'Absolute Negativity': Community and Freedom in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

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Twenty years ago, in his *Political Theory and Modernity*, William E. Connolly developed a striking thesis regarding Hegel's theory of community and freedom. With reference mainly to Friedrich Nietzsche, he maintained that no philosophy before Hegel had so clearly revealed the internal contradiction in the modern system of beliefs. He argued that the modern self is committed to reconciliation with others in institutional life, but that, as Hegel showed, this commitment entails certain religious and metaphysical assumptions. Because these assumptions cannot be sustained, the modern will to reconciliation, the politics of community and inclusion, must appear in a very different light - not as a positive and liberating activity, as Hegel believed, but 'as a set of subtle tyrannies applied by the world to the individual and by the individual to itself'.[1]

This paradoxical and ironic thesis, offered with much erudition and wit, helped to clarify what had long been said by a wide range of thinkers, including Martin Heidegger, Karl Löwith, Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault. All had maintained in different ways that Hegel's theory of community and freedom was an extreme - perhaps ultimate - version of the same one-sided, abstract subjectivity that he himself had exposed in modern philosophy and that could be seen everywhere in modern political institutions. But what then could be said on behalf of these institutions? The characteristically modern will to live in harmony with others under conditions of freedom for all appears (in this post-Nietzschean perspective) to be either naive or malicious, or both.

More recent studies have looked at these issues in a different light. The Nietzschean outlook has been subjected to criticism, and many commentators on the history of modern philosophy and politics, and especially on Hegel's relation to that history, have made us more aware of the depth and power of modern political institutions.[2]

Jürgen Habermas has perhaps made the most significant contribution to studies of this type. While his numerous and always many-sided accounts of modern philosophy, and of the relations between philosophy and institutions, can in no way be called 'Hegelian,' they do frequently highlight the cardinal importance of Hegel's philosophy and seem inevitably to be led back to Hegel as a prime source for our understanding of modern freedom. In one of his recent books, *Time of Transitions*, Habermas acknowledges the perceived conflict in modern Europe between the 'collective identity'

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[1] William E. Connolly, Political Theory and Modernity (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 1988, 90.
[2] See, for example, John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); John Rawls*, Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); and Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

of particular states, on the one side, and a universalistic 'self-critical' reflection, on the other, and adds that Hegel was the first modern philosopher to express 'fear' regarding 'the destabilizing implications of moral universalism.'[3]

The remark is interesting. It highlights an important controversy in Europe and invites us to reconsider Hegel's thoughts on the conflict between the modern state and the moral freedom of individuals. In doing so, we will look at the *Philosophy of Right* - Hegel's masterpiece of political theory - and recall at least some of the larger historical, religious and philosophical context in which he forged his understanding of community and freedom.

In the concluding passage of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel speaks of the Christian spirit of the modern European world.[4] The Christian union of divine and human, he says, exists not only in the inner 'realm of mind', but also in the 'mundane realm' of the political community. In the laws and institutions of the state, the human mind finds 'its heaven', its 'reconciliation' with the divine, in 'an earthly here and now' (sec. 360). But there is a dreadful complexity at the heart of the state: it exists in empirical actuality, in the external world, and at this level the self-conscious individual does not know or will its own ideal truth.

This is, for Hegel, a matter of huge significance. He makes it clear that the state is embodied in time and conditioned by the external world. It is essentially ideal and universal, but also in its manifestation particular and limited. So, for example, it is always a single state, 'a unit, exclusive of other units' (sec. 321). The other side of this exclusive state is the freedom of individuals to oppose it in the name of a higher ideal. The result is an all-too-familiar clash of morals and politics, and the demand 'that the latter should conform to the former' (sec. 327). It seems, then, that the modern state has in it two radically different kinds of conscience, one moral and another political.

Hegel thought that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was a time when this clash between morals and politics became explicit. Europeans could be so moralistic because for them human knowledge and free will were related to, and conditioned by, a material presupposition. On this view, any state, any political community, can be understood as the result of the interaction, the interchange, of free individuals with the external world. In other words, humans have their freedom, and a state of their own, by means of their own power to change and transform - to work on, to negate - their immediate surroundings. But the freedom is subjective, and the unity of the state is compromised by the negation present in it, i.e. the antithesis of free will to external

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[3] Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, trans. Ciaran Cronin and Max Pensky (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2006), 54-6.

[4] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 222-3. German: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), vol. 7, 512. Henceforth cited by section numbers in the text of my paper, within parentheses. Remarks are indicated by an R.

things. The consequences of this conception of freedom are extremely destabilizing.[5] For Hegel, however, this instability points not only to the unlimited freedom of the will, its infinite potential, but also to its real presence. Free will is not just infinite, but the 'infinite in actuality', in the same way that 'externality is inwardness itself' (sec. 22).

The external and the internal, the real and the ideal, pass into one another and are ultimately inseparable. To think otherwise is to make the union of individuals with the state, and indeed the union of the state with the divine, unintelligible. But Hegel does not simply insist on that union. Rather, he lets it appear on the side of individuals who at first have no knowledge of it. Everything turns on the negative factor.[6] To begin with, Hegel says, the single will of individuals is characterized by 'immediacy', and as such is 'a negative actuality, an actuality contrasted with the real world' (sec. 34). True, the individual in this negative mode seeks stability in relation to external things, and to some extent achieves it, for in possessing property it is 'an actual will' for the first time (sec. 45). This is the 'abstract right' of John Locke and his eighteenth-century followers. But property and the contracts that go with it involve comparison and competition and thus the same negative or destructive energy that gives rise to 'crime'. Crime in turn calls for 'punishment', that is, a limit to this negativity and destructiveness, in a will to justice distinct from revenge, 'a will which, though particular and subjective, yet wills the universal as such' (sec. 103). Locke and the Enlightenment no doubt wanted a justice distinct from revenge, but Hegel thinks that the 'external formation' he has described makes necessary a higher and more inward form of will, namely 'morality' (sec. 104).

Of course, this kind of moral reflection, which finds its clearest expression in Kant and Fichte, is directed exclusively at the universalization of interests. And this is its fatal flaw. Hegel's extended critique of this moral point of view is devastating (secs. 105-56). He argues that a universalistic ethics of duty, in contrast to an Aristotelian ethics of the good life, or even a Lockean ethics of self-preservation, is too empty to inspire real commitment. It puts priority on good intentions, as opposed to bad outcomes, and is oblivious to the conflict of norms with each other. It has no connection with present reality, with deep feeling or with the self-understanding of others in the political community. Indeed, it can experience nothing but its own 'vacuity' and 'gradual evaporation' (sec. 141).

Hegel clearly had no sympathy for high-minded, moral individuals who were willing to sacrifice and negate themselves in this way.[7] But he is not saying that this

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[5] In contemplating this destabilizing conception of freedom, commentators often set up an antinomy between liberal and communitarian attitudes, putting Hegel on one side or the other. For a thoughtful critique of this tendency, see Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 224-33.

[6] In what follows, I have drawn on the more formal discussion of 'negation' in G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), part one, *Hegel's Logic*, secs. 50, 51, 192 and 204. German: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, I, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke*, vol. 8.

[7] Hegel thought that this extreme form of moral subjectivism could be seen in some of Fichte's followers, e.g. Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson [1896] reprint (New York: The Humanities Press, 1974), vol. III, 506ff. German: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, vol. 20, 415ff. Cf. Manfred Frank,

negative will requires compensation or relief of some sort - that it is excessively negative, so to speak. Certainly, the emptiness of morality must be made good at the level of institutional life. But the moral will itself can come to this insight. It abolishes and destroys its own particular interests, but only insofar as they are separate from the good of institutions. The moral self-consciousness which only ought to be good, but is not, which denies the good its actuality, comes to nothing, and thereby negates itself. In its impotence and emptiness, however, it is already 'implicitly' at one with the institutions of 'ethical life' (sec. 141).

The moral subject that is strong enough to will and experience its own nothingness is thus the turning-point; it is the 'infinite form' in which the 'objective ethical order… comes on the scene '. It can now be known that only 'laws and institutions' give the will to goodness 'a stable content'. Indeed, Hegel says that ethical order can now be seen as 'independently necessary and subsistent' over against 'subjective opinion and caprice' (sec. 144). This is clearly not an individualistic standpoint. But individuals here are not like empty rooms which have to be furnished from without by separately existing objects. Subjectivity is dialectical: it breaks through its own emptiness and into objectivity by means of its own will as well as the already existing ethical-political institutional order.[8]

The central institutions of society and state elevate individuals above their arbitrary opinions and preferences, and yet it is these same individuals that make these institutions active and fully present. This conflict-ridden integration between institutions and free individuals harmonizes the community and its diverse interests, and makes the good will of individuals real and vital by transforming it into something definite and specific: 'In an ethical community, it is easy to say what man must do, what are the duties he has to fulfill in order to be virtuous: he has simply to follow the well-known and explicit rules of his own situation' (sec. 150R). The immanent substance of the community, 'put in the place of the initial, purely natural wiIl', exists now as a 'second nature' (sec. 151).

Hegel's vision of political community is at one with the modern idea of freedom. The self-conscious or rational subject is not required to affirm anything that he finds unacceptable or unjustified in the light of his own reason: 'The principle of modern states has prodigious strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme of self-subsistent personal particularity, and yet at the same time brings it back to the substantive unity and so maintains this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself' (sec. 160). The substantial unity of the state appears in relation to the extreme individuality of the multitude of fragmented individuals, whose independence it is able (by virtue of a long history) to control and regulate from within.

The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism (Albany: SUNY, 2004), 2,19, 27-9, 145-57, 208-15.
[8] Hegel praises Schiller for being the first modern to break through the barrier of Kantian-inspired moral subjectivism and affirm the substance of political life. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, 61. German: *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in *Werke*, vol. 13, 89. For helpful comments on Schiller's concept of freedom, see Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-examination* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005), 213-19, 234.

There is a two-way convergence. On the one hand, in accordance with the principle of actualizing the equal freedom of all, institutions themselves assume a rational form. On the other, each individual, while keeping to himself and taking care of his own interests, feels the underlying substance of the state to be his very own being; he looks upon the state as his ultimate final end.

Yet Hegel transcends the usual modern point of view - e.g. that of Locke or Kant - when he says that the state as a political entity presupposes an already existing constitution, which should be regarded *not* 'as something made', but as 'divine' and 'constant'. Like Aristotle, Hegel sees the substance of a political community as superior in authority to the subjective opinions of 'atomic individuals' (sec. 273R). He does not endorse the modern understanding of 'representation' even with regard to representative parliamentary assemblies; here too he appeals to an Aristotelian concept of substantial presence: 'Hence representation cannot now be taken to mean simply the substitution of one man for another; the point is rather that the interest [of society] is actually present in its representative' (sec. 311R). The good of the state is an objectively existing good.[9]

To be sure, as mentioned above, Hegel says that the national spirit stands in a wider world of conflict and contingency. In relation to other national spirits, other particular states, it finds itself in 'a maelstrom of external contingency and the inner particularity of passions, private interests and selfish ends, abilities and virtues, vices, force, and wrong. All these whirl together, and in their vortex the ethical whole itself, the autonomy of the state, is exposed to contingency.' This is a dramatic and unfortunately much neglected aspect of Hegel's political thought. At issue is the 'dialectic' of finite states. Out of it Hegel develops his conception of 'world history', that is, his vision of a historical process free of the restrictions and temporal limitations of particular national 'deeds and destinies' (sec. 340). Out of it too he develops the concept of 'absolute,' as opposed to 'objective,' spirit. In absolute sprit, humans come to a higher knowledge of the divine, beyond the necessity of nature and the necessity of history.[10]

But Hegel's God is not the old Neoplatonic idea of an absolute other, a hidden God, utterly beyond nature and history.[11] So the starting-point of this transition to a

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[9] Hegel, of course, extends Aristotle's theory of the state to include the modern conception of the subjective freedom of individuals. See the comments on the limited and parochial character of the ancient Greek city-state in G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 254-6. German: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte,* in *Werke*, vol. 12, 310-12. See too the discussion in Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 9.

[10] Hegel's conception of 'absolute spirit' clearly owes much to the Neoplatonists. See the discussion of Plotinus and his successors in G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson [1894] reprint (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), vol. II, 404ff. German: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, vol. 19, 435ff. For the deep connections between Hegel and the Neoplatonists, see Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972), 144-87.

[11] Hegel admired the all-inclusive, systematic logic of Neoplatonism, but thought that it was limited by the 'unhappiness of the Roman world'. Unlike modern Europeans, the pagan Neoplatonists did not (and could not) know themselves as free in the world, i.e. in 'nature' and 'citizen life'. See *History of Philosophy*, vol. II, 386-7. German: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 19, 416-18. For the important differences between Hegel and the Neoplatonists, see Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie: Ontologie und*

higher knowledge of the divine is the particular national spirit itself, which from its earliest beginnings already (and always) contains the concrete activity of God. In Europe, the strife among states is endless. But the negativity of history, the sheer violence and contingency of it, purges the national spirit of its particular form so that its individual members may grasp their own ideal truth, the substantial content of their starting-point. In this process, individuals rise both to the objective standpoint of the state and to the absolute standpoint of religion. They come to see at once the substantial presence of God in the world and the freedom of humans in union with him. This happens in different ways, depending on the time and the place, the country and the century. But, for Hegel, modern Europeans really do come to a certain completion: they move to 'absolute' self-knowledge and thus to a form of consciousness free of 'natural immediacy' (sec. 352).

Hegel now enters more deeply into a discussion of the union of the divine and the human, of objectivity and subjectivity, as it appears in northern Europe, the so-called 'Germanic' realm. As is well known, he traces the source of northern European freedom back to the rise of Christianity in the ancient world. Less well known is his view that the Jews are more significant in this context than the Greeks or Romans.[12] He states emphatically that the Christian religion arose from out of the ancient Jewish experience of 'infinite grief'. The meaning of this expression is not hard to fathom. After all, in the course of their subjection to the Roman Empire, the Jewish people suffered the destruction of their homeland and particular way of life. They were stripped of their possessions and dignity and, most importantly, found that they were powerless to save themselves. As individuals, they knew themselves to be null and void, both outwardly and inwardly. As Hegel says, 'Mind is here pressed back upon itself in the extreme of its absolute negativity.' But this is what made the rise of Christianity both necessary and possible: 'mind rises out of this situation and grasps the infinite positivity of this its inward character, i.e. it grasps the principle of the unity of the divine and the human' (sec. 358).

As opposed to the pagan conception of fate, we have here the consciousness of grace and the movement of the mind to God. This state of mind Hegel finds 'most purely and beautifully' expressed in the Prophets and in the Psalms of David, 'the chief burden of whose utterances is the thirst of the soul after God, its profound sorrow for its transgressions, and the desire for righteousness and holiness'. The Jewish consciousness of 'evil', of human 'wretchedness' and 'nothingness,' is the pivot, the hinge, on which the whole of world history turns. From this unrest and sorrow - in which God seems to have abandoned the world - there is developed the Christian doctrine of the reconciliation of the world. The isolated individual, in '*the fullness of Time,*' discovers that his 'infinite loss' is actually his 'infinite gain.' Such is, for Hegel, the epoch-making appeal, 'the

Dialektik in Antike und Neuzeit (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 132-59; and Jens Halfwassen, *Hegel und der spätantike Neuplatonismus: Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Einen und des Nous in Hegels spekulativer und geschichtlicher Deutung*, 2nd rev. ed. [1st ed., 1999], *Hegel-Studien* 40 (2005), 299 ff.

[12] For an excellent summary of Hegel's views on Judaism, see Emil Fackenhem, *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 197-201; and Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 56-64.

inherent vital movement', of the Christian religion: 'Suffering itself is henceforth recognized as an instrument for producing the unity of man with God.'[13]

It easily appears that this account of the affirmative aspect of the divine-human relation makes God's activity, his freedom, somehow dependent on the world. But Hegel is not saying that there are conditions for what is unconditioned; he is not making God's relation to the world dependent on the world or on the human interaction with it. On the contrary, he uses the phrase 'absolute negativity' in order to correct this impression.

The process Hegel brings to light is one in which humans, in the throes of their own pain and suffering, turn inward away from the external world. That inward turn of the mind means that the external world and the human relation to it have no ultimate value, no absolute truth. Simply put, the external world comes to nothing in the end. But because the being of the world is annulled in this way, it cannot serve as the means of reaching God. There is no 'dualism' here; the apparent means and process of working through the 'finite' to the 'infinite' is cancelled in the very activity by which it proceeds (sec. 6R). For Hegel, this simple and pure negativity is the truest and most adequate basis of belief in the union of divine and human. True religion takes its starting-point not in the given world and the finite understanding of it, but in that activity, that negativity, by which humans annihilate the natural and the temporal in their spirit and elevate themselves to God.[14]

The truth of Hegel's God is manifested in the world in deed. That is why it can become the object of human knowledge and will. Like Aristotle's God, Hegel's God is the self-revealing, fully present good in nature and history. Yet Hegel comes to his vision of God, and holds to it, by way of the modern principle of subjectivity. He declares that the 'right of the subject's particularity, his right to be satisfied,' is both Christian and the 'centre of difference between antiquity and modern times' (124R).

According to Hegel, Aristotle regarded the knowledge of God as 'the highest truth', but did not present this knowledge as the point of unity from which all other knowledge is developed. Aristotle left the impression that, from the human point of view, knowledge of God and knowledge of the external world are unrelated. This opened the way for the dogmatic and sceptical schools of ancient philosophy, in which all consciousness of the unity of the external world and the human, of the objective and the subjective, was lost. The objective and subjective were 'mutually distinguished,' and human freedom appeared only 'formally and abstractly,' that is, as a hopelessly 'one-sided' principle.[15] This was the inevitable result of pagan culture.

Hegel's God is not only the ground - the absolute unity - of all things, but the free spirit that reveals this unity to individual human beings. From this point of view, the finite external world cannot serve as the starting-point of Hegel's philosophy. The ancient Greek and Roman could accept such a condition, but the modern European is too willful

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[13] *Philosophy of History*, 321-4; *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 388-92.

[14] See the *Logic*, sec. 50.

[15] See *History of Philosophy*, vol. II, 229-30. German: *Geschichte der Philosophie,* vol. 19, 247-8.

and restless to tolerate anything simply given. This is why the actual starting-point of Hegel's (thoroughly Christian, thoroughly modern) philosophy is the infinitely inward world of human freedom.[16] And, truly, one always finds Hegel eager to affirm the 'right of subjective freedom', though never in a merely human or 'psychological' form (sec. 124R).

Again, it is important to see that Hegel arrives at the goal that he advances through negations that are ever more extreme and thoroughgoing. But this is not to say that he leaves no space for alternative interpretations of the same natural and historical phenomena. On the contrary, alternative, even radically conflicting, interpretations - ancient and modern, Western and non-Western - are crucial to his project of showing how defective and subordinate standpoints can be integrated into to an ever expanding - and intensifying - system of knowledge. For Hegel, it is always the lower standpoint that makes the higher standpoint necessary and possible; just as the higher standpoint always contains the lower. The defective and subordinate standpoints that are 'annulled' are also affirmed as 'moments' of the system. Only in this way, Hegel says, can one claim to have 'proved' one's system, instead of merely asserting it on the basis of some private intuition or 'feeling' (sec. 141R).

This is what makes the *Philosophy of Right* so fascinating and instructive. It does not merely expose the debilitating antagonisms lurking within modern political institutions. It shows how this instability, this 'evil,' is itself the means by which moderns can discover a higher principle of harmony and reconciliation (sec. 140). It does not merely reveal the extremes of self-negation to which thought must go if it falls short of the eternal and the substantial. It teaches that the eternal substance is present in 'the temporal and transient,' that 'what is, is reason' (Preface, pp. 10-11).

Critics, including Habermas and Connolly, often complain that Hegel's philosophy was a dogmatic attempt to cover up and suppress the deep-seated conflicts of the modern European state. Hegel himself, however, as we have seen, spoke of the natural and temporal limitations of the modern state and looked beyond them to the wider - and higher - process of 'world history' as well as to the 'absolute,' i.e. eternal and substantial, content of religion and philosophy. With the levelling power of history, its destructiveness, fully in view, he exhorted his readers to elevate themselves in mind to the divine.

It is true, though, that Hegel was not satisfied with the view that history is a levelling power. Such a view, he says, implies that God is a dark, unintelligible, purely destructive agent in the world - the 'Nemesis' of mankind. By contrast, if one elevates oneself in mind to God, one will discover, as Plato and Aristotle did, that 'God is not *envious.*'[17]

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[16] Hegel clearly takes sides in the famous *querelle des anciens et des modernes*. For a penetrating discussion of this point, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 7-9, 33-4, 58-9.

[17] *The Philosophy of Mind*, sec. 564. The reference is to the well-known passage in Plato's *Timaeus*, 29-30: 'God is the Good', and 'goodness has no jealousy of anything'. And 'being free from jealousy, God desired

As Hegel puts it, a true knowledge of God involves God's 'revelation' of himself. In other terms, God's 'self-knowledge' is present and at work in human 'self-consciousness,' with the result that 'man's knowledge *of* God' is actually 'man's knowledge *in* God.'[18] Here again, though Hegel is always ready to invoke the authority of Plato and Aristotle, we can see the Christian doctrine of the 'reconciliation' of the world.[19]

In all this, it is clear at the very least that Hegel did not 'fear' 'the destabilizing consequences of moral universalism'; his sense of self and trust in the world were absolutely grounded. Nor would he allow that the modern synthesis of community and freedom could dissolve into a 'set of subtle tyrannies' without revealing ever more intense forms of disorder and demoralization, of antithesis and negativity. Indeed, he relentlessly followed the path of this negativity to the point where everything natural, everything human, appears to be nothing, merely temporary and fleeting, in relation to the irresistible power of God.[20] At the same time, he saw nature and humanity, however temporally conditioned, as positive and adequate expressions of the all-affirming goodness of God.[21]

Whatever one thinks of this philosophical theology, whether one ultimately accepts it as credible or not, one must admit that it was very finely attuned to the conflicts of modernity. Though not the last, Hegel was the first philosopher to see with such clarity the contradictory nature of the modern world - the negative, which is implied in the affirmation of it. He developed his conception of unity and reconciliation from out of the deepest divisions of divine and human, of community and freedom. And he did this so well, in so many varied (and variable) contexts, that his philosophy will undoubtedly continue to serve as a source of inspiration for genuine reflection on these issues.

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to make all things like himself'. Hegel defends Plato's claim to knowledge of the goodness of God and even interprets it in a Christian light, i.e. as the work of the 'Holy Ghost'. See *History of Philosophy*, vol. II, 72-3. German: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 19, 87-8. For the influence of the *Timaeus* on Hegel, see H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight, 1770-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 102-3, 126n.

[18] *Philosophy of Mind*, sec. 564.

[19] *Ibid*., sec. 566.

[20] See the *Logic*, sec. 50. Note Hegel's sympathetic attitude towards Spinoza. He defends the Jewish philosopher from accusations of 'atheism' that date back to the famous 'pantheism' controversy of the 1790s. See Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany: SUNY, 1982), ch. 6; and Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The Adventures of Immanence*, in *Spinoza and Other Heretics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), vol.2, ch.2.

[21] For this reason, Hegel criticizes Spinoza's 'acosmism'. Again, see the *Logic*, sec. 50.