

February 4, 1971

Dear Olga,

In view of the fact (an ordinary, little contingent fact, not the Hegelian Concept of Fact) that your request for further development on the question will, no doubt, be the attitude of all of the other friends, I'm making copies of this letter to you and sending it out to the locals.

The best way to grapple with the Hegelian concept is to let Hegel speak for himself. I assume that more people will have the smaller Logic than the Science of Logic. I will deal mostly with the paragraphs in the former. (For those who have the Science of Logic, the crucial section is in Vol. II, Chapter III., Ground, the very last section entitled "Transition of the Fact into Existence," pp. 103-106. and it may interest you to know that Lenin had a great time with the two sentences: "When all the Conditions of a Fact are present, it enters into Existence. The Fact is before it exists ..." at which point Lenin wrote: "very good. What have the Absolute Idea and Idealism to do with it? Amusing, this 'derivation' of ... existence ..." (Vol. 38, p. 147)

In the smaller Logic, at the end of paragraph 145, as Hegel completes the relationship of Possibility and Contingency as the factors of Actuality, he writes: "the problem of Science and especially of philosophy undoubtedly consists in eliciting the necessity concealed under the semblance of contingency." I have started two paragraphs before the question of Fact because I wanted to give the background to this very strange phrase of Hegel's about arising "out of existence". In a word, he first has you face the accidental, the contingent, which leads into the much more serious condition, at which point everyone should think of two types of conditions -- historical circumstances, and the class struggle, which is hardly what Hegel thought about but which is what both Marx and Lenin were talking about. Having faced the accidental and the historical, Hegel moves to Real Possibility, in order to stress totality: "It is the totality, and thus the content, or absolutely characterized actual Fact ... this movement of the form is Activity: it carries into effect the Fact or real ground which rises into actuality." (paragraph 147)

At this point, Hegel develops the movement towards necessity and, evidently, expanded himself by talking. (the talk taken down by students is always in small print) It happens to be one of my very favorite parts of Hegel and it reads: "Necessity is blind. Only so long as it is not understood ... If man remembered, on the contrary, that whatever happened to them was only an evolution of themselves and that they only bore their own guilt, they would stand free ... so long as a man is otherwise conscious that he is free, his harmony of soul and peace of mind will not be disturbed by disagreeable events. It is their view of necessity, therefore, which is at the root of the content and discontent of man and which in that way determines their destiny itself."

It's only at this point that we come back to Fact and by now he relates Condition, Fact and Activity as the three elements of necessity. Stressing, further, (paragraph 148) it is the movement which translates the conditions into fact ..."

The essence of the whole development of Fact as not mere contingency or the accidental fact that you were born on such-and-such a day, but that Fact is itself a result of self-mediation, or the "translation" of the Subjective into Objective, or vice versa; the Fact's emergence from this encounter of Objective and Subjective -- condition, activity, history into a real historic happening, so that this-and-this date turns out to be anything as serious as November 7th demands that every serious revolutionary recognize that no matter how history conditions man, they are the makers of it.

Have a good time grappling with it.

Yours, Raya

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