
by Gordon Welty
Wright State University
Dayton, OH 45435

A course in classical social theory presents serious problems for those of phenomenological orientation. We will note some of these problems and indicate one way out. The "cafeteria style" approach, say of Coser and Rosenberg, which the neo-positivistic social scientists find so compatible, only emphasizes the exteriority and fragmentation of contemporary sociology and its understanding of its own genesis. At best this transforms dialectic into dialogue, with Comte commenting on Saint Simon, etc., rather than providing a reflection of the historic process.

Another approach is to concentrate on the major figures, to find continuity in the individual careers. But the triumvirate, Marx, Durkheim and Weber, are problematic. Marx can be treated fruitfully as the phenomenologist of the anti-spirit including process both as object and as stance. A course focussing on *Capital* and *The German Ideology*, however comprehensive, would be viewed askance by "valuefree" colleagues. Durkheim's self-styled and fairly consistent positivism renders him unsuitable except as an object. But this presupposes a stance for the student which must be brought to Durkheim. Weber having devoted his career to refuting Marx presents more exteriority, this time of theme, with the hapless student tossed from East Elbian peasantry to early Protestantism to bureaucracy, etc., never knowing the stance of these apparently disparate studies. Of course, as (or if) this is unfolded, the student comes to doubt the doctrine of "value freedom," and the integrity of the entire sociological endeavor.

In this impasse, Hegel has proven a viable alternative. The third moment of his philosophical system is now available in the Wallace-Miller translation of *Philosophy of Mind*, which was originally intended as a "textbook," hence prima facie suitable for pedagogical purposes. Let us consider with some care the pertinence of Hegel for social theory.

First, the dialectic is patent in this work, and in a concrete form which is congenial to the phenomenologist. For instance, the "Anthropology" with its discussion of the conditions for sensation constitutes a systematic catalogue of factors and findings, some of which have been replicated and corroborated by contemporary behavioral science. While this catalogue could be extended without limit, Hegel instead completes a dialectical product with the "little Phenomenology" whereby the interiority of social process fulfills understanding of behavior and appearances. This dialectic structures principal moments of Geist, complemented by the dialectical products within (subordinate to) each moment, such as the Master-slave dialectic, etc. All in all, methodology is presented along side of which Weber's ruminations on *verstehende Sozialwissenschaft* is puerile.

This methodological presentation is embodied in an encyclopedic display of the social sciences of the beginning of the 19th century. Thus the student has an appreciation of the historical intellectual conditions from which the thought of Marx et al emerged.

As important, though, is Hegel's developmental view of history, e. g. the emergence of the Reformation (§ 552), and his phenomenological historicity. The social and historical conditions
of pre- and post-revolutionary civil society can be discussed coherently as the ground of Hegel's
dialectical treatment, e.g. of codification of the law (§ 529). Moreover, this historical ground is
reflected in comprehensive categories including subjective mind (or the Actor), objective spirit
(or Norms and Institutions), and objectivized spirit (Symbolic Systems or culture). The clarity
and systematization these categories provide for the student is one of the most striking
pedagogical consequences, both intrinsically and as an antidote for the disciplinary
fragmentation of anthropology, clinical and developmental psychology, sociology, economics,
the sociology of law and political science, history, and the several cultural sciences.

Finally, Hegel's system is remarkably comprehensive, inviting extended excurses on his
predecessors and their social thought, e.g. Bentham and Utilitarianism (§ 479), Condorcet and
the voting paradoxes (§ 508), Hume on polytheism and monotheism (§§ 559 ff), and Rousseau
on education (§ 376 Zu). It is the same with later social scientists; immediately in mind are Freud
and psychoanalysis (§ 406 Zu) as well as the pre-Freudian tradition of psychotherapy (§§ 405-6),
Geertz' obeservation on Islam (§ 573), Jung and the character-types (§ 395 Zu), Mead and the
Generalized Other (§ 395 Zu), Merton and the "unanticipated consequences of purposive social
action" (§ 387, § 504), Tonnies on Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (§§ 517 ff), and Weber on
bureaucracy (§ 543), to mention a few.

In sum, this approach has been used for four quarter-terms of classical social theory. The density
and economy of Hegel's technical terminology makes multiple-choice quizzes feasible, and a test
item file is slowly developing. A comprehensive final examination, and essay, complements the
objective quizzes. Students' reception, course evaluations, have been uniformly favorable, the
only complaints being the difficulty of the readings. In addition to Hegel's text, Walter Stace's
Philosophy of Hegel has proved a useful crib for the students.