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Spreading Hegel's Wings II

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Hegel

by Raymond Plant
Indiana University Press, 214 pp., \$7.95

Hegel's Political Philosophy

edited by Walter Kaufmann
Lieber-Atherton, 179 pp., \$2.95 (paper)

Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives

edited by Z.A. Pelczynski
Cambridge University Press, 246 pp., \$15.50

Hegel's Philosophy of History

by Burleigh Taylor Wilkins
Cornell University Press, 196 pp., \$7.50

Hegel's Theory of the Modern State

by Shlomo Avineri
Cambridge University Press, 252 pp., \$4.95 (paper)

Introduction to the Reading of Hegel

by Alexandre Kojève, edited by Allan Bloom, translated by James H. Nichols Jr.
Basic Books, 287 pp., \$8.95

The Young Hegelians

by William J. Brazill
Yale University Press, 305 pp., \$13.50

The American Hegelians: An Intellectual Episode in the History of Western America

by William H. Goetzmann
Knopf, 327 pp., \$15.00

From Marx to Hegel

by George Lichtheim
Seabury, 248 pp., \$3.95 (paper)

In the first part of this article I discussed the current state of opinion about Hegel, his relation to previous philosophy, in particular that of Kant, and went on to consider his theory of knowledge or method and its most grandiose application in his general metaphysics. I concluded that recent studies of his account of the universe in general, even Ivan Soll's very good one, had not succeeded in making clear what Hegel took the relations of Nature and Spirit to be, in particular whether Spirit should be conceived as something like the God of theism or rather as human mentality taken as a collective whole. I turn now to the application he makes of his dialectical method of reason to the specifically human subject matter of society, politics, and history. Here its implications are very much clearer and, if there has been vigorous controversy over what precisely they are, the issues in

dispute, I shall suggest, are within reasonable distance of being settled.

Raymond Plant's *Hegel* does for Hegel's social philosophy very much what Soll's book does for Hegel's metaphysics. I mentioned earlier that for Plant Hegel's social philosophy cannot be understood abstracted from his metaphysics, but the relevant part of the metaphysics is the theory of knowledge or method rather than the theory of God, man, and nature. Plant has something to say about the latter but it has a secondary role since he sees all Hegel's thought as rooted in his social and political experience. In general he sees Hegel's mature philosophy as the culmination of a process of reflection set in motion by a pained awareness of the incoherence and division within men's personalities and between men in society, taking the form of nostalgia for the ancient Greek ideal in which

men were not divided into public and private beings, and where state, society, and religion were fully integrated.

Plant stresses the influence on the direction of Hegel's thinking of Stuart's *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*, which convinced him of the social and psychological importance of economic change. The emergence of commercial, industrial, urban society had deepened the divisions between and within men, and intensified the problem of reestablishing coherence. Yet the process, with its division of labor and of classes, is irreversible. It is a social parallel to the cosmic alienation of men from nature. Where the latter is to be overcome by a metaphysically transfigured religion, the former is to be cured by the state as Hegel conceives it—and to effect the cure he required a strong state.

An issue that emerges here, which Plant does not seem to me to deal with, is that while cosmic alienation seems eliminable by thought, by the transfigured conception of man's place in the total scheme of things supplied by Hegel, actual political change seems required for the reintegration of society. Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* appear to imply that Hegel's theories (i.e., "previous philosophy") are a sort of analgesic pill which makes everything look all right. How far is this correct? How far is right thinking about actual social circumstances enough to show that they are all right, or are shortly, and inevitably, going to be? Hegel's conception of the state included a hereditary monarch, a universal bureaucratic class, functional representation by estates, largely free but supervised activity of "corporations." In so far as this conception deviates from the actual, is it something men ought to seek to realize or is it going to be realized anyway?

In his final chapter Plant does indeed raise this and a number of other fundamental questions under the highly appropriate heading, "Transfiguration or Mystification?" and concludes that Hegel's claim that the modern state is truly "universal" is not really borne out. But the crude question of what is Hegel actually up to—is he prescribing, predicting, or describing—is never forthrightly posed.

Most recent discussion of Hegel's political philosophy in the English-speaking world has taken the form of concrete polemical argument for and against the view that Hegel is to some extent responsible for Wilhelm II and the First World War and for Hitler and the second. The apparent message of Hegel's political theory is that law and the interest of the state transcend and override morality and the interests of the individual. Hegel's "realism" about war and about the domination of historical epochs by particular states seemed to some a theory fitting such manifestations of German *Kultur* as the invasion of Belgium, the atrocities inflicted on Belgian civilians, and the punitive burning down of the University of Louvain. This line of argument began with L. T. Hobhouse's *Metaphysical Theory of the State*, an attack on the English Hegelian Bosanquet, motivated by the death of Hobhouse's son in battle in the Kaiser's war. The issue was revived by a debate between T. M. Knox and E. F. Carr in 1940 on Hegel and Prussianism.

This and a further debate of the mid-1960s between Shlomo Avineri and Sidney Hook are the main pieces in Walter Kaufmann's collection, *Hegel's Political Philosophy*. This is a lively collection of essays, more in the nature of hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets than the more usual long-range artillery exchanges of scholarly controversy. A faintly irritating feature is the partisan intrusiveness of the editor, who embellishes the contributions of Carr and Hook (for whom Hegel is, broadly speaking, a beastly Hun) with nagging footnotes. Knox is perhaps more successful in arguing, against Carr, that Hegel was not servile than in arguing that he was not a might-is-right worshiper of the state. Similarly Avineri makes a persuasive case that Hegel was a supporter of rational government rather than a nationalist of the ethnic-cultural variety. But Pelczynski makes less headway against Hook's other charge that he was a bureaucratic authoritarian rather than any sort of liberal.

Both sides to the disputes which Kaufmann referees are equally firm in their rejection of the full fury of Karl Popper's case.² Popper makes Hegel out to be a nationalist, a racialist, a militarist, and an adherent of the *Führerprinzip* by hyperbolic

extrapolation of the much milder positions he actually holds. Hegel did think that states should not be bits of dynastic property but should be associated with coherent communities; that in each epoch there is a nation that dominates the scene (but culturally rather than politically); that war is both inevitable and an engine of progress (agreeing on this second point with Popper's paradigm of political enlightenment, Kant); and he assigned a historic role to Great Men. But he was certainly no fascist. He favored constitutional monarchy with representative institutions, not inspired heroic leaders; he supported autonomous corporations; he lauded reason not intuition; he held art, religion, and philosophy to be "higher" than the state.

One virtue of Kaufmann's collection becomes clearer when it is compared with Z. A. Pelczynski's similarly named anthology, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives*. Its thirteen essays were specially written for the occasion, a fact that reveals itself in a certain stodgy resolution, an air of heavy breathing, that attends a good many of them. Pelczynski does something to undermine the view that Hegel was in the ordinary sense a state-worshiper by pointing out that by "state" he means not the government but the whole organized community; K. H. Ilting uses Hegel's idea that a satisfactory system of law must rest on a shared moral consensus, that civil liberty can prosper only in conjunction with public-spiritedness, to make a suggestive criticism of liberal-individualist accounts of law; W. H. Walsh is agreeably informative about Hegel's philosophy of history, pointing out its extremely Eurocentric character and arguing that Socrates and Luther are the heroes of the Hegelian historical pageant (for inventing morality and bringing the Middle Ages to an end, respectively); R. N. Berki has a good essay on Marx's criticisms of Hegel.

What is very noticeable about many of the essays in the Pelczynski collection is an excessive tolerance toward Hegel's intellectual extravagances that is a widespread feature of writings about him. Everybody knows rather demure and censorious people who number among their friends some drunken and lecherous rascal whose outrages of conduct are genially indulged. He can get away with throwing up at the dinner table, while others are ruthlessly

condemned for minor infractions of propriety. Historians of philosophy tend to treat Hegel with an uncritical benevolence that they would never extend to Locke or Mill. I am thinking here not of the moral defects alleged by such critics as Popper, Carritt, and Hook, but of the extreme unintelligibility of much of what Hegel wrote. Of course shrewd *aperçus* do float by on the surface of the murky torrent of Hegelian verbiage. But few dare to take this particular bull by the horns and suggest that the whole quasi-logical apparatus of "deduction" and "necessity" and "contradiction" is no more than a dense incrustation of baroque ornament or, to vary the image, a kind of pastoral idiom in which often interesting opinions are presented.

Burleigh Taylor Wilkins's *Hegel's Philosophy of History* is a conspicuous example of this kind of treatment. It is not that he is uncritical: he is not inclined, he says, "to campaign for the 'resurrection of Hegel's immanent teleology.'" But his doubts do not have their proper consequences. "Failure to accept a position or perspective does not prevent us from appreciating the significance of the position or perspective in question or from making various uses of it." But this is altogether *too* reasonable. It is not so much that Hegel's larger principles "fail to secure acceptance": they are very often absurd or unintelligible. The only thing to do is to ignore them and concentrate on the intelligible and discussable bits.

This is, in effect, the strategy of Avineri's *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*. A highly, but never oppressively, learned book, it is a brilliant feat of demythologizing. Throughout, the more abstruse and ethereal aspects of Hegel are either simply ignored or else translated into concrete, socially realistic terms, a procedure whose conspicuous success amounts to a quiet criticism of the grand panoply of the system. As a result, Hegel the political theorist is presented, despite his own efforts to conceal the fact, as a man with a coherent system of definite and perceptive things to say about the political life of mankind, past and, above all, present. The magnitude of this labor is nowhere revealed by any detailed recapitulation of the interpretative process or any brow-mopping asides of the what-Hegel-seems-to-be-getting-at-here variety. It emerges only in the startling contrast between Avineri's

main text and the corresponding footnote citations of bits of Hegel's own prose. Avineri is the Jeeves of the Absolute Idea. To Hegelian equivalents of such Woosterisms as "dash it all, a conk on the noggin is a bit of a facer" he responds with something like "I agree, Sir, that a sharp blow on the head is a cause for concern."

Of course something does get lost in this laundering out of everything but practical good sense. I should be tempted to describe it as the philosophy. What Avineri offers amounts to the comments on the political experience and present political needs of mankind, couched in pretty general terms, of a learned general historian. There is nothing much in the way of rigorous argumentative structure, only an early-nineteenth-century equivalent of the pregnant asides of A. J. Toynbee or W. H. McNeill. Avineri parenthetically justifies this by saying that Hegel's modernity is shown in his shift of concern from the problem of legitimacy to that of historical change. But that is not just a change of interest; it is a change of subject. Furthermore, even when demythologized, Hegel's theory still has implications for the central issue of legitimacy. Even when Hegel's view that the individual finds his true reality as a citizen is translated into the view that in modern industrial society the state must take on an altogether new kind of supremacy it still adds up to the thesis that the individual has only the rights that the state confers on him.

Avineri draws on the whole range of Hegel's political writings, not just the *Philosophy of Right* and the early political essays that have been recently translated, but, most crucially, on his first systematic political writings of the period 1802-1806, culminating in the Jena *Realphilosophie*. Here, more fully than in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel develops his ideas about the social and, in particular, economic changes of his own era, which require a new kind of state. In his emphasis on Hegel's concern with the inevitable class differentiation and consequent social problems of industrial societies, Avineri brings Hegel closer to Marx, tunneling from the other end toward all those recent commentators on Marx who have sought to bring him closer to Hegel.

There is a quietly persistent polemical intention behind the level surface of Avineri's exposition, that of undermining the conventional Western liberal account of Hegel's politics, the Hegel you love to hate described by Russell and Popper. According to Avineri Hegel was not any sort of ethnic or cultural nationalist (indeed he entirely failed to recognize the force of nationalism in the age that followed his own); he was not a statist since he insisted that the economic life of civil society, religion, and private morality should be independent of the state, although he thought that the state should counteract self-interest both institutionally by the mitigation of poverty and by developing public-spiritedness in ideas; he was not a militarist, although he saw that war is the great testing device for the unity and integration of states.

Hegel emerges at the end as a more worldly version of Bosanquet, endorsing educated and incorruptible bureaucracy and the great social reforms of the British governments of the mid-nineteenth century. Avineri does, it seems to me, establish beyond doubt that Hegel was not a totalitarian, racist, or fascist. But he still remains, despite Avineri's denials, pretty much of an authoritarian. The representation of public opinion that he provides for is more a safety-valve for the information of the real bureaucratic rulers than an ultimate control over law and policy.

What is also put beyond question is the fact that Hegel was no toady to the Prussian state that employed him (although, as Avineri points out, for anyone of a toadying bent there were few states more worth toadying to than the progressive, fairly liberal Prussia of Stein and Hardenberg in which Hegel lived and which was very different from the military autocracy of Frederick William IV). His much criticized attack on Fries is put in the perspective of Fries's irrational, and wildly anti-Semitic, protofascism. In favoring representation and a merely symbolic constitutional monarch, he was far from endorsing the Prussian status quo which had neither. His last piece of political writing, an essay on the inadequacy of the British Reform Bill in face of the social problems of British industrialism, was censored by the Prussian authorities. Even if there are some more fiery sub-

stances in Hegel than the milk and water of which Avineri represents him as being composed, the monstrous Hun of liberal myth cannot decently survive this cogent and persuasive book.

The blurb on Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* describes it as the best book ever written on Hegel and as one of the few important philosophical works of the twentieth century. It is the content of lectures on the *Phenomenology* given between 1935 and 1939 and reconstituted by Raymond Queneau. Desultoriness and the glitter of philosophical chic are the dominating features of this humanistic, noncosmic reading of Hegel in the light of Marx and Heidegger. One can see that they could have been exciting to the audience to which they were addressed. But they have a tendency to evaporate on the printed page.

A much more accessible book is Hyppolite's *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, a somewhat boneless affair, whose smooth and elegant reasonableness comes over well in translation. Hyppolite holds that the early Hegel had a view of existence not far from that of Kierkegaard, that the French Revolution was the crucial event for him, posing all his problems. He saw it as the first real attempt to reunite the fragments into which man or Spirit had been broken by the collapse of the Greek city-state. He said of it, "a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation of the Divine and the Secular was now first accomplished." He believes that Lukács is broadly correct in considering the view that Hegel is basically a theologian to be a "reactionary legend." He argues that, in the *Phenomenology*, history and transcendental psychology distort each other, as Haym put it, and that Hegel's logic corresponds, in a loose and cryptic way, to the history of philosophy. There is a polished fluency about Hyppolite. Raw Hegelian matter is divested of its starkness and effrontery and put forward as the most reasonable thing in the world.

Two recent books consider aspects of Hegel's influence. Brazill's *The Young Hegelians* is of more general interest since the interpretation of Hegel it examines, leading as it did through one of its lines of influence to Marx, is essentially the interpretation that lies behind the work of Lukács, Kojève, and Hyppolite. Brazill begins by consider-

ing the Hegelian ambiguities from which the young Hegelians took off. Is his philosophy a justification or a replacement of Christianity? In some sense Hegel saw his own age as that in which philosophy somehow takes over from religion and for the young Hegelians that meant that Christ is not God, history is a secular process, not a sacred one, and that Spirit has reached a point in its development of self-consciousness at which it goes beyond Christianity. Most of them, although not Bauer and Stirner, saw nature as independent and objective. As Croce put it, they developed the implicitly immanentist or humanist drift of Hegel's fundamental thinking, even if Hegel himself was too bound to the Platonic tradition in philosophy and to Lutheran religion to detach himself wholly from the belief in something transcending the concrete world of nature and history.

Strauss, Feuerbach, the more visionary and speculative Bauer and Stirner, and the more political Ruge are discussed in detail. Generally, the young Hegelians were humanist exponents of action, remote from the resigned philosophico-religious contemplativeness of the later Hegel. The Prussian government saw what was going on. It suppressed the young Hegelians' papers, replaced Hegel's disciple in his chair by the more religious Schelling, sacked Bauer (and thus extinguished Marx's hopes of a university career). By 1843, twelve years after Hegel's death, with the collision of their philosophy with state-supported religious orthodoxy, the young Hegelians ceased to be an effective party or public force.

William H. Goetzmann's *The American Hegelians* is much more of a connoisseur's book. If the young Hegelians achieved little as an organized group they still gave rise to Strauss's Biblical criticism and Marx's social theory, things of large and continuing importance. Hegelianism in America requires a very powerful lens to be seen at all. Its loyal adherents among American philosophers were, for the most part, rather dim figures and its chief significance is as something against which the pragmatists reacted: William James against its late-nineteenth-century British form, Dewey against the variety of American Hegelianism in which he had been brought up and which left a lasting impression both on his prose and on his appetite for

unification and system. A Hegelian book had come out in America in 1840, but Hegel's philosophy was condemned as pantheistic in 1845 by the president of Oberlin College. Thirteen years later W. T. Harris, who was to become the first US commissioner of education, was converted to Hegelianism by an engaging figure called Brockmeyer who, arriving penniless, went on to make, and lose, a fortune, and who is pleasantly described by Goetzmann as "an intellectual Daniel Boone."

Based in St. Louis, Harris's *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* lasted from 1867 to 1893. An idealist tradition in academic philosophy runs from Harris through Palmer, Morris, and Howison to Royce, but the movement is more interesting as an element, a distinctly German element, in extra-academic culture, at odds with rugged individualism in its concern for the community. One adherent enthusiastically identified the Eads Bridge at St. Louis with the concrete universal. A beneficiary of the Hegelian character of the St. Louis school system was, Goetzmann observes, T. S. Eliot, a possible explanation of the Bradleyan leanings of Eliot's youth.

Where Hegel is most alive today is as an ingredient in the rethinking of Marxism, associated most closely with Lukács and the "critical theorists" of the Frankfurt school. One of the most active and enthusiastic exponents of this current of thought to the English-speaking world was the late George Lichtheim. The essays collected in *From Marx to Hegel* are largely concerned with the most up-to-date efforts to reincorporate Marx, freed from the positivistic and necessitarian dialectical materialism of Engels, in the great tradition of German speculative philosophy. These essays are informed and lively, communicating a marked sense of intellectual excitement, but some-how from a distance. There is a great flux of names, an equally copious array of assertions as to what Marxism is not, but in a curious way the central substance is missing.

What this really comes to is that for the Hegelianized Marxists of the present day there is a way of studying society that is not confined to the dispassionate registration of what is to be found on its observable surface, but which can penetrate to its inner essence and, in so doing, discern what ought

to be done from the very fabric of history itself, in other words, can arrive at a social theory which embodies the principles of a valid *praxis*. But Lichtheim, unlike the critical theorists he applauds, from Horkheimer to Habermas, seems never quite able to engage with this central issue as something in need of argumentative support. Insinuation, appeals to authority, heavy irony about the superficial character of the Anglo-Saxon mind are mobilized to bear a weight they cannot sustain. This guidebook is no substitute for the hard labor of an actual visit. But it is calculated to whet fairly persevering appetites.

There is a form of scholarly skill displayed by historians of ancient philosophy in their production of substantial treatises on philosophers of whose thoughts only a few broken, vatic sentences are left to us. It corresponds to the archaeologist's ability to infer a draped and breasted goddess from a sculptural fragment of an ear or a big toe. The inverse of this craft is needed with Hegel: the capacity to winnow through the great chaos of Hegelian and near-Hegelian words (for most of what we call his works consist of editorial additions from lecture notes) to bring out an intelligible and coherent residue. Avineri has brought this off, in the area where it would be most likely to succeed and where it is of greatest current interest.

Marxisant students have addressed themselves with the most sanguine enthusiasm to Hegel in recent years, repelled by what they see as the intellectual narrowness and ideological bad faith of orthodox analytic philosophy. It has been a case of out of the deep freeze into the cinder box. I keep hearing of young colleagues who have developed an interest in Hegel, but nothing audible or visible seems to come out of it. Some strong spirit should address itself to the cryptogram of Hegel's metaphysics, with Ivan Soll's clarity and concision, but at a greater critical distance. If it turns out, as I am inclined to expect, that Hegel's metaphysics is composed of all the dross in Kant, carefully purged of all his insights, that will at least ease the consciences of those who confine themselves to Hegel as a theorist of society and culture.

(This is the second part of a two-part article.)