

## Lecture 7: Resurgent Collectivism

*Hegel, Marx, and the Post-Kantian Turn*

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### Historical Context

- **1806**: Napoleon sweeps through German states → humiliating defeat for Germany.
  - Napoleon viewed himself as a product of **Rousseau** and the French Revolution.
  - Philosophy shifts from France/England to **Germany** in the 19th century.
  - Post-Kant question:
  - Kant: reality (*noumenal*) is unknowable.
  - Choice:
    1. Follow **reason** → accept phenomenal world only (analytic, positivist path).
    2. Pursue **reality** beyond reason → non-rational, emotional, even irrational methods (romantics, poets, Hegel, Marx).
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### Romantic Reactions

- Poets like **Goethe & Keats** criticize philosophy as “cold,” “gray,” and life-denying.
  - Emphasis on **feeling** over abstract reason:
  - “*Gray, dear friend, is all theory, but green is life’s golden tree.*” — Goethe.
  - “*Philosophy will clip an angel’s wings.*” — Keats.
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## Hegel's Philosophy

### Phenomenology of Spirit (1807)

- Written as Napoleon defeats Prussia.
- Hegel sees **history as a developmental process** of Spirit (Reason).
- **Dialectic**: thesis → antithesis → synthesis → new thesis.
- Contradiction is built into reality itself.
- **World-Historical Individuals**: Napoleon, Caesar, Alexander — used by Providence to advance Spirit's goals.

### Theodicy Problem

- Classical dilemma: If God is good, all-powerful, and all-knowing, why evil?
- Hegel's solution:
- God/Spirit unfolds over time, growing in self-awareness.
- History = God realizing Himself.
- Evil, suffering, "slaughter-bench" of history = part of divine development.

### Collectivism

- **Reason (capital R)** = divine, infinite, providential force.
- **Individuals are expendable**; states and peoples matter most.
- *"So mighty a form must trample down many an innocent flower."*
- True morality = merging the self into the state.
- *"The state is the divine idea as it exists on earth."*

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## Marx's Transformation of Hegel

- Trained as a **philosopher**; influenced heavily by Hegel.
- **Flips Hegel "on his head"**:
- Hegel → Spirit drives history.
- Marx → **Material conditions** drive history.

### Core Philosophical Premises

- **Determinism:** social/economic development follows inevitable stages:
- Tribal → Feudal → Capitalist → Dictatorship of Proletariat → Communism.
- **Materialism:** ideas, religion, morality = “phantoms” reflecting material conditions.
- Religion under feudalism mirrors feudal hierarchy.
- Protestantism mirrors capitalist individualism.
- **Social Essence:**
- No innate individual soul/nature.
- *“The human essence is the ensemble of social relations.”*
- True being = **communal**, not individual.

### Necessity of Revolution

- Contradictory logics (different classes, cultures) cannot be reconciled rationally.
- **Only violence** resolves contradictions.
- Marx/Engels: revolution requires **terror and bloodshed**.
- *“The revolutionary terror.”*
- *“Entire reactionary peoples” may disappear.* — Engels.

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## Hegel vs. Marx on Collectivism

Hegel	Marx
Spirit/Reason drives history	Material/economic forces drive history
Religion integrated with state	Religion = illusion/epiphenomenon
State is divine reality	State will “wither away” under communism
Individuals must obey & merge with collective	Individuals shaped entirely by social/economic class
Violence justified as Providence’s tool	Violence necessary as material law of history

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## Key Concepts

- **Dialectic:** conflict → contradiction → synthesis.
  - **World-Historical Individuals:** great leaders used by Providence/History.
  - **Slaughter-bench of History:** individuals sacrificed for higher purposes.
  - **Scientific Socialism:** Marx's claim that socialism/communism follows material laws like science.
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## Review Questions

1. How did Kant's noumenal/phenomenal distinction set the stage for post-Kantian philosophy?
  2. Why did Romantic poets like Goethe and Keats reject "cold philosophy"?
  3. How does Hegel reinterpret history and solve the problem of evil?
  4. What role do "world-historical individuals" play in Hegel's philosophy?
  5. How does Marx "invert" Hegel's system?
  6. Why does Marx argue that violence is necessary in social change?
  7. How do Hegel and Marx each redefine the role of the individual vs. the collective?
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