

June 11, 1957

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

It was good to hear from you. I'm sure that you are well acquainted with the fact that it is much easier to write 100, if not 500, pages than it is to summarize the gist of a book on which one has worked for some 15 years, in a page or two. But I will try.

I. The central point, the pivot around which everything else in MARXISM AND FREEDOM revolves, is, of course, the philosophic foundation of Marxism. As I put it in my introductory note, "The aim of this book is to re-establish the original form of Marxism which Marx called 'thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism.'"

This runs like a red thread throughout the book. Thus Part I begins with the French Revolution and Hegel and ends with Marx's Early Economic-Philosophic Essays: A New Humanism. It constitutes his answer to classical political economy as well as to the utopian socialists and vulgar Communists of his day and establishes a new world outlook, Marxian philosophy, which is distinguished from the Hegelian dialectic and closely knit with it. What is established as the thesis of the young Marx then reappears in Part III, Marxism: the Unity of Theory and Practice, where, in The Dialectical Humanism of Volume I, I show that not only are Marx's economic categories social categories but they are thoroughly permeated with the humanism that came out of the workingclass struggles for the shortening of the working day. As Marx put it, the mere question, when does my day begin and when does it end, was on a higher philosophic level than "the pompous catalogue of the Declaration of the Rights of Man." What is true of Volume I of Capital is true of the Logic and Scope of Volumes II and III, including Theories of Surplus Value, where I show that all of history to Marx was the struggle for freedom, which, as its basis, is the shortening of the working day, and only from there do we go from the realm of necessity to that of freedom.

Lenin learned the critical importance of the philosophic foundations the hard way—when the Second International actually collapsed and, to reconstitute his own reason, had to return to Hegel's Science of Logic. The chapter, A Mind in Action, then traces what the philosophic foundations meant to Lenin and the Russian Revolution and ends with the thought that just as Marxism without its philosophic foundation is meaningless, so is Leninism. Neither is an "economist." Finally when we come to our own age, which I call Automation and the New Humanism, I show the methodology of Marxism and the compulsion of our own age for a total outlook.

II. Subordinate to this main theme of the book, and running parallel with it, is the division between the radical intellectual like Proudhon and the Marxist intellectual. I contend that Marxism is not only the theoretical expression of the workingclass striving to establish a new society on socialist beginnings, but it is that which gave intellectuals a new dimension. That new dimension arose precisely because he did not divide theory from history, including the current class struggles. The relationship of theory to history is seen as a live element that changes the very structure of Marx's greatest theoretical work. In 1863 and 1866 when he fundamentally revised that structure and 1872-75 when he wrote the French edition of Capital—the period from the Civil War in the United States through the Paris Commune—is proof of this relationship of theory to history and at

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the same time shows that what the young Marx established in the Early Essays when he held that never again must society be counterposed to the individual and which in 1845 he enshrined in his Communist Manifesto as the thesis that the development of the individual is the condition for the development of all reappears in his "most economic" work which is preferred by the academic economists--Volume III of Capital.

Again, when I move from Marx's time to that of Lenin's time I show that the contribution of the Second International -- Organization -- was taken over by Lenin in his concept of the so-called Vanguard Theory in 1902-03, but as the actual Russian Revolution occurred, he threw it overboard--or at least radically revised his theory no less than 6 times so that in 1917 he says the workers on the outside are more revolutionary than the vanguard party and by 1923 says that unless the party work is checked by the non-party masses the bureaucracy will yet bring the workers state down and they will retrogress to capitalism. In any case, our problem is certainly not will there be a revolution; but what will happen after? are we always to be confronted with a Napoleon or a Stalin? In a word, without relating the spontaneous self-organization of the proletariat and its quest for universality in the manner in which Marx did it for his time, we can expect nothing but totalitarianist results.

III. In my introductory note I state that the 3 main strands of thought in the book are: 1) Classical Political Economy, Hegelian Philosophy, and the French Revolutionary doctrines in relationship to the actual social and economic conditions of its time, the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution and up to the first capitalist crisis. 2) Marxism in relationship to the class struggles of his day, the period of his maturity, 1843-1883, as well as Marxism in the period from 1889-1923; and 3) The methodology of Marxism to our era which I call the period of state capitalism and workers revolt, the analysis of the Five Year Plans of Russia and the revolt in East Germany, and Vorkuta following Stalin's death; finally the analysis of Automation but this is a comparatively free and easy essay. I think this too in a way can be summed up in the introductory note where I explain the method in which this book is written--that research began in 1939 when I broke with Trotsky over the "Russian Question" but that it did not assume the form of MARXISM AND FREEDOM until 1950-53 when the miner's strike on automation and the revolts in Eastern Europe from their separate vantage points led me to present all my ideas to groups of workers who checked and discussed the material. "No theoretician, today more than ever before, can write out of his own head. Theory requires constant shaping and reshaping of ideas on the basis of what the workers themselves are doing and thinking." I return to Hegel (page 73 fn in the Science of Logic) where he shows that those who took Kant's results without the process did so as a "pillow for intellectual sloth" and that if the intellectual sloth which has accumulated in the Marxist movement concerned only Marxists then we wouldn't be confronting the H-bomb threat without ideological backwardness showing. The need is for a new unity of theory and practice which must begin with the new impulses coming from the workingclass, that this, far from being intellectual abdication, would mark the actual fructification of theory. Once the theoretician gets that, his work does not end, but first begins.

In a word, I have no prescriptions or rhetorical conclusions. I show a method at work and appeal to the intellectuals to use that dialectic method as a basis to view the contemporary scene, to get out from under domination of either the Russian totalitarian or the American "democratic"

bomb threats in their thinking. The workers by themselves can do a lot but they too have not achieved a new social order, but if the movement from practice to theory met the movement from theory to practice, then a serious start could be made.

There are naturally other points in the work—from the American roots of Marxism to the Communist perversions both of Marx's Early Works and Capital—since it tries to deal with our machine age since the Industrial Revolution to Automation, but I do not believe anything germane to the book is lost once one grasps the central point, the philosophic foundation.

I know the effect that your Reason and Revolution had in 1941. They could neither treat Hegel as an "old dog" nor Marx's Early Writings as mere humanitarian adjuncts to "the great scientific economic theories." But then it was a philosopher speaking and not "a solid economist" like me. When the two were combined, glory, hallelujah—there was havoc. But the academicians need not think themselves any smarter—they all fell into the "Popular Front"; it is not possible to fight Russian totalitarianism or any other kind without some solid theoretic foundation and social vision.

I naturally cannot say whether I succeeded in doing what I aimed at but if intention were indeed achievement then I could say that what was new in MARXISM AND FREEDOM was 1) the re-establishment of the philosophic foundation of Marxism in Hegel in so concrete a way that the origins of our machine age as well as the latest period of automation came alive; 2) the summation of all three volumes of Marx's CAPITAL in a manner that the reader knows Marxism both as theory and as methodology; and 3) the new dimension Marxism endows the intellectual with became so real to him that he could indeed discern the movement from practice to theory and as eagerly long for the unity of the two as does the worker.

I hope this in some way answers what you wanted me to do in recapitulating the gist of the work. I also enclose the introductory notes to the bibliography so that you can see all my problems there.

Looking forward to your Preface very eagerly.

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