

Anderson, Kevin. *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism: A Critical Study*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995. xvii + 311 pp. \$45.95 (\$15.95 paper).

Left Hegelianism and Marx continue to acquire followers in every new intelligentsia generation. Some reaffirm various aspects of Marx's theory, often at the expense of Engels, whom they blame for taking the theory in a scientific direction. Marxist Humanists uphold the Hegelian Marx of the 1844 manuscripts. Kevin Anderson's work belongs to their tradition. Following Raya Dunayevskaya and others, he accords Lenin the honor of having been the first Hegelian Marxist of the twentieth century. This is counterintuitive, given Lenin's apparently heavy reliance on Engels, both before and after 1915. Anderson argues that Lenin's study of Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Science of Logic) in 1914–15 opened his eyes and affected some of his most important theoretical works in the ensuing years. To be sure, Lenin still erred in crucial areas (some might say, all areas) because of "theoretical ambivalence." The purpose of the book, however, is not to blame Lenin for his lapses from Marxist Humanism but to show that he was the first prominent Marxist of the twentieth century to break away from the dogmatic scientific Marxism of the Second International.

Anderson's work should be taken seriously even though he cites not a single Russian source and has not seen the pertinent manuscripts. Lenin's notebooks on Hegel have been translated and Anderson has had abundant help and advice from a variety of capable scholars. Therefore, one wonders why he failed to discuss Lenin's notes of May 1920 (published and available in English translation) to Bukharin's *Ekonomika perekhodnogo perioda*, which contain a number of remarks on Bukharin's dialectical method and other germane comments. A gap of this sort, however, does not vitiate the value of the work. It is not the scholarship but some of the theoretical assumptions behind Anderson's work that needs attention.

Anderson assumes that devotion to "the dialectic" equips one to be a better revolutionary (or "liberatory") theoretician. But even if a case can be made that dialectical thinking stimulates theoretical creativity and has heuristic value, what is "the dialectic"? Dialecticians notoriously disagree, each claiming greater mastery of "the dialectic." Bukharin, for example, translated dialectic into an early variant of systems theory under the influence of Alexander Bogdanov (Malinovskii). This infuriated Lenin, who used Hegel to reinforce his own authority as *teoretik*. Hegelian dialectic does not guarantee that one will get everything right (left, that is); it certainly does not turn brutal dogmatists into nice people. In revolutions, people and their qualities of leadership probably count more than theory. Trotsky knew this, but was too doctrinaire to exploit his insight.

A case can be made, however, that study of Hegel inspired Lenin, and Anderson makes it (largely because dialectical terms offer great latitude for interpretation) by reviewing Lenin's theoretical positions on a series of important problems in the light of the notebooks on Hegel. To be sure, even after the notebooks, Lenin made statements reminiscent of the epistemologically benighted *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Lenin was only episodically a Hegelian Marxist, but the impact is clearly there. When the invalid Lenin took his last trip to his Kremlin office in October 1923, he carried away three volumes of Hegel.

Anderson also traces the richly bifurcating disputes of the Left over Lenin's position as a dialectician. Even if Anderson's assumptions about dialectical method are questionable, he ably surveys the dialectical adventures of theoreticians trying to orient themselves to the seemingly endless crises of capitalism and looking for guidance in intellectual forebears. Dialectic

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is infinitely malleable, eternally optimistic, and embraces a great range of intellectual creativity and political behavior. The inspirational character of dialectic remains, although many hyphenated Hegelianisms and Marxisms have fallen by the wayside.

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