

## BOOK REVIEW

**Kevin B. Anderson and Russell Rockwell, eds.**  
*Dunayevskaya-Marcuse-Fromm correspondence,  
1954-1978: Dialogues on Hegel,  
Marx and Critical Theory*

*New York: Lexington Books, 2012, 269 pages*

Critical Theory as a philosophical orientation has provided a radical stimulus to a contemporary generation of thinkers by combining the Hegelian and Marxian dialectical methods with Marx's critique of ideology. This has given rise to a distinctively powerful lens of social analysis for the project of emancipation in the multifarious issues of power struggle, ideology, language, discourse, technology, instrumental reason, aesthetic industry, etc. in social, economic, political, and cultural spheres of contemporary society. The revolutionary insights of Hegel and Marx in Critical Theory, however, do not imply a closed system of thought among its practitioners; in fact, at times, it has been discordant, however vibrant. In this collection of correspondence, for instance, Marcuse disagrees with Dunayevskaya on the latter's interpretation and application of Hegel's dialectics and absolute idea/mind, while Fromm accused Marcuse of callousness towards moral qualities in political figures similar to that of Lenin (xviii), and Marcuse likewise attacked Fromm on his Freudian revisionism and liberalism regarding interpretations on Freudian psychoanalysis vis-à-vis Marxist social analysis. References to the disagreements between the Frankfurt School's intellectual leaders Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno with Herbert Marcuse (xvii), on the one hand, and with Erich Fromm (xix), on the other hand, were also alluded to. Nonetheless, by and through persistent critical dialogue and exchange—truly a real practice of dialectics—the critical theorists in different perspectives of the Marxist-Humanist, Hegelian-Marxist, and Socialist Humanist standpoints, have preserved and has brought to greater heights.

This book is a collection of correspondence between Raya Dunayevskaya and Herbert Marcuse (1-93), and between Raya Dunayevskaya and Erich Fromm (119-91) edited by Anderson and Rockwell. It demonstrates the kind of intellectual dialectical exchange among three iconic figures of Marxist Humanism and Critical Theory. These correspondences between Dunayevskaya and Marcuse, and then between Dunayevskaya and Fromm give the readers a glimpse of how these Marxists and critical theorists individually and interactively wrestle with the revolutionary ideas of Hegel and Marx as they are employed in understanding the movements and issues of their time. Their agreements and disagreements on various issues manifest the theoretical development of Marxist Humanist thought in Critical Theory in the third quarter of the twentieth century (1950s-1970s) in the United States of America. Similarly, their letters reveal some intimation on how these revolutionary intellectuals and radical academics in diaspora struggled for their safety, in their career and political affiliations, e.g., looking

for publishers for their works, and split up with earlier intellectual-political activists and revolutionary allies.

The adept management and accounting of information in the introduction by Anderson and Rockwell situates these dialogues in context. It provides the reader with the necessary platform to frame in a big picture of the theoretical advancement of each of these thinkers. Notable in these correspondences is the demonstration of the convergence and divergence of ideas which are contributive of the shaping up of a theory. The inclusion of invaluable primary texts in the appendix—e.g., Marcuse's preface to Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and freedom* (217-21), Dunayevskaya's review of Marcuse's *Soviet Marxism* (222-26), Fromm's foreword to the German edition of Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and revolution* (231-32)—magnify the brand of intellectual friendship among them as well as hints at the rough edges of the relation between Marxist Humanism and Critical Theory as a philosophical attitude over time. This makes the collection a crucial resource for anyone wishing to understand deeper such philosophical dynamics.

Herbert Marcuse, of Jewish descent, was a Marxist from his youth being an active member of the Social Democratic Party. His radical thoughts and writings being influenced by a wide variety of intellectual giants and movements—Marx, Freud, Heidegger, Hegel, and German Idealism to name a few—set a provocative impact on social-structural analysis and ideological critique of modern societies. Marcuse did not hesitate to take on board what he considered to be his major contribution to critical thinking, viz. writing that range from the dialectical critique of historical consciousness to the phenomenological critique of existential consciousness and the psychoanalytic critique of the libidinal unconscious. By these he was considered by many as spawning grounds for revolutionary ideas to the young generation as well as the key philosophical catalyst of the so-called New Left.

At the time of the publication of *Reason and revolution: Hegel and the rise of social theory*, Marcuse, now exiled in the US, was a core member of the Frankfurt School. He was then the specialist in dialectical philosophy of the research institute. This work of Marcuse was acclaimed as the first comprehensive analysis of Hegelian dialectics and the first treatment of the whole body of Marx's work from the *1844 Manuscript* to the *Capital* that was ever written in English. Marcuse had also written on other themes which were associated with the Frankfurt School's brand of Marxist's sociology; however, in the view of some commentators, the increasingly "aggressive Marxian-revolutionary tone of Marcuse's theses" (xvii), became repulsive to the Institute's intellectual leaders, who thus replaced him as the philosophy specialist of the group.

Marcuse's works—*Marx's 1844 manuscripts*, *Reason and revolution: Hegel and the rise of social theory*, *Eros and civilization*, *Soviet Marxism*, and *One dimensional man*—which contained most of his radical and revolutionary ideas, converged with Raya Dunayevskaya's revolutionary trajectory of thought. Some of these ideas were Marcuse's declaration of the centrality of the Hegelian dialectic to Marx's work, his stressing the fetishism of commodities, the explicit critique of positivism and implicit critique of pragmatism, the dialectic of negativity, critique of Sartrean existentialism, etc. Such largely Marxian-revolutionary tone of Marcuse's theses brought him close to Dunayevskaya's position. Nonetheless, Marcuse's proposition of working out the revolutionary theory within communist parties, viz.,

the Stalinist Communist Parties, finds odd reception from Dunayevskaya's anti-Stalinist's left which eventually emerged into some acrimonious exchange between Marcuse and Dunayevskaya (xvi-xvii).

Raya Dunayevskaya, a Russian-born Jewish Marxist-Humanist intellectual, Marxist Feminism activist and revolutionary, initiated the dialogue with Marcuse at the time she parted ways with former political allies, while searching then for an intellectual ally for exchange ( 4). Prior to the intellectual exchanges with Marcuse, Dunayevskaya was involved in the split in the Socialist Workers Party. The split was basically rooted in her disagreement with Trotsky's characterization of the Soviet Union as a "degenerated workers' state." Dunayevskaya's contention is that the Soviet Union had neither become just a "degenerated worker's state" nor "bureaucratic collectivist" but she argued that it had become a "state capitalist." Dunayevskaya's theory of state capitalism allowed her to form a group of Marxist intellectuals with whom she debated intensely on Hegelian dialectics. Such activities were all geared towards the project of writing a book on Marxism and dialectics. From here remains the impetus of the Dunayevskaya-Marcuse correspondence and debate on Marxist dialectics and Hegel's absolute idea/mind ( 3-15).

After more than a decade of developing the theory of state capitalism, Dunayevskaya continued her study of the Hegelian dialectic by taking on a task the Johnson-Forest Tendency had set itself: exploring Hegel's *Philosophy of mind*. She advanced an interpretation of Hegel's Absolutes, holding that they involved a dual movement: a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory and a movement from theory reaching to philosophy. She considered these 1953 letters to be "the philosophic moment" from which the whole development of Marxist Humanism flowed.

Three of the most contentious ideas of Dunayevskaya's that spurred a reaction from Marcuse were the theory of state capitalism, the positive reading of Hegel's Absolute Idea, and the role of contemporary working classes. Marcuse objected to the theory of state capitalism because he sees the basic continuity between Lenin and Stalin (xxiv). He also distanced himself from Dunayevskaya's what he termed as "glorification of the common people," which was deemed "abstract and undialectical" (5). Marcuse—unlike the reading of Dunayevskaya—puts the creative force of negation not solely on the hand of labor. For him, Hegel's idea of the absolute is the most nondialectical element in Hegelian corpus.

Dunayevskaya made a positive reading of the worker's movement in Denver as embodiment of Hegel's dialectics towards the absolute idea. She argued that the rank-and-file workers fighting against what she considered as the heightened alienation resulting to automation is a new stage of capitalist production. These were for her a manifestation of the "absolutes." She elucidated that the twin pole of any fundamental work must have automation at one end and the absolute idea or freedom at the other end (xxiii, p. 5 and ff.). Likewise, she defended her theses on Hegel's absolute mind, thus she argued:

For anyone bound for adventures of the Hegelian dialectic, the Absolute Mind lies beckoning, but, no, we go back repeating the old about the de-humanization of ideas that Hegel is reproached with, although I maintain that today we should see it as its innermost essence. (47)

Despite these theoretical disagreements, Marcuse commends Dunayevskaya's ways of concretizing Hegel's abstract philosophical notions. He also agreed to writing the preface of Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and freedom*. Likewise, in many instances Dunayevskaya sided on Marcuse's position against his detractors, e.g., she defended Marcuse from the attacks of Fromm and even Adorno. They supported each other in advancing the revolutionary ideas of Hegel and Marx in their critique of contemporary society towards a democratized world.

Dunayevskaya wrote what came to be known as her "trilogy of revolution," including *Marxism and freedom* and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's liberation*, and *Marx's Philosophy of revolution* (1982). In addition, she selected and introduced a collection of writings, published in 1985, *Women's liberation and the dialectics of revolution*.

Erich Fromm was a German social psychologist, psychoanalyst, sociologist, humanistic philosopher, and democratic socialist. Fromm was one of the founding members of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and was an important colleague of Horkheimer in the inception years of the Institute of Social Research. He was the only trained psychoanalyst among this group of intellectuals and thus credited the distinction as the first who attempted to reconcile Freud and Marx (xxxv). This turn to psychoanalytical Marxism was very much supported by their intellectual leader at Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer.

However, Fromm's continuous espousing of a liberal tone and revisionist tendency in reading Freud vis-à-vis social critique pushed him away from the mainstream of critical theory. He was eventually shoved out of the Frankfurt School. Despite these, with his succeeding works, e.g., *Escape from freedom*, Fromm managed to catapult himself as an internationally celebrated social critic. Though he may have appeared to many as a less radical thinker, Fromm continued with his brand of psychoanalytic Marxist social critique. Such standpoint led him to develop a Socialist-Humanist psychoanalysis which in turn finds affinity with Dunayevskaya's interest (xxxvii).

Fromm and Dunayevskaya's intellectual exchange focused on issues arising from *Marx's Concept man*, from the discussion on the contemporary relevance of Hegel's *Phenomenology of the mind*, and questions on *Socialist humanism*, among others. Generally Dunayevskaya commended Fromm's Marxist-Humanist view; however, in a letter to Fromm dated 11 October 1961, Dunayevskaya criticized Fromm's *Marx's concept of man*. She deplored Fromm's affirmative reading of Marcuse's works *Reason and revolution* and *Soviet Marxism* as "brilliant and penetrating" (123) in reference to calling both works of Marcuse the "philosophical basis of Marx's thought." Though she commends Marcuse's *Reason and revolution*, Dunayevskaya particularly disagreed with Marcuse's *Soviet Marxism*. In her verdict of *Soviet Marxism* she wrote:

In reading your *Marx's concept of man* I noted that you referred to the works of Herbert Marcuse as if there were no difference between the period when he wrote his wonderful "Reason and revolution" and that in which he wrote his whitewash of Communist perversions in his "Soviet Marxism"... The reason I mention it is that it illuminates the pitfalls awaiting one if the Humanism of Marxism is treated abstractly, and the dialectic of the present development is analyzed on a totally different basis. (124)

She also opposed Fromm's tendency of dealing with Marx's early essays in "too general terms"(xl.). Despite these criticisms, there was a substantial core of agreement between Fromm and Dunayevskaya.

Dunayevskaya outlived both Marcuse and Fromm. In her *In memoriam* (1979 for Marcuse and 1980 for Fromm), Dunayevskaya paid tribute and saluted her intellectual friends and critics.

The death of Herbert Marcuse...marks a sad day on the historic calendar of young revolutionaries as well as old Marxists. How great is the void death has created can be gauged from his mature life-span which covered the 1919 German Revolution, the US New Left in the mid-1960s, to the very month of his death in Germany—the country of his birth, the land of both Hegel and Marx... (232)

She recalled her last discussion with him: "I thought: the 1919 German Revolution and Marx's philosophy of liberation were precisely the point of the birth of Herbert Marcuse as Marxist Philosopher" (232-35). For Erich Fromm Dunayevskaya eulogized:

The many articles that poured forth in 1980 when Erich Fromm died...all praised him as a "famous psychoanalyst." The press, by no accident at all, failed to mention that he was a Socialist Humanist. In writing "Marx's concept of man"...he did so, not as an academician, but as an activist...In any case as he moved away from orthodox Freudianism to establish his own version, it was clear that he was breaking not only with Freud but with the famous Frankfurt School and its Critical Theory, and that, not because he was moving away from Marxism, but coming closer to it. (236)

She declared that by and through them, the revolutionary lives on!

This collection of correspondence between three notable intellectual figures—between Dunayevskaya and Marcuse, and between Dunayevskaya and Fromm—demonstrates the vibrancy of revolutionary ideas as they developed in Hegelian Marxist, Marxist Humanist, and Socialist Humanists perspectives in Critical Theory. To anyone who is a serious follower of Hegel, Marx, and Critical Theory, this collection is a "must read" book.

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