

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture 25
Hegel-III: Rights and Critical Assessment of his Thought

Hello and welcome everyone. This is the third and concluding lecture on Hegel. Today, we are going to focus on his philosophy of rights. In the second part, we will discuss the critical assessment of his philosophy and how he interpreted young Hegelians, particularly, the Hegelian left and those who are in the right.

And also, we will look at how there is a kind of contradictory interpretation of Hegelian philosophy and renewed interest among the communitarian philosophers in contemporary philosophy. We will discuss the enduring legacy of Hegel before concluding today's lecture. In the previous two lectures, we have discussed the Hegelian understanding of human freedom, the expression of absolute will or spirit.

Human being constantly tries to actualize himself or herself by manifesting this spirit or will in different arena of his life. So, we have started our discussion on Hegel by looking at his conceptualization of freedom that is different from the liberal conception of freedom or the conception of freedom and it embodies the other.

Then we discuss in the second lecture, his views on civil society and how civil society is the realm of life that should not be confused with the state. So, one of the greatest contributions of Hegel in the history of western political thought is his theory of civil society. That we have discussed in the second lecture along with the other two institutions of life. It is where individuals realize their wills such as subjective, reflective, or the universal, absolute will in the realm of family and state. That we have discussed in the second lecture.

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➤ Hegel's contribution to the history of Western political thought is his theory of civil society and its inter-relationships with the state. He regarded civil society as necessary institutions, which is different from the state. These two institutions along with family represent three wills – subjective will; particular or reflective will; and absolute or universal will.

➤ His conception of human freedom is also unique, in the sense, that it is realized as an 'embodiment of self in other'. Thus, the presence of others, for Hegel, is necessary for the individuals to develop their own self-consciousness and realize their freedom. And the locations of their freedoms are in the society or the community. They realize it progressively in the family, civil society, and the state. Somewhat akin to Aristotle's *telos*, Hegel also argues that the true development of individual personality and the full realization of his freedom is possible only in the state.

➤ Hegel's philosophy has been subjected to many criticisms and often contradictory interpretations. Many saw in him a conservative or status-quo thinker, while for others there were many radical possibilities in his philosophy. Hegel's opposition to direct elections for legislatures and people's right to vote and support for unconditional obedience to the state, led many scholars to consider him as the forerunner of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century.

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Today, we will focus on his philosophy of right and the critical assessment of his thought. So, if you recall the point that I have made, one of the major contributions of Hegel to the history of western political thought is his theory of civil society. And before Hegel, there was a kind of recognition of an arena of life which is called the pre-political or social life. But it was not systematically theorized as Hegel did.

He also argued that the realm of civil society should not be confused with the state which we often find in the language of the social contract. The contract is among the two partners for certain mutual ends or mutual gains. But that cannot be the basis of the relationship of individuals and the state for political obligation. Thus, Hegel had a systematic and thorough description of life in the civil society that should be differentiated from the state.

It does not mean that there is no presence of the state in the realm of civil society. We have discussed that while we were discussing Hegel's idea of family, civil society, and state that certain institutions of the state such as the administration of justice or police were present in the realm of civil society as well. Nonetheless, the individual behavior and action in the state or his or her obligation to the state should not be guided by the language of contract prevalent in the realm of civil society.

So, this was his greatest contribution to the theory of civil society and its interrelationship with the state. He regarded civil society as a necessary institution different from the state. Many romantics during this time argued that to go back to some kind of pre-rational or innocent kind of living the harmonious life between man and nature, and man and man. For Hegel, that is not possible.

Once individuals develop their subjective or reflective being, there is no question of going back to the subjective will or the pure era of innocence or harmony. One has to navigate through it. One has to realize that particular will. But one must transcend it to something higher, bigger, representative of universal or absolute will. That is the realm of the state. So, Hegel makes that distinction very clear.

And these two institutions that are civil society and the state along with the family as the realm of subjective will represent three wills, according to Hegel. That is the subjective will which we realize in the realm of family, particular, or reflective will that guides one's action in the civil society, absolute or universal will. It is where the subjective will can be merged with the larger will of the society or the larger goal of the state.

His conception of human freedom, therefore, is unique in the sense that it realizes as an embodiment of self. That is unique. We have discussed that freedom is seen as something absent from external interference or impediments. So to the extent, such absence is there, the individual is seen as free. That is the liberal dominant conceptualization of freedom.

In contrast to that, Hegel saw the realization of freedom in others that human beings could not even develop their self-image or self-consciousness without the presence of others. So, there was a sense of being intimate with others. Thus, one sees oneself in others, one realizes one's freedom, when one gets acknowledgment or recognition from others. And that is why the realization of freedom is possible only in the society or community living with others.

There was the presence of others. For Hegel, individuals needed to develop their self-consciousness and realize their freedom. And the location of such freedom then is in the society or community. And individuals realize it progressively. So, from one stage to the next, to the

ultimate stage in the realm of society is a kind of progressive movement. That was something like Aristotle's teleological understanding.

In Hegel, we have discussed the history for Hegel that is the movement from one stage to the next, in the realization of human freedom. Similarly, the individual realization of freedom from family to the civil society and state is like a kind of linear progressive movement from the limited or partial realization to the complete and ultimate realization in the realm of the state.

The individuals realize this freedom progressively in family, civil society, and state, and somewhat akin to Aristotle's telos that is the full development of a thing, contains in that thing itself. For Hegel, that is true development or full realization of human freedom or the complete actualization of self or ethical life, 'Sittlichkeit' (09:41) is possible only in the state.

So, if you recall our lecture on Aristotle, he said that the best kind of life is possible in the life of polis that is the public and political life necessary for realizing full human potentialities or to develop a true friendship among free and equal members while living a social life in the state, somewhat similar not the same.

You have in Hegel this assertion of the state and the realm of the state as the condition for the full or the ultimate realization of human freedom. Hegel's philosophy was subjected to many criticisms and often contradictory interpretations. Many saw in him a conservative or status-quo thinker, while for others there are many radical possibilities in his philosophy.

Hegel's opposition to direct elections for legislatures and people's right to vote and his support for unconditional obedience to the state led many scholars to consider him as the forerunner of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in the 20th century. So, many considered him as an anti-liberal or anti-democratic thinker as well. This we will discuss in the second part of the lecture.

Today, we will move on to his conceptualization of right that is based on his philosophy of right.

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Hegel's Philosophy of Rights

- The first section of Hegel's *The Philosophy of Rights* deals with the idea of Abstract Right. It argues that persons as agents or will constitute the social world. For Hegel, personality represents the most abstract, immediate, and minimal possible conception of free agency. To be a person is recognized both that one is confronted by a set of givens – a given natural and social environment – and that one is independent of those givens, that they do not fully determine one's being or activity. It is, in effect, to think of oneself as a maker of choice, capable of imposing one's own will on a given situation.
- Thus, according to Hegel, individual personality is then constituted when a person looks at himself as his property capable of willing and acting upon his will. It is this sense of self-ownership that reinforces individual capacities and self-understanding. This led Hegel to develop an interesting theory of property rights. He considered property and contract as something necessary for the growth of human personality and the progressive realization of freedom. It reflects his endeavors and the exercise of free will.
- According to Hegel, a person can see the reflection of his own agency and choice in his property. It is like an extension of his own self. Hence the value of labor as the source of self-identity in the Hegelian conception of master and slave. Thus, individuals need to own property which is the basis for developing and sustaining their own personalities.

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Hegel's philosophy of rights is somewhat again very Hegelian, a unique conceptualization of right from its absolute sense to its concrete manifestation in the real, practical, material world. The first section of Hegel's, *The Philosophy of Rights* deals with the idea of absolute right, something absolute, universal, or abstract.

So, it is argued that person, agent, or will are having the capacity to act, according to one's will, they constitute the social world. The social world is constitutive of the person regarded as an agent who is capable of changing the world and their surroundings. And this capacity to change the surroundings is a necessity for the realization of self-worth or self-value.

The social world that we can think of whether it is the family or civil society is constitutive of this person who is capable of willing and acting upon their will. Now, what is unique to the person, and what makes that person or agent capable of acting upon their will? What kinds of rights are necessary for individuals to realize their self to act according to their will and achieve the mastery of their surroundings?

They should not be the slave or confined or limited to their surroundings. So, individuals exist in the surroundings. But the surroundings do not determine the individuals rather than the individual determine or establish his or her independence from those surroundings. There is a

kind of dialectical relationship, where one recognizes the surroundings. But one is not limited and subjugated to that surrounding.

And that capacity to assert mastery over the surrounding makes the human will the actual will to realize his or her personality and that requires certain rights. For Hegel, the individual personality is not a given thing. The individual acquires it while achieving the mastery of one surroundings. So, the personality represents for Hegel the abstract, immediate, and minimal possible conception of free agency.

So, there is an abstract, immediate, or minimal possible conception of free agency in human personality. What does it mean to have free will and then the capacity to act upon those will? That requires some abstract conception of a person or individual personality, and certain rights are given based on those abstract conceptions of the human self. But it also manifests itself in the concrete real and material world.

Thus, a personality for Hegel represented the most abstract, immediate, and minimal possible conception of free agency. To be a person is recognized. Both that one is confronted by a set of givens and this given may be natural and the social environment. And that one is independent of those givens. So, the individual lives in a natural environment given to him. But then individuals have to develop their personality and they must also assert their independence from that givens.

And that is the realization of one's actual will when you act upon your given things and then transform your surroundings that they do not fully determine one's being or active activities. One's self or being and activities are not determined by the set of givens, natural, or the social environment. It is in effect to think of oneself as a maker of choice, capable of imposing one's will in a given situation.

And that makes human beings realize their personality, capacity, and in other words, the actual will that is independent of the social, physical, or natural environment of his or her surroundings. How do individuals can express those will in that surroundings? What kind of surrounding is necessary for the realization of that will? It is something which he goes on to discuss when he argues what a family, civil society, and state are.

According to Hegel, individual personality is constituted when a person looks at himself as his property. So, you own your own body, you own your own will or you own your own choice, motives, and goals which guides your behavior to others. The basis of abstract rights for Hegel is when the individual began to look at himself or herself as his or her body independent or free from his or her surroundings.

When a person looks at himself as his property capable of willing and acting upon his will that leads to the constitution of human personality in the abstract sense. So, it is this sense of self-ownership that reinforces individual capacity and self-understanding. This development of self or idea of personality is necessary for individual realization or individual capacity to know himself, to understand himself, and then also act upon those understanding.

This led Hegel to develop an interesting theory of property rights. What does it mean to own property? What does it mean to have ownership over one's body, one's self? He considered property in the sense of both owning a person and owning the external object. He considered property and contract as something necessary for the growth of human personality and the progressive realization of freedom.

So, it reflects his endeavors and exercise of free will that is the motivation of the individual which leads him to act upon certain wills that is his will, the actualization of his real will. According to Hegel, a person can see the reflection of him and choice in his property. So, the property can be both as I said, one's body or the perception of self. But also something that one owns, suppose a car or a building or any tools.

You see one's image in the ownership of that thing. It may be one's car, it may be a building or it may be anything x y z that is external to one's personality. Yet it is in the sense of extension of one's personality. That is in owning that thing, one sees in one's reflection. So, society should be based on mutual recognition, where the worth of an individual or capacity of one individual is recognized based on ownership of his properties.

That is the ownership that enables the individual to develop a self-image, self-consciousness, and then progressively realize his or her freedom in different realms of collective life. So, it is like an

extension of his self that is the ownership of property. Hence, the value of labor as the source of self-identity in the Hegelian conception of master and slave.

He viewed that the relationship between the master and slave was some kind of obstacle in the realization of human freedom, where the slave while acting upon certain external objects developed his self-consciousness. But the master was deprived of it. Because he would never see in the slave his self-image and the other was necessary for the realization of one's self or one's freedom or one's person.

So, the master while exercising his control over the slaves or enjoying the freedom based on the labor done by the slaves was deprived of developing his or her self-consciousness. Because it can be done only among the equals. Whereas, the slave while acting upon certain external objects through the use of labor develop his or her self-consciousness. The labor for Hegel or the individual motive to act upon one's own will is the source of development of self-consciousness.

And that is something further developed in Marxist understanding where he argued that in the capitalist economy, the labor was alienated from his object of labor. He is also alienated from the other human beings and ultimately, alienated from his self. And that will discuss when we will discuss Marx's conception of alienation.

But for the Hegelian conception of ownership or property rights, the value of labor was recognized through which individuals developed their self-image, their self-perception, and thereby they saw in the product of their labor, the extension of their self, and will. And that is why the property is necessary according to Hegel. Thus, individuals need to own property that is the basis for developing and sustaining their personality, according to Hegel.

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➤ For Hegel then right is about property rights. It is about ownership or control over something – over one's own person or property which is recognized by others in society. Thus, the ownership of property becomes the basis for the self as well as others to recognize the person's self-worth or free will. It is further mediated by the language of the contract and social institutions such as family, civil society, and the state.

➤ Hegel's justification for the property then is very different from the Lockean idea of the property that is based on mixing one's labor with nature. In Hegelian philosophy, property ownership is necessary for the progressive development and realization of individuals' free will or freedom.

➤ However, this ownership of property as an abstract right must be actualized in a concrete and material conditions such as in the institutions of family, civil society, and state. Hegel further argues that 'an individual's deepest convictions, values, and motivations are shaped by the social practices and institutions in which he participates'. Thus in 'the 'right' social environment individuals would find the 'right' ends in their consciences and the motivations to follow those ends'. He did not consider either morality or individual motivations on its own would lead to an individual's leading an 'ethical life' (Sittlichkeit) or realizing his own true self or freedom.

For Hegel, the right in the absolute sense is about the right to property which includes both ownership over the self-independent of his or her surroundings. Then also, owning certain things or objects in which human beings see the reflection or extension of his self. So, it is about ownership or control over something, over one's person or property that is recognized by others in society.

That is the kind of from abstract to the real concrete manifestation of those rights. It is one thing to theoretically or in the abstract think of oneself being independent. That is not sufficient for the realization of one's freedom for developing one's personality. It is only possible when one manifests it in the society and others recognize certain things as one's property, maybe one's body.

Thus, one owns the body, when others recognize their right or control over my own body' or my ownership of a car or my ownership of any other external objects requires the presence of others who recognize that this property or object is the ownership of that person. They also see the self-worth of that individual in the ownership of that property or external object. So, the recognition by others is very important for the individual ownership over self or any property.

The ownership of property becomes the basis for the self as well as for others to recognize the person's self-worth or free will. So, one's motivation or will to act upon one's decisions or

desires or whatever one thinks is possible rationally within the limits of one's surroundings to realize one's freedom, self-worth, or free will. For Hegel, it is possible to realize or materialize when one has the presence of others and through the presence of the recognition of one's ownership over certain things or objects.

It is further mediated by the language of the contract and social institutions such as family, civil society, and the states. So, these things are necessary for the individual abstract rights to be materialized or manifested in the actual real material world, not merely in the realm of thought or ideas. Hegel's justifications for the property was different and unique in some sense. It is not justified for the sake of it. So, there is a kind of intimate, organic relationship between the self and ownership of the property as an abstract right in Hegel.

So, it is very different from Lockean idea, so if you remember when we did John Locke and his theory of property rights, his argument was basically when human beings mixed one's labor with nature, the outcome of such mixing is his/her property. So, Hegelian conception is different from such Lockean idea of property and the ownership of property.

In Hegelian philosophy, property ownership is seen as necessary for the progressive development and realization of individual free will and freedom. So, free will requires that you own your own body and you develop the capacity to act, according to your own will. You actualize your own will.

In that sense, there is a kind of enlightenment tradition within the limits of community or society, where individuals do not lose his self or subjective will, while living with others, while living in the community or social life in the civil society, where they merge their self with the larger self in the state.

So, individuals in all the spheres of life realize their self and worth progressively, not in the absence of others. But even when in association with others, they realize themselves. They do not lose sight of their will and freedom. And to realize that he regarded property, our self, and external object as something necessary for its progressive development.

However, this ownership of property as an abstract right must be actualized in a concrete and material condition such as in the institution of family, civil society, and state, and that we have

discussed in the previous lecture while we discussing his views on civil society and state. But also in the family as the realm of altruistic behavior or selfless behavior of the individual.

And yet it serves them to see completely their images in their partner. There is a kind of union of two adult individuals with their subjective will and when they come together, they see themselves in each other. That is the realm of family and how it moves to civil society and state is the actual real manifestation of individual on freedom.

So, you will further argue that an individual's deepest conviction, values, and motivations are shaped by the social practices and institutions in which he participates. The presence of a social or community and its values are necessary for the individual's self-imagination or those will or motives that shape his practical actions. Thus, in the right social environment, individuals would find the right ends in their conscience and the motivation to follow those ends.

There is a kind of dialectical relationship between the individual self or subjective will and the society or values that society nurtures in the individuals. So, it is not like a liberal self-defining, the atomistic individual in isolation from society. But in a relationship with the society or in a kind of dialectical relationship with society that mutually reinforces each other in that sense.

And he regarded that in the right environment such as in the family or civil society and state, the individual would realize his or her subjective will or freedom. He did not consider either morality as the guide of action. So, it will lead to humans, the purpose of individual life, and the realization of individual freedom is each to have some motivation or a sense of duty.

Now, to develop that motivation or the sense of duty, one requires the others. Morality is limited in the sense that it gives one a moral, ethical sense of one's duty. But it is not enough for the subjective realization of one's freedom or motivation in itself. It is not a guide for the realization of ethical life or the realization of one's freedom. So the idea of freedom, once again, if you recall is the combination of both the subjective will and objective will.

And that is possible to progressively develop or realize only in association with others while living in the community, family, civil society, and the state. So, morality or individual motivation, according to Hegel, is on its own would not lead to an individual's leading an ethical life or 'sittlichkeit' or realizing his true self or freedom.

Hegel did not consider that morality in itself or individual motivation in isolation from society would be a guide for living is an ethical life. It requires individual association with others in the family, civil society, and the state. And it is this dialectical relationship with others that helps human being to realize their freedom. Now, we will move on to the next part of today's lecture that is to look at the criticisms against Hegelian philosophy.

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Critical Assessment of his Thought

Hegelian philosophy had a tremendous influence on German thought and philosophy. He was the undisputed leader of the philosophic world as Goethe was to the world of literature, and Beethoven to the world of music. Many of the Hegelian terms such as history as the progressive movement of human freedom, *Geist*, *Sittlichkeit*, self and others, master, and slave have become the reference point for any discussions on philosophy.

- After his death, his followers were split into two groups Right and Left Hegelians. Right Hegelians provided a conservative and orthodox interpretation of his philosophy. They focused more on Hegel's views on religion and reconciled it with the Protestant ethics and his positive attitudes towards Prussian state. Similarly, they focused on his views on the state as the march of God on earth and citizen's unconditional obligation towards it. However, this school did not produce any major thinker and within a few decades, it went out of fashion in Germany.
- The other groups were more prominent. It consisted of a group of young men with radical leanings. They found in Hegel's philosophy many radical possibilities that Hegel, according to them, failed to carry through to their logical conclusions. These groups were called Young Hegelians or Left Hegelians. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) and Karl Marx were the most influential thinkers of this school. They derived from Hegelian philosophy inspiration to demand and struggle for the better or just world organized on rational principles.

Hegelian philosophy had a tremendous influence on German thought and philosophy. He was the undisputed leader of the philosophic world as like Goethe was the voice to the world of literature and Beethoven to the world of music. We have discussed while we discussed Hegelian contribution to German idealism and how it was seen as a kind of culmination of 'German Idealism' found by Immanuel Kant.

He remained somewhat the undisputed leader after his appointment at the University of Berlin till his death in 1831. And even after that, for many decades, Hegel had a profound influence on any discourse on philosophy. That is what the ease of Greeks like Goethe on literature or Beethoven in music.

So, many of the Hegelian terms such as the history as the progressive movement of human freedom or 'Geist' that is a spirit or 'Sittlichkeit' the ethical life, the idea of self, and others, and master and slave have become the reference point for any discussion on philosophy. Particularly,

this idea that history is the progressive movement of human freedom was taken to the logical conclusion by many left-leaning philosophers, including Marx, who believed in the Hegelian dialectic.

And based on that they argued, the next stage or the full realization of human freedom is inevitable. Because of the contradictions that are simultaneously present in any historical given moment. These ideas become a reference point for any discussions on philosophy and after his death, his followers were split into two groups, right and left Hegelians.

And right Hegelians provided a conservative and orthodox interpretation of Hegel's philosophy where they focused more on Hegel's views on religion and reconciled it with the Protestant ethics. And his positive attitudes towards the Prussian state. So, while Hegel was developing his philosophy as I said that Germany was divided into three hundred smaller states or principalities ruled by a monarchy.

Prussia, the most enlightened state in the German-speaking world was itself ruled by the absolutist monarchy, where there was the promise for reforms. But again, the reassertion of absolute control of the monarch. And even if you look at the justification of Hegel for the state and unconditional obligation towards the state, many of the Hegelian rights argued that Hegel was the status quo.

His argument that his own is the ultimate realization of human freedom or his philosophy as the attainment of maturity was something a Hegelian right projected as the conservative or status quest, characteristic of Hegel philosophy. Similarly, they focused on his views on the state as the 'march of God on earth' and citizens' unconditional obligation towards it.

However, Hegelian right did not produce any major thinkers and within a few decades maybe two and three decades after his death, the Hegelian right was out of fashion in Germany. The other groups were more prominent. It consisted of a group of young men with radical leanings. They found in Hegel's philosophy many radical possibilities that Hegel, according to these radical leaning young Hegelian had failed to carry through to their logical conclusions.

They saw in Hegel's philosophy many radical possibilities. But according to them, Hegel himself failed to carry through this to their logical conclusions, such as dialectics or the nature of

conflicts that existed in the civil society. He brought the notion of the state or universal will which for many of them was a kind of mysterious world, did not resolve the tension that existed in the civil society that is real.

And the next stage of human history or human progress would be the outcome of that conflict that existed in the civil society. Hegel failed to do so when he considered 'state as the march of God on earth' representing the will of everyone. The young Hegelians are also called left Hegelians. Hegel's philosophy had radical possibilities. But Hegel himself did not carry them through to their logical conclusions.

And many of these young Hegelians, interpreted the philosophy of Hegel, in their fight or struggle for a better or just world. According to them, it derived inspiration from the Hegelian philosophy. But they were also critical of the many flaws, according to them in Hegelian writing. So, Ludwig Feuerbach from 1802 to 1872, and Karl Marx were the most prominent thinkers in this school of young Hegelians.

And they derived from Hegelian philosophy inspiration to demand and struggle for a better world or just world organized on rational principle. So, as we have discussed in the philosophy of right, for Hegel, the search of philosophy is to look for the conditions, where a human being will realize his or her self. He argued about the constitutional monarchy.

He also recognized that the power of the state should be divided into three organs as Montesquieu said, executive, legislature, and the judiciary. That it has to be a kind of universal clause that would work on behalf of everyone in the society and not based on a particular interest. In other words, the Hegelian argument is for the creation of a rational order which would help human beings to realize their self and actual will while living with and among others.

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- They considered Hegelian dialectics as the fundamental rule of human progress which is inevitable. Marx used it in his theory of historical materialism. They saw in religion and religious orthodoxy the biggest obstacle in the realization of human freedom. David Friedrich Strauss (*Life of Jesus*) and Ludwig Feuerbach (*The Essence of Christianity*), therefore, argued that all knowledge including the religious one should be subjected to historical criticism. Feuerbach particularly turned Hegelian philosophy against its author and argued that the source of conflicts exists in the real material world and not in the realm of thought as Hegel had argued. Feuerbach, therefore, wanted neither religion nor philosophy but a 'science which studies real people in their actual lives' as the guide.
- Karl Marx, in his early years, was profoundly influenced by Hegelian philosophy. His theory of historical materialism, alienation, and communism first articulated in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript* (1844) bear the testimony of Hegelian thought and vocabulary. He was deeply moved by the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. However, Marx was also very critical of Hegel. Particularly, he argued that the human relationships that exist in civil society are real and also get reflected in the institutions of the state. Thus the state, rather than representing the will of all, represents the interest of a few propertied classes.
- There are debates about characterizing Hegel as a liberal, conservative, or a totalitarian thinker. Karl Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* presents Hegel as a totalitarian thinker. Such characterization by Popper is based on Hegel's views on the state as the march of God on earth, rational or absolute will, and unconditional obedience to the state. However, such criticism is not entirely valid if we recall Hegel's descriptions of constitutional monarchy with the division of power which must respect public opinion.

So, the young Hegelians derived such inspiration and then took it to the next level. They considered Hegelian dialectics, basically, the simultaneous presence of opposites and their reconciliation. They considered this dialectic as the fundamental role of human progress and this is something inevitable. The historical moment is pregnant with possibilities and those possibilities are based on the contradictions that existed in the civil society.

And the next stage would be the outcome of such a contradiction and reconciliation, and they agree with this Hegelian dialectic. But much more in the material and realistic interpretation rather than the ideal interpretation based on the realm of thought or idea of universal or absolute will as in the Hegelian philosophy. Marx used this Hegelian dialectic in his historical materialism.

We will discuss it in the next lecture, while we start discussing Marx and his philosophy. These young Hegelians saw in religion and religious orthodoxy the biggest obstacle in the realization of human freedom. So, the purpose of human life, according to Hegel, and also many enlightenment thinkers is to realize one's capacity to think for oneself, what is good and what is bad.

It should not be based on any external authority. Religion and religious orthodoxy prevented the men from realizing his/her self-worth or develop his/her rational faculty that should be the basis of his/her action. So, Kant argued that enlightenment said a similar thing.

It is there in the Hegelian idea. But particularly, for the young Hegelian or the left Hegelian, they considered religion and the religious orthodoxy as the biggest obstacle in the realization of human freedom. Because human beings willingly or voluntarily subject themselves to the image they have created. So, God is something which human beings have invented and once they invent God they subject their will to do their creation.

And that prevents them to search for the better, to develop their understanding and rational faculty. So, David Frederick Estrus, who wrote, *The Life of Jesus*, and Ludwig Feuerbach who wrote, *The Essence of Christianity*. Therefore, argued that all knowledge including the religious ones should be subjected to historical criticism.

So, the gospel or any religious teaching, so not be taken as the given truth. It must be subjected to historical criticism. Because they are seen not as something absolute truth. But must be subjected to historical criticism. Feuerbach, particularly, turn Hegelian philosophy against its author and argued that the source of conflicts exists in the real material world and not in the realm of thought as Hegel had argued.

The Hegelian dialectic operates on the principle of ideas and the realm of thought. But for Feuerbach and many other young Hegelians, the real motive or conflict exists in the real material world and not the other way around. So, it is not the consciousness that accepts reality. But it is the real material world that shapes the consciousness if you like the Marxist interpretation of Feuerbach.

Feuerbach, therefore, argued that neither religion nor philosophy could be a better guide of action. And in fact, they alienate like religion and philosophy also alienate the individual from the real material world. So, Feuerbach was looking for science that would study the real people in their actual lives not in the lives of the consciousness or the imagination or in his/ her thought world. That would be the basis of the creation of a rational order which would be judged and better than a society or political order which subjugate millions or creates the condition of servitude for the millions.

Karl Marx, in his early years, was profoundly influenced by Hegelian philosophy. His theory of historical materialism, alienation, and communism was first articulated in, *Economic and*

Philosophical Manuscript, where the testimony of Hegelian thought and vocabulary. So, Karl Marx was profoundly influenced by Hegelian philosophy and he was particularly moved by *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

However, Marx was also critical of Hegel, particularly, his argument on civil society. Marx argued that human relationships or conflicts that existed in civil society are real and also it gets reflected in the institution of the state. So, the institution of the state rather than representing the will or interest of all represents the interests of a few propertied classes which Hegel missed.

That is the kind of Marxist criticism of Hegel. At the same time, one needs to acknowledge Marx's many ideas were deeply influenced by Hegelian thought and philosophy. Similarly, other debates characterized Hegel as a liberal-conservative and as a totalitarian thinker. Karl Popper's, *the Open Society and its Enemies* presented Hegel as a totalitarian thinker.

And this characterization of Popper was based on Hegel's views on the 'state as the March of God on earth', the rational or absolute will, and unconditional obedience to the state. So these ideas in Hegelian thought become the ground for Karl Popper to characterize them as the enemy of an open society or the forerunner of the totalitarian or authoritarian regimes of the 20th century.

However, if we look at this criticism, we find it not to be entirely true, especially, if you recall Hegelian views on the state. He wanted the state to be a constitutional monarchy where the powers would be divided among different organs and it should respect public opinion. So, unless people see in the state and its walls the reflection of their will, they will rebel against the state.

He gave the example of the French Revolution when the monarchy set certain objects for the state to which millions or the majority of the population could not connect. And this disconnect between the objectives set by the monarchy and the will of the people leads to conflict, rebellion, and revolution.

So, for the state to become legitimate, to be respected, or to get unconditional obedience from its citizen must reflect the will of the people. It is, perhaps, not entirely correct to characterize Hegel as the forerunner of a totalitarian regime or thinking.

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- Hegel was against the right to vote or direct election for the legislature. In fact, he wrote a newspaper article opposing the English Reforms Bill of 1831. He thought that it would lead to the disastrous consequences and destabilize the constitutional monarchy. He was very suspicious of the untutored and impulsive 'public opinion' of atomistic individuals. This led many scholars to characterize Hegel as an anti-liberal and anti-democratic thinker. However, this too is slightly exaggerated. Hegel wanted the rulers to respect public opinion. Power should be divided and exercised based on law and constitution. He also argued for trial by jury.
- Hegel's philosophy has become once again the center of debates in the contemporary world among the liberal and Kantian scholars on the one hand and the communitarians or multiculturalists on the other. This debate, in some sense, is akin to Kantian and Post-Kantian debates within German Idealism during Hegel's time. Many communitarians like Will Kymlicka, Taylor, Sandel have found in Hegel's philosophy their own focus on historicity, context, and values of the community in shaping individuals' identity and self-image.
- For many critiques, Hegel was a conservative thinker who believed in the enlightenment values of science, reason, and progress. He could not see how they became the instrument of domination for a few over many. Hegel was also criticized for his support for colonialism.

Hegel was against the right to vote as we have discussed that he did not want direct election for the legislature. He wrote a newspaper article opposing the English Reforms Bill of 1832 which wanted to extend the right to vote to the majority of the population. However, he will consider that something could have a disastrous consequence and may destabilize the constitutional monarchy. As we have discussed for Hegel, he was very suspicious of the untutored and impulsive public opinion of atomistic individuals.

So he wanted the power to be given to those who are trained, expert, and knowledgeable in governing, not to the impulsive desires or opinions of the common people. And it is present even today, in many democracies, the rise of certain leaderships, parties and not necessarily working or reassuring the democratic or constitutional rules in society or the state. But driven by certain authoritarian tendencies.

And that may jeopardize the whole constitutional system or constitutional government. Modern democracies even today are not free from such disastrous influence of the impulsive public opinion that Hegel was suspicious of. It was the argument in a time, where it was the rule, where the monarchy or absolutist monarchy was governing most of the states.

And then talking about how to lead a life in the state which would be based on the constitutional laws, where Judiciary would be based on trial, and so on was far-reaching. And yet he was somewhat

from our present-day standard of democracy falls through in the sense that he was not a supporter of the universal vote or right to vote for the people. So, this led many scholars to characterize Hegel as an anti-liberal or anti-democratic thinker.

However, this too is slightly exaggerated. Because Hegel wanted the rulers to respect public opinion. And the legislature is the forum that is representative of different organizations in the civil society. That is the authority of state civil servants, the corporation of the free individuals and other assemblies or associations that existed in the civil society should together get representation in the legislature. That would in turn represent or respect public opinion, formulate policies and laws for the state.

So, Hegel wanted public opinion to be respected. But did not want people to directly vote. Precisely, because he was apprehensive of the impulsive public opinion or untutored public opinion of the atomistic individual. He wanted powers should be divided and exercised based on law and constitution, and he also argued for trial by jury.

Thus, considering all these arguments in Hegel, it is perhaps, slightly incorrect to regard him as an anti-liberal or anti-democratic theorist. Hegel's philosophy has become once again in contemporary times, the center of debates among the liberal and Kantian scholars on the one hand. Particularly, someone like John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* and the communitarian's multiculturalists on the other hand.

This debate in some sense is akin to Kantian and post-Kantian content debates within 'German Idealism' during Hegel's time. So, many communitarians like Will Kymlicka, Taylor Sandel have found in Hegel's philosophy their focus on historicity, context, and values of the community in shaping individual identity and self-image.

Contrary to the liberal idea of the atomistic, self-defining subject, these communitarians deriving inspiration from the Hegelian philosophy argues about historicity, context-specific characteristic of individuals. In other words, the embedded self. So, the self is determined not in isolation from society. But the self-perception, self-image, or self-consciousness developed because the individual is the member of a community, social, religious, a political community that shapes his/ her identity. Therefore, the rights should be based on individual beings who are a member of

a particular community and not based on some universal self-defining, atomistic subject kind of ideas.

So, communitarians like Will Kymlicka, Taylor Sandel, derived many inspirations from Hegelian thoughts. For many critics, Hegel was a conservative thinker who believed in the enlightenment values of science, reason, and progress. And he could not see how this same tool like the idea of science, reason, and progress became the instrument of domination for a few over the many and the modern world to a great extent.

It is also represented the view of the fact that how through the use of science, reason, or the idea of progress, it is the minority which controls the majority, which rules the majority, and they are progressively deprived of their rights over the resources even to lead a decent dignified life. So, many criticized Hegel for not looking at the consequences of these promises of enlightenment such as science, reason, and progress. And he was criticized for his support for colonialism.

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Hegel's Enduring Legacy

- Hegel argued that the role of philosophy in human affairs is limited. According to him, philosophy arrives on the scene too late. Thus, it could only help us understand the world. It could not change the inevitable reality. However, his philosophy has a tremendous influence on continental philosophy. It continues to generate interests among many contemporary philosophers particularly communitarians and multiculturalists like Will Kymlicka, Michael Sandel, and Charles Taylor.
- His major preoccupation was to know the real nature of a phenomenon. Hegelian dialectics (thesis, antithesis, and synthesis) is regarded as a correct approach to understanding the real nature of a thing or phenomenon. So the contradictions and conciliations are the real movers in history. It is simultaneously present at any given moment. His challenge was then how to harmonize the relations between man and nature, and man and men by organizing a rational state that would create the conditions for real freedom. How to ensure the ethical life of the individuals in the spheres of family, civil society, and the state?
- For Hegel, once subjectivity and will enters human beings there is no going back to the un-reflective stage of harmony as many romantics have argued. His philosophy is, in many ways, relevant for understanding modern politics as well. His engagement with the centrality of freedom, property rights, and the relationship between civil society and state continues to help us understand and examine many riddles of the modern states and polities.

Now, we move on to the enduring legacy of Hegel. Let us start with this idea that Hegel argued that the role of philosophy in human affairs is very limited. And this has provoked many, particularly, the Marxists who wanted philosophy to be a guide of action to guide the practical life, to make it better.

But Hegel realized that the role of philosophy was very limited in helping the human understand the situation. He argued that philosophy arrived on the scene too late to do anything or to change reality. Thus, it could help only in understanding the world and not in changing the inevitable reality. So, it was true in Greek times when Aristotle was developing his ideas in politics, where the small polities were replaced by the larger empire.

And with many other philosophers, so according to Hegel, the role of philosophy was very limited in helping the human to understand the situation. But for Marxists and many other left-leaning philosophers, the role of philosophy was not to interpret the world, not to help the individual understand the world. But to change it for the better, for making it more just for the realization of greater freedom.

Nonetheless, Hegel was very assertive about the limited role of philosophy in helping the individual understand the world. However, his philosophy had a tremendous influence on continental philosophy and it continues to generate interest among many contemporary

philosophers, particularly, communitarians, multiculturalists like Will Kymlicka, Michael Sandel, and Charles Taylor as we have discussed that when they argue about the individual subject as the embedded self.

In opposition to the liberal conception of the self-defining, atomistic subject, they derived much inspiration from the Hegelian writings or philosophy. Hegel's major preoccupation was to know the real nature of a phenomenon and Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is regarded as a correct approach to understanding the real nature of a thing or phenomena.

The best way to approach a thing is to understand or acknowledge the simultaneous presence of contradictions and conciliation. It is there in the individual. It is there in the historical situation or any given moment in any society. It is the presence of contradictions that constitute its reality and the transcendence of such contradictions to a kind of next stage of contradictions. That is how human history has moved from one stage of freedom to the next and greater stage of freedom.

So the contradictions and the constellations are real movers in history. It is simultaneously present at any given moment. And Hegel's challenge was then how to harmonize the relationship between men and nature, and also men and men by organizing a rational state that would create the conditions for real freedom.

The whole purpose of Hegelian philosophy was to ensure the realization of human freedom from the sphere in the family to its ultimate realization in the life of the state. So, how to ensure ethical life or 'sittlichkeit' of the individual and the spheres of families, civil society, and the state that governs the miser arguments. That is there in the Hegelian writing. For Hegel, one subjectivity and the will are reflective.

A human being has his own unique will which separates him or her from his/her surroundings is necessary for the modern world, for living a freely ethical life in the modern world. So, he argued that the one subjectivity and will enter human beings or human imagination, there is no going back to the unreflective stage of harmony as many romantics have argued.

So, within the enlightenment tradition, there were the romantics who thought it was possible to go back to nature, where there was the life of natural harmony or innocence between men and

nature or men and men. There was no conflict. The conflict happened when the individual became driven by their self-interest when they had a reflective will and constantly search for the maximization of their interest.

That would lead to necessary conflicts. So, the social contract tradition tried to resolve it in a certain way. The Hegelian approach was very different. In contrast to the romantic idea, it was possible to go back to the pre-industrial ease, to the ease of unreflective human being that would do certain things they were expected of without reflecting or rationally thinking about it.

Hegel thought that such kind of going back was not possible. It had to be transcended. So, human beings should have their subjective will. They should have the reflective will, which they should realize in the material world. But they must also transcend it to lead an ethical life or recognize the movement of spirit from its primitive to the advanced stage. That is the movement from family to civil society and ultimately, to the state.

His philosophy in many ways is relevant for understanding modern politics as well. One of the things is about democracy, the right to vote, and the influence of public opinion on governance. So, his engagement with the centrality of freedom, property rights, and the relationship between civil society and the state continued to help us understand and examine many riddles of modern state and politics.

And as I have discussed in the first lecture that much of the contentions that we witnessed in modern democracies and modern state across the world is between the public opinion expressed in the realm of civil society and the behavior of the state. And often, it is argued by many political theorists and scholars that civil society can hold the state accountable and it may replace the state.

What is the kind of belief in civil society? So, civil society has a necessary role to play in the life of the Nation. But ultimately, the state has also a regulating role to play in the realm of civil society, and that we learn from the Hegelian discussion. And it helps us to understand many riddles of our modern politics and state also.

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Now, to conclude this lecture, the last part is to share with you some of the readings for this lecture. You can refer to Shlomo Avineri's, *Hegel's Theory of Modern State*, David Boucher, and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present*. You can also read Gary Browning and his more advanced interpretation of Hegelian thought, *A History of Modern Political Thought*, and then Shefali Jha, James Alan Ryan's texts have remained the reference texts for this course.

So, *The Western Political Thought* and *On Politics*, respectively, you should refer to and also Peter Singer's, *Hegel: A Very Short Introduction* and Charles Taylor's, *Hegel*, you should refer to understand much of the Hegelian thoughts and philosophy, and also criticism. That is all in this lecture, today. Do share your views and feedback. We will be happy to hear and respond to your queries. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.