

Where Has the Sanity Gone?

We live in a world that seems upside down. We see obvious contradictions on the news every day, and yet not only do the anchors talk as if these absurdities are perfectly normal, but they get extremely irate at even the slightest challenge to their position. Much can be said about why people take on certain beliefs in what is known as "bad faith."

In the Oxford Languages dictionary, bad faith is defined philosophically as "refusal to confront facts or choices." In Merriam Webster, it is defined behaviorally as "a lack of honesty in dealing with other people." Wikipedia has a very universal definition with "a sustained form of deception which consists of entertaining or pretending to *entertain one set of feelings while acting as if influenced by another*. It is associated with hypocrisy, breach of contract, affectation, and lip service. It is not to be confused with heresy (supposedly false religious faith). It may involve intentional deceit of others, or *self-deception*." (italics mine) While all these terms can apply to this critique on our culture, it is the italicized portion that I will be focusing the most on here. I say this because I believe one is more likely to unintentionally *deceive oneself* than to intentionally deceive others. Furthermore, it seems that deceiving oneself is actually more harmful than deliberately lying. It's a lot easier to convince others of a lie when one is convinced of it oneself.

I am going to argue that the bad faith and its inherent cognitive dissonance is not happening by accident, but that there is an insidious and cancer-like philosophy that is behind it. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel introduced a philosophy in the mid to late 18th century that has slowly but gradually eroded the Grecian and Roman practicality that our civilization was built on.

It did not happen overnight, to be sure, nor is Hegel well known (much less understood, I'll be getting to that part soon). By hiding in the shadows cast by better known philosophers who *did* study him (such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Jean-Paul Sartre), the fundamental aspects of his work have remained safe from scrutiny while the aberrations that were promoted by his students are looked at as being unrelated to each other. Furthermore, like kudzu, newer aberrations are continually being spawned because the "tap root" remains undisturbed. Based on what has happened during the last two years (2020-2022), we may very well be near a tipping point. But unless we know what the core problem is (where the tap root has taken ground), we will be unable to stop it.

So, where is it that Hegel came from, and how is he influencing our society today? I want to begin by pointing out a curious aspect of man: a desire for a better life. Man is, by nature, a practical animal. He will do what must be done, but he is never satisfied with what he has. This craving manifests itself in various ways, one of which is philosophy. Philosophy is a desire to know why things are the way they are, and knowing this is essential to making changes, including changes that lead to a better life. When primitive man found a sweet-tasting fruit on a tree some distance from his home, it was philosophy that ultimately led him to get such a tree growing near his home. But the more complex life became for man, the more intricate philosophy had to become. The more intricate philosophy became, the harder it was to reconcile with practical uses.

There is a joke that claims that what the philosopher has decided is impossible to do, the practical man does on a daily basis. There is a lot of truth to this observation. A philosopher will claim it is impossible to say there is a difference between an apple or a lemon because both are fruits, but the practical man knows not to give lemonade to one who asks for apple juice. And science, superficially, seems to be siding with the philosopher. If we take this concept to an extreme limit, science claims everything that exists is ultimately made of some combination of subatomic particles (quanta). Since

everything else is made of quanta, then there is no difference between any one thing and another. Notice that the practical man, when confronted with this observation, has no obvious interest in this idea no matter how truthful it is. To tell the practical man that the ring in his pocket with which he hopes to propose to his girlfriend is no different than a swamp in Louisiana is going to be a difficult discussion at best. Where do we go from here?

Immanuel Kant, who was an apparent agnostic but who did have a healthy fear of God, wanted to find a secular solution to this problem and found he could not. Instead, he compromised and suggested that the philosopher was free to develop whatever theory he felt the truth led him to, but then the practical man was to judge the value of the theory. If the practical man could not find a use for the theory, then the theory was valueless. Getting back briefly to the lemon and apple example, the practical man will place some value on it, as it helps him find both of them in a grocery store (i.e., he simply goes to the fruit stand). In the other example, the practical man is likely to completely reject the notion that the ring and a swamp are the same thing.

But Hegel was not satisfied with subordinating himself to the practical man, and so rejected Kant's notion that practical men could tell philosophers what to do. This is not surprising in itself, as philosophers always felt superior to the practical man. But prior to Hegel, there was still some humility in philosophers. By seeking the truth, they implicitly admitted that there was something greater than themselves. But in understanding Hegel, we come to a highly controversial aspect of his life -- was he an atheist or a Christian?

I don't want to get into the whole debate here, but I did find one of Hegel's papers quite interesting: *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/pcindex.htm>). In it, Hegel obviously admired Jesus, but sees Jesus as the product of the history before Jesus's time. After reading this paper, I wonder what the words spoken by Jesus in John 14:6 meant to Hegel: "I am the way and the truth and the light." Most people simply do not appreciate how powerful those words are. To ancient Western philosophers, truth was a goal one strives for but could never reach. Jesus not only claimed that He knew the truth, but that He *was* truth! Is it possible that, for Hegel, the last barrier to keep one's ideas in check (the concept of being unable to know the whole of the truth) was gone? I can't know with any degree of certainty that this is why Hegel thought he could sit on God's throne, but the fact is that Hegel decided he could do just that.

From this vantage point, Hegel looked further and further back until he was faced with the dilemma of deciding what was real and what was not real. By sitting on God's throne, Hegel had no limits with which to concern himself, and concluded that the real and the unreal must both exist, and that this is possible only because they *are the same thing*. Truth and untruth are also the same. Light and dark are the same. In the philosophical version of determinism, everything that ever happened led to the current situation as it is (as seen from God's throne). A room may or may not be lit, may or may not have tables or chairs, may or may not have a strong odor or fragrance, may be one color or another, or anything else one can think of. But whatever the room is, it is that way because it *had* to be that way. All of existence led to room being that way.

And here is a very important clue as to why Hegelism is so prevalent despite his relative obscurity: all *material* things do indeed break down to quanta, so everything we see, feel, smell, touch or hear does work as Hegel would predict. One does not need to know of Hegel to understand how his theories work with material things. But humans are more than just mere matter; we have thoughts and ideas. Humans are not trapped in the material; we have a transcendental aspect as well. But even in

the transcendental, so much works like Hegel would predict.

There are three ways to deceive someone: say truthful things but with misleading emphasis, withhold truthful statements, and/or tell untruths. So one can be deceitful and truthful at the same time, as Hegel would predict. But when we focus too much on how one can be a truthful deceiver, it is easy to forget that Hegel does fail to account for when a deceitful person tells an untruth. While this fallacy seems so obvious when pointed out, subtle and deliberate brainwashing is constantly going on in schools and on media so we don't see this lie for what it is. This is why all extreme Hegelists are so adamantly promoting atheism, as God is the final arbiter on what is true and not true. God places a limit Hegel denies exists. And when we recognize that God exists, then, ironically, we also see another reason why Hegelism is so easy to spread. As long as a Hegelian conclusion remains within the boundaries set by God, the theory *will work*. It is only when Hegelian logic goes beyond these boundaries that problems arise. But by the time this flaw is discovered, it is usually too late to stop horrific damage from being done.

The final point I want to make before discussing some real world matters and some solutions is that Hegel called his idea of existence the "holy spirit," stealing a Christian term. Following Christian tradition, however, he did claim that the "unforgivable sin" is to deny the existence that the holy spirit was. Just as most Christians would claim the unforgivable sin is to deny the forgiveness and grace the Holy Spirit gives, to Hegel the unforgivable sin is to reject or resist the existence that the holy spirit is. A room is lit now because someone turned on a switch. All of history led to this room being lit now. But for Hegel, one can only flip on the switch because one was *supposed* to do it, not because one *wanted* it that way. It would be acceptable to flip the switch on out of habit, but not acceptable to do so simply because one was dissatisfied with the room being dark. For one to assume one has control over the condition of the room's existence is unforgivable blasphemy against the room's spirit.

From here, I think the influence Hegel had with Nietzsche, Marx and Sartre can be easily explained. Nietzsche thought that the only way to avoid committing the unforgivable sin was to deny passion, because it is passion that leads one to want to change what exists. But the despair that this theory (nihilism) promotes was so obvious that even Nietzsche claimed nihilism would fail, for to want to avoid passion requires having a passion to avoid it (although this is something I think Hegel actually would have appreciated). So, while Nietzsche's theory is often criticized, the fundamental understanding of why he arrived at this conclusion is ignored, and the poison that led to it lies in wait for another theory to corrupt.

Marx decided that, if Hegel could determine existence by looking at the past, then he (Marx) should be able to use this knowledge to foresee what will exist in the future. For Marx, the unforgivable sin was to use *privilege* to influence this future, particularly economic privilege. And while the socialist movement has cost an estimated 60 million people their lives just in internal suppression (this number does not include wars of expansion beyond national borders) and still failed miserably, there are those who defend socialism on grounds that the failures came from not following Marx "properly." By avoiding "economics" and instead focusing on racism, sexism, gender-ism, history-ism, and dozens (if not hundreds) of other "social ills" today, the stigma of Marxism is avoided while otherwise following his version of Hegelism. Hegelism is very much alive in socialists who don't understand why Marxism failed. And since so much injustice is done by those *with* economic privilege, it is difficult for many to completely give up Marxism no matter what facts are presented. But this is exactly why baby formula was shipped to illegal aliens at the border in 2022 instead of to American citizens who had hungry babies: the most destitute person in the United States is still in the top 6% of the wealthiest people in the world, and does even better in the "quality of life" category. By

definition, the most destitute person in the United States is super privileged over any alien. From a socialist point of view, giving baby formula to aliens instead of citizens was not a mistake or accident, this is exactly what socialism wants to make happen -- protecting the underprivileged from the privileged.

Sartre is perhaps the most revealing of Hegelists. Recognizing the dilemma of Nietzsche and admitting the horrors of socialism, he epitomizes the modern existentialist movement by declaring everything is absurd. For Sartre, the misery in the world exists because of man's desire to place himself in the role of a God that does not exist. Ironically, Sartre seems to *agree* with Hegel's conclusions while at the same time warning against *using* Hegel's conclusions. For the existentialist, one is to live as a nihilist while admitting one isn't a nihilist.

While this is barely skimming the top of what amounts to perhaps the most complicated philosophical efforts in man's history, I hope I have not only shown why these theories persist, but how they spread in such a subliminal manner. The theories appeal to the core concerns of man. Hegel's theories actually do work very well *most* of the time. It is only when the logic must deny the existence of absolutes that it falls apart. Had Hegel put God instead of himself at the nexus of truth and untruth, he might have had the most elegant "proof" of God man ever came up with, instead of the cancer that it is. The fact that so much of our lives are indeed out of our control makes it easy to downplay the concept of free will, which is what Hegel identified as a heresy. It is easy to say "It is what it is," instead of, "I may have to put up with this for a bit, but soon I'll be free again." But this is perhaps the least toxic of all everyday Hegelistic slogans, as it is almost always taken in the context of referring to a temporary condition and as a frustrated passion for better things. I believe "agree to disagree" and "you have your truth and I have my truth" are among the most toxic Hegelistic ideas today, as they represent an avoidance of a problem rather than admitting a need to fix something. Remember -- Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx and Sartre, in their own ways, all agree that efforts to change things for personal reasons are unforgivable.

All this being said, I hope one can at least see how Hegelism is manifesting itself so well in today's world. Why does Black Lives Matter (which admits to being a Marxist organization on their web page) get upset about cops killing blacks, but not black gangs killing blacks? Because police represent privilege, whereas gangs don't. And if crime spreads to middle class neighborhoods as a result of defunding the police, then so much the better because the middle class are part of the privileged class as well. It was never about protecting blacks from death, but rather from dying from the hands of the privileged. Why did so many of the people who helped endorse college and professional female sports also support transgender athletes in women's sports? Because the women's leagues were not about female dignity, but rather about removing the privilege men had with sports all to themselves. Since it was about destroying privilege, it follows that any "man" who voluntarily denies his "privilege" should likewise be able to participate in the "enlightened" world of female sports.

Censorship has been around ever since some primitive chieftain didn't want to look bad in front of a neighboring chief, but it is now being endorsed by many as essential to protect democracy. The primitive chief had practical reasons to do so (he couldn't look weak in front of the other chief without risking his life and possibly the lives of his people), and made no pretense about why he was doing it. In contrast, the social platforms are doing it for a quasi-religious reason. As independent thought *is* the very embodiment of the unforgivable sin under Hegel, Hegelists believe they are protecting others from sinning by taking away the means to do so. To the Hegelist, it is wrong to censor people to protect oneself, but even stricter censorship is acceptable if it protects the people from themselves.

And of course, I'm not blind to the other sins people have. Greed, power, hypocrisy, cognitive

dissonance, sadism and many other factors are included in this. I'm not proposing an either/or theory on why there is so much insanity, but rather trying to show how easily Hegelism is able to form a both/and relationship with man's worst sins. Regardless of the specifics for any given individual, the Hegelian idea that truth and untruth are the same, that existence is merely an unfolding of events we must abide by, is the perfect platform for these sins to be expressed. To a Hegelist, it is wrong to make money producing goods for people poorer than oneself, but it is okay to make money telling the poor that there is another man getting rich off the things they buy. They may not have heard of Hegel, much less be knowingly follow his theory. They don't need to. All they have to have is some sin they want to feel good about having, and Hegelism will show them how they can sin and be virtuous at the same time because, in the end, the two are the same.

While I have finished my goal of explaining where the insanity came from, I do want to spend a few moments on what a possible solution is. We did not get this way because of one single event, and it will not be a single event (short of the second coming) that fixes it. The first step is to take Hegel out of God's throne and put God back in it. We can do this best by remembering that Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). As long as we remember Jesus is truth, we will not accept truth as also being untruth. This is the line that separates useful Hegelism from that which causes the insanity we see everywhere today.

Once we know where this line is, the next thing to do is to challenge untruth when it is spoken. I already gave three such examples ("it is what it is," "agree to disagree," and "you have your truth and I have my truth"). Not all Hegelistic ideas have their contradictions so neatly presented, so some effort may be involved. We can best do this by searching for common ground between Christian ideals and what is being presented. If common ground can be found, then things are okay. To allow women play in sports can easily find common ground with the Christian idea of human dignity. It would therefore be Unchristian to prevent women's leagues in sports (whether or not the sport can earn enough money to survive is an economic matter, not a moral one). On the other hand, if no common ground can be found despite all honest efforts to see the others point of view, then we should stand up for the truth. In the case of most sports at competitive levels, the physical advantages men have over women mean that the human dignity of women is being rejected when men play against them.

I can't overstate the importance of self examination on this matter (Matthew 7:5: "remove the plank from your own eye"), but if such an examination is done in an honest manner, then this same scripture tells us that one has a moral obligation to *stop the insanity*.

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