doi:10.1017/hgl.2016.19
Hegel Bulletin, 37/2, 281–304

Hegel's Criticism of Hinduism

Jon Stewart

Abstract

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel critically refers to Hinduism as 'The Religion of Imagination' or, in another translation, 'The Religion of Phantasy'. Hegel's study of Hinduism came during the period when there was a rapidly growing interest in India, indeed, an Indomania, in the German-speaking world. Hegel meticulously kept up with the most recent publications in the field. This article examines Hegel's critical assessment of Hinduism in order to determine what specifically he finds objectionable in it. It is argued that his objection ultimately concerns what he takes to be the mistaken conception of what it is to be a human being that underlies the Hindu view. This conception, he claims, undermines the development of subjective freedom that he takes to be so important.

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel refers to Hinduism as 'The Religion of Imagination' or, in another translation, 'The Religion of Phantasy'.[1] He has shorter treatments of this in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,[2] and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,[3] and it is mentioned many times in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*.[4] There is also a brief discussion in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.[5] Of special importance is his long book review of Wilhelm von Humboldt's treatise on the *Bhagavad-Gita*.[6] Hegel's study of Hinduism came during the period when there was a rapidly growing interest in India, indeed, an Indomania, in the German-speaking world. Hegel meticulously kept up with the most recent publications in the field,[7] and he knew personally almost all of the major figures doing work on Sanskrit texts in Prussia and the German states. Despite the fact that Hegel's interpretation of Hinduism might at first glance appear to be a highly esoteric theme, in fact there is a strikingly large amount of secondary literature on this topic.[8]

The rise of European interest in India came at the end of the eighteenth century, and the period when Hegel was lecturing on this material in the 1820s corresponds to the introduction of Indology and Sanskrit Studies as scholarly disciplines at the German and Prussian universities (see McGetchin 2009: 76–101). Interest in India was particularly keen among the German Romantics, who were attracted by what they regarded as the emotional and primeval

elements in Indian art and literature. This fitted well with their critical reaction to eighteenth-century rationalism. A part of Hegel's critical evaluation of Hinduism can be seen as part of his ongoing criticism of German Romanticism in general. But the interest in India was by no means confined to the Romantics; on the contrary, Sanskrit and ancient Indian philosophy, religion, literature and art attracted many of the greatest luminaries of German intellectual life of the day. Thus, Hegel was by no means alone in this interest, and in the academic atmosphere at the time he could hardly have avoided giving some account of India in his works.

Hegel's treatment of Hinduism is one of the places in his corpus where his Eurocentrism, or indeed racism, comes out most strongly.[9] Perhaps he inherited a disdain of the Indians from the British texts that were amongst his main sources of information. At the time the European colonization of Asia was in full swing, and his criticism of the Indians can be read implicitly as an indirect justification for this movement. While there have been suspicions of a purported pro-colonial agenda on Hegel's part, in fact in both Germany and France there was a considerable amount of sympathy for India and resentment of the conquering British (see Schulin 1958: 76f.). One need only think of the positive treatment by Schopenhauer to appreciate that not everyone in Europe at the time was a colonial ideologue.

The task of assessing Hegel's view of Hinduism is not easy since he characterizes the nature of the Hindu religion in quite a reproving manner. As noted, he designates Hinduism the 'Religion of Phantasy' or of 'Imagination'. The idea is that the Hindus have a ruleless and absurd phantasy that wants to see a god everywhere (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 45; *Jub.*: 15: 397). Similarly Hegel complains that for Hinduism 'differentiation and manifoldness are abandoned to the wildest, most outward forms of imagination' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 2; *Jub.*: 15: 356).[10] Given this, any analysis of Hegel's interpretation of Hinduism must attempt to understand his philosophical views, while at the same time come to terms with his racism and Eurocentrism. In this article I would like to explore Hegel's critical assessment of Hinduism in order to determine what, specifically, he finds objectionable in it. I will argue that his objection ultimately concerns what he takes to be the mistaken conception of what it is to be a human being that underlies the Hindu view. This conception, he argues, undermines the development of subjective freedom that he takes to be so important.

I. The universal and the particular: Brāhma

According to Hegel, the Hindus have an abstract concept of the divine, which has both a universal and a particular side. With regard to the former

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it is conceived as an overarching principle, as the creative power of the universe, and thus it encompasses everything. This is what is known as 'Brāhma', which is the analogue to Tian in the Chinese religion. Hegel describes this as follows:

> What is the first in the Notion, what is true, the universal substantial element, is the eternal repose of Being-within-itself; this essence existing within itself, which universal substance is. This simple substance, which the Hindus call Brāhma, is regarded as the universal, the self-existing power; which is not, like passion, turned toward what is other than itself, but is the quiet, lusterless reflection into itself, which is, however, at the same time determined as power. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 11; *Jub.*: 15: 364)[11]

The divine is a force existing on its own. Brāhma is the totality of nature or can be conceived as the laws of nature.[12] It is this conception of the divine that led to the association of Hinduism with pantheism. Hegel underscores that this god in this abstract conception should not be conceived as a self-conscious entity, and this is what is meant by referring to it as 'substance' and not subject.[13]

Thus the highest conception of the divine is Brāhma, but this conception of the divine has no qualities or determinations since it is wholly abstract. Hegel explains in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, 'One extreme in the Indian mind is the consciousness of the absolute as what in itself is purely universal, undifferentiated, and therefore completely indeterminate' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 335; *Jub.*: 12: 448).[14] Brāhma is thus not an object of sense. It is a formless entity operating invisibly behind the scenes: 'Since this extreme abstraction has no particular content and is not visualized as a concrete personality, it affords in no respect a material which intuition could shape in some way or other' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 335; *Jub.*: 12: 448). Hegel critically associates this conception with the Enlightenment view of God as the Supreme Being, about which nothing more can be known.[15] In both cases Hegel is critical of abstraction, which deprives the divine of any meaningful content. This represents the universal side of Brāhma.

But Brāhma also has a particular side. Although it is in itself abstract and formless, it is nonetheless the power that constitutes the basis for everything that exists in the world.[16] This represents the creative aspect of the power of Brāhma: 'Brāhma is thus what is conceived of as this substance out of which everything has proceeded and is begotten, as this power which has created all' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 15; *Jub.*: 15: 368). There thus arises a distinction between Brāhma the single, unified deity and the multitude of creation for which Brāhma is responsible: 'But the power, as that which exists within itself, as universal power, distinguishes

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

itself from its moments themselves, and these therefore appear, on the one hand, as independent beings and, on the other, as moments which even perish in the One' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 11; *Jub.*: 15: 364). While Brāhma as such is never directly an object of sense perception, its incarnations are. The world of actuality that we perceive around us is full of these incarnations. For Hegel, this represents a problematic point in Hinduism. Since Brāhma is abstract and has no determination or content as an object of thought, its incarnations can be absolutely anything at all. There is nothing in the indeterminacy of Brāhma that rules out specific incarnations or that determines them to be certain things and not others. Since Brāhma is simply the abstract universal force of nature, it can be incarnated in any object of nature at all, and thus most everything becomes a potential incarnation.

This discussion recalls Hegel's analysis in the 'Force and the Understanding' section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PhS*: 79–103; *Jub.*: 2: 108–38). There he explored the conception of an object as an invisible force or power that was perceived only by its expressions or appearances in the empirical world. In that account Hegel explored the contradictions involved in this object model. At first the truth or essence is thought to lie in the unseen force operating behind the scenes; its appearances are only thought to be what is accidental or inessential. But then the realization is made that it is only through the appearances that one has access to the unseen force, and thus the only way to know it is by means of these appearances. With this the situation is suddenly turned around, and the appearances become the essential thing. Thus the analysis shifts back and forth between placing the truth on the side of the force or on the side of the appearances. The same dynamic can be perceived in Hegel's analysis of Brāhma, where there is a focus at first on the truth and unity of the power behind the world of appearances, but this appears wholly abstract and lacking in content and reality. Therefore the focus moves to the incarnations or expressions of Brāhma in the real world, which, due to their appearance in reality, are concrete and have content. In both analyses the respective conceptions (of the object or of the divine) exist in the dialectical tension of, on the one hand, a unified unseen force which has a multitude of appearances and, on the other, this plurality of appearances independent of any unifying principle. In short, for Hinduism the different appearances or incarnations of Brāhma can also be conceived as existing independently. The key here for Hegel is that there is no necessary relation between the universal and the particular, and so the incarnations are arbitrary. This is a result of the fact that the initial conception of the divine is completely abstract and devoid of any content. Since it has no content, it is indeterminate. Thus it cannot determine any specific incarnation, and the result is that absolutely anything could in principle be an incarnation of it.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

II. The Trimurti: Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva

Brāhma has three main incarnations: Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva. Each of these has its own sphere of activity and characteristics. In this sense they can be conceived as separate and independent of one another. But they can also be conceived as joined together in a single deity. They collectively represent the group of the three main Hindu gods called the Trimurti.[17] Hegel introduces this conception as follows:

> *Brāhma* (neuter) is the supreme in religion, but there are besides chief divinities *Brahmā* (masc.), *Vishnu* or *Krishna*—incarnate in infinitely diverse forms—and *Shiva*. These form a connected Trinity. Brahmā is the highest; but Vishnu or Krishna, Shiva, the sun moreover, the air, etc., are also Brahm, i.e., substantial unity. To Brahm itself no sacrifices are offered; it is not honoured; but prayers are presented to all other idols. Brahm itself is the substantial unity of all. (*Phil. Hist.*: 148; *Jub.*: 11: 203.)

The deity Brāhma (or Brahm) is thus the ultimate power, standing above all the others. This is the deity that is abstracted from the world. By contrast, the three incarnations are all in their own way limited since they represent specific areas of existence. Moreover, since they are connected with actuality, they are less abstract than Brāhma.

The three gods, Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva exist together as a single entity because they are all incarnations of Brāhma. When these three are represented as one, they are portrayed as a man with three heads and four arms. Hegel refers to images of this sort.[18] But these three deities also exist separately and independently of one another. He explains, 'These differentiations are now grasped as Unity—as Trimurti—and this again is conceived of as the Highest. But just as this is conceived of as Trimurti, each person too in turn is taken independently and alone, so that each is itself totality, that is, the whole deity' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24; *Jub.*: 15: 377). Thus there appears a dialectical relation between the unity and the plurality in the divine.

The first of these deities is Brahmā. Hegel emphasizes the important distinction between Brāhma, that is, the highest, most abstract form of the divinity, and Brahmā, the incarnation of this deity in the Trimurti. While the former is an impersonal force, as is indicated by the fact that it is a neuter noun in Sanskrit (with the accent on the first vowel), the latter is a personified entity and is a masculine noun (with the accent on the last vowel): 'But the Indian supreme God is merely the One in a neuter sense, rather than the One Person; He has

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

merely potential being, and is not self-conscious; He is Brāhma the *Neutrum*, or the Universal determination. Brahmā as subject, on the other hand, is at once one among the three Persons' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 19; *Jub.*: 15: 372).[19] Brahmā is represented as a man having four heads for reading the four *Vedas*. He represents the principle of creation. Hegel is also aware of visual representations of this deity.[20]

The second divinity of the Trimurti is Vishnu.[21] In contrast to the notion of creation, this incarnation represents preservation. After the universe has been created, it is Vishnu who is 'the maintaining principle' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 29; *Jub.*: 15: 381).[22] Vishnu is worshipped both as himself and in the form of one of his avatars, of which there are ten in all. One of these avatars is Krishna, the young prince in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Another is Rama, whose life is the subject of the *Ramayana*.

The third divinity of the Trimurti is Shiva,[23] who represents the principle of change, transformation or destruction (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 29; *Jub.*: 15: 382).[24] Hegel explains, 'It has been stated that change in the general sense is the third [divinity]; thus the fundamental characteristic of Shiva is on the one hand the prodigious life-force, on the other what destroys, devastates; the wild energy of natural life' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 23; *Jub.*: 15: 376). Shiva is thus represented as an ox and in the form of a lingam.

Hegel recounts a Hindu legend of how each of the three gods in turn is to create a part of the universe (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 28–30; *Jub.*: 15: 381–82).[25] This legend is instructive for understanding the relations between these deities. Each of them goes about the work of creation in his own way, and the result is that what they create has a specific defect that is characteristic of the one-sidedness of the one who created it. Thus Brahmā creates the universe, but there is nothing to preserve it, and so Vishnu is needed. Vishnu is enjoined to create human beings, but the people he makes 'were idiots with great bellies, without knowledge, like the beasts of the field, without emotions and will, and with sensuous passions only' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 29; *Jub.*: 15: 381). Thus Vishnu, the principle of preservation or maintenance, created human beings who were primarily characterized by their ability to reproduce and so survive but nothing more. Hence they looked like animals and not humans. They lacked 'the quality of mutability or destructibility' since these are just the opposite of Vishnu's principle (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 29; *Jub.*: 15: 382). So finally Rudra, an incarnation of Shiva, is enjoined to create human beings. He does so according to his principle, destruction, with the result that the people 'were more savage than tigers, since they had nothing in them but the destructive quality' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 29; *Jub.*: 15: 382). His human beings end up destroying one another; in short, they lack the principle of Vishnu, preservation. For Hegel, the point of this story is that these three deities, although all are thought to be incarnations of Brāhma, act

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

individually. But their actions are all in some way incomplete because they reflect only their own individual characteristics. Thus they are obliged to work together, and only when they do so are they able to create human beings with the correct balance of qualities.

The Trimurti represents in a sense the Hindu trinity. It might appear at first glance that with the trinity of gods Hinduism would find favour with Hegel, due to his proclivity towards triadic structures and the central role that he ascribes to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The analogy to the Christian Trinity had been noted by other thinkers, such as Kant, who mentions this in his lectures.[26] But, for Hegel, this analogy is entirely misleading. His criticism of this conception of the trinity is that it is not speculative or dialectical:

> The most striking and greatest feature in Indian mythology is unquestionably this Trinity in unity. We cannot call this Trinity Persons, for it is wanting in spiritual subjectivity as a fundamental determination. But to Europeans it must have been in the highest degree astonishing to meet with this principle of the Christian religion here. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 15; *Jub.*: 15: 367f.)[27]

According to Hegel the Trimurti is not speculative because the three figures have no necessary relation to one another (as in the Christian Trinity). He explains,

> The first, namely Brahma, is the most distant unity, the self-enclosed unity; the second, Vishnu, is manifestation (the moments of spirit are thus far not to be mistaken), is life in human form. The third should be the return to the first, in order that the unity might appear as returning into itself. But it is just this third which is what is devoid of spirit; it is the determination of becoming generally, or of coming into being and passing away. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 23; *Jub.*: 15: 376.)

Here Hegel seems to grant that the first two members of the Trimurti follow a genuinely speculative movement: Brahma is universal and Vishnu a particular. But the problem appears with the third part of the triad. In a truly dialectical triad the third member should mediate the first two and bring them together. But this is not what happens here. Shiva is not the mediation of universal and particular.

Moreover, the third member is not a return to the first so that the circle is closed, but rather the third member ends in a constant repetition, the bad infinity: 'The Third, instead of being the reconciler, is here merely this wild play of begetting and destroying. Thus the development issues only in a wild whirl of delirium' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24; *Jub.*: 15: 377). According to Hegel's speculative logic, infinity represents a circle of dialectical elements which are mutually related.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

But this is not the case here. Instead, of a closed circle, such as being, nothing, becoming, there is simply a dualistic back and forth of creation and destruction. Given that the third element does not 'return to' the first, the triad remains open-ended. There is no dialectical relation among the individual members, each of which simply seems to stand on its own. Hegel explains,

> But in the Trimurti the third god is not a concrete totality at all; on the contrary, it is itself only *one*, side by side with the two others, and therefore is likewise abstraction: there is no return into itself, but only a transition into something else, a change, procreation, and destruction. Therefore we must take great care not to try to recover the supreme truth in such first inklings of reason or to recognize the Christian Trinity already in this hint, which in its rhythm does of course contain threefoldness, a fundamental idea in Christianity. (*Aesthetics*: 1: 343; *Jub.*: 12: 458.)

The point in the Christian Trinity is that Christ, the Son, returns to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In this way the first two elements are united, and the circle is closed. But, for Hegel, the Hindu Trimurti is disanalogous to this because Shiva does not represent a return to Brahmā but rather an infinite repetition of the cycle of creation and destruction. This is an example of what Hegel refers to as the bad infinity in contrast to infinity in its true, speculative conception.

III. The forms of worship: The relation to Brāhma

Hegel explains that worship concerns the way in which one's relation to the divine is conceived. He distinguishes between the individual's disposition first towards Brāhma and then towards the other deities. This distinction defines his organization of the material. He begins with the former, outlining three different forms of worship vis-à-vis Brāhma. The goal with worship is to become one with the divine, and this can be done in different ways.

A. The first attempt to attain Brāhma is through thought and prayer. This means of attaining Brāhma is available to everyone, due to the fact that humans are thinking beings.[28] By means of thought all followers, independent of caste, can commune with the divine: 'Brahma is thought, man is a thinking being, thus Brahma has essentially an existence in human self-consciousness' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 31; *Jub.*: 15: 383).[29] Brāhma is universality and, via the universality of thought, is attainable to worshipers. Only through thought and prayer can people escape the turmoil of the desires and the transitory world of particularity. Hegel describes the desired state as 'a sort of hazy consciousness of having attained perfect

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mental immobility—the annihilation of all emotion and all volition' (*Phil. Hist.*: 149; *Jub.*: 11: 204).

This conception is limited, however, since it is fleeting.[30] This relation to the divine can only last as long as one is engaged in the process of thought or prayer. In the moment when one is distracted or needs to attend to other things, it is broken. While it is true that thought is one aspect of what it is to be a human being, it is only one aspect. Thus a more satisfactory form of worship must be found to overcome the transitoriness of this first form.

B. The second attempt to attain Brāhma is through the renunciation of the world and the elimination of the self. The goal here is to become one with the god by eliminating all finite desires and interests, by means of austerities and self-negation.[31] Hegel explains, 'The highest religious position of man, therefore, is being exalted to Brahm. If a Brahmin is asked what Brahm is, he answers: 'When I fall back within myself, and close all external senses, and say *ôm* to myself, that is Brahm'. Abstract unity with God is realized in this abstraction from humanity' (*Phil. Hist.*: 148; *Jub.*: 11: 203). The goal is to become indifferent to everything else and to focus exclusively on destroying the self and becoming one with the divine. This form of worship 'consists in the abstraction of self-elevation—the abrogation of real self-consciousness; a negativity which is consequently manifested, on the one hand, in the attainment of torpid unconsciousness—on the other hand in suicide and the extinction of all that is worth calling life, by self-inflicted tortures' (*Phil. Hist.*: 157; *Jub.*: 11: 214). Hegel gives several examples of this, including the story from the *Ramayana* of Visvamitra's attempt to attain the powers of the Brahma by means of severe exercises and austerities.[32] Hegel also recounts a report from some British explorers, which he read in an article in the London journal *The Quarterly Review*.[33] The accounts of the self-annihilation of Hindu pilgrims in the mountains leaves both Hegel and his sources horrified and appalled.

Hegel explains: 'The highest point which is thus attained to in worship is that union with God which consists in the annihilation and stupefaction of self-consciousness. This is not affirmative liberation and reconciliation, but is, on the contrary, wholly negative, complete abstraction' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 34; *Jub.*: 15: 386). Hegel claims that this conception makes clear the pre-modern nature of Hinduism. The principle of modernity is precisely the awareness and celebration of the individual. It is a recognition that there is something valuable and important in the individual as such. But in Hinduism just the opposite is the case: 'Man, so long as he persists in remaining within his own consciousness, is, according to the Hindu idea, ungodly. But the freedom of man consists in being with himself—not in emptiness, but in willing, knowing, acting' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 34; *Jub.*: 15: 386). Thus the Hindu principle openly denies the value of the individual and is as far away from modernity as can be. Hegel continues,

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'the exaltation of the individual self-consciousness which strives, by means of the austerities just spoken of, to render its own abstraction something perennial for itself, is rather a flight out of the concrete reality of feeling and living activity' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 37; *Jub.*: 15: 389f.). Hegel explains the difference between the Hindu view and how the modern European conceives of the individual: 'It is self-evident that a European civil life based on personality, on free and absolute rights, is not to be found in such a religion. Genuinely ethical relationships—those of family, human benevolence, the obligation to recognize infinite personality and human dignity—become impossible with savage fancy and abominable deeds' (*LPR*: 2: 121; *VPR*: Part 2: 28). In short, the conception of the human being that is reflected in Hinduism has not progressed very far on the road that leads to subjective freedom.

C. The third attempt to attain Brāhma concerns the caste of Brahmins. While the members of the other castes must work hard to attain the relation to the divine and the status of being a holy person, the members of the Brahmin caste have this as their birthright.[34] This represents the third stage: 'every Brahman, every member of that caste, is esteemed as Brahma, is regarded as God by every other Hindu' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 38; *Jub.*: 15: 391). Hegel explains that those belonging to the class of the Brahmins are spared the toil that those of the other classes are subjected to: 'The Brahmins, in virtue of their birth, are already in possession of the divine. The distinction of castes involves, therefore, a distinction between present deities and mere limited mortals' (*Phil. Hist.*: 148; *Jub.*: 11: 203). Hegel explains, 'the caste of the Brahmans is an immediate representation of the presence of Brahma' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 18; *Jub.*: 15: 371). So, in contrast to prayer and silent meditation which were open to all believers, this form of worship is the exclusive purview of a single class.

Hegel's objection to this view is, again, that the nature of the divine is abstract and thus cut off from the rich sphere of actuality that consists of particular actions and thoughts (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 40–41; *Jub.*: 15: 392–93). Since there is no connection to the concrete particular, the actual behaviour of the Brahmans becomes arbitrary. Although this caste of people has a special status by virtue of their birth, there is no guarantee that in actuality they will live pious and upstanding lives. Their particular actions are entirely detached from any universal principle. Individuals from the caste of Brahmans can thus become arrogant and complacent, in no way living up to any higher religious ideal. For Hegel, the defect can be traced back to the abstract universality that is to be achieved at the expense of particularity.

IV. The forms of worship: The relation to the other deities

The second category of worship concerns the relation to other deities besides Brāhma and the Trimurti.[35] Since the conception of Brāhma is so abstract, it can

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

be filled with any concrete content. Moreover, since Brāhma is conceived as the creative power of nature, anything at all in nature can be perceived to have this power. Hegel explains,

> What we have is merely a relation to particular deities, which represent nature as detached or free. They are, it is true, the most abstract possible moments implicitly determined through the notion, but not taken back into unity in such a manner that the Trimurti would become Spirit. Their whole significance therefore is merely that of a mode of some particular natural element. The leading characteristic is vital energy or life force, that which produces and which passes away, what returns to life and is self-transformation, and to this natural object, animals, etc. are linked on as objects of reverence. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 42; *Jub.*: 15: 394f.)

Thus the Hindus worship animals and plants as having some divine element, since they have a force of nature within them.

While the first aspect of Brāhma was universality, the second aspect is particularity, and it is this aspect that, according to Hegel, has the upper hand. Brāhma contains within it all of the other lesser deities, including the main ones such as Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva: 'In this it falls apart into the numberless multiplicity of weaker and stronger, richer and poorer Spirits' (*PhS*: 420; *Jub.*: 2: 530). He says, 'for the principle of the Hindu religion is the manifestation of diversity [in 'avatars']. These then, fall outside that abstract unity of thought and, as that which deviates from it, constitute the variety found in the world of sense, the variety of intellectual conceptions in an unreflected sensuous form' (*Phil. Hist.*: 156; *Jub.*: 11: 213). There are a seemingly infinite number of avatars or manifestations of the abstract divine; these take a multitude of different forms. They are all concrete objects that humans perceive with their senses.[36] Hegel explains further, 'For these subordinate gods, with Indra, air and sky, at their head, the more detailed content is provided above all by the universal forces of nature, by the stars, streams, mountains, in all different features of their efficacy, their alteration, their influence whether beneficent or harmful, preservative or destructive' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 343; *Jub.*: 12: 458).

One begins to hear a critical tone when Hegel explains, 'Starting from Brahma and Trimurti, Indian imagination proceeds still further fantastically to an infinite number of most multitudinously shaped gods. For those universal meanings, viewed as what is essentially divine, are met again in thousands on thousands of phenomena which now themselves are personified and symbolized as gods' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 343; *Jub.*: 12: 458). Hegel points out particularly the

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

numerous conceptions of the divine in terms of different plants and animals or, in short, any kind of object of nature:

> Imposing natural objects, such as the Ganges, the sun, the Himalaya … become identified with Brahma himself. So too with love, deceit, theft, avarice, as well as the sensuous powers of nature in plants and animals […] All these are conceived of by imagination as free and independent, and thus there arises an infinite world of deities. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24–25; *Jub.*: 15: 377)[37]

Every animal is in principle a candidate for a divinity: 'The parrot, the cow, the ape, etc., are likewise incarnations of god, yet are not therefore elevated above their nature' (*Phil. Hist.*: 141; *Jub.*: 11: 194). Since everything is conceived as a god, Hegel designates Hinduism a 'universal pantheism' (*Phil. Hist.*: 141; *Jub.*: 11: 193).[38] Hegel was of course not the first to make this association of Hinduism with pantheism, but it is this point in Hinduism that gave rise to this association that enjoyed such wide currency in German philosophy.

The attempt to become Brāhma led to abstraction because Brāhma was abstract. This resulted in an attempt to escape from the world of desire and interests. Now, however, the focus on concrete particular things leads in just the opposite direction, namely, to a concentration on the physical and sensual enjoyment. Worship here 'consists in a wild tumult of excess; when all sense of individuality has vanished from consciousness by immersion in the merely natural' (*Phil. Hist.*: 157; *Jub.*: 11: 214). Hegel explains further here that the Hindu 'immerses himself by a voluptuous intoxication in the merely natural'. Thus, just the opposite principle appears. Instead of denying the self with privation, one revels in sensual satisfaction. Hegel refers to this contradiction as 'the double form of worship' in Hinduism. This view of Hinduism as morally deprived was a well-known criticism at the time and was often appealed to in support of arguments for the superiority of Greco-Roman culture.

According to Hegel, the shortcoming of this conception is that Brāhma remains overly abstract and for this reason lacks content. As a result, the focus shifts to the other side, the realm of particularity and the multitude of different gods. Since Brāhma is abstract, there is nothing about him that would unite the various individual gods into any coherent group or order. So these individual deities are not related in any meaningful way to the general deity, Brāhma: 'rather they are phenomena with the characteristic of independence, and are posited outside of that unity' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 25; *Jub.*: 15: 378). Thus different deities, often worshipped in different places, become rivals. This leads to a confusing chaos of individual gods in complex relations to one another. With no meaningful principle of order, the different gods come to vie with one another

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for strength and influence: 'This pantheism which, to begin with, is the passive subsistence of these spiritual atoms develops into a hostile movement within itself' (*PhS*: 420; *Jub.*: 2: 530). The hostilities take on a local and national aspect as individual deities are taken to represent specific sects or groups of people.[39] Because Brāhma is abstract and empty, it has no way of unifying or reconciling these competing gods: 'The Hindus are, moreover, divided into many sects. Among many other differences, the principal one is this, that some worship Vishnu and others Shiva. This is often the occasion of bloody wars; at festivals and fairs especially, disputes arise which cost thousands their lives' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 26; *Jub.*: 15: 378).[40]

The abstract god Brāhma cannot be brought into harmony with the manifold lesser deities, who are concrete. This is an obvious contradiction between the universal and the particular, the one and the plurality. Hegel writes, 'For, on the one hand, the purely invisible, the absolute as such ... is grasped as the truly divine, while, on the other hand, individual things in concrete reality are also, in their sensuous existence, directly regarded by imagination as divine manifestations' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 337–38; *Jub.*: 12: 451). This leads to an uncertain relation between the universal and the particular, since it appears that the universal god is ultimately detached from the particulars which are supposed to be manifestations of him. Hegel explains, 'While a universal essence is wrongly transmuted into sensuous objectivity, the latter is also driven from its definite character into universality—a process whereby it loses its footing and is expanded to indefiniteness' (*Phil. Hist.*: 157; *Jub.*: 11: 215). This is explained in other words as follows: 'These shapes disappear again in the same manner in which they are begotten; fancy passes over from an ordinary external mode of existence to divinity, and this in like manner returns back again to that which was its starting-point' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 25; *Jub.*: 15: 378). Hegel explains further, 'This unity, however, comes to have an ambiguous meaning, inasmuch as Brahma is at one time the universal, the all, and at another a particularity as contrasted with particularity in general' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 26; *Jub.*: 15: 379).

Here at the end it is clear why Hegel refers to Hinduism as the 'religion of phantasy'. This designation refers to the manifold deities that it contains. In a certain sense this can be regarded as a great richness of a religion that it contains so many deities, each with their own concrete properties, myths, and forms of worship. However, with no ordering principle, this collapses into a confused and meaningless chaos: 'The Hindu mythology is therefore only a wild extravagance of fancy, in which nothing has a settled form' (*Phil. Hist.*: 155; *Jub.*: 11: 212).[41] Hegel explains by way of summary, 'As the Hindu Spirit is a state of dreaming and mental transiency—a self-oblivious dissolution—objects also dissolve for it into unreal images and indefinitude. This feature is absolutely characteristic; and this alone would furnish us with a clear idea of the Spirit of

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the Hindus, from which all that has been said might be deduced' (*Phil. Hist.*: 162; *Jub.*: 11: 221).[42]

V. The lack of subjective freedom

Hegel explains what he takes to be the limitation of the above view as follows: 'The first extreme is then the sensuality of Hindu religion, the fact that it is a religion of nature, that it directly reveres natural objects as divinity, and that human beings relate themselves to these natural objects as they relate themselves to their own essential being' (*LPWH*: 1: 274; *VPWG*: 1: 195). The conception of the divine is, according to Hegel, the self-conception of a people. Thus what the people regards as the essential aspect of itself, it sees reflected in the divine. The fact that the Hindus revere animals and natural objects is, for Hegel, a demonstration of the fact that they have not yet developed a conception of themselves as something higher than nature. They have not yet managed to conceive of themselves as spirit.

According to this view, there is no enduring human essence, but instead everything is transitory and passes away. Hegel describes this as follows: 'But in this religion, which still belongs to nature, the becoming is conceived as mere becoming, as mere change; not as change of the difference by means of which the unity produces itself as an annulling of differentiation and the taking of it up into unity' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24; *Jub.*: 15: 376). In short with Shiva we have the bad infinity and not the good speculative infinity. This undermines the positive conception of recognition. Hegel continues,

> Consciousness, Spirit, is also a change in the first, that is, in the immediate unity. The Other, is the act of judgment or differentiation, the having an Other over against one—I exist as knowing—but in such a manner that while the Other is for me, I have returned in that Other to myself, into myself. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24; *Jub.*: 15: 376)

The relation between Brāhma and its incarnations is not one of dialectical recognition. Brāhma does not become what it is by seeing itself in the others, i.e., in its incarnations; rather, Brāhma remains alone and isolated:

> But his abstract simplicity does not at once vanish owing to this, for the moments, the universality of Brāhma as such, and the "I" for which that universality exists, these two are not determined as contrasted with one another, and their relation is therefore itself simple. Brāhma exists thus as abstractly existing for himself. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 13; *Jub.*: 15: 365)

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

For Hegel, to define the other—the divine—simply as something beyond or outside oneself is not to give the other any determinate content. To speak of something 'outside oneself' seems to imply a relation to another thing, but in fact it is merely a self-relation, since it merely refers immediately back to the original point of departure, the self (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 20f; *Jub.*: 15: 372ff.).

There is no recognition of the human being as something higher. Again, the conception of the divine is a natural reflection of the conception of human beings in the culture. Hegel explains,

> But the liberality of the Hindus in the wild extravagance of their desire to share their mode of existence, has its foundation in a poor idea of themselves, in the fact that the individual has not as yet within himself the content of the freedom of the Eternal, the truly and essentially existent, and does not as yet know his content, his true nature, to be higher than the content of a spring or of a tree […] among the Hindus there is no higher feeling of themselves present. The idea which they have of being is only that which they have of themselves; they place themselves upon the same level with all the productions of nature. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 45f.; *Jub.*: 15: 397f.)

Recognition with respect to spirit has not yet arisen among the Hindus, and so their self-definition is only vis-à-vis nature.

Hegel recalls here the forms of self-sacrifice and self-negation that are required in order to reach the level of the Brahman. The holy person is not one who cultivates his mental faculties in a positive way, but rather one who deprives oneself of the physical and the mental by means of extreme exercises, discipline and austerities. Instead of becoming closer to the divine by means of one's genuinely human faculty, rational cognition, one does so by eliminating this, thereby reducing oneself to a level that is lower than human. For the Hindus,

> Life acquires value only by a negation of itself. All that is concrete is merely negative in relation to abstraction, which is here the ruling principle. From this results that aspect of Hindu worship according to which men sacrifice themselves, and parents their children. To this is due, too, the burning of wives after the death of their husbands. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 46; *Jub.*: 15: 398)

For Hegel, such sacrifices demonstrate clearly that among the Hindus there is no respect for the individual or for subjectivity. The holy person is the one who eliminates his own subjectivity as much as possible.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The conception of the divine is a reflection of the conception of the human being. Hegel explains,

> If the Absolute be conceived of as the spiritually free, the essentially concrete, then self-consciousness exists as something essential in the religious consciousness only, to the extent to which it maintains within itself concrete movement, ideas full of content, and concrete feeling. If, however, the Absolute is the abstraction of the 'beyond' or of the Supreme Being, the self-consciousness too, since it is by nature what thinks, by nature good, is that which it ought to be. (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 38; *Jub.*: 15: 390.)

Here Hegel refers to his criticism of the Enlightenment's conception of God as the Supreme Being. The point seems clearly that the notion of Brāhma, like the Deists' notion of God, is too abstract and therefore empty of content. As a result, the conception of self-consciousness has no meaningful content. There is no subjectivity or inwardness that we take to characterize the modern individual.

One result of the conception of humans as simply a part of nature is that human value and dignity is not recognized. Hegel explains,

> It is implied by this that the life of man has no higher value than the being of natural objects, the life of any natural thing; the life of man has value only if it is in itself or essentially higher; but among the Hindus human life is despised, and is esteemed to be of little worth—there a man cannot give himself value in an affirmative, but only in a negative manner (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 46; *Jub.*: 15: 398).[43]

For Hegel, the Hindus were indifferent to the value of human life. He mentions numerous customs such as infanticide and the burning of widows with their dead husbands (suttee or *sati*), as well as the rigors of asceticism. All of these practices are, in his eyes, clear evidence that the Hindus have not yet reached a point where the individual is valued and where human freedom can be developed.

The caste system is thought to be established by nature (*LPWH*: 1: 257–64; *VPWG*: 1: 174–82).[44] It renders impossible the development of human freedom. The members of the specific castes are permitted only to do specific work that is associated with their caste, but the individual has no right to decide for him- or herself what profession to enter:

> For while the individual ought properly to be empowered to choose his occupation, in the East, on the contrary, internal

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> subjectivity is not yet recognized as independent; and if distinctions obtrude themselves, their recognition is accompanied by the belief that the individual does not choose his particular position for himself, but receives it from nature. (*Phil. Hist.*: 147; *Jub.*: 11: 201)

But the main problem is the radical inequalities that exist among the different castes, with the class of Brahmans enjoying great privileges and the lower classes being subject to harsh conditions and countless social disadvantages. It is thought that such matters are predetermined by nature. Thus, the idea is clear: nature is superior to spirit or the individual.

For the caste system to remain in place, countless rules and ordinances must be observed. The entire society is permeated with regulations of this kind that dictate with great precision what is and is not permitted for individuals in each of the castes. Hegel recites a litany of such rules that the caste of the Brahmans is obliged to observe:

> Throughout the day a person has to perform specific ceremonies; upon arising, one must subject oneself to certain rules. Upon awakening one has to recite prayers, to stand up using a specific foot, to clean the teeth with the leaf of a specific plant, to go to the river, taking water into the mouth and spitting it out again three times, and so forth, all the while reciting particular formulas. (*LPWH*: 1: 270; *VPWG*: 1: 189)

The Indians, like the Chinese, are obsessed with the external world. This is, for Hegel, a clear indication that the sphere of the internal is lacking: 'In this way the Hindu lives dependent on external matters. Inner freedom, morality, one's own intellect, can find no place here. The Hindus exist in this domination by externality, with the result that they can have no inherent ethical life' (*LPWH*: 1: 271; *VPWG*: 1: 190). The inner sphere of conscience and subjectivity is absent here.

A related element here is, according to Hegel, the lowly status of women in India. Women are denied basic rights; they are not permitted to determine for themselves certain fundamental things about their own lives. In short, the women of India are lacking subjective freedom. Hegel explains this first with respect to the laws of inheritance: 'As for justice and personal freedom, there is thus no glimmer of it. The female gender is wholly excluded from a right of inheritance, and even debarred as such from making a will. When there are no male heirs, the goods go to the rajah' (*LPWH*: 1: 268; *VPWG*: 1: 187). Moreover, women 'are not allowed to eat in the presence of the husband, just as a lower class person is not allowed to eat in the presence of someone of a higher class' (*LPWH*: 1: 268; *VPWG*: 1: 187). Similarly, women are not allowed to testify in court.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In connection with marriage, the matter is no better. According to Hegel, acquiring a wife takes the form of a mercantile exchange between the bridegroom and the parents of the woman to be married.[45] A woman as potential wife is regarded as something that has a specific market value, but is not recognized as a person with her own inward sphere and subjectivity. Women do not have the opportunity to choose their own husbands, but rather the husbands are chosen for them by their fathers (*LPWH*: 1: 268; *VPWG*: 1: 187). If their fathers are not able to find a suitable husband for their daughters, the fate of the latter is to end up as one of many wives to a single man.[46] In short, women 'are in general subordinate and in a state of degradation' (*LPWH*: 1: 268; *VPWG*: 1: 187).

Hegel states that 'history presents a people with their own image in a condition which thereby becomes objective to them' (*Phil. Hist.*: 163; *Jub.*: 11: 221). The image of India that is reflected in Hinduism is one in which humans have still not emerged from nature. They are still considered a part of the natural world, and for this reason some of the fundamental elements of what Hegel calls 'spirit' are lacking in both their religion and their social order. History must progress for the sphere of spirit to become more clearly recognized. According to Hegel, this happens first in Persia and Egypt.

VI. Critical evaluation

While Hegel has some useful insights in his analysis of Hinduism, it is difficult to escape the impression that he is at times making interpretative decisions based on his need to place this religion at a relatively low level in the history of the development of the world religions. Here it is impossible to overlook the Eurocentric and racist overtones that are present in the text. One could imagine that if he had wanted to do so, it would not have been too difficult for Hegel to see certain similarities between Hinduism and Christianity instead of constantly rushing to point out their differences.

One example of this might be found in the figure of Rama. In the *Ramayana* he is portrayed as an incarnation of Vishnu. He is a supremely virtuous person whose life represents the embodiment of *dharma*, the principle of ethics or justice that runs throughout the text. Rama can in many ways be seen as a figure like Jesus. As an incarnated god, he has come to earth with a specific mission: to combat the Raksasas, the malevolent semi-divine entities that plague humanity. Then when he has completed his mission, he goes back to heaven and becomes a part of Vishnu again. This sounds very much like the Christian understanding of Jesus, who was incarnated with a specific mission of preaching a message of love and atoning for human sin. Rama's return to heaven is very much like Jesus's return to the Father. The different avatars existing together in Vishnu can be seen

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as an echo of the Christian Trinity. One could continue for quite some time with parallels of this kind.

So if Hegel were interested in seeing these similarities, there would have been ample material for him at hand. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he was blinded by a Eurocentric view that prevented him from seeing something more positive in Hinduism. While his insights might be useful tools for interpreting his own system, it remains to be seen to what degree they can be regarded as actually fitting with the subject matter that he analyses.

Jon Stewart
Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
js@sk.ku.dk

Notes

[1] See *Phil. Religion*: 2: 1–47; *Jub.*: 15: 355–400; *NR*: 137–85; *LPR*: 2: 316–52; *VPR*: Part 2: 219–54; *LPR*: 2: 579–609; *VPR*: Part 2, 475–504; *LPR*: 2: 731–35; *VPR*: Part 2: 619–22.
Abbreviations used:
Aesthetics = *Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, vols. 1–2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, 1998).
Episode = *On the Episode of the Mahabharata Known by the Name Bhagavad-Gita by Wilhelm von Humboldt*, trans. H. Herring (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995).
Jub. = *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, vols. 1–20, ed. H. Glockner (Stuttgart: Frommann 1928–41).
LPR = *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols. 1–3, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson and J. M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris (Berkeley CA: University of California Press 1984–87).
LPWH = *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vols. 1–3, trans. and ed. R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson, with the assistance of W. G. Geuss (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2011ff).
NR = *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Zweiter Teil, *Die Bestimmte Religion*, Erstes Kapitel, *Die Naturreligion*, ed. G. Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner, 1974 [1927]).
OW = *Die orientalische Welt*, ed. G. Lasson (Leipzig: Meiner, 1923) (vol. 2 of *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vols. 1–4, ed. G. Lasson (Leipzig: Meiner 1920–23)).
Phil. Hist = *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Willey, 1944).
Phil. Mind = *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
Phil. Religion = *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vols. 1–3, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1962, 1968, 1972).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

PhS = *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
VPR = *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Parts 1–3, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983–85, 1993–95).
VPWG = *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte: Berlin 1822–1823*, ed. K.-H. Ilting, K. Brehmer and H. N. Seelmann (Hamburg: Meiner, 1996).

[2] Hegel, *Phil. Hist.*: 139–67; *Jub.*: 11: 191–226; *LPWH*: 1: 251–303, esp. 273–81; *VPWG*: 1: 164–233, esp. 192–204; *OW*: 343–410.

[3] *PhS*: 420–21; *Jub.*: 2: 530–31.

[4] While Hegel does not have an independent treatment of India in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, he does mention different aspects of Indian art and culture sporadically throughout these lectures.

[5] *Phil. Mind*: §573; *Jub.*: 10: 458–74.

[6] This is '*Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gita bekannte Episode des Mahabharata*. Von Wilhelm von Humboldt. Berlin, 1826', in *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (1827), Erster Artikel (January), nos. 7 and 8: 51–63; Zweiter Artikel (October 1827), nos. 181–88: 1441–92. (English translation: *Episode*.) See *Jub.*: 20: 57–131.

[7] '… [N]o one can dispute the fact that he had read the best of the then available works on India and wanted to uncover their significance in the context of his own system as well as world history' (Viyagappa 1980: 60).

[8] See App (2008: 7–60; see esp. 22–42), Cruysberghs (2012: 31–50), Germana (2009: 206–42), Glasenapp (1960: 39–60), Halbfass (1987: 424–33, 84–99), Herling (2006: 203–53), Hulin (1979: 99–124), Kreis (1941: 133–45), Leuze (1975: 61–114), Menze (1986: 245–94), Mitter (1977: 208–20), Ruben (1954: 553–69), Schulin (1958: 76–88), Sommerfeld (1943: 69–87), Viyagappa (1980), Westphal (1989: 193–204).

[9] For example, in one particularly offensive passage, he says, 'deceit and cunning are the fundamental characteristics of the Hindu. Cheating, stealing, robbing, murdering are with him habitual. Humbly crouching and abject before a victor and lord, he is recklessly barbarous to the vanquished and subject' (*Phil. Hist.*: 158; *Jub.*: 11: 216).

[10] See also *Aesthetics*: 1: 334–35; *Jub.*: 12: 449.

[11] See also *LPR*: 2: 732; *VPR*: Part 2: 620.

[12] 'But this potentially existing power works in a universal manner, without this universality being a subject for itself, a self-conscious subject. These universal modes of working, understood in their true character, are, for instance, the laws of nature' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 13; *Jub.*: 15: 366).

[13] 'But this potentially existing power works in a universal manner, without this universality being a subject for itself, a self-conscious subject' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 13; *Jub.*: 15: 366). 'But the Indian supreme God is merely the One in a neuter sense, rather than the one person; He has merely potential being, and is not self-consciousness; he is Brāhma the *neutrum*, or the universal determination' (*Phil. Religion*, 2: 19; *Jub.*, 15: 372).

[14] 'Brahma's *metaphysical* characteristic is as known as it is simple and was already discussed: *pure Being*, pure universality, *supreme Being*, most sublime Being; yet what is most essential and interesting is that one sticks to this abstraction as against its concrete fulfilment—Brahma as pure Being, void of any concrete determinateness' (*Episode*: 117f.; *Jub.*: 20: 114).

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

[15] 'When we Europeans call God the most supreme Being, this definition is equally abstract and insufficient, and reason-based metaphysics which denies our knowledge of God, i.e., to know God's qualities, demands that our conception of God be restricted to the same abstraction, knowing nothing of God than what is Brahma' (*Episode*: 119; *Jub.*: 20: 114f.).

[16] 'Now the determination which is all-important here is that this power is, to begin with, posited simply as the basis of the particular shapes or existing forms, and the relation to the basis of the inherently existing essence is the relation of substantiality. Thus it is merely power potentially—power as the inner element of the existence' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 12; *Jub.*: 15: 365).

[17] 'This totality, which is the unity, a whole, is what is called among the Indians *Tri murti*—*murti* = form or shape—all emanations of the absolute being called *murti*' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 15; *Jub.*: 15: 367). See also *LPWH*: 1: 278; *VPWG*: 1: 199f.; *LPR*: 2: 327; *VPR*: Part 2: 230; and *LPR*: 2: 587; *VPR*: Part 2: 483; and *LPR*: 2: 734; *VPR*: Part 2: 622.

[18] '[T]he whole is represented by a figure with three heads, which again is symbolical, and wholly without beauty' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24; *Jub.*: 15: 376).

[19] 'This divinity is composed, *first*, of Brahma, the productive generating activity, the creator of the world, lord of the gods, etc. On the other hand, Trimurti is distinct from Brahma (in the neuter), from the supreme being, and is its first born; but, on the other hand, he coincides again with this abstract divinity, since in general, in the case of the Indians differences cannot be retained within fixed limits but are partly confused and partly pass over into one another' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 342; *Jub.*: 12: 457). See also *LPR*: 2: 586; *VPR*: Part 2: 481.

[20] 'Now his shape in detail has much that is symbolical; he is portrayed with four heads and four hands, with sceptre, ring, etc. In colour he is red, which hints at the sun, because these gods always at the same time bear universal natural significances which they personify' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 342; *Jub.*: 12: 457).

[21] 'We now come to the Second in the triad, Krishna or Vishnu' (Hegel, *Phil. Religion*: 2: 23; *Jub.*: 15: 375). See also *LPR*: 2: 327f.; *VPR*: Part 2: 230; and *LPR*: 2: 589f.; *VPR*: Part 2: 486.

[22] 'The *second* god in Trimurti is Vishnu, the god who preserves' (*Aesthetics*: 1: 342; *Jub.*: 12: 457).

[23] 'The Third is Shiva, Mahadeva, the great god, or Rudra' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 23; *Jub.*: 15: 375f.). See also *LPR*: 2: 328; *VPR*: Part 2: 230f.; and *LPR*: 2: 591f.; *VPR*: Part 2: 487.

[24] See also *Aesthetics*: 1: 342; *Jub.*: 12: 457: 'the *third* is Shiva, who destroys'.

[25] Hegel notes that he has read this story in Alexander Dow's partial translation of the *Vedas*, found in his *The History of Hindostan* (Dow 1768: 1: xxxviii and following).

[26] 'This idea of a threefold divine function is fundamentally very ancient and seems to ground nearly every religion. Thus the Indians thought of Braham, Vishnu and Shiva; the Persians of Ormuzd, Mithra and Ahriman; the Egyptians of Osiris, Isis and Horus; the ancient Goths and Germans of Odin, Freya and Thor: as three powerful beings constituting one divinity, of which world-legislation belongs to the first, world-government to the other and world-judgment to the third' (Kant 1996: 408f.).

[27] 'Brahmā occurs mainly in relation to Vishnu or Krishna and to Shiva in a more distinct form and as one of the figures of Trimurti, the Indian trinity; a *definition* of the Supreme which

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

must have been of great interest for the Europeans to find in the Indian world-view' (*Episode*: 139f.; *Jub.*: 20: 125). See also *Phil. Religion*: 3: 27f.; *Jub.*: 16: 242.

[28] 'Every Hindu is himself momentarily Brahma. Brahma is this One, the abstraction of thought, and to the extent to which a man puts himself into the condition of self-concentration, he is Brahma' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 33; *Jub.*: 15: 385). See also *LPR*: 2: 335f.; *VPR*: Part 2: 238.

[29] 'The essential feature of this religion reaches as far as India where the Hindus likewise regard a human being, the Brahmin, as god, and the withdrawal of the human spirit into its indeterminate universality is held to be divine, to be the immediate identity with God' (*Phil. Mind*: §393A; *Jub.*: 10: 74). 'The Hindus, for example, place the highest value on mere persistence in the knowledge of one's simple identity with oneself, on remaining within this empty space of one's inwardness like colourless light in pure intuition, and on renouncing every activity of life, every end, and every representation. In this way, the human being becomes *Brahman*. There is no longer any distinction between the finite human being and Brahman; instead, every difference has disappeared in this universality' (*PR*: §5A; *Jub.*: 7: 55–56).

[30] See *Phil. Religion*: 2: 22; *Jub.*: 15: 374f.; *LPR*: 2: 341f.; *VPR*: Part 2: 244.

[31] See *LPWH*: 1: 280f.; *VPWG*: 1: 203f.; *Phil. Religion*: 2: 20–22; *Jub.*: 15: 372–75; *LPR*: 2: 342; *VPR*: Part 2: 245.

[32] See *Phil. Religion*: 2: 35–37; *Jub.*: 15: 387–89; *LPR*: 2: 597; *VPR*: Part 2: 492.

[33] 'Whoever resigns everything cannot be punished. One practices mortification, becomes a hermit so that one can only see to the end of one's nose, undertakes pilgrimages on foot, or covers long distances on one's knees. In particular, one commits suicide, sacrifices oneself, not (as in human sacrifices) others)—like the countless wives who are nothing for themselves, who kill themselves near the temple or hurl themselves into the Ganges. They seek death especially in the Himalayas, in the abyss, or in the snow (Webb, also Moorcroft, the Englishman who was in the Nitee Pass before Webb—*Quart. Rev.*, no. xliv, pp. 415ff.)' (*LPR*: 2: 121; *VPR*: Part 2: 27f.). Hegel refers to the anonymous article 'Sur l'Elévation des Montagnes de l'Inde, par Alexandre de Humboldt' (anonymous 1820: 415–30). See also *LPR*: 2: 602; *VPR*: Part 2: 497.

[34] 'The other castes may likewise become partakers in a *regeneration*; but they must subject themselves to immense self-denial, torture and penance' (*Phil. Hist.*: 148; *Jub.*: 11: 203). See also *LPR*: 2: 344f.; *VPR*: Part 2: 247.

[35] 'The second relation here is that of consciousness to these very manifold objects. The many deities constitute these objects' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 42; *Jub.*: 15: 394). See also *LPR*: 2: 348; *VPR*: Part 2: 250.

[36] 'Self-conscious Spirit that has withdrawn into itself from the shapeless essence, or has raised its immediacy to self in general, determines its unitary nature as a manifoldness of being-for-self, and is the religion of spiritual *perception*' (*PhS*: 420; *Jub.*: 2: 530).

[37] 'The Hindus, for example, contemplate the universal God as present in the whole of nature, in rivers and mountains just as in men' (*Phil. Mind*: §393A; *Jub.*: 10: 75). 'Everything, therefore—sun, moon, stars, the Ganges, the Indus, beasts, flowers—everything is a god to it'

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(*Phil. Hist.*: 141; *Jub.*: 11: 194) 'The other deities are therefore things of sense: mountains, streams, beasts, the sun, the moon, the Ganges' (*Phil. Hist.*: 156; *Jub.*: 11: 213). 'Every bird, every monkey is a present god, an absolutely universal existence' (*Phil. Hist.*: 157; *Jub.*: 11: 214).

[38] 'The Indian view of things is a universal pantheism, a pantheism, however, of imagination, not of thought. One substance pervades the whole of things, and all individualizations are directly vitalized and animated into particular powers' (*Phil. Hist.*: 141; *Jub.*: 11: 193f.).

[39] '[T]he ensoulment of this kingdom of Spirits bears this death within it owing to the determinateness and the negativity which encroach upon the innocent indifference of plant life. Through this negativity, the dispersion into the multiplicity of passive plant forms becomes a hostile movement in which the hatred which stems from being-for-self is aroused. The *actual* self-consciousness of this dispersed Spirit is a host of separate, antagonistic national Spirits who hate and fight each other to the death and become conscious of specific forms of animals as their essence' (*PhS*: 420; *Jub.*: 2: 530).

[40] See also *LPR*: 2: 334; *VPR*: Part 2: 236.

[41] The Hindu religion is 'a giddy whirl from one extreme to the other …' (*LPWH*: 1: 276; *VPWG*: 1: 197).

[42] 'Thus the development issues only in a wild whirl of delirium' (*Phil. Religion*: 2: 24; *Jub.*: 15: 377).

[43] See also *LPR*: 2: 602; *VPR*: Part 2: 496f.

[44] See also *LPWH*: 1: 285f.; *VPWG*: 1: 210f.

[45] 'It is further the case that wives are more or less purchased by the bridegroom from the parents. This is traditional, an ancient custom, although the laws forbid it. For a formal legal marriage the bridegroom must give a cow and an ox, the ancient form of purchase. Generally, however, a contract is drawn up regarding the gift supposed to be given to the parents. But the arrangement nevertheless consists of a formal side' (*LPWH*: 1: 268; *VPWG*: 1: 187).

[46] 'A father can readily provide for his daughter by means of this Indian polygamous relationship, by giving his daughter as wife to a reputable Brahman; the result is that many a Brahman has thirty to forty wives, half of whom he has never seen, for the parents have merely informed him that they have given their daughters to him as wives' (*LPWH*: 1: 269; *VPWG*: 1: 188).

Bibliography

Anonymous (1820), 'Sur l'Elévation des Montagnes de l'Inde, par Alexandre de Humboldt', *The Quarterly Review* 22: 415–30.

App, U. (2008), 'The Tibet of the Philosophers: Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer', in M. Esposito (ed.), *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries* vols. 1–2. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient.

Cruysberghs, P. (2012), 'Hinduism: A Religion of Fantasy', in B. Labuschagne and T. Slootweg (eds.), *Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dow, A. (1768), *The History of Hindostan; From the Earliest Account of Time, to the Death of Akbar; Translated from the Persian of Mahummud Casim Ferishta of Delhi: Together with a Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins* vols. 1–2. London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt.
Germana, N. A. (2009), *The Orient of Europe: The Mythical Image of India and Competing Images of German National Identity*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
Glasenapp, H. von (1960), *Das Indienbild deutscher Denker*. Stuttgart: Koehler.
Halbfass, W. (1987), 'Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer und Indien', *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch* 37: 424–33.
Herling, B. L. (2006), *The German Gita: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778–1831*. New York: Routledge.
Hulin, M. (1979), *Hegel et l'orient, suivi de la traduction annotée d'un essai de Hegel sur la Bhagavad-Gita*. Paris: Vrin.
Kant, I. (1996), 'Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion', in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans A. W. Wood and G. di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kreis, F. (1941), 'Hegels Interpretation der indischen Geisteswelt', *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Kulturphilosophie* 7: 133–45.
Leuze, R. (1975), *Die außerchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
McGetchin, D. T. (2009), *Indology, Indomania, and Orientalism: Ancient India's Rebirth in Modern Germany*. Madison NJ: Farleigh Dickensen University Press.
Menze, C. (1986), 'Das indische Altertum in der Sicht Wilhelm von Humboldts und Hegels', in A. Gethmann-Siefert and O. Pöggeler (eds.), *Werk und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik*. Bonn: Bouvier.
Mitter, P. (1977), *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Ruben, W. (1954), 'Hegel über die Philosophie der Inder', in *Asiatica, Festschrift Friedrich Weller*. Leipzig: Harrassowitz.
Schulin, E. (1958), *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht.
Sommerfeld, S. (1943), *Indienschau und Indiendeutung romantischer Philosophen*. Zurich: Rascher.
Viyagappa, I. (1980), *G. W. F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy*. Rome: Gregorian University Press.
Westphal, M. (1989), 'Hegel, Hinduism, and Freedom', *The Owl of Minerva* 20: 193–204.

https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.19 Published online by Cambridge University Press