# Spirituality in Modern Philosophy: Hegel's Spirituality

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More than any other modern philosopher, Hegel explicitly addressed what he saw as the problems of modernity, especially the challenges he saw being made to religious life. Hegel was not outwardly pious, so his defense of religion what today might be a defense of spirituality.
This text highlights the kind of spirituality that Hegel adhered to and the one he didn't like. The concept of spirituality and several intellectual movements that have contributed to it, most importantly: Romanticism, religious pluralism, and esotericism will be discussed. The book also touches on the meaning of spirituality today and how it relates to modernity.

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**Person Tags:**

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel [5]

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## Abstract

After discussing the meaning of the term "spirituality" and its equivalents in German and Persian, three roots of spirituality in modern European culture are introduced:

(1) the emphasis on religious feelings instead of doctrines and rules;

(2) tendencies that favor various forms of religious pluralism; and

(3) popular interest in esoteric and mystical traditions.

Hegel's positions on all three aspects of spirituality are discussed. It is concluded that the basic responses given by Hegel to these aspects of spirituality remain relevant today.

**Keywords:** Hegel, spirituality, esotericism, hermeticism, mysticism, religious pluralism, religious feelings, religious experience, Romanticism, the Enlightenment.

## Introduction

More than any other modern philosopher, Hegel explicitly addressed what he saw as the problems of modernity, especially the challenges he saw being made to religious life. Hegel is one of the last major philosophers of his era to defend a religious worldview, albeit one that has been accused of heresy. Personally, Hegel was not outwardly pious, at least not as this was conventionally understood in his own society.[1] So his defense of religion was not a defense of the bourgeois piety of his day. Instead, he defended a contemplative form of religious life, what today might be called a kind of spirituality.

Spirituality is understood in various ways today, including some that are pejorative. The suggestion that Hegel was religious without being conventionally pious invites the attribution of spirituality in some such pejorative sense. In order to get an overview of the kind of spirituality for which Hegel was an advocate and the kind to which he was opposed, we will need to examine the contemporary concept of spirituality, and several intellectual movements that have contributed to it, most importantly: Romanticism, religious pluralism, and esotericism. Before turning to these topics, however, we first need a clearer understanding of what is meant by "spirituality" today, and how the elements of this concept relate to modernity.

## Spirituality

Since our concern is to explore spirituality in relation to Hegel's thought for a mostly Iranian audience, we may begin by briefly considering the word's used for spirituality in Persian, English, and German.

The Persian word used to translate spirituality is *ma'naviyyat*, which is derived from the Arabic word for meaning, *ma'n*, which in turn is derived from the root *'an*, which means a concern. So, a meaning, *ma'n*, is literally a locus of concern, that to which concern is directed, a purport; the spiritual, is that which pertains to inner meaning, as opposed to the outward literal form; and spirituality, *ma'naviyyat*, is the quality of being inwardly meaningful, or the quality of possessing a purport to which concern is directed.

Although there are interesting differences in the concepts associated with the Persian and English, the differences are mostly a matter of emphasis. For example, the Persian/Arabic word retains associations with meaning, while the English word derives from the Latin verb for breathing.[2]

The term "spirituality" (*Spiritualität*) was not current in Hegel's day, at least not with the meanings that it has today, which have emerged only over the course of the last sixty years or so. In Aquinas, the Latin word, *spiritualitas*, has both a metaphysical and a moral sense. Metaphysically, the spiritual is what is incorporeal, spiritual as opposed to material. In the moral sense, one may adopt worldly or spiritual values. Voltaire used the French equivalent in order to mock those he considered to have fanatically religious beliefs. In the nineteenth century, the term "spiritual theology" became established as the study of Christian life and prayer.

Late twentieth century discussions of what is called “spirituality” tend to focus on religious experiences, feelings, and emotions, as well as depth of character, personal piety, and morality. Some Christian theologians expand the notion to include all areas of human experience to the extent that they are connected with religious values; where these areas are separated from questions of doctrine and from the institutional aspects of religion.[3] There is also a widespread tendency to use the term to include discussions of feelings of the sacred and values one treats as sacred regardless of one’s religious affiliations.

So, while it might be inappropriate to speak of the religious life of an agnostic, there is no doubt about the propriety of speaking of the spiritual life of one who rejects all organized religion and religious dogma, as long as the person has some feelings of the sacred and attention to the inner life. Some authors use spirituality to cover activities and attitudes that spring from intense moral and aesthetic aspects of life and the search for deep reflective awareness of the meaning of life and relationships to others and to nature independent of doctrinal or institutional commitments.[4]

The Swiss theologian and photographer Hektor Leibundgut has observed that spirituality is a fashionable but overused concept that is difficult to grasp because it is used for a variety of phenomena: non-denominational religiosity, esoteric philosophies, Eastern wisdom, an ethical and devotional understanding of existence, practical, ritual activity in which meanings can be experienced intuitively and shared, and spiritual exercise, as an exercise in a form of life and existential attitude, such as meditation, prayer, yoga or the reveries of lonely walks.[5]

Although spirituality has become a kind of buzzword, Leibundgut observes, “much of today's spirituality is anything but new, but occurs at least since the Enlightenment, more precisely, an ever reemerging: individualization, privatization, secularization and de-Christianization, fascination with foreign religions, the esoteric.” Leibundgut uses a saying attributed to Hegel as emblematic for the turn to spirituality: “Reading the morning newspaper is a kind of realistic morning prayer. One orients one’s position toward the world with reference to God or to how the world is. Each provides the same sense of security, as if one now knows how one stands.”[6]

The German words for spirituality are *Spiritualität* and *Geistigkeit*, which are treated as synonyms today; likewise *Geist* is the usual German translation for the Latin *spiritus*. The word *Spiritualität* was not common in Hegel’s time, and when it was used it was not in the contemporary sense of spirituality discussed by Leibundgut. Hegel uses *Geistigkeit* in several of his works, but usually not in anything like the currently fashionable sense of spirituality, but rather to mean having a mind, or the status of having a mind, which is sometimes rendered into English as “mindedness”.[7] An example of Hegel’s use of Geistigkeit that seems close to the contemporary sense of spirituality is in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

“If we also say that feeling and devotion are essential [to religion], this is because there is a spiritual relationship or spirituality in this feeling.”[8]

However, in today's sense of spirituality, one would not need to mention that there is spirituality in religious feelings; but here, Hegel is trying to concede a place for feelings in what is essential to religion, and grants this only because these feelings have spirituality, Geistigkeit, that is, they are an essential aspect of the human life of the mind. In Hegel's system, spirit has objective and subjective aspects; feelings pertain to subjective spirit, while normative standards pertain to objective spirit.

The fact that *ma'naviyyat*, *Geistigkeit*, and spirituality are intertranslatable today, does not mean that we can expect to learn much from Hegel about spirituality by examining the texts in which *Geistigkeit* appears. A place must be conceded for feelings in religion and spirituality, but this spirituality, for Hegel, is only that of subjective spirit. Hegel's sense of spirituality, or *Geistigkeit*, is one that is also related to the practices of reasoning through representations, the concern of objective spirit, and, ultimately, the objective and subjective are to be reconciled in absolute spirit.

In what follows, I will consider three key elements in the contemporary concept of spirituality that were important for Hegel: religious feelings and intuitions, the world religions, and esotericism. All three of these elements can be found to have been the focus of discussion by numerous thinkers in the modern period, and Hegel's discussions of them are integral parts of his own views about modernity and religion, and what today would be called spirituality.

## Challenges to Religion during the Ages of the Enlightenment and Romanticism

### The Crisis of Reason and Religion

During the Enlightenment period in the 18th century, many of the structures that had previously dominated European life were rapidly being eroded by the pressures resulting from the mercantilism that took hold during the previous century. With trade and colonialism came an often distorted awareness of other ways of life that inspired many to question what had been considered absolute truths of morality, religion, law, and social life. The amassing of wealth outside the ranks of the nobility and the amassing of political power in the royal houses that came to control empires whose colonies stretched across the globe led to the marginalization of religion as a source of social cohesion and authority.

The responses to these changes by some religious leaders provoked the intellectuals of the French Enlightenment to anticlericalism and even to direct attacks on Christianity. Although the Enlightenment took different forms in French, English, and German speaking areas, common currents included reformist and revolutionary ideas in politics, questioning and rejecting the authority of tradition, and advocacy of individual reliance on reason. These currents added force to the already developing trends toward skepticism about traditional beliefs about the Bible that had been initiated by humanists since the time of Erasmus (1467–1536). Many of the intellectuals of Hegel's generation began to suspect that religious doctrines, practices and institutions were not only incapable of directing the course of

intellectual and social change, but that religion had become irrelevant to the problems of modern life.[9]

The philosophical challenges to religious belief (as opposed to political challenges to clerical institutions) were met by two basic responses: some rejected traditional religious claims while others sought to defend religious belief. The rejection of religion, or more specifically, of Christianity, first took the form of Deism, and later agnosticism and atheism. This was, however, the position of only a tiny minority.[10]

Those who sought to defend religious beliefs divide into those who gave philosophical defenses and those who abandoned philosophical accounts of religious tenets and defended their faith without any appeal to reason. Those who sought to formulate philosophical defenses of religious belief may be divided according to the strategies they employed. First, there were those who sought to defend the traditional teachings with traditional arguments to which various refinements, embellishments, and modifications were made.

Attacks on the ontological and cosmological arguments led many to seek refuge in versions of the argument from design. David Hume's (1711–1776) attacks on the design argument made the need for another strategy acute. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) took the bold step of admitting that the existence of God could not be demonstrated through theoretical reason, nor could other key religious doctrines, particularly the immortality of the soul and free will. But Kant was neither an agnostic nor a fideist, and held that pure reason could still be used to defend religious belief—not pure theoretical reason, but practical reason. Hegel saw this strategy as one that would limit the concept of God to that of a moral judge to be feared but neither loved nor revered.[11]

It was the perception of the failure of natural theology to provide convincing answers to doubts that had been raised about the claims of the rationality of religious belief that led to the development of the philosophy of religion by the end of the eighteenth century.[12] Kant's abandonment of any attempt to find a theoretical justification for religious beliefs left many unsatisfied, such as F. H. Jacobi (1743–1819), who argued for the theoretical rationality of religious belief based on faith.

According to Jacobi, intuitive certainty of faith could provide sufficient epistemological foundations for both practical and theoretical reasoning to justify religious beliefs. Jacobi was not a fideist in that he did not claim that religion did not require any rational justification or that a justification by faith would suffice in lieu of a philosophical justification. Jacobi held that without basing beliefs on intuitive certainty, no beliefs would be rational. Since reason permits reliance on intuitive certainties to avoid skepticism about the external world and one's own existence, Jacobi held that certain intuitions could justify religious beliefs.

By this time Romanticism was emerging as a celebration of the emotions in reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and Jacobi's strategy was taken up eagerly by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who took the step of defining religion in terms of feelings instead of doctrines.

## Religious Toleration and Pluralism

The philosophical challenge of the Enlightenment to European Christianity, however, was not limited to the charge that the rational grounding provided by traditional proofs of doctrine fails. There were also various challenges to the philosophical justification of the authority of the dominant religious institutions. These challenges were often expressed as advocacy for religious tolerance, which was opposed by Catholic and Protestant conservatives.

Three major sources of Enlightenment calls for tolerance are to be found in the works of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), and John Locke (1632–1704). While Locke was the most important of the three for the development of the liberal tradition, Spinoza[13] and Bayle[14] posed what seemed to the established churches as the greatest threats, and it was they who argued for the most sweeping forms of tolerance.[15]

The stress on the organic nature of social developments was a hallmark of the shift from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, although the labels are somewhat artificial and we should not imagine that the two tendencies can always be neatly divided in art or philosophy. Romanticism grew out of the Enlightenment as the critical point of view advocated in the Enlightenment was turned back on itself.

The Enlightenment criticism of Christianity was augmented by a Romantic criticism of religious skepticism. Christianity is not to be replaced by a Cult of Reason, as was briefly attempted by some in France in 1793.[16] Intellectuals of the late Enlightenment tended to glamorize or romanticize alternatives to the predominant forms of Christian culture, especially ancient Greece and the Orient. This tendency was fed by the nascent fields of Oriental studies, and by descriptions of travels by diplomats, missionaries, and others who accompanied the European mercantile and military forces that went to various corners of Africa and Asia.

As early as the sixteenth century, European art and architecture display Oriental motifs. During the Enlightenment, pagodas, sham ruins, and temples are built by European nobles to ornament their gardens. A noteworthy example is the palace of Schwetzingen built as a summer residence for Karl Theodor, Elector of the Palatinate (1724–1799), whose garden (*Schlossgarten*) included temples to the Roman gods Apollo, Minerva, a sham ruin of a temple to Mercury, and a decorative mosque, adorned with inscriptions of wise sayings in flawed Arabic and their German translations. Hegel taught that art is an expression of the spirit of a culture, and the gardens of Hegel's own era gave expression to a fascination with the idea that wisdom was to be found in the religions and cultures of the world, in their emergence, development, and ruin.

## Esotericism and Secret Societies

The interest in the Orient and the wisdom of the ancients that found expression in garden follies was also manifested in the popularity of esotericism. The Romantics were attracted to mystical and esoteric

literature, in which they saw a vitality that they found lacking in the Enlightenment. In the Württemberg of the late eighteenth century, the popular *Schwäbischen Magazin* published alchemical and theosophical works. Among Lutherans, Pietism was very influential, and many of the Pietists turned their attention to the German mystical tradition represented in the works of Meister Eckhart (1260–ca. 1327) and Jakob Boehme. There was also much activity in secret societies, such as the Freemasons. The Masons had various inclinations. Some groups were advocates of Enlightenment political thought, while others were more interested in esotericism; and, of course, there were combinations of these interests.[17]

Like the Masons, the Rosicrucians formed another secret society whose members believed in the esoteric unity of all religions. The Rosicrucians first appeared with the publication of a series of manifestoes in the early seventeenth century, according to which a legendary figure, Christian Rosenkreuz, was supposed to have been initiated into esoteric science by Arabs in the fourteenth century.[18]

"The Rosicrucians believed in the possibility of unification with God, and they "held a doctrine of *prisca theologia*, the position that there is one true, trans–denominational, trans– cultural theology, an account of divine being revealed by God to man in the remote past. They believed that if this ancient wisdom could be recovered it would unify the world's religions."[19] Rosicrucian groups were soon to be found in France and Britain as well as in German lands, where some groups had links German Freemasonry, which incorporated elements of alchemy.[20]

The preoccupation with mysticism and political conservatism found in some of these groups led to the establishment of yet another secret society, the Illuminati, in 1776. Most members of the Illuminati came from the ranks of the Masons, but they were particularly opposed to superstition and to the influence of the Catholic Church. The Illuminati included such notables as Herder and Goethe as members. The group was eradicated at the order of Karl Theodor in 1785, although it continued in secret for a few more years outside of Bavaria.[21]

## Hegel's Responses to Enlightenment and Romantic Challenges to Religion

### Hegel's Response to the Crisis of Reason and Religion

Hegel's response to the crisis of reason and religion that had taken shape involves a strategy that is different from any of those that had come before. He agrees that the traditional support for religious beliefs cannot meet the challenges of modernity. Like Jacobi, he is dissatisfied with Kant's surrender of theoretical reason to purely secular knowledge; yet he is no less dissatisfied with basing religious belief on feelings or intuitions. His solution is a reworked logic in which practical and theoretical reason intertwine,[22] and a dialectical progression in accordance with this new logic that results in a kind of demonstration of the truth of religious beliefs, not by proving the existence of God as an object distinct

and separate from finite objects, but by an inward movement that Hegel calls an “elevation to God” (*Erhebung zu Gott*).[23]

Thus, Hegel’s response to the philosophical crisis of the justification of faith in the early nineteenth century is to give a reinterpretation of the proofs, focusing on the ontological proof (but in a version much different from anything Anselm or Descartes could have imagined) as an intellectual mode of spiritual ascent. Hegel is opposed to the Enlightenment’s religious skepticism, but he does not dismiss its criticism of Christianity, and incorporates elements of this critique in his own work.[24]

He agrees with the Romantic assertion of the importance of religious feeling, but he rejects any theology that would content itself with emotions immune from the court of reason. Hegel, thus, accepts important elements of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, although he also rejects key claims that came to characterize these movements.

As indicated earlier, one of the common themes among many who write about spirituality today is that the spiritual aspects of religion are to be contrasted with religions dogmas. The spiritual is taken to be non–cognitive, a matter of the heart, while doctrine and dogma are cognitive, in the head. A spiritual understanding of religion, according to this sort of approach, is one that focuses on the heart rather than the head, on ways of living instead of reasons for acting. Even if this sort of idea was not called “spirituality” in Hegel’s day, it had its advocates, among whom one of the most influential was the father of liberal theology and colleague of Hegel at the University of Berlin, the pastor and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. The emphasis on religious feelings that is at the core of Schleiermacher’s appeal to the Romantics of his day in his On Religion was one that commanded a widespread respect.

Hegel’s reaction is to affirm the importance of feelings. According to Hegel, religion begins with consciousness of God, or spirit. One finds religion within oneself in such a basic way that it is not even recognized as religion. The second moment in the development of the concept of religion occurs with the realization of the need to form a relation to God, a realization of estrangement or separateness that needs to be overcome. The relation of a person to God in which the person understands himself to be distinct from God occurs to the person on several levels, or, as Hegel says, the relation has several determinations:

“The first of these is feeling; and certainty in general, or faith, is classed under it. The second determination is representation. The third is thought, the form of thinking....
Whenever we philosophize about religion, we are engaging in religious thinking....This thoughtful understanding will show itself to be what used to be called “proofs for the existence of God.” We will consider here the significance of this “proving.”... namely that they in fact display the process of the elevation of the human being to God.”[25]

After Hegel explains that faith begins as some sort of immediate knowledge accompanied by a feeling of certainty, often based on authority and trust, he turns to feeling. Hegel is concerned in this discussion to

combat what he sees as a childish view of spirituality that would limit it to the non–cognitive level. If religion is just a matter of feelings, then it does not make sense to argue about it; and it is not hard to see the attraction of the absence of conflict under the welcoming banner of a spirituality in which everyone is recognized as sharing vague feelings of a beyond. Hegel thinks that this view arises from an inadequate analysis of feeling. The kinds of feelings relevant here are not purely sensory feelings, such as pains and pleasures; rather, at issue are feelings of awe, and feelings that something is so or must be so, feelings about God, and about what is right, for example.

Hegel describes feeling as a subjective involvement with a content. The content might be fear, awe, or that such and such is right. The objective dimension of the content is vague, indeterminate, while the subjective dimension is more prominent and determinate. When we move from feeling to consciousness of something, there is a projection of the content from its subjective associations to an objective status independent of the knower. Rationality requires the determination of the content through thought, and not merely based on feelings. So, the way in which the content is in feeling is, by itself, inadequate.

Hegel presents the developmental idea of the relationship between feeling and thought with the organic metaphor often found in the writings of the Romantics: even if the seed of the concept of God, for example, is to be found in feeling, the soil in which it develops is thought. Nothing is true or legitimate simply because it is found in feeling. If feeling were any sort of a criterion, there would be no way to judge between good and evil, for feelings inspire crimes as well as heroism. The criteria for legitimacy and truth are to be found in representation and thought. The demonstration of religious truth consists in the development of the seed of faith, which is subjective feeling, to grow and develop in thought, to find reasons for the support that some of these representations can take, and reasons for pruning and rejecting others.

While Hegel rejects a spirituality that would limit religion to its non–cognitive elements, he considers those elements to be essential. The spirituality to which Hegel invites us is one that includes both heart and head, one that does not rest content with the childish certainty of feelings, but aspires to the conviction of the mature religious intellect.

## Hegel's Response to Religious Diversity

Hegel devoted a great deal of time and energy to the study of the material that was becoming available in his day about the world religions. Some of the material he read and his reading of it were biased. The texts he used included reports of missionaries and colonialists. He was convinced that the world religions could be interpreted as conforming to levels of development that would culminate with his own philosophical interpretation of Lutheran Christianity. His treatment of Islam is particularly deplorable. Nevertheless, he did not simply reject the non– Christian religions, but was prepared to find important truths in each of them.

While Hegel considered the various religions of the world to be necessary for human spiritual

development, he was by no means an equality pluralist.[26] Equality pluralists hold that the major religions of the world are equal in important respects, such as conveying divine truths, leading to salvation, and providing moral guidance. In contrast, Hegel advances a form of degree pluralism, according to which the various religions can be ranked on a scale of the extent of the development of spirit.

Walter Jaeschke and Peter Hodgson have identified more than 240 sources, in Greek, Latin, English, French, and German, that Hegel used for his research on the world religions.[27] Hodgson writes: "Hegel knew more about the history of world religions than most of his contemporaries.... Islam represented an obvious lacuna."[28] Even with regard to Islam, however, Hegel occasionally expresses his admiration,[29] although he repeatedly finds fault with it for fanaticism.

Hegel's work on the world religions begins with an attempt at classifying them into various types, and then seeks a logic of development that would lead from one type to another, from East to West, and from past to present. Since religions form the basis for world civilizations, the same sort of typology and progression was sought in his Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. He paid little attention to developments within the various religious traditions, and focused on what he considered to be their typical expressions or foundational texts.

Despite the selective omissions, Hegel is not only unable to find a place for Islam in his framework, he also remains frustrated in his attempts to arrange his material into a convincing progression. As Hodgson comments: "Hegel's inability to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement of the materials is indicated by the fact that his organization of Determinate Religion differed widely in each of the four lecture series [on the philosophy of religion]."[30]

From the outset, Hegel is determined to delineate a history in which Christianity emerges as the consummate religion. This conviction must be a part of the difficulty that Hegel had in finding a place for Islam in his history.[31] It is also one of the factors that caused his difficulties with the organization of his materials, which has led a number of his commentators to suggest modifications of the Hegelian program in a manner that would offer non–Christian religions greater recognition.

John Burbidge speculates that if we take into consideration the developments in religious thought that have taken place after the nineteenth century, including the remarkable reconciliation and forgiveness expressed by Iranian Muslims toward their former Iraqi enemies after the war between their nations ended, we cannot expect that an account of the world's religions could be given in which Christianity comes at the end as the consummate religion. Christianity will have to share the stage of consummate religion with Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, at least, not as these religions have developed to the present age, but each of them in a more perfect form.[32]

The hope that Hegel's project is to be cured through the injection of religious pluralism is also to be found in the works of Robert Wallace[33] and Peter Hodgson.[34]

No matter whether religious pluralism is interpreted as an equality pluralism or a pluralism of

incommensurability, the suggested repairs to Hegel's outlook pose the danger of what the Roman Catholic Church condemned shortly after Hegel's death as indifferentism.[35] Although indifferentism was defined in terms of salvation, what is at issue among Hegelians is whether rational appraisal of the extent to which a religion may be taken to be an expression of spirit or to be a realization of freedom.

Clearly, it was a key part of Hegel's philosophy of religious diversity to attempt some kind of ranking. Hegel may have been mistaken to hold that Christianity is the consummate religion to the exclusion of any others; but even if we agree with Burbidge, Wallace, and Hodgson that given what is known today about the religions of the world, there is no better reason to hold that Christianity is the consummate religion than Judaism or Islam, this should not be taken to mean that no rational evaluation of points of difference among the religions is possible.

It was essential to Hegel's analysis of the phenomena of religious diversity that reason can examine the various aspects of religious concepts, that justifications can be given for religious beliefs, and religious practices, and that the intellect has the ability to identify flaws and merits of religious teachings and practices. Roman civic religion must continue to be seen as a flawed in so far as it subordinates religion to the ends of empire.

Even if the norms of contemporary polite intellectual society do not permit us to find fault with other people's religious beliefs, that does not mean that religious differences do not warrant philosophical scrutiny and evaluation. During Hegel's own time, what would soon be called indifferentism was fairly widespread in Enlightenment circles to such an extent that the Pope would give it a name and condemn it. I do not mean to suggest that Burbidge, Wallace, or Hodgson are guilty of the heresy of indifferentism; but that the pluralism they advocate needs to be more carefully elaborated in such a way as to avoid indifferentism and the very un–Hegelian notion that reason can find no grounds on which to judge among competing religious claims and practices.

## Hegel's Hermeticism

The Papal encyclical against indifferentism also condemned Freemasonry and membership in some other secret societies. Freemasonry had been condemned by the Catholic Church since 1738. One of the complaints against it was that it fostered indifferentism. It is known that in Hegel's youth and during his Jena period, he had the acquaintance of some Freemasons; and he expressed sympathy toward some of the ideals they espoused. Some of his acquaintances had also been members of the Bavarian Illuminati.

There is no evidence, however, that Hegel ever was a member of the Freemasons or of any other secret society.[36] There is ample evidence, however, that in his youth, Hegel began to study such German mystics as Boehme, Eckhart, and Johannes Tauler (1300–1361). His study of mysticism continued and intensified through the rest of his life. After Hegel moved to Berlin, in 1818, he cultivated a friendship with Franz von Baader (1765–1841), the foremost interpreter of Boehme at the time and a reputed member of

the Rosicrucians. Magee reports:

“Baader visited Hegel in Berlin, and the two studied Meister Eckhart together. Baader reports that on reading a certain passage in Eckhart, Hegel cried ‘*da haben wir es ja, was wir wollen!*’ (There, indeed, we have what we want!).[37] Hegel then subsequently introduced a quotation from Eckhart into his 1824 Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: ‘The eye with which God sees me is the same eye by which I see Him, my eye and His eye are one and the same. In righteousness I am weighed in God and He in me. If God did not exist nor would I; if I did not exist nor would he.’[38]
Baader was widely reputed to be a member of the mystical order of the Rosicrucians, which had been revived in the late eighteenth century. The Rosicrucians of Hegel’s time had a reputation for alchemy and Hermetic interests of all kinds, as well as for political conservatism. In the Preface to the1821 Philosophy of Right, Hegel launches an attack on political idealism and states ‘To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present and thereby to enjoy the present, this is the rational insight which reconciles us to the actual...’”[39]

The use of the Rosicrucian symbol here has puzzled Hegel’s commentators.[40] Magee concludes that since the allusion could not have been for personal gain, Hegel might really have been in agreement with the Rosicrucians. It is somewhat more plausible to think that Hegel used the symbols of the Rosicrucians and others in his works in a manner analogous to the symbolic constructions that Karl Theodor had built in his Schlossgarten in Schwetzingen. Karl Theodore did not mean to demonstrate his acceptance of Islam or his agreement with the adherents of the cult of Minerva, but to show his open mindedness, and willingness to recognize the insights found in various religions and cults, and to do this in a playful and aesthetically pleasing way.

A careful review of the various interpretations has been given by Robert Stern, who offers a “methodological reading” according to which: “Hegel’s claim is that philosophy as a rational inquiry will avoid ‘the setting up of a world beyond,’” and that when one thinks rationally, one does so without setting up some sort of “empty utopianism.” Because philosophy refrains from otherworldliness, it is a rational practice that reconciles us to the present and leads us to “delight” in it, which does not mean accepting whatever political institutions happen to be in place.[41] While Stern’s penetrating analysis enables us to see what is wrong with conservative and progressive readings of Hegel’s Preface, it does not really explain the reference to the Rosicrucians, which requires an appreciation of Hegel’s interest in mysticism.

Hegel uses the symbols of the Rosicrucians and alchemists as a playful sign of his willingness to find a place in his philosophy for the esoteric, such as the mystical insights he finds in Boehme and Eckhart. The difference between Hegel and Karl Theodor is that while the Elector did not devote himself to any serious study of the religious ideas of Islam or the Greek mystery cults, Hegel did study the world religions and the ideas of mystics and, perhaps, of secret societies, since he certainly was well acquainted with a number of their members.

To recognize the rose in the cross of the present, as Stern correctly argues, is not to offer a “social theodicy” as conservatives contend, nor is it to see that a new phase of social life is dawning, as Avineri suggests. Stern contends that Hegel is making a methodological observation that philosophy must begin its work under the assumption that it is the world as it actually is, not an ideal, to which reason is to be applied. The precise form of reason that Hegel recommends is speculation. Speculation rejects the dualism that separates finite and infinite. The infinite is to be found in the manner in which the finite ought to overcome its limitations: “In the ought [Sollen] the transcendence of finitude, infinity, begins. The ought is that which, in the subsequent development,…will display itself as a progress to infinity.”[42] This overcoming of the merely transcendent in the transcendence of the immanent is what Hegel found in the teachings of the mystics and what was suggested to him by esoteric symbols, and this is why he identifies the speculative with what used to be called “mystical”. Hegel’s hermeticism is not an irrational occultism, but the recognition that within the hermetic tradition teachings are to be found that reject the dualism of transcendent and immanent without reducing either to the other.[43]

Much of what Hegel says about mysticism can be put in terms of spirituality. If the alchemy and hermeticism of Hegel’s age are seen as analogous to some forms of what, today, is sometimes called new age spirituality, it is clear what Hegel’s stance would be toward it. While Hegel would not endorse, let alone join, any particular new age cult, he would feel free to avail himself of the symbols they use to indicate his own interpretation of those aspects of the hermetic and mystical traditions that can be interpreted philosophically in terms of his own logic.

## Hegel’s Spirituality

If spirituality is understood according to contemporary usage, a picture of Hegel’s spirituality emerges from our considerations of some of the challenges faced by religious believers during the ages of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In each case, Hegel takes a moderate position. He appreciates the point of each challenge, and he offers responses that defend religious belief and deepen the sense of the spiritual beyond what is current among the defenders of conventional religious belief and its attackers. Hegel rejects the movement to redefine religion in terms of religious feelings or religious experiences; but at the same time, he affirms that these feelings and experiences are an essential component to religious life.

Furthermore, he suggests how spirituality can be deepened through the rational development of the concepts formed on the basis of these feelings. Contemporary spirituality is characterized today by a widespread acceptance of various forms of religious pluralism. Hegel agrees with the pluralists that there are important religious insights to be discovered in the various religious traditions of the world; but he denies that this means that we cannot use reason to adjudicate issues on which the traditions conflict. He shows how one can gain insights about the features of the world religions as one seeks to construct typologies for them, and revises the categories on which they are based. In this way, he goes beyond the banal forms of pluralism that merely offer acceptance to a wide variety of traditions by maintaining a

critical stance toward his own and other traditions while remaining loyal to his denomination.

Finally, with regard to the esoteric, Hegel provides a qualified endorsement that is willing to interpret esoteric symbols and the teachings of the mystics in a manner that accords with his own speculative philosophy, although he does not formally support any specific esoteric cults. Characteristic of Hegel's response to the various elements of spirituality that were emerging in the early nineteenth century was the advocacy of the use of reason, and a defense of the basic tenets of his religious faith.

The study of Hegel's responses to the challenges to religious belief that he faced illuminates the emergence of what is known as spirituality today, for its roots pass through the currents of thought addressed by Hegel. Although spirituality (*ma'naviyyat*) is understood in Iran in a somewhat different manner than how it is understood in the West, and although these differences are important and profoundly interesting in themselves, many elements of the Western understanding of spirituality are shared with the Iranian one. Some aspects of Western and Iranian spirituality have common roots in monotheism and in various elements of Christian and Islamic mystical traditions. Other aspects have been imported to Iran through the translations of Western sources. Yet other elements are a result of the translations of Iranian sources, like the poetry of Mawlavi, into European languages. So, much of what Hegel has to say about issues pertaining to spirituality are also relevant to the Iranian context of discussion.

Although Muslims will (and should) reject Hegel's misunderstandings of Islam and his defense of specifically Christian doctrines as elements of the consummate religion to the exclusion of Islamic teachings, nevertheless the basic stance taken by Hegel on the three aspects of spirituality that have been reviewed here are perfectly in harmony with Islam, at least as understood by many of our own Shi'i scholars, namely: (1) the rejection of a reduction of religion to feelings and experiences and the defense of a rational theology; (2) the rejection of equality pluralism in favor of a non-reductive degree pluralism; and (3) an appreciation of esotericism to the extent that it can be given a rational interpretation.

1. See Pinkard 2000, 577; Desmond 2003, 13–17.
2. See: Legenhausen, Spirituality in Shi'i Islam: An Overview 2010.
3. Sheldrake 1995, 521.
4. Cottingham 2005, 3.
5. Leibundgut kein Datum.
6. The quotation is designated by Rosenkranz as being from Hegel's Jena period 1801–1807, "Das Zeitungslesen des Morgens früh ist eine Art von realistischem Morgensegen. Man orientiert seine Haltung gegen die Welt an Gott oder an dem, was die Welt ist. Jenes gibt dieselbe Sicherheit, wi hier, daß man wisse, wie man daran sei." Rosenkranz 1844, 543.
7. 7 See Terry Pinkard's translation of the Phenomenology of Spirit, paragraph 508, and his note 57. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit October 30, 2013. Also, see the addition to §123 in Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right 1991.
8. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume 1, 1984, 140, fn. 63.
9. These points have been pointed out by many others. For example, see the introduction to Lewis 2011.
10. The exaggeration of the role of Deism in the history of the Enlightenment is documented in Barnett 2003.
11. See Hodgson, Shapes of Freedom 2012, 153.
12. See Jaeschke 1990, 3; Hodgson, Hegel and Christian Theology 2005, 13.

13. See Spinoza 2007.
14. See Barnett 2003, 55.
15. Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right 1991, §66. Hegel's arguments for religious toleration both before and after the writing of the Grundlinien include toleration of non-Christian religious beliefs. See Shl72, 31, 56-58, 169.
16. Contrary to Beiser 2003, 95, Robespierre opposed the extremists who favored a Cult of Reason and forced dechristianization, and instead promoted his own Cult of the Supreme Being, which was sufficiently extreme in its anti-Christian orientation to substantiate Beiser's main point, despite the confusion of cults. See Ozouf 1988, 21-24.
17. All of the points of this paragraph are made in Magee, Hegel and Mysticism 2008, 254-256.
18. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 51.
19. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 52.
20. Lamprecht 2004, 47.
21. The Order of the Illuminati was founded by Adam Weishaupt in 1776 in order to promote the ideals of the Enlightenment and to combat the influence of Catholicism, particularly of the Jesuits, whose order had been suppressed in 1773. At its zenith, the group had about 2000 members, many of whom were disaffected Freemasons. The program of the Illuminati was the education of a "new man". Those who were thus trained to staff a new moral regime were to be secretly infiltrated into positions of authority in the institutions of government. Eventually, in the Electorate of Bavaria, about ten percent of senior officials were Illuminati.

Despite its successes, the society was finally betrayed by some of its own members, who plotted for the Hapsburg's to gain control over Bavaria and to compensate Karl Theodor with Hapsburg territories in the Netherlands. Bavarians opposed to the plot withdrew from the order and accused it of treasonous activities. Karl Theodor responded with his edict to outlaw the group. In addition to the political machinations, there was considerable dispute within the Illuminati about the significance and desirability of various aspects of esotericism. After Karl Theodor's edict, one of the friends of Weishaupt was struck by lightning. A list of members of the Illuminati was found at his estate and turned over to the Bavarian police, which they used effectively for the suppression of the order. See Neugebauer- Wölk 2006 ; cf. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 57.

22. See Wallace 2005, 45.
23. See Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition, the Lectures of 1827 1988, 162; and the commentary, Hodgson, Hegel and Christian Theology 2005, 115 f.
24. See Wallace 2005, 312.
25. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition, the Lectures of 1827 1988, 105.
26. See Legenhausen, On the Plurality of Religious Pluralisms 2009, § III.
27. See the bibliography of Hegel's sources in Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume II: Determinate Religion 1987, 783ff. and the discussion in the editorial introduction, 4f.
28. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume II: Determinate Religion 1987, 4.
29. Hegel, Philosophy of Mind 2001, § 573. Hegel's knowledge of Mawlavi Jalal al-Din Rumi was through a translation by the German poet and scholar Friedrich Rückert: Rückert 1821.
30. Hodgson, Hegel's Philosophy of Religion 2008, 206.
31. Hodgson comments: "Islam lacks a place in Hegel's schema of determinate religions because, unlike the other religions, it does not represent an earlier phase of religious consciousness that has been or can be subsumed in the consummate religion. Rather it stands in antithesis to Chrsitianity as a contemporary rival." Hodgson, Hegel and Christian Theology 2005, 199; also see 198 for how Islam posed organizational difficulties for Hegel.
32. Burbidge 1992, 182.
33. Wallace 2005, 316.
34. Hodgson, Hegel and Christian Theology 2005, 212-219; 237-238.
35. Pope Gregory XVI issued the encyclical Mirari Vos on 15 August 1832, subtitled, "On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism". It is defined in paragraph 13 of the document, following which it is also condemned as follows: "This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience

must be maintained for everyone." See XVI 1832.

36. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 75.

37. Magee, Hegel and Mysticism 2008, 262, citing Nicolin 1970, 261.

38. LPR, 1:347–48;Werke, 16:209. This is actually a composite quotation, built out of lines from several of Eckhart's writings. [Magee] LPR is Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume 1 1984 ; Werke is Hegel, Werke in zwanzig Bänden 1969.

39. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, trans. by T. M. Knox Oxford: ClarendonPress, 1952, p.12 [ Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right 1991, 22]; Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, section 27. [Magee], Magee, Hegel and Mysticism 2008, 263.

40. See, for example Avineri 1972, 129; Peperzak 1987, 109; and the references in Stern 2006.

41. Stern 2006.

42. „Im Sollen beginnt das Hinausgehen über die Endlichkeit, die Unendlichkeit. Das Sollen ist dasjenige, was sich in weiterer Entwicklung nach jener Unmöglichkeit als der Progreß ins Unendliche darstellt." Hegel, The Science of Logic 2010, 105; Wallace 2005, 80.

43. See Wallace 2005, 107.

# Appendix 1: Schwetzingen

### Appendix I: Schwetzingen[1]

The palace at Schwetzingen was the summer residence of Carl Theodore, or Karl IV. Philipp Theodor, (1724 – 1799) who was Prince-Elector and Count of Palatine from 1742, Duke of Jülich and Berg from 1742 and also Prince-Elector and Duke of Bavaria from 1777.

Portrait of Karl Theodor; 1780 by Anton Hickel; his coat of arms.

Decorative structures were erected in various gardens throughout Europe in the eighteenth century. In England they became known as "follies". Karl Theodor had the follies of his palace constructed to display his open-mindedness as an "Enlightened" ruler and a champion of peace. In one of the monuments at Schwetzingen there is an inscription translated as: "A field of war and death of Romans and Germans has been discovered, through the unearthing of weapons, urns and bones, in the year 1765. - To the arts of peace, which are the sole joys of his life, the elector Charles Theodore has dedicated this spot, excavated to the height of seven feet, and had this monument erected in 1768."

The decorative mosque depicted below was built for the palace garden at Schwetzingen under the direction of the architect Nicolas de Pigage (1723-1796). It was completed in 1785, the same year in which Karl Theodor abolished the Bavarian Illuminati, after having issued edicts outlawing both Freemasonry and the Illuminati. It was built before any real mosque was erected in Germany. The mosque is adorned with several tableaus in which wise sayings are inscribed in Arabic, beneath which

are the German translations. Examples of the sayings are: For the sake of the flower, one waters the thorns; Speech is silver, but silence is golden; Possessions and the world are temporary, but good deeds remain; Loneliness is better than bad company; The fool has his heart in his mouth, but the tongue of the wise man is in his heart; Changing one's friends brings ruin; One lapse of a wise man counts for a thousand. Often the Arabic has errors. Over the entrance (in the second picture below) is a tableau in Arabic without a German translation, apparently intended to mean: There is no god, but Allah; but the Arabic is flawed so that it says: No Allah, but Allah. Although it was never intended for prayer, Muslims have made use of it on several occasions with the permission of the authorities in Baden–Württemberg; otherwise it is used for programs of the museum, including lectures and concerts.

Below is the Temple to Mercury (the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hermes), which was built by Pigage to appear to be a ruin. Mercury/Hermes was considered a messenger and keeper of secrets. The word "hermeneutics" derives from the Greek name. The structure was completed in 1788 and designated as Merkurtempel in 1791.

Another temple was dedicated to Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, identified with the Greek Athena. It was completed by Pigage in 1769.

Apollo was the name used by both Greeks and Romans for the Olympian deity who was worshipped as a god of light and the sun, truth and prophecy, healing, plague, music, and poetry. As the patron of Delphi, Apollo was an oracular god—the prophetic deity of the Delphic Oracle. Pigage's belvedere was erected in 1762.

Pigage completed the Temple of Forest Botany in 1780. It contained medallions with the likenesses of ancient and modern botanists, and is guarded by two sphinxes.

In addition to the above structures, which are included here because of their depiction of late 18th century attitudes among the nobility with regard to spirituality, the grounds of the Schwetzingen palace contain various other structures and gardens. Among the famous guests who visited Schwetzingen are Voltaire, Mozart, and Schiller.

Schloss Schwetzingen is administered today by the Institute for Official Palaces and Gardens of Baden–Württemberg (der Einrichtung Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden–Württemberg), and is open to the public on a daily basis.

1. All of the information in this appendix is from Wikipedia.

# Appendix 2: Hegel's Occult Drawing

Glenn Alexander Magee includes a drawing allegedly by Hegel in his book on Hegel's hermeticism.[1]

It is not known when the drawing was made, but it was found among Hegel's papers and has been attributed to him on that basis.

It is not known whether the triangles are supposed to be pointing up or down. The drawing includes astrological symbols for the sun, the moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, and Saturn. A planetary symbol appears over each occurrence of "Spiritus". Magee speculates that some of the other symbols may be variant astrological signs or alchemical symbols. According to Magee, "Hegel regularly employed astrological, chemical, and alchemical symbols in his manuscripts, as abbreviations."[2] Magee goes on to surmise:

"The word *Spiritus* occurs three times in the midst of astrological and (possibly) alchemical symbols, on each of the sides of the central triangle. This could represent Hegel's philosophical realization that all reality—whether celestial (the planets) or terrestrial (the elements)—must be understood in terms of the development of Spirit.... *Spiritus* is the 'magic word' that evokes the 'shape' of the Absolute, which allows us to comprehend the Absolute in its totality."[3]

1. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 111.
2. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 113.
3. Magee, Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition 2001, 117.

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