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Hegel – Introductory Note

Alfredo M. Bonanno

2002

I am putting together here my studies on Hegel composed between the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies.

Some of them have been revised later (indicated at the end of each piece) but, nearly always, it has been a question of updating the quotations with publications that were not available at the time they were drawn up.

In the following decades I returned more than once to Hegel's books, but of my many notes, in part expressions from a too personal point of view to interest anyone, I have not considered it useful to insert anything more. It was a question, for the main part, of reflections on the dialectic that will perhaps find a place in the future in the volume History of Logic that I am thinking of publishing.

In the face of the immane dimension (and difficulty) that Hegel's philosophy presents to the more or less prepared reader there is to remain in fear. On the other hand, I must confess that I have often been amazed by this philosopher's capacity to work. The variety of interests of research, the analytical material gone into and discussed critically, the authors held present as a consequence of reading done, in

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a word, a laboratory of a thinker worthy of that name has always impressed me in others and I have tried, within my possibilities, to work as well, with results that I don't know how to evaluate. It is easy to be amazed by the work of others, while one tends to undervalue one's own. Here I am not expressing perplexity on the value of what I have produced from the intellectual point of view, this question is quite foreign to me, but only of effort and involvement, as mole of the research, as width of reference, as reading and memorisation, as accumulation of news and capacity of selection ,etc. And, in this perspective, Hegel is second to none.

But what has impressed me most has been his capacity to suggest a punto d'appoggio, something to start off from, where to puntellare reflection. I know well that it is a question of a falsely solid beginning, but I have taken a long time to realise it. On the necessity that philosophy becomes system, objective totality of knowledge, I have never had any doubts: philosophy cannot and must not become it. Accumulation is the last stop of research, the azzeramento of creativity the rule of dominion that becomes dominion of the rule. Any attempt aimed at building a system of thought inevitably ends up in the paradox of existence. Like a negation of life in act, existence is nothing other than a game of illusions, a nothing in the absence of light, a spegnersi affrettato of any vital sollicitation. As far as the problem of the form that the philosophical system must assume, I was for a long time prisoner of factual procedures not estranged to Hegel himself. I got rid of them almost completely in Bergamo prison, writing the final stesura of the first part of Trattato delle Inutilita.

The need for philosophy to take the form of a system is nothing new in the philosophical debate at the end of the eighteenth century. The critique of spinosa's philosophy, begun with the argument on spinozism of Lessing, made for example Jacobi conclude that spinozism is the only philosophy possiblebecause of its systematic-deductive formulationit completes

the principle of intellectual knowledge with that of the purest dogmatism.

Saving myself from this possible outcome, or better from that closure, Hegel has been useful to me to make me see the road I could address myself to and the means I was about to enter into possession of, means that could take me far from that road, just as they could consegnarmi for the rest of my days. Hegel for me has been something more than a handful of powder thrown into the air, he has contributed to feeding a fire charged with logical enjoyment and doubts, but he has also put out that fire, making me run the risk of drying up all thirst and desire and becoming (discovering this to my cost) what I was. I could not understand all that without beginning a contenzioso with my will, I am not saying a dipartita towards other beaches, but a bramosos disputere palmo a palmo. That was not exactly what Hegel's message was at the time of my clash with the giants, it wasn't because the time I am talking about was supplied with a subtle filter, a filter called marxism. To read him through it was often a casual happening, beneficial intervention of destiny rather than pondered effect of reflection. My not accepting this filter, my Hegel was (and in many ways continues to be) different to that of the others. There were periods in which the obstacles were others: virtuoso styles and delicate ways of learning, little effort and a great capacity to represent all the possibilities, in strata, one after the other, like Liberty floral designs and the maioliche polichromes of Caltagirone. I passed through them with all the heaviness of who wants to put order in their affairs. This period was also carrier of my reading of Hegel, different once again.

My refusal of the system, any philosophical system, but also of any system of ideas that claims to vigilate and regulate my life, has not therefore lent on the prosthesis of the demonisation of any system of research but, on the contrary, it has entered into the most significant of this research coming out from time to time strengthened instead of weakened.

Hegel has often been my comrade di strada and has never disturbed my dreams as an anarchist. Con buona pace of so many censori in pectore.

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