

HEGEL CONTRA LIBERALISM

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Nietzsche once wrote: "They are no philosophical race, these Englishmen: Bacon signifies an attack on the philosophical spirit; Hobbes, Hume, and Locke a debasement and lowering of the concept of 'philosophy'...in their fight against the English-mechanistic doltification of the world, Hegel and Schopenhauer were of one mind."¹ But conceding the fact that

Locke, for example, is dull and repetitious, does that give Hegel license to be abstract to the point of incomprehensibility? However blameable Hegel was stylistically, though, one fact

I'm not sure this phrase is not itself "blameable stylistically."

really should be conceded to him: the substance of his philosophy was probably as profound and comprehensive as that of any philosopher before him. Profound in his lack of dogmatism, his relativity--a trait which Marx, that great perverter of Hegelianism, certainly did not share with him--and in his powerful critique of the seductive ideas of free will and individuality.

Unbalanced, unless

Some critics have considered Hegel's philosophy exceedingly dangerous, claiming an intellectual kinship between it and the

Nazis and Communists. But the consequences of a philosophy can never be alleged against its truth; it must be judged on its merits, regardless of how terrible in import, or gruesome "demerits" in consequences, it may be. And to be sure Hegel's philosophy

Evidence in text?

does have a stern and forbidding quality. Hegel has an affinity for war, for example, even offensive war,² and for totalitarianism. But even the harshest interpretation of history or analysis of mankind is an improvement on pleasant but illusory ideas. Still another objection to Hegel's philosophy is that it is a shameless, self-interested apology for the Prussian monarchy; behind all his mystical abstractions, runs this argument, lies

Footnotes

1. Beyond Good and Evil, #252
2. Phil. of Right, Oxford Press, p.219.
3. Popper, Open Society and Its Enemies, v.2, for both criticisms.
4. Hegel, p.162.
5. *ibid*, p.64.
6. *ibid*, p.265.
7. *ibid*, p.261.
8. *ibid*, p.260.
9. *ibid*, p.148.
10. *ibid*, p.280.
11. *ibid*, p.268.
12. *ibid*, p.282.
13. *ibid*, p.164.
14. Popper, p. 69.
15. Hegel, p. 212.
16. *ibid*, p.48.
17. *ibid*.
18. *ibid*, p.242.
19. *ibid*, p.71.
20. *ibid*, p.173.
21. *ibid*, p.206.
22. *ibid*, p.287.
23. *ibid*, p.11.
24. *ibid*, p.186.
25. *ibid*, p.295.
26. Popper, p.48.
27. Hegel, p.16.
28. Popper, p.67.
29. *ibid*, p.74.

On the whole, a competent exposition of some of Hegel's themes, though not in all cases a fully balanced account. Here again I would recommend that you look at the S. Avineri or C. Taylor ~~to~~ books on Hegel. There are important authoritarian interpretations of Hegel. Also, some critically desirable. Some critical interpretations of Hegel might have been admitted. This is admittedly a different thing.

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