

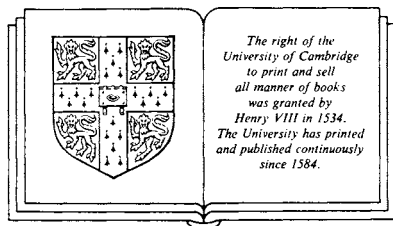
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HEGEL'S DIALECTIC AND ITS CRITICISM

MICHAEL ROSEN



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To the memory of Achim Günther

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Si comprehendis non est Deus
Augustine

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Preface

'Dialectic', Alexander Herzen once wrote, 'is the algebra of revolution.' More often, though, its function has been alchemical: a source of incantations by which revolutionaries have transmuted defeats into victories – or at least into vindications of the 'dialectical worldview'. This book is written in the belief that the best safeguard against such exploitation is to examine the notion of dialectic at its modern point of origin, in Hegel's theoretical philosophy. It operates there, I believe, as part of a thorough-going, consistently applied, conception of philosophical rationality, centred on the 'speculative discourse' of the *Science of Logic*. That previous commentators have failed to identify this conception has been due, as much as anything, to a concern to separate out an acceptable, independent 'kernel' from this original context. My own interpretation, however, can make no such claim; the rationality of Hegel's dialectic is, I shall argue, inextricably linked to Hegel's Absolute Idealism.

Before embarking on the interpretation which occupies the central chapters of the book, I offer, in Chapter 1, a more general account of the issues involved in the interpretation of philosophical texts; this will illuminate, I hope, my interpretative strategy. Subsequently, in Chapter 7, I discuss a modern philosopher, Theodor Adorno, whose work is based on a critical appropriation of Hegel. My aim is to illustrate, in the light of the interpretation previously developed, the way in which Hegel's categories continue to exercise a hold even outside their original context.

I have received too much help and encouragement in my work on this book to acknowledge adequately. However, I would like to express my gratitude to my teachers Rüdiger Bubner, Alan Montefiore, and Charles Taylor, to my D. Phil. examiners, István Mészáros and Alan Ryan, and to those friends from whose comments on different

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parts of the manuscript I have profited greatly: Graham Burchell; Josef Buscher; Alex Callinicos; Eckart Förster; Colin Gordon; Kurt Hilgenberg; Joanna Hodge; Tim Mitchell; Mary Tiles; Gavin Williams.

I also offer my sincere thanks to the Stiftung FVS, Hamburg and the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, Cologne whose generous financial support made possible my graduate studies in Germany.

A note on texts and translations

There is no universally accepted German edition of Hegel. However, for the English reader, the new Suhrkamp edition is the most accessible, not least because of its modern script and orthography. I have used this edition with the exception of the *Science of Logic*, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, where the editions of Lasson and Hoffmeister are standard.

I have noted only where translations are not my own, except for Kemp Smith's translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Inevitably, they reflect the interpretations which the book argues for, to some extent, and I have therefore given the original German in parentheses where this seemed helpful.

In translating Hegel the most difficult problem is not that of finding equivalents for individual technical terms, but that Hegel uses many non-technical terms in a sense specific to his philosophy, while retaining – and often playing on – their non-technical associations. To signal this I have made a good deal of use of a device not available in German and capitalized such terms as 'Idea', 'Logic', 'Thought', 'Science', whenever it was necessary to make clear that Hegel was using the terms in this way. For *Begriff* and *Geist*, on the other hand, I have used the translations 'notion' and 'Spirit'. Their direct translations as 'concept' and 'mind' should not, however, be forgotten. The most difficult of Hegel's technical terms and the one which is, perhaps, the most crucial to my argument is *Vorstellung*. There is some temptation to follow Kemp Smith's translation of Kant and render it as 'representation', but the latter's associations with 'standing in the place of' and 'bringing to presence' would be utterly misleading. Similarly, if less so, the Miller and Wallace translations of 'figurative consciousness', 'general image' etc.; *Vorstellungen* are not images, although (the book will argue) they share essential features with images. I have adopted no unique translation, but have frequently rendered it as 'common' or 'everyday consciousness'.

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Abbreviations of works referred to

Adorno, <i>Negative Dialektik</i> (=Negative Dialectics):	N. D.
Hegel, <i>Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften</i> , I–III (=Encyclopedia Logic, Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Mind):	Enz.
Hegel, <i>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</i> (=Philosophy of Right):	Rechtsphil.
Hegel, <i>Phänomenologie des Geistes</i> (=Phenomenology of Spirit):	P. d. G.
Hegel, <i>Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik</i> , I–III (=Aesthetics):	Ästh. I–III
Hegel, <i>Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie</i> , I–III (=Lectures on the History of Philosophy):	Gesch. der Phil. I–III
Hegel, <i>Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte</i> (=Lectures on the Philosophy of History):	Phil. der Gesch.
Hegel, <i>Wissenschaft der Logik</i> , I, II (=Science of Logic):	W. d. L. I, II
Kant, <i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i> (=Critique of Pure Reason):	K. r. V.
Kant, <i>Kritik der Urteilskraft</i> (=Critique of Judgment):	K. Uk.