

January 15, 1970

Dear Friends,

There is a little philosophical problem I should like to take up with you. In the re-writing of the draft of the book on the basis of the general discussions among members, as well as in conferences with non-members, the question of what Hegel called "The Third Attitude to Objectivity" (in the "Smaller Logic", pars. 61-78) came up several times. I was asked if it wasn't possible to analyze this attitude, not only on specific political problems as with "the fixed particular" in the Trotsky chapter, and the two types of subjectivity in the Mao chapter, but within the very first chapter that deals with all of the major works of Hegel. I have, therefore, developed the political movement in the Science of Logic. This gives me the opportunity to introduce the whole question of the attitudes to objectivity. In fact, I now have sub-titled the whole section dealing with the Logic, "Attitudes to Objectivity". (The sub-title for Phenomenology of Mind is "Experiences of Consciousness", which happens to be Hegel's own expression; and the sub-title for Philosophy of Mind will be a question: "Movement from Practice"?). In any case, I should like to have your commentary on the new page on the "third attitude" which follows below. Please write to me individually.

"A continuous process of becoming is what the Hegelian philosophy is all about. The exposition of this continuous process of becoming is followed throughout the Logic, by "Observations", differentiating his philosophy from other philosophies. Nowhere is this more detailed than in Chapter I where, after three short paragraphs on Being, Nothing, Becoming, there follow no less than 22 pages of "Observations". What is crucial

however, is not the detail, but the relationship. "Observations" have to a new structure that appears only in the "Smaller Logic", that of "Attitudes to Objectivity."

In Chapter I of the Science of Logic in Observation 3 (which is a critique of the isolation of the abstractions -- being and Nothing -- so that becoming could never have emerged out of them), Hegel remarks that "the most eloquent description -- perhaps already forgotten," (Vol. I, p. 107) was given by Jacobi.

A decade later, when Hegel prepared the much expanded second edition of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, he had evidently decided that, whether or not such an attitude was "forgotten", it would always recur in the movement of becoming when, in the process of transcending contradiction, the subject becomes impatient with all the stages of negation it must suffer through, and instead rolls back into intuitionism. Hegel, therefore, introduces a whole new structure called "Attitudes to Objectivity." It consists of three chapters.

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Far from this triad signifying any sort of "synthesis", it signals, instead, a dismemberment. There is a forward movement from the first attitude (which covers all pre-Kantian thought -- simple faith, the old metaphysics, abstract understanding, scholasticism, and dogmatism --) to the second attitude, which is devoted to both Empiricism and Kantianism. But, instead of going forward from the empirical and the critical to the dialectic -- and, naturally, Hegel considered his dialectic the highest stage, the absolute -- there is a retrogression to Intuitionism, "the school of Jacobi", which rejects all methods". (par. 77) It becomes "wild", returns to the "dogmatic metaphysics of the past from which we started. Thus, it shows the "reactionary nature of the school of Jacobi." (par. 76)

This backward step is seen also in the fact that Jacobi has reduced "mediation to the immediate, the intuitive, with "its passwords, 'Either-Or'" (par. 66), Hegel calls attention to the fact that the whole of the Doctrine of Essence, "a discussion of the intrinsically self-affirming unity of immediacy and mediation." (par. 66)

You can hear Hegel's anger rising to a crescendo -- the "one-sidedness" of the Intuitionists is seen most in reducing the truth from something arising from the "nature of the content" but, out of pure subjectivism:

"Since the criterion of truth is found, not in the character of the content, but in the fact of consciousness, all alleged truth has no other basis than subjective knowledge, and the assertion that we discover a certain fact in our consciousness. What we discover in our own consciousness is thus exaggerated into a fact of consciousness of all and even passed off for the very nature of the mind." (par. 71)

The Science of Logic makes clear enough how sharply he separates his Absolutes from the "empty Absolutes" of his philosophic contemporaries. Our bringing in the attitudes to objectivity from Encyclopaedia here throws, we hope, a further illumination on what we started pointing out when we said its structure shows no straight line to the Absolute. Not only that. We shall now see that each realm has, so to speak, "its own," Absolute. Which is what

Sartre may or may not have meant when he said that what was original with Existentialists was that the war and the occupation "made us rediscover the Absolute at the very heart of Relativity." (What Is Literature, p.148) ^{Volney} says