

HEGEL

(Historical, Dialectical Idealism)

Kinds of History

(As a disciplined study/historiography)

- Original: Written of own time
- Reflective: Written of a past time, through the veil of the spirit of one's own time
- Philosophical: Only possible in Hegel's time, as the spirit of his time holds within it/understands the spirit of all other times. It allows for an understanding of events within the larger context of human progress

Idea/Freedom/Reason

(These are all very similar)

(1) *The Idea*: The abstract notion of freedom as self-conscious being for oneself, and how it exists practically in the world. (The notion that human beings are properly beings for themselves). Also: people become more self-conscious of this through history. Each age has some conception of this idea, but only in Hegel's time is it matured.

Freedom: The idea that works throughout history.

Reason:

- (1) The abstract notion of freedom. Self-conscious being for oneself
- (2) Its practical substantiation in the world: the modern state

(2) *Philosophy/Reason* is contemplating what is – rather than understanding eternal nature (à la the ancients) – so we never have access to the eternal through philosophy. Philosophy is always historically based. “The rational is actual and the actual is rational.” -Philosophy is historically confined: What is rational is simply what is. (A theodicy of sorts)

(3) *Responding to two conceptions of reason*:

- (1) Reason developed in Greece: Anaxagoras and abstract reason. This is reason divorced from the historical content of the meaning of reason. (And as such is incomplete.)
- (2) (Christian) notion of providence: This notion is aware that there is some kind of plan, but make the claim that we cannot understand God's plan (this would be presumptuous) – we only have faith and feeling. Hegel argues we can understand this plan, because it is grounded in the human/the spirit.

More Concepts

(1) *History* (as progress, rather than as historiography) is the process by which freedom becomes realized. Everything that exists is rational because it displays an (immature) level of awareness of freedom. This is a theodicy of sorts. (History as dialectical progress, thesis-antithesis-synthesis)

(2) *Geist* (the Idea, particularized): What has been made by a given people in a particular epoch. The cultural institutions (totality of thought and product) of men. (This is set up against nature). Each people has a particular *geist* whose substance is their culture; in history, there is a progressive development of *geist* to more fully realize freedom/the Idea. Hegel saw 'spirit' or *geist* – the totality of human life and activity – advancing.

(At each stage of its unfolding, spirit finds itself in contradiction with what it has itself produced, which now confronts it as something alien. Philosophy reflects on this alienation, and overcomes it through this reflection. This is how spirit (and humanity) creates itself.)

(3) *The Modern State*: An ethical community (the totality of institutions/cultural products and thought that represent a people) – the *sittlichkeit*. This is not a constitutional state, as understood in the early liberal or contemporary modern state, but something much larger. We properly realize our freedom in an ethical community – this is a positive conception of freedom, and not a negative conception of the role of the state as with Hobbes and Locke. The state is not only an arbiter but allows us to be fully human. The political is central for Hegel.

The modern state makes possible the reconciliation of freedom understood on both the particular level (individual as being for himself – negative liberties) and the universal level (the state as built around the principle of freedom, allowing for positive achievement). Hegel was worried about the development of self-interest/partisan interest (as with Rousseau). He wanted an independent civil service that would balance out the selfish needs in society. He considered the 19th century constitutional monarchy of Prussia ideal. (Unlike with the ancients, this is actualizable, not purely a standard or ideal.)

In this he seeks to show how modern state power, rationally understood, reconciles the contradictions of 'civil society', that is, bourgeois society. The state/*sittlichkeit* indicates that there is freedom/common good above these 'interests.'

NB. Three institutions:

- Family: Feeling and natural love, pre-historical. Doesn't recognize free will.
- Civil society: Negative freedom, antagonistic interests.
- The State: Universality, the solution. The mechanism by which universal freedom/reason and particular freedom/reason reconciled, and the Idea is achieved.

(4) *The Status of World-Historical Figures*: People that represent historical epochs (ie. Napoleon, Alexander): they are great men, but how do we justify their questionable actions and human suffering more generally? Ultimately, we must judge these movements and these men according to how they developed the progress of the Idea, the development of freedom/reason through history (even if they weren't fully conscious of their philosophical actions themselves). Their violent standards are not moral in the usual sense, but are justified under the ethics of the Hegelian philosopher of history. (Again, this is a theodicy; these world-historical men are a key motor of change/progress.)

General Concepts – A Review

- Rights: No fundamental/inalienable human rights
- Equality: Not a central concept
- Freedom: The central (progressing) concept: self-conscious being for oneself.
- Human Nature: Is changeable through the ages; the attainable ends are not constant, though there is some conception of a telos/essence (only achievable in Hegel's time).
- State of Nature: Not a central concept
- Virtue: Not really – perhaps folded into freedom/reason
- Justice: There is a sense of progress and individual freedom, so perhaps there is justice here – but it is not natural/inalienable justice. Freedom, reason, human nature, justice are all dependent on the historical context/development of the spirit in a given epoch.
- Purpose of the State: The state is central for Hegel, as the unity of particular and universal freedom and a central arena for the achievement of the Idea.

MARX

(Historical, Dialectical Materialism)

On Freedom, Essence, Rights

1844 (Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts)

(1) Species Being (vs. animal) – something like the human essence.

- Consciousness of (laboring) essence in action
- Consciousness of other consciousnesses – a link between species
- Man's action/labor on nature produces culture (in products)

(Like Hegel, humanity creates itself, but through material labor rather than the action of the spirit and the work of philosophy)

(2) Moments of Alienation:

- Man from product (because you sell the product)
- Man from laboring activity/essence
- Man from species being (the essence)
- Man from the species – from other men.

(3) Criticizing modern conceptions of rights and liberty: The notion of rights (wrongfully) places the emphasis on mere existence and the preservation of the individual, rather than on life. It removes the distinction between (animal) existence and living in a human sense, and makes labor a means only for existence rather than for essential living. Modern liberty is only negative liberty – freedom from harm by others and also freedom and alienation from others more generally; it is based on division of the species.

On the Jewish Question (1843)

(1) Marx equates Judaism here with economics and commerce, and with the private sphere more generally. The Jewish population in Germany at the time requested that their private rights – including both economic and religious rights – be respected. Marx argues that ‘rights’ and religion are one and the same: both are products of a given political-economic system related to the division of social life into private and public spheres.

(2) Marx argues that liberal rights presuppose this division. ‘Property rights’ are no more than the right of selfishness – as such they are privilege to be granted (wrongfully) rather than a right to be demanded. Religion and liberal rights are egoism posing as universality. He then says that ‘Judaism’ (ie. The public/private split and rights of religion/property) – liberal rights – is the secret center of Christian society. (And yes, these are key tenets in the modern (largely Christian) state).

(3) Human emancipation requires an end to the division between man as an egoistic being in civil society and man as an abstract citizen of the state – as such it requires us to ‘rid the world of Judaism.’ Marx argues that ‘true rights’ – ie. human emancipation/non-alienation – are impossible with a religious/private sphere identity, as the separation of the private into another realm carries with it the alienation of man.

Historical Materialism, Economics and Politics.

On the German Ideology (1845-46)

(Marx’s materialist conception of history)

(1) History is driven by the interaction of the forces/modes/relations of production (the base). This gives rise to the socio-political structure (the superstructure), and the ideology of a time and society arises from this superstructure. The ruling forces of production (crystallized in a social class) will promulgate the ruling ideology, which will lead to the general consciousness of the time. This consciousness is false consciousness, not the consciousness of one’s (laboring) essence in action.

Note that Marx retains from Hegel the concept of dialectical, progressive history, and the notion that human’s make their own history (he was a ‘Young Hegelian’). But he criticizes Hegel’s understanding of philosophy/spirit as the motor for history, rather than labor/material forces.

(2) The division of labor in society allows this false consciousness to move to abstraction (give rise to ethics, ‘philosophy’, etc.). It also allows for the rise of particularistic group interests and the public/private split (vs. communal consciousness).

(3) True liberation will arise out of the historical conditions.

- The ruling class makes the general consciousness
- This ideology will come into conflict with the forces of production and lead to class conflict and revolution, giving rise to new (more advanced) relations of production and the new superstructure associated with it, and so on...
- Eventually, this process will destroy the market and production system, and lead to human emancipation.

Capital (1867) ("Later Marx")

(Marx's science/political economy)

(1) Surplus value: There something intrinsic to the act of production that is taken away by the capitalist as surplus value, to make a profit. By definition, then, capitalism is alienative/exploitative because it expropriates from the worker the fruits of his or her production. This surplus value – or capital – is at the heart of the capitalist system, and allows the capitalist system to expand.

(2) Commodity fetishism: To 'fetishize' is to take only one part of something and consider it the whole. In the capitalist system, a commodity has both (1) use value and (2) exchange value. We no longer understand the use value of products, but only their exchange value – and relatedly we don't recognize that there are other humans who create and use them.

This seems to draw on the moments of alienation Marx discusses in the 1844 Manuscripts. Man's relations with others and his relation to his own essence are abstracted into a relation between products. Relations between humans are fetishized into relations between commodities, and humans see other humans as mere commodities.

-NB. Like Locke, Marx presents a labor theory of value: The worth of the product depends on the labor added to nature.

-NB. Early Marx's language of species being drops out of later Marx.

The Communist Manifesto (1848)

-History thus far has been the history of class struggle

-The capitalist state and society, in creating and expanding the proletariat, dig their own graves. There will be the exploitation of this one part of society until it leads to the communist revolution.

-The revolutionary importance of the proletariat: "Workers of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

-NB. Elsewhere (other speeches in the Reader), he is more pragmatic, recommending some work within the existing socio-political framework rather than revolution.

IV. More Concepts

- Rights: Not in the liberal sense. More a conception of freedom than right. (like Hegel)
- Equality: Through species being (rather than through fear). Marx moves away from the early liberals (Hobbes and Locke in particular) in that he de-emphasizes the position of fear and the search for security in leading to political life.
- Freedom: Non-alienation, emancipation from both material servitude and false consciousness
- Human Nature: The essence of man: consciousness of laboring essence in action (species being). But often we are alienated from this. (NB. This is more early Marx)
- State of Nature: Not really relevant – always existed in a political society
- Virtue: Not really relevant
- Justice: Not explicitly noted, but presumably to emancipate humanity (justice as a political rather than an individual concept)
- Purpose of the State: The state is just part of the superstructure/ideology. There isn't a state in the communist society – the achievement of communist society is the end of the political. (Marx is very vague on what this society will look like, how it will be run, etc.) Marx's critique of Hegel partially argues that both the state argues that both civil society and the state are alien to a truly human life.
(Of course Lenin has some answers to this question...!)

Questions on Hegel and Marx

How different is Marx's conception of species being from Hegel's conception of spirit (as the totality of human activity)? How do these differences ground their different philosophies?

In what ways is Hegel an 'idealist'?

He asked, "What does Marx mean by species-being? What does he want to accomplish with that idea and why?" When I stuttered on the "why" question he said "how" and then we were off talking about internationalism and allegiance to class, etc.

What generates class consciousness in Marx?

What is relevant about Marx for today? Do you think the Marxist project has been discredited?

What is Marx's critique of Hegel?

How is Marx's understanding of the 'inevitability of history' similar to Kant's – or what is Marx's position in his own conception of history and progress? – it seems that this a historical(ly inevitable) process, but he needs to catalyze class consciousness to move it along.

Her next link started by saying that some people criticize Kant for being ahistorical. Do you know who made this criticism and do you agree?

What is Hegel's conception of history?

We then went into civil society (there was something about whether the arguments I had made also had a structural basis and about the structures of civil society).

We also talked a lot about the importance of unity, both for Plato and for Hobbes, Rousseau, and Marx, and the negative effects of partial associations.

He then asked me why, if modern thought is characterized by a concern with unity, that we normally think of it as pluralistic. That led to a discussion of Mill, Hegel, and a little bit of Locke.

Talk about Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and anyone else you want with respect to methodology:

- Should we read all their works? Why not read only their later works?
- Should we look for continuities in their works?

(... I guess you don't need to know what Seyla asked me, since I think no one else would ask about Hegel. We talked about Hegel and Marx for 15 min.)