

KARL ROSENKRANZ'S 'LIFE OF HEGEL' 5/24 - HEGEL IN JENA, PART ONE

AN ABRIDGED AND COMMENTED TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

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BOOK TWO

Chapter One The Literary Situation at Jena

As discussed at the end of the last chapter, Hegel allowed himself to be convinced to move to Jena. However, its literary effervescence was largely over. For example, the *Athenaeum* of the Schlegels had ceased publication; Novalis - the beautiful soul of the *Phenomenology* - died in 1801; Fichte had left; Tieck had left. The *Athenaeum* was full of verve and had accustomed the public to paradox. If I might interject here, this was very much the age of the Literary Magazine in Britain and I think elsewhere too, partly as it was on the verge of new printing and paper-making technology.

The examples of Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling had drawn many to Jena who hoped to make a name for themselves in philosophy. However, Schelling was no longer reckoned a novelty there. He had come to Jena originally from Leipzig as an 'extraordinary professor'. In Jena, Hennings and Ulrich had chairs of philosophy and taught logic and moral philosophy. Ulrich sought to reconcile Leibniz, Wolff and Kant.

There were many *Privat-dozenten* who came and went - Rosenkranz mentions Jakob Fries and the historian Gruber as the best known. As logic was a required subject and thus remunerative, it was much taught. There was also a fashion for the philosophy of nature. Apart from these, 'Philosophical Encyclopaedia' was the subject of many courses by private teachers, who beyond that were free to follow their own interests.

Prices were modest at 2 or 3 Thalers a lesson. Many of the teachers projected new reviews or sought to write for remuneration for those that already existed. There was fierce competition for the few professorships and this led to an atmosphere of fault-finding, recrimination, petty jealousies and mutual favours. When Bavaria reorganised its higher education system, it could draw freely from this milieu. Thus did

- Niethammer
- Paulus
- Schelling
- Ast

go to Bavaria, where they were looked on with envy by those who remained. Hegel later corresponded with Niethammer. In January 1801 then, Hegel appeared in Jena, one more Swabian amongst many already there, where he would spend the next six years of his life.

Chapter Two The Difference between the System of Philosophy of Fichte and Schelling

The *Difference* essay < https://hegel.net/hegelwerke/Hegel1801-Differenz_des_Fichteschen_und_Schellingschen_Systems_der_Philosophie.pdf> was the first book Hegel authored and it was published in July 1801. Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* had appeared in March 1800 and was largely Fichtean. Interjecting, I have to say Schelling's is one of the most obscurely expressed pieces of prose I have ever read. Hegel in contrast is quite luminous at times in the *Difference* essay and Rosenkranz speaks too briefly to do him much justice.

Hegel thinks that Fichte is wrong to see endless progressions in concrete life. He thinks the Absolute of Schelling is a mere point of indifference. In the introduction, Hegel speaks of:

- The need for philosophy
- The idea of a fundamental principle
- Intuition
- Reflection
- The history of philosophy

as current thoughts. The idea of a system too as something that flows from an improved principle and of analytic and synthetic methods are subject of deeply meditated comments. There is also exposition of Fichte and Schelling.

The appendix to the *Difference* essay discusses Bardili and Reinhold who are both now almost forgotten. Bardili was a cousin of Schelling who had developed ideas in Kant to try and prove what was taken as a starting point. For Hegel, there is a primary necessity simply to start. Bardili had written a *Précis of Logic* that had appeared in 1800. Reinhold's *Historical Sketch of Philosophy at the Start of the Nineteenth Century* drew on this. Bardili developed certain logical ideas, especially those of one and many, independently of concrete phenomenology and consciousness. Hegel found this too formalistic in taking on mathematical form. Nonetheless, those who knew both works have said that the Logic of Hegel owed something to that of Bardili.

Chapter Three The Dissertation on the Orbit of the Planets

At Jena, Hegel produced a *Habilitationschrift* on the Orbit of the Planets, based on his readings of Kant, Kepler and Newton. He wrote this in German and then summarized it in Latin. He particularly admired Kepler's *Harmonia Mundi* and his principal subject was the distances of the planets to the sun. Hegel was fired by patriotism in his treatment, for Kepler was a fellow Swabian who had been rejected by Tübingen. For similar reasons, he criticized Newton's *Optics* for holding apart mathematical and physical properties of light, defending Goethe against naturalist critics. Here though, he addresses:

- a) the form of the orbit of planets
- b) their speed (distance from the sun and time of revolution)

and this on an a priori basis. Newton was regarded as the discoverer of the ellipse as the orbit of the planets. Hegel knew that physical concepts (attraction, impulse) had only a mathematical significance and he was in general less sure-footed here than in Logic and Psychology.

Rosenkranz comments at this point that Hegel wishes to speak in universal terms, but also avoid errors of detail and that this led to his obscurity of expression. This strikes me as a key observation of much wider significance than this minor text and it is almost worth reading the book for this insight alone. Schelling on the other hand turned to poetry.

Amongst reasonings on number and geometrical forms, at the end of the text Hegel considers progressions of numbers as possibly indicating a new planet. He says, hypothetically, that if the *Timaeus* progression (1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 16, 27) was right, this would not be necessary. The discovery of several asteroids between 1801-07 made this speculation redundant. Hegel's admiration of Jacob Boehme was of the same cloth with his regard for Kepler – a reaction against the mechanism of the understanding.

[I might interject here that there seems to me to be a question about Hegel's approach to scientific method here in that he seems to be simply looking for patterns rather than placing observation first. This even though he correctly labels his idea as a hypothesis. More basically, the motion of a planet in Newtonian terms is a function of its mass and speed and of the mass of the sun and there seems to be no reason from that why there should be any pattern in the number of planets or their distances from the sun. It may of course be that is some pattern in the known planets and this gives some (weak) reason to extend it by creating hypotheses. There may thus be a case for using analogy to create hypotheses, but then as Newton said, the hypotheses are not part of science, but rather queries to put at the end of a book as subjects for possible further research, as in the *Principia*. SC]

Chapter Four Defending the Habilitationschrift

Hegel defended his thesis at Jena on 27 August 1801, which was his 31st birthday. He appended to it various Latin theses on logic, the philosophy of nature, philosophy in general and practical philosophy. These survive and make great use of paradox. Rosenkranz lists them and gives descriptions of how they might be justified:

1. Contradiction is the rule of truth and non-contradiction of falsehood.

This is not, says Rosenkranz, directed against the identity of Wolff, but indicates that good and evil, true and false, are opposed concepts both applicable to reality. He refers to Spinoza *Ethics* 2.43 Scolia. That

A is A

A is not B and not-B

destroys any deepening of cognition by its rigidity. The negative, such as pain, illness, evil, is also part of reality. Contradictions exist, for example centripetal force and inertia, and are resolved, as in an orbit. Hegel here draws on the dialectic of Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

2. Syllogism is the principle of idealism.

Hegel finds the occurrence of three terms in the dialectic of Kant, the thesis, antithesis and synthesis of Fichte and in the construction of identity and duality of Schelling. This shows the logical side of Hegel. according to Rosenkranz.

3. The square is the law of nature, the triangle that of mind.

This, says Rosenkranz, he borrowed from Franz von Baader and Plato.

4. In true arithmetic, addition is of unity to the dyad, subtraction of dyad from triad [...]

There is some attempt here at a construction of arithmetic ideas.

5. Gravitation of planets towards the sun is a natural pendulum.

This was taken from the philosophy of nature of the day.

6. The Idea is the synthesis of infinite and finite and all philosophy is in the Idea.

7. There is a defect in the critical philosophy. It is an uncompleted form of scepticism.

8. The matter of the postulate of reason exhibited by the critical philosophy destroys that philosophy and is the principle of Spinozism.

9. The state of nature is not unjust and that is why we must leave it.

The will must, in other words, renounce its naturalness and determine itself. Hegel held to this all his life.

10. The principle of moral science is respect for destiny.

11. Virtue has excluded innocence in action and passion.

12. An absolute morality [...] is incompatible with nature.

These paradoxes are directed on the whole, says Rosenkranz, against Kantian morality and towards the ancient conception of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), to which we will return later.

Chapter 5 The Jena Courses

At this time Schelling dealt more than Hegel with critical approaches to first principles, whilst Hegel was concerned more extensively with the cycle of sciences. Rosenkranz reproduces the Latin descriptions of the courses Schelling put on up to his departure for Bavaria around the winter of 1803. Schelling had the air of a revolutionary in philosophy, speaking with fervour, but with an aristocratic imprecision and negligence. In contrast, the manner of Hegel was simpler. He did not draw attention to himself, but to the subject at hand.

[To interject, I think Rosenkranz is drawing a general distinction here that is still with us. There are what I would call philosophical personalities, perhaps including Zizek, who draw attention to themselves in the manner of public figures, publish frequently, etc, to become a subject of discussion, but where you might question what is really being added to human knowledge other than an exhibition of the mind at work in particular circumstances. That is not to criticise such an enterprise as such or its value as oratory, but I think scholarship that intends to add to human knowledge in the tradition of Francis Bacon, either cumulatively or by way of rethinking, is a different matter. However, Zizek himself intends to publish on Hegel shortly so maybe I will be found to have done him an injustice. - SC]

Rosenkranz then describes the courses Hegel gave. I had always imagined that people who described these were citing old college catalogues, but in fact they are simply reproducing material from Rosenkranz. As he allegedly misdated some of the manuscripts Hegel wrote in Jena to the Frankfurt period, this may lack accuracy in detail. However, the courses were:

- Winter 1801, Logic and Metaphysics, 3 to 4 pm, 11 hearers.
- Summer 1802, similar, following Schelling.
- Winter 1802, Logic and Metaphysics, following a textbook that is soon to appear. The course is to include Natural Law.
- Summer 1803. All Philosophy, following a projected Compendium. Rosenkranz comments that Hegel was very involved in writing at this point.
- Winter 1803, System of Speculative Philosophy, including Logic and Metaphysics, or Transcendental Idealism; Philosophy of Nature; and Philosophy of Mind.
- Summer 1804, no course, perhaps for want of students.
- Winter 1804, same as winter 1803. He has 30 students, including Bachmann, and from now on 20 to 30 students.
- Summer 1805, Natural Law, and the above course.
- Winter 1805, History of Philosophy, Realphilosophie (i.e. Nature and Mind), Mathematics (arithmetic and geometry, using books by Stahl and Lorenz) Gabler, the successor of Hegel at Berlin appreciated this course.
- Summer 1806, Philosophy of Nature and Mind, Speculative Philosophy, including Phenomenology and Logic
- Winter 1806, Speculative Philosophy again.

From the Summer of 1805, there was a small band of dedicated listeners, including a Greek from Constantinople. It is interesting that by the end of this period the subjects are those of the principal books Hegel published, i.e. the tripartite system of the *Encyclopaedia*, the *Philosophy of Right* or Natural Law and the combination of Phenomenology and Logic. It seems that the major distinctions in the system emerge from these comprehensive expositions of material from first principles to their application. To have kept up with mathematics is also an impressive achievement. Interesting also that in Winter 1805 a historical treatment of philosophy seems to stand in for the *Phenomenology* and Logic.

Chapter 6 The Critical Journal Of Philosophy 1802 to 1803

Rosenkranz observes that Hegel played the leading role in the *Critical Journal* over Schelling. There is a story that he was wounded by a remark in a Stuttgart journal that called him a champion of Schelling and wished to assert some independence. At this time though, the two of them still thought they were in basic agreement. The chapter discusses the essays in the Journal individually.

On the Essence of Philosophical Criticism in General

The opening essay was *On the Essence of Philosophical Criticism in General*. Hegel sees the Idea as providing a criterion of judgement. Roughly, he thinks an overall judgement is possible, that takes account of the general state of culture, but goes beyond particular comparisons. Goethe noted (in letters to Zelter) that Hegel put himself in the shoes of other people so that they in effect criticised themselves, but that this bothered busy readers who could not distinguish his expositions of others from his own position.

How Common Sense understands Philosophy

This is the second essay on Professor Krug with the ridicule about the pen. Krug apparently resented the philosophy of identity ever after, but Rosenkranz does not dwell much on this essay, which is not much more than a brief satirical sketch anyway.

The Relation of Scepticism to Philosophy

This important essay discusses and compares ancient and modern scepticism and I think here again there is a key to Hegel that has been overlooked. Rosenkranz states that Hegel had “engaged like Herbart in an in depth study of Sextus Empiricus.” (295) I have noted a similar remark earlier in the book and this substantially reinforces it. Hegel discusses the writings of Schulze, namely:

- *Aenedisemus* (1794) which was reviewed by Fichte, and
- *Critique of Theoretical Philosophy* (1801)

The original Greek Aenedisemus was a sceptic discussed by Sextus in his account of Pyrrhonism. Schulze is the representative of modern scepticism in the essay. I had always assumed this was Hume, but apparently not. Hegel says that scepticism is a moment of all true philosophy. This is surely an important remark as it implies that it is contained in his own thinking. True philosophy is neither dogmatism or scepticism (these are the opening standpoint and the dialectic of the mature system respectively). Scepticism is the free side of philosophy. Ancient scepticism, Hegel argues, was directed against fixed categories or concepts. Strangely, he cites Parmenides here, who was not a sceptic, but perhaps the thought is of the paradoxes of Zeno. Hegel rejects the idea of Schulze that the mind is like a bag containing imagination, reason, etc. He rejects his suspicion of great natural gifts. He concludes that the ancients did not rest in the senses as modern sceptics do.

Two articles by Schelling

At this point, Rosenkranz discusses two articles that were in fact by Schelling, but attributes an influence on them to Hegel. It has since been recognised that Schelling claimed authorship of one and Hegel did not of the other.

Faith and Knowledge

The [second volume of the *Critical Journal* \(1802, vol.1\)](https://hegel.net/hegelwerke/Hegel1802-Kritisches_Journal_der_Philosophie.pdf) < https://hegel.net/hegelwerke/Hegel1802-Kritisches_Journal_der_Philosophie.pdf> contains this essay on Kant, Jacobi and Fichte, characterised as "reflective philosophies of subjectivity" which exhaust all its forms. This Hegel takes to be a "Principle of the North", or in other words an expression of Protestantism. Hence for example, there is an objectivity about the dialectic of Kant, but it issues in subjective postulates in the practical philosophy. In Jacobi there is a nostalgia of the infinite that envelops the particular forms of consciousness. Fichte unifies these tendencies, or so Hegel thinks. Hegel criticises Herder along with Jacobi, which was itself bold at the time.

Hegel's thought is that religious elevation of thought forgets itself, rather than meditating on its own feelings. He compares this to the way a singer forgets himself in the objective harmony of a song. Hegel also saw religion at this time as a communal work to embody the will of God, not as an admiration for the subjectivity of a preacher. In the *Difference* essay he had already acknowledged the significance of the *Speeches on Religion* (1799) of Schleiermacher. Here too he sees a contradiction between an aspiring freedom and the goal of liberation from reflection on self. The preacher becomes a kind of symbolic communal sacrifice, a "virtuoso of edification and enthusiasm". (302) This was a common feeling in Protestantism at the time and there were certainly similar thoughts expressed outside Germany, particularly in the Sandemanian movement. Religious consciousness does not find itself in the laws of the state or the universal church, but remains a quest, a seeking.

In religion as in a philosophy that includes scepticism, negation is a moment. It is expressed in the acknowledgement of finitude and in the idea of the death of God (God himself is dead, says the Lutheran hymn). There is then a speculative good Friday from which freedom and regeneration comes as in the idea of resurrection.

Natural Law

The [last two issues of the journal](https://hegel.net/hegelwerke/Hegel1802-Kritisches_Journal_der_Philosophie.pdf) (1802, vol.2 and 1803), see page 198ff and 294ff in the PDF < https://hegel.net/hegelwerke/Hegel1802-Kritisches_Journal_der_Philosophie.pdf> were taken up by the essay of Hegel on *The Ways of treating Natural Law scientifically, its Place in Practical Philosophy and Relation to the Science of Law*. This, says Rosenkranz, gives a more determinate idea of his own system. Hegel distinguishes

- Empirical and
- Formal

treatments of natural law and he refers back to the recent work of Fichte in this regard. Kant and Fichte seek an absolute morality, but their subjectivity leads them to a dualism of morality and legality. Thus they see legality as a matter of restraint. Hegel wrote that the state of Fichte:

"Far from becoming the organic whole of the spirit of a people, degenerated into a police state of the worst kind, in which the Ephorate, overseeing everything, reduces to nothing the freedom of private life and just as much the possibility of an authentically public life." (304)

Hegel envisions in place of this an objective freedom where morality and legality are at one. The moral subject of Kant and Fichte is estranged from the idea of a Republic (*Gemeinwesen*) where he would be at home. Thus patriotism is foreign to him.

Rosenkranz notes that Hegel is accused of holding morality of little account (e.g. by Rudolph Haym, but presumably by others beforehand). He replies that Hegel saw its necessity; his objection was rather that it was not the only form of practical spirit. Hegel distinguished himself from the mistrust of the romantic school for morality. The book on *Universal Practical Philosophy* (1808) by Herbart also argues that a doctrine of virtues and duties was not an exhaustive practical philosophy. Herbart too thought an atomistic tendency of thought should be resisted. Rosenkranz writes that Hegel was "in no way an enemy of individuality where it justifies itself [...] He did not cease to hold education in high esteem, seeing in it the subordination of the accidental particularity of the individual, a discipline, a process of ethical life." (306)

Hegel justified his terminology by noting the common origin of *Sitten* (of *Sittlichkeit*) and the Greek *ethos* (both meaning custom) whereas morality in German was a made up word.

In relation to legal science, Hegel relates punishment to the idea of freedom as a consequence of its misuse. A criminal code is not like a price list of crimes, for its prohibitions address our rational nature. Similarly, he rejects the idea of contract as being too relative to be explicatory of ethical life beyond a narrow and subordinate sphere. The relation of monarch and people is not a contract for example. Ethical life has an absolute character that is lacking in the idea of contract. Rosenkranz remarks that this idea predates the Caesarism of Napoleon and the move of Hegel to Berlin and hence counts against the idea of Hegel as changing his colours as suited his personal interests (as claimed by Haym).

Hegel sees a conflict in modernity between the idea of equality which pertains to all free individuals and concrete social relations. He identifies the idea of sacrifice as of public significance and rejects the idea of a World state, for states are already something absolute in character. These ideas certainly reappear in the *Philosophy of Right* and some of them in the *Phenomenology*.

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