

The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx

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Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* identified *praxis* as the touchstone of his new philosophy. 'Revolutionary' materialism was neither detached contemplation nor blind mechanism, but the unity, the friction, of the two.¹ This unity threatens to become undone in the post-Soviet era. Marxism's strength as a theory of capitalism and capital's effects is widely recognised. But this has sparked little interest in Marxist politics. If Marxism is to speak to the changed conditions of the twenty-first century, it must draw on its neglected liberatory traditions. A rich history of independent radicalism has been overshadowed by the official Communist movement, but can form the basis for a profound renewal of revolutionary *praxis*.

The recently published *Power of Negativity* returns the reader to a specially fruitful chapter in Marxist history. Its author, Raya Dunayevskaya, was a key figure of what Harry Cleaver has called the 'autonomist' strain of Marxism.² In the decades after the Second World War, Dunayevskaya developed a philosophical and political perspective that rejected the Sino-Soviet bloc as 'state-capitalist' and called for a new society based on, and brought about by, the self-activity of workers, women, minorities, and students. *The Power of Negativity* brings together her work on dialectics in Hegel and Marx. While Dunayevskaya addressed a Cold-War context very different from our own, her philosophy holds, perhaps, even more value in post-Soviet times. Dunayevskaya's emphasis on workers' self-activity, race, and gender anticipated the polymorphous anti-globalisation struggles and Hardt and Negri's 'multitude'. But her view of Marxism as the creation of the freely associated seeks capitalism's abolition in a way that *Empire's* demands for a guaranteed income do not.

Born in the Ukraine in 1910, Dunayevskaya's family later settled in the Jewish ghettos of Chicago, in the wake of the famines that had devastated the region.³ At an early age, Dunayevskaya took an active part in radical politics as member of the

¹ Karl Marx 1978, p. 143.

² Cleaver 2000. The term is used with reservation, as Dunayevskaya never described herself as an 'autonomist'.

³ Bibliographical information taken from entry on Raya Dunayevskaya in Schultz and Hest 2001.

Communist Youth Organization in the early twenties, and as a regular contributor to the newspaper of the American Negro Labor Congress, the *Negro Champion*.⁴ When, in 1928, Stalin had Trotsky expelled from the Party, and Dunayevskaya urged her comrades to listen to Trotsky's response, she found herself thrown out of the Communist movement as well. Thereafter, she became involved in Trotskyist circles, working as a Russian language secretary to the famous revolutionary in 1938, and, despite the break with him over the nature of the Russian state, participating in the Trotskyist Socialist Workers' Party during the next decade and a half. It was within this sphere that Dunayevskaya met Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James, with whom she was to form the State-Capitalist or Johnson-Forest Tendency inside the SWP.

As part of her work for the Johnson-Forest Tendency, Dunayevskaya translated Lenin's 'Abstract of Hegel's *Science of Logic*' into English. Dunayevskaya would later insist that, as opposed to Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, Lenin's 'Abstract' was the starting point for all Marxist understandings of Hegel; and, though not a Leninist herself, her work is unimaginable without his influence (p. 216).⁵ After James had been expelled from the United States and the Johnson-Forest Tendency was dissolved, Dunayevskaya established the News and Letters Committees in Detroit. From then on, her philosophical work bore closely on the organisational work of the committees, and the committees were thought to concretise the philosophy she would call 'Marxist-Humanism'.

The term 'Marxist-Humanism' comes from her first book, *Marxism and Freedom*, which sought 'to re-establish Marxism in its original form, which Marx called 'a thorough-going Naturalism, or Humanism'.⁶ Dunayevskaya developed this philosophy through the course of three major works, each relating to a different subject. *Marxism and Freedom* saw 'the movement from practice' as decisive for Marx's entire thought, from his early to his later works. Marxism, she argued, was not about suppressing market forces, or state-ownership of the means of production, but about 'freely-associated labor' at the point of production. In light of the many abortive revolutions of the twentieth century, *Philosophy and Revolution* posited the necessity of a philosophy of revolution: the dialectics of negativity as developed by Hegel and concretised by Marx. Absolute negativity, she argued, would explode each retrogression in the revolutionary movement. *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* evaluated the life and work of Rosa Luxemburg, criticising – albeit sympathetically – her perspective on feminism and the anticolonial struggles, and contrasting this with the 'new moments' in Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*.

⁴ Dunayevskaya's affiliation with African-American politics was to last a lifetime, and led to her path-breaking work on the early abolitionists, Marx's writings on the American Civil War, and the 'two-way road' between African revolutions and the African-American civil rights struggles. See Dunayevskaya 1983.

⁵ Presumably, this did not mean that Lenin superseded Marx's critique of Hegelian dialectics, but that his work provided for a new interpretation in the postwar reality.

⁶ Dunayevskaya 2000, p. 21.

The essays comprising this latest book, *Power of Negativity*, span the length of Dunayevskaya's career. In general, they are more philosophy proper than its historic concretisation, and present Dunayevskaya's thought in a much-needed spirit of abstraction. While the debate over Mao's China seems firmly settled, the nature of dialectics provokes heated argument to this day. The editors have selected from a wide range of material, published articles, lecture transcripts, works in progress, and her correspondence with comrades in *News and Letters*, as well as with scholars such as Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. *The Power of Negativity* follows the development of Dunayevskaya's thought on Hegel and Marx. This development reflected her historical context, but always in relation to Dunayevskaya's earliest work on Hegel's Absolutes, which was decisive for her thought.

Dunayevskaya's original contribution developed from her work on Hegel's Absolutes. Following Engels, most Marxists have divided Hegel's philosophy into method and system. While Hegel's method, dialectics, is a revolutionary theory of change through contradiction, his system provides a reactionary defence of the Prussian state and the Christian religion. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, so removed from Engels's popularising style, nevertheless appropriates the latter's argument whole:

Although the structure of [Hegel's] system would certainly collapse without this principle [positive negation], dialectic's experiential content does not come from the principle but from the resistance of the other to identity.⁷

Dunayevskaya rejected this interpretation. She saw in Hegel's Absolutes the abstract expression of the 'new society' brought about by free proletarian subjectivity. How could she have arrived at such a singular view?

First of all, one must understand Dunayevskaya's approach to reading Hegel, which was profoundly historicist in outlook. Hegel's philosophy came of age in the period after the French Revolution and before the development of mass working-class activism. A Jacobin, Hegel felt that he had witnessed a new era in the history of humankind, a 'birth time of the spirit', calling for new concepts and categories to describe it. Chief among these was an idea that shook the *ancien régime* to its foundations, the notion of freedom. To a previous metaphysics of substance and necessity, Hegel posed the self-thinking idea, the notion, or freedom:

If to be aware of the idea – to be aware, i.e., that men are aware of freedom as their essence, aim, and object – is a matter of *speculation*, still this very idea itself is the actuality of men – not something which they have, as men, but which they are. (Cited on p. 34.)

Hegel strove to express the Spirit's new actuality in his philosophy. But, according to Dunayevskaya, because he lacked the example of a working class, in and for itself,

⁷ Jarvis 1998, p. 173.

Hegel fell back on mere philosophy, leaving actuality untouched. Hegel's historical vantage point prevented him from seeing in the nascent working class a richer, more concrete manifestation of the new spirit. Dunayevskaya set out to read the working class back into Hegel. As C.L.R. James wrote during his collaboration with Dunayevskaya, 'we' were poles away from Hegel, 'but now that the history of humanity is about to begin, the Hegelian concept of speculative reason comes to life with us, as never before, though on our basis' (p. 28). This approach is no where more evident than in the 'Letters on Hegel's Absolutes of May 12 and 20, 1953', which are included in the present volume, and which Dunayevskaya considered the 'philosophic moment' of 'Marxist-Humanism'.

At the time, Dunayevskaya and the members of the Johnson-Forest tendency were combing exhaustively through the works of Hegel, Marx, and Lenin. James had singled out the Hegelian 'transformation into opposites' as instrumental to Lenin's theory of monopoly capitalism. Johnson-Forest now retraced Lenin's route through Hegel for a theory adequate to the post-World-War II reality (p. xxvi). The letters consist of lengthy extractions from Hegel's *Science of Logic* (May 12) and the *Philosophy of Mind* (May 20), together with Dunayevskaya's discussion. One step taken in her letters will seem indefensible to some: the translation of Hegelian logical categories into Marxist political ones. So, the 'Absolute Idea' becomes 'Socialism'. The 'Other' becomes the 'proletariat outside', 'absolute negativity' becomes the rejection of Stalinism. These translations, plus the claim that – but for an accident of birth – Hegel would have recognised proletarian subjectivity as his Absolute Idea, could well strike the reader as extravagant.

But, in fact, Dunayevskaya makes a persuasive case for Absolutes as the new society. Hegel insisted that his Absolute was not a synthesis, not an equipoise from change. It was, instead, the unity of the theoretical and practical idea, brought about by 'a subject, a person, a free being' (p. 183). Theory by itself lacks actuality; what it posits merely ought to be rather than is. Practice lacks consciousness and is dogmatic, unfree. To transcend either limitation, Hegel did not, of course, call for the abolition of capitalism. Nonetheless, Dunayevskaya argued that his Absolute Idea points beyond the contradictions of the capitalist order to a new society based on free association. As she will write later, in 'Absolute as New Beginning', 'Free creative power assures the plunge to freedom. It is the unifying force of the Absolute Idea' (p. 183).

Hegel's discussion of the Absolute sets him apart from a distinctly modern hostility to speculative thought. According to this perspective, philosophers can think what they will, but practice, fact – in Rorty's twist, value – admits no reasoning reflection.⁸ Hegel roundly rejects these constraints on reason in his chapters on the Absolute.

⁸ For example, take Hobbes's statement that 'there are of knowledge two kinds, whereof one is knowledge of fact – which is absolute –, the other knowledge of the consequence that of a philosopher, which is conditional' (Hobbes 1994, p. 47).

Flipping the coin, Dunayevskaya saw these writings as an implicit critique of capitalism as well. If capitalism is the sphere of instrumental reason, it cannot easily be squared with Hegel's demand that theory unite with practice. The unity of the theoretical and practical idea meant the end of the separation of mental from manual; and this, for Dunayevskaya, sounded the death knell of capitalism itself.

Dunayevskaya's letters led to a profound break from Leninism on the issue of the party. Her new understanding took its direction from Hegel's statement that 'the transcendence of the opposition between notion and reality . . . rests upon subjectivity alone' (p. 102). Recall that Dunayevskaya regarded this subject, when concretised for the capitalist era, as the proletariat. Now what is the relationship between the proletariat and the organisational forms that represent it? How is the Absolute realised in practice? In her first letter on Hegel, Dunayevskaya wrote that 'in the dialectic of the absolute idea is the dialectic of the party'; a party facing, on the one hand, the proletariat outside, and on the other, the universal of socialism. *Prima facie*, this sounds like an orthodox Leninist formulation for the party leading the masses on to communism. But Dunayevskaya goes on to show that the two are not first opposed, and then united, by the party. The proletariat and socialism are already mediated in themselves. Mass activity is 'implicitly the idea'.

The new society will not be until it is; now we see intimations, approximations, but it is nevertheless all around us, in the lives of the workers and the theory of the party. (p. 102.)

This is because, as Hegel wrote, every beginning is made with the Absolute. Worker activity cannot be conceived as immediate or spontaneous. The wildcat strikes, the East-German protests that erupted after Stalin's death expressed the Absolute Idea of socialism with or without party direction (p. 284). Indeed, Dunayevskaya considered the idea of party-as-external-mediator counter-revolutionary. Her 'Letters on Hegel's Absolutes' spell out a philosophical and political position she was to spend the next thirty years refining, which saw practice as 'a movement which is itself a form of theory'; that is, which was itself a manifestation of the idea. Johnson-Forest already opposed Stalinism. Dunayevskaya, once Trotsky's Russian-language secretary, broke with him over the issue of whether the Soviet Union was state-capitalist or merely a degenerated workers' state. But they still adhered to organisational concepts such as 'the three layers', James's formulation for the relationship between party leadership, intellectuals, and the masses. Dunayevskaya abandoned these concepts in light of her work on Hegel's Absolutes. The relationship between organisation and philosophy comprised a single dialectic, with each aspect expressing the new society as its living principle.

Dunayevskaya's contemporaries did not at all share her view that the new society was everywhere in existence. Her arguments for working-class activity went against

the prevailing tendencies of Marxist theory, especially in the developed world. The Hegel-Marx nexus was still the chief preoccupation of Marxist scholars. But the direction their writings took was often away from revolutionary agency and into themes such as technology and aesthetics. Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* is representative in this respect. A 'comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom' prevailed in the developed nations of the postwar order, assimilating into itself contradictory social classes and rendering the prospect of social revolution increasingly obsolete. Advanced industrial society had contained negativity, so that its working classes no longer confronted it as a living contradiction.⁹

Still, Dunayevskaya determined that the 'movement from practice' captured 'Marx's Marxism', as well as the actual tenor of the times. According to Dunayevskaya, Marx's 'new continent of thought' began with his concept of revolutionary *praxis*, of human history as a dialectical movement of the subjective and objective. The development of *praxis* was closely tied to his study of Hegel; specifically, his insight into the revolutionary implications of Hegel's 'negation of the negation'. The second negation, for Hegel, was the free release of subjectivity posited 'for itself'. Here the subject confronts, not an alien object, but its innermost self, externalised, and thus transcends the opposition between the real and the ideal. Marx viewed the second negation more concretely, as the end to all limitations to human development. The first negation, communism, was not the goal of revolutionary struggle. Rather it was the movement to a 'positive Humanism, beginning from itself' that had negated communism (p. 115). Marx *humanised* the dialectic of negativity, returning to it again and again at key moments: as 'new humanism' in 1844, 'revolution in permanence' in 1850, and as 'new passions and new forces' in *Capital* itself (p. 263).

It was Marx's grasp of the negation of the negation in actuality, in the political and economic struggles of his day, which transformed his critique of political economy into a full-blown philosophy of revolution. Dunayevskaya faulted her contemporaries for isolating themselves from these same wellsprings. Her 'Marxist-Humanism' found its role in articulating the struggles of the post-WWII reality from within the context of Marx's philosophy of revolution. For Marcuse, negativity, as Marx understood it, had been contained by the postwar era. But Dunayevskaya saw negativity's reach as expanding into new realms, the working classes of the industrial world as well as the anticolonial struggles, the African-American civil rights movement, and feminism.

The post-WWII era was a period of extraordinary economic and social transformations, which 'probably changed human society more profoundly than any other period of comparable brevity'.¹⁰ Decolonisation swept Asia and Africa in the decades after the Second World War. Africa had had one independent nation in 1939; in a matter of

⁹ Marcuse 1991.

¹⁰ Hobsbawm 1994, p. 6.

years that number would reach fifty.¹¹ In the developed world, oppressed minorities organised to demand equal participation in the life of the nation. Women's roles changed dramatically as well; the percentage of married women workers in the United States doubled between 1950 and 1970, and, in developing economies such as Mauritius, it went from twenty per cent in the early 1970s to sixty per cent by the mid-1980s.¹²

Dunayevskaya threw herself into the struggles then convulsing Eastern Europe and the Third World, to show how each illuminated the new stage of freedom. In turn, these movements influenced her theoretical work, especially on the issues of race and gender. While her 'Letters on Hegel's Absolutes' discuss revolution strictly in terms of the proletariat, Dunayevskaya would go on to underscore the revolutionary agency behind the civil rights struggles, feminism, and the anti-imperialist movements; an enthusiasm not often found in the generations preceding the New Left.

Historically, these movements have presented the challenge to Marxism of producing a coherent theory of revolutionary subjectivity that does not simply add feminism and civil rights onto the proletariat without regard for difference. Marxism has been accused of a productivist bias because of the centrality of wage-labour in *Capital*. Domestic labour and bonded labour in the colonies play no role Marx's analysis of capitalism, apart from his powerful chapters on primitive accumulation. How does one relate these together without either jettisoning Marxism (Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*) or reducing everything to one simple logic ('Gay, Straight, Black, White, Same Struggle, Same Fight!' as an old protest chant went)?

For Dunayevskaya, the problem ultimately rested on a misconception. If Marxism was a theory of class struggle narrowly conceived, its relevance to the developing world and to feminism and civil rights would be slight. But Marxism was first and foremost a philosophy of revolution, of revolutionary *praxis*.

Marx's analysis of labor . . . goes much further than the economic structure of society . . . His analysis goes not only to class relations, but to actual human relations. (p. 126.)

To prove this claim, Dunayevskaya drew from Marx's philosophical discussions in the 1844 *Manuscripts*, as well as his reactions to contemporary events such as the Tai'ping Rebellion, the American Civil War, Russia, Algeria, and his establishment of a separate women's section in the International Workingmen's Association. Here we find Marx's attitude strikingly different from that of a crude economic determinism. His reaction to certain American Marxists on the eve of the Civil War is instructive, and became part of Dunayevskaya's presentation to a 1968 'Black/Red Conference' in Detroit:

¹¹ Hobsbawm 1994, p. 344.

¹² Hobsbawm 1994, p. 310.

Some so-called Marxists said well, of course they were against slavery – but the slaves just wanted the freedom to be exploited by the capitalist. The (so-called) Marxists thought they were much wiser because they wanted freedom from the capitalists, too. Marx showed them that they were crazy because freedom and thinking are always *concrete*. And in the actual dialectic of liberation – that is, in the actual relation of thought to act, in the actual development, you have to arouse and elicit from the population many, many forces. Marx told the whites who thought they were superior because they were free: Look at you, you don't even have a national labor union – and you can't organize one because labor in the white skin cannot be free while labor in the black skin was branded. (p. 148.)

Sartre, when discussing the African anticolonial struggles, claimed that black identity was particular and that the working class represented a more truly universal category.¹³ But Marx did not subordinate the anti-slavery movement to class struggles. Nor, with regard to Russia, did he insist that nation should schematically repeat Western Europe's historical development before reaching socialism. Marx began from the concrete historical situation. In each case, it was the living subject that predominated, not an abstract, formal model. *Capital* represents Marx's mature statement of his thought, and it is perhaps because of this that activists have often measured other struggles against its perspective. This has made for a Procrustean fit, and one Marx himself would surely have opposed. Dunayevskaya's investigations into Marx's writings on the Third World and race and gender recapture the vibrant, multidimensional quality of his thought.

With the apparent collapse of alternatives to capitalism, it might be argued that Dunayevskaya was naïve; that, far from being revolutionary, the 'movement from practice' effects local transformations to particular problems and this alone. Foucault, whose political life centered on the practices of just such 'counter-institutions' and who formed a Groupe d'Information des Prisons so that prisoners might speak for themselves, distrusted Marxism as an oppressive universal.¹⁴ His sentiments are widespread in the post-Cold-War era. The Brazilian PT shies away from revolutionary pronouncements, and this is perhaps the most radical party currently in power. The antiwar movements in Europe, the Middle East, Australia, and the United States concentrate their efforts on war alone, and have not triggered events like Paris 1968. Few expect that they will.

But, today, the value of the category 'movement from practice' is not so much to foster an apocalyptic world view, as to recognise that there *are* alternatives to the present order in groups such as the Landless Peasant's Movement, the American

¹³ Dunayevskaya recounts Sartre's claim and the subsequent critique by Fanon in p. 193.

¹⁴ Foucault 1977.

environmental justice movement, and in heretofore unorganised individuals. The first order for revolutionaries must be to solidarise with these subjectivities. How this, in turn, will lead to a new social order is still an open question; not through vanguard leadership, but not with the ironclad necessity projected by theories of 'crisis', either. As the revolutionary optimism of the late sixties gave way to a climate of reaction, Dunayevskaya increasingly came to see philosophy as offering a key to the dilemma. Her later writings take up the theme of retrogression and the critical role of a 'battle for ideas' in building a revolutionary movement. Dunayevskaya saw philosophy as a crucial link between the many political movements and a new society.

Ironically, in Dunayevskaya's own country, the movement most receptive to philosophy was from the Right, which entered into think tanks and private research institutions at the very moment its funeral seemed assured. A powerful understanding of freedom, formulated in Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* and in Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, cut across the American landscape in the late 1970s, upending the welfare state and putting the established Left on the run. While a simple idea, 'market equals freedom', bound together libertarians, religious conservatives, Wall-Street financiers, and the suburban middle class, the Left wrestles with the idea of a common language to this very day. In an article for the British newspaper *The Guardian*, *Nation* columnist Katha Pollit points out that

what we think of as the left [in America] is really a collection of single or dual issues that network with each other but there really isn't a home for them.¹⁵

This situation contradicts both a long history of mutual influence and the philosophical perspective of identity's relation to other. 'Difference from' is, also, a relation to, and the effort to disentangle oneself from others leads, not to the affirmation of one's own specificity, but to an abstract, empty negative. A politics of single issues jeopardises these very issues, by making the socially complex appear isolated, singular. The disparate groups that make up the left 'have found themselves incredibly effective beyond their own field on the few occasions when they have been able to work together, as in Seattle a few years ago'.¹⁶

Dunayevskaya's work shows that the choice between the universal or the particular is a false one. Like a B-movie monstrosity, Marxism's universal aims are often feared to subsume particular issues beneath an indeterminate swell, the 'masses'. Using Marx's writings on gender and the Third world, Dunayevskaya argued that this was not true of Marx himself, nor was it something Marxism inevitably produced. A philosophy of revolution allowed one to move from local issues to a global alternative without swallowing the former whole. Moving beyond the particular does not mean

¹⁵ Younge 2003.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

losing sight of the concrete. The particular, by itself, is abstract. It becomes concrete only through its relation to others, just as I become more than a disembodied ego by immersing myself in work, school, family, friends, and the life of my community.

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* is the most celebrated work of revolutionary theory to appear in recent times. Like Dunayevskaya, these authors look for alternatives to capitalism in self-activity; or, in their terms, autonomy. They criticise the structuralist view of subjectivity as a socially-determined identity, positing it instead as an active, creative being. Both neoliberal capitalism and the bureaucratic state-capitalist model are rejected in favour of a 'new society' that would give free rein to these productive powers.

The mode of production of the multitude is posed against exploitation in the name of labor, against property in the name of cooperation, and against corruption in the name of freedom.¹⁷

These similarities are not surprising. According to Harry Cleaver, the work of the Johnson-Forest Tendency received wider discussion in Italy than in the United States, and in the autonomist circles with which Negri is associated especially.¹⁸ *Reading 'Capital' Politically* presents the American and Italian movements as complementary theoretical developments.

But the authors of *Empire* differ sharply with Dunayevskaya on the subject of dialectics. Their consequent positions on value and labour show what happens to theory in the absence of dialectics, and what use *Power of Negativity* might have for the present day. According to Hardt and Negri, production in the postmodern age becomes increasingly immaterial as the labour of the mass factory worker is displaced by intellectual, communicative and affective work.¹⁹ Capital extends to all aspects of contemporary life, and labour in hitherto uneconomic spheres – such as housework – is drawn into the capital nexus. Thus, a new theory of value is needed, and with it, a new political demand: a social wage and a guaranteed income for all.²⁰ Now, the demand to revise Marx's theory of value proceeds from a categorial error. Value is not affected by the kind of labour that produced it. Labour-power, the specific form of labour in value production, is the work of human nerves and brain 'expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure'.²¹ Whether this labour is consumed in a factory or a research laboratory is beside the point; and indeed, if value is by definition immaterial, how could labour's increasing immateriality bring about a change in its substance?

¹⁷ Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 408.

¹⁸ Cleaver 2000, footnote to p. 66.

¹⁹ Hardt and Negri 2000, p. 29.

²⁰ Hardt and Negri 2000, pp. 401–3.

²¹ Marx 1967, p. 38.

But the differences between Dunayevskaya and the authors of *Empire* also stem from their rejection of dialectics in favour of a theory of pure positivity. As a result of their new understanding of value, Hardt and Negri call for an income to be guaranteed to each member of society regardless of whether they are employed or not. Because all labour is productive of value in the postmodern age, each individual is due a certain level of income as a right. This is Proudhon for the postmodern age, almost inexplicable in an author who wrote a book on the *Grundrisse*. Labour produces value, yes; but only under the conditions of capitalism.²² The latter's abolition will require new social relations, totally other than those producing value. But wrestling with such absolutes is a transparently dialectical process. Without a theory of negativity, Hardt and Negri are left in *Empire* extending the positive fact of value production into a revolutionary demand. Dunayevskaya's work on dialectics caused her to view any scheme that did not uproot value as an unfinished revolution. Absolute negativity became the vantage point for a new society.

Dunayevskaya's thought represents a crucial point of departure for Marxism in the twenty-first century. Her theoretical refutation of the vanguard party and her embrace of the new movements from practice are essential to any future Marxist politics. Authoritarianism in theory or practice is intolerable to an age that witnessed the Soviet Union's collapse. The new century requires a Marxism predicated on freedom instead. Dunayevskaya's 'Marxist-Humanism' is one of the most consistently realised attempts to ground Marxism in freedom. *The Power of Negativity* is not, perhaps, a self-sufficient introduction to this philosophy. It generally lacks the element of the historical that breathes life into abstract categories. But the spare presentation allows us to see past history to a thought that pulses today.

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²² Marx is at pains to show that value is not a necessary attribute of labour, and that value results from capitalist mode of production alone. For example, with regard to the division of labor he writes: 'The division of labor is a necessary condition for the production of commodities, but it does not follow, conversely, that the production of commodities is a necessary condition for the division of labor' (Marx 1967, p. 42).

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