

Elephant Archives

Nine Studies on Hegel

Alfredo M. Bonanno

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Introductory note

I am putting together my studies on Hegel all carried out between the late sixties and early seventies.

Some of them have since been revised (indicated at the end of each piece) but that has mostly been a question of updating the quotations with publications that were not available at the time of the first draft.

I returned to Hegel's writings various times in the decades that followed, but regarding my many notes, in part expressions of a point of view too personal to be of interest to anyone else, I have never considered inserting anything further. For the main part it was a question of reflections on the dialectic, which will perhaps find a place in the volume *History of Logic* that I am thinking of publishing some time in the future.

The vast dimension (and difficulty) of Hegel's philosophy even for the reasonably prepared reader is quite frightening. At the same time I must confess that I have often been astonished by this philosopher's capacity for work. The variety of interests in his research, the analytical material gone into and examined critically, the many authors held present as a consequence of his reading, in a word, the laboratory of a thinker worthy of the name who has always impressed me and who, as far as my possibilities allowed, I have tried to emulate in my work with results that I am unable to evaluate. It is easy to be amazed by the work of others while tending to undervalue one's own. Here I am not interested in any possible worth in what I have produced from the intellectual point of view, that would be quite foreign to me, but only in the effort and involvement as mole of research, width of reference, reading and memorisation, accumulation of facts and capacity of selection, etc. In this perspective, Hegel is second to none.

But what has impressed me most has always been his capacity to suggest a point of contact, something to start off from to back up reflection. I am well aware that that is a question of a falsely solid beginning, but it took me a long time to realise it. I have never thought that philosophy needs to become a system, a totality of knowledge: philosophy cannot and must not become such. Accumulation is the last stop of research, the zeroing of creativity, the rule of dominion that becomes dominion of the rule. Any attempt at building a system of thought inevitably ends up in the paradox of existence. Like a negation of life in act, existence is no more than a game of illusions, a nothing in the absence of light, a hasty shutting down of any vital solicitation. As far as the

problem of the form that the philosophical system must take, I was for a long time prisoner of factual procedures not unknown to Hegel himself. I almost got rid of them completely in Bergamo prison while writing the final draft of the first part of *Trattato delle Inutilita*.

The need for philosophy to take the form of a system was nothing new in the philosophical debate at the end of the eighteenth century. The critique of Spinoza's philosophy, begun with Lessing's argument on Spinozism, led Jacobi for example to conclude that Spinozism is the only philosophy possible because of its systematic-deductive formulation it completes the principle of intellectual knowledge with that of the purest dogmatism.

Saving myself from this possible outcome, or rather from that closure, Hegel has been useful to me to show me the road I could address myself towards and the means I was about to enter into possession of that could take me far from that road just as they could deliver me for the rest of my days. For me Hegel has been something more than a handful of dust thrown up 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 losing all thirst and desire and becoming (discovering this to my cost) what I was. I could not understand all that without beginning a dispute with my will, I am not saying a departure towards other beaches, but a yearning/eager disputing inch by inch. 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. Reading him, often through a casual occurrence, a beneficial stroke of fate rather than the pondered effect of reflection. By 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 different: 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 majolica polychromes of Caltagirone. I passed through them with all the heaviness of he who wants to put order in their affairs. This period was also a carrier of my reading of Hegel, again different.

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

Hegel has often been my fellow-traveller and has never upset my dreams as an anarchist. With all due respect for the many censors in thought alone

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