

# JOHN ANDERSON, INQUIRER AND CRITIC: A RADICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE LOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASES OF HIS PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



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#### ABSTRACT

This dissertation is not exegetical, but critical and difficulties reconstructive. Ιt recognises serious within Anderson's core philosophical position and attempts to present a consistent account of his central doctrines, especially his view of empiricism, based on some of his fundamental views, while rejecting others. It argues that Anderson was wrong in his identification of the opposition between rationalism empiricism: in his assumption that this opposition centres on the metaphysical or ontological issues of being and truth. It argues that rationalism is founded in theological assumptions, but particularly in the notion of soul or mind. The main thesis being argued for in this dissertation is that Anderson's core philosophical position is not metaphysical but is founded in an overt method of inquiry: effectively Socratic dialectic, which makes no assumptions, coes not depend upon the notions of mind, forms, ideas, concepts, etc.; which method is empiricism, and so empiricism is not a doctrine. It is argued that the rationalist notion of mind has influenced the conceptions of philosophical method, logic, science, and scientific method to their great detriment. Accordingly, Ancerson's central and distinctive doctrines -- his empiricism (doctrine of one way of being), realism. pluralism, determinism, his many claims about "things", his criticisms of relativism and his quest for a theory of categories -- are interpreted here in a non-metaphysical way, as methodological principles of dialectic, while the notion of mind and all its associated paraphernalia are totally rejected.

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<sup>\*</sup> Studies in Empirical Philosophy

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#### STUDIES IN EMFIRICAL PHILOSOPHY

Anderson's Studies in Impirical Philosophy is the major source referred to in this dissertation, although it was not, by any means, the only source referred to as the basis of Anderson's philosophical views. The reasons for this are firstly, it contains "Anderson's chief philosophical papers" [A.K. Stout, in the Foreword], and secondly, because a great deal of the other material used in the research is not readily accessible.

Abbreviations : SIEP

Studies in Empirical Philosophy is mostly referred to here by the abbreviation SIEP; but where there are many references close together, this is shortened to "S/" instead of using Ibid.

Just as most members of the realist movement did not realise how far realism must go in its development of an objective view of mind, particularly in the rejection of relativist conceptions, so they did not realise how far the cleansing must proceed in other fields, and especially what would be the impact of realist criticism on ethical theory.

John Anderson, *Realist*, In <u>The Australian Highway</u>, September 1958, p.55.

Anderson once said to me that what he had done was to present the sketch of a systematic philosophy; it could be left to others to work out the detail. That was unrealistic: I can think of no instance in the history of philosophy in which anything of that kind has happened. As Anderson himself points out, those pupils who thought of themselves as being most faithful to Hegel in fact reduced him to a ridiculous doctrinarianism. The better pupils of a great philosopher have always followed their master's example; to whatever degree they have been inspired by his spirit, however grateful for his teaching they have been, they could not rest content with 'filling in detail', any more than Anderson confined himself to 'filling in detail' in Alexander.

John Passmore, Anderson as a Systematic Philosopher, in <u>Quadrant</u>, June, 1977, p.53.