

takes into account the structural factors which enable individuals to evade both the actual consequences of what they do, and any sense of responsibility for doing it ('I was only obeying orders').

If Keane's title – borrowed from Sorel – suggests something a bit meandering, rather than a rigorously pursued argument, that, regrettably, is not misleading. There are odd hiatuses, and there are too many digressions. We are a third of the way through the book (p. 65) before he turns to the definition of violence, and the ensuing brief discussion is far from satisfactory.

Keane wants to hold on to the traditional conception of violence as 'the unwanted physical interference by groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others' (p. 67). But while he dislikes attempts to extend the meaning of the term, he does not discuss the problem raised by his narrow definition. What constitutes 'physical interference'? Are policies which result in death by starvation or hypothermia examples of such interference? If not, why not? And why are 'bodies' the only object of violence? Modern methods of torture, as employed by British forces in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, may involve no direct physical assault on their victims, yet can do terrible damage to the mind and personality, as well as the body. If this is not violence, then the adequacy of Keane's definition is called into question. Given the huge emotive power of the word 'violence', these cannot be regarded as merely semantic questions.

Nor, I think, does Keane do sufficient justice to the

pacifist case against all violence. Personally, I agree with him that there are occasions when recourse to violence is justified as having less terrible consequences than passive resistance. But the argument that justifiable violence can breed unjustifiable violence is not taken seriously enough. Keane slips too easily into calling violence of which he approves 'counter-violence' or 'civil violence'. But it is one thing to regard violence as a sometimes regrettable necessity and quite another to claim that the killing or injuring of people can be dignified as 'civil'.

Keane's *Reflections*, though manifestly serious and enterprising, lack rigour and thoroughness, and the book shows many signs of having been hastily composed. A diatribe against nationalism, which he claims has 'a fanatical core' (p. 126), is quite inadequate in dealing with such a complex subject, and, significantly, makes no mention of any of the British nationalisms. Are Scottish nationalists really 'driven by the feeling that all nations are caught up in the animal struggle for survival' (p. 127)? I think the question answers itself. There are many unnecessarily long and convoluted sentences – the section on the definition of violence (pp. 65–7) is particularly bedevilled by them: and too many throw-away asides and unexplained references. What, for instance, is the 'near dominant Westphalian model of interstate power' which we suddenly encounter on page 45? Or am I the only reader of *Radical Philosophy* not to know?

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## The first Hegelian Marxist

Kevin Anderson, *Lenin, Hegel and Western Marxism: A Critical Study*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1995. xviii + 311 pp., \$49.95 hb., \$15.95 pb., 0 252 02167 3 hb., 0 252 06503 4 pb.

Thanks to its impressive argumentation and wide scholarship, this book brings to life a new and unexpected Lenin, poles apart from both wooden 'Marxism-Leninism' and dismissive Western scholarship. A follower of the Hegelian Marxist Raya Dunayevskaya, Kevin Anderson gives us a sympathetic but critical assessment of Lenin's attempt to assimilate Hegelian dialectics into revolutionary politics.

The starting point for Anderson's argument is Lenin's *Notebooks* on Hegel of 1914–15, a series of abstracts, summaries and comments, mainly on Hegel's *Science of Logic*. In spite of their fragmentary and unfinished nature, these constitute Lenin's philosophical and methodological break with Second International 'orthodox' Marxism, and, therefore, with his own earlier views, as codified in his crude and

dogmatic polemical piece of 1908, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. The Lenin who emerges from the *Notebooks* – a Marxist fascinated with Hegelian logic – eludes the usual distinction between 'Western' and 'Eastern' (or Russian) Marxism.

Closely following Lenin's extracts and comments, Anderson persuasively shows how his attitude changes with his reading of Hegel: from an initial 'materialist' diffidence, to a growing interest in subjectivity and self-movement, finally coming to the surprising conclusion that 'an intelligent (dialectical) idealism is superior to a stupid (vulgar) materialism'. Even if he did not take into account the plenitude of Hegel's dialectic, the Lenin of the *Notebooks* can be considered the first 'Hegelian Marxist' of the twentieth century, and the first to emphasize the Hegelianism of Marx's

*Capital*: 'It is impossible fully to grasp Marx's *Capital* and especially its first chapter, if you have not studied through and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, none of the Marxists for the past half century have understood Marx!' – a famous aphorism with quite obvious 'self-critical' implications.

Lenin's public writings on dialectics were much less explicit than the *Notebooks*: shot through with philosophical ambivalence (Raya Dunayevskaya's expression), they refuse to choose between Hegel and Plekhanov. The call, in 1922, for a 'systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint' is the nearest Lenin came to a public expression of the ideas advanced in the *Notebooks*. On the other hand, the reissuing of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in 1920, without a critical introduction, indicates the extent of his 'ambivalence'.

However, if one goes beyond Lenin's strictly philosophical statements, one will discover, according to Anderson, that some of his most significant post-1914 theoretical and political writings were variously grounded in his Hegel *Notebooks*. His interest in subjectivity and self-movement, as well as in the dialectical transformation into opposites, contributed to his understanding of national liberation movements as new revolutionary subjects produced by imperialism, and of grassroots spontaneous democracy (the soviets) as the alternative to the centralized bureaucratic state.

Curiously enough, Anderson fails to mention a more obvious example of the impact of the Hegel *Notebooks* on Lenin's dialectics of revolution: the 'April Theses' of 1917, where, for the first time, he called for the transformation of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one. This major turn – a radical break with the Russian Marxist tradition, common to Mensheviks and Bolsheviks – was only possible because of Lenin's emancipation, thanks to Hegel, from the strait-jacket of Plekhanovite Marxism, with its rigid, pre-dialectical notion of 'stages' prescribed by the 'laws' of historical 'evolution'. The idea at the heart of the 'April Theses' of revolution as a dialectical process owes much to the *Notebooks*.

The last section of the book deals with Lenin's *Notebooks* and Western Marxism – a category that Anderson does not challenge, even though his data show that the opposition between dialectical and vulgar-materialist Marxism does not coincide with any geographical distinction between 'East' and 'West'.

Lenin's *Notebooks* were published in the USSR in 1929, but Soviet Marxism nearly buried them, canonizing *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* instead.

While some Western Marxists, such as Lukács, Bloch, Goldmann, Lefebvre, Marcuse and, above all, Dunayevskaya, showed interest in them, others (e.g. Colletti and Althusser) either ignored or misinterpreted them, from a materialist/positivist standpoint, hoping to drive Hegel's shadow 'back into the night' (Althusser).

Henri Lefebvre is an interesting example: having discovered Hegel's *Science of Logic* thanks to André Breton – whose place in the history of Hegelian



Marxism deserves to be studied one day – he became very much attracted by Lenin's *Notebooks*, which he translated into French (1938). However, as long as he remained a member of the French Communist Party, he tried to reconcile Lenin's Hegelianism with the mechanistic views of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Only in 1959, after his expulsion from the Party, did he dare to state that up to 1914 Lenin did not understand dialectics.

Of all Western Marxists, only Dunayevskaya made the *Notebooks* central to her overall theoretical project, with an extensive – and increasingly critical – series of writings, from the 1950s to the 1980s. Her *Marxism and Freedom* (1958) is the first serious discussion in English of the *Notebooks*, and the first to try to relate them to Lenin's views on imperialism, national liberation, state and revolution. In *Philosophy and Revolution* (1973) the issue is taken up again, but this time emphasizing Lenin's philosophical ambivalence. Finally, in a new preface for this book (her last writing), Dunayevskaya insisted on Lenin's too narrowly materialist reading of Hegel.

A similar conclusion is drawn by Anderson in conclusion: while Lenin's study of dialectics took him well beyond the limits of Second International materialism, in spite of occasional critiques of Engels in the *Notebooks*, he still remained imprisoned within the confines of Engelsian Marxism.

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