



German Idealism

Frederick C. BEISER

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One of the very few accounts in English of German idealism, this ambitious work advances and revises our understanding of both the history and the thought of the classical period of German philosophy. As he traces the structure and evolution of idealism as a doctrine, Frederick Beiser exposes a strong objective, or realist, strain running from Kant to Hegel and identifies the crucial role of the early romantics--HÃfÂ¶lderlin, Schlegel, and Novalis--as the founders of absolute idealism.

Traditionally, German idealism is understood as a radical form of subjectivism that expands the powers of the self to encompass the entire world. But Beiser reveals a different--in fact, opposite--impulse: an attempt to limit the powers of the subject. Between Kant and Hegel he finds a movement away from cosmic subjectivity and toward greater realism and naturalism, with one form of idealism succeeding another as each proved an inadequate basis for explaining the reality of the external world and the place of the self in nature. Thus German idealism emerges here not as a radical development of the Cartesian tradition of philosophy, but as the first important break with that tradition.

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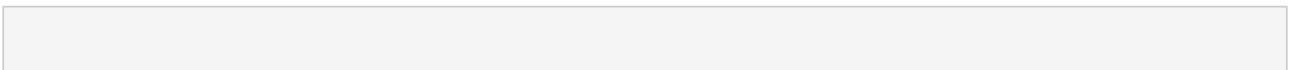
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