

# Carlsbad 1819

## Like another Chouannerie

## Hegelianism is not Prussianism

*November 29, 2017 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur*

One of the most flagrant and offensive misconceptions about Hegel is that he was a conservative theoretician of the Prussian state. This is offensive not so much because it misrepresents Hegel, but because it misrepresents the thought of the Prussian conservatives who passionately fought ideas like his until the ultimate downfall of classical, Maikäferi Prussian conservatism come German unification. There were certainly some Hegelians on that front, such as if I recall correctly Heinrich Leo, Johann Eduard Erdmann and Hermann Wagener (the latter dramatically defecting to the Bismarck-worshipping Freikonservativen by the 1870s), but basically none of them ever conflated Hegelianism with Prussianism.

Some of you might remember a spat between Daniel Larison and Moldbug that happened a decade ago by now, regarding the legacy of Hegel (<http://larison.org/2007/07/07/hegel-ii/>). Was he a “moderate-liberal constitutional monarchist” (Larison) or a proto-totalitarian (Moldbug)?

The answer is both. But overall, Larison’s side holds up better.

Resuscitating old-school Prussian conservatism is one of this blog’s goals. So far I have done little on this (but as of now I still regard my essay on Friedrich von Gentz (<https://carlsbad1819.wordpress.com/2017/06/25/friedrich-von-gentz-the-law-of-nations-and-the-decline-of-internoble-solidarity/>) to be my best). This blog is meant to have a definite end at some point, but we are only at the beginning.

I suppose a brief anti-Hegelian conservative pamphlet is a good way to start: not only does it debunk a Hegel myth, it also serves to scrub out his name and emphasize the distinctness of *Preußentum*, properly speaking. Oh, and if that term ends up invoking Oswald Spengler in your mind, forget about him also.

The author is Karl Ernst Schubarth. He is kvlt enough that he lacks any Wikipedia article. He does, however, have an entry in the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie. Schubarth was no fan of romanticism; he did not take a liking to Schiller or Schlegel. He was a massive fan of Goethe, though. He personally visited and exchanged letters with him throughout the 1820s until Goethe’s death in 1832. In 1830, he published “Lectures on Goethe’s Faust.”

He is also cited in Friedrich Julius Stahl’s *Die Philosophie des Rechts*, which is how I found out about him.

The pamphlet that concerns us here is entitled *Ueber die Unvereinbarkeit der Hegel'schen Staatslehre mit dem obersten Lebens- und Entwicklungsprincip des preußischen Staats* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=z4nuGnRgoJoC>). [On the Incompatibility of Hegel's Political Science with the Prussian State's Principle of Life and Development] (1839).

Right from the opening, Schubarth speaks of the "anti-Prussian tendency of Hegel's political theory," [in the Philosophy of Right] and he dives in to the corrections (presented here in mixed order):

The basic conception of constitutional states is that they are not states formed and sustained by the power of the ruling lineage [Ed.'s note: "Geschlecht," as in e.g. Adelsgeschlecht, a noble lineage] alone, whose power could not be thought away for a moment without abolishing the essence of the state, but that in addition to the power of the ruling lineage, they have their cause and origin in an external body, their true substance, while the existence and occurrence of a ruling princely lineage is only an accidental result. A constitutional state is a republic in a monarchical garment, nothing more or less, where the prince is left as the remnant of a preceding purely monarchical epoch, without just sending him away, by making use of him for some ceremonial functions of formal importance to carry out the state, which by its very nature is completely independent of him, with a certain momentous pomp.

The unfavorable direction of Hegelian philosophy, which ultimately leaves nothing to the personality in general, and its full manifestation, so that the personality ceases at the end by the abolition of its individual immortality, and the absolute substance in the form of absolute personality is absorbed in the life of the state by the restriction of the princely personality and its effectiveness to the least of its capabilities, namely, the mere capacity to say yes or to sign his name... What this means is that the monarch attains the final power only in formality and not in substance, What the monarch still has is only his ceremonial decision... In p.373, Hegel says: "In a well-ordered monarchy, the law alone has the objective side to which the monarch adds only the subjective 'I want.'"

In Hegel's sense, therefore, it can be argued that the monarch in a constitutionally modern state is the same thing that was with the ancients in their organic state: the vapor of the Pythia, the oracles — essentially, things which could be substituted for each other. Hegel quite rightly follows the concept of the constitutional state of restricting the prince to this mere formal role and to the function of the yes-man, since in a constitutional state the prince is not the substance of the state, but the epitome of the different individual spheres. In this case the prince has only an accidental significance. Hegel, however, again quite rightly proceeds in his own near sense not to recognize the peculiarity of the character as the most important thing in the Prince, since the State is not to him an embodiment of men.

...The substance of the Prussian state, as a pure monarchy, is essentially only its ruling lineage, which by virtue of its inherent, special ability has made the state alone what it is, so that the state's existence is based on what Hegel calls the peculiarity of character. And so the organism of the entire state, and every single part of it, as a smaller organism in the Prussian state, is that of the personality, and especially of the person of the monarch, who must continually determine the state, if the state is to continue to be what it is. But this determination consists in far more, and in something quite different, than simply saying "yes," or signing one's name under what others consult and conclude as irrevocable. According to this, what Hegel sees as the most important, what he wants to be left out of the concept of the monarch, are self-determination and self-action, which are the soul, the very nerve of Prussian political life.

And so, without this particularity of the character of the Prussian monarchs, without the right to assert them, and without their continuity, the preconditions would not at all arise to have what we today call Prussia. Rather, Prussia would immediately cease to be a state, as soon as even the slightest change was made.

If, therefore, Hegel declares: "There may well be states in which this particularity alone occurs, but then the state is not yet fully developed, or not well constructed," as his doctrine shows, Prussia's character being of this type, the Prussian state necessarily becomes an unkind, hostile force... Yes, this is a call for indignation and rebellion, such a doctrine awakening a rebellious conviction.

It may be said that with the change of dynasty the former state dies and another one begins. The history of no state explains this so much as England's with its frequent dynastic convulsions. The monarchical figure which England had under the Tudors did not at first change anything so radically, but prepared first the boisterous, then the moderate republic, or the constitutional monarchy, for which no event was more important than the accession of the Stuarts to the throne. England as a country and people, and its early development as a state thus begins, and as the Tudors dissolved the prior government through the Wars of the Roses, they then newly recreated all political relations, and made a new England, both ecclesiastical and political in character. The animating spirit soon escaped the Tudors, and the Stuarts, accustomed to another principle, seemed to appear as a mere external attachment [to Parliament]. The English State, stripped of its former ruling soul, thereby automatically fell to the masses, as did its basic constitution, and in the end became a republic, in which the occurrence of a ruling lineage in relation to the state had only a tangential significance.

Ultimately, this goes against Hegel's assertion in §278 of the Philosophy of Right that "sovereignty depends on the fact that the particular functions and powers of the state are not self-subsistent or firmly grounded either on their own account or in the particular will of the individual functionaries, but have their roots ultimately in the unity of the state as their single self."

But that's just scratching the very surface — which is all I intend for the time being in this quick Hegel myth-related note.

*This entry was posted in [Historical insights](#), [Monarchy](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).*

## 7 thoughts on "Hegelianism is not Prussianism"

1. Pingback: [Hegelianism is not Prussianism | Reaction Times](#)

2. [Imperial Energy](#) says:

*[November 30, 2017 at 4:12 am](#)*

"The unfavorable direction of Hegelian philosophy, which ultimately leaves nothing to the personality in general, and its full manifestation, so that the personality ceases at the end by the abolition of its individual immortality, and the absolute substance in the form of absolute personality is absorbed in the life of the state by the restriction of the princely personality and its effectiveness to the least of its capabilities, namely, the mere capacity to say yes or to sign his name"

L'Etat, c'est moi?

"Resuscitating old-school Prussian conservatism is one of this blog's goals."

Frederick the II or Bismark?

"The unfavorable direction of Hegelian philosophy, which ultimately leaves nothing to the personality in general, and its full manifestation, so that the personality ceases at the end by the abolition of its individual immortality, and the absolute substance in the form of absolute personality is absorbed in the life of the state by the restriction of the princely personality and its effectiveness to the least of its capabilities, namely, the mere capacity to say yes or to sign his name... What this means is that the monarch attains the final power only in formality and not in substance, What the monarch still has is only his ceremonial decision... In p.373, Hegel says: "In a well-ordered monarchy, the law alone has the objective side to which the monarch adds only the subjective 'I want.'""

Hmm..... how about Putin and his "personalism"?

The following is from What is Putinism?

"Putin, who centralized, concentrated, and personalized power while establishing himself as Russia's sovereign authority and sole political luminary. To centralize power vis-à-vis Russia's regions, Putin replaced provincial security-services personnel with his own appointees, altered the distribution of the tax take to favor Moscow, sent "federal inspectors" to provincial capitals to keep an eye on governors, created powerful new federal agencies at the provincial level, and established "superregions" whose heads monitored the governors and reported to the Presidential

Administration. Finally, Putin scrapped popular elections for governors and assumed the power to appoint them. By midway into his second presidential term (2004–2008), he had restored near-Soviet levels of centralization, but with a unified, hierarchical command structure headed by the Presidential Administration rather than the Communist Party.

Putin also reestablished a Soviet-level concentration of power in the executive branch, converting the Federal Assembly into a rubber stamp. He rewrote the respective rules for election to the legislature's two houses, the State Duma and the Federation Council, and tasked close associates with building the United Russia party to dominate those elections. United Russia now runs parliament, supported by three "opposition" parties—the Communists, the ultranationalist and impressively misnamed Liberal Democratic Party, and the nominally social-democratic A Just Russia—that provide a veneer of multipartism, but readily supply unanimous or near-unanimous votes on behalf of presidential initiatives. Draft laws originate in the Presidential Administration or other government agencies under the ruler's immediate control.

Power under Putinism is not just centralized in Moscow and concentrated in the executive, as in Soviet times. To a far greater extent than during the Soviet era, it is also intensely personalized. Except during Stalin's time, no one individual ruled the USSR; rather, the Party ruled. Even Stalin ceaselessly affirmed his allegiance and subordination to the Party. But there is no Party in Putinism, only a party, and Putin treats United Russia—which was founded and exists solely to support him—more as a necessary nuisance than as an asset.

Putin is not merely Russia's best-known, most powerful politician; he is its only politician. Anyone who seeks public acclaim apart from the ruler does so in defiance of him. Among such figures, only Alexei Navalny, the jaunty corruption fighter who splits his time between jail and organizing protests, has even partially succeeded in winning recognition as a politician. Among officeholders, only Putin is endowed with the authority to cultivate a national following, and only he has one. The rest are administrators who derive their authority from the ruler's favor and their service to him. The four-fifths of Russians who approve of Putin have no common second- or third-favorite national politician, though some like their own Putin-appointed governors and Putin-approved mayors.

Putin's authority stands independent not only of any organization or ideology, but also of the office he holds. He has been the center of power both as president (2000–2008 and 2012–present) and as prime minister (2008–12). If Putin chose to become minister of transport, the minister of transport would rule Russia. Elections do not determine who rules; they merely display the ruler's mastery. While Putin would probably win free and fair elections with ease, no one knows for sure how he or United Russia would fare. To most Russians it does not matter anyway, since they do not see themselves as the source of Putin's power. Putin's authority derives from his being Putin, not from his winning votes.

As sovereign, Putin also stands above impersonal rules. He makes, alters, and ignores the law at will, and he retains the ultimate power to decide when other officials—and major economic actors—may flout its provisions with impunity. Each of Russia's scores of billionaires thrives only at Putin's pleasure or at least with his forbearance. Those who openly defy him land in prison or exile, often with vastly diminished assets.

To be sure, Putin calls himself a mere servant of the people and subject of the law. He never even hints that *le loi, c'est moi* ("I am the law"), as traditional hereditary rulers sometimes do. Nor does he trade on his formidable charisma to invoke the Führerprinzip, the Nazi theory that sacralized the ruler's will as the highest source of decision.

Putinism also eschews the trappings of a personality cult. Photos of the ruler displaying his semi-magnificent torso while riding on horseback may receive attention (and elicit chuckles) abroad, but they are about as far as the pageantry goes. Although the media never fail to make Putin and his policies shine, nothing akin to the cults of Stalin, Hitler, Mao, or post-Soviet leaders such as Turkmenistan's Saparmurad Niyazov and Azerbaijan's Heydar Aliyev are to be found in Putin-era Russia. Putin prefers to legitimate his authority in rational-legal rather than charismatic terms. This approach preserves Putinism's smart modern façade, and the choice of decorum over fervor fits well with the regime's fundamental conservatism."

[Click to access Fish-28-4.pdf](#)

Is Putin a role model?

The question of what a King/Ruler does (on a day to day level) is a question that has long interested us and we would welcome your thoughts on the matter.

What do you think about the following:

<https://www.ribbonfarm.com/2017/11/09/ceos-dont-steer/>

The assumption there is that a CEO's role is quite different from that of leader in a state. The difference, essentially, is that a CEO is a "orientation lock" and thus prevents ADD, "faddism" and the corporation losing "focus". The implicit assumption is that a statesman is supposed to be more "energetic" and "creative". This is only half right, in our view.

We tend to think that there are two "modes" of operation.

Mode 1 involves:

1: Prevent internal deviation from protocols (stopping the ADD the CEO article mentions) and external interference ("all enemies foreign and domestic").

2: Scanning for anomalies that contradict the paradigm and threaten the equilibrium of the established order.

If a crisis occurs ( a new type of war, a devastating economic crash or something that contradicts the paradigm's basic assumptions) and is therefore something that cannot be regulated according to the established protocols and methods and thus cannot be controlled, then the art of the statesman comes into play.

Now, we must move from equipoise to energy (of a rather imperial kind).

Mode 2 involves:

The struggle for prediction and control; the battle for mastery of the machine and of men; the fight against nature and uncertainty; the war against chaos.

Victory is the re-establishing of order and regularity – though on different terms than the previous paradigm.

If so, then energy gives way to equipoise once more.

Nevertheless, the CEO article claims that very few CEOs when faced with a crisis can actually survive it. What happens, according to Rao, is that they get replaced.

How is that not a problem for throne and altar monarchy and a point in favor of the neo-cam model, with its boards of directors that can switch out a CEO?

There is a way round this problem, however; nevertheless it leads to a kind of paradox that the Chinese philosophers would well understand.

Reply.

- Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur says:  
November 30, 2017 at 7:01 am  
 > Frederick the II or Bismark?

Neither.

Reply.

- Imperial Energy says:  
December 1, 2017 at 12:05 am  
 So who is the role model then?

What about Putin?

Reply.

3. radicotradical says:

November 30, 2017 at 10:37 am

Well, an honest review of Hegel would make you right. But there are elements in his Philosophy that lend themselves to certain militaristic readings, that in pop-history is related to Prussian ideology.

Reply.

4. marcusmontisursinensis says:

December 2, 2017 at 7:37 pm

The key thing with Hegel is the question of “that, which exists”. Is there a unity between Sein and Nichts? Do they make together something in surplus, a synthesis? Is “that, which exists” related with being or becoming? In case of being, the reality is the unchanging JHWH (Ex 3, 14: Dixit Deus ad Moysen : Ego sum qui sum. Ait : Sic dices filiis Israel : Qui est, misit me ad vos). In case of becoming, we all become a portion of the pantheist god.

All problems have their root in theology, as Ritter von Kuehnelt-Leddihn used to say.

Reply.

5. dissentingsociologist says:

December 3, 2017 at 2:48 pm

Yes, what you get in Hegel esp. the Philosophy of Right is the polar opposite of personal rule, notwithstanding everything he has to say about the Great Man. The State has a definite personality, but it's a corporate personality in and before which the individual disappears. It's true of the modern State in general, but Prussians in particular like this aspect of the State and celebrate it. Hegel just says what they all think. It's because their culture came under heavy influence of Stoic-type philosophy in which a man of authority has to voluntarily and totally submit to the Universal as made known to him by the use of reason.

Reply.

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