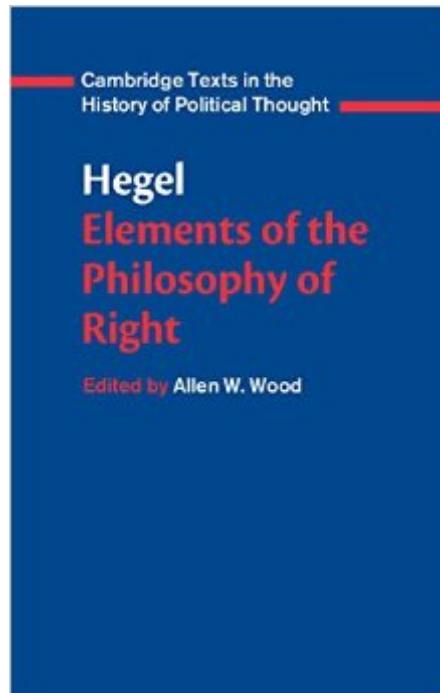


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Hegel: Elements Of The Philosophy Of Right (Cambridge Texts In The History Of Political Thought)



Synopsis

This book is a translation of a classic work of modern social and political thought. Elements of the Philosophy of Right, Hegel's last major published work, is an attempt to systematize ethical theory, natural right, the philosophy of law, political theory, and the sociology of the modern state into the framework of Hegel's philosophy of history. Hegel's work has been interpreted in radically different ways, influencing many political movements from far right to far left, and is widely perceived as central to the communitarian tradition in modern ethical, social, and political thought. This edition includes extensive editorial material informing the reader of the historical background of Hegel's text, and explaining his allusions to Roman law and other sources, making use of lecture materials which have only recently become available. The new translation is literal, readable, and consistent, and will be informative and scholarly enough to serve the needs of students and specialists alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Well first off a bit about Hegel: It was, until recently, quite fashionable in English speaking countries to dismiss Hegel as a charlatan, an apologist for totalitarianism, and an embarrassment to the title of philosopher. That's changing, and I tend to think it's for the good. There's a good bit of nonsense in Hegel, but there's also some very important philosophy. The problem with not dismissing Hegel is that he's one of the most difficult philosophers to make sense of; there are passages, and perhaps entire books, of Hegel's that no one honestly understands. Luckily, the "Elements Philosophy of

Right" is not only one of the easier of Hegel's books to read (easy being a relative term), but also the most relevant for the general reader. Since Hegel is speaking of concrete institutions he's much easier to follow here than in most other works. Also, I tend to agree with Wood that Hegel's main contribution to philosophy is in the field of ethics and political philosophy, and this book is the best summation of Hegel's ethical theory. Okay enough about Hegel, onto this edition of the POR. This edition is great, and anyone who's had the misfortune of reading its predecessors will appreciate just how great. For one thing, the translation is good. Yes Hegel is tough to read, but not as hard to read as many English speaking people think; the English translations are generally terrible. This edition also has Hegel's notes on the work on the same page with what he initially published, unlike other editions, which generally put them at the end.

Hegel gives primacy to constitutional monarchy, but wants a government that allows civic participation. Citizens should participate in government as part of a subset of the whole "not as individuals. Hegel calls these subsets "corporations." I don't know to what extent corporations in the mid-19th century resemble corporations today. But we can view it another way by calling them "estates," which is exactly how medieval many participated in the monarchical order. Hegel wants a constitutional monarchy, to which I have grave misgivings. I understand why, though. At that time in Europe, the old liturgical tradition had largely been eradicated. Institutions tended to reflect raw power. Hegel likely saw "traditional" monarchies as absolute monarchies and wanted to mute that tendency. Most interesting, he sees the monarch--properly understood--as the concrete embodiment of a culture's values. It's also important to point out that Hegel did not mean by "state" what we mean by it, simply the bureaucratic apparatus that takes away liberty. He meant the combined culture and volk. The Foundations of the Modern State Monarchy as the Representative Individual: consistent with his earlier points, Hegel notes that there must be some way for the individual to retain his subjective right, yet at the same time freely and fully identify with the community (Staat). This happens by way of monarchy. Beneath the monarchy are Estates, who mediate the King to the people. Nowhere does Hegel mean representation according to our usage today. The King does not "represent" the will of the people, but through his kingly majesty allows the people to identify.

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