

Graduate School) gave an electrifying assessment of Whitehead's struggle with 'dialectical logic' in the final transition to his mature 'atomist' position.

A revised collection of several of these papers will be published in 1985 by the State University of New York Press (Albany, NY), while others will appear in *The Owl of Minerva* and *Process Studies*. Together, these suggest the coming assimilation of Whitehead scholarship into a more promising and hospitable 'Continental' context, as well as indicating a new and healthy focus for ecumenical dialogue and exchange between Europeans and Anglo-American philosophers generally.

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The Young Hegel

The Sixth Annual Conference of the Hegel Society of Great Britain, 13th–14th
September 1984, St Edmund Hall, Oxford

THIS year's meeting discussed Hegel's writings up to but not including the *Jena Phenomenology* of 1807. Norbert Waszek's paper 'David Hume and the young Hegel' was read by Stephen Houlgate as Dr Waszek was absent lecturing in New Zealand. It was a scholarly historical tracing of the influence of Hume on Hegel dealing both with Hegel's acquaintance with Hume's thought via German historians and with his direct reading of Hume in the 1790s. Waszek argued that Hume, as historian, influenced Hegel's philosophy of history in three important ways: (1) Hegel made use of Hume in effecting the transition from Greek to modern culture; (2) Hume provided a prototype for Hegel's view that the totality of an action—described as including its unintended consequences—is not apparent to the agent. This apparently was an anticipation of the doctrine of the 'cunning of reason'; (3) Waszek claimed to find the origins of Hegel's concept of the world historical individual in Hume. Most of the discussion of the paper centred around the latter two issues. M. Petry, who chaired the discussion, emphasised the value of Waszek's research in the reconstruction of this period of Hegel's life and work.¹

The second paper, 'The character of the modern state in Hegel's early writings', was read by Colin Lines (Thames Polytechnic). This was a clear and carefully argued

1. 'David Hume and the Young Hegel' is an extract from Dr Waszek's University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis. The paper is being published by the journal *Clio*.

paper concentrated mainly on *The German Constitution*² and the 1802 paper on *Natural Law*. In the first of these Hegel discusses the sorts of state he wishes to exclude from the concept of the 'modern state' and also distinguishes states in general from other sorts of human organisation. In the second Hegel makes his radical break with the natural law tradition in a way that anticipates the *Philosophy of Right*. Lines showed how Hegel uses different, e.g. moral and religious criteria to mark the distinction between states and other sorts of social organisation. Hegel reaches a definition of 'state' by excluding those features not essential to it. So, a state need not be a community based on a common religion; it is not necessarily composed of a single nation; and it is not the expression of 'the marginal will of an administrative bureaucracy'. During his Jena period (1801–7) Hegel seems to have thought of the state as a 'community of needs' where human association derives from the satisfaction of material wants. Lines briefly traced this idea back to feudal society. Hegel thought the state could not function without some administration but he rejected the model of a 'machine state' embodied in the Prussia of Frederick the Great, the French Republic and in the theoretical socialism of Fichte. The conditions for the minimally justifiable state were fulfilled according to Hegel if persons were united in the common defence of property. On this point, and in Hegel's making sovereignty the defining characteristic of the state, Lines saw parallels with Hobbes. 'State' was defined in the end as 'supreme public authority over persons on a territory'.

Lines drew an interesting parallel between Hegel's view of the state as an organic whole and Hegel's holistic metaphysics. At various stages he compared Hegel with Constant, Humboldt, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Bradley and Oakshott. The discussion was mainly about the extent to which it was true that Hegel actually rejected Kant's categorical imperative or whether he just regarded it as an incomplete principle for ethics, to be integrated into his own account.

David Krell (Essex) read 'The oldest fragment towards a system in German idealism'. Krell presented a translation of this fragment³ which, although written in Hegel's hand, is the subject of a longstanding debate about authorship. If the piece was authored by Hegel then it is of enormous interest to Hegel scholars and it raises deep and complex philosophical issues in its own right, e.g. whether the whole of metaphysics might be subsumed under moral philosophy; whether the world exists just at the same time as oneself and for oneself as a free self-conscious being; and whether this co-genesis of self and world might be the only conceivable creation *ex nihilo*. To deal with such questions the author would like to 'lend wings to physics'. The fragment includes criticisms of the machine state, remarks on history, reason, God and the Idea. Interestingly 'the idea that unifies all' is called 'the idea of beauty' where 'beauty' is to be understood in a 'higher, Platonic sense'. Krell thought it most

2. *Die Verfassung Deutschlands* and many other early writings discussed at the conference are usefully collected in the paperback G.W.F. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971.

3. See *Mythologie der Vernunft: Hegels' ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*, C. Jamme and H. Schneider (eds.), Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1984.

likely that the allusion was to the *Phaedrus*, not the *Republic*. In any case, the author of the fragment regards beauty as a synthesis of truth and goodness. The fragment ends by advocating a new democracy where a rational mythology will be a religion shared by philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Under this religion there will be no suppression but universal freedom and equality. This, the author predicts, will be 'the very last and greatest of humanity's works'.

Krell explained the history of attempts to decide the authorship of the fragment. The consensus among leading Hegel scholars in the 1960s was that Hegel himself is the most likely author. This has been claimed by Otto Pöggeler (1965), Klaus Düsing (1969) and by H.S. Harris (1972).

Robert Bernasconi (Essex) read 'Faith and Knowledge', which dealt with Hegel's essay of that title. Bernasconi identified the central problem of Hegel's philosophy as the reconciliation of successive philosophical systems. A new approach to the history of philosophy was needed to do this, and the *Critical Journal* which Hegel edited was designed to provide this. Traditional criticism was destructive and one-sided in that it simply opposed the object of criticism. Hegel proposed a new sort of criticism: philosophy as unity under the Idea. *Faith and Knowledge* was Hegel's largest contribution to the *Critical Journal* and should not be read in the manner of the old criticism. According to Bernasconi, it is read as a sort of sourcebook for Hegel's attitudes to his predecessors and so is assimilated to the very idea of critique it is designed to repudiate. A better technique is to read it to try to discern Hegel's method of reading his predecessors. Bernasconi himself decided to use a deconstructive method of reading Hegel.

This involved finding what he called a 'double' or 'duplicious' reading of Kant, Jacobi and Fichte by Hegel. Bernasconi emphasised the distinction between *system* and *speculation* and showed how the texts Hegel reads become significant in the 'play' between those two concepts. On this reading, Fichte's work for example emerged as an authentic product of 'speculation' yet was still 'dogmatic' because in it the absolute was still reduced to the finite. Here Bernasconi pointed to a recurrent theme in Hegel's thought: to oppose an object of criticism is in a sense to remain subservient to it. For example, in Fichte, one pole of an opposition is nullified and the other raised to absolute status, and this really amounts to a failure to overcome the opposition. Hegel's remedy is the suspension of opposites in the process of 'Aufhebung' so that in the Idea finite and infinite are one. Neither exists in abstraction from the other and the Idea is indifferent towards both. A similar treatment of infinity can be found in Hegel's reading of Spinoza which, in *Faith and Knowledge*, is designed to supersede Jacobi's reading of Spinoza.

Finally Bernasconi posed a question: Is Hegel free of the charge of remaining within oppositional thinking? And; in his attempt to escape this does Hegel nullify the divine in raising knowing to the level of the absolute? Bernasconi thought Hegel did pay this price for absolute knowing. Divine transcendence vanishes in the death of God. But, Bernasconi argued, Hegel had qualms of conscience about this. He ended by saying

that *Faith and Knowledge* was open to this 'double reading' and that this was how we should read Hegel.

H.S. Harris (York, Toronto) read 'Hegel and Hölderlin'. This was a most scholarly and meticulous reconstruction of the relations between the two thinkers, which arose out of retrospective thoughts on some of his earlier major work on Hegel.⁴ Harris in fact shed much light not only on the Hegel-Hölderlin relation but also on Hegel's views on Schelling, Kant, Rousseau, Jacobi, Spinoza and Fichte. Harris argued that Schelling really deceived himself about Hegel stealing his ideas. Harris identified Hegel's early reading of Kant as an attempt to defend Plato. This was one of several points where Harris detected a strong community of interests between Hegel and Hölderlin. Both were interested in defending Plato. Both were interested in Rousseau. Both were profoundly steeped in Greek civilisation; they were in fact both 'Hellenists'. Sophocles was another strong bond, as was their common escape from clerical professionalism. Finally, they were both 'apostles of the return to nature in the Greek sense', Hölderlin 'embodying' this idea.

Harris drew important parallels between Hegel's method of overcoming opposites and certain views of Hölderlin. Hölderlin's God for example is designed to supersede or overcome the oppositions between freedom and necessity and thought and being. Both authors inherited much of Jacobi's philosophical vocabulary in doing this. Harris's paper thus had implications for nearly every aspect of Hegel's system, but was perhaps especially interesting for the *Philosophy of History* and the *Logic*.

At the annual general meeting it was announced that Professor Plant is retiring as chairman of the society. A new chairman will be elected in 1985. Also discussed was the possibility of a joint meeting of the HSGB with the Hegel Society of America. Although proposed for autumn 1986 at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia it was thought more feasible on financial grounds to invite the Americans to England (as in 1981). A third possibility, mooted by Bernard Cullen, was holding the 1986 meeting in Ireland.

It was agreed at the AGM that the topic of the next conference would be Hegel's political thought, concentrating on the *Philosophy of Right*.

Stephen Priest

4. Especially his *Hegel's Development*, Oxford, 1972.