

## Raya Dunayevskaya

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I'm not sure when I first encountered the work of Raya Dunayevskaya, but I'm pretty sure it was just shortly after beginning to teach at Loyola, which was 1975. I do remember the first book of hers I read, *Philosophy and Revolution*, which opened with that startling essay, "Why Hegel? Why Now?" I remember being impressed by at least four things:

- 1) Here was a Marxist activist-intellectual passionate about Hegel. I'd never heard such a voice before. I had struggled with Hegel as a graduate student, spending two quarters immersed in the *Phenomenology* (never making it all the way to the end). That experience did change me, made me able to think about the "contradictions" we encounter in the real world, before which "analytical reason" stands mute. But I'd never thought of Hegel as offering more than a really intense mental workout that could change the way one thinks--no small thing to be sure, but much less than Dunayevskaya found in Hegel. She challenged me to rethink my appreciation of Hegel.
- 2) Here is someone deeply impressed by Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* (so impressed that, after struggling for years to get some scholar to bring out an English translation of those works, translated them *herself*, and appended them to her 1958 book, *Marxism and Freedom*). I'd only recently read those writings—and had also found them to be indescribably rich. I had become a Marxist—at least to the extent that I had become wholly convinced that capitalism, in its origins, in its day-to-day operations, and at its theoretical core, was a profoundly unjust system—by reading, very carefully, volume one of *Capital*. But it was *The 1844 Manuscripts* that opened up the *humanist* side of Marx, deepened for me the *meaning* of human, and gave me access to the moral passion that one senses just beneath the surface of Marx's "more scientific" economic analyses.
- 3) Here is a Marxist who seems to have been right all the major issues of the day—an enviable record, given the complexity of the historical events: The Russian Revolution—its great hope, then betrayal; the deep flaws in the Maoist alternative to Soviet Communism which was then deeply attractive to many of us of the "New Left;" the revolts in Eastern Europe against "Communism": East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia; her enthusiastic support for the African struggles against colonialism—still going on at the time; her sense that the struggle for black liberation in the United

States was an integral part of the struggle for a Marxist-Humanist society, that the struggle for racial justice was not less important than class struggle; and her sense that the women's movement was also central to the struggle for human liberation, and not something to be put off until "after the revolution"

- 4) Here is one *very smart* woman—the third I'd encountered in recent years. Shortly after reading Marx's *Capital*, I'd read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* had made me an existentialist, and her *The Second Sex* had made me a feminist. Then, as I was working on my dissertation on a democratic alternative to capitalism, I began reading the Cambridge economist, Joan Robinson. Her toe-to-toe confrontation with the Nobel-laureate MIT economists Paul Samuelson and Robert Solow had solidified my sense that those super-smart economists, so scornful of the critics of capitalism, weren't so super-smart after all.

And now Raya Dunayevskaya, who knew so much, from her own intensely-political lived-experience and from her sophisticated readings of classic and contemporary philosophy.

Yes, a remarkable woman, whose works remain provocative, challenging, rewarding. I confess, I started browsing through my old, much-marked-up copies of *Marxism and Freedom*, and *Philosophy and Revolution* in preparation for this talk—and had to force myself to put them down. Too many thoughts stirred up—far too many for my ten-minute presentation.