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ADDITIONS TO THE SYLLABUS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION CLASSES

The replacement of an "and" by two prepositions -- "from" and "to" -- in the title of the last talk in our series of classes in Philosophy and Revolution, which is now to read: FROM DIALECTIC METHODOLOGY TO THE DIALECTICS OF LIBERATION, summarizes and pinpoints what has developed from the classes. Thus, in the first talk -- "Why Hegel? Why Now? And 20th Century New Passions and New Forces" -- we added to the required reading, at one and the same time, the essay on Absolute Negativity as New Beginning from the NEW ESSAYS pamphlet, and Frantz Fanon's THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH. This focused not only on the fact that we were combining Chapter 1 and Chapter 9, but the motivation for that combination -- its concretization to the point where we no longer had to fear that readers would skip Chapter 1 and run to the present moment without ever grappling with dialectic methodology. Everything thereby moved directly from Hegel's revolution in philosophy to Marx's philosophy of revolution. The present as the test and the "proof" was carried to the suggested readings as well by adding our pamphlet on FRANTZ FANON, SOWETO AND AMERICAN BLACK THOUGHT.

More important was the need shown, in Lecture two on "Marx's Philosophy of Revolution", for not separating PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION from MARXISM AND FREEDOM. By adding to the required reading Chapters 3, and 5 through 8, from MARXISM AND FREEDOM, history became not only the way it affected Marx's restructuring of CAPITAL, but what happened objectively, from the Civil War in the U.S. to the Paris Commune. Moreover, we moved GRUNDRISSE into the required reading so that we had the opportunity to bring in the Orient without needing to wait for the 20th century revolutions to appreciate Marx's new continent of thought as well as revolution. To the suggested readings we added considerable emphasis on the American roots of Marxism: AMERICA'S FIRST UNFINISHED REVOLUTION as well as the pamphlet on THE FIRST GENERAL STRIKE IN THE U.S. On the other hand, I didn't wish to leave the contemporary scene only for Part III, and therefore suggested we add the critique of Ernest Mandel ⁱⁿ the pamphlet on MARX'S CAPITAL AND TODAY'S GLOBAL CRISIS, as well as my "Two Worlds" column on Roman Rosdolsky. Also added was the special Jan-Feb 1979 issue of NEWS & LETTERS, with my critique of Engels.

The third lecture on "Dialectics of the Concrete vs. False Alternatives" took nearly two hours -- and believe me, I left out much that I had intended to talk about before I felt the time¹ flying.² Of course it covered a great deal of ground, but there was no other way to comprise the whole book into four talks.

In any case, we also had to add to the required reading: first and imperative, LENIN'S PHILOSOPHIC NOTEBOOKS (Vol. 38 Collected Works)³; secondly, Gramsci's PRISON NOTEBOOKS, especially the articles on Dialectics and the Critique of Bukharin; and thirdly, Rosa Luxemburg's GENERAL STRIKE.⁴

Also added to the readings was Hegel's Smaller LOGIC. Besides the constant references to the Second and Third Attitudes to Objectivity which you will hear on the tapes, constantly related to Leon Trotsky and Mao, I felt it imperative to call attention to Lenin's reading of the SCIENCE OF LOGIC. Two points especially were important to emphasize: the point where Lenin finds Hegel reaching the Absolute Idea — (Johnson and Struthers translation, Vol. II, p. 465) "not, however, merely as objective world without the subjectivity of the Notion; but as objective world whose inner ground and actual persistence is the Notion"; and (Vol. II, p. 477) the point where Lenin, in developing at length that final chapter of Hegel's work, sees "contradictory terms are held apart ... and thus come before consciousness without mutual contact," and describes the latter as "the essence of the anti-dialectic." I felt strongly that this is, indeed, the essence of the anti-dialectic and covers not only Trotsky, and Mao, but all Alternatives of today whom Lenin anticipated as he concluded that he had no one to leave his mantle to and had to write the Will as he did.

Finally we come to what I began with — the final talk. For the first time, in a talk at a university which, though under N&L Youth sponsorship, was nevertheless not totally ours, I introduced the organizational question. Not only that, it was introduced as the third and conclusive point as "The Concretization of the Absolute Idea", saying that instead of ending, as usual, with the two final paragraphs of PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION, I wanted those two paragraphs to become the task not that "remains to be done" but that we would begin doing. And we had begun doing it in 1953 with the Letters on the Absolute Idea, expressed it in organizational form in 1955 with News and Letters Committees, and it was time to stop keeping it as our organizational "secret". Rather, just as Lenin had concretized the Paris Commune as "All power to the Soviets" in 1917, we had better continue with the "Self-bringing Forth of Liberty" we had been doing the past quarter century. If we are serious about the unity of theory and practice as totality, then that totality cannot exclude collectivity as N&L Committee form where all work out the dialectic as the theoretical preparation for the American Revolution.

15169

Finally, on the Syllabus itself, where Suggested Readings include Herbert Marcuse's Reason and Revolution, please change what is in the parentheses to read: (the 1941 edition and Preface to the 1960 edition contrasted) — and add our M&L Bulletin on "The Newness of Our Philosophic-Historic Contribution", originally published in 1969. That is where I first stressed our originality as centering on those words "as new beginning" and it certainly should be part of this class.

Because I believe our comrades should know that this is the way these lectures end, I'm sending this out now and asking you to attach it to your Syllabus.

May 1-2, 1979

RAYA

Notes:

- 1) Besides LABOR as "summation" for all the categories of Marx, I include time, since I believe the absolute opposite, that really tells what Marxist-Humanism is, is to contrast Marx's analysis of labor-time as that horror of the factory clock that pounds you into an abstraction, against Marx's definition of "time is space for human self-development."
- 2) I wish someone would volunteer to type from the tapes, what I said in these four lectures for which I have no notes — provided only a single copy is made and that one is only for me, so that I can edit and at some time in the future have the four talks as a bulletin. *
- 3) We should show that it is not the whole of Vol. 38 which the Stalinists most deliberately tried to pretend is a "continuity" of Lenin, whereas the Philosophic Notebooks (the Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic) and the work he did in 1914-1915 is a break with his own philosophic past.
- 4) I just decided to look into Paul Frolich's ROSA LUXEMBURG as it was published by Monthly Review Press and to my surprise found MARXISM AND FREEDOM listed. That set me off to thinking that perhaps we should really also include the talk on Rosa Luxemburg I gave on International Women's Day. It certainly is great that a book on Rosa Luxemburg lists M&F and that a book of letters is coming out that I will have advised readers to study.

15170