A dictionary of the social sciences

Hugo F. Reading

doi: 10.12681/grsr.344

To cite this article:

accept the principles and conclusions of the Kantian teaching. The PhG teems with slashing attacks against its hopelessly analytic spirit. But in any case Hegel recognised that Kant, despite the fact that he made it ex hypothesi impossible to carry out the project of subject-object unification, did, nevertheless, posit it as an inescapable yearning of pure reason, an "endless task" necessarily engendered in the course of analysing the dynamics of the "transcendental unity" of the Ego.

Kant stubbornly based his revolutionary conception on a strictly subjective basis, severing "our" (limited) understanding from the objective laws governing the universe "in itself". Hegel saw it as his vocation to suppress this spurious separation, to reunite consciousness and its object in a system of integral reason, which is not an impossible Ought but a tangible spiritual reality accessible to the individual by means of adequate philosophical instruction.

The PhG is precisely such a paedagogy, an attempt to reorient the average human being away from the abstract analytical principles of formal logic that have up to now shaped his mode of thought towards a higher intellectual existence: he is encouraged to burst the dams of tautology in order to inundate the in itself, and to receive, in turn, the full richness of a rationalised cosmos in his soul. This is a περιαγωγή ψυχής in the most eminent Platonic sense. This is the supreme goal that the PhG announces, a goal going far beyond the limited aspiration to a rational political order. Its essence is thoroughly gnoseological, the outcome of an immanent criticism of the transcendental principles of Kant, a spiritual consummation internal to the German idealist mind.

The driving anticipation of such a completed system of reason is the key emotion permeating the PhG, and it finds its highest expression in that passionate masterpiece, its Preface, a text that is markedly de-emphasised in Freedom and Independence.

The young philosopher is greatly excited for the lost harmony of Hellas has thus been overcome by a doxology to dialectical reason conquering the elusive absolute on the basis of the rule of synopticity, which again was first enunciated by Plato. The passionate images of the Preface, as well as the rapturous concluding lines of the PhG, create the emotional atmosphere for that leap of human subjectivity into the infinity of the cosmic One. The eleugy to the Hellenic past is aufgehoben, in the strictest Hegelian sense, by the fervent paean to the German-Hegelian future.

Hegel’s political insights must be firmly placed within this metaphysical scheme. Only thus can we effectively combat an ever-present temptation to elevate the political moment to supreme dominance in the system. Prof. Shklar’s preoccupation with the politics of the PhG may have made a bias in this direction unavoidable, as evidenced by her unquestioned readiness to identify Hegel’s "Volksgeist" with Montesquieu’s "esprit des lois" with its predominantly objective, political flavour. But Hegel’s political concepts, even his powerful state as constructed in the Philosophy of Right of 1820, participate in a higher metaphysical movement, whose telos is not the self-subsistent perfection of a rational political community, but a spiritual world of cosmic reconciliation based on the healing principles of absolute reason.

* * *

A DICTIONARY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

I am most gratified by the review of my book A dictionary of the social sciences published by Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd and I appreciate being given the hospitality of your columns for answering the two major objections raised by Helen Papachristou.

The first objection is that I omitted a few but important terms such as "capitalism", "socialism", "liberalism", "Marxism".

I was forced to establish criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of terms. As the social sciences have survived the Wittgensteinian onslaught of P.G. Winch (1958), the Positivismusstreit of the 1960’s, and repeated attacks on their scientificity, it is important to try to establish law-like generalisations which employ terms which are rigorously defined. It was clear that the terms enumerated were too vague for this purpose and they were therefore rejected.

The term "Marxism" was rejected because Marxism is a Weltanschauung and is broader than sociology.

The second objection is that certain writers who should have been attributed to certain definitions were omitted.

These omissions were deliberate and there were good reasons for them. Where a term or a concept was in common use and was used by many leading writers, it was considered misleading to mention the classic author. In many cases a semantic shift had occurred since the term’s introduction. Many forms of alienation have been distinguished since Karl Marx’s use of the term, for example, by C. Wright Mills. G. Lukacs used the term "reification" not in the sense used by Sidney and by many philosophs of science, but in the sense of false consciousness. The term "imitation" is in wide use by psychologists and I did not wish to associate it with Tarde’s theory of imitation. A lot of work has been done since the time of Adorno, by Eysenck amongst others, on the authoritarian personality and various types of authoritarian personality have been distinguished.

HUGO F. READING