

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
HEGEL AND
NINETEENTH-
CENTURY
PHILOSOPHY

Edited by

FREDERICK C. BEISER

The Cambridge Companion to

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NINETEENTH-
CENTURY
PHILOSOPHY

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Frederick C. Beiser

Syracuse University



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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO HEGEL AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy examines Hegel within his broader historical and philosophical contexts. Covering all major aspects of Hegel's philosophy, the volume provides an introduction to his logic, epistemology, philosophy of mind, social and political philosophy, philosophy of nature, and aesthetics. It includes essays by an internationally recognized team of Hegel scholars. The volume begins with Terry Pinkard's article on Hegel's life – a conspectus of his biography on Hegel. It also explores some new topics much neglected in Hegel scholarship, such as Hegel's hermeneutics and relationship to mysticism. Aimed at students and scholars of Hegel, this volume will be essential reading for anyone interested in nineteenth-century philosophy. The up-to-date bibliography includes the most important English-language literature on Hegel written in the last fifteen years.

Frederick C. Beiser is Professor of Philosophy at Syracuse University. He is the author of *The Romantic Imperative*, *German Idealism*, and *Hegel* and is the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*.

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Preface

In the spring of 2002, the late Terry Moore proposed that I produce a new edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, the original of which had appeared in 1993. What precise form the new edition should take was left to my discretion. After discussion with Paul Guyer, who received a similar request around the same time regarding *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, I decided to produce a completely new collection of essays rather than re-editing the older ones. Although I had no misgivings about the first edition, I thought that a new edition would be more fruitful for Hegel scholarship. It was one of the aims of the *Companion* series, as conceived by Terry Moore, that it should be in the vanguard of discussion in the field. In that spirit, it seemed that a completely new edition was better than just a revised version of the older one. This gave opportunity for older contributors to write on new topics as well as for new contributors to join in the discussion.

This new edition is not meant to replace the older one but to complement it. Like the older edition, this one strives to provide a broad introduction to Hegel's philosophy. But it also attempts to cover areas of Hegel's philosophy that were omitted or underrepresented in the older edition. The previous edition contained little about Hegel's philosophy of religion and *Naturphilosophie*, whereas this edition has two essays on Hegel's philosophy of religion (those by Magee and Hodgson) and three on Hegel's philosophy of nature (those by Westphal, Halper, and Kreines). This edition also focuses more on the aesthetics (the essays by Pippin and Speight) and the epistemological issues surrounding Hegel's philosophy (the essays by Franks and Forster).

I thank the many contributors to this volume for their patience for its slow and delayed production. Like all volumes in the *Companion* series, this one is a tribute to Terry Moore.

Frederick Beiser
Syracuse, May 2008

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New York Press, 1998); "Hegel's Family Values," *Review of Metaphysics* 54 (2001), 815–858; "The Idealism of Hegel's System," *The Owl of Minerva* 34 (2002), 19–58; and "Positive and Negative Dialectics: Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik* and Plato's *Parmenides*," in *Platonismus im Idealismus: Die platonische Tradition in der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, edited by B. Mojsisch and O. F. Summerell (Munich: K. G. Saur Verlag, 2003). He has been particularly interested in understanding the systematic dimension of Hegel's philosophy and in showing how Hegel uses categories from his *Logic* to treat other topics.

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of Right, and *Philosophy of World History*.¹ No one bothered with the study of Hegel's system as a whole, still less any of its integral parts: the *Philosophy of Nature*, *Philosophy of Spirit*, and, least of all, the *Science of Logic*.

Yet, what is so puzzling about the contemporary interest in Hegel is how much it has outlived the original source of its inspiration. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Empire, Marxism has suffered – for better or worse – a steep decline in prestige. But as Marx's star fell, Hegel's only rose. Somehow, the servant to Marx became a master in his own right. Now every aspect of his philosophy became of interest. Hegel was restored to the pantheon of great philosophers, taking his place alongside Leibniz and Kant.

So our original question returns: Why the contemporary interest in Hegel? How has it managed to outlive its initial debt to Marxism? The mystery only deepens when we consider the subsequent course of the Hegel renaissance. The apex of the Anglophone Hegel revival was the publication in 1975 of Charles Taylor's *Hegel*.² With grace, precision, and remarkable erudition, Taylor surveyed the depth and breadth of Hegel's entire system and showed it to be an edifice of great intellectual subtlety and sophistication. Unlike earlier scholars, Taylor did not limit himself to Hegel's social and political thought; he treated every aspect of Hegel's system and examined in depth its central core and foundation: its metaphysics. The central theme of that metaphysics, Taylor argued, was the concept of self-positing spirit. What held every part of the system together, what made it into a unified whole, was the idea of an absolute spirit that posits itself in and through history and nature. Because of its remarkable clarity, Taylor's book proved to be a great success, going through several editions and translations. Yet, it is difficult to understand how Taylor's book could lead to a growth in interest in Hegel. The idea of self-positing spirit, which Taylor made the very heart of Hegel's philosophy, is so speculative, so metaphysical,

The chief monographs were Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972); G. D. O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); B. T. Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); Bernard Cullen, *Hegel's Social and Political Thought* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979); and Raymond Plant, *Hegel* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1971). Also much discussed in the 1970s were George Armstrong Kelly, *Idealism, Politics and History: Sources of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969); John Plamenatz's two chapters on Hegel in *Man and Society* (London: Longman, 1963), II, pp. 129–268; and Z. A. Pelczynski's substantial "Introduction" to *Hegel's Political Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 5–137.

Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

and so religious that it is hard to understand how it could convince modern readers of Hegel's intellectual merits. These readers had been raised in a much more secular and skeptical age, in a philosophical culture suffused with positivism, and so the idea of a self-positing spirit proved very problematic. When Taylor's book appeared, the academic establishment in Britain and the United States was already dominated by analytic philosophy, which never had much time for metaphysics. So, ironically, given the emphasis it placed on Hegel's metaphysics, and given the anti-metaphysical atmosphere in Anglophone academia, Taylor's book was more likely to bury than revive Hegel. Yet, interest in Hegel only grew. Why?

For all its merits, this had little to do, I believe, with Taylor's book. Instead, it had much more to do with the fact that scholars began to ignore or underplay that aspect of Hegel's philosophy that Taylor had placed center stage: metaphysics. Some scholars fully admitted the metaphysical dimension of Hegel's philosophy; nevertheless, they insisted it is not important for every aspect of his philosophy, especially his social and political thought. Since the early 1960s, many scholars of Hegel's social and political thought claimed that it could be understood without his metaphysics.³ Hegel was appreciated for his critique of liberalism, his conception of freedom, and his theory of the state, all of which seemed to have point and meaning independent of the rest of his system. To see value in Hegel's critique of social atomism or contract theory, for example, one did not have to accept his theory of self-positing spirit. Other scholars, however, began to question the metaphysical

³ The first of these scholars was Z. A. Pelczynski in "An Introductory Essay" to his edition of *Hegel's Political Writings*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Since then, many other scholars have followed his lead and the nonmetaphysical approach has been the dominant one in the interpretation of Hegel's social and political thought. See Steven Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. xi; Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 4–6; Mark Tunick, *Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 14, 17, 86, 99; Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 8; and Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 16–27; Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 83–84, 126, 135–136, 140, 151–152, 360–361; John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 330. For some recent protests against this approach, see Yirmiahu Yovel, "Hegel's Dictum that the Rational is the Actual and the Actual is the Rational," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. by Jon Stewart (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 26–41; and Adrian Peperzak, *Modern Freedom: Hegel's Legal, Moral and Political Philosophy* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 2001), pp. 5–19.

interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, claiming that his entire system is best understood apart from, or even as a reaction against, traditional metaphysics. Taylor's interpretation was rejected because it seemed to make Hegel's thought much too metaphysical. Since the 1970s there have been at least three kinds of nonmetaphysical interpretations. First among them was the *category theory* of Klaus Hartmann and his school.⁴ According to Hartmann, Hegel's philosophy is not speculation about mysterious entities, such as the absolute or spirit, but an attempt to develop a system of categories, the most basic concepts by which we think about the world. It is only in a metaphorical sense that Hegel's *Science of Logic* is about "the essence of God before the creation of the world"; in the proper literal sense it is only about the structure of our most basic concepts, those necessary to think about being as such. Another nonmetaphysical interpretation was that developed by Robert Pippin in his *Hegel's Idealism*.⁵ Pippin places Hegel's idealism essentially in the Kantian tradition, as a theory about the necessary conditions of possible experience. The subject that is at the heart of Hegel's idealism lies not in any conception of a self-positing spirit but in Kant's unity of *apperception*, the principle that self-consciousness is a necessary condition for all experience. Yet another nonmetaphysical approach has been worked out more recently by Robert Brandom.⁶ "The master idea that animates and structures Hegel's metaphysics and logic," Brandom writes, is "his way of working out the Kant–Rousseau insight about a fundamental kind of normativity based on autonomy according to the model of reciprocal authority and responsibility whose paradigm is mutual recognition."⁷ Brandom sees Hegel as fundamentally a theorist about the normative dimension of life, experience, and discourse, and claims that all his talk about spirit has to be understood in terms of the mutual recognition implicit in such norms.

So we now have something of an explanation for our mystery, for why the Hegel revival survived the decline of Marxism and Taylor's metaphysical interpretation. Interest in Hegel endured because the most difficult and troubling aspect of his philosophy – his metaphysics – was either ignored or read out of his system. The nonmetaphysical readings

⁴ See Klaus Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," in *Hegel*, ed. by A. MacIntyre. New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 101–124. See also the anthology of his students, *Hegel Reconsidered*, ed. by Terry Pinkard (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1994).

⁵ Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁶ Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

of Hegel have been acts of enormous interpretative charity: they have interpreted Hegel in a way to make him acceptable to the standards of a more secular and positivistic age. They have worked so well because they have made Hegel conform to the image of what we think a philosopher should be.

Yet, despite their success, these interpretations have not been able to suppress a nagging doubt: Are we interested in Hegel only because we have made him reflect *our* interests? Do we find him acceptable now only because we have re-created him in our image? If that is so, it leaves us with an even more troubling question: Is the Hegel revival perhaps a mistake? Are we interested in Hegel only because we have a false image of him?

Although the nonmetaphysical interpretations are interesting and illuminating, they have never succeeded in convincing many Hegel scholars. The problem is that the metaphysical dimension of Hegel's thought has proven stubbornly irreducible. When push comes to shove, all those who advocate a nonmetaphysical reading have to admit that they have not revived the real historical Hegel but only some aspect of him that reflects our own contemporary interests and values. One respect where the nonmetaphysical interpretations are especially problematic concerns the religious dimension of Hegel's thought. There can be no doubt that, ever since his Frankfurt years, a crucial part of Hegel's program was to demonstrate the fundamental truths of Christianity.⁸ We have to take Hegel at his word when he tells us in his lectures on the philosophy of religion that God is the alpha and omega, the end and centerpoint of philosophy.⁹ Of course, Hegel's God is not the theistic God of orthodox Christianity, and still less the deistic God of the eighteenth-century philosophers. Nevertheless, whatever the precise nature of his God, he still answered to the general concept of the infinite or absolute, and still complied with the St. Anselms classical definition of God as "*id quo nihil maius cogitari possit*" (that of which nothing greater can be conceived). We cannot explain away the Hegelian absolute in terms of the completeness of a system of categories, the subject of the Kantian unity of apperception, or the structure of mutual recognition involved in norms. For all these interpretations give us only one half of the Hegelian equation: the manner in which we *think* about the universe; they do not give us the other half: the universe itself. The

⁸ See my *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 124–152.

⁹ See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), XVI, 28, 32–33, 94. For the role of religion in Hegel's philosophy, see the article by Peter Hodgson in Chapter 9 in this volume.