

## HEGEL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

## OFFICERS

Honorary President	Professor H S Harris (York University, Toronto)
Chairman	Professor Michael Petry (Erasmus University, Rotterdam)
Secretary	Professor Howard Williams (University College of Wales, Aberystwyth)
Treasurer	Dr Gary K Browning (Oxford Brookes University)
Bulletin Editor	Dr Robert Stern (University of Sheffield)
Members of the Council	Professor Leon Pompa (University of Birmingham)
	Dr Bernard Cullen (Queen's University, Belfast)
	Professor Kenneth Westphal (University of New Hampshire)
	Dr Z A Pelczynski (Pembroke College, Oxford)
	Nicholas Walker (Magdalene College, Cambridge)

## BULLETIN OF THE HEGEL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

No 34 Autumn/Winter 1996

## Review Article

- ♦ *Hegelianism in Slovenia: A Short Introduction* 1  
Boris Vežjak

## Discussion

- ♦ Terry Pinkard, *What is the Non-Metaphysical Reading of Hegel? A Reply to Frederick Beiser* 13
- ♦ Frederick C Beiser, *Response to Pinkard* 21

## Reviews

- ♦ Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (eds), *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies* (Ronnie Mather) 27
- ♦ Joji Yorikawa, *Hegels Weg zum System* (Jussi Kotkavirta) 30
- ♦ H S Harris, *Hegel: Phenomenology and System* (Terry Pinkard) 34
- ♦ John Walker, *History, Spirit and Experience* (Andrew Shanks) 40
- ♦ Justus Hartnack, *Hegels Logik* (John Burbidge) 42
- ♦ Michael O Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy* (Alan Patten) 43
- ♦ Ludwig Siep, *Praktische Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus* (Philip Stratton-Lake) 50
- ♦ Michael John Petry (ed), *Hegel and Newtonianism* (Errol E Harris) 52
- ♦ Andrew Benjamin, *The Plural Event* (Dermot Moran) 53
- ♦ Jenny Teichman and Graham White (eds), *An Introduction to Modern European Philosophy* (Claudia Lally) 59
- ♦ Mary Anne Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy* (Sophie Thomas) 60
- ♦ Andrew Shanks, *Civil Society, Civil Religion* (Gary K Browning) 64
- ♦ Van A Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion* (David Leopold) 67

at least in his Jena period, Hegel does not reduce questions of the good life and of a just society to a conception of what is, understood through his philosophy of history, but makes available a criterion by means of which these questions may be evaluated; and in chapter twelve he defends Hegel's notion of the *Aufhebung* of morality in ethical life against Tugendhat's interpretation, which sees it simply as the replacement of the individual's conscience and reflexion with blind trust. The correction of these types of standard objections, which almost never stand up to critical scrutiny, is always a worthwhile enterprise, and I found the chapter on *Aufhebung* particularly helpful in this respect. But Siep is not consistent in his approach. He repeats uncritically many of Hegel's criticisms of Kant which have become standard and are based on the sort of superficial interpretations of Kant from which Siep is keen to defend Hegel. Thus, for example, we find Hegel's claims that Kant's ethics is empty, abstract and merely formal repeated, without raising questions about whether Kant intended to derive specific duties from the categorical imperative — something which seems as implausible to me as the view that he intended to derive all causal laws of nature from the category of causality — or without pushing Hegel on what it is that is wrong with distinguishing, rather than opposing, morality from sensibility, which is all Kant's method of isolation does. It is by no means obvious that if we distinguish between two properties or concepts that we are committed to the view that they are opposed to each other, or even that they are independent. The key virtue of Siep's book is, then, its scholarly, rather than its philosophical insights.

Philip Stratton-Lake  
Keele University

**Michael John Petry (ed) *Hegel and Newtonianism*, International Archives of the History of Ideas, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993, pp xiv + 786, Hb £184.00**

This is the published proceedings of the Cambridge Conference on Hegel and Newtonianism, held in 1989 under the auspices of the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici (Naples). The volume is divided into seven parts, on Metaphysics, Mathematics, Mechanics, Celestial Mechanics, Optics, and Chemistry, the final Part being Bibliographical, with an introduction by Andre Mense, listing books on Mathematics, Mechanics, Optics and Chemistry, as well as the editions of Newton's Works, in Hegel's Library, with an explanation by P Bronger. Altogether the book contains 44 essays, eleven under the heading of Metaphysics, six under each of the headings Mathematics, Mechanics, Optics and Chemistry, and seven under the heading Celestial Mechanics, and two under the final heading, Bibliographical.

We are here offered a wealth of information and comment on the relation between Hegel and Newton, which serves to dissipate old prejudices and adverse opinions of Hegel's attitude to Newton's work, and to dispose once and for all of the belief that he was incompetent

in mathematics and the sciences. But in a review of permissible length it is impossible to comment adequately on every one of forty-two papers, most of which are highly technical. It is never easy to review the proceedings of a conference, because the reviewer is scarcely ever able to do justice to every contribution, and the size and extent of this anthology defeats any effort to give a satisfactory account of all the very various and diverse contents. None of the papers is sufficiently outstanding to be selected for special attention, although they are all significant and informative. As a book of reference there can be no doubt about the value of the volume as a whole. An enormous amount of effort must have gone into the process of editing and ordering the material for which all credit is due to Professor Petry.

I shall content myself with some general remarks: most, though not all, of the writers in the first section seem to appreciate sufficiently the philosophical position which Hegel adopted, though few if any of them have made it very clear. The general consensus is that Hegel's critique is not directed against Newton's own work, for which he had considerable respect, but against Newtonianism and its unwarranted and indefensible metaphysical implications. My own argument in *Hypothesis and Perception* was that Newton's method, in common with that of other scientists (like Kepler, Lavoisier and Darwin) was to construct a body of interlocking and corroborative evidence, the systematic interrelations of which, when established, enabled him to deduce conclusions apodictically. This he called "deduction from the phenomena". Such a system develops in principle (and necessarily) dialectically. Hegel was aware of this and his protest is not so much against Newton as against the metaphysical assumptions of philosophical Empiricism and the theory of induction developed by Hume, commonly and quite unwarrantedly attributed equally to Newton. The authors of the essays under review, while what they argue is not, for the most part, in conflict with this contention, do not seem to be sufficiently aware of it.

This is a book that every student of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* will be glad to have on his or her shelf. But few, I suspect, will be inclined to sit down and read the whole of it continuously from cover to cover. Moreover, those who can benefit from it most will have to be competent in several sciences, especially mathematics; and will need to be conversant with more than Hegel's dialectical system, although an understanding of that is indispensable.

Errol E Harris

**Andrew Benjamin, *The Plural Event. Descartes, Hegel, Heidegger*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp 211, Pb**

The central theme of this subtle, frequently intelligent, but all too often dense and cryptic book is the relation between philosophy and its presentation, as exemplified in certain texts and queried by Derridian deconstructive manoeuvres. The texts — whose exemplary or canonical status is never explained let alone justified — are: Descartes's 1641 *Meditations*, Hegel's

1801 *Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy* and the beginning of his 1830 *Encyclopedia Logic*, Heidegger's 1962 lecture, *Time and Being*. Interspersed between these readings are "intermezzo's" on Pascal (on naming), Leibniz (on relations), and, by way of conclusion, a discussion of Freud's account of "working through" illuminated through Lyotard. The main assumption is Hegelian — in philosophy the work is part of the result. The book's originality lies in its quite daring — if idiosyncratic — linking of apparently disparate texts as liminal texts for rethinking philosophy's evolving self-differentiation. Of course, since Benjamin challenges both the assumption that philosophy possesses self-identity and that it 'evolves', the exposition is hedged around with a great deal of backward stepping and problematising, usually characterised as overcoming resistance: "Working with the procedure of distancing inherent in resistance forms a fundamental component of the present task" (p 2).

In the face of such persistent unravelling, I shall try to isolate what I take to be the main threads of the far from transparent argument whose presentation is both systematically allusive and elusive.

The book claims to be about "events" and "relations" and even proposes an "ontology of events" (p 2). It is primarily a meditation on the event/work of philosophy, philosophy's self-manifestation, with specific attention to its many tales of origin. Benjamin is interested in the tension between those in philosophy who claim to begin anew, ignoring history and denying repetition (eg Descartes) and those for whom the new involves only the re-cognition of what is always already there (Hegel) "a recognition incorporating its own coming-to-emerge" (p 31). To explicate this, Benjamin calls on Derrida's thinking on prefaces, traces, *différance* and the failure of the *arche*. Specifically, Benjamin raises the problem of how newness arises, how there can be new events, taking as his paradigm the case of philosophy itself. Newness is always a relation with what has gone before; the absolutely new would be "a singular event" (p 20) — impossible on Benjamin's view. There can be no "founding singularity" (p 165). Benjamin's holds that events never have clear beginnings or identity criteria; they are "anoriginal", "plural", "complex", marked by "anoriginal heterogeneity" (p 24) "irreducible difference" (p 109).

Benjamin begins by claiming (p 5) that a thing receives its identity from an initial act of differentiation. Thus philosophy's identity is inaugurated in being distinguished from common sense (eg in Hegel's lesser *Logic*). According to Hegel, philosophy is "in harmony" (*Übereinstimmung*) with actuality, however this harmony is not just given but must become self-conscious. For Benjamin the givenness of the harmony with actuality precludes any genuine "advent" of the event. Benjamin argues that, for Hegel, philosophy's harmonisation with reality is supposed both to have already taken place and at the same time to be enacted by philosophical thought itself. Philosophy is thus obliged to be a special kind of mirroring or representing. Benjamin challenges the Hegelian assumption that philosophy can become transparent to itself by claiming that tradition is as much withholding and refusal as it is gift

(p 11). Tradition is not simple receptivity nor is it primarily oriented to the past, tradition "involves dominance and futurity" (p 25). Benjamin thus problematises Hegel's reliance on the notion of a self-realising historical tradition. Philosophy can ever become self-enclosing; the very nature of tradition prevents closure.

Benjamin's next move is to assert that without singularity there can be no representation. "Plural" events cannot be represented (pp 59, 196n 14) since representation requires an initial separation. Thus, for example, Descartes can only represent the body after it has been separated out from the mind (p 47). The positing of singularity must itself be seen as falling into a certain tradition. Representation then is tied to a logic of origin and differentiation. When that logic is questioned, representation becomes problematic. In Descartes's *Meditations*, a method is announced to overcome philosophy's failures, a method which involves a certain forgetting (eg of the body), nevertheless the forgotten intrudes. Benjamin claims that Cartesian doubt aims at the elimination of the body "as though the body has become waste" (p 35). This is a rather dramatic way of putting Descartes' pretence that the body does not exist, but for Benjamin it refers to the manner Descartes puts the body of philosophy into question, seeking to eliminate the body of philosophy from the act of philosophising. For Benjamin, Cartesian doubt is a set of procedures for overcoming the given, specifically: for ending repetition. Doubt is linked to destruction (p 44) and forgetting. Descartes aims at the destruction of the inherited tradition, end the *repetition* of tradition (p 45), take a stand against the *préjugés*. According to Benjamin, Descartes assumed that what the term 'philosophy' named originally could be destroyed, thus ending repetition (pp 59-60). Benjamin's emphasis on doubt as forgetting highlights an often neglected feature of the *Meditations*, namely, that Descartes seems consciously to neglect or exclude memory itself, he never doubts it or questions its veracity. With Derrida in mind, Benjamin refers to Descartes's discussion of memory in the *Passions of the Soul* in terms of a small gland in the brain. Objects have left traces in the brain, but it remains for the will to turn to pay attention to these traces (p 50). These traces are physically inscribed and hard to destroy, so Descartes' procedure is to write over them, perhaps generating a palimpsest (p 51), but certainly recording the event of destruction.

Benjamin's discussion of representation in Descartes focuses on the complex role of *ideas*. Ideas name things singularly and accurately, for Descartes. Representation is given by the 'idea' and things can be represented totally and correctly. The name stands for the thing, but the idea actually becomes identical with the thing. According to Descartes' ontology, the thing "is always able to be represented as itself" (p 61). This however is not possible. The sections on Descartes are followed by an "intermezzo" on Pascal, employing Marin's<sup>1</sup> study of Pascal, focusing mostly on the gap between words and their names, referred to by Benjamin as "conflict naming" eg how the term 'infinity' both refers to infinity and of course fails to so refer.

Benjamin's discussion of Descartes is bolstered by close attention to certain details (eg a definitive *non potest* in the Latin version replaced by a *presque impossible* in the French) but the general thrust of Benjamin's interpretation is not wildly original. Although he makes a valid point about the exclusion of the body in Descartes he doesn't develop at all Descartes' complex discussions of the passions or the union of soul and body found in the letters to Elizabeth.

Hegel is approached by relating passages on the nature of philosophy as system from an early and a late text — the 1801 *Difference* essay and the late 1830 *Lesser Logic* (specifically §1-18). For Benjamin, the *Difference* essay is an important moment in the history of difference itself (p 197n 20). Benjamin re-examines Hegel's claim that "division is the source of the need of philosophy"<sup>2</sup>. Benjamin sees Hegel's pronouncement as a diagnosis which continues to resonate with regard to our contemporary philosophical predicament. Benjamin dwells on this claim that division (*Entzweiung*) — 'diremption' as Benjamin calls it — is the source of the need (*das Bedürfnis*) for philosophy. Benjamin rightly characterises *Entzweiung* as "emergence out of harmony" (p 86), but overlooks the long Neoplatonic tradition (especially Proclus) upon which Hegel was drawing to articulate the emerging differentiation of things out of the One. In diagnosing the current state of the age, characterised by indifference brought about by the many different unrelated philosophical opinions available, Hegel is concerned with the relation between the Absolute and appearance. Hegel rejects Reinhold who simply sees philosophy as a collection of particular unrelated opinions. Hegel, on the other hand, relates particulars to the system, particulars only become particulars through their necessary relations. This, however, eliminates pure chance (chance doesn't happen by chance, as Benjamin puts it, p 87). Philosophy without system would have its content only by chance as Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia Logic* §14. In the *Difference* essay Hegel sees Reason as everywhere "eternally one and the same" (p 88) and as giving the true, otherwise there would just be a series of accidental occurrences. However this only emerges when it becomes self-conscious. Hegel's account of an event is such that within its appearance is already the kernel of its opposite and hence the event is not genuinely singular but always already plural (p 93). Again, Benjamin makes his argument by focusing on Hegel's use of particular give-away terms, in this instance his use of "zugleich" ("at the same time", p 93) in Hegel's remark that "... at the same time the appearance cannot disown its origin."<sup>3</sup> Events are accidental and necessary at the same time. It is precisely this "at the same time" that prevents the possibility of genuine novelty.

In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Benjamin sees Hegel as concerned to recognise necessity and universality in the accidental or contingent (*das Zufällige*). In *Logic* §13 Hegel distinguishes the accidental or contingent from the necessary in philosophy, and argues that the appearance of different systems does not deny unity, rather unity is manifested at different degrees of maturity in the different systems. Different philosophies should not be distinguished from true philosophy, as if the true philosophy was simply another philosophy beside the

others. Here Hegel concedes that even ordinary reasoning does not make this mistake: "Even common sense in every-day matters is above the absurdity of setting a universal beside the particulars".<sup>4</sup> Hegel employs an analogy which Benjamin unpacks: would someone desiring fruit reject cherries, pears etc, on the grounds that they were cherries and pears and not fruit? Benjamin quite cleverly unpacks this metaphor and shows how a cherry (singular event) on its own would be unintelligible: "The impossible occurrence would be the presentation of the cherry in its complete singularity as an isolated occurrence falling outside any relation" (Benjamin, p 102).

While Hegel recognises the plural event, and the difficulty of naming it, nevertheless he retreats to the idea that a name names a unity and ignores the role of time. As Benjamin sees it, to say that cherries are fruit is to say that the singular and the universal co-exist, but in the case of philosophy, it would imply that philosophy had already come to *fruition* (Benjamin's word-play) whereas this would actually distort the true play of time in the presentation of philosophy. Benjamin's argument is subtle, and typically deconstructive, he homes in on the analogy in Hegel's text (put in the form of a question by Hegel) and, in unpacking what is concealed in the analogy, shows its limitation. However, apart from this subtle and illuminating textuality, Benjamin's overall account of Hegel is fairly standard — one-sidedness both appears and signals its one-sidedness and also the necessity for belonging to a larger whole. Where Benjamin departs from Hegel, is where all commentators from Marx to Adorno have departed, namely in the assumption that this whole has already attained its completion and that philosophy now simply has the task of *expressing* this completion. It is possible to read Hegel as recognising the forces generating and demanding totalisations without declaring the achievement of totality. The section on Hegel is followed by a second *intermezzo* on Leibniz on the nature of necessary relations, which though interesting, is not closely tied to what have gone before, namely Hegel.

Benjamin's third thinker is the later Heidegger of *Time and Being* and hence one caught up in the difficulties of thinking the nature of "gift", the event (*Ereignis*), the meaning of "*es gibt*". This section was originally given at a Derrida seminar on the gift. Benjamin's strategy in the face of the difficulty of the Heideggerian text is to examine how Heidegger himself presents the nature of the difficulty at work — specifically the difficulties of *showing*, using only the propositional utterances of a lecture, difficulties of thinking *Sein* without *das Seiende*, and so on. This strategy is nowhere defended by Benjamin. It is a form of internal criticism to suppose the difficulty of reading Heidegger is somehow best dealt with by examining the difficulties and blockages Heidegger himself identifies as requiring to be surmounted. I am not persuaded by this strategy, indeed it assumes precisely the kind of representational mirroring Benjamin elsewhere rejects, namely, that the difficulty of the text mirrors the difficulties announced in the text. Nevertheless, this section has a good, lucid discussion (pp 134-140) of Heidegger's interpretation of *Destruktion, Abbau*. Destruction is not levelling but at best rethinking, recasting the tradition so that its effective force becomes

dislocated and made transparent. Benjamin connects Heidegger's thinking on destruction with sacrifice and talks of the "logic of sacrifice". This invocation is far from clear and Benjamin's discussion does nothing to clarify how Heidegger is supposed to be caught up in this sacrificial logic.

How to assess the success of this deconstructive web of texts? Benjamin clearly has a subtle, dialectical mind, best when he is carefully dissecting certain key passages in his chosen texts, keenly sensitive to ambiguities and reverberations of repressed problematics, but all too often his writing is dense, difficult, obscure, hermetic, even solipsistic. Benjamin's style offers the reader no comfort and the too frequent diagnoses of resistance ends up frustrating the reader's attempt to work through. Every page drops 'danglers' that are never taken up again. Sometimes too, the obvious is pretentiously announced: thus the notes are "intended to allow other forms of deliberation to take place". Yes, that's what notes are for. A great many formulations are in fact platitudes (the gift is therefore in its being given, p 131). After all the rhetoric of new beginnings (whether Descartes or Husserl) has long been identified as somewhat frayed and old (by Hegel and recently by Barthes).

Finally one is left seeking the justification for discussing these texts together. The ontology of events is a assuredly a hot topic for ontological discussion. Here Davidson and Jaegwon Kim among others have offered various kinds of identity criteria, usually either using space-time co-ordinates or else defining events in terms of their causal relations, arguably both sets of criteria fail. How events are individuated may in the end depend on the interests of the interpreter. But Benjamin never gives us a straight discussion of the nature of events, despite the title and various announcements in the book, rather only one event is examined, philosophy's self-founding. Furthermore, Benjamin's claim that events are non-originary and possess plural descriptions is conceded by most in the analytic world as also in Husserl (see the manner the sense underwrites different sentences in the *Logical Investigations*) and Derrida. The "same" sentence can be rendered in many different ways, there does not seem to be any right way independent of point of view. Benjamin's third claim regarding the relation of event to representation seems to be the crux of the matter, but this is the least developed theme in the book. Indeed after the discussion of Descartes one hears little of the nature of representation, other than that Heidegger is seeking to announce a thinking counter to representation, which thinks the impossibility of representation.

In summary, despite encountering small gems of textual illumination in the course of struggling through this difficult text, I am left unconvinced as to nature and validity of this deconstructive approach. One is left with the sense that Benjamin considers philosophy to be sealed within certain texts which have to be gone over with a deeply suspicious intelligence, recognising ineliminable resistances and *aporiai*. Yet at the same time Benjamin wants to open up the notion of genuine possibility. Surely, there is more to be gained by adopting the equally-available notion of philosophy as a co-operative, dialogical enterprise, a triangulating with others and with the world. Benjamin's book is for the *cognoscenti*, its elusiveness does

not recommend it to students seeking to understand better the relations between Descartes, Hegel and Heidegger.

Dermot Moran  
University College Dublin

- 1 L Marin, *La Critique du discours* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1975).
- 2 G W F Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1977), p 89.
- 3 Hegel, *The Difference*, p 89.
- 4 *The Logic of Hegel*, translated from the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* by William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p 23.

Jenny Teichman and Graham White (eds), *An Introduction to Modern European Philosophy*, Macmillan Press 1995, pp x + 199, Hb £40, Pb £12.99

This is a collection of short essays on eleven prominent figures of European philosophy from Hegel and Kierkegaard to Sartre and Habermas. It is aimed at newcomers to European philosophy, and is introduced by a piece in which Graham White argues that the analytical and European traditions are closer than each has decided to believe. The volume opens with a chapter on Hegel, written by Robert Stern. Hegel's position in the book is justified by Stern's remark that "for many of the philosophers to be discussed in this book, only once they had come to terms with Hegel could their own thinking begin." With the interests of readers of the present volume in mind, this review will focus on Stern's chapter on Hegel.

Like all the contributors, Stern first gives brief biographical details of his subject and then a guide to the major works. Stern's account focuses upon the *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopaedia* (especially the *Encyclopaedia Logic*) and the *Philosophy of Right*. Stern stresses the importance of understanding the place of the *Phenomenology* in the overall system, that is, as Hegel put it, as a 'ladder' to the mature systematic standpoint. This is characteristic of Stern's policy of showing how Hegel's works interrelate. The discussion of the *Phenomenology* centres around the progression of consciousness through its various successive standpoints — a progression, it is emphasised, with its own internal momentum: it is to be understood as being driven by the failure of the categories employed by consciousness to do the work required of them, rather than relying for its intelligibility on what Stern calls a 'goal-oriented evolution'. Hegel's treatment of the categories of universal and particular is highlighted by Stern as illustrative of Hegel's overall procedure, providing, Stern suggests, an insight into the way in which the difficulties encountered by consciousness structure its movement. The *Phenomenology* and *Encyclopaedia* are contrasted on the grounds that the *Encyclopaedia* consciously attempts to rework the categories, while in the *Phenomenology* their development was merely described. Stern's view of Hegel's reworking of categories of