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HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 1770–1831

German philosopher

Hegel was the son of an official in the service of the Duke of Baden-Württemberg. He studied from 1788–93 at the Tübinger Stift, a higher education seminary specializing in the training of young men for public service. There he formed close friendships with Friedrich Hölderlin* and Friedrich Schelling*. The three shared a common intellectual outlook. Politically, they hoped for a regeneration in Germany to correspond to the revolution in France. Culturally, they contrasted the fragmentation of contemporary art and religion with the harmony of Greek life. Only in philosophy did they consider Germany a leading force, thanks to the work of Immanuel Kant. 'Kant is the Moses of our nation,' wrote Hölderlin. He had led his people out of bondage; others must take them into the Promised Land.

In the years to 1806, when he completed the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807, trans. 1977), Hegel worked as a tutor and as a lecturer at the University of Jena. He wrote several minor works (see *Early Theological Writings*, trans. 1948; *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. 1977; and *Political Writings*, ed. Z. Pelczynski, 1964) in which he pursued the need for a reintegrated cultural and religious life and for a systematic, post-Kantian philosophy.

The *Phenomenology* has always been the most admired of Hegel's works. Though difficult, it has a breadth and grandeur of presentation which carries the reader through its complexities. On one level the *Phenomenology* represents a rejection of Kantian philosophy and the conception of experience on which it is based. According to Kant, our experience is composed of two elements: a *content*, received from outside, through the senses, and a *form*, imposed on the content by the activity of the mind. The mind, therefore, sets limits on possible experience. Philosophy, by examining the mind's structure, gains knowledge of the structure of reality, in so far as it can be given to us.

For Hegel, this conception of philosophy makes use of a model – of the mind imposing its form on an essentially non-mental reality – which is psychological, rather than philosophical, in origin. Kant misconceives the mind as if it were an instrument or medium. Yet, though it rejects the Kantian conception of experience, the *Phenomenology* is, at another level, Kantian in inspiration: Hegel, too, aims to disclose the governing structures underlying experience. But, for the reasons given, he cannot proceed by trying to isolate the form of experience and treating it as something to be analysed independent of its content. Instead he adopts a historical approach. The *Phenomenology* traces the different forms which mind's relation to the world takes at each stage of historical development. The mind

Hegel is dealing with he calls *Geist* (standardly translated as 'spirit'), for it is not the individual mind but that common intellect in which, he claims, all men, as individual intelligences, participate.

Thus, men's political and cultural relations (which, from *Geist*'s point of view, are forms of its own self-relation) are as much part of the *Phenomenology*'s subject matter as the traditional philosophical questions of body and mind, etc. The final stage, presented at the end of the *Phenomenology*, is Absolute Knowledge: the individual becomes aware that *Geist*'s structure permeates all of reality, nature as well as history. So a recognizably Kantian project – the discovery of structures of experience – has been carried, by non-Kantian means – the description of the development of consciousness – to a quite anti-Kantian conclusion: the claim that it is possible to give a philosophical account of the absolute structure of reality.

The *Phenomenology*'s description of *Geist*'s development leads to an important difficulty, however. The standpoint which sees the stages of consciousness as forming, together, a single, unified development is not that of the individuals who actually undergo the process. But what entitles Hegel to adopt it? It appears that Hegel is assuming his conclusion: making use of a philosophical perspective which the *Phenomenology* itself should derive.

Hegel does not deny this apparent circularity: 'the road to science

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is science itself,' he writes. But it is only apparent. What is assumed and what is derived are, in fact, different. What is assumed at the beginning is a form of consciousness with the ability to retrace its own development when presented to it philosophically. What is derived – Absolute Knowledge – is a consciousness with a full awareness of its own nature and capacities.

Two important points follow: that the *Phenomenology* depends on the *historical* assumption that consciousness has reached the stage at which it can participate in 'science'; and that the *Phenomenology* is not the ultimate philosophical statement. It leads beyond itself, as Hegel intended it should, to the fully conscious unfolding of knowledge in the *Science of Logic*.

Hegel hoped that the *Phenomenology* would secure him a permanent academic appointment. But it was not to be. As he finished his masterpiece, the philosopher of history's career was disrupted by history itself, in the shape of the Battle of Jena. The Napoleonic campaign spoiled Hegel's chance of a university post (he was first appointed to a professorship at Heidelberg in 1816) and he worked as a journalist and then as a schoolteacher.

It was during the latter period that Hegel published his *Science of Logic* (*Wissenschaft der Logik*, 1812, trans. 1969), the work which was intended to present the structures of the Absolute in pure form – 'the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind', as he puts it. Even philosophers sympathetic to Hegel have generally found such claims on behalf of the *Logic* excessive. It seems that Hegel is pre-empting the function of the scientist and attempting to settle *a priori* what are really matters for practical investigation.

However that may be, there can be no doubt of the central importance the *Logic* has for Hegel. By its means the philosopher is enabled to see clearly those essential features of reality which others grasp obscurely and intuitively. This conception resembles Plato's vision of the philosopher as one who turns away from the world of shadows to the world of pure forms. But, unlike Plato, Hegel does not see these forms as a separate realm, lying behind, as it were, our own world. The philosopher sees them as part of the single 'Idea' which, developed and articulated, unifies the apparent diversity of reality. The 'immanent self-constructing path' of this pure Idea is what the *Logic* aims to chart.

In 1818 Hegel was called to the chair in Berlin where he remained till his death. The works of his later years are systematizations and recapitulations, compared to the *Logic*: attempts to show the rationality of various disciplines by discerning in them the lineaments of the *Logic*'s structure. Many were given as lectures and only published posthumously. (See *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. 1956; *Philosophy of Right*, 1821, trans. 1942; *Aesthetics*, trans. 1975; *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 1817, trans. 1970–5; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. 1892–6).

The most significant of the later works are the *Philosophy of Right* (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*) and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which have had a disproportionate influence on Hegel's received image. On their evidence Hegel has been seen as an apologist for Prussian militarism and, even, as an incipient Fascist. These claims are based on various statements, for example, 'What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational', which appear to place established power beyond criticism. Such remarks should be set in context, however. Certainly, Hegel believes that whatever exists – and thus any existing political structure – has its place in a divinely rational scheme of things. But this does not make him an unreserved apologist for authority; if Caesar is the embodiment of historical destiny, so too is Brutus.

Yet it must be admitted that the 'rational' state described in the *Philosophy of Right* strongly resembles Prussia. Moreover, Hegel is open to two serious theoretical criticisms.

The first concerns the theological dimension of his view of history – his claim to have provided a demonstration of its beneficent, providential character. Even if Hegel succeeds in showing, as he claims to, that events which seem to be purely evil (the sufferings of innocent children, for example) are necessary for some desirable end, this does not, it can be objected, justify them theologically. To accept the sort of reasoning which justifies evil as part of the price which must be paid for good would be to accept that the realization of God's purposes is subjected to the constraints of necessity; implicitly, the divine is reduced to the human level.

The second criticism is sociological: to the idea of authority in the rational state. Hegel is committed to the view that social authority will be acknowledged directly and spontaneously by the state's citizens. (The alternative, a fully explicit justification, can only be provided at the level of philosophy; but not all the state's citizens can be expected to be philosophers!) Yet it can be objected that hierarchical societies of the sort Hegel envisages do not show such natural and spontaneous cohesion.

These objections, in the hands of Kierkegaard* and Marx* respectively, have been the starting point for the two strongest surviving post-Hegelian intellectual movements. Soon after Hegel's death philosophers influenced by him divided into right and left camps. The right interpreted Hegel, as far as possible, in terms compatible with orthodox Christianity; the left argued that the truth of Hegelianism lay in a critique of theology. Something like the ideas of the Hegelian right were embodied in the movement of British Idealism at the end of the century. Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche* were all, in different ways, successors of the Hegelian left.

Philosophers outside the Marxist and existentialist traditions have tended to regard Hegel's system as, at best, a mausoleum of misplaced ambition. Although Marxists and existentialists have been more sympathetic to Hegel, they have seen little value in the commitment which Hegel himself regarded as paramount: to a universal, philosophical conception of rationality. Hegel was aware that the scientific progress of the Enlightenment had at the same time led to a loss of meaning from other areas of life. But he was no romantic; he did not seek to return to a world of myth and poetry. Only knowledge would heal the wound it had opened.

Michael E. Rosen

Most of Hegel's works have been translated (see references in text). The modern translations are very good, although unfortunately not mutually consistent in their rendering of key terms. The best comprehensive study is Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (1975). Its lucid presentation makes it also the best introduction. H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (1955), and A. Kojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1969), are outstanding interpretations from a Marxist and an existentialist perspective respectively.

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HEINE, Heinrich 1797–1856

German poet

Heine is a Romantic and a Realist, a master of lyrical music and of ironic dissonance, a committed satirist and a doubter of all commitment – a deeply divided mind reflecting the complexity and conflicts of his age.

To be born in 1797 meant being brought up simultaneously in two worlds, that of the Romantic literary imagination, devoted to folksong simplicity, fairy-tale fantasy and a mistily perceived Germanic medieval past; and that of modern society, commercial and ideological, seeking stability after the upheavals of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars in a phase of reactionary politics. The one world was as uncompromisingly hard as the other was seductively soft; they offered a choice of real and unreal, between which no compromise was possible. Heine first learned the Romantic poetic game, to the point of mastery; in the *Buch der Lieder* ('Book of Songs', 1827) he revelled in manipulating its rhymes and rhythms and images, and in treating its stock themes, wistfully erotic or macabre. But even in the earliest poems, dream and visions are followed by rude awakening. Soon he begins to undo the Romantic illusion, changing tone and register or stepping cynically outside convention to show the falseness of his own artefact. Yet debunking of a superseded mode is not the whole story, this is not gleeful, literary satire: the disillusion is painful, because the poetic world he undoes is the only one avail-