

September 12, 1985

Dear Ron:

I'm sure you will not be surprised to hear that the many deadlines staring me in the face, from getting ready to execute decisions of the Plenum to finally getting down to serious work on The Dialectic of 'the Party'", make it necessary that this note to you on your Sartre essay will be brief. Nevertheless, I would like to recapitulate the two criticisms I spoke about to you during the Plenum. The first was that there wasn't enough of you and that that was especially necessary on science, not directly your magnificent work on The Mathematical Notebooks (I did very much like your footnote on that), but Engels' Dialectics of Nature. Here, more specifically, is what I would like you to do:

The intellectuals made the attack on Engels' work, which is Engels' not Marx's, as if all attempt to see any dialectics in Nature is wrong. It began with Lukacs back in 1919, braving to call Engels' dialectic an "external dialectic/." That was correct and not only on Nature, but very much more importantly the unilinear view of human development. Sartre and the Existentialists in the early '40s made a veritable library all in itself attacking any concept that dialectics relates to Nature. That is fantastic and wrong. What is correct is that the dialectics of Nature is not the dialectics of human beings, and what preoccupied Marx was the dialectics of human relations, class relations, all revolts, revolutions and thought.

I have often wanted to very much attack the question but I know nothing about science. But I did try to attack Sartre at the time that George Novack was very vulgarly totally defending Engels against Marx when he edited the book Existentialism Versus Marxism (New York: Dell, 1966). Novack's excuse for refusing to accept my essay was that he already had accepted Marcuse's statement, and supposedly I and Marcuse are the same. I need hardly debate that ridiculous question. In fact, since I am publishing only excerpts of my talk to the Executive Session, I do want to repeat that, in addition to asking you to read that Novack compilation, you get the author I referred to who wrote the article on Lukacs --

Marshall Berman, in the Voice Literary Supplement, July 1985 -- especially the last paragraph, which begins with : "Finally, there is the idea of totality, according to which the question of freedom becomes 'purely tactical'... a metaphysical undertow that might well be strong enough to drown all Lukacs' dreams of liberation."

I felt that you, in dealing with totality, and in contrasting naturally Sartre's and my views on it, nevertheless did not ~~IMMENSE~~ stress that I meant totality not as sum-up unless the sum-up is only the jumping off place for a new beginning. In this respect, I'd like to say that your last paragraph on p. 25, where you talk about the need for a total view rather than any single issue, does not bring in that new beginning as including both a philosophy of revolution and the self-determination of the Idea, thus giving the impression that what comes from the movement from practice as a form of theory were philosophy itself, instead of one form of theory which ~~IMMENSE~~ needs new relations with the movement from theory to achieve a philosophy, so that the Absolute Idea as new beginning ~~IMMENSE~~ comprises activity, thought, self-development. Otherwise, you give the impression as if the WLM or the anti-nuclear movement that is also anti-war is what Marxist-Humanism is.

I do not know, naturally, whether you want to do something for a post-Fleum bulletin or whether you think you would want to take this point of science and your entry into the entire debate with Sartre as a sort of P.S. to your essay. I will want much later to have something to say about too many references to me, but there is no hurry about that. No doubt we are going to have many new views also on the dialectic of "the Party", dialectics of organization in general, before the next Convention.

Yours,

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