

## Discussion

Reply to Roderick Long

### **Dialectical Libertarianism: All Benefits, No Hazards**

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I want to thank Roderick Long (2001) for a genuinely perceptive review of *Total Freedom: Toward a Dialectical Libertarianism* (Sciabarra 2000) and a discussion of the “Dialectics and Liberty” trilogy of which *Total Freedom (TF)* is a part (along with *Marx, Hayek, and Utopia* and *Ayn Rand: The Russian Radical*). The fact that his assessment is not entirely favorable gives me the opportunity to discuss a number of crucial problems associated with dialectical approaches to libertarian social theory.

#### **What is Dialectics?**

Contrary to popular belief, dialectics isn't simply a method of thinking about oppositions between labor and capital. Neither is it a grand “synthesis” of “thesis” and “antithesis.” It is an attempt to examine any object of our inquiry as a structured *totality*, as something existing within a larger system, across time, as viewed from different perspectives. I call dialectics the “art of context-keeping,” because it counsels us to grasp the full context of any object through techniques of abstraction and integration. By examining an object from different vantage points and on different levels of generality, we achieve a more comprehensive grasp of its antecedent conditions, interrelationships, and tendencies.

When we apply these lessons to social theory, we recognize that the object of our inquiry is society as such. A dialectical approach to social theory stresses that the attempt to deal with any given social

problem will often entail an investigation of related social problems. Those who seek *radical* social change, then, can only get to the root of the social problems they seek to resolve, by grasping their complex interrelationships. And because a free society is ultimately a *dynamic system* of complexity, any radical movement toward freedom requires a multidimensional appreciation of those personal, cultural, and structural preconditions and effects that nourish it and sustain it.<sup>1</sup>

The conception of a dialectical social theory itself requires a context, a wide survey (such as I undertook in *TF*) of dialectical traditions of thought. As Long points out, dialectics is a word that has been used to describe many things, not all of them compatible. What we need to do is to abstract some characteristic fundamental to the major dialectical approaches (I believe that characteristic is “context-keeping”) and then to define a dialectical social theory on the basis of that fundamental characteristic. When we do this, we find that any simplistic identification of dialectics with, say, “triadic modes of thought” is mistaken.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible to take issue, as Long does, with “superficial resemblances” that might lead one to embrace the allegedly dialectical character of certain triadic forms, as expressed in Plato, the Christian Trinity, Freud, Hegel, the Waltz, or “Charlie’s Angels” (404–5).<sup>3</sup> But noting the existence of certain triadic forms by thinkers who characterize them as dialectical does not entail an endorsement of such views. Regrettably, dialectics has for too long been associated with the ironclad “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” formula, which does not even remotely capture its contextual essence.

### Was Aristotle Dialectical?

The major dialectical traditions all insist on keeping the context; that is what makes them interesting and valuable to study. Their differences, however, are important to notice. The central opposition between Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions is crucial to the varied developments that sprang forth from them (see *TF*, chapter 1 especially). Aristotle was the first theorist to enunciate formal principles of dialectical inquiry, and also to sever their connection to

a problematic Platonic ontology. I therefore consider him the “fountainhead” of dialectics, the genuine father of the enterprise.

Cogent objections can be made to this idea. Long argues, for instance, that Aristotle’s sense of the word “dialectic” is irrelevant to the sense that I am using here (Long 2001, 405). Aristotle’s narrower concept of “dialectic” stressed reasoning from *endoxa* or common beliefs; but to focus on this aspect is to ignore the master’s self-conscious use of “dialectical” techniques in the examination of philosophical problems. Those techniques are not simply a consideration of *endoxa*; they constitute a detailed analysis of issues from various “points of view.” The whole thrust of Aristotle’s *Topics*—the very first theoretical treatise on dialectics—is that we can achieve contextual alterations in our inquiry by varying our vantage point or “point of view.” What is *The Topics* if not a grand discussion of how a shift in perspective can help to reveal different things about the objects of our inquiry—and about the perspectives from which those objects are viewed? It is *this* supremely dialectical principle that is a constituent element of the formal definition of dialectics that I offer in Chapter 4 of *TF*.

### How Good Was Marx?

One interesting thing about Aristotle’s dialectic is its connections with later forms, such as the dialectics of Hegel, Marx, and Engels. This connection may be doubted. Long maintains that I am attempting “to demonstrate the fundamental compatibility and continuity of Aristotelian dialectic with Hegelian-Marxian dialectic,” strictly by “showing that Hegelian and Marxist thinkers said various nice things about Aristotle” (441 n. 23). But the continuity can be shown by reference to a series of passages from Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Lenin, which praise the Aristotelian emphasis on “points of view”—or as Hegel puts it, those “places” [a reference to the *topoi* of Aristotle’s *Topics*] that “are, so to speak, a system of many aspects under which an object can be regarded in investigating it” (quoted in *TF*, 46).<sup>4</sup>

One need not have any “enthusiasm for Marx” to believe that he

was significant in many ways. I give him “high marks” not simply for “good dialectical intentions” (Long 2001, 439 n. 12), but for providing the first explicitly enunciated dialectical model for social theorizing in the history of thought. While others before Marx exhibited dialectical sensibilities, it was Marx who provided the first defense of this sensibility in the context of social theory. And in an era when mainstream social science sidesteps the real world, I do think that radical thinkers can profit from a critical reading of the “generally valuable” Marxist analyses of monopoly, finance, and state capitalism—as Misesian philosopher Hans-Hermann Hoppe attests (see *TF*, 298 n. 44)—even if Marxists themselves are apt to get things wrong from an analytical standpoint. At the very least, they often *do* identify *really existing* elements and social conditions, even if they misidentify their root causes or ultimate solutions.

Some critics, such as Long, might object that Marxists share with mainstream neoclassicists a view of “abstractions as idealized models to which reality may approximate to a greater or lesser degree. For Marx,” says Long, “real-world capitalism ‘does not correspond precisely to its concept’ but only approximates it; however, ‘this approximation is the greater, the more developed the capitalist mode of production’ (*TF*, 258)” (Long 2001, 441 n. 30). This attack on idealized abstractions is basically an attack on Marxism’s Hegelian heritage.

The Marxist approach, however, owes far more to Aristotle than it does to Hegel.<sup>5</sup> As Long reminds us, the Marxist theorist Bertell Ollman states that “[a]n ‘abstraction’ is a part of the whole whose ties with the rest are not apparent; it is a part which *appears* to be a whole in itself” (408). But this statement captures only *one* of three distinct ways in which Marx regarded the process of abstraction.

Ollman (1993) defends this process as essential to dialectical investigation. He explains that Marx viewed abstraction variously: (1) it can refer to the actual process of breaking down the whole into the manageable mental units by which to think about it (a verb); (2) it can also refer to the results of that process (a noun); and, (3) it can refer to “a suborder of particularly ill-fitting mental constructs,” which are characterized by their narrowness. In this last sense,

abstractions are a basic unit of “ideology” and constitute a form of deceptive reification (26).

Marx accepts Aristotle’s conclusion that “not all abstraction is precise [and therefore, falsifying] abstraction”—since it is only abstraction in the third “ideological” sense that *might* be conceived as precise. Thus, Marx would say that the classical liberal view, for example, *does* capture something true about the revolutionary character of capitalism, even if it errs in trying to represent itself as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. That’s why it is *ideological* in the Marxist sense.

He would be wrong, of course. But consider his statement that, in reality, when considering the capitalist mode of production, “there exists only approximation,” that is, there is no *pure* form of existing capitalism (*TF*, 258). In this regard, Marx adopts the same “ideal type” abstraction on display in the works of Max Weber, Ayn Rand, and Murray Rothbard. As Peter Boettke explains, an ideal type is “a theoretical construct intended to illuminate certain things that *might* occur in reality; empirical investigation determines whether these phenomena are actually present and how they came to be there” (quoted in *TF*, 279 n. 17). Marx posits a “pure form” of capitalism based on what he defines as its essential principles. He then compares the existing systems to that definition. For Marx, the essential characteristic of capitalism (as distinguished from either feudalism or socialism) is the alienation and exploitation of human labor-power. For Rand and Rothbard, by contrast, capitalism is pure freedom, even though it remains “an unknown ideal.”<sup>6</sup> Now, Marx may be misidentifying the nature of capitalism, but this speaks less to his view of abstraction than it does to his faulty view of economics. If we are concerned with general intellectual methods, however, Marx shows a fine dialectical sensibility.

### What About Internal Relations?

As important as the issue of abstraction is for dialectics, nothing is more crucial than the issue of relations. From my earliest published musings on the subject, I have always given a contextualist

qualification to the doctrine of internal relations. As Brand Blanshard explains, “[a] given term is internally related to another if in the absence of the relation it could not be what it is.” By contrast, “a term is externally related to another if the relation could equally be present or absent while the term was precisely the same” (quoted in *TF*, 154). One might say that terms that are internally related are mutually dependent, while terms that are externally related are independent of one another.

It is not possible to judge the internal or external character of an object’s relations without investigating the issue. And any investigation must take place within a given context of inquiry. The vital thing is for the investigator to be aware of this fact and make sure to keep the context in mind. Long suggests that this is an attempt to “epistemologize” internal relations—that is, to evaluate relations on the basis of a given context of knowledge, rather than on the basis of any speculations about the metaphysical nature of an entity.

The task of drawing boundaries is always contextual, and our understanding of relations as internal or external will reflect this fact (*TF*, 138; see also chapter 6 of *Russian Radical*). This is not to endorse the false claim that as “our epistemic context expands, relations will shift from external to internal” (Long 2001, 419).<sup>7</sup> To epistemologize relations is not to make them arbitrary or to subjectify them. By defining a context within which inquiry can proceed, we can distinguish between those relations that are essential or nonessential to the issues at hand *in that context*.

One of the problems here is that, as Long observes, internalists speak of “essence” in both the quidditative and modal sense. As Long puts it: “An entity’s quidditative essence is what the entity most fundamentally and distinctively is; it is what explains and integrates the greatest number of the entity’s properties. An entity’s modal essence, by contrast, is the set of all those properties the loss of which the entity could not survive” (421). In the larger metaphysical sense, it is true that internalists endorse the propositions that “X cannot be *understood* apart from its relations” just as surely as “X cannot *exist* apart from its relations” (422). For example, it might be said that *reason* is a human being’s quidditative essence, because it is

the one distinctive characteristic that best explains the greatest number of other properties that humans *qua* humans possess. But one could also say that reason is so crucially important to human survival that it constitutes a modal essence as well; it is essential to “man’s survival *qua* man” in such a way that its loss will have a greater impact on a human being’s existence than, say, the loss of a single toe. (Of course, the context remains important; the loss of a single toe by a ballet dancer will have a greater impact than, say, the loss of a single toe by a typist. Ultimately, however, both will need to rely on the power of the mind to deal with such adversity.)

I am less concerned with such metaphysical explorations, however. Our focus is, and needs to remain, social theory. It is “society” that is the object of my study—not as an ineffable organism, but as a complex nexus of interrelated institutions and processes, of volitionally conscious and acting individuals and their dynamic relations. Understanding the complex relations within any given society is the prerequisite for changing it.

In studying society, the scope of our inquiry might actually help us to place X within a larger system Y such that the conditions of Y need to be articulated if we are to fully understand X. I do not endorse the a priori proposition that every X is embedded in a system, except in the grandest minimalist-metaphysical sense, since everything that exists is part of the same reality. Dialectical social theory, however, is less concerned with grasping the cosmic dimensions, and far more concerned with grasping the significance of any X within a larger system Y of historical and cultural specificity. And this is an understanding that can only be reached through diligent investigation.

For example, Rand argues that, in considering the social problem of racism, we cannot fully understand its dimensions without grasping its preconditions and effects, its history, its function in the larger social system, and its relations to other phenomena. For Rand, racism requires a tribalist “anti-conceptual mentality,” which thinks in terms of perceptual concretes, rather than in terms of principles. But it also requires collectivism, which reciprocally reinforces tribalism by creating a structure for its economic and political

manifestations. Racism, thus, cannot be understood apart from its relations to other personal (ethical and psycho-epistemological), cultural, and structural phenomena. Rand goes so far as to suggest that the embeddedness of racism in a larger epistemological, cultural, and political context is so crucial that it would not exist apart from these given relations (Sciabarra 1995a, 343–48).

This is, after all, one of the hallmarks of radical thinking: that if one aims to conquer a specific social problem, one must look to the larger context within which that social problem is manifested, and without which, it would not exist. This is why context-keeping is so indispensable to the radical project.

In all cases, however, the activity of context-keeping necessarily entails a moment, and many moments, of inquiry. That inquiry (an “analytic” activity, if ever there were one) might help us to discover that certain relations are, indeed, external and therefore relatively insignificant—but these judgments must always be made *within a given context*.

Context is essential. On the basis of the rule of fundamentality, it is the one characteristic that makes possible and explains the greatest number of other characteristics entailed by dialectics. By not anchoring such subsidiary concepts as “relations” and “totality” to a contextual qualifier, we are led to think of them in cosmological terms. Such cosmological speculation requires the assumption that one can be omniscient with regard to the ultimate constituents of reality and the totality they constitute. But omniscience is not possible to human beings, which is why Hayek derided those in search of “total knowledge” as suffering from a “synoptic delusion.”

It is not true, therefore, that “from a synoptic view . . . all relations *would* be internal” (Long 2001, 420). I categorically reject the very notion of *any* synoptic view as well as the notion that such a view would necessarily imply universal internal relations. Synopticism must be repudiated—root, tree, and branch; it has poisoned the dialectical tradition, just as surely as its pretense of total knowledge has served as the epistemic foundation of modern totalitarianism. *TF* is as much an attack on spurious notions of synoptic totality as it is a defense of context-keeping.

The opposition to synopticism and organicism is crucial to the dialectical enterprise, which depends on rigorous inquiry for its success. In social theory, this has enormous implications. We cannot ever presume that everything is “internally” connected, even in a given society. Such connections—and their character—must be discovered through various forms of historical and empirical investigation and analysis, in which we are always cognizant of our vantage points, levels of generality, and cognitive purposes.

Of course, in dialectics, as in all methodological concepts, there is an underlying ontology at work. But in the case of dialectics, it is a minimalist one: “everything that exists is part of the same reality” (*TF*, 125). As Rand states: “Everything is interrelated . . . [S]ince reality is not a collection of discrete concretes which have nothing to do with each other, since it is actually an integrated whole, the same is true of our conceptual equipment” (quoted at 175 n. 65).<sup>8</sup>

This underlying ontology does not prevent us from recognizing the reality of internal *or* external relations, given a specific context of inquiry (217). On this basis, then, the twentieth-century libertarian social theorist and anarchist, Murray N. Rothbard, clearly identifies the *valid* “external” relationship or absolute distinction between “voluntary” and “coercive” relationships. As I argue in *TF*, while Rothbard’s analysis sometimes obscures aspects of social life, his identification of the voluntary-coercive polarity helps us to grasp certain essential principles governing society (233). By highlighting the distinction between the “voluntary” and the “coercive,” he helps us to understand their *logical* opposition.

But as Rothbard extends his analysis, he begins to recognize that the principles are *not* fully independent of one another, as a strict dualism would require, since the coercive *must* draw its sustenance from the voluntary, just as surely as predators *must* exploit producers. There is no possibility of coercing people to act against their will, without the presumption that people *have* a will. And there can be no predation without production. The complexities of finding out who is a predator and who is a producer in the real world is a separate analytical question, distinct from any articulation of the principles involved.

When Rothbard shifts his context of inquiry still further, altering the boundaries of his analysis to consider the nature of power, he begins to recognize an “internal” relationship at work between the “voluntary” and the “coercive.” In introducing La Boétie’s *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, for example, he grasps the “voluntary” dynamics in coercive relationships—how the “sanction of the victim” (as Rand called it) is needed to legitimize the power relationship. This is an insight with revolutionary consequences.

In each of these instances, it is not so much that Rothbard’s different orientations “ascribe mutually incompatible properties to their objects of study” (Long 2001, 424). It is that, given a specific context of study, a specific orientation may help us to grasp the properties at work *in that context*. The properties are not in contradiction to one another because they are not being situated *in the same respect*. The problem with nondialectical orientations is not that they are atomist, monist, dualist, or organicist; it is that they prescribe these properties in an a priori fashion. They attempt to force the facts into a preconceived universal schema.

It is not necessary to react “with instant suspicion” whenever one finds “atomistic, monistic, or dualistic aspects in a given writer’s thought” (423). Quite simply, as social scientists in twenty-first century America, we conduct research within a culture that tends toward compartmentalization over integration. Our attitudes might differ if we lived in a society where monist and organicist presuppositions led scholars to embrace an a priori Unified Science. But this is ultimately of little consequence, since, in the end, we must always use those approaches most appropriate to the subject-matter at hand. In agreement with Buchanan and Tullock, who stress the complexity of the social system we scrutinize, I too “stress the limitations that any single explanation must embody” (*TF*, 377). This is why a multidimensional dialectical orientation is required.

On these matters, I also draw inspiration from Rand (2001), who argues in *The Art of Nonfiction*. “[E]very item of knowledge is connected to every other, and since there is only one reality, if you wanted to present an exhaustive case on any one subject, you would have to write the work of a universal scholar.” It is for this reason

that “[a]ll writing is *selective* in every aspect—not only in its style, but in its most basic content, because you cannot communicate everything” (7–8). Because “abstraction *is* the human method of classifying, integrating, and identifying concretes” (182), and because “there are as many . . . aspects” to any object of study “as there are, say, professions[,] . . . you cannot say one valid profession is better than another, . . . [or that] one aspect of a subject is objectively superior to another” (13–14).<sup>9</sup> Vehemently opposed to compartmentalization in the study of human society, Rand tells us that the “historian,” the “philosopher,” and the “economist,” among others, will each have something of importance to contribute to our knowledge (13).

Thus, for Rand, “Objectivism, above any other philosophy, holds *context* as the crucial element in cognition and in all value judgments. Just as you cannot have concepts, definitions, or knowledge outside of a context,” so you cannot judge the value of any part that exists within a larger context until you “see the total” (74). This is not a prescription for eternal ignorance; one does not need to know *everything* before one can analyze or understand *anything*. All that matters is that one specifies an identifiable context and relate that context to a specific cognitive purpose. This is why Rand maintains that “the requirements of your context come first” (77). One need not be a “relativist” to embrace the practices of “a good contextualist” (161).<sup>10</sup> These dialectical principles are as applicable to the study of society as they are to the task of exposition, a topic central to Rand’s *Art of Nonfiction*.

### Dialectic versus Analytic?

Because dialectic has often been caricatured as “synthetic” and “holistic” reasoning, it has often been viewed as part of a conventional dichotomy between dialectical and analytic modes of inquiry. Long (2001, 426) gives voice to this convention:

. . . dialectics by its very nature cannot be a full-blown methodological orientation, because such an orientation would be self-stultifying. For if it stresses dialectics to the

exclusion of rival approaches, then it is one-sided and so, to that extent, no longer fully dialectical. And if it does *not* stress dialectics to the exclusion of rival approaches, then once again it is no longer fully dialectical. A one-sided obsession with avoiding one-sidedness is a non-starter. Hence, dialectical considerations can (and, I think, should) *inform* a methodological orientation, but they cannot *constitute* it.

The opposition to making dialectics into a bona fide methodological orientation is founded on the mistaken and rigid identification of dialectics with internal relations and the attempt to transcend distinctions. Given this perspective, a critic such as Long must argue, by necessity, that dialectics requires a “nondialectical” complement, which would “look for external relations and seek to draw distinctions. If dialectics is synthetic, then its complement should be analytic.” Therefore, Long “suggest[s] that the ideal methodological orientation will be one that combines the integrative instincts of the dialectical tradition with the precise conceptual tools of analytic philosophy” (426–27).

Now it is true that dialectical thinkers often display “synthetic” modes, rather than “analytic” ones; they *seem* more interested in connections rather than distinctions, in connotations rather than denotations (TF, 172). But it is incorrect to view these as opposed “moments.” Philosopher Archie Bahm echoes a point made by Frederick Engels: that there is an “organic unity” of synthetic and analytic aspects.<sup>11</sup>

Those who propose to supplement dialectic with analytic modes are simply embracing a more *dialectical* view of dialectics. That I have emphasized synthetic activity in the context of social theory, which is all too often fractured and fragmented, does not mean that I don’t applaud complementary analytic activity.<sup>12</sup> The division and specialization of knowledge and labor may require that we engage in different activities, but that does not mean that they are opposing ones.<sup>13</sup>

The need for mutually reinforcing analytic and synthetic modes

is necessary, as Long recognizes, for pure analysis “risks losing sight of the forest,” while pure synthesis “risks losing sight of the trees” (428–29). But since a dialectical approach is not synonymous with a synthetic one, a genuinely dialectical method *must* incorporate both analytic and synthetic aspects. Rand recognized the need to navigate carefully between a methodological Scylla and Charybdis. Rand repudiated all attempts to view the concept of “society” apart from the individuals who composed it. For Rand, “‘society’ . . . is not a separate, mystical entity. . . . You cannot claim that you have a healthy forest composed of rotting trees. I’m afraid that collectivists cannot see the trees for the forest.” But Rand also lamented. “[t]he rapid epistemological degeneration of our present age—when men are being brought down to the level of concrete-bound animals who are incapable of perceiving abstractions, when men are taught that they must look at trees, but never at forests” (quoted in TF, 164–65).

So it is not possible to divorce the forest from the trees, or vice versa, and dialectics does not counsel us just to embrace the forest. My very definition of dialectics—an orientation toward contextual *analysis* of the systemic and dynamic relations of components within a totality—acknowledges an analytic moment in the larger dialectical method. Definitions require one to draw boundaries; whereas I include analysis in dialectics, critics such as Long exclude it. But those who recognize the necessity of both analysis and synthesis aim for the same goal, regardless of where they draw the boundaries in defining any methodological orientation.

### What About Anarchism?

By focusing on primary philosophical issues, I think that many of the criticisms that can be made of my approach to Rothbard fall by the wayside. Rothbard was a unique anarcho-libertarian social theorist, who integrated the insights of Austrian economics, New Left historical revisionism, anarchist class theory, and a Lockean natural rights ethos into a grand anti-statist political program. In many significant ways, the very breadth of Rothbard’s project entails a dialectical sensibility because, in its totality, it draws strength from the

interconnections among its various parts.

Still, Rothbard introduced a host of dualisms into his social theory—the market versus the state, the personal versus the political, the political versus the cultural, and so forth—that require critical engagement. Despite that critique, which forms the bulk of Part Two of *TF*, I do not reject anarchism outright. In every book of the trilogy, I take a self-consciously one-sided approach (that of methodology) to the thinkers I discuss. I agree that method and content are intimately related here; but if I also examined the validity of every substantive argument in Hayek, Rand, or Rothbard, I would have had a much larger task on my hands, and the books would have been unwieldy.

I remain profoundly suspicious of anarchism and the non-dialectical premises that seem to inspire it. These nondialectical premises are *both* dualistic *and* monistic, but *not* at the same time and in the same respect. Rothbard, for example, presents us with a sundered world—centered on the opposition of market and state, liberty and power—even as he seeks to overcome its fatal dichotomies in an anarchistic resolution that allows the market to absorb fully the judicial and defense functions of the state. Rothbard's dualism thus becomes the basis for a projected monistic triumph, in which market processes are both the cause and the consequence of law and prosperity. This has been a fairly typical representation of the relationship between dualism and monism since Greek antiquity. From the time of Pythagoras, the *dyás* (dyad, or pair) was conceived as a derivative of the monad, or *monas*. Each was a coprinciple of the other, except that dualism was synonymous with evil, while monism was synonymous with good. This partially explains why dualists, with their conception of a fractured universe, were often led to one-sided monistic resolutions (168).<sup>14</sup>

Like the ancients, Rothbard himself viewed dualism as a negative. He condemns the state for introducing all sorts of distortions and polarities into social existence; his ideal libertarian society aims to transcend the dualities of everyday life (324).

Though I identify certain problems with anarchism, I'm equally suspicious of minarchism. I take very seriously some of the trenchant

anarchist criticisms of limited government. I greatly value the contributions of anarchist thinkers to libertarian class theory and revisionist historical understanding. If my own perspective helps minarchists and anarchists to move toward a dialectical resolution of sorts, I will be pleased. And if it contributes to a similar transcendence of the conventional left-right continuum that both Long (2001, 439 n. 13) and I (*TF*, 193 n. 8) reject, I will be even more pleased.

I hope that my dialectical-libertarian ambitions will challenge scholars to explore the mutual implications of dialectics and libertarianism. Dialectics can provide libertarianism with the contextual support for a conception of freedom that is not merely political or economic but also psycho-epistemological, ethical, and cultural. And libertarianism can release dialectics from the influence of those who cannot distinguish mere blinkered totalitarianism from context-keeping and the genuine aspiration for a radical, comprehensive view of society and social change.

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## Notes

1. One of the reasons that dialecticians tend to focus on "internal" relations is that these often exhibit causal efficacy within a structured totality. If our aim is to *change* such a totality, then it makes practical sense to focus on these "internal" relations, within a given context, since they are frequently the most important from a *causal* perspective, and, hence, most in need of changing, due to their ripple effects on constituent elements. For more on relations, see below.

2. If one looks at the index to *TF*, one will find no more than six page references on the subject of triads in a 400+ page book.

3. This is not the only issue in which I take a good humorous ribbing from Long. For example, he criticizes "questionable judgment" with regard to some of my sources, such as my single footnoted reference to the esoteric tome "Three Initiates." Let the record show, however, that I do *not* classify the legendary sage Hermes Trismegistos "as the first dialectician" (Long 2001, 404; see *TF*, 20 n. 2). But the truth remains that Hermetic philosophy—whatever its origins—was a unique amalgam of Hellenic and Egyptian influences, a summary of the esoteric principles of the day, with an emphasis on such mutually reinforcing dialectical precepts as polarity and attraction. The Hermetic "Emerald Tablets" came to inspire esoteric, mystic, Gnostic, and even German dialectical-speculative thinkers (e.g., Hegel) right

up through the twentieth century. (Interestingly, a great number of websites devoted to Hermes are in the German language.) For a comprehensive discussion of Hegel and his relationship to the Hermetic tradition, see Magee 2001.

4. On the subject of Hegel, Long also criticizes me for dwelling on the three Hegelian forms of dialectical syllogism without any apparent purpose (Long 2001, 405). Yet, I mention that these distinctions have led some Marxist theorists, such as Tony Smith, to use the model “to illuminate the Hegelian characteristics of Marxian social theory” (TF, 67). In addition, I draw specific parallels between this model and Rand’s social theory. I explore the implications of Hegel’s syllogistic permutations of individual, personal, and universal “moments” within the context of my own tri-level model of Rand’s analysis of power relations (379–83).

5. I found Long’s whole discussion of the distinction between precise and non-precise abstraction fascinating. Long (2001, 425) also points out crucial distinctions between Aristotle, Hegel, and, by extension, Marx, on the issue of logical and causal relations. Aristotle does indeed view the master-slave distinction, for example, as a *logical* relationship of “correlatives,” whereas for Hegel it is a *causal* one. What is important in this context, however, is that the Aristotelian master-slave distinction was *reconcived* by later thinkers, such as Hegel, Marx, and Rand, in ways that fundamentally undermined the institution of slavery—an institution that Aristotle himself never questioned.

6. Because pure capitalism remains an “unknown ideal,” I stand by my claim—criticized by Long (2001, 430)—that “the market has *always* existed within the parameters of state involvement” (see TF, 262). That claim is made in TF within a section exploring the nature of capitalism, wherein I argue that both Rothbard and Rand identify capitalism with the unimpeded market. States and state-like predatory institutions are as old as production itself; production might precede predation logically, but I suspect that they appeared almost simultaneously in history, since theft has always been easier than creation. But it is simply not true that all markets are capitalistic. If capitalism is a system based on the recognition of individual rights, including property rights, in which all property is privately owned, as Rand maintained, and if capitalism is to be *identified* with markets, then it is clear that capitalistic markets are a relatively recent historical phenomena. This is not to deny that pockets of “market anarchism” have existed here and there. But states and predatory institutions have always been attempting to shape the market’s parameters. The revolutionary character of the anarchist resolution is that it seeks an entirely nonstate-centered conception of politics.

7. Long argues, however, that “to treat more and more relations as internal as our epistemic context expands” is to give “the impression that these relations will be needed in order to *understand* or *explain* the relata, not just to classify them.” For Long, this “view of essence does not seem to be precisely the same as Rand’s” (420). In this instance, Long’s criticism is directed at me, but the passages he cites (TF, 41) refer not to my own perspective per se, but to my summary of Aristotle’s perspective on these issues.

This basic criticism suggests a larger pattern with my approach to writing intellectual history. Long is correct to note that my own perspective on a theoretical issue is not always clearly represented in the text, especially when I’m discussing the views of others (see Long 2001, 440 n. 16). Following Isaiah Berlin’s example, I do

realize that it is neither possible nor desirable to extricate oneself from the presentation of other perspectives. Just as Berlin’s views were often contained in the ways he interpreted the views of others, so too one can usually glean my perspective from the exposition. But not always.

For example, Long criticizes my all-too-brief characterizations of Frege as a logical atomist (TF, 105), Brecht as a poststructuralist (149 n. 14), and Foucault as a deconstructionist (110 n. 59). In each of these instances, however, my characterization takes place within the context of what some *other* scholar has said about that thinker. In the case of Brecht as poststructuralist, I cite Frederic Jameson’s description. With regard to Frege, I note that neo-Idealist Errol E. Harris opposes him as a “logical atomist” (a phrase I place in quotes), without ever stating my opinion of Harris’s assessment. In fact, I note cautiously that my citation of Harris’s views on Frege, Russell, and Moore should *not* be interpreted as any attempt on my part to impugn “more than a hundred years of Anglo-American analytic philosophy and the contributions of thinkers such as Austin, Kripke, Searle, Strawson, Toulmin, and Wittgenstein.” I remark that even if analytic philosophy “*may* not be, in its essence, dialectical” (emphasis added), “this does not mean that there are no dialectical elements to be found among its chief representatives” (105 n. 42). I revisit the alleged analytic-dialectic divide below, since it is crucial to Long’s overall critique.

Of all the references above, however, the Foucault citation is most complex. Once we get into the murky waters of postmodernism and deconstructionism, classifying thinkers becomes a difficult task. Even though a case can be made for not including Foucault among deconstructionists, I think it can be well argued that his whole *raison d’être* is the deconstruction of everything from the “disembodied transcendental subject” to the concept “woman.” It is no coincidence that Edward W. Said has analyzed Foucault’s *Power* as a grand attempt at “Deconstructing the System” (Said 2000). For insofar as Foucault searches for the hidden “power structures” in knowledge, language, and sexuality, his deconstructionist pedigree remains apparent.

8. Long argues that Peikoff extends this Randian view to encompass Hegel’s maxim that “the true is the Whole.” Hence, for Peikoff, “every part of Rand’s philosophy is equally essential to it.” For Long, “both claims seem to exalt internal relations and to treat abstraction as falsification” (Long 2001, 442 n. 33). Ironically, however, Rand’s own endorsement of the “everything is connected” proposition did not prevent her from repudiating those within Objectivism who failed to grasp the “contextualist” thrust of the philosophy. Such individuals apply Objectivism dogmatically, Rand argued, with no regard to the subtleties of context. She writes: “Philosophy cannot give you a set of dogmas to be applied automatically. Religion does that—and unsuccessfully. The dogmatic Objectivist desperately tries to reduce principles to concrete rules that can be applied automatically, like a ritual, so as to bypass the responsibility of thinking and of moral analysis. These are ‘Objectivist’ ritualists. They want Objectivism to give them what a religion promises, namely, ten or one hundred commandments, which they can apply without having to think about or judge anything” (Rand 2001, 30). These “ritualists” utter nothing but “Objectivist bromides” (32). Rand’s prophetic observation is a lesson that has yet to be learned by some of her more orthodox followers.

9. I should note that Long's contrast between the early and mature Rand on the issue of abstraction is illuminating (Long 2001, 414–17).

10. "Contextualism," as Rand uses it, is not to be confused with its use by philosophical pragmatists. See Bissell's contribution to this discussion, in this issue.

11. Bahm actually spoke in terms of the union of "analytic dialectic" and "synthetic dialectic," which he called, "organitic" dialectic (TF, 151 n. 16).

12. It is true that in a *single* footnote in TF, I express a less than glowing view of the analytic tradition to which Long owes some allegiance. It is therefore encouraging to learn more about the analytic revolt against the Hegelian and British Idealist versions of metaphysical internalism.

More generally, however, Long is sometimes critical of my footnoting techniques; he is concerned especially by a tension between text and notes. In some instances, he sees "signs of hasty editing" (440 n. 17). For example, he tells us that I "quote Rothbard's opinion that 'it is a happy accident of history that a great deal of . . . common law is libertarian' (TF, 349), only to assert in a footnote on the same page (349 n. 62) that 'Osterfeld . . . agrees with Rothbard that . . . it was no accident that the common law was largely libertarian.'" Long continues: "If Rothbard thinks it was an 'accident,' then Osterfeld's view that it was 'no accident' hardly counts as an agreement with Rothbard." But my noting of Osterfeld's comment comes at the end of a paragraph on page 349, in which I am discussing Rothbard's conception of law as a theoretical process that uses human reason to establish a legal code. Osterfeld's point amplifies the importance of "judge-made law" to this legal process. See also page 245 of the text.

Long also criticizes the fact that in several instances, I make a claim in the text that is qualified in a footnote, and then I proceed as though such qualifications were nonexistent. My only response to this is that I am following the rules of good scholarship: I am making the reader aware that I am aware of certain qualifications and complexities that are not dealt with in the text. I advise the reader toward more in-depth discussions of these issues in other works, so that I may proceed, in the text, by means of essentials.

13. I readily acknowledge that Long has put his finger on some very real problems in the works of dialectical thinkers. This does not mean that the problem resides in dialectics per se; it just means that the dialectical tradition needs to embrace its analytic aspects with greater consistency. Oliman has argued correctly that

on occasion dialectical thinkers will "play down or even ignore the parts, the details, in deference to making generalizations about the whole." They "also have a tendency to move too quickly to the bottom line, to push the germ of a development to its finished form. In general, this error results from not giving enough attention to the complex mediations, both in space and over time, that make up the joints of any social problem." Some also tend to overestimate the speed of change and to underestimate the barriers to change. (quoted in TF, 184 n. 84)

But, as I point out, "in each of these instances, dialectical thinkers are just not being

dialectical enough."

14. Monists tend to focus on *causal* rather than logical relations, since they view the primary sphere as that to which all other spheres are epiphenomena, as in economic determinist models of social causation (TF, 169). Dualists, by contrast, tend to focus on the *logical* interrelations between *principles* (167). The libertarian dualist, thus, sees a stark, mutually exclusive, *logical* opposition between the *principles* of voluntarism and coercion.

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