this publication now is a two-fold challenge: the need for philosophic new beginnings in the face of today's economic, political and ideological crises *and* the need to overcome the separation between an epochal philosophic breakthrough and its organizational expression. In issuing this publication we invite our readers to join us in the attempt to re-create Marxist-Humanism on the basis of its philosophic moment.

- The Resident Editorial Board

News and Letters Committees

January, 1989

Notes

¹ This is from a letter of Dunayevskaya of Jan. 13, 1987, see *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13, #10726, which forms part of her Archives, titled *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection-Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of its World Development*, on deposit at Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Dunayevskaya's Archives are available on microfilm [UPDATE: the Dunayevskaya Archives are now available online at: <https://rayadunayevskaya.org>].

² At the time of her death on June 9, 1987, Dunayevskaya had not written this book, but her many notes for it have been collected and deposited in the *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13. See especially the 232 page Section 1.8, "Talking to Myself": Dunayevskaya's Notes for the 'book-to-be'".

³ See Raya Dunayevskaya, "On Political Divides and Philosophic New Beginnings", in *News & Letters*, July 25, 1987 [UPDATE: the back catalogue of *News & Letters*, from the first issue in 1955 up to December 2009, has been digitised and can be accessed on the Marxist Internet Archive at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/news-and-letters/index.htm>].

⁴ For Dunayevskaya's decade long theoretic work that preceded her 1951 Letters, see her discussion in *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1984).

⁵ See Dunayevskaya's In Memoriam to "Charles Denby, Worker-Editor", in *News & Letters*, November, 1983. This appears as an Afterword in the 1989 Wayne State University Press edition of Denby's *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*.

[6](#) This quotation is from Dunayevskaya's Introduction to the 1956 edition of *Philosophic Notes*, which included her 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes".

Editor's Note

The Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy was written as a talk to be delivered to the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees as part of the preparation for its 1987 national Plenum. Dunayevskaya never got to deliver the talk, but the manuscript as prepared by her has been preserved, with her notations, in the *Supplement to the Raya Duneyevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13. The text of this June 1, 1987 presentation was not checked by the author for presentation in printed form. It has not been edited, except for obvious typographical and grammatical errors. All footnotes were added in 1989 by the editors, as was all material in square brackets.

The title given here of the June 1, 1987 presentation was chosen by the editors. In her outline for the talk, Dunayevskaya called it, "Pre-pre Post-Plenum, i.e. - Executive Session Type of Talk in three parts: I. *The Philosophic Point*, II. *Dialectics of Organization*, III. *Untrodden Paths in Organization*".

Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987

The chaotic and informal form of presentation tonight is not due to lack of deliberation and working out, much in advance of the time necessary to draw a balance sheet for the Plenum. Rather, it is because so many different and yet interrelated topics are reaching for solution, that I felt it very necessary to consult with you in this seemingly "off the top of my head" talk.

I. *The Philosophic Point*

To understand today we must begin at the beginning, that is to say, as always, with Marx. Specifically the two periods are: the first and the last, the first being *the* philosophic moment, 1844. That laid the ground for all future development. The last being the long hard *trek and process* of development - all the Revolutions, as well as philosophic-political-economic concretizations, culminating in *Capital*. Yet the full organizational expression of all came only then, i.e., the last decade, especially the 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*. Why only then?

Take first another look at 1844 - the philosophic moment for all of Marx's Marxism, including organization. Throughout Marx's life he reached to concretize it. But none of the concretizations, whether 1848 with the Communist League, or 1864 with the First International, or even 1871 with the Paris Commune, fully reached to the level of the philosophic moment of 1844. Only with the *Critique of the Gotha Program* in 1875 did Marx fully return to that moment as it was concretized for organization, and even then, he did not call it philosophy, but "principle."

The specific point that I'm singling out from the 1844 founding of a New Continent of Thought and of Revolution is when Marx articulates the great merit of Hegel in discovering the "negation of the negation", and the great demerit of this same Hegel in enveloping it in such mysticism by dealing with it as various stages of consciousness, rather than as men and women thinking. Marx, on the other hand, declares himself not only against capitalism and "vulgar communism", but proclaims his philosophy to be "a new Humanism."¹

To this day 1844 was *the* philosophic moment of Marx's discovery of that whole new continent of thought and of revolution that "Marxism" certainly lacked, and instead singled out *one* of the developments -

economics - so that we didn't know "new humanism" until the Depression. But in fact, it is that which was the *ground for organization* throughout his life, from the moment he did "experience" the philosophic moment, even if it was only correspondence (letters) soon to become international correspondence.

Seriously, however, as organization, and that organization - the Communist League - accepted the challenge to the existing capitalist world, and that not separated from all political tendencies and parties. I'm referring, of course, to the *Communist Manifesto*, whose second part is a critique of utopian socialism, etc. What we want to do here is to compare the 1847 *Communist Manifesto* to the 1864 First International (and in 1871) hailing the Paris Commune as *the form, the working existence, the communal non-state as needing only release of all the mental, manual and emotional potentiality.*²

Why then is the actual concretization of a new unity so sharply critiqued as in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*? That becomes the whole rub and the urgent problematic of our day which must be worked out.

First, enter history. In 1847 critique meant the ruthless critique of all that exists that he spoke of in his philosophic break with the bourgeoisie and Hegel, concretized on the level of the existing "parties" in that period. (As we were to see in 1860 in his letter to Freiligrath, when Freiligrath, in refusing to get involved in the Vogt Affair, said he didn't belong to the party any longer. Marx's reply was: Neither am I, to any existing party. I didn't mean it in the ephemeral sense, I meant it in the *historic*. Clearly, Marx meant that no one could re-write the history, and both the revolution of 1848 and the *Manifesto* that anticipated it and followed it, are *historic*).³

It is that historic period that changed when *international* workers got together to take a position on what was happening on a different continent. That too had a "manifesto", perhaps not as bold as the

Communist Manifesto, thought Marx, which was actually the preamble to the Constitution and By-laws to the First International.

AT THE SAME TIME Marx didn't hesitate a second once the Paris Commune burst out, and some trade unionists didn't share the enthusiasm, to write them out of the First International, and not only to declare the need to go lower and deeper, but insist that they didn't represent the majority of the masses; the Paris Communards did, and it is that Idea that defines history now as both ongoing and the future.

II. Dialectics of Organization

So, what happened in 1875? Look at how the self-development of the Idea that we now call Marxism has concretized itself *when* its greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, in its French edition, is finished, and that has philosophy spelled out in the most concrete terms from fetishism of commodities to the new passions and new forces that go against the accumulation of capital. And he has the experience now of both political parties and forms of organization emerging spontaneously from the masses, *plus philosophy*.

Critique of the Gotha Program: There is no way now, no matter how Marx kept from trying to give any blueprints for the future, not to develop a general view of where we're headed for the day *after* the conquest of power, the day *after* we have rid ourselves of the birthmarks of capitalism *when* a new generation can finally see all its potentiality put an end once and for all to the division between mental and manual labor.

Let me now state something general from Hegel on the question of "The Philosophic Point" which would also apply to us.⁴

In Hegelian dialectics, the philosophic moment is a determinant; even if the person who was driven to articulate the Idea of that "moment" was very nearly unconscious as to its depth and its ramifications, it remained the element that governed the concretization that follows the laborious birth that poured forth in a torrent nevertheless.

Specifically and concretely, in our case the moment I'm referring to is May 12 and 20, 1953. The Idea is in demystifying the Absolute as either God or the closed ontology, as the unity I singled out, a dual movement, from theory to practice, from practice as well as from theory.

We were so overwhelmed with the movement from practice that we were hardly as enthusiastic or as concrete about the movement from theory, if not actually forgetting it. I therefore wish to go into great detail about those two letters in 1953, *not* as the small coin of concrete questions, but as the many Universals inherent in it, so that we can see what is still new in it that we must develop for the book.⁵

Everyone has heard so much about 1953 as the stage of breakthrough on the Absolute Idea that you may think: what else is there to be said? The whole point, however, about the philosophic point that became a philosophic determinant, and not just the ground of, but became so startlingly new and clear with Marx, that looking at it for this age, specifically ourselves, it began to appear in an altogether new way. Here is what I mean:

Heretofore what we stressed when we pointed to 1953 as source was the important point of 1955, when there was an actual organizational break-up.⁶ Then what became clearer was that actually, insofar as the words "Marxist-Humanism" are concerned, we couldn't say 1955, but as it was expressed in written form in *Marxism and Freedom* in 1957. Now what is clear is not that any of the other dates are wrong, but that each time it is a specific period that makes one realize that actually what wasn't clear was what was in *the* philosophic moment, and *only when* the objective and subjective merge is it "proven". Oh, the source, the ground, really also had a roof. But the context in between, the structure, couldn't be controlled without the objective situation. But that, on the other hand, made it very clear that we are back to focusing on the philosophic moment.

1987 AND THE IMPERATIVENESS OF BOTH THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE URGENCY NOW MANIFESTS THAT WHAT HAS BEEN AN UNTRODDEN PATH ALL THESE YEARS, BY ALL POST-MARX MARXISTS, INCLUDING LENIN - WHO DID DIG INTO PHILOSOPHY, BUT NOT THE PARTY, AND LUXEMBURG, WHO DID DIG INTO SPONTANEITY, BUT NOT PHILOSOPHY - IS ORGANIZATION, the Dialectics of Philosophy and Organization.

Why did we think once we took the big step of separating, indeed breaking, with the elitist party, that, it is sufficient to do so politically without doing so philosophically?

Wasn't it because we actually had not penetrated the dialectic of organization in its relationship to dialectics of philosophy, though we certainly never stopped using the word "dialectics"? In a word, even when we used "Absolute" in relationship to method and definitely stressed that we do not mean just a tool or application, we did think that it was not just the threshold of the Absolute Idea, but the Absolute Idea as its ultimate, *as if Absolute Mind was no more than what Absolute Idea was in the "Logic" and Hegel didn't need to tell us that we better not stop there and instead go to "Philosophy of Nature" and "Philosophy of Mind"*.

No wonder that when C.L.R. James said that he looked into *Philosophy of Mind*, he concluded that he found nothing there "for us."⁷ I must have felt dissatisfied, since that is where I went, and precisely, I might say, on the question of what we called "dialectics of the party," specifying however, that I wasn't interested either in the mass party, which the masses will build, or in the elitist party, which we definitely oppose, but in what happens to a small group "like us" who know that nothing can be done without the masses; and are with them, but they (small groups) are theoreticians and they always seem to be around too. So, what is the *objectivity* which explains their presence, as the objectivity explains the spontaneous outburst of the masses? In a word, I was looking for the objectivity of subjectivity.

The one thing I did not mention in discussing 1953 is that the letter of May 20, where I suddenly speak on the *Philosophy of Mind*, came after C.L.R. James had said in his Notes - or the letter accompanying his Notes - that he had looked into *Philosophy of Mind*, and found nothing there "for us" (naturally that means Johnson-Forest Tendency).⁸ So why did I go to the *Philosophy of Mind* after connecting the end of the last few pages of *Science of Logic* with *Philosophy of Mind*? And that was directly after I just

repeated what the Johnson-Forest Tendency had worked out, that Lenin said Marx's development in the section on commodities not only bore resemblance to Hegel's syllogistic U-P-I,⁹ but moreover, what is further to be noted is that just as Lenin had noted that Chapter One of *Capital* - and we noted Chapter One including fetishism bore resemblance to U-P-I - so the accumulation of capital, its General Absolute Law, was based on the Absolute Idea, holding that just as that meant the dialectic of bourgeois society, its end by the revolt of the workers, so Marx "also set the limits to the dialectic of the party, which is part of bourgeois society and will wither away with the passing of the bourgeoisie...". Therefore, what we were working on was not just a book, but a *philosophy*, a whole new philosophy of dialectics for our age, of post-World War II, and that, of course; meant cracking the Absolute. That is where we all stopped. C.L.R. James promised he would do it, but he didn't. Instead, he said he had looked into the Philosophy of Mind and found nothing in there for us.

So, whatever it was that was driving me in 1953 to write those letters of May 12 and May 20, it suddenly became the *whole* of Hegel's work, beginning, as always, with what Marx said was most important in *Phenomenology of Mind*, going through the *Science of Logic* with Lenin, but refusing to follow either Lenin in that last paragraph,¹⁰ or C.L.R. James on the fact that he found nothing in *Philosophy of Mind*, and delving not only into that work, but into those last final syllogisms that nobody, including bourgeois academia, had *seriously* tackled the next decade.¹¹ I was not debating them or what they did or did not do; in this case, my "ignorance" saved me from having to argue with them or anybody, but, again it was Marx who, though he broke off his manuscript before the final section of *Philosophy of Mind*, his very sharp digging into *Capital*, especially the general law of Capitalist accumulation and the new passions and new forces, led me to conclude suddenly that the dialectic of the Party as well as of the contradictions in the Absolute Idea itself, resulted in my seeing what I called "the new society", i.e. the end of the division between mental and manual.

Thus, that philosophic moment was the core for those heretofore formative years of News and Letters Committees which ended with the completion of *Marxism and Freedom*, where we saw that the little phrase "the movement from practice" set the whole structure of *Marxism and Freedom*. Not only that: it served both as ground and roof for the analysis of the contemporary world, both theoretically and practically, including the altogether new voices from both the proletariat and the new revolts in the Communist world, as well as the Black Revolution right here in the U.S.. I'm sure I don't have to repeat that to this day that first edition had one banner-raising event of world historic importance, by including the first translation both of Marx's *Humanist Essays* and Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*.

[Here Raya said - on June 5, from her hospital bed - that she wished to include as part of this presentation the following six paragraphs of her "Theory/Practice" column written that day].¹²

I returned to the final Chapter 12 of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. Its penultimate paragraph read:

"It isn't because we are any 'smarter' that we can see so much more than other post-Marx Marxists. Rather, it is because of the maturity of our age. It is true that other post-Marx Marxists have rested on a truncated Marxism; it is equally true that no other generation could have seen the problematic of our age, much less solve our problems. Only live human beings can recreate the revolutionary dialectic forever anew. And these live human beings must do so in theory as well as in practice. It is not a question only of meeting the challenge from practice, but of being able to meet the challenge from the self-development of the Idea, and of deepening theory to the point where it reaches Marx's concept of the philosophy of 'revolution in Permanence'".

It was at that point that I asked that the following paragraph be added:

"There is a further challenge to the form of organization which we have worked out as the committee form rather than the 'party-to-lead'. But, though committee-form and 'party-to-lead' are opposites, they are not absolute opposites. At the point when the theoretic-form reaches philosophy, the challenge demands that we synthesize not only the new relations of theory to practice, and all the forces of revolution, but philosophy's 'suffering, patience and labor of the negative', i.e. experiencing absolute negativity. *Then and only then* will we succeed in a revolution that will achieve a classless, non-racist, non-sexist, truly human, truly new society. That which Hegel judged to be the synthesis of the 'Self-Thinking Idea' and the 'Self-Bringing-forth of Liberty', Marxist-Humanism holds, is what Marx had called the new society. The many paths to get there are not easy to work out ...".

Now return to our own situation, and think of the attacks that we will be facing in 1987, when we state openly that even the one post-Marx Marxist revolutionary who did reach deeply into philosophy - Lenin - nevertheless did not do so on the question of organization. In truth, he never renounced his position on the vanguard party set out in 1902 in *What is to be Done?*, though he often critiqued it himself. He profoundly extended his new breakthrough in philosophy to a concretization of the dialectics of revolution, and yet never changed his position on the need for the 'thin layer of Bolsheviks' as a vanguard party organization. In 1982 in *Rosa, Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, we critiqued Lenin politically. To fully work out the dialectics of philosophy and organization for our age, it is now clear that that critique must dig deep, philosophically.

The whole truth is that even Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, which remains the ground for organization today, was written 112 years ago. What is demanded is not mere 'updating,' after all the aborted revolutions of the post-World War II world. 'Ground' will not suffice alone; we have to finish the building - the roof and its contents. This is what I am working on now in the *Dialectics Of*

Organization and Philosophy. I would appreciate hearing from our readers on their thoughts on this.

Now then, it seems to me that in a certain sense we could call it a shock for me to have experienced this in *this year 1987*, when a great deal of research was done by others - Eugene, Mike, Peter, Cyrus, Kevin, Sheila, Olga¹³ - on the many ways that spontaneity appeared in the forms of councils, soviets, committees, communes, and so forth, not only to say the generalization: Yes, the party and the forms of organization born from spontaneity are opposites, but they are not *absolute* opposite. The change in the title, to *Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy*¹⁴ really means that the absolute opposite is philosophy, and that we have not yet worked out organizationally. *Because ...*

Take Pannekoek. The Council Communists were certainly earlier on the scene and directly opposed Lenin in a friendly way, on the question of a single form of organization, insisting that when it comes to production, the people at the point of production must maintain their power after the revolution. But, did they ever give up their party? Didn't they think, along with Rosa Luxemburg, that spontaneity is no substitute for the wholeness of internationalism and theory? On the contrary, they took that for granted. What not only was not taken for granted, but never even approached in any way whatever, unless one calls "approached" a total rejection, was philosophy. Except, except, except...

The except of course, refers to Lenin. But he too kept to old and Plekhanov when it came to Russia.

One must not hem in a new duality into an old reality because of the similarities of abstract opposites colliding. It is the collision of *concrete* opposites that demands a new unity. Without that philosophic moment there is no way to hew out a new path. And for Lenin there was no philosophic moment insofar as *organization* was concerned.

In the case of organization, every Left was grabbing at some old contradictions, and with them, some old solutions. Which is why the most cogent moment for our problematic, and for showing up more than ambivalence in Lenin, was the fact that Pannekoek (and Gorter), with that creative, new concept of council communism, i.e. power in the hands of the workers at the point of production, came the old, vulgarized, abysmally narrow, materialistic philosophy of Lenin's 1908 *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, as against Lenin's great new philosophic breakthrough on the Larger *Logic*, and as if that self-movement of ideas and of people was a "betrayal" of the class struggle. And to this day, that is what Council Communists are swearing by (see *Lenin as Philosopher*).¹⁵

Lenin, too, never raised philosophy directly in relationship to organization. It was at most a phrase, like the famous reference in the Trade Union Debate, where he brings in, in a general way only, dialectics and eclecticism (see page 65 of Volume IX of Lenin's *Selected Works*, on "a glass cylinder").¹⁶

And the *epigones* have been busy trying to say that whereas it was correct for Lenin not to touch the question of the party when there was the great phenomenon of Soviets, "we" must no longer avoid the question of party. Whereupon, they end up just with two more reasons for being in favor of the vanguard party.

III. Conclusion: Untrodden Paths in Organization

In a single word, we must go into these untrodden paths. We must not, I repeat *must not*, look for a crutch just because a new epigone is using the word "democracy" to mean more than one party, and a Mao is espousing at one and the same time, "bombard the headquarters" and "the Party remains the vanguard" (+ vs. bureaucratization...).

Since Marx himself laid the ground - and that, remember, is 112 years ago - in other words, the whole of post-Marx Marxism beginning with Engels has not built on that ground. And Engels, you must remember, did fight hard to have the *Critique of the Gotha Program* published, if in a "moderated" form, and yet assented to the establishment of the Second International. And the German Social Democracy had been forced to publish it, but only as a "contribution to the discussion", not as ground for organization.

Lenin did return to Marx's roots in Hegel, and did see that the *Critique of the Gotha Program* had never really been concretized as the smashing of the bourgeois state, without which you could not have a revolution. In a word, he certainly worked out the dialectics of revolution, and made it be in Russia. But, but, but - he too didn't touch the question of the party. On the contrary, it didn't even go as far as his own varied critiques of *What is to be Done?*, once the Bolsheviks gained power.

With *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, especially Chapter 11, we alone showed that Marx had created the philosophic ground for organization. But we need not only ground but a roof. And we have all these 112 years of void on organization and philosophy. There is no time in a nuclear age to put it off for another day.

1988 is the year of the book, and not as in 1980 just as challenge to post-Marx Marxists, but the actual presentation of the dialectics of philosophy and the book as one, and for that it needs a whole organization, and not just the author. The whole does not mean ...

The real point is the meaning that this is not a question of the "author", but the *whole* organization. I want to stress the word, "the whole", *not* in the sense that each one is going to write a chapter, but rather that the context of each person's activity and special point of concentration - be it labor, Women's Liberation, youth, Black, etc. - will be inseparable from the meaning of that activity, and that *meaning*, whether of an Objective event or the subjective activity, will be projected to those not-yet Marxist-Humanists, because in meaning, i.e. philosophy, is both *ground* and *roof* of all we do, survey, strive for, as we prepare for that "revolution in permanence".

The philosophic nucleus, the attempt to become "practicing dialecticians", did have a good beginning in the 1980s.¹⁷ But the test is very different now, *not* because that is not what we need. We certainly do. But because the type of need involves first the whole organization which this year has been so preoccupied with making a success of the biweekly¹⁸ that the organisational growth from which it was supposed to be inseparable was very much separated. It suffered that *because* what got put very much on the back burner, and back again to only me writing it, was philosophy.

I want to repeat, because philosophy has *not* permeated the paper, *therefore*, it didn't permeate the organization.

Therefore, I would very strongly suggest that the Plenum consider that beginning in January, 1988 we become a monthly twelve page paper in a very new way, where the book - *Dialectics of Philosophy and Organization* - becomes the dominant force, not only in essay-articles, but in every activity we undertake, especially in discussions with subscribers, with not-yet Marxist-Humanists, not just as the recording of the events and their experiences, but the *meaning* of those events and experiences and their direction in a global context.

That is what we will have to project when we have conversations with subscribers. That is what has been missing - the whole new concept of "post-Marx Marxism as a pejorative" - it just laid there in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

To assure that such essay-articles would be forthcoming, we ought to suggest or have people volunteer in September at the Plenum, on what they would do for the issues beginning in January, 1988. I have had a chance to speak to some on this already. By raising it this early, it means I not only want to hear from you today, but we will continue the discussion at the next Resident Editorial Board meeting, when I will bring in a draft of the Plenum Call.¹⁹ And once the Call is out, then the full Plenum discussion is open to all.

Notes

¹ See Marx's "Private Property and Communism" and "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Dunayevskaya was the first to publish an English translation of these two essays, as Appendix A of her *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until today* (New York: Bookman, 1958).

² See Marx's "The Civil War in France" in *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 339 (New York: International Publishers, 1986), where he writes "the greatest social measure of the (Paris) Commune was its own working existence".

³ See Marx's letter to Ferdinand Freiligrath of Feb. 29, 1860, in Karl Marx, *Collected Works*; Vol. 41 (New York: International Publishers, 1985), pp. 80-87, where Marx says "by party, I meant party in the eminent historical sense".

⁴ This sentence was written by Dunayevskaya on the outline of her talk for inclusion at this point in her presentation.

⁵ "The book" refers to Dunayevskaya's planned book, "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'Party' and Forms of Organization Born Out of Spontaneity". Dunayevskaya's book was left unwritten at her death on June 9, 1987, but her many notes for it have been collected and donated to Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, as the *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13, which forms part of her Archives. These writings are available on microfilm. [UPDATE: and now also online at: <https://rayadunayevskaya.org/>].

⁶ This refers to the break-up of Correspondence Committees, the organization of which Dunayevskaya was co-leader (along with C.L.R. James and Grace Lee Boggs) from 1951 to 1955. In 1955,

Dunayevskaya founded News and Letters Committees, the organization she headed from its founding to her death in 1987.

⁷ See the letter of C.L.R. James to Grace Lee Boggs of May 20, 1949, in *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, #11612-15.

⁸ The "Johnson-Forest Tendency" refers to the tendency headed by Raya Dunayevskaya, C.L.R. James, and Grace Lee Boggs within the U.S. Trotskyist movement from 1941-51, which developed the theory of state-capitalism.

⁹ This refers to Hegel's syllogism "Universal-Particular- Individual" (see footnote 27 to Letter of May 12, 1953).

¹⁰ "The last paragraph" refers to the last paragraph of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. In his 1914 "Abstract of Hegel's 'Science of Logic'", Lenin wrote that the last half paragraph of the *Logic* was "unimportant." For Dunayevskaya's "refusal to follow" Lenin on this, see her Letter of May 12, 1953, which follows.

¹¹ "Those final syllogisms" refers to paragraphs 575, 576 and 577 of Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, which forms the third part of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. These three final paragraphs were added to the 1830 edition of this work, a year before Hegel's death. For Dunayevskaya's view of these three final syllogisms, see her Letter of May 20, 1953, which follows.

¹² Dunayevskaya's "Theory/Pracice" column, from which the following six paragraphs were excerpted by her, is the last writing from her pen. Entitled "On Political Divides and Philosophic New Beginnings", the full text was published in the July 25, 1987 Memorial issue of *News & Letters* dedicated to her life and work.

¹³ This refers to research for Dunayevskaya's new book prepared by Eugene Walker, Michael Connolly, Peter Wermuth, Cyrus Noveen, Kevin A. Barry, Sheila Fuller, and Olga Domanski. For Dunayevskaya's notes and commentary on this research, see

Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Vol. 13, #10727, #10800-10, #10856-59, #10896-98, #10904-16, #10952, #10957-58.

[14](#) The proposed title for Dunayevskaya's new book developed from "Dialectics of the Party" to "Dialectics of Organization" to "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'Party' and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity". For Dunayevskaya's discussion of the significance of these changes in the title of her book, see *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13, #10813.

[15](#) See Anton Pannekoek, *Lenin as Philosopher* (London: Merlin Press, 1975).

[16](#) See Lenin's 1920 speech "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin", in *Selected Works*, Vol. 9 (New York: International Publishers, 1943), pp. 62-72; in *Collected Works*, Vol. 32 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), pp. 90-100.

[17](#) In 1980, *News & Letters* newspaper began publishing as a 12-page monthly with the aim to more fully manifest philosophy in revolutionary journalism. For Dunayevskaya's discussion of this, see her *The Myriad Global Crises of the 1980s and the Nuclear World since World War II* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1986), pp. 43-60

[18](#) In January, 1987, *News & Letters* newspaper began publishing as a biweekly; for one of Dunayevskaya's discussions of this development, see her "The Shocking Liaison of U.S.-Iran and the need for a biweekly News & Letters," in *News & Letters*, December, 1986.

[19](#) The "Resident Editorial Board" is the elected leadership body of News and Letters Committees; "The Plenum" refers to a national gathering of News and Letters Committees, which was scheduled to be held over Labor Day, 1987. Due to Dunayevskaya's death on June 9, 1987, the Plenum was postponed to January, 1988, when

this presentation of June 1, 1987 was adopted as "the central part of the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives" for 1988. The "Plenum Call" refers to a document written by the Resident Editorial Board 60 days before the holding of a national Plenum which outlines the philosophic-organizational-political perspectives to be developed at the Plenum.

Editor's Note

Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes first appeared in mimeographed form in 1955 as part of the pamphlet *Philosophic Notes*. These Letters were reproduced, in mimeographed form, in 1956 and (in excerpts) in 1974. The text that follows is a reproduction of the 1953 Letters as prepared by Dunayevskaya for publication in the 1955 *Philosophic Notes*. No changes or insertions have been made, except for correcting obvious typographical errors. We have taken the liberty of adding page references to all the quotations from Hegel in brackets.

We have provided in the footnotes a complete list of the changes introduced by the author into the text of the 1953 Letters between their first appearance in 1955 and their subsequent re-issuing in mimeographed form in 1956 and 1974. All footnotes were added in 1989 by the editors.

The Letter of May 12, 1953

May 12, 1953

Dear H:¹

I am going to take the plunge and if it turns out that I have behaved like a bull in a china shop — well, I simply have to take my chances or I will never get to sleep nights at all.²

There is no concrete problem that I meet daily, no matter how minor, that doesn't send me scurrying to the LOGIC and by now I'm so drunk with it all that I brazenly shout that in the dialectic of the Absolute Idea is the dialectic of the party and that I have just worked it out.

Just like that. I have taken the plunge.³ But I will restrain myself from beginning with the conclusions and the differentiation of us from Lenin and even us from 1948⁴ but I will have you bear with me as I go through the whole last chapter of the *Logic*. However, before I do so, let me state what I am *not* doing: 1) I am not touching upon the mass party; the workers will do what they will do and until they do we can have only the faintest intimation of the great leap. 2) This is not 1948, but 1953; I am not concerned with spontaneity versus organization, nor with Stalinism which the workers will overcome.⁵

I am concerned only with the dialectic of the vanguard party of that *type* of grouping like ours, be it large or small, and *its* relationship to the mass.

Let's begin with the beginning: "The Absolute Idea has now turned out to be the identity of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea" (p. 466 J&S; 824M; 548W).⁶ *At this moment* this means to me that the party is the identity or unity of the activity of the leadership and the activity of the ranks. "[E]ach by itself is one-sided and contains the

Idea itself only as a sought Beyond and unattained goal; each consequently is a syntheses of the tendency and both contains and does not contain the Idea..." (p. 466 J&S; 824M; 548-49W).⁷ And further down on the same page we have the warning that the Absolute Idea "contains the highest opposition within itself."

While the staggering truth of this last phrase sinks in, I will make one more quotation from that page: "The Absolute Idea is the only object and content of philosophy. As it contains every determinateness, and its essence is to return to itself through its self-determination or particularization, it has various phases. It is the business of philosophy to recognize it in them. Nature and Spirit are different manners of presenting its existence...." (p. 466 J&S; 824M; 549W).

Because the party is the only object and content of our philosophy here, I wish to make two jumps here. One is to contrast to the manner in which Other is explained on this page where "Notion... as person, is impenetrable and atomic subjectivity; while at the same time it is not exclusive individuality, but is, for itself, universality and cognition, and in its Other has its own objectivity for object" (p. 466 J&S; 824M; 549W). Here then Other is the proletariat outside. What I wish to contrast to it is the description of Other when the Notion is further developed on p. 477 where Other turns out to be, not the proletariat outside, but the party itself.⁸ Hegel says:

"The second or negative and mediated determination is at the same time the mediating determination. At first it may be taken as simple determination, but in truth it is a reference or relation; for it is negative — the negative, however, of *the positive*, and includes the latter. It is not therefore the Other of a term to which it is indifferent, for thus it would be neither an Other, nor a reference or relation; it is the Other in itself, the Other of an Other. It thus includes its own Other, and so is contradiction, or the posited dialectic of itself" (pp. 476-77 J&S; 834-35M; 562W).

The other jump that I referred to that I wish to make is to leave the Logic for a moment and go to the last chapter in the

PHENOMENOLOGY. In that chapter on Absolute Knowledge Hegel writes: "The object as a whole is the mediated result (the syllogism) or the passing of universality into individuality through specification, as also the reverse process from individual to universal through cancelled individuality or specific determination" (p. 791B; 480M; 550H).⁹

Take a second look at the phrase, "the mediated result" and remember that our object is the party and that we are working out the triangular relationship not only politically but philosophically that, syllogistically speaking, the party is the totality, the mediated result of the three layers¹⁰ *and at the same time* it is what it is by its relationship to the proletariat outside, on the one hand, and to the universal of socialism, on the other hand, except that the two are now not "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" but interpenetrated.

Hegel goes on (p. 804): "Spirit is the movement of the self which empties (externalises) itself of self and sinks itself within its own substance, and *qua* subject, both has gone out of that substance into itself, making its substance an object and a content, and also supersedes this distinction of objectivity and content" (p. 804B; 490M; 561H).

So Socialism too as it "externalizes" itself in parties, and in this case I mean not the vanguard grouping but the Paris Commune, the Soviets, the CIO, and so is Hegel talking of history: "The other aspect, however, in which Spirit comes into being, *History*, is the process of becoming in terms of knowledge, a conscious self-mediating process - Spirit externalized and emptied into Time" (p. 807B; 492M; 563H). But he does not leave it at history (which includes historic development for us not only of the above, but the historic development of the party 1903, 1920-23, now). He ends Absolute Knowledge with (p. 808):

"The goal, which is Absolute Knowledge or Spirit knowing itself as spirit, finds its pathway in the recollection of spiritual forms (*Geister*)

as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their spiritual kingdom. Their conservation, looked at from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is *History*; looked at from the side of their intellectually comprehended organization, it is the *Science* of the ways in which knowledge appears. Both together, or History (intellectually) comprehended (*begriffen*) form at once the recollection and the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit, the reality, the truth, the certainty of its throne, without which it were lifeless, solitary, and alone" (p. 808B; 493M; 564H).

Now the way I see this connect with the *Logic*, (p. 466 J&S; 824M; 548W), where I left off before I began jumping around, is that where the "various phases" could have meant stages of development *within* the party such as 1903, 1920-23, etc., the recognition of the different manners of the existence of the Absolute Idea as Nature and Spirit, or the country and something like the CIO rather than, a "strict party" meant you are a fool if you cannot recognize the party in that for *that* is socialism just as at one time it was sufficient to define it as "electricity plus soviets".¹¹ The *world* concepts, the *American* roots, and us. We will come back to that, but now I wish to return to Hegel as he develops his Absolute Idea logically. On the next page (467) he writes: "Thus the logical idea has itself as infinite form for content... As opposed to form, content appears as Other and as given..."

"The Absolute Idea itself has only this further content, that the form-determination is its own perfected totality — the pure Notion... What remains therefore to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal element of its form — that is, the method" (p. 467 J&S; 825M; 550W).

In the party both as political organization and as the realization of the theory of knowledge, the "form-determinations" or *form* of relations between leaders and ranks, between the various layers, and within each layer tells the *whole* story. *There is no content outside of that.* Or, once again to stick close to Hegel, "The method therefore is both

soul and substance, and nothing is either conceived or known in its truth except in so far as it is completely subject to the method..." (p. 468 J&S; 826M; 551-52W) .

Hegel brings this development of method to a climax by contrasting sharply what it is to inquiring cognition where it is "in the position of a tool, of a means which stands on the subjective side, whereby the method relates itself to the object" (p. 469 J&S; 827M; 553W), to what it is in the dialectic: "But in true cognition the method is not merely a quantity of certain determinations: it is the fact that the Notion is determined in and for itself, and is the mean [the middle member] only because it equally has the significance of objective, so that in the conclusion, it does not merely achieve an external determinateness through the method, but is posited in its identity with the subjective Notion" (p. 469 J&S; 827M; 553W).

It is directly after this that Hegel discloses to me the secret of something that I have been chewing over like a dog does a bone, for many a moon — the intuition of the leader which he calls "internal intuition". First, let's watch the process of arriving at *internal intuition*: 1) method only has to have a *beginning* and so that is where we must begin; 2) but this beginning (and he warns later that "neither in actuality nor in thought" is there any beginning "so simple and abstract as is commonly imagined") is *not* "the immediate of sensuous intuition" which "is manifold and individual"; 3) no, this beginning is "internal intuition." (p. 470, 471 J&S; 827, 828, 829M; 554, 555W).

Secondly, note the contrast between "the immediate of sensuous intuition" and which comes from that which is, from the way, we would say, the *third layer lives*, and "the internal intuition" of the leader which comes from the way he *thinks*.

Jam these two opposites together, and you will first understand a sentence back on p. 467: "The self-determination therefore in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak..." (p. 467 J&S; 825M; 550W). In a word, the self-development of socialism, objectively and subjectively, gives off impulses which come one way to the leader,

another way to the *class* as a whole, but what is important is that it is *determined to appear* "to hear itself speak". And the beautiful part about the "internal intuition" is that this "beginning must be inherently defective and must be endowed with the impulse of self-development" (p. 471 J&S; 829M; 555W).

So that, finally, we reach Hegel's conclusion that nothing in life or in thought has a beginning so simple as is imagined but that "every beginning must be made from the Absolute, while every progress is merely the exhibition of the Absolute... The progress is therefore not a kind of overflow, which it would be if in truth that which begins were already the Absolute; rather the progress consists in this, that the universal determines itself and is the universal *for itself*, that is, is equally also individual and subject. It is the Absolute only in its completion" (p. 471-2 J&S; 829M; 555-56W).

So although we began with the universal of socialism and although we have seen socialism in the various phases of the Commune, the Soviets, the CIO, it is not yet IT for it can be it "only in its completion". The new society will not be until it is; now we see only intimations, approximations, but it is nevertheless all around us, in the lives of the workers and in the theory of the party, so until the solution of the conflict and the abolition of the division, we are back to *stages* of development: "*cause* is the highest stage in which the concrete Notion as beginning has an immediate existence in the sphere of necessity, but it is not yet a subject which, as such, preserves itself also in its actual realization" (p. 472 J&S; 830M; 556W).

Here I wish you to remember that in this page and in the next is where Lenin made his own 16-point definition of the dialectic, the essence of which was three-fold:¹² 1) the transformation of anything into its opposite (collapse of 2nd International); 2) the absolute in every relative which is the transition to something else (Monopoly as eve of socialist revolution); and 3) thought reflects reality (objective world connections). That we can fit Lenin in too here *historically* can now be seen from the fact that in the previous section on The Idea of

Cognition, Lenin had gone *further*, saying that "Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world but creates it",¹³ but when he reached the Absolute Idea it was not the creativity that he developed but the objective world connections because *to him in 1915 the Idea as "objective truth" of necessity predominated over any actual Reconstruction of society, or the 1917 "socialism looking at us through all windows"*.¹⁴

We, however, can go further, and not only further than Lenin but further than we ourselves did in 1948 when the Nevada Dialectics so profoundly held forth on the positive in the negative. But holding fast to the positive in the negative then meant only the general development of socialism through overcoming Stalinism, whereas now we can be more concrete, at least in relation to our own organization where the mediating determination is a negative "but the negative of the *positive* and includes the latter." Now you can see why some 11 pages back¹⁵ I called attention to this further determination of Other as "its own Other... the posited dialectic of itself" (p. 477 J&S; 835M; 562W): "-The first or immediate term is the Notion in itself, and therefore is the negative only *in itself*; the dialectic moment with it therefore consists in this, that the *distinction* which it implicitly contains is posited in it. The second term on the other hand is itself the determinate entity, distinction or relation; hence with it the dialectic moment consists in the positing of the unity which is contained in it" (p. 477 J&S; 835M; 562W).

We have reached the *turning point* despite the unity or the party as a totality, since: "The negativity which has just been considered is the turning point of the movement of the Notion. It is the simple point of negative self-relation, the innermost source of all activity, of living and spiritual self-movement, the dialectic soul which all truth has in it and through which it alone is truth; for the transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality, and that unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone. -The second negative, the negative of the negative, which we have reached, is this transcendence of the contradiction, but is no more the activity of an external reflection than the contradiction is: it is the innermost and

most objective moment of Life and Spirit, by virtue of which a subject is personal and free" (pp. 477-78 J&S; 835-36M; 563W).

NOW STAND UP AND SHOUT PERSONAL AND FREE,
PERSONAL AND FREE, PERSONAL AND FREE AS LENIN
SHOUTED LEAP, LEAP, LEAP WHEN HE FIRST SAW
DIALECTICAL DEVELOPMENT TO BE THAT AND ALSO THE
OBJECTIVE WORLD.¹⁶

I will return to freedom, and where our age proves it has abolished the distinction between theory and practice and that which is the preoccupation of the theorists freedom out of one-party totalitarianism¹⁷ is the preoccupation of the great masses, but now I must still stick close to Hegel for when he reaches that point he goes not into paeans of freedom but an attack on all old radical parties from the Social-Democracy (Kant to Hegel) to the SLP¹⁸ (formalists to Hegel) and he does not let go until the method itself extends itself into a *system* (p. 480).

And on p. 482 he says: "The method effects this as a *system of totality*... This progress determines itself, first, in this manner, that it begins from simple determinateness and that each subsequent one is richer and more concrete". It has not been a straight line, but an approach both *rearward* and forward so that now we can see: "In the absolute method the Notion preserves itself in its otherness, and the universal in its particularization, in the Judgement and in reality; it raises to each next stage of determination the whole mass of its antecedent content, and by its dialectical progress not only loses nothing and leaves nothing behind, but carries with it all that it has acquired, enriching and concentrating itself upon itself" (pp. 482-83 J&S; 840M; 569W).

So that none of the other philosophies (parties to us) just degenerated or died, but their achievements have been incorporated in the new philosophy or party and this new has been enriched "concentrating itself upon itself" for we have that new source, the third layer.¹⁹

Now watch this: "Each new stage of exteriorization (that is, of further determination) is also an interiorization, and greater extension is also higher intensity" (p. 483 J&S; 840-41M; 570W). What a more perfect description of going outward with B,²⁰ and becoming richer inward and more intense.

"The highest and acutest point is simple personality," continues Hegel, "which, by virtue alone of the absolute dialectic which is its nature equally holds and comprehends everything within itself because it perfectly liberates itself..." (p. 483 J&S; 841M; 570W). So we are back at liberation and until the end of The Absolute Idea that will be the theme, liberation, freedom *and an absolutely uncompromising, Bolshevik attack on impatience*. If you are right and the Unhappy Consciousness should somehow go as part of Abernism — and I agree with you there — then nevertheless I will not let go of Leland.²¹ Just listen to the absolutely devastating analysis by Hegel, and remember Hegel does it as he has already approached freedom and we met that type when we approached independence.²²

p. 484: "That impatience whose only wish is to go beyond the determinate (whether in the form of beginning, object, finite, or in any other form) and to be immediately in the absolute, has nothing before it as object of its cognition but the empty negative, the abstract infinite — or else would-be absolute, which is imaginary because it is neither posited nor comprehended" (p. 484 J&S; 841-42M; 571W).

I am shaking all over for we have come to where we part from Lenin.²³ I mentioned before that, although in the approach to the Absolute Idea Lenin had mentioned that man's cognition not only reflects the objective world but creates it but that *within the chapter* he never developed it. Objective world connections, materialism, dialectical materialism it is true, but not the object and subject as one fully developed — that's what he saw. Then he reaches the last paragraph: "For the Idea posits itself as the absolute unity of the pure Notion and its Reality, and thus gathers itself into the

immediacy of Being; and in doing so, as totality in this form, it is *Nature*" (p. 485 J&S; 843M; 573W). [24](#)

There Lenin stops — it is the *beginning* of the last paragraph — and he says: "This phrase on the *last* page of the *Logic* is exceedingly remarkable. The transition of the logical idea to *Nature*. Stretching a hand to materialism. This is not the last phrase of the *Logic*, but further till the end of the page is unimportant". [25](#)

But, my dear Vladimir Ilyitch, it is not true; the end of that page *is* important; we of 1953, we who have lived 3 decades after you and tried to absorb all you have left us we can tell you that.

Listen to the very next sentence, "But this determination is not a perfected becoming or a *transition*..." (p. 485 J&S; 843M; 573W). Remember how transition was everything to you in the days of Monopoly, the eve of socialism. Well, Hegel has passed *beyond* transition, he says this last determination "the pure Idea, in which the determinateness or reality of the Notion is itself raised to the level of Notion, is an absolute *liberation*, having no further immediate determination which is not equally *posited* and equally Notion. Consequently there is no transition in this freedom... The transition here therefore must rather be taken to mean that the Idea freely releases itself in absolute self-security and self-repose" (p. 485, 486 J&S; 843M; 573W).

You see, Vladimir Ilyitch you didn't have Stalinism to overcome, when transitions, revolutions seemed sufficient to bring the new society. Now everyone looks at the totalitarian one-party state, *that* is the new which must be overcome by a totally new revolt in which everyone *experiences* "absolute liberation." So we build with you from 1920-3 and include the experience of three decades.

But, H, (Hauser, not Hegel) I have not finished yet, not that last paragraph in Hegel, nor my summation, for we must retrace our steps to the paragraph before and as we do, let's keep in mind Marx's last chapter of *Capital* (Vol. I). Hegel writes: "In so far the

pure Idea of Cognition is enclosed in subjectivity, and therefore is an impulse to transcend the latter; and, as last result, pure truth becomes *the beginning of another sphere and science*. This transition need here only be intimated" (p. 485 J&S; 843M; 572-73W). And then he goes into how the Idea posits itself and is liberation. That, he says, he cannot fully develop here; he can only intimate it.

Now you will recall that that is *precisely* what Marx does in the Accumulation of Capital when he reaches the laws of concentration and centralization of capital and socialization of labor. He says he cannot develop those, but he can give an intimation, and this intimation turns out to be that: 1) the ultimate would be centralization of capital "in the hands of one single capitalist corporation"; 2) that it would not matter if that occurs peacefully or violently; 3) but, that with the centralization grows also the *revolt*, and it is not just any revolt but one that is "organized, united, disciplined by the very mechanism of capitalist production."²⁶

H, are you as excited as I? *Just as Marx's development of the form of the commodity and money came from Hegel's syllogistic U P I, so the Accumulation of Capital (the General Absolute Law) is based on the Absolute Idea.*²⁷

Remember also that we kept on repeating Lenin's aphorism that Marx may not have left us "a Logic" but he left us the logic of *Capital*.²⁸ This is it — *the logic of Capital is the dialectic of bourgeois society*: the state capitalism at one pole and the revolt at the other.

At one stage we tried to divide socialization of labor from revolt, the form being still capitalistic, and the latter the beginning of socialism. We didn't get very far because that socialization was capitalistic but revolt liberates it from its capitalistic integument. Marx, however, dealing with the dialectic of *capitalist* society did not make the negation of the negation any more concrete, but, on the contrary, in the last chapter returns to the origins of capitalism.

Now we are ready to return to the last few sentences of the *Logic* ending with "But this next resolution of the pure Idea — to determine itself as external Idea — thereby only posits for itself the mediation out of which the Notion arises as free existence that out of externality has passed into itself; arises to perfect its self-liberation in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, and to discover the highest Notion of itself in that logical science as the pure Notion which forms a Notion of Itself" (p. 486 J&S; 843-44M; 573W).

(*Please*, Hauser, can you get a hold of a copy of *Philosophy of Spirit* or is it *Mind*? I am brazen enough to want to swim there too. I have an instinct that we couldn't get very far there when we tried it before because we equated *Mind* to party, but now that I believe the dialectic of the Absolute Idea is the dialectic of the party, I feel that *Mind* is the new society gestating in the old, and I feel sure we could get a lot of very valuable dialectical developments there, and what is so significant about that also is the building of the new within the old makes it possible to stop jumping from high point to high point but rather to follow *concretely* since this new is in the *daily* struggle).

Somewhere in the letters about Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks it is stated that Lenin was aware of the gap between his Universal ("to a man") and the concrete Russian proletariat, where we are more aware of the identity of the Universal and the concrete American proletariat. What, further, these two years of our organization showed was the high stage of social consciousness of the *new layers* attracted to us: they *practice* in the paper before they join and yet they appreciate *leadership*. Perhaps I'm stretching but I feel that in the Absolute General Law when Marx was developing the dialectic of bourgeois society to its limit and came up with the revolt "united, organized and disciplined" he also set the limits to the dialectic of the party which is part of bourgeois society and will wither with its passing as will the bourgeois state. It appears to me when objective and subjective are so interpenetrated that the preoccupations of the theoreticians of the man on the street is *can* we be free when what has arisen is the one-party state, the assertion of freedom, "personal and free" and full liberation takes precedence over economics,

politics, philosophy, or rather refuses to be rent asunder into three and wants to be one, the knowledge that you can be free.

Do you remember the letter of May 20, 1949: "We are poles apart from Hegel but very close to him in another respect. As materialists we root man in his environment, but now that the real history of humanity is about to begin, the Hegelian concept of speculative reason, comes to life with us, as never before, and *on our basis*".^{[29](#)}

W. (Raya Dunayevskaya)

Notes

¹ "H" stands for "Hauser," the organizational name used by Grace Lee Boggs in this period; "W", the signature at the end, stands for "Weaver", the organizational name used by Raya Dunayevskaya in this period.

² This sentence does not appear in the 1956 [mimeographed] edition.

³ The first two sentences of this paragraph do not appear in the 1956 edition.

⁴ The phrase "even us from 1948" refers to a 1948 manuscript by C.L.R. James, then co-leader with Raya Dunayevskaya of the "Johnson-Forest Tendency" within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). James' manuscript, first called the "Nevada Document", has since been published in book form as *Notes on Dialectics* (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1980).

⁵ In the 1956 edition, this paragraph reads as follows: "But I will restrain myself from beginning with the conclusions, and the differentiation of us from Lenin and even us from 1948, but I will have you bear with me as I go through the whole last chapter of the LOGIC. However, before I do so, let me state what I am not doing: I am not touching upon the mass party; the workers will do what they will do, and until they do, we can have only the faintest intimation of the great leap. 2) This is not 1948, but 1953; I am not concerned with spontaneity versus organization, nor with Stalinism which the workers will overcome.

⁶ Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Vol. II, translated by W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers (New York: MacMillan, 1929); all quotes in the following text are from this edition. The first parenthetical page citation refers to Vol. II of the Johnston & Struthers translation,

designated hereafter as "J&S"; the second is to the translation by A.V. Miller (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969) and is designated as "M"; the third is to the German edition, published as Vol. 6 of Hegel's *Werke*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), and is designated hereafter as "W".

⁷ In the 1956 edition Dunayevskaya added the words -"Hegel continues," preceding this quotation.

⁸ In the 1956 edition this paragraph reads as follows: Because the party is the only object and content of *our* philosophy here, I wish to make two jumps here. One is to contrast the description of Other on this page to that on p. 477. On p. 466 he defines Notion "as person (which) is impenetrable and atomic subjectivity; while at the same time it is not exclusive individuality, but is, for itself, universality and cognition, and in its Other has its own objectivity for object." *Here, then, Other is the proletariat outside.* On p. 477, however, Other turns out to be, *not the proletariat outside, but the party itself.*

⁹ Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, translated with an introduction by J.B. Baillie (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931). All quotes from Hegel's *Phenomenology* in the following text are from this edition. The first parenthetical page citation refers to the Baillie translation, designated hereafter as "B"; the second refers to the translation by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and is designated as "M": the third refers to the German text as edited by Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952) and is designated as "H".

¹⁰ C.L.R. James developed a concept of "three layers" after the Johnson-Forest Tendency left the SWP, patterned on his interpretation of Vol. IX of Lenin's *Selected Works*. The term "first layer" referred to the "intellectual leadership"; "second layer" referred to the "experienced politicians"; "third layer" referred to the rank and file workers, women, Blacks and youth who were seen as representing the masses outside. With her 1953 philosophic

breakthrough, Dunayevskaya worked out the totally new concept of the relationship between the "movement from theory" and the "movement from practice that is itself a form of theory".

¹¹ This refers to Lenin's 1920-21 view that "*Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country*". See Lenin's *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), Vol. 31, p. 419 and p. 516.

¹² See Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), Vol. 38, pp. 220-22. Also see Appendix B of Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until today* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1958), pp. 349-50, for the first English translation of Lenin's "Abstract of Hegel's 'Science of Logic'", as there are significant differences between Dunayevskaya's translation and that of the later editions. Hereafter, the editions are cited as "Lenin, CW, Vol. 38" and "RD, App. B," respectively.

¹³ Lenin, CW, Vol. 38, p. 212; RD, App. B, p. 347. Both editions quote Lenin's aphorism fully as: "Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it."

¹⁴ See Lenin, CW, Vol. 25, p. 363.

¹⁵ See page 26, above.

¹⁶ See Lenin, CW, Vol. 33, p. 123; RD. App. 8, p. 330.

¹⁷ In the 1974 edition the phrase "freedom from out of one-party totalitarianism" is separated off with dashes.

¹⁸ "SLP" refers to the Socialist Labor Party.

¹⁹ In the 1974 edition the phrases *philosophies (parties to us)* and *new source, the third layer*, are underlined.

[20](#) "B" refers to Charles Denby's *Indignant Heart*, first published in 1952. An expanded edition was published in 1978 as *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal* (Boston: South End Press); a new expanded edition was published in 1989 by Wayne State University Press.

[21](#) Martin Abern, one of the founders of Trotskyism in the U.S., died in 1947. In a 1953 document entitled "Our Organization", Dunayevskaya characterized "Abernism" as "cliquism, unprincipled combinationism, gossip and intrigue". Leland was the organizational secretary in 1951-52 of Correspondence Committees, the organization to which Dunayevskaya belonged from 1951 to 1955.

[22](#) The Johnson-Forest Tendency "approached independence" in June, 1951, when it left the SWP and formed a new organization, Correspondence Committees.

[23](#) In the 1974 edition the phrase, *where we part from Lenin*, is underlined.

[24](#) In the 1974 edition this paragraph has vertical double lines drawn alongside it.

[25](#) Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 38, p. 230. RD, App. 8, p. 352.

[26](#) Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1906), Vol. J, pp. 836-37. Also see the Marx Library edition, translated by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 929.

[27](#) This refers to Hegel's syllogism "Universal-Particular-Individual"; see "The Notion" in Hegel's *Science of Logic* (pp. 234-57 J&S; 600-22M; 273-300W). See also Marx's *Capital*, Vol. I, chapter I, "The Commodity," and chapter 25, "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation".

[28](#) See Lenin, *CW*, Vol. 38, p. 317; RD, App. 8, p. 353.

[29](#) This statement is from a letter of C.L.R. James to Grace Lee Boggs (see The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Wayne State University Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, #1613).

The Letter of May 20, 1953

May 20, 1953

Dear Hauser:

Please do not interpret this as any prodding of you to commit yourself on my analysis of the Absolute Idea; it is only that *I* cannot stand still and so rushed directly to the *Philosophy of Mind*. I then reread the Preface, Introduction and Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, the Introduction, Three Attitudes to Objectivity, and the Absolute Idea in the *Smaller Logic* and the Absolute Idea in the *Science of Logic*.³⁰ After that I read from cover to cover Lenin's phenomenal Vol. IX³¹ which *is* the Absolute Idea in action, reread Marx's Accumulation of Capital and the Fetishism of Commodities in Vol. I of *Capital*, and the final part in Vol. III, and *The Civil War in France*. All this I did on my own time, so to speak, that is to say, between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. after putting in very full days and evenings in concrete organizational activity.³² I note these facts only in order to show how this Absolute Idea has me coming and going. Along with keeping all these in the back of my head then as I read the *Philosophy of Mind*, I made up the following outline of the development of the vanguard party and its relationship to the mass movements:

The party as a "simple" class instrument — Communist League, the First International (reflecting 1848 class struggles and the Paris Commune).

The party as divider of *tendencies* within Marxism - Lenin's party of 1903-17 (1905 & 1917 revolutions)

The party as divider of politics from economics — the German Social Democracy (trade union aristocracy of labor and the 1914 betrayal).

The party as different social layers — 1920 — (in Russia Lenin to leaders and ranks; in Germany ranks to leaders).³³

The party as suppressor of ranks and destroyer of revolutionism — Stalinism — (Spanish Revolution, CIO, National Resistance Movements) 1923-53.³⁴

Now ourselves, '41-'50 — clarification of ideas, elaboration of theory, eyes on *mass movements*. '51-'53 — life in party and third layer as source of theory. Something totally new appears —

100 years becomes practically no more than mere background for listening and digging - B,³⁵ woman, Youth — *all* come from ranks — something like the Great Beginning in Russia. What is so remarkable is that it comes *not* as direct result of any revolution, but rather as the accumulated experiences and feelings and social thinking *when* placed in the proper theoretic and climatic atmosphere of live people.

To this the paper is the climax not alone because it has never been but because it *could* never have been. Only one who *knew* it could go through the toil of the negative, the labor and suffering, of not a single break in the cadre of the "continuator" of Leninism. And (note the "and" rather than a "but") only when it did *appear* can we have perspectives that we have. This therefore is not just a general interpenetration of objective and subjective but one so concrete that it is impossible to say where theory leaves off and practice begins. *This can be so only because the elements of the new society are everywhere in evidence.* ³⁶

First now you are where I was as I read the *Philosophy of Mind* which, to me, is the new society. *That's* what materialistic reading of the final chapters of Hegel means to me.³⁷ (To say the end of Hegel is highly idealistic is to deny that the dialectical laws apply in their *totality*. Perhaps I am very rash but that is how I *feel* at this moment. Unfortunately, in this field I can do no more than feel for I most certainly have no knowledge or practice and I am totally dependent on you).³⁸

I limit myself to the following sections of the Philosophy: Introduction, Free Mind, Absolute Mind.³⁹

In the Introduction Hegel states what the three stages in the development of the Mind are:⁴⁰ 1) in the form of *self-relation* where "the *ideal* totality of the Idea" is, it is "self-contained and free."⁴¹ 2) Moving from the Mind Subjective he comes to the second stage or "*the form of reality*" and in this objective world "freedom presents itself under the shape of necessity." 3) From Mind Objective⁴² we reach Mind Absolute "that unity of mind as objectivity and of mind as ideality and concept, which essentially and actually is and for ever produces itself, mind in its absolute truth" (para. 385).

Hegel continues (para. 386): "The two first parts of the doctrine of Mind embrace the finite mind. Mind is the infinite Idea: and finitude here means the disproportion between the concept and the reality — but with the qualification that it is a shadow cast by the mind's own light — a show or illusion which the mind implicitly imposes as a barrier to itself, in order, by its removal, actually to realize and become conscious of freedom as *its* very being, i.e., to be fully *manifested*. The several steps of this activity, on each of which, with their semblance of being, it is the function of the finite mind to linger, and through which it has to pass, are steps in its liberation. In the full truth of that liberation is given the identification of the three stages — finding a world presupposed before us, generating a world as our own creation, and gaining freedom from it and in it. To the infinite form of this truth the show purifies itself till it becomes a consciousness of it.

"A rigid application of the category of finitude by the abstract logician is chiefly seen in dealing with Mind and reason: it is held not a mere matter of strict logic, but treated also as a moral and religious concern, to adhere to the point of view of finitude, and the wish to go further is reckoned a mark of audacity, if not of insanity, of thought."

(Remember "soviets in the sky"?)⁴³

If we go from this audacious thinking directly to the Free Mind or end of Section 1 of Mind Subjective, we will meet with free will in a new social order: "Actual free will is the unity of theoretical and practical mind: a free will, which realises its own freedom of will, now that the formalism, fortuitousness, and contractedness of the practical content up to this point have been superseded. By superseding the adjustments of means therein contained, the will is the *immediate individuality* self-instituted - an individuality, however, also purified of all that interferes with its universalism, i.e., with freedom itself" (para. 481).

In a word, not the free will of the Ego, the unhappy consciousness, but the free will of the *social* individual, "an individuality... purified of all that interferes... with freedom itself" (para. 481).

To get to the "will to liberty (which) is no longer an *impulse* which demands its satisfaction, but the permanent character — the spiritual consciousness grown into a non-impulsive nature", (para. 482) Hegel cannot avoid *history*, the concrete development:

"When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength, just because it is the very essence of mind, and that as its very actuality. Whole continents, Africa and the East, have never had this idea, and are without it still. The Greeks and Romans, Plato and Aristotle, even the Stoics, did not have it. On the contrary, they saw that it is only by birth (as, for example, an Athenian or Spartan citizen), or by strength of character, education, or philosophy (— the sage is free even as a slave and in chains) that the human being is actually free. It was through Christianity that this idea came into the world" (para. 482).

(I'll be d**d if *for us* I will need to stop to give the materialistic explanation here. I'm not fighting Hegel's idealism but trying to absorb his dialectics. Anyone who *can't think* of the Industrial and French Revolutions as the beginnings of modern society, or *know* that when will to liberty is no longer mere impulse but "permanent character", "spiritual consciousness" it means and can mean only the

proletariat that has absorbed all of science in his person, that person better not try to grapple with Hegel).

Then a rejection of property, the "have" of possession, and directly to the *is* of the new society: "If to be aware of the idea — to be aware, i.e., that men are aware of freedom as their essence, aim, and object — is matter of *speculation*, still this very idea itself is the actuality of men — not something which they *have*, as men, but which they *are*" (para. 482).

We are ready for the Absolute Mind. I will limit myself to the concluding four paragraphs, 574-577. [44](#)

Hegel begins his conclusions about philosophy which "is the self-thinking Idea, the truth aware of itself" by referring us to the Absolute Idea in the *Smaller Logic*, and there Hegel issued a warning, "It is certainly possible to indulge in a vast amount of senseless declamation about the idea absolute. But its true content is only the whole system of which we have been hitherto examining the development." [45](#)

Back to para. 574: "the logical system, but with the signification that it is universality approved and certified in concrete content as in its actuality." [46](#)

I'm here reminded of that total Introduction to the *Smaller Logic* (or perhaps it is time to begin calling it by its right name, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, since the *Smaller Logic* is Part I of it and the *Philosophy of Mind* that concerns me now Part III) where he says "the Idea is not so feeble as merely to have a right or obligation to exist without actually existing" (para. 6) And most certainly Socialism "is not so feeble as merely to have a right or obligation to exist without actually existing". Quite the contrary the new society is *evident* everywhere, *appears* within the old.

Let us return to Hegel, still para. 574, "In this way the science has gone back to its beginning: its result is the logical system but as a

spiritual principle: out of the presupposing judgement, in which the notion was only implicit and the beginning an immediate - and thus out of the *appearance* which it had there — it has risen into its pure principle and thus also into its proper medium."

This appearance "gives the motive of the further development" (para. 575). So, like all rational thinkers, we are back at the form of the syllogism: "The first appearance is formed by the syllogism, which is based on the Logical system as starting point, with Nature for the middle term which couples the Mind with it. The Logical principle turns to Nature and Nature to Mind" (para. 575).

The movement is from the logical principle or theory to nature or practice *and* from practice not alone to theory but to the new society which is its essence: (Note scrupulously how this development, this practice, *sunders* itself).

"Nature standing between the Mind and its essence, sunders itself⁴⁷ not indeed to extremes of finite abstraction, nor itself to something away from them and independent — which, as other than they, only serves as a link between them: for the syllogism is *in the Idea* and Nature is essentially defined as a transition point and negative factor, and as implicitly the Idea" (para. 575).

Thus the sundering of practice has been neither to mount the "extremes of finite abstraction" nor as mere link between practice and theory for the triangular development here means that practice itself is "implicitly the Idea."

"Still", continues Hegel, "the mediation of the notion has the external form of *transition*, and the science of Nature presents itself as the course of necessity, so that it is only in the one extreme that the liberty of the notion is explicit as a self-amalgamation" (para. 575).

By all means let's follow Hegel and hold back from skipping a single link. But also let us not forget that this is only the first syllogism, while "In the second syllogism this appearance is so far superseded, that that syllogism is the standpoint of the Mind itself, which — as the

mediating agent in the process — presupposes Nature and couples it with the Logical principle. It is the syllogism where Mind reflects on itself in the Idea: philosophy appears as a subjective cognition, of which liberty is the aim, and which is itself the way to produce it" (para. 576).

Here then Mind itself is "the mediating agent in the process." I cannot help but think of Marx concluding that the Commune is "the form at last discovered to work out the economic emancipation of the proletariat",⁴⁸ and of Lenin in Vol. IX⁴⁹ saying that the workers and peasants "must understand that the whole thing now is *practice*, that the historical moment has arrived when theory is being transformed into practice, is vitalised by practice, corrected by practice, tested by practice," and on the same page (420): "The Paris Commune gave a great example of how to combine initiative, independence, freedom of action and vigour from below with voluntary centralism free from stereotyped forms". And so I repeat Mind itself, the new society, is the "mediating agent in the process".⁵⁰

This is where Hegel arrives at Absolute Mind, the third syllogism: "The third syllogism is the Idea of philosophy, which has self-knowing reason, the absolutely-universal, for its middle term: a middle, which divides itself into Mind and Nature, making the former its presupposition, as process of the Idea's subjective activity, and the latter its universal extreme, as process of the objectively and implicitly existing Idea" (para. 577).

No wonder I was so struck, when working out the layers of the party, with the Syllogism which disclosed that either the Universal or the Particular or the Individual could be the middle term. Note carefully that the "middle which divides itself" is nothing less than the absolute universal itself and that, in dividing itself into Mind and Nature it makes *Mind* the presupposition "as process of the Idea's subjective activity" and *Nature* "as process of the objectively and implicitly existing Idea".

Here, much as I try not once again to jolt you by sounding as if I were exhorting, I'm too excited not to rejoice at what this means *for us*. But I'll stick close to Hegel and not go off for visits with Lenin and Marx. *Hegel* says that the two appearances of the Idea (Socialism in the form of the Commune and the Soviets) characterizes both its manifestation and in it precisely is "A unification of the two aspects":

The self-judging of the Idea into its two appearances (para. 575, 576) characterizes both as its (the self-knowing reason's) manifestations: and in it there is a unification of the two aspects: — it is the nature of the fact, the notion, which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition. The eternal Idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute Mind.

We have entered the new society.

W. (Raya Dunayevskaya)

Notes

[30](#) In the 1956 edition this sentence reads as follows:

I then reread the Preface, Introduction and Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology of Mind*; the introduction, Three Attitudes to Objectivity and the Absolute Idea in the *Smaller Logic*, along with the Absolute Idea in *Science of Logic*.

[31](#) This refers to Vol. IX of Lenin's *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1943).

[32](#) In the 1956 edition this sentence starts a new paragraph and reads as follows:

All this I did on my own time, so to speak, that is to say, between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m., after putting in very full days and evenings in concrete activity.

[33](#) In the 1956 edition this paragraph reads as follows:

The party as different social layers - 1920 (in Russia, Lenin to leaders and ranks; in Germany, ranks to leaders).

[34](#) In the 1956 edition this paragraph reads as follows:

The party (Stalinism) as suppresser of ranks and destroyer of revolutions - Spanish Revolution, CIO, National Resistance Movements, 1923-53.

[35](#) "B" refers to Charles Denby's *Indignant Heart* (see footnote 20).

[36](#) In the 1956 edition this paragraph reads as follows:

Now ourselves: 41-50 - clarification of ideas, elaboration of theory, *eyes on mass movements*. 1951-53 - life in party and third layer as source of theory. Something *totally new* appears: 100 years becomes practically no more than mere background for listening and digging - Indignant Heart, Woman, Youth - *all* come from ranks. Something like the Great Beginning in Russia.

What is so remarkable is that it comes not as a result of any revolution, but rather as the accumulated experiences and feelings and social thinking *when* placed in the proper theoretic and climatic atmosphere of live people. To this our paper is the climax not alone because it has never been, but because such type of paper *could* not have been born before. Only those who *knew* it could be could have gone through the toil of the negative, the labor and suffering and not a single break in the cadre of the "continuators" of Leninism.

And (Note the "and" rather than a "but") only when it did *appear* can we have the perspectives that we have. This, therefore, is not just a general interpenetration of objective and subjective, *but one so concrete that it is impossible to say where theory leaves off and practice begins. This can be so only because the elements of the new society are everywhere in evidence.*

[37](#) In the 1956 edition the first two sentences of this paragraph read as follows:

"First now you are where I was as I read the *Philosophy of Mind*, which, to me, is the *new society*. That's what a materialistic reading of the final chapter of Hegel means to me.

[38](#) In the 1956 edition the final two sentences within the parentheses do not appear.

[39](#) In the 1974 edition this sentence reads as follows:

"I will limit myself to the following sections of the *Philosophy of Mind* - Introduction, Free Mind, Absolute Mind.

[40](#) In the 1956 edition this sentence begins as follows:

In the *Introduction* Hegel states what the three stages in the development of Mind are:

[41](#) Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, translated by William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), para. 385; all quotes from the *Philosophy of Mind* in the text are to this edition, which is a translation of the 1830 edition of this work. All references are cited according to paragraph numbers in Hegel's text.

[42](#) In the 1956 edition a comma appears after the words "Mind Objective."

[43](#) Irving Howe, writing in a Workers Party discussion bulletin (Vol. I, No.9, March 28, 1946) attacked the Johnson-Forest Tendency for allegedly romanticizing American workers, charging them with creating "soviets in the skies".

[44](#) In the 1974 edition this sentence reads as follows:

I will concentrate on the concluding four paragraphs, #574-#577.

[45](#) Hegel's *Logic* (Part I of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*), translated by William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), para. 237, Zusatz.

[46](#) In reissuing excerpts of the May 20, 1953 Letter in mimeographed form in 1986, Dunayevskaya included the first half of the first sentence of para. 574. The full sentence in Hegel reads:

This notion of philosophy is the self-thinking Idea, the truth aware of itself (para. 236) - the logical system, but with the signification that it is universality approved and certified in concrete content as in its actuality.

[47](#) In her 1974 lecture to the Hegel Society of America, entitled "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning", Dunayevskaya noted that "A.V. Miller, the new translator of Hegel, called my attention to the fact that in the Wallace translation 'sie' (them) is mistakenly read as 'sich' (itself)". Dunayevskaya elaborated upon this in her 1986 "Letters to non-Marxist Hegel Scholars" (see *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13, #11219): "(Miller) pointed out that Wallace had translated *sie* as if it were *sich*, whereas in fact it should have read 'sunders' not *itself* but *them*. That, however, was not my problem. The sundering was what was crucial to me; the fact that Nature turns out to be the mediation was certainly no problem to any 'materialist'; the form of the transition which was departing from the course of necessity was the exciting part:"

[48](#) See Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France", in *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, (New York: International Publishers, 1986), p. 334.

[49](#) This refers to Vol. IX of Lenin's *Selected Works*.

[50](#) In the 1974 edition this paragraph has vertical double lines drawn alongside it; this paragraph was not included by Dunayevskaya in the 1986 excerpts of the May 20, 1953 Letter.