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Hegel and the Myth of the Accessibility of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2008

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (hereafter LPH) has been often hailed as his most accessible work. I wish to argue that, even if it were at one point in time the best entrée to Hegel's thought, it is no longer. More specifically, I argue that the claim that it is still his most accessible work needs retooling. To do this, I have set up three criteria for what it means for a work to be accessible: authenticity, self-containedness, and navigability. The criterion of authenticity simply states that the more authorial integrity a work has, the more accessible it is; that of self-containedness demands that a work be relatively understandable in itself; and that of navigability demands that an accessible work help the reader navigate in further studies of the same author.

The argumentative section of the paper is structured according to these criteria. The first section considers the text of the LPH itself and the criterion of authenticity. Here we see that the text of the LPH has a peculiar, varied textual tradition, both in its German and English editions. The second section considers the secondary literature on the LPH and the criterion of self-containedness. Here we find that the commentators regularly feel the need to go outside the LPH to make even the basic content of the LPH understandable. The final section considers the wider corpus of Hegel scholarship, specifically his metaphysics, and the criterion of navigability. Does the LPH help us resolve, or even slightly clarify, perennially thorny tensions in Hegel scholarship like his metaphysics? I will argue that this is unlikely. Thus overall we conclude that the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work is indeed in need of qualification.

Contents

Introduction

G. W. F. Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (hereafter LPH) has been often hailed as Hegel's most accessible work. The back cover of one edition readers: "Hegel himself seems to have regarded [the LPH] as a popular introduction to his philosophy as a whole" and as "the most readable and accessible of all his philosophical writings."[1] One scholar says that "Hegel himself opined that these *Vorlesungen* [Ger. 'lectures'] were the best popular introduction to his philosophy."[2] Another scholar declares that "his most accessible work is *Reason in History*."[3] Still another scholar says that the "best place to begin reading Hegel . . . is with the lectures on aesthetics or the philosophy of history" since they are "relatively accessible" and "perceptive and thought-provoking."[4] Most of the time this claim is merely asserted, and those who do try to argue it normally point to its readability or its emphasis on history. Moreover, that Hegel himself seems to have considered the LPH a good entrée into his thought makes it seem quite impious to think otherwise. Yet while it may be Hegel's most readable work and it surely emphasizes history, I want to argue that, even if it were at one point the best entrée to Hegel's thought, it is no longer, or, more specifically: the claim that it still is needs retooling.

To argue such a claim, I have first to set up some criteria for what it means for a work to be accessible. I have chosen three: authenticity, self-containedness, and

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1. From the back of Nisbet's translation of Hoffmeister's critical German edition.

2. Leonard Krieger, *Ideas and Events: Professing History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 56.

3. Larry Johnston, *Ideologies: An Analytic and Contextual Approach* (Petersborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 78.

4. Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel*, 2d ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2005): 300.

navigability. While I have not the space to explicate the theoretical underpinnings of each of these criteria, I will briefly explain each one, hoping that they will resonate somewhat intuitively with the reader. The criterion of authenticity states that a work must have a high degree of textual integrity, particularly by having a confirmed origin of authorship; and the higher its degree of integrity, the more accessible it is. This is so because the more certain we are that a given author wrote the work at hand, the more certain we can be that it is representative; and that a work well represents its author seems desirable in an accessible work. The criterion of self-containedness demands that a work be relatively understandable in and of itself. It must be like a movement in a great symphony: distinct from the other movements yet somehow dependent for its theme, not full of the glory of the whole piece itself but containing some resemblance of that glory. Thus, the more a work requires the aid of outside works in order to be understood, the less accessible it is.[5] The criterion of navigability, borrowing a nautical metaphor, demands that once a person has read an accessible work, it will have been preparatory for understanding further works by that same author; it will help to navigate in further studies. The less a work helps the reader navigate, the less accessible it is.

Thus, having set these criteria in place, we proceed now to consider each three correlative aspects of the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work. The first aspect is that of the text of the LPH itself. Does this aspect meet satisfactorily the correlative criterion of authenticity? The second aspect is that of the secondary literature on the LPH. Does the secondary literature vindicate its self-containedness or does it demonstrate the need to consult other works in order to understand it? The third aspect is

5. This is not to say that an accessible work need be comprehensive but only that it be an understandable work in and of itself.

that of the wider corpus of Hegel scholarship. Does the LPH, in light of the wider corpus of Hegel scholarship, help the reader satisfactorily navigate that wider corpus? These aspects and these questions will be the substance of this thesis.

A few more preliminaries are in order. First, I have tried at all times to differentiate those criticisms of the LPH which claim that it is not self-contained, not accessible, etc. from those which claim that it is not a fundamental source for Hegel's mature philosophy; for it is only the former in which I am interested, and to confuse the latter for the former would sully the results of my research. In addition, it would be good for me to make it explicit that my primary concern here is methodological, not exegetical, even though it is about the LPH; and this is a good thing, because I am no Hegel scholar, and I claim no in-depth familiarity with even some of the most central Hegel writings. So, while there may be a monograph or tome my ignorance of which compromises my conclusions, I am inclined to believe otherwise, and I have sought to avoid this by copious reference to those whose knowledgeability far exceeds mine.

Finally, a few words on limitations and delimitations. First, the space restrictions for this thesis required that I be selective in my use of resources. Though I tried to consult as many resources as possible, each new source sometimes resulted in the discovery of half a dozen other resources that would ultimately be left untapped. I did my best, however, to include those resources that seemed to be well-established, oft-referenced works. Any failure to include what others may deem as important sources is strictly my fault and is not, by their exclusion, my commentary on their worth. I am more convinced now than ever that the process of learning—especially learning about Hegel—never ends.

The Criterion of Authenticity: the Text of the LPH

What follows in this section is a discussion of the various German editions of the LPH and their respective English translations, after which I shall argue that the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work is in need of qualifying. This overview will also help us throughout insofar as it shows in more detail with what texts we have to do.

The LPH has had no fewer than four German editions. Eduard Gans, the first editor and Hegel's close friend and colleague, had as his aim the transformation of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history into a popularly accessible book. Thus Gans' edition, published in 1837, made use of Hegel's manuscripts and his students' notes only from Hegel's last and most popular offering of the course, that of the winter term of 1830–31 in Berlin. In addition, Gans made significant alterations to the text, turning Hegel's less-structured, punctuated style into more readable, elegant prose. In 1840, just three years later, Hegel's son Karl published a second edition, in the Preface to which he praised Gans' pioneering but limited efforts and justified the new edition by referencing the incorporation of a vast amount of new material, from both Hegel and Hegel's students and from earlier offerings of the course. It was Karl Hegel's edition that would prove to be the authoritative German text for the LPH until the early twentieth century, when the third edition, done by Georg Lasson, was published. This third edition made several significant contributions, the first being the incorporation of a valuable and theretofore ignored manuscript of Hegel's own; the second, the undoing of Gans' and Karl Hegel's altering and restructuring, returning to a more faithful though less readable and appealing format; and the third, the addition of a technical feature that distinguished Hegel's own work from his students by setting the former in italics and the latter in Roman type. Most

significant, however, is the 1955 critical edition of Johannes Hoffmeister, which furthered Lasson's critical work through a variety of organizational revisions of the work based again on newly discovered manuscripts of Hegel's. According to Hoffmeister in the preface to his edition, Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history could now be pieced together based almost solely on Hegel's own manuscripts, though Hoffmeister still included supplementary material from Hegel's students. What we see then in the German editions available is that, with the discovery of new source material and an increased sensitivity to properly differentiating Hegel himself from his students, the German editions upon which the LPH are based have become increasingly judicious.[6]

But it is the English translations in which we are most interested, and it is here that our task becomes perceptibly more difficult, for the translations are great not only in number but also in variety. That is, not only are there several different translators, each with their own methodology and intent, but many of them have translated only selected sections of the different German editions. Thus, the first English translation, by J. Sibree, appeared in 1857 and was based on Karl Hegel's 1840 German edition.[7] Sibree's work was entire: it included both the more famous and theoretical Introduction to the lectures and also the impressively lengthy survey of world-history. To date, the LPH in its entirety appears in English only in Sibree's translation and so, lacking competition, Sibree's translation increased in popularity as Hegel was introduced to the English-speaking

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6. For more information on the history of the text of the LPH, see Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7–10. For even more details, cf. Karl Hegel's Preface to his edition of G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Mineola: Dover, 1956, repr. 2004), xvii–xix (hereafter 'Sibree'); C. J. Friedrich's introduction to Sibree, iii–vii; Nisbet's preface to G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World-History. Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), xxxvii–xxxviii (hereafter 'Nisbet'); and Lasson's 'Note on the Composition of the Text' in Nisbet, 221–226.

7. Cf. Sibree's introduction, ix–xv.

world. Then in 1953, Robert S. Hartman translated into more modern prose just the Introduction to the lectures and entitled it *Reason in History* (after the German title *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*).[8] Despite the publication of Lasson's 1920 critical edition, Hartman based his work on the same German edition as Sibree's translation, that of Karl Hegel. It was not until 1975 that Hoffmeister's critical German edition—and here only the Introduction—was translated into English, this time by H. B. Nisbet. In 1988, Leo Rauch produced another English translation based on Karl Hegel's edition, this one containing just the Introduction, as well as an appendix containing several sections of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.[9] While this survey does not exhaust the English translations of the LPH, it does include the most well-known and widely-used ones and is sufficient to show that the lot is varied indeed.

Scholarly discussion of the merits of each translation over against the others has not been insignificant and is something to which LPH commentators have grown accustomed. And while the issue here with editions and translations is really much too thorny and far too specialized to be given thorough treatment in this paper, a quick glimpse at the issue should, and can be, safely made. Moreover, I argue, a glimpse at this issue will reveal the LPH's checkered textual tradition, thus diminishing its accessibility, and so, demanding a qualification of the claim at hand. Now, normally, if there is discussion of the relative merits of the translations at all, it begins by doing what we have started to do already, that is, by tracing the development of the text of the LPH. Only

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8. See Hartman's preface to G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History*, trans. R. S. Hartman (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1953), v–vi (hereafter 'Hartman'); and Hartman's introduction, ix–xl.

9. G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. L. Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988). It is commonly held that Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is a helpful propaedeutic to the LPH, hence its inclusion in Rauch's translation.

after such a survey is it pointed out that the new, critical editions are superior to translations based on earlier German editions, like Gans' or K. Hegel's, which are thoroughly fragmented and incomplete.[10] For instance, by 1955, when J. Hoffmeister published his edition, two manuscripts written by Hegel himself had been found, one in a museum and the other in a private residence in Zurich.[11] The additions to the text made by these new discoveries were not insubstantial either; thus, it became increasingly clear that the earlier editions were inferior. But the claim is made not only that earlier editions were inferior inasmuch as they lacked material that was only made available later, but also that the editing and organizing of what sources the editors did have was itself inferior. As Lasson points out in a 'Note on the Composition of the Text' in his critical edition, the previous editors, namely Gans and Karl Hegel, either failed to read closely and slowly the texts they were compiling and editing, and so, made egregious editorial errors, or they were simply unprincipled and failed to meet the standards of philological rigor that would have been taken for granted in Lasson's day.[12] We have not the space to expatiate upon these discrepancies here, but we can safely conclude that, whether the editors made mistakes or had low standards, the earlier editions are inferior: it is clear that the new, critical editions are superior texts. This means also that English translations

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10. See, for instance, Shlomo Avineri, "The Problem of War in Hegel's Thought" in J. Stewart (ed.) *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 140; and Shlomo Avineri, "Hegel and Nationalism" in J. Stewart (ed.) *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 125.

11. See Nisbet, 8.

12. For example, Lasson mentions Hegel's idiosyncratic use of the comparative construction, which Gans and Hegel never noticed, thus blunting Hegel's point (Nisbet 22). In addition, Lasson notes the frequent incorrect readings done by Gans and K. Hegel, the most distorting of which is their substitution of Hegel's *Autoritäten* ('authorities') for *Aprioritäten* ('a priori inventions'). Again, Gans and K. Hegel left out many of Hegel's marginal comments which added explanatory insight to the text they commented upon. Thus, reasons Lasson, if the editors' handling of Hegel himself inspires so little confidence, how much less confidence must their handling of Hegel's students' lecture notes inspire?

based on the earlier editions can be characterized, too, as fragmented, incomplete, and thus inferior. Given the LPH's textual tradition—a checkered one indeed—what will this mean for the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work?

It is not altogether obvious that the varied quality of the English translations of the LPH would require a qualification of the claim at hand. After all, textual problems notwithstanding, the denseness and heaviness of Hegel's other work contrasts with the lighter and more lucid LPH such that all parties would likely consider it refreshing.[13] Moreover, most commentators on Hegel's philosophy of history do not see the abundant textual variation in the available versions of the LPH as creating an appreciable amount of philosophical variation among them.[14] In this regard, whether one is reading Sibree or Nisbet is not as important as the fact the Hegel has the tendency in any English translation to produce a fairly consistent effect in his reader, normally something like bewilderment. Hence, even if there are minor variations in the different translations, the same general philosophical content is transmitted relatively faithfully. In fact, many authors, while only indirectly treating but still referencing Hegel's philosophy of history, mix and match the various translations of the LPH. More specifically, Nisbet's translation is most often consulted for the Introduction to the lectures, while Sibree's translation, only for its substantial historical survey. It would seem, then, that competent scholarship

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13. This is probably one reason why the LPH is such a popular entrée to Hegel.

14. For instance, see G. D. O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 6; W. H. Walsh, "Principle and Prejudice in Hegel's Philosophy of History" in Z. A. Pelczynski (ed.) *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 181; McCarney, 7–8; B. T. Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 18. C. J. Friedrich, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (New York: Random House, 1954), 2, seems to indicate that a reliance on Sibree is unwise, but then he claims in the preface to Sibree, iv, that neglecting the new insights offered by Hoffmeister's translation will not impair a student's ability to catch Hegel's vision.

can be done without apprehensions about the text of the LPH. If this is so, do considerations of the text of the LPH really make it necessary to qualify the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work?

Yes, in fact. Remember that in discussing the nature of the text of the LPH, I am not arguing that scholarship which consults the earlier, inferior editions of the LPH is irreparably tainted, and so, somehow substandard. As we have seen, this is quite clearly not the case. Rather, the discussion of the history of the text lays the groundwork for evaluating the claim of the LPH's superior accessibility. To substantiate my argument that the claim requires qualification, one must consider what it would be like for one to begin studying Hegel on the unqualified notion that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work. For simplicity's sake, we will discuss only the translations of Sibree and Nisbet.[15] Therefore, suppose that a student buys Sibree's translation, the greatest merit of which is its inclusion of the voluminous world-historical survey (since no other English translation of the survey exists). Incarnating, so to speak, the seemingly abstract, metaphysical content of the more famous Introduction, the survey is essential to maintaining the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work. Unfortunately, the Introduction, which is typically the part in which scholars are most interested (hence all the translations of just the Introduction), has now been shown to lack a substantial amount of material from Hegel's own hand in Sibree's version. But what Sibree lacks, Nisbet has. Without a doubt, then, Nisbet's is the superior text, but only of the Introduction. Suppose instead, then, that the student buys Nisbet's translation. In this scenario, the student is able to read the best, because most critical, English translation of the Introduction to the LPH but unfortunately

15. I have chosen Sibree and Nisbet because they are typically the top two most frequently chosen translations: the former because it is comprehensive and classic; the latter because it is critical.

cannot read the world-historical survey, since Nisbet omits it. In picking just one translation, then, the student is necessarily going to miss out on one thing or the other. Therefore, we have to disagree to some extent with those who say that a similar reading is had whether one reads Nisbet or Sibree. To the introduction, Hoffmeister added almost one-third more material—not an insubstantial amount—all of which came from Hegel's own hand, better satisfying our criterion of authenticity. In this way, then, Nisbet's translation is more accessible than Sibree's translation of the Introduction. But if all one reads is the Introduction (whether Sibree's or Nisbet's translation), then one is likely neither to have benefited from the concretizing tonic of the world-historical survey nor, therefore, to have made the best access to Hegel. In failing our first criterion, then, the claim on trial needs a qualification.[16]

The Criterion of Self-Containedness: Secondary Literature

In this section, we will look at LPH commentaries by B. T. Wilkins, G. D. O'Brien, and Joseph McCarney, as well as miscellaneous secondary literature, in hopes of finding some sort of proof that the LPH is a self-contained work. We will also make this section larger than any other in this thesis just because the criterion of self-containedness is, I think, more intuitively proper as a criterion for accessibility than the other two. When

16. One may object that I have unnecessarily belabored my point and that only by extensive exegesis can it be satisfactorily demonstrated. Unfortunately, such a demonstration would increase the bulk of this thesis beyond acceptable bounds. Nonetheless, I think, the deficiencies of the textual tradition of the LPH are such that, even without such exegetical support, the claim on trial fails to meet my criterion of authenticity. On a separate but not unrelated note, see John McCumber, "On Teaching Hegel: Problems and Possibilities" in T. Kasachkoff (ed.) *Teaching Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 171. He has opined that the greatest obstacle English-speaking students face in accessing Hegel is the fact that Hegel wrote in German, not English. Still worse, Hegel's German has been characterized as idiosyncratic, neologistic, and frequently given to wordplay and abstruse technicalities, potentially making the LPH, which is a mixture of the notes of both Hegel and his students', an even more remote work. So, although I hardly have the space in this paper to prove it exegetically, I am inclined to believe all the more that the LPH, maybe even all of Hegel's works, is exponentially more difficult to access than the others.

we find, then, that the LPH depends heavily on other works, and so, is not self-contained, it is not insignificant: accessibility thereby diminishes, and the claim of superior accessibility needs qualification.

B.T. Wilkins, Hegel's Philosophy of History

Burleigh T. Wilkins' interpretive work, *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, based on Hartman's English translation of the LPH, is among the first attempts to elucidate the LPH in the context of Hegel's overall system. In fact, however, Wilkins' aim is much narrower: he treats only of the Introduction to the LPH and seems to imply that Hegel's *Science of Logic* is fairly representative of Hegel's system.[17] Wilkins focuses on the question with which Hegel himself seems to have been concerned in the Introduction to the LPH: what is the ultimate purpose of the world?[18] Such methodological decisions are reasonable, for Wilkins is more interested in illuminating the LPH, mainly its Introduction, than in illuminating Hegel's greater system.

More specifically, Wilkins' interpretation of the Introduction to the LPH proceeds in three chapters. In the first chapter, "The Varieties of History," Wilkins examines just the first few pages of the LPH's Introduction. Here, says Wilkins, Hegel self-consciously avoids an error that he sees made in much historical scholarship, and in allied disciplines, namely, that one can assume a passive posture in writing history such that the facts conferred by documents and artifacts organize themselves into categories and schemes

17. Wilkins, 13. Unfortunately, as points out, the *Logic* suffers from its own interpretive difficulties, even in relevant passages that Wilkins uses in interpreting the LPH (91). This, of course, only serves to render more difficult the task of determining Hegel's meaning in the LPH.

18. Ibid., 13.

that allow the historian to produce an objective account of history.[19] In avoiding this error, Hegel leads into a discussion of the different ways in which historians have done their work, identifying two general kinds of history: nonphilosophical history and philosophical history. Nonphilosophical history further divides into original history and reflective history, together receiving relatively sparse treatment in the LPH (ten pages or so) compared with the scores of pages of treatment that philosophical history receives. This disparity, Wilkins argues, is unfortunate, for understanding these few pages which treat of the movement from original history to philosophical history is crucial to the task of understanding Hegel's philosophy of history,[20] the main tenet of which is that Reason is the one gift of philosophy to history, and that Reason in history proposes these two convictions: one, from the Greeks, that nature is ruled by universal physical laws; and, two, from the Christians, that God rules providentially over the world.[21] With these convictions firmly in place, one can at once sympathize with a common reading of Hegel's philosophy of history, namely, that Hegel thinks that just as the correct mathematical or geometric concepts allow one to understand the natural, sensible world, so also the right historical concepts (e.g., a concept about God's Providence) allow one to understand history. Said differently, Hegel tries to reconcile teleology with mechanism,

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19. Ibid., 19–26. The correction of this error, as Wilkins notes, is commonplace today; in Hegel's day, it was not. That Hegel is often construed as violating this very rule of which he was apparently very aware is ironic. If he did violate this rule, he either was, in fact, aware of the error but committed it anyway (for some ulterior purpose, perhaps) or so lacked the ability to self-criticize that he committed the error unconsciously. I am inclined toward neither option.

20. Ibid., 28. The importance of Hegel's movement from original history to philosophical history has also been recognized by Duncan Forbes, "Introduction" in Nisbet, xvii, who argues that the movement is, in fact, a dialectical one.

21. Wilkins, 47–48.

the former being an understanding of purpose or design in the world and the latter being the understanding of its governance by physical laws.[22]

As Wilkins sees it, this reading is problematic and can only be resolved with reference to Hegel's work outside the LPH. Expanding on this in the second chapter, "Teleology and Mechanism," and ever aware of Hegel's overarching question—"What is the ultimate purpose of the world?"—Wilkins broadens the tension between teleology and mechanism in more general terms of freedom and necessity.[23] Wilkins does this, mimicking the section of Hegel's *Logic* that traces the development of mechanism, chemism, and teleology. Thus brought into the picture is Kant, whom Hegel sees, according to Wilkins, as failing to answer the only important, relevant question: is it teleology or mechanism, or, again, freedom or necessity, which has truth in itself? Hegel's solution in the *Logic* is that teleology is superior to mechanism, more specifically, that teleology cancels out in mechanism the negative while retaining the positive.[24] Thus self-conscious individuals in the natural world are seen as "struggling"[25] to manifest the world's immanent purpose.[26] After spending most of the chapter in exegesis of the relevant passages of the *Logic*, Wilkins returns to show the analogy between the dialectic of mechanism, chemism, and teleology in the *Logic* and that of

22. Ibid., 72–73. Correspondent to teleology and mechanism may be Hegel's concepts of Spirit and Nature.

23. Ibid., 87–88.

24. Ibid., 90–92.

25. Ibid., 91.

26. Ibid., 91–92.

original history, reflective history, and philosophical history in the LPH.[27] He concludes that what philosophical history can do that no other kind of history can is this: the former, having become aware of the immanent purpose of the world, has established criteria by which to evaluate the empirical data used by all historians.[28]

In the last chapter, Wilkins considers the section of the *Logic* that traces the development of possibility, actuality, and necessity. Giving it admittedly more selective treatment than thorough exposition, Wilkins says that Hegel views the concept of contingency in itself as an unsatisfactory reconciliation of possibility and actuality; instead, Hegel develops possibility and actuality into necessity. Thus, "what is really possible cannot be otherwise."[29] But it is Hegel's view here of necessity which unsettles so many who read the LPH, wherein one reads of the cunning of reason, a notion which seems to justify all evil throughout history; of history itself described as the slaughter-bench upon which is sacrificed happiness, wisdom, and freedom; and so on. Yes, but for Hegel, contingency itself, the tonic which the unsettled seek, is a necessary precondition in the development from possibility to necessity.[30] As Hegel in the *Logic* cancels out the negative and retains the positive with respect to contingency and necessity, some sense is

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27. Ibid., 121. It is worthwhile to mention here, like Wilkins, that the dialectic of self-consciousness is relevantly analogous, too. That is, a man *qua* subject opposes, or estranges, himself, thus creating himself as an object in the natural order, and so, subject to mechanism, only to reconcile himself to himself with a more sophisticated self-awareness. As Wilkins, 132–133, notes in passing, Hegel is likely displaying this process in the world-historical survey of the LPH.

28. Ibid., 134.

29. Ibid., 151–152. Wilkins notes that Hegel himself is quick to qualify that what is really possible cannot be otherwise *in particular conditions and circumstances*. Per Wilkins, Hegel's claim amounts to this: that, for a particular phenomenon to occur, there are particular necessary and sufficient conditions which need to be in place such that, when they are, it necessarily follows that the phenomenon occurs (155–156).

30. Ibid., 157–158.

made of Hegel's historical explanations in the LPH: Hegel's is primarily not a disdain for scientific explanations of history but rather an emphasis on the superiority of teleology, in general, and freedom, in specific.[31]

The succinctness of this summary of Wilkins' work is not meant to betray the complex and sustained mental effort required to understand Wilkins' work, much less Hegel's. Rather, the summary serves two purposes. My first purpose is to procure appreciation for Wilkins' pioneering effort with the LPH. Though a less ambitious project than others since, his focused modesty gave his treatment greater explanatory potential; thus, one reviewer, while unsatisfied with Wilkins' theoretical treatment of teleology, can still praise Wilkins for correcting the misunderstandings of, e.g., W. H. Walsh and H. Marcuse.[32] My second purpose is more directly relevant to the issue of the LPH's accessibility. While Wilkins may demonstrate that the LPH is self-contained enough to understand portions of it without recourse to other works, e.g., Hegel's initial discourse on the varieties of history, still, the LPH does little to illuminate Hegel's more formalized philosophy such as that in the *Logic* or *Encyclopaedia*.[33] Moreover, one might, with Michael Zuckert, criticize Wilkins on the grounds that, excepting the first chapter which is almost entirely an isolated treatment of the text of the LPH, most of the book is an

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31. Ibid., 186–190. Cf. also Robert Anchor, review of *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, by B. T. Wilkins, *American Historical Review* (June 1975): 611–612.

32. H. S. Harris, review of *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, by B. T. Wilkins, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (March 1975): 422. Walsh holds a view of the relation between Hegel's varieties of history with which Wilkins takes issue; Marcuse, as Wilkins sees it, misunderstands Hegel's 'cunning of reason.'

33. As if Hegel himself were not routinely impenetrable in thought, see Patrick Gardiner, review of *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, B. T. Wilkins, *History and Theory* (February 1976): 54–55. He says that Wilkins' treatment is sometimes equally impenetrable: Wilkins presents at once "a fair-minded and objective account of some of the things Hegel actually wrote about history . . . [H]owever . . . he is less successful when he goes on to try to illuminate Hegel's picture of historical development by relating it to the general doctrines . . . propounded in the *Science of Logic* and elsewhere."

exposition not of the LPH but of the *Logic*.[34] With central tensions in the LPH resolved only in reference to other works, then, Wilkins' work gives us no reason to think the LPH is self-contained, and it is thus not without qualification Hegel's most accessible work.

G. D. O'Brien, Hegel on Reason and History

O'Brien's commentary on Hegel's philosophy of history builds indirectly upon the work of Wilkins. While there is overlap in the material covered (for instance, they both emphasize the dialectical development from original history to philosophical history), there is much contained in O'Brien that is not in Wilkins, this being in all likelihood the result of the influence of Alexander Kojève on O'Brien's work.[35] More importantly and unlike Wilkins, O'Brien uses mainly Hoffmeister's 1955 critical edition, and he pays more attention to it. All of this makes O'Brien's work both complex and refreshing for the same reason: his assiduous exegesis of a more critical text.[36] What this means for the task at hand, however, is that extended recapitulations of O'Brien's work cannot, for space limitations, be included here. Nonetheless, we will take shorter trips through the work just to be able to consider our question at hand in light of it. On first glance it would seem that O'Brien's work might vindicate the LPH as a fairly self-contained work, thus making it more accessible. In the end, however, we will not only see that this is not the case but also that O'Brien himself knows so.

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34. Michael P. Zuckert, "Future of Hegel's Philosophy of History," review of *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, by B. T. Wilkins, *Review of Politics* (July 1977): 410. He also criticizes Wilkins for relying too heavily on English translations of Hegel's work, specifically on Hartman's translation of Karl Hegel's edition. See also John P. Burke, review of *Hegel's Philosophy of History*, by B. T. Wilkins, *The Philosophical Review* (April 1976): 261–264. Whether or not this greatly affects Wilkins' work is probably irrelevant.

35. See O'Brien, 3, 8–9. For more on Kojève, see below.

36. See also Zuckert, 409.

O'Brien begins with a summation of the status of the text of the LPH, not unlike my own above, though perhaps more thorough. In the second chapter, O'Brien lays the groundwork for understanding how Hegel viewed the philosophy of history. For O'Brien, Hegel sees philosophy of history neither as some speculative, a priori schema foisted upon the events of time nor as mere metahistorical criticism, a sort of philosophy of historiography. Rather, the philosophy of history results from the historian recognizing that all history-writing is an expression of man's self-consciousness at a given time and that only from this recognition can truly philosophical history be written.[37] O'Brien's two main purposes in the third chapter are, one, to start discussion of Hegel's famous remark that Reason, philosophy's sole gift to history, objectively governs the world; and, two, to make the distinction that he sees implicit in Hegel between subjective and objective reason. He finishes this chapter by considering objective reason in light of Aristotle's four causes. Then the fourth chapter deals with subjective reason, and here O'Brien aims to resolve the tension between Hegel's remarks that philosophical historians "must proceed historically—empirically,"[38] that Reason governs history, and that only through Reason can one comprehend history. Through extended interaction with, e.g., explanations and law in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Bertrand Russell's doctrine of knowledge by acquaintance, and Carl Hempel's covering-law model, O'Brien concludes that subjective Reason must be found in individuality, more specifically self-consciousness.[39] For the fifth and sixth chapters, O'Brien uses Aristotle's four causes—end and efficient cause in

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37. O'Brien, 35.

38. Sibree, 10.

39. Hence O'Brien's emphasis on the master-slave dialectic of the *Phenomenology*, for it is the self-consciousness of the slave and the master that puts the dialectic into motion.

chapter five, material and formal in chapter six—as the organizing principle underlying the LPH.[40] Therefore, even though Hegel switches terms frequently, in general it can be said that the final cause of history is Spirit, the essence of which is freedom. Spirit is reached by means of human passions, the efficient cause. Spirit and human passions meet to form the matter of history: the State; and its constitution is history's formal cause.[41] The last chapter considers the lessons that, according to Hegel, can be learned from history, one of which is that in doing philosophical history, that is, in doing the sort of history that traces the development of the Absolute's self-consciousnesses of freedom, the historian is able to gain a sense of his own self-consciousness.[42] It is particularly here that O'Brien does some of his most original and insightful thinking.

How then shall we think about O'Brien's work? To be sure, at certain points, it is something of an improvement upon Wilkins' work. O'Brien not only did close reading of the LPH, as is evidenced by the frequent block quotes and exegetical minutiae,[43] but he also did not wander outside of the LPH as much as Wilkins did. Moreover, though O'Brien's argumentation, like Hegel's, is long and sophisticated, it is, unlike Hegel's, put forth perspicuously. Thus O'Brien illuminates with almost un-Hegelian clarity both Hegel's long dialectical movement from original history to philosophical history and the

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40. While the organization of Hoffmeister's text of the Introduction to the LPH manifests, however vaguely, the four causes, O'Brien cites Kojève as the explicator from whom he borrows both the simile of history as a created edifice and the organizing principle of the four causes specifically in treating Hegel. O'Brien's contention is, of course, that Hegel was aware that he was organizing his 1830 lectures in this Aristotelian fashion (98–100).

41. O'Brien, 101–102.

42. Ibid., 164.

43. Says Gardiner: "[O'Brien] makes a commendable effort to unravel sympathetically the complexities of the Hegelian texts" (56).

connection between philosophical history and Aristotle's four causes.[44] If one had noticed, however, that Wilkins imported a great deal from the *Logic* to make cogent his interpretation of the LPH, one will probably notice, too, that O'Brien is similarly dependent on the *Phenomenology*, particularly its master-slave dialectic, which at critical points, says O'Brien, elucidates Hegel's understanding of self-consciousness in history. We may concede that this reliance upon the *Phenomenology* does not of itself necessitate a qualification that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work, because the *Phenomenology* is, after all, a central Hegel work. This by itself is not problematic, but when O'Brien explains the debt he owes to Alexander Kojève's famous lectures on the *Phenomenology*, it becomes problematic.[45]

Why this is problematic may not be immediately clear, and though for space's sake we cannot afford to make it fully clear, we can at least mention the fact that there is little consensus as to the accuracy of Kojève's reading of the *Phenomenology*, and thus that, insofar as O'Brien's interpretation of the LPH depends on Kojéve's allegedly dubitable interpretation, it is subject to potentially fatal criticisms that warrant a qualification to the claim we are trying here. But consider the lack of consensus. Some have representatively dismissed Kojève's reading of the *Phenomenology* as "incredibly eccentric"[46] and, though "broadly justified," "seriously incomplete."[47] But it is P. T. Grier

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44. Harris says that O'Brien's analysis "worked . . . out magnificently," "correctly," and "convincingly" (237).

45. See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 2d ed., trans. J. H. Nichols, Jr. (Paris: Gallimard, 1947; reprint, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

46. Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 21.

47. Michael Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 248–249. See also Tom Rockmore, *Before & After Hegel* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993),

who has more comprehensively called into question Kojève's reading, noting that, as Kojève also indicated, his interpretation of the *Phenomenology*, and particularly the master-slave dialectic, has no basis in the text itself, but rather that it came from and is based upon the work of Kojève's fellow Russian *émigré* scholar Alexandre Koyré, who based his reading of the *Phenomenology* upon some newly found early writings of Hegel's philosophy of nature.[48] We cannot afford to look any closer into the issue, but the point we take as sufficiently established. If O'Brien bases, even in part, his interpretation of the LPH on Kojève's dubitable reading of the *Phenomenology*'s master-slave dialectic, which may not be actually based on the text but rather on Koyré's interpretation of the *Phenemenology* in light of newly found writings of Hegel's earliest thoughts on the philosophy of nature, then we see more clearly on what unstable ground much of O'Brien's commentary stands. In the end, we have at least *prima facie* reason to qualify the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work.[49]

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3. He echoes that Kojève "errs in taking a part [of Hegel] for the whole." McCarney points out the incompleteness of Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, calling it "a kind of heroic generalisation" of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, and so concludes that "whatever brilliant insights or transforming perspectives [Kojève] may provide, they are unlikely to come with a panoply of textual references" (92).

48. See P. T. Grier, "The End of History and the Return of History" in J. Stewart (ed.) *Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), passim. One may recall the similarity between a new interpretation of Hegel based on recently found, early writings, and that new interpretation of Marx offered by certain Marxist historians who made much of newly found early writings of Marx.

49. If the reader is interested to give nuance to the relationship between O'Brien, Kojève, Koyré, et al., consult the following works: Grier; Kojève, 43–70; and O'Brien, 3, 8–9, 53, 57, 87, 90–91, 98–99, 105, 122. For a more thorough assessment of O'Brien's debt to Kojève, see Zuckert, 410; Gardiner, 55–56; Harris, 428; Stanley Rosen, review of *Hegel on Reason and History*, by G. D. O'Brien, *The American Political Science Review* (September 1977), 1149); and Georg G. Iggers, review of *Hegel on Reason and History*, by G. D. O'Brien, *American Historical Review* (October 1976): 844.

Joseph McCarney, Hegel on History

After Wilkins and O'Brien, little serious, comprehensive work had been done by a single scholar in the area of Hegel's philosophy of history. With the publication of Joseph McCarney's *Hegel on History*, all that changed.[50] McCarney, like his predecessors, focuses his inquiry mainly on the Introduction to the LPH, though, unlike his predecessors, he makes a reasonable and more marked attempt to incorporate the lengthy world-historical survey inasmuch as it is useful to incarnate, so to speak, some of the abstractions made in the Introduction. Reasonable also is the structure of McCarney's inquiry: In the first part, he lays the philosophical foundations of Hegel's philosophy of history by defining and giving substance to the main metaphysical and historical concepts and ideas in the Introduction to the LPH; in the second part, the actual text of the LPH takes a more organizing and procedural lead, which McCarney follows; and between the two parts is an essay that attempts briefly to bridge the conceptual gap between the two parts. As McCarney hopes, the whole structure of the book reflects more clearly what he sees as the formal unity of the LPH. Ultimately, McCarney's aim is to illuminate not only the basic ideas and concepts of the LPH but also those things which Hegel had to presuppose in order to unfold his philosophy of history in the LPH.[51] To accomplish this, McCarney says that he must without question go outside the LPH to Hegel's other works.[52] In other words, the LPH is not an entirely self-contained work and a reader who

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50. Because this work is relatively recent, there has been little scholarly, peer-reviewed criticism of it. See Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 336. There he briefly mentions the work, among other books, as a good starting point for those interested in Hegel's philosophy of history.

51. McCarney, 6. He aims also to justify these presuppositions. Whether or not he is successful in doing so is an inquiry for another paper.

52. Ibid., 19.

wishes to understand even the basics of the LPH must go outside it to do so. While this admission on the part of McCarney could suffice for our purposes, a glance at the content of his work will substantiate the need to qualify the claim at hand.

A survey of McCarney's ideas sufficiently long for our purposes would run something like this. In part one, McCarney enlists the basic terms that Hegel regularly uses in the LPH that, if left undefined, McCarney thinks, will at best confuse and at worst mislead the reader. This list includes terms like "reason," "the Idea," "God," "concept," and "Spirit"—terms which one may take to mean one thing when Hegel meant something different or, as McCarney thinks, even completely opposite. Therefore, to explain the development of self-consciousness, McCarney quotes long, dense passages from the *Phenomenology*;[53] to explain the unity of infinite and finite in the divine and human nature, McCarney references Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*;[54] to show the transition from the concept of Spirit to that of Nature, he goes to Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*;[55] to define Hegel's "concept," it is back to the *Phenomenology*;[56] and to plump the emaciated concept of *Geist* in the LPH, McCarney returns to the *Encyclopaedia*, where *Geist* is given nourished consideration.[57] McCarney even later shows how important it is to understand Kant, and Hegel's criticisms of him, in order to understand Hegel's thoughts

53. Ibid., 26–32.

54. Ibid., 46–47.

55. Ibid., 49–50.

56. Ibid., 53.

57. Ibid., 62–64.

on historical teleology[58] and related notions like the cunning of reason[59] and the ethical life.[60]

Almost the entire book follows this pattern of identifying concepts, defining them fully using as much other work of Hegel as is needed, then returning to the LPH with a fuller understanding of its conceptual framework. The result is new-found clarity and orderliness in the LPH, and while this result is great for the LPH reader, it also proves my point about the necessity of going outside the LPH in order to make it understandable. As for McCarney, he sees himself as simply taking seriously Hegel's own prefatory comments to his lectures, which in effect state that all along more information than the LPH provides has been needed to understand the LPH.[61] McCarney thus concludes that, apparently, "some vital preliminaries to the action of the *Introduction* have already taken place off-stage."[62] This *prima facie* justifies McCarney in wandering "off-stage."

McCarney's method is, however, a Faustian bargain: for though McCarney's use of the *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopaedia*, etc. helps to clarify some of the abstruse concepts that are presupposed in the LPH, it also necessarily readmits, as McCarney is aware, at least one of the most intractable and age-old debates in Hegel interpretation, namely, does Hegel see the substance of Reason as ruling over the world as an immanent

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58. Ibid., 127–129. The relevant criticisms of Kant are contained in the *Encyclopaedia*.

59. Ibid., 133. Here McCarney goes to the *Logic*.

60. Ibid., 159. 'Ethical life' translates Hegel's term *Sittlichkeit*.

61. Thus Hegel says of the LPH: "I have no text book on which to base my lectures; but in my 'Elements of the Philosophy of Right' . . . I have already defined the concept of world history proper, as well as the principles or periods into which its study can be divided. This work should enable you to gain at least an abstract knowledge of those moments of world history with which we shall be concerned here" (Nisbet, 11). Cf. also McCarney, 6.

62. McCarney, 26.

or transcendent power?[63] This question can be reframed as construing this power as deity: is God[64] an autonomous being independent of nature that rules over the historical realm? This reading would be something closer to traditional theism. Or is God immanent in nature, distinct, perhaps, but not separate from the world in which we live? Such a notion of deity is noticeably pantheistic. McCarney accepts this immanent reading, and most of the book is spent vindicating that reading, though he admits, at least on one occasion,[65] that the transcendent reading appears more correct than the immanent one. That this debate has been around since the first generation of Hegel interpreters and shows no signs of abating in our own time, and that both sides of the debate have been able to corroborate their reading with references to the Hegel corpus shows, at the very least, that the navigability of this debate is deeply textual. But the problem that this debate brings to the LPH is further compounded upon consideration of the situation in which Hegel found himself in Berlin and how this may have affected his public teaching. As McCarney contends, Hegel might have been intentionally ambiguous on this issue to avoid Berlin censorship. The reason for this behavior is clear and not incidentally favors McCarney's immanent reading: for Hegel to teach an arrant immanentism would be to lay himself open to the charge of pantheism, a view quite in conflict with traditional Christian theism, and to invite the censorship of the Berlin powers that be. But if Hegel believed in the

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63. Ibid., 39–48, passim. Says McCarney: "No progress can be made in explicating that philosophy [of history] without declaring, and attempting to vindicate, where one stands on the issues at stake in [the debate between immanent and transcendent readings]. This is a nettle that simply has to be grasped" (40). If he is right, this debate captures in a snapshot the very delicate nature of Hegel interpretation, particularly as regards his LPH.

64. Whether Hegel meant "God" in any traditional sense of the term is debated heavily. See McCarney, 40.

65. See ibid., 124–126.

traditional theistic notion of a transcendent deity, the apparent ambiguity becomes, as McCarney reasons, inexplicable.[66] This attempt to historicize Hegel is commendable[67] but, of course, indecisive in the final analysis. Nonetheless, it demonstrates well the thorniness of Hegel interpretation. Whether, in the end, McCarney is right to incorporate these nettling issues into his account of the LPH is not our business here; we are concerned only to show that LPH commentators again and again feel compelled to have recourse to works other than the LPH for explanatory purposes. We can now take it as established that McCarney, perhaps more than most LPH interpreters, recognizes this.

Miscellaneous Works on the LPH

We have looked at three of the leading commentaries and interpretations on the LPH and concluded confidently that there is an established pattern of venturing outside the LPH to the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic*, the *Encyclopaedia*, and other works in order to render intelligible the claims and arguments in the LPH.[68] A quick glance at Hegel scholarship that does not focus exclusively on the LPH will show just the same thing.

Consider, for example, the following. In one essay, Frederick Beiser comments on the importance of history and historicism for Hegel's philosophy, noting further that Hegel's historical methodology is treated at length only in the LPH.[69] Beiser argues,

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66. Ibid., 42–44.

67. In fact, Beiser sees the need to individuate Hegel historically as one of the most pressing needs of current Hegel scholarship. See *Hegel*, 5.

68. Other LPH commentaries and interpretations were found and consulted but, in the end, not commented upon in this thesis, if only because they appeared somewhat narrower in scope and never appeared to gain any scholarly currency. E.g., see R. J. Siebert, *Hegel's Philosophy of History: Theological, Humanistic, and Scientific Elements* (Lewiston, Edwin Mellen: 1979); and William A. Behun, *The Historical Pivot: Philosophy of History in Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin* (Zion: Triad Press, 2006).

69. "Hegel's Historicism," in F. C. Beiser (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 270–300.

however, that to understand that method it is necessary to look at texts beside the LPH. As for Beiser, he goes to the *Phenomenology*.[70] In his important volume, Walter Kauffmann claims that in general a knowledge of Hegel's overall system and in specific a knowledge of Hegel's philosophy of aesthetics and of religion are needed to properly contextualize the LPH and to dispel the "many misconceptions about his philosophy of history and of the state."[71] In his seminal comprehensive volume on Hegel, J. N. Findlay makes the LPH unquestionably dependent on Hegel's philosophy of right, being particularly subservient to Hegel's political theory of the state.[72] In his introductory essay to the Nisbet translation of the Hoffmeister text of the LPH, Duncan Forbes also uses the *Philosophy of Right* to bolster his analysis of Hegel's dialectical movement from original history to philosophical history.[73] Finally, in Jean Hyppolite's *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*, though the subject at hand is ostensibly Hegel's philosophy of history, the actual text is only rarely cited and instead treated almost strictly through the *Phenomenology* or, in rare cases, the *Philosophy of Right* and Hegel's early theological

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70. Beiser, *Hegel's Historicism*, 284. Another example from Beiser's article: in discerning what type of teleology Hegel is dealing with in the LPH, Beiser warns that "Hegel's language here can be extremely misleading. If, however, we consider Hegel's remarks *in the light of his other works*, it becomes clear that the kind of teleology in question is not that commonplace in the eighteenth century" (288–289, emphasis mine). If one had been aware of Hegel's commitment to the Aristotelian dictum that universals only exist *in re*, made explicit in Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*, then Hegel's musings on the teleology of *Geist* in the LPH would not have been as confusing.

71. *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), 270. Kaufmann also emphasizes Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy as a high point of Hegel's philosophy in general (275).

72. *Hegel: A Re-examination* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), 328–333. Findlay says specifically: "This Philosophy of History is no independent part of the system, which can be studied in isolation" (238).

73. "Introduction" in Nisbet, vii–xxxv. Of the LPH, Forbes says: "it is liable to be used as a substitute rather than an introduction [to Hegel], especially as a substitute for the *Philosophy of Right*, and one suspects that much of the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Hegel has been due to this" (vii).

writings.[74] In his book *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel*, Thomas Lewis is concerned that ignorance of critical distinctions made only outside the LPH will lead uninformed readers of the LPH to think that its ideas are irrational or unjust.[75]

Though the list could go on, the point can be taken as established: just as those commentators whose work focuses comprehensively and strictly on the LPH are routinely compelled to explain the arcane concepts and ideas of the LPH with reference to other works, so also do those scholars whose work has narrower scope or does not focus strictly on the LPH. All of this is indicative of the fact that the LPH is not a self-contained work, and to the extent that it is not so, it is not an accessible work. We look now to the still broader aspect of wider Hegel scholarship in hopes of finding better points of entrée than the LPH so as to warrant a qualification for the claim in question.

The Criterion of Navigability: Wider Hegel scholarship

As was said, this final aspect under consideration is broader than that of the variegated text of the LPH itself and of the LPH's secondary literature. In the first case, we saw how the heterogeneity of the various versions of the LPH text detracted from its authenticity as we defined it as a criterion of accessibility. In the second case, we noted the tendency in the secondary literature of the LPH to require the help of works other than the LPH in order to explain basic concepts and ideas in the LPH, thereby diminishing its self-containedness as we defined it as a criterion of accessibility. In this

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74. *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996). His use of the *Phenomenology* can be seen throughout the work. For examples of his use of the *Philosophy of Right*, cf. 56–70, passim; and of Hegel's youthful writings, cf. 20–25.

75. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2005). Says Lewis: "It is essential to distinguish Hegel's claim about the rationality of the ways of life of particular nations—a claim we might reject—from his analysis of individuals' relations to these ways of life" (146).

last aspect, we will glance at the greater corpus of Hegel scholarship just far enough to demonstrate some of the basic contours of current Hegel scholarship. What we will find is that Hegel presents one of the most formidable interpretive challenges in philosophy, and therefore lack of consensus characterizes Hegel scholarship. For an incoming Hegel student, this challenge can be (and perhaps should be) bewildering and mystifying, making it difficult to navigate any further. For our purposes, note here that navigability is closely related to accessibility, and so we can construe the problem thus: one of the first tasks to undertake after making an entrance into a philosopher's thought is to orient oneself and proceed. Given Hegel's labyrinthine thought, the choice of entrance is crucial. To choose a substandard entrance is to exacerbate the task of subsequently orienting oneself. To choose a better entrance, however, quite naturally is to make the task of navigating thereafter somewhat easier, even if the waters, so to speak, are still quite tumultuous. Thus in looking at this third and final aspect, that of the greater corpus of secondary literature on Hegel, we will find that the lack of interpretive consensus creates a situation in which entering Hegel's thought through the LPH may leave the reader so disoriented that finding one's bearings becomes a most difficult task, thereby making it at the very least reasonable to qualify the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work. To make the present task more manageable, we must limit ourselves to just one aspect of current Hegel scholarship: Hegel's metaphysics.

Hegel's metaphysics is arguably the most controversial part of his philosophy. Virtually no consensus exists on what exactly he means with the stock metaphysical phrases he regularly uses throughout his corpus. Some sort of comprehensive survey of the varying interpretations is, perhaps for anyone, too grand an undertaking, but

especially so for our purposes, so, given the limited space we have here, we will instead limit ourselves to just three broad interpretations: the historical-traditional metaphysical reading, the non-metaphysical reading, and, quite fittingly, a reading which accepts and denies differing tenets in the previous two.

First, the historical-traditional metaphysical reading: This view was favored among Hegel's earliest interpreters.[76] For these, Hegel seemed to have posited, in a pre-critical, dogmatic, even Leibnizian-Wolffian manner, a thoroughly speculative metaphysics, one which must be jettisoned if Hegel is to be of any use. Thus Dilthey, for example, tries to free Hegel's insight into the philosophy of history from those seemingly dubious metaphysical claims about "Reason governing history" or "the Idea advancing to infinite antithesis."[77] Twentieth-century examples of this reading also exist, which, having dispensed with Hegel's speculative metaphysics, either retain some appealing aspect of his system or reject Hegel with varying degrees of finality. An example of the former would be Benedetto Croce, who wished to preserve the dialectic and its gifts while refuting "all panlogism and every speculative construction."[78] An example of the latter would be Karl Popper, who declared that the same dialectic has "lost in our day together with Hegelianism any significance" and is nothing "more than a clever joke . . . revealing the weakness of . . . speculations."[79] Examples of both sorts could be

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76. Frederick Beiser, "Introduction: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics" in F. C. Beiser (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2. He names Dilthey, Haym, Haering, Rosenkranz, and Kroner among such early interpreters.

77. See Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 538. These quotes are paraphrased from Sibree, 9, 26.

78. Benedetto Croce, *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel* (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 203.

79. Karl Popper, "What is Dialectic?" *Mind* (October 1940): 426.

multiplied, for most in the Marxist and Anglo-American analytic tradition who have bothered with Hegel at all have come to similar conclusions regarding him.[80]

Second, the non-metaphysical reading: this view rejects the historical-traditional metaphysical reading of Hegel as lacking in textual support and offers in its stead a reading that leaves Hegel with a much more modest metaphysical program, i.e., one with noticeably fewer metaphysical commitments. Though embryonic forms of this reading can be found in earlier Hegel interpretations, it was posited most succinctly and seminally by Klaus Hartmann.[81] For him, Hegel was caught up in the task of giving the Real its determination in a way that was rationally satisfactory.[82] From the text of the *Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia*, Hartmann finds no trace of dogmatic metaphysics in Hegel but rather identifies Hegel's philosophy with a theory of categories, where these categories determine the way in which reality is understood.[83] Thus reason tries to give an account of its categories in an effort to satisfy itself on its own immanent, reflective terms. If it is not satisfied, a process of categorial reconstruction occurs until reason is satisfied.[84] Recently, this view has gained marked currency, and several of Hartmann's students have introduced this reading to a new generation of Hegel scholarship. Two of these students—H. T. Engelhardt, Jr. and Terry Pinkard—have played particularly prominent

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80. In this context, see Allen W. Wood, "Hegel and Marxism" in F. C. Beiser (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 415. He mentions J.-P. Sartre and T. Adorno among twentieth-century Marxists. See also Peter Hylton, "Hegel and Analytic Philosophy" in F. C. Beiser (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 447. He mentions B. Russell and G. E. Moore among those early analytic philosophers.

81. Hartmann's most seminal essay is "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View" in A. MacIntyre (ed.) *Hegel* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972): 101–124.

82. Hartmann, 103.

83. Ibid., 104.

84. Ibid., 117.

roles, both in clarifying Hartmann's original ideas as well as exploring their implications. Thus, says Englehardt, Hartmann was trying to avoid the historical-traditional view of Hegel's metaphysics as well as the type of non-metaphysical reading where Hegel was just the propagator of a new ironist tradition in Western philosophy (à la Rorty). Taking the *via media*, Hartmann read Hegel's metaphysics as "the immanent rationale of a categorial hermeneutic."[85] Pinkard, too, retained much of the influence of Hartmann's non-metaphysical reading, publishing one work on Hegel's dialectic.[86] Robert Pippin, though not a student of Hartmann, showed the influence of a non-metaphysical reading in his influential *Hegel's Idealism*.[87] In it, Pippin supports a form of a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel, though one that is not a theory of categories. Instead, Pippin sees Hegel as a proponent of a specific kind of idealism that is neither speculative nor transcendental but rather a variation on the Kantian theme of the transcendental unity of apperception.[88] The relationship between Kant and Hegel is centerstage, then, for Pippin, whose task is to reconcile the facts, as Pippin posits them, that Hegel accepted Kant's strictures on metaphysics, that Hegel denied Kant's epistemological concept-intuition dualism, and that Hegel could still make a non-dogmatic claim to know the Absolute.[89] Whether or not Pippin is successful in reconciling these facts is not our business here, but at any rate

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85. H. T. Engelhardt, Jr., "Introduction" in H. T. Englehardt and T. Pinkard (eds.) *Hegel Reconsidered: Beyond Metaphysics and the Authoritarian State* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994): 1.

86. *Hegel's Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

87. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

88. Ibid., 6. Hence the subtitle *The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*.

89. Ibid., 9–10.

Pippin's work is important for its influence on other non-metaphysical interpreters such as Pinkard, who in one book notes Pippin as a tonic influence in his grasp of Hegel.[90]

Some, however, found even these variations on the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel to be ultimately unsatisfactory. Representing the third view of Hegel's metaphysics is Frederick Beiser. Like Pippin and others, Beiser tries to navigate between the Scylla of the traditional-historical approach that views Hegel as the best example of everything wrong with speculative metaphysics and the Charybdis of that approach that strips Hegel of all metaphysical content, leaving only a pith that is Marxist, positivistic, humanistic, neo-Kantian, social epistemological, or categorical-analytical.[91] But Beiser's results are noticeably different from Pippin and others. A proper understanding of Hegel's metaphysics, Beiser explains, must be seen in the historical context not only of Kant's philosophy but also of Fichte's and Schelling's, lest Hegel, forever philosophizing about the Absolute, be interpreted as being merely dogmatic. For Beiser, Hegel neither capitulated completely to Kant's limitations nor accepted Fichte's or Schelling's responses to Kant uncreatively; instead, Hegel modified Schelling's definition of the Absolute to include not only that which exists in and of itself but also "the *whole* of substance *and* its modes, as the *unity* of the infinite *and* the finite."[92] And a system in which both the one

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90. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 349. In fact, Pinkard says that much of what he put forth in *Hegel's Dialectic* he has retooled, particularly with reference to Hegel's historical context.

91. Beiser, "Introduction," 2. Cf. also Beiser, *Hegel*, 55–56. Beiser considers Pippin's work to be neo-Kantian. For Beiser's more thorough critique of these 'deflationary' readings, as he calls them, see Frederick Beiser, "Hegel, A Non-metaphysician? A Polemic," review of *Hegel Reconsidered: Beyond Metaphysics and the Authoritarian State*, by H. T. Englehardt, Jr. and T. Pinkard (eds.), *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* (Autumn/Winter 1995): 1–13.

92. Beiser, "Introduction," 7.

substance and its modes are unified is, for Hegel, a monistic naturalism.[93] But Hegel's naturalism, unlike the mechanistic naturalism of Spinoza, views the natural world as organicist, vitalistic, and as necessitating the reintroduction of teleology. Now for Kant, to know rationally that nature is an organism is ruled out in his third *Critique*, but for Hegel, it is not. This not only shows one difference between Kant and Hegel, but it also makes clear what Hegel's critical task is, namely, to show that he can have rational knowledge of the Absolute, that nature is an organism. The attempts to show this by Fichte and Schelling Hegel rejects, and his last recourse, says Beiser, is also his most original: the dialectic. The dialectic is meant to "show the possibility, indeed the necessity, of a strictly immanent metaphysics based upon experience alone."[94]

Not only is Beiser's foregoing account at least as explanatory, if not more so, than the other possibilities; it is also an impressive demonstration of two things. One, it demonstrates the need to historicize Hegel so as to individuate him among his German idealist contemporaries. Two, it demonstrates how failure to historicize and individuate Hegel can negatively affect one's interpretation of Hegel. And if the issue of Hegel's metaphysics is at all representative of the heterogeneity of interpretation that typifies Hegel scholarship, then what it means to access Hegel, and what role the LPH might play in accessing him, surely requires re-evaluation. To claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work seems more problematic now than ever. A qualification is in order.[95]

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93. Thus explaining his emphasis on his *Naturphilosophie*.

94. Ibid., 21.

95. A qualification is in order indeed, I think, when one more deeply considers also Hegel's German idealist milieu. For quite some time and especially among Anglo-American philosophers, German idealism was seen as just the philosophies of Kant and the three biggest names in German philosophy after him: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Such an emaciated view of German idealism was, of course, of no use in interpreting Hegel. But worse, a common view of post-Kantian philosophers, and especially of Hegel, held

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I set out to evaluate the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work. My thesis is that the claim is in need of serious qualifying. I argued this, first, by setting up three basic criteria of accessibility—authenticity, self-containedness, and navigability—and, second, by showing how the LPH fails in some measure to meet each of those criteria. I did this mainly by considering the text of the LPH itself, the secondary literature on the LPH, and the wider corpus of Hegel scholarship.

With respect to the text itself, we discovered that its long and variegated career, both in its German and English editions, is reason enough to doubt how representative of Hegel's thought the LPH truly is. Though Hegel's lectures include a relatively abstract Introduction and a lengthy world-historical survey from ancient China to modern Christendom, often translators would only translate the Introduction. Moreover, subsequent editions of the Introduction took an increasingly text-critical approach that rendered the earlier, but still widely-circulated, editions of the Introduction inferior, while also exposing their organizational and interpretive flaws.

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that they had, in one way or another, abandoned Kant's critical philosophy and returned to pre-critical, dogmatic speculative metaphysics. It is this reductionistic, withered view of German idealism, common in Anglo-American circles, that has been redressed by the burgeoning, recent literature in English. One such example is Frederick Beiser's *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), in which he retraces the reception of Kant's philosophy up to Fichte, a grasp of which sets in relief the rising tensions of the Enlightenment and provides a framework in which the German idealists can be seen, not as reverting to pre-critical dogmatism, but as responding to those tensions. The advent of such seminal scholarship leads one to wonder how clear the picture of Hegel has been that English-speaking students have been looking at. If just Beiser's account shows anything of the clarity and depth that can be had as a result of situating Hegel in his historical context, then a re-examination of how best to navigate Hegel's philosophy may be warranted; and if so, then we have a *prima facie* reason to believe that the claim on trial needs qualifying. For other examples of the recent English language literature, consult Karl Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Deiter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

With respect to the secondary literature, we looked deep into three comprehensive interpretations of Hegel's LPH—Wilkins', O'Brien's, and McCarney's—as well as some other secondary treatments of the LPH. In doing so, we discovered a pattern among these commentaries, namely, the need to go outside the LPH to other works by Hegel or others in order to understand even some of the basic content of the LPH. This pattern militates against the self-containedness of the LPH and so it fails in some measure to meet that criterion of accessibility, at least enough to warrant a qualification of the claim that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work.

Lastly, with respect to the wider corpus of Hegel scholarship, we looked at just one specific issue—Hegel's metaphysics—just long enough to see whether, after reading the LPH, a student would be more oriented or disoriented in continuing his or her study of Hegel. Once we noted the variety of interpretations of Hegel's metaphysics, we concluded that the LPH fails to meet satisfactorily this criterion of navigability. All together, the verdict is that the LPH fails to meet all three criteria, and the claim is sentenced to thorough qualification.

But what would this qualification look like? After all, if not the LPH, what is Hegel's most accessible work, especially considering that most scholars regularly comment on Hegel's strange vocabulary and dense construction? Unfortunately, it is not the province of this paper to answer that question. It may be the LPH; it may not be. But we have shown that the unqualified claim that the LPH is, in fact, Hegel's most accessible work is problematic three times over. That said, I suggest that the qualification be articulated as in a manner that corresponds to my criteria of accessibility.

Now one may object that perhaps all of this has been a little overwrought. Could not it have been, merely and still reasonably, asserted that such a claim is in need of some qualification? Did we really need all this research to persuade those who persist in claiming that the LPH is Hegel's most accessible work that they are wrong? This objection is not really an objection, but perhaps an evaluation of the work I have here done, namely, that it has proved too little. To demonstrate that the LPH is not Hegel's most accessible work by, for example, referencing the various and differing interpretations found in LPH commentaries does nothing more than explain the purpose of commentaries: to use other texts to illuminate a given text. I take this objector-cum-evaluator's point. Perhaps I have proved only a little, but this is not an objection to my conclusion. That the LPH is regularly extolled as Hegel's most accessible work, to me, seems to have reached mythic proportions, and to demythologize the myth by adding even some minor qualifications will, I hope, redress the unqualified, misleading claim.

Another objection that might be put forward here is that, according to the criteria of accessibility put in place above, most philosophical works from all Western philosophical history would be rendered inaccessible. Is it possible that such criteria, though admittedly self-styled, are a little too stringent and demanding and that perhaps they ought to be relaxed a little? Well, I am not at all inclined to believe that my criteria render most Western philosophical works inaccessible, though this objection could only be substantiated with individual studies. Perhaps the criteria need relaxing just a little, but not too much, because they seem, at least to me at any rate, intuitively apt, and I cannot imagine how they could be retooled without losing that intuitiveness. Unfortunately, such methodological concerns as accessing a thinker's thought have been given little treatment

in scholarly circles. If this lacuna were to be redressed and criteria of accessibility given greater nuance, then this objection, viz., that my criteria are somehow too demanding, might gain force. But even if the objection does gain force, I am inclined to believe that my main point will still stand. After all, I have not been interested to show to what degree the LPH failed to meet my criteria (for this would indeed require nuance), but rather only that it did and that therefore the claim needed qualification. Whether my criteria are impregnable to nuanced objections matters little. So long as they remain somewhat intuitive, my argument should still stand.

It seems that the most apt conclusion overall would be to be mystified at how difficult it is to access Hegel at all. If my work has accomplished anything, hopefully it will serve to teach just this. Perhaps by one generation of Hegel scholarship showing the next one how difficult it is to access Hegel, then that next generation will know more exactly what it is that they are getting into when approaching Hegel and his LPH. And if they know that sufficiently, we, having set the bar at what may seem at times an unreachable height, may have, at least in part, guaranteed the quality of the Hegel scholarship of the next generation.

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