

13924

May 16, 1966

Dear FF:

You may consider the intrusion into your thinking on your new work as a bit far-fetched, but I trust not irrelevant. Somehow, ever since you mentioned developing the ideas of Marx's humanism in the psycho-analytic field, I have felt (and I trust not only because I do not know psycho-analysis) that certain historical-philosophical analyses by Marx and Hegel could serve not only to illuminate the field, but actually to inspire opening new avenues. The work of Marx that I was thinking about in this relationship is one that is hardly ever mentioned and has not been translated. However, a good selection of quotations does appear in Lowith's From Hegel to Nietzsche. I am referring to Marx's doctoral thesis on the difference between the philosophies of Democritus and Epicurus. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Marx's profound insights there relate not only to the two philosophies, but to those turning points in history where a great philosophy having "perished", the epigones arise because they have been unable to establish altogether new beginnings and so must chip away (interpret) at the last great philosophy. I'm sorry to say I don't have this work of Marx, but I feel sure that if you don't have it, the quotations you will find in Lowith will stimulate you sufficiently to want to read it in relationship to your specific work now rather than as part of Marx's development. I'm sure also that you will not be the least diverted from this pleasant task by the fact that Communists, Trotskyists, and such other old radicals hold this thesis to have been "the bourgeois Marx".

Now the section in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind which I consider indispensable to any serious analysis of people in power and those who hunger to get there is entitled "Spirit in Self-Estrangement -- The Discipline of Culture". The "Unhappy Consciousness" is much more famous than the "Spirit in Self-Estrangement" but in fact this "higher" stage of alienation is the most interesting for the analysis of characters like Mao Tse-tung or Fidel Castro, for that matter. What I'm trying to say is, that whereas the "Unhappy Consciousness" comes at a time when the world is going to pieces and the individual cannot find his place in society, either with the old or the new, the "Spirit in Self-Estrangement" comes at a time when the person has gotten power and should be most happy, but, but, but -- just listen to Hegel himself:

" Spirit in this case, therefore, constructs not merely one world, but a two-fold world, divided and self-opposed." (p.510) "The noble type of consciousness, then, finds itself in the judgment related to the state-power ... This type of mind is the heroism of service ... The result of this action, binding the essential reality and self indissolubly together is to produce a two-fold actuality -- a self that is truly actualized and a state-power whose authority is accepted as true." (P.526-7) "Such a type is the haughty vassal" (p.528) "This estrangement, however, takes place in language ... Speech, however, hides ego in its purity; it alone expresses I, I itself." (p.529-30) "This type of spiritual life is the absolute and universal inversion of reality and thought their entire estrangement one from the other" (p.541).

For a man as erudite as Hegel to have this merciless attack on "culture" is one more of those paradoxes which show the duality in Hegel as man, as a Prussian, and Hegel, the genius, who could step across class and historic barriers -- and with very good humor at that.

Yours,

P.S. I don't know whether the letter above could pass as a congratulatory note for your getting the Guggenheim grant, but I was diverted from sending regular congratulations by the fact that, as expected, I did not get it or any other foundation to sponsor my "subversive" study and thus I must do it and work and scrounge for pennies at the same time. Anyway, I know you'll understand.