

## HEGEL'S "EGOPHANIC REVOLT" AND VOEGELIN'S CRITIQUE

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**A**s the title indicates, the thinking of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and the critique of his thinking is the subject-matter of this paper. This implies that Hegel is understood to be part of the intellectual legacy of the French Revolution, or at least a translator and even a transformer of the ideas of the French Revolution. One must admit that Hegel, as an outstanding thinker of German Idealism together with Immanuel Kant (1742-1805), had an enormous impact on German intellectual life and also the so called "West" up until today.

In my paper I will in particular refer to the political scientist and philosopher of history Eric Voegelin (1901-1985).<sup>1</sup> A brief introduction to Voegelin's thoughts shall serve as a point of reference for a comparison to Hegel's thinking: At the center of Voegelin's

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1 Voegelin was originally from Vienna, where his academic career began; later he also taught in the United States of America and in Munich/Germany. For more information for his life and work see the Voegelin Societies in the United States and Germany: <https://ericvoegelin.org> and <http://eric-voegelin-gesellschaft.de>.

work is a theory of the order of man and society: "The reality of order is not my discovery. I speak of order in reality. By order we mean the experiential structure of reality and the attunement of man to an order that is not created by him, i.e. the cosmos."<sup>2</sup> For Voegelin, order always has a religious dimension. While searching for the concepts of order in the history of ideas, Voegelin stated that political ideas have their roots in "existential experiences" and beyond that always have an evocative character, i.e. they not only describe, but also always evoke political reality. True religious experiences form the foundation of every good political order, because it is the source of moral orientation in society and the basis of truth and rationality in general. In his studies on order in history Voegelin distinguishes three different "types of truths": the "cosmological truth" of the oriental kingdoms, the "anthropological truth" of the Greek classical period and the "soteriological truth" of Christianity. Where they exist, there is order, where they are destroyed, order is being destroyed.

Voegelin's philosophy is in particular also known for a critique of the deformations of the traditional notions of order. Voegelin sees the fundamental characteristic of modernity in the turning away from transcendence, which has led to the dissolution of the spiritual substance of our Christian civilizations. As a result, a whole bundle of measures came about with the help of which man tries to compensate for the loss of faith and meaning in the modern world. Voegelin tried to sum up these measures as "gnostic". Gnosis in Voegelin's understanding is characterized by the attempt to bring about man's self-redemption, which is, however, an expression of human hubris. This hubris became increasingly socially effective in the process of secularization and finally became the dominant force whose sign was a re-deification of the world. A well-known phrase out of Voegelin's thinking is the "immanentizing of the Eschaton."<sup>3</sup> Voegelin's think-

2 Cf. Eric Voegelin, *Ordnung und Unordnung*, in: *Autobiographische Reflexionen*.

3 Full quote: "The problem of the eidos in history, hence, arises only when a Christian transcendental fulfillment becomes immanentized. Such an im-

ing thus implies, we may conclude, also a critique of the ideas of the French Revolution with its anti-religious impulse – Voegelin defines the French Revolution as a “radical wave of gnosticism” (*New Science of Politics*).

Let us turn to Hegel who, next to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), is being understood to be the main representative of German Idealism. The analysis of the German poet Heinrich Heine (1791-1856) shall serve our inquiry:

*Just compare the history of the French Revolution with that of German philosophy and you might really begin to believe: the French, who, having so many real responsibilities, needed to remain completely awake, asked us Germans to sleep and dream for them in the meantime, and thus our German philosophy is nothing but the dream of the French Revolution. We, in the realm of thought, broke with our past tradition and present institutions, just as the French in the realm of society; our philosophical Jacobins gathered around the Critique of Pure Reason and would accept nothing which could not stand up to that critique. Kant was our Robespierre. – Afterwards came Fichte with his “I,” the Napoleon of philosophy, the highest love and the highest egoism, the despotism of thought, the sovereign will, which improvised a quick universal empire which vanished just as quickly; idealism, despotic and horribly solitary (...) – Until Hegel, the Orléans of philosophy, founded a new regime...<sup>4</sup>*

Following Heine’s assessment, the premise of this paper is that even though neither Hegel nor Kant were political executors of their own ideas, both revolutionized German philosophy and became part of the intellectual legacy of the revolution. Even so, Hegel was like most thinkers in that his thinking has many facets and layers, which also deserve acknowledgment, e. g. bearing in mind

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manentist hypostasis of the eschaton, however, is a theoretical fallacy.” Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, p. 187

4 Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany – And Other Writings*, Terry Pinkard (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 130-131.

that he understood man not as an autonomous individual but as a *zôon politikon* in the sense of Aristotle. Eric Voegelin argued that the modernity of Hegel can be characterized "as the coexistence of two selves, as an existence divided into a true and a false self – holding one another in such balance that neither the one nor the other ever becomes completely dominant."<sup>5</sup> Yet, how is Hegel to be understood properly? Can he be understood as a revolutionary philosopher of Enlightenment, also as a Christian philosopher, or even as a reactionary glorifier of the Prussian state? All these categorisations are of secondary importance considering the overriding fact that Hegel professed himself to be a philosopher of the French Revolution.

As a young man Hegel joined a "Political Club" in order to involve himself in the enthusiastic discussions about an alleged re-birth of Europe after the Declaration of Human Rights. He planted a liberty tree in Tübingen, singing the Marseillaise. Throughout his life Hegel celebrated the Bastille Day and even had contacts with Jacobin secret societies. Hegel considered Napoleon to be the "Great Man", because he was supposed to be a world-historic "servant of the Idea that brings itself forth" (*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) as it comes to its fulfilment. Hegel saw Napoleon as the man destined to make the French Revolution a positive reality in Germany. In 1814, he wrote that the abstractness of the idea of freedom moved from France to Germany. We can conclude with Voegelin that the impact of the Revolution was indeed the experience that fundamentally formed Hegel's existence as a thinker. It should be noted that Hegel, while he was a rather unimportant scholar teaching at the University of Jena, asked himself how he could participate in the Revolution as a non-combatant and concluded that death in battle and philosophy are the same – provided the battles are conducted to establish a "free people" – and that this process results in "absolute knowledge" (*Phenomenology of the Spirit*). This understanding differs

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5 Eric Voegelin, *A Study in Sorcery*, p. 213. This analysis can be argued of several modern thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche for example.

from the practice of art of dying to prepare oneself for immortality that Socrates spoke of, whereas Hegel speaks of death for the ideals of the French Revolution.

#### HEGEL'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITION

For both acknowledging and criticizing Hegel, and other thinkers of the French Revolution, there has to be a point of reference. This point of reference ought to be in particular Plato (427-347 BC). As to the importance of Platonic thinking one should be reminded of the famous statement by the English philosopher Whitehead, that all "Western," or rather Christian thinking consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. Likewise, Voegelin's critique on Hegel has its measure in Platonic thinking. Even so, Hegel's thinking includes Platonic ideas and concepts. Hegel can be understood to be one of the last thinkers to develop a philosophical theology seeking to defend Christianity yet, in his own way, laying out new tracts of thinking.

Acknowledging Hegel's political thought, one must mention that Hegel criticized the contract theories, especially Kant's, which, in his opinion, fell short because they are derived from the sum of the individual interests and are born of the abstract mind. These theories have no relation to concrete history and therefore do not consider traditions, customs and also the family. A state, which is derived from contract theory, would be left to arbitrariness and thus to destruction, Hegel analyses. The abstract freedom can only be available in the context of the tradition-governed social order. And a political order is, according to Hegel, the communal expression of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), according to which politics itself is the outward aspect of morality. In this sense Hegel picks up the ancient Platonic concept of the inner relationship of morality, religion and politics.<sup>6</sup> In other words, in order to overcome the weak points of the

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6 Compare Plato: "We understand nothing of these things, we entrust them

contract theories, Hegel ties in with Plato and Aristotle by seeing also an inner connection between the law, religion and the state. Religion and state should complement each other. A human must not be split into a political and religious being. The self does not exist prior to society, but is in Hegel's understanding "created" in society through the resolution of conflict and through custom, morality and civil association. One may conclude that Hegel attempted to rescue the human individual from the philosophy of individualism, because he saw the interdependence of institutions and individuals.<sup>7</sup>

Yet keeping these aspects of his thinking in mind, there are also flaws, big intellectual, and also spiritual mistakes. that Hegel can be held accountable for – as the critique of Eric Voegelin clearly expressed. In the following, the focus will be set on three aspects of Hegel's thinking, namely his epistemology, his history of philosophy and his understanding of the state with all its possible implications.

#### HEGELIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Hegel was convinced that man can obtain "absolute knowledge" (*absolute Wissen*) in all its clarity about the nature of things. In this Hegel contradicted Kant, who cared about not crossing the boundaries of theoretical philosophy. Hegel compares the agnostic Kantian position with someone who buys a knife and then *asks* whether the knife can be used to cut instead of cutting with it himself. These questions are of importance today considering that positivism, critical rationalism and also pragmatism are questioning the existence of metaphysical and eternal truths. Hegel would speak of a false humility and agree with Plato on this matter. At this point it would not come as a surprise that Karl Popper (1902-1994) is in opposition to Hegel. Between the Hegelian position of the existence of *absolute*

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to no one else even at the foundation of our state, if we are reasonable, and we make no use of any other interpreter of them than the God worshipped by the fathers." *The Republic*, IX. Book.

7 Roger Scruton, *Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 23-25.

*Wissenschaft*, on the one hand, and the view on the provisional nature of all knowledge on the other hand, which Popper himself has elevated to a dogma, hardly any reconciliation is possible.<sup>8</sup>

However, being aware of man's ability to acquire truth, in the preface to the *Phenomenology of the Mind* Hegel states that it is his intention

*to work to bring philosophy closer to its goal of being called the 'love of knowledge', to be able to lay aside and to be real knowledge – that is what I have set for myself.*<sup>9</sup>

At this particular point, Voegelin's critique sets in: Hegel formulates a claim that in principle goes beyond human possibilities. Voegelin argues that when we set Hegel's understanding of philosophizing next to the Platonic one, we must say that, while there is progress in the clarity and accuracy of knowledge of the order of being, the leap from the limits of finiteness into the perfection of real knowledge is impossible.<sup>10</sup> When a thinker tries it, he does not promote philosophy, but leaves it and becomes a "gnostic". According to Voegelin, human existence is always and everywhere "existence-in-tension", that is, existence in the "in-between" reality. What Plato termed *metaxy*, is man's constitution in a tension between mundane existence and the transcendent "divine ground" (Voegelin). A healthy, balanced, and well-ordered consciousness accepts this "tensional structure of existence" (Voegelin).<sup>11</sup>

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8 Walter Hoeres, *Heimatlose Vernunft*, p. 151.

9 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Mind*, Chapter 2: "Daran mitzuarbeiten, daß die Philosophie der Form der Wissenschaft näher komme – dem Ziele, ihren Namen der *Liebe* zum *Wissen* ablegen zu können und *wirkliches Wissen* zu sein –, ist es, was ich mir vorgesetzt." In contradiction to this understanding Leo formulates Strauss: "Philosophy is quest for wisdom, is quest for universal knowledge, for knowledge of the whole. It is the attempt to replace opinion about the whole by knowledge of the whole," *What is political philosophy*, S. 10-11

10 Eric Voegelin, *A Study in Sorcery*, p. 215-216.

11 Eric Voegelin, *A Study in Sorcery*, p. 217.

In Platonic thinking, the *metaxy* is man's participation in the divine *Nous*, this in Hegelian thinking now becomes an identification with the *Nous* in self-reflective consciousness. The "existential tension" (Voegelin) between immanence and transcendence is thereby abolished and replaced by the dialectical progress in history. In a historical development opposites are supposed to find resolutions, for example: the thesis/tyranny generates a need for freedom – but once freedom has been achieved there can only be anarchy until an element of tyranny is combined with freedom, creating the synthesis "law". In such a concept, for Voegelin there is no existential tension towards the divine (as a source for a just law), but a construction of absolute knowledge in a constructed system. Hegel thereby constructs what Voegelin calls a second reality which is destroying the first, "real" reality (Voegelin).

At this point let us be reminded of Hegel's interpretation of biblical story The Fall of Man. Instead of acknowledging the divine reality, obeying God and thus acknowledging the distinction and "existential tension" between man and God, Hegel offers a slightly different interpretation, respectively different accentuation: Adam and Eve gained their first self-confidence through the Fall. They stepped out of an absolute dependence. The Fall had to happen for a developmental step to take place. Therefore, the bite into the apple and the associated transgression of the divine commandment is not evil, but only the enabling of consciousness. In other words: Adam and Eve had to eat from the fruit in order gain real knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

Voegelin claimed that Hegel's thinking neglects the distinction between God and the Self, which is a misconstruction of being and thought. In this way, thinking is reduced to self-consciousness and to the construction of a system, which is supposed to be a science (*Wissenschaft*). This new *Wissenschaft* is supposed to provide an understanding of the whole, the true, the rational, and the necessary.

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12 Markus Renner, *Der Sündenfall in der Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus – Kant, Schelling, Hegel*, p. 14-15.



Voegelin further argues that Hegel is reducing the *logos* of revelation to a system of absolute knowledge through a *libido dominandi*, for which he in particular uses words of magic (*Zauberworte*).<sup>13</sup> Hegel's attempt to acquire knowledge of the whole can be called a belief in science as a „systematic science“; science is supposed to be the “true tissues of divine life” (*das wahre Gewebe des göttlichen Lebens*), a system of the living *logos*. Karl Marx (1818–1883) would later take the Hegelian concept of *Wissenschaft* in order to create his *Marxistische Wissenschaft*. Hegel constructs an imaginary *Wissenschaft*, which is constructed in the consciousness of man – this is what Voegelin refers to as an “egophanic revolt” or just egophany. In this revolt one's consciousness replaces the metaphysical source of knowledge, morality and thus order. The egophanic revolt is the opposite of “theophany”, it is the epiphany of ego leading to the death of God. This for Voegelin is an attack on man's consciousness of his existence under God, which thus is also an attack on the concept of human dignity.<sup>14</sup>

#### PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY OR THE NECESSITY OF PROGRESS

Speaking of Hegel, we need to further address a core aspect of modernity, namely its idea of progress for which Hegel is particularly known. Hegel's philosophy of history is to be distinguished from the understanding of progress most thinkers of the Enlightenment had, simply because it is more profound.<sup>15</sup> According to Hegel, world history necessarily moves towards more and more rationality and also freedom. For Hegel, nature itself is always in process; nature means becoming and thus is in a historical development. This development is not mechanical as with the materialistic evolutionists, but sense-controlled; for Hegel it has a highest goal, namely the “presence of the idea”. History is a teleological development towards

13 Eric Voegelin, *A Study in Sorcery*, p. 225.

14 See Eric Voegelin, *Ecumenical Age*, p. 260–271.

15 Walter Hoeres, *Heimatlose Vernunft*, p. 115–117.

a more perfect state in which the "absolute spirit" (*absoluter Geist*), and thus also God himself, realizes itself. Hegel understands this development to be inherently necessary. However, with his theory of history Hegel becomes the creator of a blind theory of fate and also of fatalism, which has a paralysing effect on the individual human being. In history there are in fact no necessities, there can only be a blind faith in them, which in fact is a faith in empty formulas, disconnecting man from reality again.<sup>16</sup>

One important question must be asked to clarify this core concept in Hegelian thinking, namely concerning his dialectics. How is development in a dialectic process supposed to come about? Breaking with the understanding of the dialects in the sense of the ancient philosophers, as a method with the goal to acquire truth through reasoned arguments, for Hegel dialectics is a process of contradicting ideas as thesis and antithesis, that would resolve in a synthesis. As both for Heraclitus as well as for Hegel, every development to a higher level is the result of a struggle and thus of the efforts and renunciations of the individual. But how is the freedom of the individual to exist in this conception? Hegel's answer: through a "cunning of reason" (*List der Vernunft*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*). Ultimately, the individual who thinks he is following his own, highly private purpose actually acts in the service of the "world spirit" (*Weltgeist*). According to Hegel, the "cunning of reason" should make this possible and for this also sacrifices have to be made. The great historical figures like Napoleon knew the right interpretation the signs of the times, and more or less consciously placed themselves at their service. It is doubtful whether this world spirit is a real or a personal power. It is a power that comes "to itself". The question arises: What should be the goal of the whole of progress, including the immense suffering in the world history? Hegel answers: On Golgotha the ground is prepared for the "absolute knowledge" in which the divine spirit comes to itself in man's consciousness as well

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16 See Rudolf Rocker, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel*.

as in nature, history and the institutions created by human reason. In the “absolute knowledge” all opposites of nature and spirit, subject and object, are abolished or dissolved. Hegel explains:

*Every single man is but a link in the chain of absolute necessity, by which the world builds itself forth (sich fortbildet). The single man can elevate himself to dominance (Herrschaft) over unappreciable length of this chain only if he knows the direction in which the great necessity wants to move and if he learns from this knowledge to pronounce magic words (Zauberworte) that will evoke its shape (Gestalt).<sup>17</sup>*

These words are, according to Voegelin, a key passage for the understanding of Hegel and modern man: Man has become nothing, he has no reality of his own, and he is a blind particle in a process of the world.<sup>18</sup> The spirit working in history will be self-actualizing, ultimately the absolute truth will be achieved – what is left of the freedom of the individual, which for Hegel is still supposed to have a conscience? The German and Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann (1927–2018) aptly pointed out that there are “progresses”, but there is no thing called progress: “The singular ‘progress’ is a pure myth, capable of befogging all of us.”<sup>19</sup>

#### THE ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE

Hegelian philosophy is concerned with the highest realization and shaping of freedom, which for him takes place not only in and through history, but also through the state. Hegel claims that his state is the final culmination of the embodiment of freedom. While Kant defined practical freedom individually and negatively, as independence from exogeneous determinants, to the arbitrariness and positively as self-determination of the individual, for Hegel freedom

17 G. W. F. Hegel, *Dokumente*, p. 324.

18 Eric Voegelin, *A Study in Sorcery*, p. 221.

19 Robert Spaemann, *Planungsgesetze zur Gentechnik wären unerhörter Totalitarismus*, in: *Junge Freiheit*, 8. Februar 2006.

was objectified and generalized in the state: the state is the "reality of the ethical idea" (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*), the true idea of freedom is only the state. Hegel's idea of freedom thus, in contrast to Kant, refers to society, the state, only in which freedom for all can be realized. The principle of freedom can only become real for all people in modern states and this is, according to Hegel, only possible after the French Revolution.

For Hegel there are different "moments" of the "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*): There is the family and civil society, which are "fulfilled" in the state. Ethical life ultimately has its root in religion, which is the source of authority and also the authority of the state. However, Hegel intends to merge religion with the state respectively giving the state a religious meaning:

*for it is now known that the moral and the right in the state are also the divine and the commandment of God, and that there is no higher and more holy content.*<sup>20</sup>

For Hegel there is an individual's "supreme duty is to be a member of the state" (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*). In the words of Hegel, morality can only exist in the unity of the individual with the general consciousness of the state. The individual conscience should be adjusted to the reasons of the state and the personal responsibility should be replaced by the consciousness to act in the interest of the state. In Hegel's thinking the state even becomes "God's walk through history" (*Gang Gottes durch die Geschichte*):

*It is the way of God in the world that the state is, its reason is the violence of reason that is realized as will. In the idea of the state, it is not necessary to have particular states in mind, nor particular institutions, but rather to consider the idea, this real God, for itself.*<sup>21</sup>

20 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*. This theory of the state can, as Hegel himself said, only be realized in Protestantism and not in Catholicism: "In the Catholic Church, on the other hand, conscience can very well be set against the laws of the state. Kingslaughter, state conspiracies and the like have often been supported and carried out by the priests."

21 G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlagen der Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 258. "Es ist der Gang

In others words: for Hegel the state is identical with an “absolute authority and majesty”, whereby, we can conclude, Hegel is the “state mystic”. In his “absolute” state theory the question of the ideal state is excluded. But precisely the question of the “right order” in the state and its best constitution is the central question of the philosophy of the ancient thinkers such as Plato.<sup>22</sup> And it should also be pointed out that the state in the traditional understanding ought to be of limited size, whereas Hegel had the evolving Prussian state in mind, whose advocate he actually was.

### CONCLUSION

Many different thinkers have tried to diagnose the so-called *modern age* as a project of subject oriented totalizing reason. Max Weber (1864-1920), for example, defined the modern world as a “housing of bondage”, or Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) as an “administered world”. There are also voices that have proclaimed the end of history, the *Posthistoire*. As the most important modern thinkers, René Descartes (1596-1650) and next to him Hegel ought to be mentioned. Hegel’s thinking offers key concepts for a better understanding of modern thought, which became politically powerful through the French Revolution. Interpreting Hegel himself is no easy task. Hegel had a holistic approach; terms to describe his thinking would be “idealistic pantheism” or “monism”; Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical *Humanae generis* (1947) spoke of “systematic idealism.”

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Gottes in der Welt, daß der Staat ist, sein Grund ist die Gewalt der sich als Wille verwirklichenden Vernunft. Bei der Idee des Staates muß man nicht besondere Staaten vor Augen haben, nicht besondere Institutionen, man muß vielmehr die Idee, diesen wirklichen Gott, für sich betrachten.“

- 22 As interpreted by Voegelin, Plato showed that the order of the human soul depends on the experience of God. This in turn forms the inner disposition of the human being. It is the philosophical experiences that evoke man that establish a true order of the soul. Such a person, who participates in the divine spirit (nous) and whose soul is therefore also ordered, should be an example and ruler in the state. According to Voegelin he is the measure of the paradigmatic order in the state and representative of cosmological truth.

Hegel attempted to create a great unification theory and in particular saw a culmination of rationalism in the history of philosophy. The "absolute idea" (*Science of Logic*) is the "absolute spirit". When the finite spirit thinks the absolute, the absolute spirit thinks in it, and so on – Voegelin would speak of words of sorcery. Voegelin in particular pointed out that in Hegelian ideology man does not live in an "in-between" (*metaxy*), in a participatory tension towards the "divine ground of existence" (Voegelin), but constructs a false consciousness which is an imaginary attempt to gain power over reality. This Voegelin understands to be an attack of man's existence under God, in particular the Christian loving God, and thus could and should also be seen as undermining the dignity of man. Any way of thinking has an evocative character, it not only describes, but always evokes political reality. In other words: ideas have consequences in the political reality.

Hegel did not remain unchallenged. One of his first critics was the (Protestant) Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). For Hegel, all reality is only reality insofar as it is reasonable: "What is reasonable is real, what is real is reasonable" (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*). Kierkegaard's accusation was directed against this thought. Hegel wanted to capture phenomena of life into a logical system, which would have ruinous effects on man's religious-ethical existence as Kierkegaard pointed out.<sup>23</sup> Hegel transfers the "authority of the spiritual sources of order" (Voegelin), revelation and philosophy to a system: Hegel does not "capitalize" the presence of eternal being, but the system in which one can get "locked" in. In Hegelian thinking the divine mystery is penetrated by the logic of the system, which leads to the alienation of man from God. The consequences of this are, in the words of Voegelin: "The Spirit as a system requires the killing of God, or: the killing of God is committed in order to create the system."<sup>24</sup>

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23 See Soeren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, A Fragment of Life*.

24 Eric Voegelin, *Gnosis, Science, Politics*.

Hegel has just like Plato shown that every state worthy of the name is ultimately based on religion. Religion gives rise to morality in the state. Yet, for Hegel religion is “the reality of the state”. How does not the state have the status of an imminent religion in Hegelian thinking, a concept one would clearly find again in socialism? Three aspects of the political implications of Hegelian thinking ought to be pointed out:

- Central in Hegel’s thinking and the French Revolution is the idea of “freedom”. For Hegel the idea of freedom is not quite emancipatory, but still predominant. The idea of freedom replaces the importance the classical thinkers would give to virtue.
- Hegel’s political thinking is political theory and not philosophy: Just like in his epistemology, where he wants to capture the “absolute knowledge”, in his political theory Hegel wants to “think” the “absolute state”. By doing so he is omitting the question of the right order, which was the guiding question of the philosophers of tradition.
- As a consequence, political philosophy in the sense of tradition loses its normative power; politics are consequently left to a mystical *Weltgeist*, which in fact is nothing else than the *Zeitgeist*.

The history of Hegelian thinking is known: there has been a moderate, a conservative-reactionary-Prussian and also an effective leftist interpretation of Hegel. Hegel provided core concepts for the socialist and radical leftist interpretation. The core myth of Enlightenment thinking, liberalism and socialism is their understanding of history as a permanent process in the form of a necessary progressive human emancipation. Hegel spoke of a dialectic progress laying the ground for what a socialist would call “revolution”. The Russian philosopher Alexander Herzen (1812-1870) called the dialectics of

Hegel the "algebra of revolution."<sup>25</sup> Hegel's "absolute science" was adopted into a *Marxistische Wissenschaft*, which is ideological and thus rather a system of beliefs that contradicts classical thinking and in particular its sense of reality. The consequences of socialist thinking in history with all its human casualties is known – it has to be pointed out that Marxism with its Hegelian foundation today in particular lives on in the West as "Cultural Marxism," causing the destruction of all (Christian) values that are the source of a true order of the soul and society, especially including the family.<sup>26</sup>

Does the following dictum apply to Hegel: What is true in his thinking is not new, and what is new is not true? Voegelin sharply analyzed a crisis of our civilization and particularly sharply criticized the thinking of Hegel, which in his understanding is a cause for spiritual disorder. And Voegelin did not cease to say: The spiritual disorder of time is not an inevitable fate. We have the means to overcome it. No one is obliged to take part in a spiritual crisis; on the contrary, everyone is obliged to refrain from this nonsense and to live in order.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Alexander Herzen, *Wladimir Lenin: Dem Gedächtnis Herzens*, p. 10.

26 Cf. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Stephane Courtois).

27 "The order of the Western world goes back to antiquity. At the occasion of the great legislative work of Justinian, its sources were expressly defined as power, reason and revelation. (...) Through the Middle Ages the three sources are alive as imperium, studium and sacerdotium. In the historicizing examination of the 19th century, Ernest Renan could say that the foundations of Western culture were Hellenistic philosophy, the Judeo-Christian religion and the Roman legal and official order. Power, reason and revelation have remained the primary sources of order in the Western world to this day." Eric Voegelin, *Democracy and Industrial Society*, in: *Philosophy and the Question of Progress*, p. 61.



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