

INTRODUCTION TO SPECULATIVE LOGIC AND PHILOSOPHY

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Introduction to Speculative Logic and Philosophy by A. Vera

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TO

Speculative Logic and Philosophy.

BY

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P R E F A C E .

This book was written some fifteen years ago during my stay in England. Events having called me back to my native country, and, being engaged in other publications and my professional duties, I did not meet with, nor seek for, an opportunity of publishing it. Now this opportunity has been kindly afforded me by my honored and valued friend Mr. Wm. T. HARRIS, to whom Hegelianism is greatly indebted for having boldly set up its banner, and, by his and his fellow-workers' labors and perseverance, opened to it a new and wide field on the young and vigorous American soil.

My object in writing this book was not to expound the Hegelian doctrine, but, as it is indicated by its title, to pave the way to the right understanding of it, and to enable the mind to reach the region of the Hegelian speculation and to grasp the Hegelian idea—I mean the idea as it has been conceived and demonstrated by Hegel in the concrete and systematic unity of its nature and existence. I make this statement in order that the reader should not expect to find in this book that which it is not intended for, and also to remind him that a book, and more especially a philosophical book, cannot be rightly appreciated and fully understood unless taken as a whole, i.e. here with the Hegelian doctrine in general, and, if I am allowed to speak of myself, with my other writings.

A. VERA.

MONTREUX (SUISSE), August, 1872.

INTRODUCTION
TO
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Preliminary Remarks.

That there is a Logical science is admitted on all hands, and that this science is of paramount importance for purely speculative as well as for practical purposes is a point upon which all men seem to agree. For although in practical life men are mostly guided by opinion, by interest, by passion and caprice, yet there is not one who is not anxious to strengthen and develop his logical powers—"the faculty of reasoning" as it is generally termed—either to apply it to the peculiar object of his industry, or to outdo the adversaries whom every one has to meet and to contend with in the struggles of life. This it is which, with Mathematics, makes Logic the most popular amongst abstract sciences. For every one feels, as if by instinct, that to act rightly one must think rightly, and consequently that the science which inquires into the rules of thought must be worthy of the attention of all rational beings; and as there is neither science nor art, nor any practical avocation, which is not founded upon thought, and does not require the normal exercise of the logical faculties, the conclusion naturally drawn therefrom is that Logic is a science embracing within its boundaries the whole range of human knowledge and activity.

But if Logic, when considered in its abstract notion, takes so high a standing even in popular opinion, it little answers

the general expectation when considered in its present shape and as embodied in the various logical treatises; and this accounts for the fact of Mathematics having seen the number of its worshippers increased, and the field of its researches and application becoming more and more enlarged, whilst Logic has fallen into neglect and decay, and if still taught in colleges and schools it is more owing to the tradition of the scholastic *curriculum* than to the earnest desire of becoming acquainted with it; and this in spite of its intrinsic and acknowledged importance, not only with respect to other sciences in general, but to Mathematics itself, mathematical knowledge supposing the existence and the application of Logical laws. The fact is that this science, the object of which is to strengthen and develop the rational powers of the mind as it is now constituted, seems rather to have been intended to mislead and vitiate them. For its theories consist of nothing but an aggregate of empty formulas, of arbitrary rules, and artificial proceedings, which are neither consistent with themselves nor with the things to which they are applied; and it is only by false teaching and false habits of thought, and by a distortion of facts, that we are brought to think that *concrete objects*, either physical or metaphysical, are apprehended by our mind through, and according to, laws as they are laid down by Logic. For if the matter be truly investigated it will be seen that they are apprehended and known in spite of and in contradiction to them.

The failures of Logic have long been felt by philosophers, and several attempts have been made, since Ramus, to remodel this science. But I do not hesitate to say that all attempts have failed, and not only failed but are merely an inferior reproduction of the theories they propose to overthrow and replace. For there is nothing in Bacon's *Organon* or Descartes' philosophy,* as far as the fundamental principles of Logic are concerned, which could not be found in the Aristotelian *Organon*; and those who have seriously attended to these matters, and whose judgment is not biassed by national prejudices and vanity, will agree, I trust, with me in saying that the Aristotelian *Organon* surpasses all subse-

* *Discours sur la Méthode et Règles pour bien conduire ses Pensées.*

quent logical theories by the range and accuracy of its inquiries, and by the scientific character with which it is stamped. As to Bacon's *Organon*, the long cherished delusion that he had discovered a method and logical proceedings unknown to Aristotle and ancient philosophers has been exploded by modern criticism and a more accurate knowledge of ancient philosophy.

The common failure of all logical theories—of the Aristotelian as well as others, but more especially of the latter than of the former, as will be shown in the course of this inquiry—the error which has precluded the authors of these theories from establishing Logic on a sound and firm basis, and which vitiates, as it were, the whole structure, is to be found in the very principle from which they start, in the very notion they form of Logical Science. For they have, one and all, considered Logic as a *formal* science, as a science whose business it is to analyze and describe the merely *subjective forms* of thoughts, i.e. forms that possess a value and meaning as far as the mind is concerned, but which have no *objective* bearing or consubstantial connection whatever with the things the mind apprehends and knows through them.

This is the view philosophers have generally taken of Logic, and starting from this notion they have curtailed it, and stripped it, as it were, of all substance, leaving nothing but a mere *form*, which, for the very reason that it has been severed from its substance and considered apart from concrete and real objects—either experimental or metaphysical—is anything but a *rational form* and *organon* of truth. Indeed, from Aristotle down to the present time, it would seem that Logicians, instead of enlarging and completing the field of researches marked out by the Greek philosopher, have exerted all their ingenuity in compressing it into a narrower compass by cutting off some of its essential branches and reducing it to its *minimum*. Hence the arbitrary and superficial distinctions of *Metaphysical* and *Logical Truth*, of *Reason* and *Reasoning*, of Logic as the science of *mere Possibilities* and Metaphysics as the science of *eternal and absolute Realities*—distinctions which, whilst breaking asunder the unity of the mind and knowledge, and with the unity of knowledge the unity also of things, have made of Logic a

sort of *caput mortuum*, wherein the mind is unable to derive any rational guide or real criterion either for practical or speculative purposes.

Such is even at the present moment the position of Logical Science, though it is more than half a century since the renovation of Logic was accomplished by one of the most extraordinary thinkers that ever existed. I mean Hegel.

When Hegel's *Logic* appeared* it was hailed in Germany by the philosophical world with admiration; nay, with enthusiasm. It was felt that it would do away with old Logic, and inaugurate a new era not only for Logic and Philosophy, but for Science in general. For Logic being a universal science, there is no province of knowledge to which its influence does not extend; there is no theory, nor thought, relating either to God, or to Nature, or to ourselves, which does not involve some logical notion or law; and consequently the renovation of Logic must needs carry with it new mental habits and criteria, new methods and principles, in all provinces of science.

That Hegel's Logic, when better known, when a blind attachment to old formulas and a sort of mechanical use of them shall have given way before rational and demonstrative principles, will supersede old Logic, does not leave a shade of doubt in my mind. And the objection raised by some against the Hegelian philosophy, namely, that this philosophy which once held sway has now been falling off; that his disciples are scattered and discouraged, and hardly acknowledge the doctrine of their master; that consequently this doctrine *a fait son temps*, and that it was a transitory phase of the human mind, a bold but sterile attempt to explain the absolute laws of the Universe,—this objection has, in my opinion, very little, if any, value. To those who assume that the Hegelian philosophy has lost its influence, may be opposed the contrary assumption. It may be said that what it has lost in *intensity* it has acquired in *extent*, and that its influence which was formerly confined to Germany is now spread all over Europe and beyond the seas, as is attested by private and public accounts, and by publications relating directly or in-

* It was published in Nuremberg in 1812.