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978-1-107-03359-7 - Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity

Brady Bowman

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HEGEL AND THE METAPHYSICS OF ABSOLUTE NEGATIVITY

Hegel's doctrines of absolute negativity and "the Concept" are among his most original contributions to philosophy and they constitute the systematic core of dialectical thought. Brady Bowman explores the interrelations between these doctrines, their implications for Hegel's critical understanding of classical logic and ontology, natural science, and mathematics as forms of "finite cognition," and their role in developing a positive, "speculative" account of consciousness and its place in nature. As a means to this end, Bowman also re-examines Hegel's relations to Kant and pre-Kantian rationalism, and to key post-Kantian figures such as Jacobi, Fichte, and Schelling. His book draws from the breadth of Hegel's writings to affirm a robustly metaphysical reading of the Hegelian project, and will be of great interest to students of Hegel and of German Idealism more generally.

BRADY BOWMAN is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Pennsylvania State University. His recent publications include *Sense Certainty: On the Systematic Pre-History of a Problem in German Idealism* (2003).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is my attempt to arrive at a general understanding of Hegel's theoretical philosophy. I have been occupied with this task for longer than my doubtless very imperfect degree of success at it would indicate. The origins of the project go back to my doctoral studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, in the 1990s, and its basic conception and character have been shaped by the German community of Hegel scholars among whom I began my career. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my *Doktorvater*, Andreas Arndt; through my work on this book especially I have come to appreciate how much I learned from him. At an early stage in my career I received important impulses from Walter Jaeschke. My philosophical friendship with Albrecht Heil, also in Berlin, continually reminds me of why I got into this business to begin with. Klaus Vieweg, at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, recruited me into my first job; traces of the work I did with him on skepticism can be found throughout these pages. When I look back at the years I spent in Jena, they appear to me as an unbroken philosophical conversation – above all with Ralf Beuthan, my flatmate, fellow Hegelian, and constant interlocutor. Surely almost all the ideas in this book were, at one stage or other, topics of discussion with him and with our friends and colleagues Tommaso Pierini and Christian Spahn. In this context I would also like to mention my former colleague Jonas Maatsch. Dietmar Heidemann and Ulrich Schlösser, who were frequent guests at the department, have both also contributed to the ideas in this book in substantial ways. My association with Birgit Sandkaulen, who has since left Jena for Bochum to head the new *Forschungszentrum für klassische deutsche Philosophie*, was of decisive importance in broadening my vision of the sources and forces that shaped German thought around 1800; the philosophical exchange I enjoyed with her and her students, such as

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A NOTE ON CITATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

I cite Hegel's texts according to the historical critical edition, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by the Academy of Sciences of Nordrhein-Westfalia (Hamburg: Meiner 1968–). In referring to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I also give the paragraph numbers of the translation by A. V. Miller. Kant's works are cited according to the *Akademie-Ausgabe*, except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which I conventionally cite by reference to the A or B edition. In the case of the most frequently cited texts by Kant and Hegel, the standard English translations include the pagination of these editions for ease of reference. I have made use of Norman Kemp Smith's translation of Kant's First Critique. For Hegel's writings, I have consulted the translations by Miller (*Phenomenology of Spirit*), Harris and Cref (*The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy, Faith and Knowledge*, and *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy*), di Giovanni (*Science of Logic*), and Brinkmann and Dahlstrom (*Encyclopedia, Part I*). For full details, please refer to the bibliography, where references to translations of less frequently cited authors will also be found. Throughout, I have tacitly modified translations as needed, and supplied my own where no authoritative English edition yet exists.

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ABBREVIATIONS

6:12	<i>Kant's gesammelte Schriften</i> (Akademie Edition): volume and page number
A/B	First/second edition, Kant's <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
CSM	<i>The Philosophical Writings of René Descartes</i> , ed. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch
Disc. Prael.	Wolff, <i>Discursus Praeliminaris</i> , trans. and ed. Gawlick and Kriemendahl
Dt. Log.	Wolff, <i>Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit</i> , in <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> , Abteilung 1, vol. 1, ed. Arndt
Dt. Met.	Wolff, <i>Vernünftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt</i> , in <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> , Abteilung 1, vol. 111, ed. Corr
E	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> : part, definition, axiom, proposition, corollary, and/or scholium, in <i>Collected Works</i> , vol. 1, ed. Curley
ENC	Hegel, <i>Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences</i> (1830 edn.). References are given by section (§) and indicate remarks (R) and additions (A)
FHJW	Jacobi, <i>Werke: Gesamtausgabe</i> , ed. Hammacher and Jaeschke
GA	Fichte, <i>Gesamtausgabe der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaft</i>
GW	Hegel, <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> (Akademie Edition); for GW 9 (<i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>), the section number (§) is also given
HA	Goethe, <i>Werke (Hamburger Ausgabe)</i> , ed. Trunz

HBr	Hegel, <i>Briefe</i> , ed. Hoffmeister
KStA	Hölderlin, <i>Sämtliche Werke (Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe)</i> , ed. Beißner
Ontol.	Wolff, <i>Philosophia prima, sive Ontologia</i>
PPC	Spinoza, <i>Principles of Cartesian Philosophy</i> , in <i>Collected Works</i> , vol. 1, ed. Curley
SW	Schelling, <i>Sämtliche Werke</i> , ed. K. F. A. Schelling
TIE	Spinoza, <i>Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect</i> , in <i>Collected Works</i> , vol. 1, ed. Curley
TW	Hegel, <i>Werke in zwanzig Bänden</i> , ed. Moldenhauer and Michel