



Hegel: Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right

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These lectures constitute the earliest version of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, one of the most influential works in Western political theory. They introduce a notion of civil society that has proven of inestimable importance to diverse philosophical and social agendas. This transcription of the lectures, which remained in obscurity until 1982, presents the philosopher's social thought with clarity and boldness. It differs in some significant respects from Hegel's own published version of 1821.

Nowhere does Hegel make plainer the difference between his concept of objective spirit and traditional concepts of natural law or offer a more prominent treatment of the key notion of recognition. His description of poverty is more forceful and his critique of existing social conditions more thorough than in the published edition, which had to satisfy the Prussian censor. The strictly limited powers of the monarch are more clearly delineated in the Heidelberg lectures, and the arguments for a bicameral legislature are more explicit. Hegel formulates in a more dynamic way his understanding of the relationship between rationality and actuality--the rational is not what exists but what is coming into being--and sets forth more simply and clearly the central themes of his political philosophy--freedom, justice, and community.

The Heidelberg lectures are an indispensable resource for understanding the edition of 1821 and an invaluable supplement to one of the great classics of political philosophy.

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Hegel: Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right From Brand: Oxford University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #458388 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Oxford University Press
- Published on: 2012-05-04
- Released on: 2012-05-04
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x .90" w x 9.10" l, 1.25 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 366 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

J. Michael Stewart, until his death in 1994, was a professional translator and independent Hegel scholar in England.

Peter C. Hodgson is Charles G. Finney Professor of Theology Emeritus, at Divinity School, Vanderbilt University. He studied for his AB degree at Princeton University and his BD degree at Yale Divinity School, and completed his MA and PhD at Yale University. Hodgson is the author and editor of over twenty books, and the series editor of the Oxford Hegel Lectures Series.

Otto Poggeler studied at the University of Bonn and the University of Heidelberg, and in 1961 became the editor of *Hegel-Studien*. His academic positions have included Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Hegel-Archiv at the Ruhr-University Bochum, and visiting professor at Pennsylvania State University, and then at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

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