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Political Writings

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G. W. F. HEGEL

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EDITED BY

LAURENCE DICKEY

Professor of History, University of Wisconsin–Madison

and

H. B. NISBET

Professor of Modern Languages, University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Sidney Sussex College

TRANSLATED BY

H. B. NISBET

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Contents

Editors' note

Although this volume has been a joint endeavour from the beginning, each of the editors had special tasks to perform in assembling the volume. The translation was the work of H. B. Nisbet, who has also used the translator's preface and the glossary to explain some of the finer points of rendering Hegel's difficult German into English. The general introduction was written by Laurence Dickey, who was also responsible for the chronology of Hegel's life and career and the editorial notes. Laurence Dickey, however, is greatly indebted to H. B. Nisbet for the many contributions he generously made to each of these parts of the book. Indeed, H. B. Nisbet not only provided suggestions and information that considerably improved the editorial notes but also commented extensively on various drafts of the general introduction. His observations on these drafts – as to style and to the structural balance of the argument – proved immensely helpful.

Laurence Dickey and H. B. Nisbet would respectively like to express their thanks to two colleagues for their friendship and support over many years: they accordingly dedicate this volume to Marc Raeff and Hans Reiss.

General introduction

In 1964, T. M. Knox and Z. A. Pelczynski published their well-known edition of what they called Hegel's 'minor' political writings.[1] They claimed that these writings were 'a most valuable supplement' to Hegel's major political work, the *Philosophy of Right* (henceforth *PR*). In addition, they saw the minor works as in some ways providing 'a clearer insight into Hegel's basic political ideas' than *PR*, a work which, they noted, was filled with metaphysical arguments, esoteric vocabulary, and obscurities associated with Hegel's life-long commitment to the ideals of speculative philosophy. By contrast, the minor writings were 'relatively free' from the jargon of metaphysics and addressed in plain language 'topical political issues' of the day. The down-to-earth quality of these works, in turn, prompted Knox and Pelczynski to present them as journalistic pieces that showcased Hegel's talents as a 'publicist'.[2] If, in that capacity, Hegel could be seen struggling with practical rather than metaphysical problems, then so much the better for appreciating his realistic political outlook.

On a deeper level, though, Knox and Pelczynski wished to use the writings in their edition to introduce students to a more 'liberal' Hegel, one whose ideas were more in line with the mainstream of western political thinking.[3] This Hegel, they argued, while certainly not absent from *PR*, is clearly on display in the minor political writings, for in these, he reveals himself as a supporter of constitutional government and as a critic of absolutism, autocracy, and reaction. To bolster this thesis, Knox and Pelczynski show how, in the minor writings, Hegel was 'the resolute opponent of . . .

étatisme' from the beginning to the end of his career, from the essay on *The German Constitution* (henceforth *GC*, pp. 6–101 below), begun in the late 1790s, to the essay entitled *On the English Reform Bill* (henceforth *ERB*, pp. 234–70 below), published just before his death in 1831.

The stress here on the long-term continuity of development in Hegel's political thinking is important, because it calls into question the conventional view of him as having become the philosopher of the reactionary Prussian state after 1818, the year in which he assumed the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, Prussia's new but most prestigious university.[4] On the basis of the minor political writings, Knox and Pelczynski seek not only to correct the misconception of Hegel as a reactionary but also to draw attention to what they call the 'rational' core of his political philosophy.[5] Going further still, they argue that, once we recognise that Hegel was a 'champion of political rationality', it is incumbent on us to treat him as a western-style political thinker rather than as a thinker who upheld the values of 'Prussianism'.[6]

To make this line of argument convincing, Knox and Pelczynski have to play down two crucial aspects of Hegel's political thinking, both of which, they contend, are 'metaphysical' and can be found prominently displayed in *PR* as well as in sections of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (henceforth *PH*). On the one hand, in *PR*, Hegel consistently discusses the modern state in terms of his 'general theory of ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*). On the other hand, he insists in *PH* that the emergence of the modern state is inseparable from a growing realisation among certain groups of Protestants that *Sittlichkeit* fulfils religious as well as political needs in the modern world. As Knox and Pelczynski see it, this mixing of religious and political values in the concept of *Sittlichkeit* results in a theory of the modern state that is metaphysical. It is their contention that Hegel's minor political writings, by way of contrast, show him to be a practical and pragmatic thinker who 'can be read, understood, and appreciated without having to come to terms with his metaphysics'.[7]

Viewed in this way, Knox and Pelczynski's edition of the minor political writings seems to offer more than just a 'supplement' to our knowledge of Hegel's political ideas. Rather, its aim seems to be to make him appear a more liberal, rational, and mainstream

political thinker than he has been taken to be in the past. But they are able to do so only by explaining away the metaphysical dimension of his political thought, especially as it relates to the idea of *Sittlichkeit*. The present edition of his political writings is informed by the converse view that any attempt to rehabilitate Hegel's political thought by ignoring its metaphysical aspects will necessarily be one-sided and unsatisfactory.

After all, as J. Ritter has observed, Hegel knew very well that his conception of *Sittlichkeit* was to a large extent grounded in 'metaphysical' assumptions and was part of a long tradition of philosophical thinking in which the political sphere functioned as a point of mediation between universals and particulars, wholes and parts, divine things and human things, and so on.[8] But in Hegel's judgement, the boundaries of the political sphere were becoming so narrowly drawn in his own age that citizens were on the verge of becoming depoliticised. In this context, he wished from the 1790s on to recall citizens to public life and civic engagement by identifying the political sphere, with the help of his own metaphysical theory of the state, as a point where human beings can aspire to higher things. And he proposed to do so mainly by using the idea of *Sittlichkeit* to stretch the boundaries of the political in directions that would permit him to bring religious and ethical considerations into the political sphere.

It is for this reason, of course, that Hegel has been accused of 'transposing politics to the metaphysical plane'[9] and condemned – especially by liberals – for mixing religious and political values in a way that deified the state in relation to society and to individuals.[10] But whereas liberals tend to believe that *Sittlichkeit* plays an instrumental ideological (i.e. metaphysical) role in the subordination of 'individual rights' to the 'superior rights of the state',[11] Hegel in fact envisaged *Sittlichkeit* as an ideological tool for extending the scope of citizenship from the private to the public sphere. In this respect, one of the great shortcomings of Hegel scholarship is that it has been so convinced that *Sittlichkeit* is an anti-liberal conception that it has forgotten the challenge which the philosophy of *Sittlichkeit* posed to that reactionary alliance of throne and altar that dominated Prussian public policy during the Restoration.[12]

In the light of these considerations, this volume seeks to give students of Hegel's political ideas access to texts which do justice

to the *metaphysical* as well as the *practical* aspects of his thinking. To this end, five of the texts included in this volume (discussed in part II of the introduction below) show in detail why Hegel became a philosopher of *Sittlichkeit* and what practical problems he thought could be addressed, perhaps even resolved, by means of this concept. At the same time, our volume includes three texts (discussed in part I of the introduction below) in which he adopts a comparative historical perspective on the evolution of feudalism in Europe in order to examine current political conditions in several of the major European states. The three texts in question are not metaphysical, and they do not feature *Sittlichkeit* as their organising principle. But these texts, especially *GC* and *ERB*, are extremely interesting because they show Hegel drawing conclusions about political life in the modern world from remarkable comparative analyses of recent political developments in England, France, and Germany.

In this general introduction we provide an overview of some of the major themes Hegel develops both in his more metaphysical and his more practical political writings. Both groups of writings are important for developing a historical understanding of his political ideas. We refrain, therefore, from using the labels 'major' and 'minor' to characterise these writings, for no useful historical purpose is served by privileging one group of writings as against the other. As a matter of presentation, however, we discuss the practical essays first because, in his own manner of thought-progression, Hegel liked to proceed from historical-empirical to philosophical-metaphysical concerns.

I The European states in comparative political perspective

Although Hegel devoted much attention throughout his life to developing a metaphysical view of political life, he also engaged in more practical political commentary. Indeed, four of his political works fall into this category – the fragment of a 1798 pamphlet entitled *The Magistrates Should be Elected by the People* (henceforth *M*); *The German Constitution* (*GC*; 1798–1802); the equally long essay on the proceedings of the Estates Assembly in Württemberg in 1815–16 (1817; henceforth *PWE*); and *On the English Reform Bill*

(*ERB*; 1831). Of these, two testify to Hegel's abiding interest in the political affairs of his native Württemberg; one tries to explain the relationship between state and society in England by examining the politics of the English Reform Bill from a unique non-British perspective; and one, while explaining the breakdown of the Holy Roman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, offers a remarkable analysis of the historical processes which, according to Hegel, accounted for the different paths of political development followed by England, France, and the German states in early modern European history.

In some respects, these four pieces, three of which are translated here,[13] all try to identify institutional and cultural obstacles to what Hegel regarded as truly political reform in the modern world. For example, in *M*, he tries to find an institutional mechanism in Württemberg through which initiatives for responsible political reform could flow. But in whichever institutional direction he turns, he discovers good reasons for pursuing his political objectives by other means. Thus, as he surveys the political landscape in Württemberg, he becomes uneasy about leaving the responsibility for reform either in the hands of government officials (even if they are enlightened) or in the control of the various Councils of the Württemberg Estates.[14] At the same time, he expresses reservations about the wisdom of empowering the people to make such decisions.[15]

Given his perception of ever-narrowing institutional options, Hegel proposes to revitalise public life in Württemberg in a relatively new and progressive way: by politicising citizens through 'publicity' (*Publizität*). Since the 1780s, reform-minded Germans had advocated publicity – i.e. the dissemination and public discussion of information relative to the public good – as a means of raising public consciousness concerning political matters. In *M*, Hegel endorses this view. And by suggesting that 'enlightened and upright' (p. 5 below) citizens should actually form themselves into a citizens' association which would operate outside of Württemberg's official political institutions, he also underlines the need for citizens to create associations among themselves through which they could participate in the decision-making political process. He thereby develops a view of political associations which had already been common among German political reformers since the 1760s. *M* is important in this respect because it shows how, in certain

circumstances, the inertia of public institutions frustrated political reformers in Germany to the point where they had no option but to identify extra-political groups (Hegel's 'body' of citizens) as agents of the public good. This attitude, as it turns out, is responsible for much of the discussion in the twentieth century about the supposedly 'unpolitical' Germans.[16]

In *GC*, Hegel continues to emphasise the need for citizens to be actively involved in German public life (pp. 23, 96, 98 below). In his view, such action must involve their participation in the exercise of rulership (pp. 22–3 below). It is not enough, he argues, for citizens to pay lip-service to the abstract cultural ideals of cosmopolitanism or to endorse the utopian political ideals of revolutionary democracy. Nor, he adds, should they measure political participation in terms of a 'theory of happiness' (*Glückseligkeitslehre*) or eudaemonism whereby civil liberties are expanded by the government in exchange for the citizens' acquiescence in the government's wishes in all political matters. Indeed, like some 'republicans' of the German Enlightenment, Hegel associates civic engagement with the exercise of political liberty rather than with enhanced civil liberty.[17] In accordance with this view, he holds up to citizens the ideal of the *Staatsbürger* (p. 22 and 277 n 25 below) – that is, the ideal of the citizen who understands that sharing in and promoting the public good constitutes not only the mark of a mature citizen, but of a truly civilised people as well.[18] It is true, as Rudolf Vierhaus has pointed out, that the patriotic discourse of the late German Enlightenment encompassed a wide range of meanings,[19] many of which downplayed (if they mentioned it at all) the importance of active participation by the citizens in the political decision-making process.[20] But as Vierhaus suggests, if the idea of the *Staatsbürger* called citizens to active civic engagement, it did so without supporting the extension of suffrage to everyone. From what Hegel says in *GC*, we can see that, for him at least, patriotic discourse did entail civic engagement for everyone.

In *GC*, Hegel reveals his commitment to participatory government in two important ways. First of all, like the enlightened German patriots of the late eighteenth century, he uses a discussion of the feeble political condition of the German Empire to emphasise the need for more 'public spirit' (*Gemeingeist*) among Germans.[21] He develops this point in a remarkable way, for he relates the

decrepit political condition of the Empire to the stages by which feudalism had evolved as a system of social organisation in European history.[22] Proceeding historically, he draws attention to three features of feudalism: (1) it had once been the common form of social organisation in Europe and Britain; (2) it gave impetus to the emergence of representative government in Europe and Britain; and (3) it had Germanic origins, arising 'in the forests of Germania' as he puts it in *GC* (p. 63 below). Secondly, he then explains how the interplay between various historical forces in feudal societies – especially in the domains of law, property, and politics – led to different systems of government in France, England, and the states of the German Empire.

In the end, his point is that, while feudalism degenerated into despotism in France (p. 65 below) and into an institutional system of controlled political anarchy in the German Empire (p. 57 below), it evolved under different circumstances in England into a constitutional form of government – a system of representative government (i.e. limited monarchy) – which, as Montesquieu had noted, showed great flexibility in maximising the liberty of citizens in ever-changing economic circumstances. Following Montesquieu (who appealed to German thinkers for this as well as other reasons),[23] Hegel argues that German liberty found its most mature political expression in England. Accordingly, in *GC*, he sees valuable political lessons for the Germans in English constitutional history.

Hegel's discussion of the evolution of feudalism as a social and political system originates and culminates in celebrations of Germanic liberty. This allows him to take pride in his German heritage, while at the same time associating himself with modern English political institutions and values. This strategy – whereby he depicts England as a fellow 'Germanic' community – helps us to locate his position in the political landscape of the 1790s. For as it turns out, his admiration for England's political institutions is not only close to that of Montesquieu but also mirrors a view of England proclaimed in Germany by the so-called 'Hanover Whigs' during the closing decades of the eighteenth century.[24]

In the 1780s, for example, these Hanoverians had praised English constitutional liberties in order to encourage German princes to moderate their rule and to initiate a range of English-style reforms, many of which demanded that the economic interests of non-landed

groups as well as landowners be represented in government.[25] In addition to asking for a more representative government throughout the system of German states, the Hanoverians (e.g. Ernst Brandes) had also complained bitterly about the way in which absolute princes in Prussia and Austria had turned their states into 'machine states', with the result, as Brandes puts it, that these states had lost their character as organic communities.[26] In *GC*, Hegel reiterates many of the points which the Hanoverians had made before him.

If *GC* has many affinities with the pre-revolutionary political outlook of the Hanoverians, it also voices complaints about the French Revolution which echo those articulated by the Hanoverians throughout the 1790s. Hegel's view in *GC* is that the Revolution not only polarised European political discourse but forced a false political choice upon citizens, insisting that they choose between absolute tyranny on the one hand or absolute freedom on the other. He registers his dissatisfaction with this political choice by expanding on the idea of the 'machine state' (pp. 21–5 below).[27]

Hegel had addressed the issue of the machine state several times in the 1790s.[28] Early in *GC* (p. 22 below), he associates this idea with Prussia – just as the Hanoverians had done. However, in the course of the 1790s, he became persuaded – perhaps by Friedrich Schiller[29] – that the revolutionary state in France also exhibited the qualities of a machine state. So, in *GC*, he adds France to the list of machine states, thereby collapsing the political differences between revolutionary French democracy and Prussian absolutism (p. 25 below). Both forms of government, he now proceeds to argue, are inappropriate ways of dealing politically with the increasingly fragmented (i.e. 'atomised') character of modern life; he indeed declares that the machine state is the political correlate of modern atomism.[30] This argument, of course, enables him to present himself as the voice of moderation between political extremes. The Hanoverians had done much the same thing in the 1790s.

In 1831, reacting to the political debate in England over the Reform Bill, Hegel revisits several of the themes which he had earlier discussed in *GC*.[31] In *ERB*, which he published shortly before he died, his main concern is to show how a large part of the agricultural class in Britain failed to become property owners during the 'transition from feudal tenure to property' (p. 248 below). This development, he notes, created socio-economic problems in Britain, for, without the protection of certain provisions of the old feudal

law, agricultural workers were dependent for their livelihood on the ability of economic markets to absorb them as free labourers.[32] Given the growing European awareness of the cyclical character of market production patterns,[33] which Hegel had become aware of in the late 1810s,[34] the gloomy prospect of agricultural workers becoming a permanent pauper class was, in his and others' judgement, a disturbing possibility.

In *ERB*, Hegel uses the depressed condition of the propertyless agricultural class, which was a European as well as a British phenomenon, as a point of departure for analysing the Reform Bill. How, he asks (p. 239 below), will the Reform Bill enable Parliament to respond to the pauperisation of Britain's rural population? It is significant that he does not simply allow English supporters and opponents of the Reform Bill to answer this question for him, for neither group, he reports, has taken much interest in the plight of the agricultural workers. Instead, he first frames the question in comparative historical terms and then puts it to the English political class in the light of the way in which the 'civilised states on the Continent' (pp. 239, 264 below) had responded to the social distress of agricultural workers in their own countries. This comparative procedure, which he had used to great effect in *GC* to discuss the evolution of feudalism in Europe and Britain, produces one of the principal themes of *ERB*: namely that, in comparison with the continental countries, England is politically backward in matters relating to the 'material rights' (p. 255) of its citizens.

This evaluation of England, of course, stands in sharp contrast to that which Hegel had developed in *GC*. Perhaps with his own earlier celebration of English constitutional liberty in mind, he says in *ERB* that Europeans had once been 'impressed' (p. 238) by the way the English government had been able to maximise the liberty of the citizens by constantly balancing and adjusting the claims of positive law *vis-à-vis* the private rights of groups and individuals. Throughout *ERB*, however, he contends that, in the course of the eighteenth century, the constitutional balance in England had shifted significantly – to the detriment of the monarchy and to the advantage of the long-standing privileges and private rights of particular propertied groups.[35]

On the basis of their property, Hegel observes, these groups are both represented in Parliament and control it. In this respect, he says, propertied interests in England represent a 'class' in

Parliament – a class, however, which is not without its own internal tensions between its agricultural and commercial components, as well as between financial and manufacturing interests within the commercial group itself. Although he draws attention to these tensions within the English political class, he treats them as less important than the fact that the propertied class as a whole seems to be quite indifferent to the material well-being of the propertyless agricultural workers (pp. 254–6 below). In these circumstances, he thinks, the depressed economic and psychological condition of the bulk of the rural population in England will not be addressed by political means – that is, through the agency of the Reform Bill. In fact, he believes that the 'non-recognition' of the material rights of the propertyless will turn social paupers into political revolutionaries.[36]

According to Hegel, the continental states had reacted in a more responsible way to the pauperisation of their agricultural workers. They had been able to do so, he argues, because of the concerted efforts of a group of dedicated and well-trained civil servants who, while working through the due power of their respective monarchs, developed social legislation that provided state assistance to those whose well-being had been adversely affected by the transition from feudal tenure to property. Indeed, like many German liberals of the 1820s and 1830s,[37] Hegel thinks it is incumbent on the state to accept some responsibility for ensuring the material rights of all citizens.

Throughout the 1820s, he associates this kind of state-sponsored interventionism with what he calls the 'police' (*Polizei*) function of government.[38] He does not, of course, wish to restrict the function of the state to matters which involve only the material needs of citizens – which is why, in a lecture of 1824–5, he limits the focus of 'police' legislation to questions of welfare and physical need as distinct from those which involve *Sittlichkeit*.[39] But just because he separates the welfare and ethical functions of government does not mean that a state which takes heed of the material well-being of its citizens has achieved its end in a teleological sense. On the contrary, Hegel's expectation is that, to enable civilised people to realise themselves fully as human beings, states must help their citizens to form themselves into truly ethical communities. It is, however, the English government's lack of an ameliorative 'police' function that induces Hegel to depict England as politically backward in compari-

son with the legislative achievements of the civilised states of the Continent.[40] But since neither England nor the continental states had, in his opinion, yet reached the level of *Sittlichkeit*, he refrains from talking about that realm – the ethical life of the state – altogether. As we shall soon see, this was despite the fact that *Sittlichkeit* was very much on his mind at the time when he wrote *ERB*.

Obviously, this criticism of English political institutions stems, in part, from the comparative perspective which Hegel brings to his analysis of the Reform Bill. But throughout *ERB*, he also criticises the English political class more directly, faulting it both for the (false) 'pride' (p. 251) it allegedly took in its own private rights and for the excessively narrow and self-serving way in which it reduced political questions about the common good to economic questions about what was good for the particular interests of particular individuals within Britain's propertied class.[41] In the past, he concedes, the English had been right to take pride in the rationality of their political institutions (p. 238 below), especially in the way in which those institutions defended private rights against encroachments of the absolute state. In the face of changing historical circumstances, though, that pride had impeded the promulgation of legislation which would address the socio-economic distress of Britain's agricultural class.[42] Just as the Germans had once had to overcome the illusions they had formed about themselves as a unified people, so now the political class in England had to see that social justice in modern market societies occasionally requires the state to abridge the private rights of some for the sake of a more comprehensive social justice.[43]

Throughout *ERB*, Hegel suggests that, in the absence both of a strong monarchy and of any inclination on the part of the government to improve the training of civil servants, and in the absence of any commitment by the middle class to extend voting rights to non-propertied groups, England's political class will fail to respond to the social situation of the pauper class. It would be wrong to interpret this concern as evidence of any desire on Hegel's part to have 'persons' rather than 'property' represented in Parliament.[44] This certainly is not his intention. (Nor was it the intention of many liberal reformers in England in the 1820s.)[45] But, as he had already noted in the 1790s in the face of lessons drawn from the French Revolution,[46] if governments fail to minister to the needs (i.e.

'material rights') of impoverished citizens, then those citizens, when driven by 'external necessity' (p. 251 below), will sooner or later not only seek non-political ways to achieve social justice for themselves but will do so in the name of those 'formal principles of abstract equality' (p. 255 below) which had underpinned radical French thinking on the rights of citizens since 1789 (pp. 264–70 below). In this context, Hegel speculates, citizens who are not represented in Parliament will eventually find voices among politically ambitious 'new men' in Parliament to articulate the concerns of the propertyless in the language of 'French abstractions' (p. 265 below). This combination of political ambition and social distress, he fears, will lead to revolution rather than reform in Britain.

Although Hegel invokes the civilised states of the Continent as a means of exposing the myopic political vision of the English ruling class, it would be wrong to assume that he is recommending the 'police state' as a model for Britain to emulate. On the contrary, his argument unfolds within a conceptual framework in which four types of modern political regime are either discussed or alluded to: (1) the *laissez-faire* regime of liberal political economy; (2) the interventionist regime of qualified liberalism; (3) the political regime of French revolutionary democracy; and (4) the ethico-political regime of *Sittlichkeit*. In his view, the first, second, and fourth types constitute an evolutionary pattern which moves modern societies on towards true liberty. The third type, by way of contrast, interrupts that progression; and it is the failure of the first type of regime to transform itself into the second that paves the way for the third type to emerge in history. In this respect, Hegel sees the regime of *Sittlichkeit* as the mature expression of a liberal progression in history and the French Revolution as a threat to liberal values rather than an agent of them. To understand why he holds that view, we need to examine the idea of *Sittlichkeit* more closely.

II Hegel as a philosopher of *Sittlichkeit*

The origins of Sittlichkeit *in Hegel's early writings*

That the concept of *Sittlichkeit* plays a major role in Hegel's political philosophy is beyond dispute. As is well known, it is central to the argument of *PR* (1821), his greatest political work, and it figures prominently in *PH* (1827–31), especially in the section included in

this volume (pp. 197–224 below). To understand how *Sittlichkeit* came to command so much of Hegel's attention it is necessary to look at his long-term development as a political thinker.

First of all, it is important to realise that the concept of *Sittlichkeit* is already present in his so-called 'early theological writings'.[47] In these writings, which he composed between 1793 and 1800, he studies the civil history of religion in the ancient world, especially among the Greek, Roman, and Jewish peoples. He himself emerges as a religious optimist who believes that Christianity has the potential to become what he variously calls a 'rational' or 'virtue-' or 'public' or 'folk religion'.[48] By these designations, he means to suggest that Christianity is a religion that asks individuals to assume responsibility for acting ethically in the world. This is especially true, he says, if one's view of Christianity is based on what he identifies as the 'religion of Jesus' (*die Religion Jesu*) as distinct from the 'Christian religion'.[49] The latter, he argues, is a 'private religion';[50] the former is a religion of *Sittlichkeit* that was optimistic about the capacity of human beings both to cope with sin and to realise the 'spark' of divinity which God had originally implanted in them. Given these premises, Hegel says, Jesus expected Christians to carry Christian principles into the world through their ethical actions, forming communities of religious fellowship in the process. In the language of the religious history of Christianity, Hegel could be said to view the latter as an 'ethical religion' whose task was to persuade Christians to strive for perfection in their individual and communal lives. *Sittlichkeit* is the word he often uses in the early theological writings to give ideological focus to this conviction.[51]

Secondly, in the early 1800s (just after he started to teach philosophy at the University of Jena), Hegel begins formally to organise his thinking around the idea of *Sittlichkeit*. He does so most conspicuously in his essay on *Natural Law* (henceforth *NL*; pp. 102–80 below), a work which he published in two instalments in 1802 and 1803. In this essay, he announces his intention of becoming a philosopher of *Sittlichkeit*. In so doing, he makes comments on *Sittlichkeit* that anticipate arguments which he develops later in *PR* (e.g. on the differences between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*). Not for nothing has *NL* been described as the 'first philosophy of right'.[52]

Although Hegel scholars have long been aware of the importance of this essay, the pivotal role which it plays in the development of Hegel's political ideas has not always been fully appreciated. For

one thing, if *NL* is read in the light of Hegel's earlier religious arguments concerning *Sittlichkeit*, then it becomes clear that the philosophy of *Sittlichkeit* expresses in new terminology the optimistic view of human nature which he had developed in his earlier theological writings. For example, at a number of places in the latter (as well as at several places in the present volume), he grounds his optimism regarding human nature, and the capacity of human beings to form themselves into communities of fellowship, in the 'fact' that God created human beings in his own image and likeness.[53] From this 'fact', Hegel derives the notion that human beings have a spiritual essence which, with God's help, they can cultivate – but only if they are of a mind to do so. As they are more or less successful in this endeavour, they become more spiritual, more mature, and more capable of Christianising the world through their ethical actions. Or – to use another of Hegel's formulations from the 1790s – by striving for ethical and spiritual perfection in their lives, human beings begin to 'approach' God.[54]

In *NL*, Hegel struggles to find ways to express this optimism about the human spirit (*Geist*) in philosophical terms. To achieve this end, he develops a distinction, insisting throughout the essay that human beings are not initially formed 'by nature' for what they are meant to be 'by nature'.[55] On the still deeper philosophical level of ontology, he sometimes registers this distinction in *NL* by differentiating between 'existence' and 'essence'. In the case of the individual, the latter represents potential being, the former immediately existing being. At other times, he equates the idea of existence with the 'subject' and the idea of essence with a 'substance' that is immanent in the subject but has not yet been either developed in the subject's self-consciousness or translated by the subject into ethical action in the world.

Whatever the terminology, the point of philosophy for Hegel in 1802–3 is twofold: to 'awaken' human beings to what is immanent in them (i.e. to their *Geist*);[56] and to urge them to organise their communities in accordance with this immanent substance which, when externalised, becomes *Sittlichkeit*.[57] In other words, subjective individuals have to realise themselves as ethical substance in the external world – to think of themselves, that is, not as isolated existential beings with immediate natures but as communal beings with spiritual natures.

Two pivotal arguments of *NL* follow from this. Firstly, the philosophy of *Sittlichkeit* implies that human beings can realise their communal natures only when they begin to envisage themselves as spiritual rather than as natural beings. This explains why Hegel talks so much in this essay about the externalisation of inner dispositions (e.g. ethical intuitions, rational spirit, ethical reason, ethical nature) and about the differences between the 'natural' and the 'ethical'.

Secondly, Hegel indicates in *NL* that the impulse towards *Sittlichkeit* involves an elevation and expansion of consciousness which reveals the shortcomings of a life lived in accordance with the Kantian doctrine of *Moralität*. Indeed, as Hegel sees it, *Moralität* is a sophisticated form of philosophical subjectivism which, while undoubtedly high-minded, ultimately contributes to the isolation of human beings from one another.[58] For this reason, he offers *Sittlichkeit* as a corrective to *Moralität* on the grounds that, in the final analysis, *Moralität* is inimical to community (i.e. in the terminology of *NL*, it is *unsittlich*). In this respect, the movement from *Moralität* to *Sittlichkeit* that is so central to the arguments of *NL* and *PR* is governed by the same concerns that induced Hegel to identify *Sittlichkeit* as an agent of religious fulfilment in the early theological writings. Throughout the writings in the present volume, he indicates again and again that *Sittlichkeit* as religious *praxis* is related to the transformation of *Moralität* into *Sittlichkeit*.

Sittlichkeit *and Protestantism in the development of Hegel's political thinking*

If, as we have seen, the discussion of *Sittlichkeit* in *NL* foreshadows much of the argument of *PR*, then *PR* registers Hegel's intention of making *Sittlichkeit* an agent of Protestant religious fulfilment as well. Nothing like this can be found in the writings from the early Jena period.[59] Indeed, during the early Jena years (1801–3), Hegel connects Protestantism with religious and philosophical values that were, for him, alarmingly subjectivist in nature, scope, and purpose.[60] As we have seen, he deliberately develops his conception of *Sittlichkeit* in *NL* as a corrective to moral subjectivism in philosophy; and from some of his other writings of 1801–2 we learn that he also believes that *Sittlichkeit* provides a communal religious

alternative to the privatising and atomising tendencies of Protestantism.[61] There is even evidence in these other writings that he considered *Moralität* to be the philosophical expression of Protestant subjectivism.[62] Thus later, when he declares in the Preface to *PR* that Protestantism is destined to become the agent of *Sittlichkeit* in the modern world,[63] he commits himself to becoming a philosopher not only of *Sittlichkeit* but of Protestantism as well. This development means that there is discontinuity as well as continuity between *NL* and *PR*.

In the light of Hegel's embracing of Protestantism and his willingness to put the Protestant 'principle' at the centre of his conception of *Sittlichkeit* as essential to modern freedom,[64] the present edition of his political writings includes four texts that testify to the increasing importance he attached to Protestant values in his discussions of *Sittlichkeit*, the modern state, and the philosophy of history. These texts, two of which have never before been translated into English, all date from his so-called Berlin period (1818–31) – the time when his philosophy was in the ascendant in Germany in general and throughout the Prussian educational system in particular.[65]

As these texts confirm, Hegel develops during his years in Berlin a theory of the modern state in which Protestantism becomes a political ideology through the agency of *Sittlichkeit*, and *Sittlichkeit* becomes an agent of Protestant religious fulfilment in the course of Hegel's various reflections on the philosophy of history. For students of his political ideas, this means that the philosophy of *Sittlichkeit* can no longer be grasped by studying *PR* alone. Indeed, despite its monumental character, *PR* should not be viewed as the culmination of Hegel's development as a thinker. Rather, in keeping with the trajectory of his political thinking in Berlin, it is more accurate to see *PR* as the beginning of a project in which he tries to explain the political interplay between Protestantism and *Sittlichkeit* in terms of a philosophy of history in which the modern state occupies a central place. It is in fact in his reflections on history that he develops an agenda for political change in Europe as well as in Prussia; and *Sittlichkeit* is the point on which his meditations on history, politics, and religion converge.

The first of the texts in question is the *Inaugural Address* that Hegel delivered in 1818 at the University of Berlin (henceforth

BIA; pp. 181–5 below).[66] Although it has never before been translated into English, it has drawn the attention of Hegel scholars for several reasons. For some, *BIA* offers proof of his servility before the idol of the Prussian state and of his willingness to act as a spokesperson for its reactionary religious and political policies.[67] Others have interpreted *BIA* as an integral part of an ambitious effort by a group of liberal reformers in the Prussian bureaucracy to develop a mental culture in the university which would offset attempts by political forces on the right and the left to shape the direction of education in Prussia's leading university.[68] Still others see *BIA* as aimed at philosophical subjectivists (e.g. J. F. Fries) who, Hegel thought, had debased philosophy by reducing it to matters of mere feeling.[69] Finally, some read *BIA* as a call to the young people of Germany to become more engaged in public life[70] – first through their achievements in education (*Bildung*) and then by applying what they have learned about 'the ethical power of the spirit' (*die sittliche Macht des Geistes*) to public life.

For our present purposes, what is intriguing about *BIA* is the way in which Hegel argues for Germany's emerging supremacy in European philosophy. Although he had held this view since at least 1802,[71] he clearly regards his call to Berlin as part of this broader European pattern of cultural development.[72] To this end, he uses *BIA* to outline a fourfold agenda for the cultivation of philosophy and the sciences in Germany.

Firstly, as part of his life-long antipathy towards subjectivism, he pleads for a shift in the focus of philosophy from 'feeling' to 'thinking'.[73] Secondly, he identifies the university as the particular place where, among other things, people can begin to think seriously and freely about the universal, essential, and spiritual substance of 'ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*).[74] Next, he suggests that Germany has become the custodian of the 'sacred light' of philosophy at this particular moment in history because the 'world spirit' (*Weltgeist*) demands emancipation from the 'religious', 'philosophical', and 'ethical' shallowness of French thinking.[75] (Though he does not say so in *BIA*, he states in 1817, in *PWE*, that the movement of philosophy from France to Germany has a political dimension which involves defining political rationality in terms of *Sittlichkeit* rather than 'atomism'.[76]) Finally, he is convinced that, as philosophy shifts from France to Germany, the 'spiritual culture' (*Geistesbildung*) of Europe

will become not only more German but more Protestant as well. For him, this means that education and learning will be less Catholic (i.e. 'hierarchical' and 'closed') and more open to 'laymen' (*Laien*) and to critical ways of thinking that are essential for the cultivation of the sciences.[77]

If *BIA* held up high-minded ideals for Prussia and Protestants to aspire to in 1818, Hegel's Latin oration of 1830 on the tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession – now for the first time translated into English (henceforth *AC*; pp. 186–96 below) – again appears to extol the 'cause' of Prussian and Protestant values. But the political circumstances in which Hegel delivers *AC* are very different from those that existed in 1818. For while there were few signs in 1818 of the coming political and religious reaction, by 1830 an alliance of throne and altar dominated the Prussian state, ensuring that a reactionary religious and political agenda would be at the centre of public life in Restoration Prussia. It is well known that the various groups that had formed this alliance (e.g. orthodox Lutherans, neo-Pietists, and advocates of 'feudal theology' and the 'ideology of patrimonialism') distrusted Hegel as much as he disdained them.[78] Given this mutual suspicion, which surfaced in Prussia as early as 1818,[79] the question to ask is this: is the 'cause' which Hegel promotes in *AC* the alliance's or his own?[80]

To answer this question, we need to bear three things in mind. Firstly, by 1820, shortly after his arrival in Berlin, Hegel wrote the famous Preface to *PR*. In this Preface, he continues his assault on subjectivism by reiterating the need to shift the focus of philosophy from feeling to thinking.[81] In so doing, however, he adds a religious dimension to the discussion, arguing that, in Protestantism, feeling stands to thinking as an immature Lutheran attitude towards religion stands to a mature Hegelian one. As the Preface reveals, Hegel uses the progression from feeling to thinking to exhort Protestants to turn their inner-directed piety outwards – towards *Sittlichkeit* and civic engagement.[82] Throughout *AC*, he underscores this point. It could not have gone down well with either the orthodox Lutherans or the neo-Pietists, both of whom encouraged inner-directed piety and embraced what Hegel called Luther's doctrine of 'faith in feeling'.[83]

Secondly, the 1830 oration's repeated references to Protestantism as a 'lay' religion are designed to operate on two different rhetorical

levels. On the one hand, Hegel shows that Luther's doctrine of conscience and his understanding of 'subjective freedom' abolished priestly control of Christianity by Catholics. On the other hand – and here Hegel draws on arguments he had developed in the 1790s[84] – he implies that orthodox Lutheranism had itself fettered the spirit of Protestant religious freedom in order to preserve the letter of orthodoxy. As was the case with Catholicism before it, this 'positive' form of Lutheranism cut Protestants off from free access to God by denying them the capacity to realise in their ethical lives the 'spark' of divinity within them. Such an observation could not have pleased members of the alliance of throne and altar in Prussia.

Finally, *AC* illustrates how Hegel uses history to promote his own Hegelianised version of Protestantism's role in the modern political world. He does this in several ways. To begin with, he suggests that, as Protestants become more mature in a *spiritual* sense, their piety should become more ethically and communally focused in a *religious* sense. Secondly, he indicates that, while Protestantism had its origins in Luther's Reformation, the Lutheran doctrine of inner-directed 'subjective freedom' itself needed to be reformed – that is, it needed to be re-directed outwards before Protestantism could provide constructive 'principles of action' for the organisation of communal life in the modern world. Thirdly, he thereby associates himself with an older tradition of Protestant discourse which had raised questions as to whether the scope of Luther's Reformation extended to matters of 'life' (*Leben*) or was limited to matters of 'doctrine' (*Lehre*) alone.[85] For Hegel – and this is very clear in *PH* (pp. 197–224 below) – Luther's Reformation had succeeded admirably in reforming Christian doctrine by providing a religious sanction for subjective freedom (i.e. freedom of conscience); but it had fallen short of reforming Christian life. Thus, like others before him, Hegel distinguishes between a 'first' and a 'second Reformation'.[86] The first Reformation, he implies in *AC*, gives us the idea of 'freedmen' (*liberi*) in terms of abstract theory; the second Reformation demands that human beings become 'genuinely free' (*liberti*) in terms of the practice of piety in life. As Hegel understands it, *Sittlichkeit* is the agent of the latter, but not of the former.

Thus, at the end of *AC*, when he speaks of the Protestant 'cause', Hegel is referring to Protestant norms that were neither those of

Lutheran orthodoxy nor those of the existing Prussian state.[87] Rather, these norms expressed the values of a liberal Protestant humanist who, for religious and political reasons, wished to turn Lutheranism 'inside out' by insisting that subjective freedom can be realised in the world only through the agency of *Sittlichkeit*.[88] In this respect, *AC* calls on Prussia to complete the work which, in retrospect, Hegel thought the Reformation had begun.

Towards the end of *AC*, Hegel alludes to political developments in France. His comments follow remarks on how different the political histories of Catholic and Protestant nations had been in Europe in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In various of his Berlin lectures in the 1820s, he had devoted more and more attention to this theme,[89] the results of which can be seen in two other works from his late Berlin period included in the present volume: the famous section on modern history from *PH* (pp. 197–224 below), and the section on *The Relationship of Religion to the State* from the 1831 lectures on the philosophy of religion (henceforth *RRS*).

At the outset, it is worth noting that both of these texts contain material that Hegel added to his lectures after the Revolution of 1830 in France. This allows students of his political ideas to measure continuity and change in his political thinking before and after the Revolution.[90]

Of the two texts, *PH* is the more important. It shows Hegel developing a philosophy of history in which subjective freedom evolves historically into *Sittlichkeit* as the focus of Protestant piety shifts from doctrine to life and from feeling to thinking. His claim is that, in so far as Protestants act to realise *Sittlichkeit* in the world, they become progressively more free – both as citizens and as Christians.[91] Since increasing freedom is, in Hegel's judgement, part of God's plan for human salvation in history, he has no reservation about designating a political association – the state rather than society – as the sphere in which *Sittlichkeit* has to be developed in order for humanity to realise its divine essence in the modern world.

Obviously, Protestant values inform much of this argument. And scholars have been right to note that Hegel's conception of modern freedom unfolds in accordance with a Christian philosophy of history.[92] But with only a few exceptions, Hegel scholars have badly misconstrued how the Protestant aspects of his philosophy of his-

tory shape the story he tells about freedom's progress in the world as it advances from the Reformation through the Enlightenment to the French Revolution. The conventional view of his understanding of modern freedom has long been that (1) it starts with Luther's doctrine of religious individualism; (2) it is then shaped by the Enlightenment (i.e. secularised and rationalised) into a philosophy that celebrates the critical thinking of free, morally autonomous, and self-determining individuals; and (3) it culminates in the political individualism of the French Revolution.[93] In keeping with this, it has been said that Hegel regarded the French Revolution as 'a kind of political Reformation' because it gave priority to the exercise of private judgement in political as well as religious life.[94]

Now, this judgement may certainly be applied to Novalis, who in the late 1790s called the French Revolution a 'second Reformation'.[95] But whereas Novalis used the idea of a second Reformation to link the religious anarchy of the Reformation with the political anarchy of 1789, Hegel used the same idea to separate Hegelianised Protestantism from political anarchy. Therefore, to interpret him as if he were saying in a positive sense that the French Revolution was a kind of political Reformation is a serious error, for it makes it impossible to explain all the negative things which he has to say throughout his life about the subjectivism of Luther's Reformation, the abstractionism of the Enlightenment, and the unfreedom of the French Revolution. In addition, it overlooks his interpretation of the Reformation–Enlightenment–Revolution sequence as, respectively, the religious, philosophical, and political moments of a single process of 'atomisation'. Clearly, in his Berlin period, Hegel means to use the idea of a 'second Reformation' to distance himself from the atomising tendencies of each of these major historical events. So, far from seeing 1789 as marking the political fulfilment of Protestant freedom – which, instructively, was the basis of the French theocrats' charge in the 1790s that Protestantism was responsible for the anarchy of the French Revolution – Hegel identifies the 'second Reformation' simultaneously as an agent of *Sittlichkeit* and as an ethical, political, and religious corrective to the atomistic course which European history had been following since the Reformation.

In this respect, the close connection which he draws in *PH* between Protestantism, *Sittlichkeit*, and the second Reformation

aims at reasserting human control over the direction of history in the face of anarchy and atomisation. This means, in turn, that his idealised view of religious and political community is predicated on the idea of *Sittlichkeit* becoming a new form of *praxis* for Protestants and burghers alike. It is an ideal, in short, that urges a people to take collective responsibility for its own future through the agency of political association. If a people does so, Hegel says, spirit will triumph over nature in history.

Sittlichkeit *and the critique of civil society*

Given what these four texts from Hegel's Berlin period say, it should be apparent that his Berlin project required the boundaries of the political to expand in a religious direction, one that would be consistent with his understanding of the course of European history since the Reformation. It is worth observing, though, that this is the second time he had sought to expand the scope of the political sphere. He had done so for the first time as a young man in *NL* – when he began to include economic factors in his understanding of the role which *Sittlichkeit* might play in the political sphere in the modern world.

His youthful project of assimilating economics to politics undoubtedly culminates in *PR*.[96] But it is in *NL* that he first begins to write in detail about the triangular interplay between *Sittlichkeit*, economic processes, and the loss of political liberty in the ancient (and presumably modern) world. As we have seen, he wishes in *NL* to use *Sittlichkeit* to ennoble human beings by raising the focus of their ethical and religious lives above the narrow concerns of immediate existence. But from his readings in political economy in the late 1790s he had learned how economic and social developments can together not only militate against ethical uplift, but erode existing communal ties as well.[97] As *NL* shows (pp. 147–9 below), he explains the loss of *Sittlichkeit* from antiquity onwards as a result of the people's growing fixation with their immediate existence – with their private lives, that is. In this context, he explains how privatising processes in economics, property law, and morality produced a class of citizen-proprietors whose primary interest lay more in acquiring economic possessions and securing them legally than in participating in public life through membership of a political

association. In *NL*, he connects this development with the depoliticisation of Roman political life. And by calling these citizens *bourgeois* (see p. 151 below), he suggests that privatising processes similar to those which had depoliticised Roman citizens were drawing the burgher, as *bourgeois*, away from public life in the modern world too.[98]

Given the lofty ideal of *Sittlichkeit* that he brought to *NL* from the early theological writings, it cannot be surprising that Hegel depicted the *bourgeoisie*, and their privatised notion of *Moralität*, as an obstacle to the realisation of *Sittlichkeit* among human beings. Thus, one of the principal aims of *NL* is to repoliticise the *bourgeoisie* – that is, to persuade them of the need to develop that political part of their natures which, while 'immanent' within them, still remained to be developed. To do this, Hegel idealises the notions of citizenship and of membership in the political community and holds them up to the *bourgeoisie* of his own day as ideals to which they ought to aspire. In this respect, *NL* must be interpreted as marking the moment when *Sittlichkeit* becomes for Hegel a political as well as an ethico-religious ideal.

But there is more to it than this, for the ideological connection which he draws between *Sittlichkeit* and citizenship is constructed with an eye to how developments in economics and property law 'atomise' society and isolate citizens from one another. Such developments occur, Hegel explains, because economic expansion creates opportunities for individuals to realise themselves outside the political sphere. As *NL* argues, the more citizens come to define liberty in 'civil' rather than 'political' terms, the more subjective and self-regarding they are likely to become.

For all that, Hegel does not blame the *bourgeoisie* for being *bourgeois*. They are as they are because, in his opinion, the organisation of civil society actually encourages individuals to put their private lives before the public good. At best, this arrangement creates depoliticised individuals who hold high personal standards of *Moralität* and are industrious, frugal, and honest.[99] At worst, the organisation of civil society produces a mental outlook that is conducive to what scholars from Carl Schmitt to C. B. Macpherson have called 'possessive individualism'.[100]

In the end, what is important about the economic aspect of *NL* is that it induces Hegel to designate the sphere of *bourgeois* liberty –

the sphere of political economy, private property, property law, *Moralität*, and subjectivism in philosophy and religion – as a depoliticised sphere of atomised individuals who, paradoxically, are *unsittlich* even though – or perhaps precisely because – they are 'moral'. Needless to say, this formulation largely anticipates the view of civil society later expounded in *PR* – that is, in *NL*, Hegel begins to develop *Sittlichkeit* as an alternative – at once political, ethical, and religious – to the way in which life is organised in the civil sphere. In so far as the civil realm is the preserve of liberal values – and Hegel says as much in *PH* (pp. 217–19 below) – his conception of *Sittlichkeit* tends to be critical of those values because they underestimate the role of political association in public life. But in so far as *Sittlichkeit* is the agent of civic Protestantism and of a repoliticised *bourgeoisie*, he intends that it should promote rather than discourage participation in public life.[101] As recent studies of Berlin in the 1820s have shown, it took civic courage to do this in the face of Prussia's illiberal power structure.[102] It would seem fair to say, therefore, that after stretching the boundaries of the political sphere in the direction of economics, Hegel turns round and stretches them in the other direction. By initiating the first move, he becomes open to – and develops an appreciation of – many of the values of economic liberalism. With the second move, however, he registers his growing discontent not only with economic liberalism but also with many of the values of liberalism itself.

The dialectic of Sittlichkeit *and Hegel's myth of the state*[103]

In many interpretations of Hegel's political philosophy, his strategy of stretching the boundaries of the political first one way then another constitutes the 'dialectic of *Sittlichkeit*'.[104] Within the framework of that dialectic, it is often argued, Hegel discusses several other key conceptual movements: from inner- to outer-directed piety; from *Moralität* to *Sittlichkeit*; from parts to wholes; from particulars to universals; from burgher as *bourgeois* to burgher as *citoyen*; from civil society to the state; from *Gesellschaft* to *Gemeinschaft*; from the first to the second Reformation; and, within the framework of Franco-German relations, from 'atomism' to *Sittlichkeit* and from Catholicism to Protestantism. The enormous importance which he attaches to the transformative power of *Sittlichkeit*,