A Companion to Hegel

Edited by
Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur
A Companion to Hegel
Blackwell Companions to Philosophy

This outstanding student reference series offers a comprehensive and authoritative survey of philosophy as a whole. Written by today's leading philosophers, each volume provides lucid and engaging coverage of the key figures, terms, topics, and problems of the field. Taken together, the volumes provide the ideal basis for course use, representing an unparalleled work of reference for students and specialists alike.

Recent books in the series (a full list appears at the back of this book):

1. A Companion to Heidegger
   Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall
2. A Companion to Rationalism
   Edited by Alan Nelson
3. A Companion to Pragmatism
   Edited by John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis
4. A Companion to Ancient Philosophy
   Edited by Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin
5. A Companion to Nietzsche
   Edited by Keith Ansell Pearson
6. A Companion to Socrates
   Edited by Sara Ahmed-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar
7. A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism
   Edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall
8. A Companion to Kant
   Edited by Graham Bird
9. A Companion to Plato
   Edited by Hugh H. Benson
10. A Companion to Descartes
    Edited by Janet Broughton and John Carriero
11. A Companion to the Philosophy of Biology
    Edited by Sahotra Sarkar and Anya Plutchik
12. A Companion to Hume
    Edited by Elizabeth S. Radcliffe
13. A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography
    Edited by Aviezer Tucker
14. A Companion to Aristotle
    Edited by Georgios Anagnostopoulos
15. A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology
    Edited by Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Stig Andur Pedersen, and Vincent F. Hendricks
44. A Companion to Latin American Philosophy
    Edited by Susana Nuccetelli, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno
45. A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature
    Edited by Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost
46. A Companion to the Philosophy of Action
    Edited by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis
47. A Companion to Relativism
    Edited by Steven D. Hales
48. A Companion to Hegel
    Edited by Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur

Forthcoming:

- A Companion to Schopenhauer
  Edited by Bart Vanderebeke
- A Companion to Rawls
  Edited by Jon Mandle and David Reidy
- A Companion to Foucault
  Edited by Chris Falzon, Timothy O'Leary, and Jana Sawicki
- A Companion to Derrida
  Edited by Leonard Lawlor and Zeynep Direk
- A Companion to Continental Philosophy, Second Edition
  Edited by Simon Critchley and William Schroeder
- A Companion to Locke
  Edited by Matthew Stuart
A Companion to Hegel

Edited by
Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur
Contents

Notes on Contributors ix
Chronology of Hegel’s Life and Work xv
G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to His Life and Thought 1
Stephen Houlgate

Part I Early Writings 21
Katerina Deligiorgi

Part II Phenomenology of Spirit 45
2 The Project of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit 47
John Russon
3 Self-Consciousness, Anti-Cartesianism, and Cognitive Semantics in Hegel’s 1807 Phenomenology 68
Kenneth R. Westphal
4 Spirit as the “Unconditioned” 91
Terry Pinkard

Part III Logic 109
5 Thinking Being: Method in Hegel’s Logic of Being 111
Angelica Nuzzo
6 Essence, Reflexion, and Immediacy in Hegel’s Science of Logic 139
Stephen Houlgate
7 Conceiving 159
John W. Burbidge

Part IV Philosophy of Nature 175
8 Hegel and the Sciences 177
Thomas Posch
CONTENTS

9 The Transition to Organics: Hegel’s Idea of Life
   Cinzia Ferrini 203

Part V Philosophy of Subjective Spirit 225
10 Hegel’s Solution to the Mind-Body Problem
   Richard Dien Winfield 227
11 Hegel’s Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume
   Jere O’Neill Surber 243

Part VI Philosophy of Right 263
12 Hegel on the Empty Formalism of Kant’s Categorical Imperative
   Sally Sedgwick 265
13 The Idea of a Hegelian ‘Science’ of Society
   Frederick Neuhouser 281
14 Hegel’s Political Philosophy
   Allen W. Wood 297

Part VII Philosophy of History 313
15 “The Ruling Categories of the World”: The Trinity in Hegel’s
   Philosophy of History and The Rise and Fall of Peoples
   Robert Bernasconi 315
16 Hegel and Ranke: A Re-examination
   Frederick C. Beiser 332

Part VIII Aesthetics 351
17 Hegel and the “Historical Deduction” of the Concept of Art
   Allen Speight 353
18 Soundings: Hegel on Music
   John Sallis 369

Part IX Philosophy of Religion 385
19 Love, Recognition, Spirit: Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion
   Robert R. Williams 387
20 Hegel’s Proofs of the Existence of God
   Peter C. Hodgson 414

Part X History of Philosophy 431
21 Hegel’s Aristotle: Philosophy and Its Time
   Alfredo Ferrarin 433
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>From Kant’s Highest Good to Hegel’s Absolute Knowing</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Michael Baur</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Part XI     Hegel and Post-Hegelian Thought</strong></td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Hegel and Marx</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Andrew Chitty</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Kierkegaard and Hegel on Faith and Knowledge</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jon Stewart</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Thinking of Nothing: Heidegger’s Criticism of Hegel’s Conception of</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Daniel O. Dahlstrom</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Adorno’s Reconception of the Dialectic</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Brian O’Connor</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Hegel and Pragmatism</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Robert Stern</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Analytic Neo-Hegelianism of John McDowell and Robert Brandom</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Paul Redding</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Difference as Negativity: The Hegelian Remains of Derrida’s Philosophy</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Karin de Boer</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>You Be My Body for Me: Body, Shape, and Plasticity in Hegel’s</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Catherine Malabou and Judith Butler</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Index</strong></td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on Contributors

**Michael Baur** is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Adjunct Professor of Law at Fordham University. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Toronto, and a J.D. from Harvard Law School. He is the translator of Fichte’s *Foundations of Natural Right* (2000), Series Editor of “Cambridge Hegel Translations” (Cambridge University Press), and Associate Editor of the *Owl of Minerva: Journal of the Hegel Society of America*. His areas of research include German Idealism, the philosophy of law, and contemporary continental thought. He has published articles on a wide range of thinkers, including Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Heidegger, Adorno, and Gadamer.


**Robert Bernasconi** is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Philosophy at Pennsylvania State University. He was previously for over twenty years Moss Professor of Philosophy at the University of Memphis. He is the author of *The Question of Language and Heidegger’s History of Being* (1985), *Heidegger in Question* (1991), and *How to Read Sartre* (2006). He has published numerous articles on such figures as Kant, Hegel, Levinas, Derrida, and Fanon, and he has written extensively within the field of political philosophy and critical philosophy of race.


NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


Andrew Chitty is a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Sussex. He has published on Hegel, Marx, E.V. Ilyenkov, and Alan Gewirth, and is coeditor (with Christopher Bertram) of Has History Ended? Fukuyama, Marx, Modernity (1994) and (with Martin McIvor) of Karl Marx and Contemporary Philosophy (2009). He is a founding member of the Marx and Philosophy Society. He is currently working on a monograph on freedom and sociality in the thought of Marx.

Daniel O. Dahlstrom. Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Boston University, is the author of Das logische Vorurteil (1994), Heidegger’s Concept of Truth (2001), and Philosophical Legacies: Essays on the Thought of Kant, Hegel, and Their Contemporaries (2008). He has published numerous articles and has translated works by Mendelssohn, Schiller, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Heidegger. A former President of the Metaphysical Society of America and currently Presiding Officer of the Heidegger Circle, he is the editor of Interpreting Heidegger: New Essays (2010) and the cotranslator (with Klaus Brinkmann) of Hegel’s Encyclopedia Logic (2010).

Karin de Boer is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. Her areas of interest include Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, tragedy, metaphysics, and contemporary French thought. She is the author of Thinking in the Light of Time: Heidegger’s Encounter with Hegel (2000) and On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative (2010), as well as numerous articles on modern and contemporary continental philosophy. She is the editor (with Ruth Sonderegger) of Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy (2011).

Katerina Deligiorgi teaches philosophy at the University of Sussex. She is currently completing a monograph on The Scope of Autonomy: Thinking About the Morality of Freedom with Kant, Schiller, and Hegel. She is the author of Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment (2006) and the editor of Hegel: New Directions (2006). She has been editing the Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain since 2007.


Kinzia Ferrini is a Lecturer in the History of Philosophy at the University of Trieste and a Humboldt Fellow. She is the author of Guida al “De orbitis” (1995), Scienze empiriche e filosofie della natura (1996), and Dai primi hegeliani a Hegel (2003), the editor


**Catherine Malabou** is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Paris Ouest-Nanterre and will be Professor of Philosophy in the Centre for Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University from 2011. She is the author of *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (English translation, 1985), *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* (English translation, 2005), and *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing* (English translation, 2009).


(xi)
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


Thomas Posch is Senior Scientist and Lecturer at the Institute of Astronomy of the University of Vienna. He holds a PhD in Philosophy (2002) and one in Astronomy (2005). His current research topics include the history of astronomy, the philosophy of nature and the role of solid particles in the cosmic matter cycle. As well as publishing numerous papers on these subjects, he has edited several lecture transcripts of, and anthologies on, Hegel’s philosophy of nature. Combining astrophysics and the humanities, he recently edited a book entitled *Das Ende der Nacht* (*The End of Night*) (2010), which examines the history and the dramatic effects of turning night into day through the ever-growing excessive use of artificial illumination.


Sally Sedgwick is Professor of Philosophy and Affiliated Professor of Germanic Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her publications include numerous essays on Kant and Hegel, and the monograph *Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction* (2008). She is the editor of the volume *The Reception of Kant’s Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel* (2000) and she has under review a book on Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. In the academic year 2009–2010, she was President of the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association.
Allen Speight is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Boston University. He is a recipient of Fulbright, DAAD, Berlin Prize and NEH Fellowships and is the author of Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency (2001) and The Philosophy of Hegel (2008). He is also coeditor and translator (with Brady Bowman) of Hegel: Heidelberg Writings (2009), the first volume to appear in the new series of Hegel translations published by Cambridge University Press. He currently serves as Director of the Institute for Philosophy and Religion at Boston University and is editor-in-chief of the series Boston Studies in Philosophy, Religion and Public Life (Springer).

Robert Stern is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sheffield. He has written widely on Hegel and German Idealism more generally, including Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object (1990) and Hegel and the “Phenomenology of Spirit” (2002), while a collection of his papers has been published under the title of Hegelian Metaphysics (2009). He was the editor of G.W.F. Hegel: Critical Assessments (1993). He is currently President of the Hegel Society of Great Britain.

Jon Stewart is Professor at the Kierkegaard Research Centre at Copenhagen University. He is the author of The Unity of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit (2000), Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered (2003), A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark (2007), and Idealism and Existentialism (2010). He is the editor of The Hegel Myths and Legends (1996), The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader (1998), Miscellaneous Writings by Hegel (2002), and Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries (2003). He has translated Heiberg’s “On the Significance of Philosophy” (2005) and Heiberg’s Speculative Logic (2006) into English. He is the editor of the series Kierkegaard Studies: Sources, Reception and Resources, Texts from Golden Age Denmark, and Danish Golden Age Studies. He is a member of The Royal Danish Academy of the Sciences.

Jere O’Neill Surber is Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Theory at the University of Denver. He is the author of numerous books and articles in the areas of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Continental Philosophy and contemporary cultural critique. He has been a visiting professor at such institutions as the Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, and Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven; he serves on the editorial boards of several journals; and he has been Vice-President and Program Chair of the Hegel Society of America.

Kenneth R. Westphal is Professorial Fellow at the University of East Anglia. He is author of Kant’s Transcendental Proof of Realism (2004), Hegel’s Epistemology (2003), Hegel, Hume und die Identität wahrnehmbarer Dinge (1998), “From ‘Convention’ to ‘Ethical Life’: Hume’s Theory of Justice in Post-Kantian Perspective” (The Journal of Moral Philosophy, 2010) and “Mutual Recognition and Rational Justification in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit” (Dialogue, 2010). His current projects are “Hegel’s Critique of Cognitive Judgment: From Naïve Realism to Understanding” and “Moral Constructivism Modern Style.”

Robert R. Williams is Professor Emeritus of Germanic Studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the author of Schleiermacher the Theologian (1978), Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other (1992), and Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition (1997), and the editor of Beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism:
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


Allen W. Wood is Ward W. and Priscilla B. Woods Professor at Stanford University. As of 2011–2012, he will be emeritus at Stanford and will be Ruth Norman Halls Professor at Indiana University. He has taught at Cornell University (1968–1996) and Yale University (1996–2000), and held visiting appointments at the University of Michigan (1973), the University of California at San Diego (1986), and Oxford University (2005). He is author of numerous books and articles, chiefly on ethics and on the German idealist tradition from Kant through Marx.
Chronology of Hegel’s Life and Work


1776 American Declaration of Independence.

1777 Hegel enters the Stuttgarter Gymnasium.

1781 First edition of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is published.

1783 September 20: Hegel’s mother dies.

1784 Hegel transfers to the Stuttgarter Obergymnasium.

1785 Hegel begins writing a diary, partly in Latin. Kant’s *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* is published.

1787 Second (revised) edition of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is published.

1788 Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* is published. October: Hegel and Hölderlin begin studies in theology and philosophy at the Tübinger Stift. During their time at the Stift the two students develop a close friendship with one another and with Schelling (after he enters the Stift in 1790).

1789 July 14: The storming of the Bastille in Paris marks the beginning of the French Revolution, which is greeted with enthusiasm by students at the Stift.

1790 Hegel receives his M.A. degree. Kant publishes his *Critique of Judgement*.

1792 Fichte’s *Critique of All Revelation* appears.

1793 Louis XVI is guillotined. Hegel graduates from the Tübinger Stift. Autumn: He takes up a position as private tutor with the family of Captain Carl Friedrich von Steiger in Bern. Kant publishes *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*.

1794 Fall of Robespierre. Fichte begins to publish his *Foundation of the Entire Science of Knowledge*. 
1795    Schiller’s letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man are published. Hegel works on “The Life of Jesus” and on “The Positivity of the Christian Religion.” Kant publishes “Towards Perpetual Peace.”

1796    Hegel (or Schelling or Hölderlin) writes the Earliest System-programme of German Idealism. Napoleon campaigns in Italy.

1797    January: Hegel moves to Frankfurt am Main to take up a position as private tutor which Hölderlin had arranged for him with the family Gogel. Summer/autumn: Hegel drafts fragments on religion and love.

1798    Schelling becomes Professor of Philosophy at Jena on the recommendation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Hegel works on Kant’s Metaphysics of Morals. Napoleon campaigns in Egypt.

1799    January 14: Hegel’s father dies. Hegel writes the “Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate” and works on Sir James Steuart’s Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy.

1800    Schelling publishes his System of Transcendental Idealism. September: Hegel completes his “System-fragment.” From 1800 to 1802 Hegel works on (but does not complete) his extended essay, “The Constitution of Germany.”

1801    January: Hegel joins Schelling at the University of Jena. He begins lecturing as an unsalaried lecturer (Privatdozent) on logic and metaphysics. His first publication, an essay entitled The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy, appears. He completes his dissertation, On the Orbits of the Planets.


1803    September: Hegel prepares a manuscript known as the “System of Speculative Philosophy,” which includes material on the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit.

1804    February 12: Kant dies. December 2: Napoleon crowns himself Emperor.

1805    February: Hegel is appointed Extraordinary Professor of Philosophy at Jena through the help of Goethe. May 9: Schiller dies.

1806    July: Hegel draws his first regular stipend at Jena. October: He finishes the last pages of the Phenomenology of Spirit during the night before the battle of Jena (in which Napoleon’s army defeats the Prussian troops). Earlier, during the day before the battle, he sees Napoleon riding out of the city on reconnaissance.
1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* is published. February 5: Christiana Burckhardt (née Fischer), Hegel’s landlady and housekeeper in Jena, gives birth to his illegitimate son, Ludwig Fischer. (Ludwig is raised in Jena by the sisters-in-law of Hegel’s friend, the publisher Karl Friedrich Frommann, until he is taken into Hegel’s own home in 1817.) March: Hegel moves to Bamberg to become editor of a newspaper. Autumn: A period of reform begins in Prussia, initially under Freiherr von Stein, then under Karl von Hardenberg. This lasts until 1813.

1808 November: Hegel moves to Nuremberg to become rector of the Ägidiengymnasium. One of his tasks at the Gymnasium is to teach speculative logic to his pupils.

1811 September 15: Hegel marries Marie von Tucher (born 1791).

1812 Napoleon’s Russian campaign. Volume 1 of the *Science of Logic* (the Logic of Being) is published. June 27: Hegel’s daughter Susanna is born. She dies on August 8.

1813 June 7: Hegel’s son Karl is born. Volume 2 of the *Science of Logic* (the Logic of Essence) is published. Søren Kierkegaard, Giuseppe Verdi, and Richard Wagner are born.

1814 January 29: Fichte dies. September 25: Hegel’s son Immanuel is born.

1815 Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo.

1816 Volume 3 of the *Science of Logic* (the Logic of the Concept) is published. Hegel becomes Professor of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. At Heidelberg he lectures on the history of philosophy, logic and metaphysics, anthropology and psychology, political philosophy, aesthetics, and the *Encyclopaedia*.

1817 The first edition of the *Encyclopaedia* is published. Hegel becomes co-editor of the *Heidelberg Yearbooks* and in that journal publishes his “Proceedings of the Estates Assembly in the Kingdom of Württemberg 1815–1816.”

1818 May 5: Karl Marx is born in Trier. Hegel is recruited by the Prussian Minister for Religious, Educational and Medical Affairs, Karl Siegmund Altenstein, to become Professor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin, where he remains until his death.

1819 August/September: The Karlsbad Decrees are passed, authorizing press censorship and closer surveillance of universities in Germany. In the period of crackdown shortly before the decrees are passed, one of Hegel’s students, Leopold von Henning, is arrested.

1820 October: *Philosophy of Right* published (dated 1821).

1821 Hegel lectures for the first time on the philosophy of religion. May 5: Napoleon dies.
CHRONOLOGY OF HEGEL’S LIFE AND WORK

1822 Hegel travels to the Rhineland and the Low Countries, where he sees paintings by Rembrandt and van Dyck. In Berlin he lectures for the first time on the philosophy of history.

1824 The Brockhaus *Konversationslexikon* includes an account of Hegel’s life and philosophy. Hegel visits Vienna where he attends several operas by Rossini.

1826 Hegel founds the *Yearbooks for Scientific Criticism*.

1827 The second edition of the *Encyclopaedia* is published. Hegel visits Paris, where he sees Molière’s *Tartuffe* and an operatic version of *Oedipus at Colonus*. He also sees the central section of the van Eyck Altarpiece in Ghent and paintings by Memling in Bruges. October: He visits Goethe in Weimar on the way home to Berlin.

1830 Hegel is Rector of the University of Berlin. The third edition of the *Encyclopaedia* is published. The July Revolution occurs in France.

1831 January: Hegel is awarded Red Eagle Third Class by Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia. August 28: Ludwig Fischer dies in the East Indies. November 14: Hegel dies in Berlin (probably of a chronic gastrointestinal disease) without learning of his son’s fate. December 24: A contract is signed by Hegel’s wife, students, and friends for the publication of his collected works.

1832 March 22: Goethe dies.

1835 D. F. Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* is published, marking the beginning of a split between Left, Right, and Middle Hegelians.

1841 Schelling is called to the University of Berlin by Friedrich Wilhelm IV to counter the influence of Hegelianism. L. Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* is published.

1843 June 7: Hölderlin dies in Tübingen.

1848 Marx and Engels publish the *Communist Manifesto*.

1854 August 20: Schelling dies in Switzerland.
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) is one of the giants of the European philosophical tradition. Indeed, in the eyes of many the depth and sophistication of his thought are matched only in the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. Hegel’s texts and lectures are by no means easy to read, but his influence on the modern world has been profound and wide-ranging. His thought helped spawn Marxism, existentialism, American pragmatism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School; his philosophy of religion has left its mark on theologians, such as Karl Barth, Hans Küng, and Rowan Williams; he was considered by Ernst Gombrich to be the “father” of art history; and he continues to provide inspiration to many contemporary philosophers, including Judith Butler, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom.

Hegel is worth studying, however, not just because of the influence he has exercised, but also because of the intrinsic merits of his thought. He has challenging and profound views on thought and being, nature and natural science, consciousness and language, human freedom in society and the state, and on history, art, religion, and the history of philosophy.

The bulk of the chapters in this collection examine aspects of Hegel’s mature thought, which is set out in the Phenomenology of Spirit (1807) and the texts and lectures Hegel produced in the years following the Phenomenology’s publication. All of the principal parts of Hegel’s system are covered in this collection, including the philosophy of nature and philosophy of subjective spirit, which are often overlooked in studies of Hegel. The collection also includes a chapter on Hegel’s early writings that brings out the exploratory character of his work in the late 1790s and early 1800s, and eight chapters that explore the ways in which some of the most significant post-Hegelian thinkers have engaged both sympathetically and critically with Hegel’s ideas.

The chapters in this collection have been written by scholars from Europe, North America, and Australia, and bear witness to the fact that the significance of Hegel’s thought is recognized worldwide. They also reflect a wide variety of different approaches to Hegel. No single “orthodox” interpretation of Hegel’s thought is presented here, but
together the chapters provide a rich and multifaceted study of one of the richest and most multifaceted philosophies in the European tradition.

Hegel’s Life

Hegel was born on August 27, 1770 in Stuttgart in the duchy of Württemberg and died on November 14, 1831 in Berlin, probably due to a gastrointestinal disease (though he was thought at the time to have succumbed to cholera). He was the first of seven children to be born to Maria Magdalena Hegel and her husband, Georg Ludwig, a secretary at the court of Duke Karl Eugen. His sister, Christiane, who committed suicide in 1832, was born in 1773, and his brother, Georg Ludwig, who was lost serving in Russia with Napoleon in 1812, was born in 1776. The four remaining children of the Hegel family all died in infancy.

Hegel began at the local German school when he was just three years old, moved to the Latin school at five, having already been taught the first declension in Latin by his mother, and entered the Stuttgarter Gymnasium when he was six or seven. In September 1783 his mother died, the following year he transferred to the Stuttgarter Obergymnasium, and in 1785 he began a diary that he wrote for at least eighteen months in German and Latin. His reading at this time included Rousseau, Klopstock, Lessing, Wieland, and Moses Mendelssohn, and his interests also encompassed history, Greek, Latin, and trigonometry, to which he appears to have devoted both Saturday and Sunday mornings. Hegel was not, however, an utter bookworm but, as a teenager, enjoyed the company of young women and loved to dance (though he was said by his sister to be a somewhat “awkward” [linkisch] dancer). He also developed a lifelong fondness for playing cards.

In 1788 Hegel entered the theological seminary or Stift in Tübingen, becoming friends with Friedrich Hölderlin, who would go on to become one of Germany’s greatest poets, and (after 1790) with Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, who would go on to become one of Germany’s greatest philosophers. (The three friends famously shared a room at the Stift, though there were at least seven other students in the room, too.) Hegel had joined the Stift with the intention of contributing to the development of a new, “enlightened” religion. During his time there, however, he abandoned this aim in favor of leading what Terry Pinkard calls “an independent life as a ‘man of letters.’” What prompted Hegel’s change of heart was partly his growing aversion to the theological orthodoxy and “supernaturalism” of teachers, such as Gottlob Christian Storr, and partly his enthusiasm, shared by Hölderlin and Schelling, for the French Revolution of 1789. As Pinkard puts it, Hegel came “to identify the French Revolution with moral and spiritual renewal” and the overthrow of theological orthodoxy, and, under the influence of his admiration for ancient Greece, he began to equate the new, revolutionary age “with the coming reign of beauty and freedom.”

Upon leaving Tübingen in 1793, Hegel took up a post in Berne as a private tutor (or Hofmeister) to the family of Captain Carl Friedrich von Steiger. While in Berne he read Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and probably studied the work of Adam Smith. He also devoted himself assiduously to the study of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling (who by this time was already making a name for himself in philosophical circles). In
the provincial setting of Berne, however, Hegel felt isolated from intellectual and literary activity, and in a letter of August 1795 he tells Schelling rather plaintively “how much good it does me in my solitude to hear something from you and my other friends from time to time.”

Knowing that Hegel was unhappy in Berne, Hölderlin managed to find a position for him in Frankfurt as private tutor to the family of the wine merchant, Johann Noë Gogel, and Hegel took up his new post in January 1797. While in Frankfurt Hegel was able to enjoy a richer cultural life than he had been able to enjoy in Berne, attending the theater “at least once a week” and delighting especially in the opera (seeing Mozart’s *Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni* in March 1797). He read the works of Schelling, Plato, and Sextus Empiricus; in August 1798 he began an intensive study of Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals*; in 1799 he worked through a German translation of Sir James Steuart’s *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy*; and, according to Walter Jaeschke, he made his first forays into the philosophy of nature. Hegel was also able to renew his personal and intellectual contact with Hölderlin and may well have read the latter’s novel, *Hyperion*, when it was published in 1797.

By the end of his stay in Berne, Pinkard maintains, “Hegel was beginning to rede-scribe everything in terms of the basic notions of Kantian ethical theory.” Indeed, in Hegel’s essay, “Life of Jesus,” written in 1795, Jesus emerges, in Pinkard’s words, “as one of the foremost exponents of Kant’s ‘religion of morality.’” During the years in Frankfurt, however, Hegel came more under the influence of Schelling and Hölderlin. As a result he sought to overcome some of the characteristic dichotomies of Kant’s thought: Karl Rosenkranz, for example, reports that Hegel strove to unite the Kantian concepts of “legality” and “morality” in a “higher concept” which he called “life” or, later, “ethical life” (*Sittlichkeit*).

Hegel also began to reflect more on the philosophical foundations of Kantian (and Fichtean) thought and of his own project of “educating the people.” As a consequence he started to develop his own philosophical system and to turn his mind toward theoretical, rather than directly practical, concerns. As he puts it in a letter to Schelling, written in November 1800, “in my scientific development, which started from [the] more subordinate needs of man, I was inevitably driven toward science [Wissenschaft], and the ideal of [my] youth had to take the form of reflection and thus at once of a system.” This does not mean that Hegel suddenly lost interest in transforming modern political and religious life; but he came to believe, as he wrote to his friend, Immanuel Niethammer, in 1808, that “theoretical work accomplishes more in the world than practical work.” “Once the realm of representation [Vorstellung] is revolutionized,” Hegel declared, “actuality [Wirklichkeit] will not hold out.”

In January 1799 Hegel’s father died, leaving him an inheritance that was modest but enough to open the possibility of his abandoning the life of a private tutor. In January 1801 Hegel then joined Schelling at the University of Jena, where he worked initially as an unsalaried lecturer (Privatdozent), paid only by the students whom he could attract to his lectures. While at Jena Hegel defended his dissertation “On the Orbits of the Planets” (1801), published several significant essays, including *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s System of Philosophy* (1801), and lectured on logic and metaphysics, natural law, philosophy of nature, philosophy of spirit, and the history of philosophy. He also completed his monumental introduction to his philosophical system, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), which contains some of his most
famous and influential analyses, including the “master / slave” dialectic, the account of the “unhappy consciousness,” and the examination of revolutionary consciousness (which is now understood to lead of necessity to terror).

Hegel famously finished the last pages of the Phenomenology “in the middle of the night before the battle of Jena” and had to send earlier installments of his manuscript by courier through French lines to Niethammer in Bamberg (who then passed them on to the publisher). On the day before the battle, October 13, 1806, Hegel saw Napoleon – “this world-soul” (Weltseele) – riding out of the city on reconnaissance, and he commented: “it is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual, who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and masters it.” Hegel retained an enduring respect for Napoleon throughout his life and in particular welcomed the introduction into parts of Germany of the Napoleonic Code, which, in Clark Butler’s words, was “unambiguously revolutionary” in the still relatively feudal German context, even if it was “conservative” in comparison to the ideals of the French Revolution itself.

In Jena Hegel made the acquaintance of Goethe, and it was Goethe who finally secured a small salary for him in 1806, well over a year after he had been made “Extraordinary Professor of Philosophy.” By February 1807, however, Hegel was “virtually penniless.” He had also fathered an illegitimate son, Ludwig Fischer, by his housekeeper and landlady, Christiana Charlotte Burckhardt (née Fischer). He was in urgent need, therefore, of finding more lucrative employment. Opportunity came in the form of a newspaper editorship in Bamberg, which Hegel took on in March 1807. By November 1808, however, Hegel had moved to Nuremberg, where he became rector of the Ägydiengymnasium. In Jena and later in Heidelberg people remarked on Hegel’s “tormented lecture style”; in Nuremberg, by contrast, “his students remembered him as an inspiring teacher.” He was also known especially for his concern and care for students in financial hardship.

Hegel’s great philosophical achievement in Nuremberg was the completion and publication of his three-volume Science of Logic (1812–1816), a work of formidable complexity that presents his speculative logic. The most significant event in his personal life was his marriage in September 1811 to Marie von Tucher, the daughter of a prominent Nuremberg family. A month after the wedding Hegel wrote to his friend, Niethammer, of his newly found happiness: “on the whole – apart from a few modifications still to be desired – I have now reached my earthly goal. For what more does one want in this world than a post and a dear wife?” The Hegels’ first-born child, a daughter, Susanna, died in August 1812, just six weeks old. A son, Karl, was then born in June 1813 and a second son, Immanuel, was born in September 1814. (Karl edited and published the now familiar second edition of Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of world history in 1840.)

Among the “few modifications” that Hegel still desired, even after his marriage, was a secure, salaried position teaching philosophy at a university. In the autumn of 1816, at the age of 46, he finally fulfilled his desire by becoming Professor of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. There he lectured on the history of philosophy, logic and metaphysics, anthropology and psychology, political philosophy, and aesthetics, and in 1817 he published the first edition of his Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences.
In the spring of 1817 Hegel and his wife took Hegel’s illegitimate son, Ludwig Fischer, now ten years old, into their household in Heidelberg. Ludwig had previously been brought up in an orphanage in Jena run by the sisters-in-law of Hegel’s friend, Karl Friedrich Frommann, and in April 1817 Hegel describes to Frommann the pleasure that both he and his wife now take in his son. Hegel writes that Ludwig “gives evidence of a good mind. He is now attending the local gymnasium, which to be sure could be better. But I am most surprised at how much Latin he has learned this past winter.” Ludwig’s own recollections of his time in Heidelberg were, however, somewhat less positive: “I lived always in fear of, but never with love toward, my parents – a relationship that necessarily produced a constant tension that could never do any good.”

In 1818 Hegel left Heidelberg to become Professor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin. During his years in Berlin Hegel published his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1820) and two further editions of his *Encyclopedia* (1827, 1830). He also gave lectures on the whole of his philosophical system, including philosophy of nature, philosophy of history, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, and the history of philosophy. It was through these lectures above all that Hegel exercised influence on his contemporaries.

Hegel became a prominent public figure in Berlin during the 1820s, socializing with politicians, such as Johannes Schulze, a minister in Karl Siegmund Altenstein’s ministry for “Religious, Educational and Medical Affairs,” and with leading figures in the arts, such as the opera singer Anna Milder-Hauptmann, who was admired by Beethoven and Goethe. There was, however, little public engagement with Hegel’s *philosophy* during his lifetime (in marked contrast to the public interest shown in the thought of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling). Many of Hegel’s colleagues at the University of Berlin, such as Schleiermacher, were actively hostile to Hegel’s philosophy, and the broader educated public did not devour Hegel’s published works with any great enthusiasm. (Walter Jaeschke notes that the first edition of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, published in 1807 with a print run of only 750 copies, was still available in 1829, the year in which Hegel was made rector of the university.) What influence Hegel did exercise was confined principally to his lectures, which were attended by, among others, Ludwig Feuerbach, David Friedrich Strauss, and the young Felix Mendelssohn. Only after Hegel’s death in 1831 did his influence spread, aided by the new edition of his works (including revised versions of his lectures) produced by his friends and by the critical reception of those works by figures such as Feuerbach, Marx, and Kierkegaard.

In the 1850s Rudolf Haym asserted that Hegel’s philosophy was the “scientific home of the spirit of the Prussian restoration.” In this way Haym helped to popularize the idea that Hegel is authoritarian, reactionary, and hostile to the cause of modern freedom: the now familiar “philosopher of the Prussian state.” The charge frequently leveled against Hegel in the more immediate aftermath of his death, however, was that his philosophy was at odds with the principles of the Prussian restoration. Hegel’s strongly monarchist opponent, Karl Ernst Schubarth, published a work in 1839 entitled *On the Irreconciliability of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State with the Supreme Principle Governing the Life and Development of the Prussian State*, and, in my view, Schubarth is much closer to the truth than Haym and those influenced by him.
During his years in Berlin Hegel was, indeed, an employee of the Prussian state (since all university professors, including opponents of Hegel, such as Schleiermacher, were state employees), but it is important to note that he was called to Berlin by a reform-minded minister in the Prussian government, namely Altenstein. Furthermore, Hegel never became close to King Friedrich Wilhelm III or to the party of restoration that surrounded him; nor did he have any special influence on the government. Indeed, unlike many colleagues, Hegel was never made a Privy Councillor. Hegel was thus by no means as closely associated with the reactionary figures in the Prussian state as Haym (and others, such as Karl Popper) would have us believe.

On the contrary, Hegel sympathized deeply with the advocates of reform, and his distance from, indeed opposition to, the party of restoration is evident from his scathing criticism of one of the latter’s chief philosophical spokesmen, Carl Ludwig von Haller. Haller, Hegel tells us, maintains that it is “the eternal, unalterable, ordinance of God, that the mightier rules, must rule, and will always rule.” In Hegel’s view, however, this exhibits Haller’s “virulent hatred of all laws and legislation, of all formally and legally determined right,” and so shows him to be at odds with the principles of modern freedom that Hegel himself endorses. Popper accuses Hegel of proclaiming the “doctrine that might is right.” Hegel’s criticism of the party of restoration, however, is precisely that it equates might with right by defending power and privilege against the modern insistence on the primacy of freedom, right, and law.

In March 1819 the playwright August von Kotzebue was murdered by Karl Ludwig Sand, a member of the student fraternity, or Burschenschaft, at the University of Erlangen. Prompted by the Austrian Foreign Minister, Metternich, the governments in Germany and the federal parliament in Frankfurt responded to the murder by passing, in August and September 1819, the “Karlsbad Decrees,” under which universities became subject to more and more repressive scrutiny. Censorship was increased, and lecturers or professors who were suspected of promoting “demagogical,” or in other respects “liberal,” tendencies ran the real risk of losing their posts. In the period before and after the passing of the Karlsbad Decrees not only Hegel himself, but also some of his students, fell under suspicion. In July 1819, for example, one student, Leopold von Henning, was arrested on the basis of comments in letters sent to him and was held for seven weeks. Then, in December 1819, Hegel’s choice for his teaching assistant, Friedrich Wilhelm Carové, was denounced as a subversive and thereupon advised by Altenstein to leave Berlin. Hegel clearly felt under threat himself and in October 1819 wrote to his friend, Friedrich Creuzer:

I am about to be fifty years old, and I have spent thirty of these fifty years in these ever-unrestful times of hope and fear. I had hoped that for once we might be done with it. Now I must confess that things continue as ever. Indeed, in one’s darker hours it seems they are getting ever worse.

Hegel’s fears were by no means unjustified, and at the time of Carové’s denunciation he was precariously close to being denounced himself. Although Hegel was charged by Haym with supporting the conservative and reactionary policies of the Prussian state, he was in fact strongly opposed to the party of restoration that instigated those policies, and after 1819 felt (with justification) threat-
Hegel’s commitment to law, freedom, and right was not merely a personal preference, but a commitment firmly rooted in his systematic philosophy. For the remainder of this Introduction I will give an – all too brief – account of the central themes of that philosophy.

Logic and Phenomenology

Hegel’s philosophy has been, and is still, interpreted by commentators in widely differing ways. Some see Hegel as completing Kant’s project of establishing the transcendental conditions of human cognition; others see him as continuing the work of pre-Kantian philosophers, such as Spinoza, by showing us what being is in itself. Some see Hegel as a deeply religious, indeed profoundly Christian, thinker; others concur with Robert Solomon’s judgment that Hegel is “the precursor of atheistic humanism in German philosophy.”48 Some, as I noted above, see Hegel as a political reactionary; others see him as a dedicated advocate of human freedom. My aim here is not to try to do justice to the manifold ways in which Hegel’s thought has been understood. I propose, rather, to provide a brief sketch of Hegel’s system as I understand it, and to leave it to readers to explore other interpretations, many of which are represented in this collection, by themselves.

The first work published by the mature Hegel is his Phenomenology (1807). On my reading, however, phenomenology does not form part of Hegel’s philosophy proper, but provides a systematic introduction to that philosophy – “the way to Science,” as Hegel puts it.49 Hegel’s philosophy proper starts with speculative logic, which is set out in fully developed form in the Science of Logic (the so-called Greater Logic) (1812–1816, 1832) and in abbreviated form in the first part of the Encyclopaedia (the so-called Lesser Logic) (1817, 1827, 1830).

Speculative logic provides an account of the pure categories of thought, such as “being,” “cause,” “substance” and “object” (rather than empirical concepts, such as “tree” or “chair”). Some commentators thus take Hegel to be doing no more in his logic than showing us what it is to think properly. To my mind, by contrast, Hegel’s logic unfolds the categories through which the fundamental forms or ways of being are disclosed. Speculative logic, therefore, is at the same time a fully-fledged ontology or metaphysics that tells us a priori what there is (and must be), in a manner akin to that of Spinoza in the Ethics.50 In such logic, as Hegel puts it, “being is known to be the pure concept [Begriff] in its own self, and the pure concept to be true being.” The “element” of speculative logic is thus not just thought, but the “unity” of thought and being.51

Speculative logic discovers the basic categories of thought (and forms of being) by rendering explicit what is implicit in the thought of pure being. In this way, logic discloses the categories and forms that are immanent in pure being itself. An important result of Hegel’s immanent logic is that each form of being proves to be inseparable from its negation; indeed, it proves in a certain respect to be its own negation. This result sets Hegel at odds with previous metaphysicians, such as Plato and Spinoza, whom in other
The process of becoming, or proving to be, one’s own opposite, simply by being what one is, is what Hegel understands by *dialectic.*

It is a genuine universal, therefore, only to the extent that it particularizes, individuates, and thereby determines itself. When being is understood explicitly to be, not just “something,” or the “cause” of certain “effects,” but the process of self-determination, it is understood to be what Hegel calls “the absolute Idea [Idee].”

Hegel’s speculative logic discloses what he understands to be the true nature of being itself, and in that sense it continues the project of pre-Kantian metaphysics and ontology. Such logic is, however, a distinctively post-Kantian enterprise for two reasons. On the one hand, speculative logic tells us about being by setting out the fundamental *categories of thought* in and through which the character of being is disclosed, and, in Hegel’s view, it is above all Kant’s great merit to have focused philosophical attention on those categories (even though Kant himself did not accept that being could be known through categories alone). As Hegel puts it, it was Kant’s critical philosophy that “turned metaphysics into logic,” that is, into the explicit study of thought.

On the other hand, Kant’s promotion of the idea of philosophical critique prompted Hegel to take such critique to its logical conclusion. In Hegel’s view, that means taking nothing for granted in advance about thought or being, except for the bare idea that thought discloses being. Hegel’s logic is a post-Kantian logic-cum-metaphysics, therefore, because it begins by setting aside all determinate presuppositions about philosophical method, the structure of specific categories, and the nature of being itself.
Speculative logic does not assume (with Aristotle and most of the tradition) that philosophy should avoid contradiction, or (with Kant) that concepts are “predicates of possible judgments,” or (with Spinoza) that “whatever is, is either in itself or in another.”

On the contrary, Hegel insists that speculative philosophy should eschew all such assumptions and be “preceded by universal doubt, i.e., by total presuppositionlessness [Voraussetzungslosigkeit].” Speculative logic may begin, therefore, with nothing but the utterly indeterminate and empty category of “pure being”; to start with anything more determinate than this – for example, with the idea of possibility, or substance, or “will” – would presuppose too much about being at the outset and so violate the modern, post-Kantian requirement that thought be thoroughly self-critical. (The bare idea that thought discloses being is not itself to be regarded as a mere presupposition, by the way. For Hegel, it is the idea we are left with when we suspend the unwarranted assumption made by abstract, “reflective understanding” that thought and being are quite separate from one another.)

In the Science of Logic Hegel maintains that nothing is required in order to begin speculative logic except “the resolve [Entschluss], which can also be regarded as arbitrary, that we propose to consider thought as such” and the readiness to “rid oneself of all other reflections and opinions whatever.” Hegel also argues, however, that the standpoint of speculative logic cannot be justified unless it can be shown to emerge “in consciousness.” Is Hegel being inconsistent here? I think not. His position, as I understand it, is this: philosophical thought can begin to think speculatively simply by setting traditional conceptions of thought and being to one side and starting with the indeterminate category of pure being. Doing so, however, will appear quite unjustified to ordinary, non-philosophical consciousness that is not moved by the spirit of modern self-criticism and that rejects the idea that we can know the nature of being simply by thinking about it. The standpoint of speculative philosophy will appear justified to ordinary, non-philosophical consciousness only if that standpoint is shown to be made necessary by the commitments of such consciousness itself. The task of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit is precisely to show this to be the case.

On this interpretation, the Phenomenology does not present Hegel’s own understanding of the world directly. It examines an array of alternative views of the world, or “shapes” [Gestalten] of consciousness, and shows that they are led by their own experience to mutate into one another and eventually into the standpoint of speculative philosophy. The viewpoints examined in the Phenomenology count as shapes of consciousness because they assume a certain “antithesis,” or contrast, between the knowing subject and the object known. Sense-certainty, for example, distinguishes between itself – this I – and its object – this, here, now – and perception distinguishes between itself and the things it encounters.

Hegel writes that “the standpoint of consciousness which knows objects in their antithesis to itself, and itself in antithesis to them, is for Science [i.e., speculative philosophy] the other [das Andere] of its own standpoint.” This is because speculative philosophy understands being to be disclosed in and through the categories of thought and not to be something “over there” to which we have to gain access, as it were, from “over here.” The aim of phenomenology, therefore, is to show that the antithesis in consciousness between itself and its object is progressively undermined in the course of its experience and eventually gives way to the position of speculative philosophy.
which “unites the objective form of truth and of the knowing self in an immediate unity.”

In the course of the Phenomenology Hegel describes many shapes of consciousness that have emerged at certain points in human history, including, for example, the consciousness of “absolute freedom” (manifest in the French Revolution). Other shapes are more abstract and less easy to locate historically, including sense-certainty and perception, and some are found principally in works of art, such as the “ethical order” (encountered in Sophocles’ Antigone). Some shapes are theoretical, some practical, some aesthetic, some religious; some are shapes of individual consciousness, some “shapes of a world.” What connects each shape to the next one, however, is always the same thing, namely the experience that is made by each shape or, rather, that logically should be made if the shape is to be true to its own conception of its object. Phenomenology is thus a systematic account of the logically necessary experience of consciousness, an account that starts with the simplest shape of consciousness – bare sense-certainty – and leads eventually to the standpoint of speculative philosophy. As such, phenomenology justifies that standpoint to non-philosophical consciousness (or to philosophers wedded to a non-philosophical view of things).

Philosophy of Nature and Spirit

If phenomenology precedes speculative logic, what follows such logic in Hegel’s system is the philosophy of nature. The latter is made necessary by the fact that self-determining reason, or the idea that being proves to be, is not purely and simply what it is but is itself “the negative of itself.” Such reason thus necessarily takes the form of unreason, more specifically, Hegel claims, the “unreason of externality.” According to Hegel’s metaphysics, therefore, what actually exists is not pure reason or logos alone, but being that is wholly external to itself. Such being, we are told, is space (which is itself inseparable from time). Reason, for Hegel, is inherent in space and time, and indeed in nature as a whole, but it is inextricably mixed with its negation: contingency. Such contingency may be explicable from the point of view of natural science, but from the perspective of philosophical reason it is non-rational. It thus constitutes what Hegel calls “the impotence of nature”: nature’s essential inability to be completely rational.

Significantly, Hegel notes that “this impotence of nature sets limits to philosophy.” Hegel is sometimes accused of trying to explain absolutely everything through the workings of the dialectic, but this is clearly not his ambition. On the contrary, he insists that “it is quite improper to expect the Concept [Begriff] to comprehend – or as it is said, construe or deduce – these contingent products of nature.” In Hegel’s day, apparently, over 60 species of parrot were known; it is certainly not the task of philosophy, however, to explain why this should be the case.

The task of philosophy is, rather, to work out what is made necessary by the reason inherent in space and time themselves. Hegel argues that such reason requires there to be motion, gravity, light, electricity, magnetism, and physical, chemical, and organic matter. Together these phenomena thus constitute what philosophy understands by the term “nature.” Hegel is not concerned with the temporal processes that produce these phenomena. He is not seeking to explain the genesis of matter and gravity, or the