

Quadrant II – Notes

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was an eminent German Philosopher and one of the chief proponents of Idealism. Hegel was a brilliant student, and at school he excelled and won a scholarship to a reputed seminary at Tubingen in 1788, where he studied philosophy and theology.
- After completing his studies, he accepted the position of a family tutor and followed similar positions from 1793- 1800. His philosophical speculations began at this time. In 1799 his father died and he inherited certain amount of money which he thought sufficient. He gave up the job of private tutor.
- In August 1801 he was appointed a private lecturer and began lecturing on logic and metaphysics. As a Lecturer he earned wide reputation and in 1805 he was given the post of Professor which was highly coveted in those days. His well-known Phenomenology of Mind appeared in 1807.
- His long work, Science of Logic in three volumes, appeared in 1812, 1813 and 1816. By this time he became quite well known, and in 1816 he was invited to take up the post of professor of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. Here he wrote the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1817).
- By this time, Hegel became quite famous, and the Prussian minister of education offered him the prestigious chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin. Berlin was the intellectual centre of Germany, and Hegel accepted the offer and taught at Berlin from 1818 till his death in 1831.
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IDEA OF DIALECTICS

- Hegel's political philosophies rest mainly on his dialectical method. Hegel borrowed his method from Socrates who is the first exponent of this method. The term 'dialectic' or 'dialectical' is derived from the Greek origin which refers to the method of investigation of through the art of disputation that is by the process of argument and counter-arguments.
- Dialectics is a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned methods of argumentation. Hegel's dialectical method is termed as Dialectical Idealism as he feels-
 - 1) Idea (Spirit or consciousness) is the basic substance of universe (which includes physical objects as well as social and political institutions), it is the driving force behind all historical development. Each social institution represents the manifestation of prevailing form of idea at a particular historical point.
 - 2) Idea is endowed with capacity and tendency of development.
 - 3) Idea always moves in a dialectical path that is the initial idea is confronted by its contradictory form and this confrontation results in destruction of the untenable part of truths; and integration of tenable path and the process goes on repeating itself till it reaches the stage of Absolute Truth.
- An idea moves from a thesis to antithesis until a synthesis of the two is found. Synthesis has in it elements of thesis as well as antithesis. In due course the synthesis itself acquires the status of a thesis and gives rise to its own antithesis. This process goes on.
- In practice, Hegel applied his dialectical method to the domain of ideas. Therefore, his method may be described as dialectical idealism. It means that every idea (thesis) gives rise to a counter idea (antithesis) and the original idea and counter idea merge to give rise to new idea (synthesis)
- The initial idea or proposition or thesis does not represent absolute truth; the counter-proposition or antithesis, which just the opposite or negation of thesis too, does not represent absolute truth. When thesis and anti-thesis clash with one another they tend to destroy each other's untrue elements (because, true elements cannot be destroyed)
- The resultant proposition which is the synthesis embodies the residual elements both of thesis and antithesis is relatively free from the untrue elements of the two; it is nearer to truth or perfection as compared to those two.
- But the synthesis so evolved may still not be the complete truth. It therefore takes position of new thesis and undergoes same process of clash with antithesis and emergence of new synthesis. This process of negation of negation continues till it reaches the stage of absolute idea which is free from contradiction.
- Family is the thesis, civil society is its antithesis and state is the synthesis. Similarly, despotism is thesis; democracy is its antithesis and constitutional monarchy the synthesis. Inorganic world is the thesis, organic world is its antithesis and human beings are the synthesis.