

June 1, 1987

Dear Raya,

Going over your "Why Hegel's Phenomenology? Why Now?" helped me to see some philosophical developments - both within and outside Marxist-Humanism - in new ways. Although I have studied the 1960 notes on Phg. many times before, this time they stand better as a whole for me, where previously I had looked more at individual parts, i.e. to get an answer to a specific problematic, or compare what you had said to another writer on a specific section. The 1987 publication of the 1960 notes with its new introduction shows the full sweep of Hegel's Phenomenology for Marxist-Humanism, or at least begins to do so. It also shows some sharp differences with other commentators on Phenomenology: Marcuse, Lukacs, Hyppolite, Westphal, Norman.

It is actually Marcuse's reading of Phenomenology in Reason and Revolution which now seems almost vulgar. Marcuse actually begins his discussion of Phenomenology thusly:

Hegel saw that the result of the French Revolution was not the realization of freedom, but the establishment of a new despotism...The process of emancipating the individual necessarily results in terror and destruction as long as it is carried out by individuals against the state, and not by the state itself. The state alone can provide emancipation, though it cannot provide perfect truth and perfect freedom. (91)

If this is Hegel on the state even in 1807(not 1820) for Marcuse, I think it says more about Marcuse's own descent later into Soviet Marxism than it does about Hegel's Phenomenology.

For even ~~the~~ non-revolutionary and religious Hegel scholar (Westphal), who surely believes in some sort of state, does nonetheless see the following statement from the young Hegel as an important part of the ground for the Phenomenology:

...that there is not Idea of the state, because the state is something mechanical, just as little as there is an Idea of a machine. Only the object of freedom is called Idea. We must therefore go beyond the State! For every state must treat free men as mechanical cogs, and it should not do so; therefore it should cease. (Quoted in History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology, p. 175, quote attributed to Schelling or Hegel.)

For Westphal, this type of thinking remains part of Hegel's Phenomenology, whether

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on the French Revolution or earlier where Westphal writes: "One can say that in the Phenomenology slavery and the state are only overcome together." (176)

In addition, Marcuse's discussion of Phenomenology ends with Self-Consciousness, not even bothering with Reason and Spirit, and then making the gratuitous (and unproven) remark that: "At the end of the road, pure thought again seems to swallow up living freedom," (120), a reference to Absolute Knowledge, to which he jumps all the way from Unhappy Consciousness.

Lukacs' synopsis of Phenomenology at the end of The Young Hegel is problematic enough, but worst of all is his very superficial discussion of Marx's 1844 "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" in the last chapter on The Young Hegel, where he too often reduces it to materialism versus idealism, while avoiding the Absolute altogether. And that book, with its explicit references to Stalin on dialectics, he did allow to be reprinted without any new introduction taking any of it back - even though he did write that infamous 1967 introduction to History and Class Consciousness, taking it back. H.S. Harris told me that he and his research colleagues on the young Hegel have actually found numerous factual errors in Lukacs' dating of Hegel's pre-1807 writings, calling many of his interpretations into question. Harris' next book is to be on the Phenomenology itself.

Actually the non-Marxist Hyppolite comes out better than Lukacs or Marcuse the Absolute, as do some of the newer Hegel scholars. But none of them have a concretization of Hegel's dialectic for today "in another element", just as Marx concretized Hegel's Phenomenology for the proletariat in 1844. That new element is what you achieve in the post-WWII world in the aftermath of the Russian, Chinese and Third World revolutions. You reformulate Hegel's dialectic, recreate it actually, in the "new element" of revolutions either soured or transformed into their opposite, and of the new movements from practice.

Marx (1) in 1843 discovered the proletariat, (2) in 1844 wrote in Paris

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on Alienated Labor and Private Property and Communism, but still (3) in 1844 then returned to Hegel's Phenomenology directly. In a very different period, you (1) developed Hegel's Absolutes in 1953, (2) concretized that as a movement from practice which is itself a form of theory in 1957 and then (3) dug back into Hegel in both letters to Marcuse and notes on Hegel in the period 1960-61, on the way toward P&R. (By the way, in your discussion of Spiritual Work of Art, etc., you refer parenthetically in the 1960 notes to a two page statement "I took up a few days ago" which "would be considered part of this summation." Do we have that still?)

Reading your 1960 notes on Phenomenology now makes them seem more related than ever both to the concept of state capitalism of the 1940s and after, and to the booklet on the Afro-Asian Revolutions, first written in 1959, and then expanded in 1961, after the notes on Hegel. The administrative mentality you outlined in 1959 in life was critiqued philosophically in the notes on Phenomenology as never before by anyone. That is what can make these notes not just for Hegel scholars, but also for revolutionaries, especially Third World revolutionaries in places like Grenada, Africa, India, the Philippines - anywhere where in life they have seen "in place of revolt appears arrogance,"

This is because, for you, Hegel's critique in Phenomenology is not only against all states (contra Marcuse, etc.), but even a critique as well of would-be states hiding as beautiful souls, etc., in the heads and the parties of the revolutionary leaders: "the heartthrob for the welfare of mankind passes therefore into the rage of frantic self-conceit..." Isn't that what Fanon saw? But Fanon wrote from some experience and some study of Hegel.

Your notes on Phenomenology come from a study of the whole of Hegel, plus the experience of battling Stalin's trials directly at the time of the strangling of Spain and the Hitler-Stalin Pact, those events constituting the deepest counter-revolution from within the revolution that the world

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ever seen. But you move on in the 1950s to catch as well the new type of petty-bourgeois Maos and Castros who claimed to be "real revolutionaries" as opposed to bureaucratic "Russian models", yet set up single party states. Knowing CLR James certainly "helped" in seeing this new element. Here Hegel's critique of Rousseau and Jacobi which you present in the notes on Phg. is more to the point than Hegel's critique of Kant, versus what in P&R you singled out as Third Attitude. Your 1960 notes capture the varieties of the new administrative mentalities in all of their fullness, not only politically, but as an alien philosophy to Hegel and Marx. You begin to offer a critique of a mentality which may not even have a state yet, but only a party or leadership of a movement, and which may not even "know" that its dialectic moves it toward a single party state. To this, you offer not only critique, but a full-blooded humanist alternative grounded in Hegel and in Marx.

All of this takes you ^{to the point} beyond Marx in fact, where as you wrote in Philosophy and Revolution:

(For Marx) "The negation of the negation" allows in but the faintest glimmer of the new, "new passions and new forces" for the reconstruction of society, but no blueprints of the future there. We approach the proletarian revolution and there stop. (93)

The post-WWII age compels a somewhat different vantage point than that of Capital, as seen in the second half of Marxism and Freedom.

I also noted your rich discussion of the "idea of the good" both at the level of "Absolute Freedom and Terror", and later under Absolute Knowledge when you go into "action", and "doing something, is always the only proof there is of the thought, and therefore stands in the center of all Hegelian philosophy." But this seems today a bit one-sided, and seemingly stands in contrast to your statement in 1987 in the article for the Yugoslav encyclopedia:

The self-development of ideas cannot take second place to the self-bringing forth of liberty, because both the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and the development of theory as philosophy, are more than

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just saying philosophy is action. There is surely one thing on which we should not try to improve on Marx - and that is trying to have a blueprint for the future.(27)

These differences are not fundamental, but rather a question of emphasis, of further self-development and self-confidence of the Idea of Marxist-Humanism.

The 1987 article points to where Marxist-Humanism has developed since 1960.

In your later discussion of Hegel's Phenomenology in Philosophy and Revolution (1973), the stress seems less on the various forms of alienated consciousness and administrative mentalities than on the notion "all of world history was to Hegel a history in the 'progress of the consciousness of freedom'." (11) Following closely Marx's 1844 critique of Phenomenology, here the focus is on "absolute method." You conclude: "The 'ultimate' turns out to be not the Absolute, which has just suffered its Golgotha, but a new beginning, a new point of departure." (18)

This type of emphasis can be seen as well in your 1987 introduction to the Hegel notes, where your focus is very much on today, on where to begin, on "new beginnings." One gets the sense that the Marxist-Humanist discussion of Hegel's Phenomenology is an ongoing one. That Hegel's Phenomenology is an anticipation of the coming not only of Mao, but also of Reagan. I think this is very objective when even a journalist and New York politico like Alexander Cockburn quotes almost a whole paragraph from Hegel's Phenomenology on "flattery" as part of a critique of the press's fawning on Reagan, (Nation, 5/30/87). This contrasts to Marcuse's statement in the 1950s (letter to RD, 4/14/55):

I still cannot get along with the direct translation of idealistic philosophy into politics: I think you somehow minimize the "negation" which the application of the Hegelian dialectic to political phenomena presupposes.

But if even Cockburn is today quoting a passage from Hegel directly, it is all the more reason for Marxist-Humanists to specify what is our unique contribution.

One thing I have not worked out is how you can write in 1987, "the great French Revolution did not produce totally new beginnings in philosophy",

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Cherrey
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in your 1987 introduction to the notes on Phenomenology. In P&R in 1973 you wrote about "the dangers inherent in the French Revolution which did not end in the millenium. The dialectic disclosed ~~that~~ the counter-revolution is within the revolution." (287) In 1987 you are separating the dialectic of thought from that of action/history in what appears to be a new way. The stress in 1987 is equally on the ~~limits of the thought~~ ^{limits of the thought (generally but specific)} growing out of the French Revolution, that that limit was Hegel's problematic. So too in your 1960 notes on Phg. and other writings on Hegel, your stress is on the limits of thought arising out of the post-WWII movements from practice, as you recollect-recall in your essay for the Yugoslavs: "The ambivalence in the theoretical developments persisted though they reached for a total philosophy." (1) But now you seem to be stressing that for Hegel's age too, the point of departure was the lack of new beginnings in philosophy after the French Revolution. But the thinkers Hegel criticized - Kant, Rousseau, Fichte, Schelling - were all of them great and original philosophers. It seems to me very new to draw a parallel on this aspect between Hegel's period and our own. Previously our stress has been more on philosophical void or "lack of philosophy" rather than limits of the philosophy that was created.

Like Hegel's then, our postwar age "did not produce totally new beginnings in philosophy." Hence the necessity of creating Marxist-Humanism. I like that notion better, because after all, Marcuse, Hyppolite, CLR, Gramsci (not published until postwar period), Lukacs, Sartre, etc. were all trying to create a philosophy of liberation to free us from fascism, capitalism and for some of them, also Stalinism. Certainly the 1960s with their

structuralism, existentialism and Marcuseans did not completely "lack philosophy" but what type of philosophy was it?

Again in your 1987 introduction, you write on "darkness before the dawn," seeming to suggest that something new, something beyond the postwar world

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It is not so much of the present as the future you are from Marcuse's the way another clean Mark!

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may be emerging out of the crisis in capitalist society exemplified by Reaganism as a world phenomenon. Responding to this will require a self-development of the dialectic as Marxist-Humanism, but not only as response, but as MH digging into itself, self-developing. Perhaps that accounts for the stress on the new, on self-development, not only of the revolutionary subject, but also of thought, including MH thought.

I meant to say above, perhaps on page 5 that initially I had some reservations about the great emphasis you placed on Spirit(not Absolute Knowledge) in the 1960 notes. While on one level this may be true, when you write, "The second major subdivision - Spirit - is the cornerstone of the entire work." Westphal and Baillie show the connection at this stage to Absolute Spirit. Westphal writes:

At the beginning of this longest chapter of the Phenomenology we are told that the goal and result of this historical progression is 'that the actual self-consciousness of absolute Spirit will come forth.' (Baillie, 461) ^u That would be not minor result, for if the self-consciousness of absolute Spirit is not Absolute Knowledge, it's hard to say what would be." (Westphal, 155).

Yours,

Karl

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8/4/87

Dear Kevin -

Just heard bad news - I will
need opera 5m - so this will be very
very brief - 2 points only.

Yours Gil

Commentary on Special Suppl. on Thursday

is very good + some day I hope to

discuss; indeed we need to do so before

Part II of my 1987 intro. next -

Re. gaps to NY these

Wks. + in general the delay on "literary agent"

role for P&R + M+F, it seems to me it

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11288 approach Olga, Rick, Eugene - all would be

God + without delay
Lays

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8/4/87

Dear Kevin

Just heard Paul news - I will

need operation - so this will be very

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Yours G.H.

Commentary on Special Supplement on Phonology

is very good + some day I hope to

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Part II of my 1987 intro next

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paid + without delay -
Lays

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June 4, 1987

Dear Kevin,

Just heard sad news -- I will need operation -- so this will be very, very brief -- 2 points only:

1) Your 6/1 commentary on Special Supplement on Phenomenology is very good and some day I hope to discuss; indeed we need to do so before Part II of my 1987 intro next --

2) Re going to NY those weeks and in general the delay on "literary agent" role for P&R & M&F, it seems to me it needs help. Could you give some suggestions of publishers others should approach -- Olga, Mike, Eugene -- all would be glad and without delay --

Raya

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