

DR. JOSEPH BERKE

megválaszolatlan

4 St. George's Terrace

London N.W.1.

14th October 1966

Pendant ces derniers mois plusieurs d'entre nous avons fondé un Institut d'Études Phénoménologiques à Londres. Ce projet exprime le desir commun d'un grand nombre de personnes et groupes travaillant dans divers pays: particulièrement par rapport à la recherche théorique et pratique en des issues les plus urgentes que nous confrontent.

A fin de coordiner et déployer ces efforts, un congrès est projeté pour l'Été 1967 à Londres. Cette lettre a pour but de vous inviter de participer et d'assister à ce Congrès.

Un exposé ci-inclus par Dr. David Cooper exprime notre vue en details, et ci-incluse une liste de personnes invitées.

En outre, nous espérons qu'un grand nombre de jeunes penseurs, écrivains, activistes etc. des pays de l'Ouest, de l'Est et du Troisième Monde vont pouvoir y participer.

Ce Congrès proposé aura lieu le 15 juillet 1967 au 30 juillet à Londres. Naturellement nous aimerions que vous puissiez venir et rester aussi longtemps que possible.

Le Thème de ce Congrès sera: la Dialectique de Demystification. Les rencontres ou meetings auront lieu dans différents parts de Londres, dans les salles et en plein-air. A ces occasions nous désirons un maximum de participation par tous ceux-présents. En arrière plan nous espérons achever une rencontre informelle de certains penseurs qui par leur retotalisation des forces historiques dans lesquelles nous sommes pris vont catalyser les efforts des peuples dans tous les pays pour reconsidérer les problèmes avec lesquels ils sont confrontés.

Par d'antérieur publicité et appels, aussitôt que nous

aurons la liste des speakers, nous espérons pouvoir couvrir les frais de voyage et logement pour ceux qui sont invités à participer à ce Congrès. A l'instant, nous n'avons aucun fonds pour garantir ces frais. Pour cette raison cela nous aiderait considérablement de savoir aussitôt que possible s'il vous serait possible d'y participer et quelle est votre condition économique, et/ou autres.

Nous serons très heureux de vous voir à notre Congrès.

Joseph Benke

Georg Lukacs,
c/o Academy of Scientists,
Budapest,
Hungary.

1021-3 JMD

2

THE INSTITUTE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDIES

The term phenomenology may be taken in a more or less restricted sense. The more restricted sense derives from Husserl and the existential philosophers, in particular Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. We do not intend to take up this rigorous tradition here but the less restricted sense of the term that we shall pursue in this statement is in a most profound way pre-conditioned by this highly disciplined philosophical ground-work.

From our earliest beginnings we are conditioned by systems of influence that converge on us--influences of family, school, mass communication and 'higher education'. These influences extend even into the chemistry of our bodies. In our society we are thus inducted into a state of alienation whereby we become so other than what we might have been that the original source of our personal being is reduced to what is little more than an abstract hypothetical point of a totally dehumanised coordinate system.

Phenomenology in its looser sense is a tentative liberation in the direction of the original source of our personal being by means of a more or less systematic elimination of preconceptions regarding who we are, what we are and where we are, in both horizontal and vertical lines of study. It means clearing the field of our vision of all manner of socially convenient academic conventions, many of them propped up by ideological and quasi-philosophical justification.

These preconceptions are the products of forms of mystification that blur or totally mask, by confusing our perceptions and conceptions, critical sectors of social-historical and 'natural' reality'. The conditioning ground of this project of mystification is always characterised by Avoidance--avoidance of anything that might disturb a carefully contrived Stasis in the lives of persons, groups or mass social collectivities. The disturbance might assume the form of anything from a particular anxiety in one person to the dissolution of a certain class structure in society and even, ultimately, to the most chaotogenic disturbance of all--the vision of the final paradoxes of our condition--that we have to realise and to live in anguish and despair.

There are many forces today that challenge these elemental characters of our existence. These forces have the common nature of denial and evasion. The peculiar manner in which these evasions operate is to condition us to function within a totally conformist setting that denies our most basic need to assert ourselves autonomously in the world.

There is one persistent characteristic of the reduced state of existence thus induced: namely that it sets up its victims in a way that condones all sorts of violence--from napalm in Vietnam to the streaming of school-children according to a pseudo-scientific selection based on so-called intelligence tests. The compulsion to categorise people

results in self-deceptive strategies: once one gets someone into the position of being labelled one has them, they have had it and somewhere along the way one has lost oneself. The labels are attached and that radical uncertainty and doubt that is a necessity for any sort of creativity are finally and fatally avoided.

The peculiar illogic or illness of logic that preconditions mystification is the shift from an appropriate, dialectical rationality to a positivist-analytical rationality that is demonstrably inappropriate to human reality. According to positivist-analytical rationality it is possible to split up a person along all the various points of meeting of the oppositions that compose our total identity. By a selective process we constitute ourselves as who and what we are from a series of 'couples'. For instance saint/sinner, murderer/murdered, sane/crazy, torturer/tortured, teacher/taught and so on. Any project of healing, making ourselves whole, depends on the realisation of the antithesis that constitute us as the basis on which we constitute ourselves. If we refuse this work of keeping ourselves in one piece, while inevitably living through periodic dissolutions and recuperations, we lapse into a state of illusion that is the ground and condition for violence. The essential nature of this illusory state of being consists in a refusal of a certain aspect of ourselves in a certain human situation and then the externalisation of this aspect into another, or group of others, and then the refusal to recognise the refusal one has accomplished.

The present situation of scarcity in the world makes it seem very natural indeed for certain people to fall into the role, say, of torturer or oppressor, and for others obligingly to live out the opposite. These are clearly matters about which we have to achieve a new lucidity. There is an urgency in all this that is posed by the actuality of oppression and deprivation in the third world that we can only experience as some sort of shock.

We are concerned to rid ourselves of the typical alienated and serialized relation of teacher to taught--the relation that is expressed in the typical academic situations of the mass lecture and the formalised tutorial group or dyad in which each person is concerned solely with living out an imposed system of rights and obligations. In such situations, in their worst form, the only valid possibilities that remain may be discretely to withdraw or to go to sleep.

One possible liberation is to destructure the violent, coercive form of these anonymising groups. For instance, I propose, as a basic structure, a seminar group that meets in any suitable place not subject to a prior deformation dictated by academic bureaucratic needs. These needs are conditioned by and reflect a society that we may have to reject on a very basic level because of its conspicuous success in failing. This is not a failure to succeed in any conceivable sense. Its failure is in the very creation of the field of possibility of the Bomb; of actual ways to suppress movements for the autonomous self-assertion of colonial peoples; of the systematic invalidation of a wide category of people who do not conform and are labelled

psychotic or delinquent or some other convenient label.

The locale of these seminar groups would be in the flats or houses of any member of the group or in a coffee house, pub, park or any available open space. The groups would be occasions of meeting between people coming into relation from bases in diverse fields of theorising and action. The groups would not be occasions for analytically recounting past events, that is to say a re-membering of dis-membered experience, but rather a more pristine sort of re-membering closer to the un-distorted sense of the Platonic anamnesis. This entails a sustained refusal to obscure critical moments in our experience of ourselves and others. The realisation of the truth of the present becomes a possibility only on the basis of a resolute refusal to forget, an uncovering and re-discovering of our personal, collective and pre-human cosmic past. The seminars would be concerned with the integration of existing systems of conceptualizations into an inchoate mass of unorganized or scarcely organized experience that at present, in a highly alienated fashion, subjugates us. It subjugates us because we choose, by our existential cowardice, to evade the task of inventing a discipline to heal ourselves or make ourselves more whole by freely and responsibly ordering this vast, uncharted region of primary experience. The consequences of this evasion include all recognizable forms of violence that our age has witnessed, but also some of the less easily recognized forms.

In the Winter of 1966-7 a series of seminars will be initiated in London. This will be the inaugural event of the Institute of Phenomenological Studies and a prelude to the major Summer School of 1967 which will be presented by us in association with a number of leading thinkers from other parts of the world. Concurrently with these projects a number of specific research enterprises are proceeding; including, for instance, investigations into the real array of interests in the Vietnam war, and multi-generational studies of families in which one or several members are considered to have gone mad.

carefully contrived States in the lives of persons, groups or mass social collectivities. The disturbance might assume the form of anything from a particular anxiety in one person to the dissolution of a certain class structure in society and even, ultimately, to the most chaotogenic disturbance of all--the vision of the final paradoxes of our condition--that we have to realise and to live in anguish and despair.

There are many forces today that challenge these elemental characters of our existence. These forces have the common nature of denial and evasion. The peculiar manner in which these evasions operate is to condition us to function within a totally conformist setting that denies our most basic need to assert ourselves autonomously in the world.

There is one persistent characteristic of the reduced state of existence thus induced: namely that it sets up its victims in a way that condones all sorts of violence--from napalm in Vietnam to the streaming of school-children according to a pseudo-scientific selection based on so-called intelligence tests. The compulsion to categorise people