

FRANZ GABRIEL NAUEN

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REVOLUTION, IDEALISM AND HUMAN FREEDOM:

SHELLING HÖLDERLIN AND HEGEL AND THE CRISIS
OF EARLY GERMAN IDEALISM

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by

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P R E F A C E

In this study I will present the intellectual development of Schelling, Hölderlin and Hegel during their formative years. Because of their similar social origins, the early thought of these young Swabians, during the 1790's, should be treated as a unit. Their experience as roommates at the *Stift* in Tübingen and their close intellectual fellowship throughout the nineties made each extremely responsive to the others ideas. As members of the political elite in Württemberg, their intellectual assumptions were profoundly affected by the crisis of Württemberg and German political society and by the events of the French Revolution in a way explicable only in the light of their Swabian heritage. So, for example, seen in the context of Hölderlin's and Schelling's thinking, the genesis of Hegel's earliest mature philosophical assumptions appears to be not so much an event in the history of philosophy as a specific solution to the problems raised by the crisis of his society.

The crucial role of Hölderlin in the history of German Idealism should also become apparent as a result of this study. For reasons developed in the following, Hölderlin's thinking bridged the gap not only between Kantianism and the new philosophy, which was to come to fruition in Hegel's mature thought, but also between the republican and the nationalist phase in the history of German political thought.

While, however, I hope that the following will contribute to our understanding of the mature thought of Hegel and Schelling, I have with some reluctance limited this study to the evolution of the thought of Schelling, Hölderlin, and Hegel during the nineties, partially for substantive and partially for philological reasons. Just because their emerging mature thought should be seen as a response by three former student radicals to the crisis of Württemberg and German republicanism, it would do injustice to the story of the evolution of this commitment to attempt here a general history of German idealism. Also, in sharp con-

trast to the nineties, neither the intellectual exchange between Hölderlin, Hegel and Schelling nor the specifics of the crisis of Württemberg and German politics play a crucial role in the development of Hegel's and Schelling's thought after 1800. Finally, the manuscripts which record Hegel's and Schelling's development after 1800 still have not been adequately prepared for the historian. All these considerations have led me to omit all but cursory reference to texts written after 1800. To do so would have necessitated facile comparisons out of keeping with the complexity of the record and the context of their development after 1800.

The *terminus ad quem* of this study is therefore not Hegel's *Phenomenology* or Schelling's *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, but Hegel's prior decision in 1800, while still under the influence of Hölderlin, to collaborate with Schelling by becoming a professional philosopher concerned with discovering a new metaphysics which would be the key for social transformation.

Indeed this decision was made almost entirely within the context of his friendship with Schelling and Hölderlin. The relevance of Hegel's Swabian heritage to his philosophizing has been largely obscured by the fact that Hegel's earliest published writings on philosophy, which appeared in the first decade of the nineteenth century, were polemics against Kant, Fichte, and eventually Schelling. Hegel's prior decision, however, to engage in philosophical work, which set the tone for his subsequent development, was not only a response to the writings of Kant and Fichte but his own solution – affected profoundly by his friendship with Schelling and especially Hölderlin – to the specifically Swabian question of how to resolve the impasse of Württemberg and Imperial politics.

In this context it must be stressed that Hegel's early politics, while patriotic, were libertarian and must be distinguished from the "nationalist" patriotism of Fichte's later years which was a consequence of his disillusionment with and ensuing contempt for the totality of the French revolutionary experience. Fichte's politics during the nineties while he was still an apologist for the French Revolution were characterized by a moral rigorism far afield from the emphasis on harmony and integration which colored Schelling's, Hegel's, and Hölderlin's vision. Perhaps this is why Hegel decided after his philosophical conversion in 1800 to collaborate with Schelling, whose occasional views on politics conformed to his own, rather than with Fichte whose politics were both too authoritarian and abstract to be a real key to the immediate transformation of the state and society. In contrast to Fichte or Kant, political conscious-

ness – an awareness that ideas must serve politics and not the reverse – is the hallmark of Schelling's earliest writings, Hölderlin's entire work, and the characteristic contribution of Hegel to classical idealism.

In preparing this study, I have relied almost exclusively on obscure secondary works, usually of an "antiquarian" character, for social and political background. All discussions of ideas, however, have been based on a close exegesis of primary texts. The best critical editions of the published and unpublished writings and letters of Schelling, Hölderlin, Hegel, Kant, Fichte, Schiller and Lessing have been consulted.

I would like to thank my friend, H. Stuart Hughes, for his constant encouragement and abiding good will. I also wish to express my fathomless gratitude to Henry Tudor and Rena Nauen for helping me see that the pursuit of this study was the only sincere thing for me to do at this stage of my career.