

Articulated
Method
of
Artisan
Science

THEORY and PRACTICE, History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx
by Nicholas Lobkowitz (University of Notre Dame, 1967)

Of the three parts -- I., "Materials for Pre-History"; II. From Hegel to Moses Hess; III. Marx; -- only part III. has special relevance. However, there is great interest in the fact that this scholar who is a Thomist and, naturally, anti-Marxist, actually employs materialist analyses, especially where it relates to secular debates. Thus, in part I., as he tries to prove that it was not during middle-aged scholasticism that science was disregarded, he writes "Bacon as a thinker who systematized and raised to a method the mentality characteristic of Renaissance artisans and artisan-scientists. As we shall try to show, this pragmatic mentality of Renaissance artisans which Bacon converted into a system and program did not merge with the ideas of the founders of the modern scientific mentality, and in fact, under the impact of Cartesian rationalism all but completely disappeared during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In other words, what we want to suggest is that the main reason why Bacon appears to us an unusually 'modern' mind, even though his philosophy of science is radically inferior to that of Galileo and Newton, or even Descartes, is that Bacon succeeded in articulating a mentality which had existed before the break-through of modern science, but which was overshadowed by the latter's Cartesian self-interpretation and did not re-emerge until this 'Cartesian' spirit of modern science entered a period of crisis in the nineteenth century." (p. 92)

Church prepared ground

The author then goes on to show that there were important technological innovations in the thousand years between the end of antiquity and the modern period, stressing further that "the unearthing of iron resources in Northern Europe, and the shift of the centers of Occidental civilization from the Mediterranean area to countries north of the Alps" was what produced the Italian Renaissance but that "real humanism" had started long before then in Church doctrine: "In fact, it was Christianity, not antiquity, that prepared the ground for the modern notion of progress." (p. 98)

How

So anxious is Lobkowitz to prove his point that he actually attributes, in "perfect" dialectical materialist style that Bacon's thought relates to that of artisans. "One will have to add that there was at least one group in Renaissance society which had begun to be aware of a group which was in close touch with technology and technological progress and, last but not least, introduced into European culture the pragmatic tone which today strikes us so much in Francis Bacon - the artisans" (p. 106) "Many decades before the humanists began to speak about progress, such men argued that whatever man does should 'better wherever there is something to be bettered', develop the existing arts, and serve mankind."

Revolutionizing Science

It is this attitude toward knowledge which Francis Bacon articulated into a program for revolutionizing the whole of science... Rather, his greatness consists in having made explicit the self-understanding of an emerging industrial and capitalist society." (p. 107) And he even goes so far as to say that what the scientists and philosophers expressed had first of all developed "in the minds of common people"

Still in Part I, the author proceeds, in a materialist way, in relating the rationalist reaction to the actual material conditions, showing also, however, that the new interest in "pure and realistic theory", characteristic of the 17th century founders of modern astronomy and physics "was due to their re-discovery of absolute truth in the study of nature". (p. 116) This relating of absolute to material holds over, also, to an analysis of Descartes: "Thus the Cartesian explanation of mathematical theorizing is paralleled by a virtually unprecedented irrationalism and, to some extent, scepticism in the practical order. By reducing all knowledge to one kind Descartes commits himself to a radical irrationalism in those areas, most significantly ethics and politics, where mathematical knowledge is irrelevant." (p. 119)

The fun comes in at the end of this first part which ends with Kant when he even tries to bring in "the ideas of the young Marx are the last outcome of this peculiar self-confidence and the 'new practical humanism' so admirably formulated in Pico's oration, a summary of the whole renaissance intent and, in fact, an expression of the basic intent of post-medieval man.

PART II: FROM HEGEL TO MOSES HESS

The author begins by quoting Hegel's concept of Ought as against Kant's: "The standpoint of Kantian philosophy is that, by its reasoning, thought has reached the point of grasping itself as absolute and concrete, as free and ultimate. It grasped itself as that which is everything in all things. It accepts no exterior authority; no authority except that of thought is of any value. Accordingly, thought determines itself and thus is concrete."

In his own Thomist way, the author is so anti-Hegelian -- though much of him "steals" -- that he speaks about the accusation, as if it were only by "others" that Hegel had an "almost ~~pathological~~ pathological presumptuousness" regarding Absolute Knowledge, himself stating, instead: "What Hegel adds is no more than the adequate self-knowledge of these historical results; he adds the scientific form of conceptual thought." (p. 157) See p. 176 for Hegel's criticism of the Enlightenment but I am not sure why the whole chapter is called "The Kingdom of God".

The one new thing about the young Hegelians is the introduction of the lesser known Polish left Hegelian, Cieszkowski, whom, however, he thoroughly overestimates, especially as it relates to the supposed influence of Cieszkowski's concepts of absolute and Praxis on Marx.

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P. 241: Philosophy throws its eyes away 'because its heart has become strong enough to create a world.' As Marx puts it in another passage, once spirit has reached a definite level of universality, and thus also of freedom, it turns into 'energy'. It becomes will which turns on a reality still deprived of spirit. (MEGA, 64)

'If one denies this historical necessity, one has to deny that after a universal philosophy men can continue to live,' (MEGA, 132) that is, to be creative philosophers."

P. 242: One has to separate Hegel's private consciousness about his system from the objective consciousness expressing itself in his system. . . . Marx expresses this in terms of a distinction between 'exoteric' and 'esoteric'; whereas Hegel's interpretation of his system is 'chatty and exoteric', the system itself is the highest expression of the 'constantly digging mole of true philosophical knowledge.' (MEGA 1.1/1.143)

P. 243: Ruge simply believed that after Hegelianism has been freed from its reactionary elements, one can proceed to its actualization without further ado. Marx, on the contrary, realized that the very essence of Hegelianism consisted in its 'totality character,' that is, in its claim that it is absolutely all-embracing. Accordingly he concluded, contrary to Ruge, that all attempts to translate Hegelianism into practice are 'essentially afflicted with contradiction.'

For he has to admit

that in the extent to which the world becomes philosophical, philosophy becomes worldly; that the actualization of philosophy simultaneously to its loss. What philosophy fights outside actually is its own inner shortcoming. It succumbs to the defects which it fights; indeed, it cannot abolish these defects except by succumbing to them. (MEGA 1.1/1, 64 ff. - P. 244)

. . . . P. 244: Granted, too, that the actualization of Hegel's Absolute Knowledge entails a double-edged criticism; the critique has to turn both on the world and against Hegel. There remains the problem that the salvific character of Cieszkowski's 'practice' as well as of Bauer's 'critique' depends upon their being effluences of Absolute Knowledge. . . . He is convinced that 'the praxis of philosophy is itself theoretical.

P. 245 It is the critique which measures individual existence against the essence, particular reality against the Idea. (MEGA, 64)

P. 272: "Just as old nations witnessed their prehistory in imagination, in mythology, we Germans have witnessed our posthistory in thought, in philosophy. We are philosophical contemporaries of the present without being its historical contemporaries. German philosophy is the ideal prolongation of German history." (MEGA, 1/1/1, 612, tr. Bottomore, 49.)

P. 273: Of course, to negate philosophy cannot mean to mutter a 'few angry and banal phrases'; . . . It can mean only that one ought to transcend theory toward action. "you cannot abolish philosophy except by actualizing it."

P. 376: In short, whereas all other Left Hegelians considered praxis as an effluence of Absolute Knowledge, Marx discovered that it also might be an almost "ontological" development on the part of history. If present society contained a group powerful enough to transform the world, and if this group was to accept the critique as its program of action, ~~then it was possible to argue that history had destined this group for being the world's ultimate savior. In that case, however,~~

P. 294: ..the Manuscripts revealed a Marx whose dialectic was as supple as that of the Phenomenology, who struggled with Hegel on properly speculative grounds instead of only turning him "upside down", and who made profound statements about the interrelation of economics and philosophy as well as about the "alienation" of human products from their originator, the worker. Rereading Das Kapital, one could see that behind the sober economic analyses there was hidden a highly speculative idea about the meaning of man and his universe. Rereading Marx's later definitions of his 'historical materialism,' one began to realize that they were congealed postscripts to an earlier 'humanistic' philosophy.

Between November, 1843 and February, 1845, he devoured all the contemporary literature on economic problems on which he could get his hands. He had to restrict himself to books available in French and German; his English was still not very good. But even so he read more than ten thousand pages, a remarkable undertaking if one considers that during the same time he wrote the Manuscripts and spent more than two months composing the Holy Family.

P. 398: Thus, whereas Feurbach remained a figure of a drama written by Hegel, Marx succeeded in truly rewriting Hegel's drama of the "spirit alienated from itself." . . . Marx's "alienation," on the contrary, like that which Hegel had in mind, is an utterly real phenomenon, an alienation of man's whole existence, against which all 'enlightenment' is impotent.

P. 424: In short, Feurbach's materialism constantly overlooks history, the fact that the empirical foundations from which derive all human ideas have been created by man himself. As far as Feurbach is a materialist, history does not exist for him, and insofar as he considers history, he is not a materialist. (Ibid, 43 ff.; tr Pascal 35 ff)

P. 418: In other words, the fact that men are dependent upon their circumstances and nevertheless constantly succeed in overthrowing them can only mean that human practice by its very nature leads to and results in an overthrow of existing circumstances and the creation of new and less limited ones. This is why the German Ideology Marx without further ado identifies "material practice" and "revolution." (CMEM III, 38 tr. Pascal, 28 ff. where there is a clear parallel between "explaining practice from the idea" and "criticism as the moving force of history," on the one hand, and "explaining the formation of ideas from material practice," and revolution as the moving force of history, on the other hand.)

THEORY AND PRACTICE - by Lukacs (p. 294)

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(p. 322) "In short, Marx does not accuse Hegel of having treated labor as if it was a thought activity. Rather, he accuses him of having in the Phenomenology described human history in terms of a dialectic of consciousness, not in terms of dialectic of labor. When he says that the only labor which Hegel recognizes is abstract mental labor, he has in mind the structure of the Phenomenology and in fact of Hegel's whole philosophy, not the passage on labor in the Phenomenology and other writings by Hegel. For what Marx wants to say is that Hegel's description of the movement of self-consciousness is an adulterated description of the historical movement of laboring humanity."

(p. 323) "Moreover, Marx claims that the very fact that Hegel translates the real dialectic of laboring humanity into a dialectic of a mentally laboring self-consciousness is itself a reflection of alienated labor. Just as in religion man believes his own mind to be a divine entity outside him because in real life he is alienated from the products of his life activity - that is labor - so Hegel's description of history as a movement of a mentally laboring self-consciousness is nothing but 'the self-objectification .. of the alienated mind of the world thinking within its self-alienation.' [Colligan 1982]"

(p. 343) "Marx never touches upon those texts in which Hegel explicitly takes up the subject of labor. Instead he analyzes the structure of the Phenomenology as a whole and intimates that it contains an alienated description of alienated labor as well as an alienated description of the transcendence of alienated labor. ... 'Identifying man with self-consciousness, Hegel had described the 'alienation of the human essence' as an alienation of self-consciousness. (No wonder) then, that in Hegel 'the whole process of the withdrawal of alienation is nothing but the history of the production of .. logical, speculative thought.'"

Handwritten notes: "P276 Marx's principal might be an almost ontological in the fact of the fact" with a circled "ON" and "A.K."

Handwritten notes: "HERE Beautiful"

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