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## Hegel's Teleology of World Religions and the Disanalogy of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion

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One of the trademarks of Hegel's philosophy is its claim to systematicity. Hegel never tires of informing his readers and auditors that for philosophy to be a rigorous science it must be a system. He regularly engages in polemics against different forms of thinking that he regards as unphilosophical because they do not display the proper systematic characteristic that he regards as essential: "A philosophizing *without system* cannot be scientific at all; apart from the fact that philosophizing of this kind expresses on its own account a more subjective disposition, it is contingent with regard to its content. A content has its justification only as a moment of the whole, outside of which it is only an unfounded presupposition or a subjective certainty."<sup>1</sup>

Hegel's basic intuition in this regard can be summed up in the famous slogan from the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "The truth is the whole."<sup>2</sup> The guiding insight here is that a science is not merely an aggregate of facts put together in a convenient manner, but rather each individual part has a necessary relation to all the other parts. Thus, it has a specific and necessary place in the system of parts as a whole. From this it follows that one cannot understand the nature of the individual part without having some sense of its role vis-à-vis the other parts. In anatomy, one cannot understand the nature and function of certain organs without understanding their relation to other organs and systems of the body. It would be impossible to understand the brain without understanding the spinal chord, or the heart without understanding the circulatory system. While these empirical relations are not necessary in Hegel's special sense, they can be seen as an analogy that captures his basic intuition.

<sup>1</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of Logic, Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), § 14 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke* (Jubiläumsausgabe), ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1928-41), vol. 8, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1977, p. 11 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8, 24. Translation slightly modified.

For Hegel, this systematic structure is, however, not static. He explains, "The science of [sc. the Absolute] is essentially a *system*, since what is *concretely* true is so only in its inward self-unfolding and in taking and holding itself together in unity, i.e., as *totality*."<sup>3</sup> In science the concepts organically develop into one another in a necessary manner that Hegel wishes to trace. This development follows the rules of Hegel's well-known dialectic. This includes his account of the different world religions, which collectively develop the concept of the divine. Given this, he claims, "Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle that closes upon itself."<sup>4</sup> Philosophy represents a closed system that exhausts its subject matter. If anything is left out, then there would be something essential missing in the account it gives of the particular elements. Philosophy must thus include an account of everything.

Given Hegel's clear methodological statements about the systematic nature of his philosophy, it is odd that his philosophy of religion is usually treated either in a piecemeal fashion or in abstraction from the other parts of his thought. It is rarely understood in relation to, for example, his philosophy of history or his aesthetics, although there is significant overlap in the themes that are treated. In order to appreciate the place and role of Hegel's philosophy of religion, one must see it in the context of his overall philosophy. For this reason we must here at the outset gain an appreciation for the structure and nature of Hegel's philosophical system.

### Section 1

The large question of the nature and shape of Hegel's system is of course a matter of considerable academic debate. It is impossible in this context to enter into a detailed discussion of every aspect of this. For the purposes of the present study, it is merely important to establish in a preliminary way a model of the system in order that the role of his philosophy of religion becomes clear.

The question is where in Hegel's corpus can we find the overview or structure of his system at the macrolevel? In which of his works is this most clearly stated? Hegel wrote four main books in his lifetime: the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807),<sup>5</sup> the *Science of Logic*, in three volumes (1812,

1813, 1816),<sup>6</sup> the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817),<sup>7</sup> and the *Philosophy of Right* (1821).<sup>8</sup> What is the relationship of these works with respect to the system as a whole? The role of the *Phenomenology* has traditionally been particularly problematic with the endless debates about its status as the entrance or beginning of the system or as the first part of a system. There is a large specialized secondary literature on this topic, and for this reason this question must be more or less put aside in this context. In any case, it is clear that both the *Science of Logic* and the *Philosophy of Right* are specialized studies. In other words, they treat respectively the subject matter of logic and social-political philosophy. Since they are specialized studies they cannot provide the systematic overview that we are seeking.

Given these considerations, the only text that is left is the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. I wish to argue that this text is the clearest systematic overview of Hegel's philosophy. There are a number of things that speak for this claim. First and foremost, the title itself as an "encyclopedia" indicates that the work is intended to provide an exhaustive account of human knowing. Second, the organization and content of the work clearly evidence that this text is intended to contain not a specialized study of a particular philosophical field, but rather an overview of all the "philosophical sciences." Thus it is divided into three main parts: the logic, the philosophy of nature and finally the philosophy of spirit, each of which has further subdivisions reflecting the individual fields.

The other parts of Hegel's published corpus can be seen as elaborations of the basic framework set forth in the *Encyclopedia*. Hegel had this systematic structure in mind from a fairly early period as is evidenced by the so-called *Jenaer Systementwürfe* or what is also known as the *Realphilosophie*,<sup>9</sup> that is, drafts of a philosophical system that he worked on

<sup>6</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols. 1-3. (Nürnberg: Johann Leonard Schrag, 1812, 1813, 1816). Hegel, *Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (Heidelberg: August Oigwäld's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1817).

<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1821).

<sup>8</sup> These works are as follows in German: *Jenaer Systementwürfe I-III*, vols. 6-8 in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968ff). The English translations are as follows: G. W. F. Hegel, *The Jena System*, 1804-5. *Logic and Metaphysics*, ed. John W. Burdidge and George di Giovanni (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); *The Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* (1805-6) in *Hegel and the Human Spirit*, trans. Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983); *First Philosophy of Spirit* in G. W. F. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, ed. and trans. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, § 14 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8, 60.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, § 15 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8, 61.

<sup>5</sup> Hegel, *System der Wissenschaft, Erster Theil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg and Würzburg: Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807).

during his years in Jena prior to writing the *Phenomenology*. The overall outlines of the system that appear in these drafts bear a general similarity to the *Encyclopaedia*.

Moreover, the two main works that Hegel published prior to the *Encyclopaedia*, namely, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* can already be seen to fit into the organizational plan of the *Encyclopaedia*.

(1) Specifically, the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ("Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness" and "Reason") are an elaboration of the second part of the "Subjective Spirit" section of the third part of the *Encyclopaedia*.<sup>10</sup> This section is explicitly named "Phenomenology of Spirit."<sup>11</sup> (2) The *Science of Logic* is obviously a more detailed account of the first part of the *Encyclopaedia*, which is dedicated to the first philosophical science, i.e., logic.<sup>12</sup> (3) Similarly the *Philosophy of Right* is an obvious elaboration of the "Objective Spirit" section of the third part of the *Encyclopaedia*.<sup>13</sup> Hegel writes directly in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*: "This textbook is a more extensive, and in particular a more systematic, exposition of the same basic concepts which, in relation to this part of philosophy, are already contained in a previous work designed to accompany my lectures, namely, my *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Heidelberg 1817)."<sup>14</sup> [Graphic 1: Hegel's System: The Published Works]

Although the original text of the *Encyclopaedia* was published in 1817, Hegel continued to work on this material, and a decade later, in 1827, he published an augmented second edition.<sup>15</sup> This second edition more than doubled the size of the work. The first edition contained 477 numbered sections or paragraphs, spanning 288 pages. As Hegel himself noted in the passage from the *Philosophy of Right* quoted just above, the *Encyclopaedia* was a textbook that he used in his lectures. Indeed, on the title page of the work itself, it reads "*Zum Gebrauch seiner Vorlesungen*." Thus, as he continued to give courses based on this text, he continued to develop his thought with new illustrations and analyses. The second edition con-

<sup>10</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace, A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), § 413-439 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 255-293. Here I modify the translation of "Geist" from *Philosophy of Mind* to "Spirit."

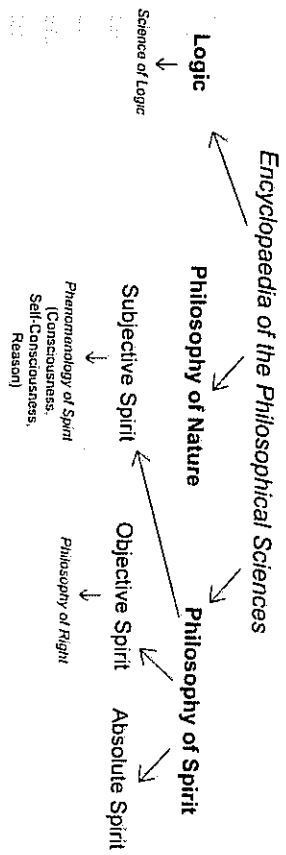
<sup>11</sup> Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic / Hegel, Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §§ 483-551 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 382-445. Here I modify the translation of "Geist" from *Philosophy of Mind* to "Spirit."

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen Wood (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), § 1 / Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 7, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, 2nd edition (Heidelberg: August Olswald, 1827).

Graphic 1: Hegel's System: The Published Works



tained 574 sections and covered 534 pages. Finally, only three years after this in 1830 Hegel published a third edition.<sup>15</sup> This edition had the same number of sections but grew in length to exactly 600 pages. This is the only text in Hegel's corpus that he continued to rework in this manner.

When Hegel died in 1831 his students founded the "Society of the Friends of the Deceased."<sup>16</sup> The goal of this society was to produce the first complete edition of his collected works.<sup>17</sup> They published this influential edition from 1832-45 under the title, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*.<sup>18</sup> In addition to Hegel's primary texts, his students also published his lectures. They saw Hegel's lectures as an integral part of his system and indeed regarded them on a par with the published works. In this context there were four series of lectures: *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*,<sup>19</sup> *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, 3rd edition (Heidelberg: Verwaltung des Olswaldschen Verlags [C. F. Winter], 1830).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: the Path Toward Dialectical Humanism*, 1805-1841 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 204.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Wilhelm Rammund Beyer, "Wie die Hegelsche Freundesvereinsausgabe entstand," in *his Denken und Bedenken, Hegel-Aufsätze* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1977), 277-286; Carl Ludwig Michelet, *Geschichte der letzten Systeme der Philosophie in Deutschland von Kant bis Hegel*, vols. 1-2 (Berlin, 1837-38), vol. 2, 636-638; Walter Jaeschke, *Hegel Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Schule* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2003), 502-504; Lothar Wigger, "75 Jahre kritische Hegel-Ausgaben: Zu Geschichte und Stand der Hegel-Edition," *Pädagogische Rundschau* 41 (1987), 102-104.

<sup>18</sup> *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe*, vols. 1-18, ed. Ludwig Boumann, Friedrich Förster, Eduard Gans, Karl Hegel, Leopold von Henning, Heinrich Gustav Hoho, Philipp Marheineke, Karl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Rosenkranz, Johannes Schutze (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1832-45).

<sup>19</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eduard Gans, vol. 9 [1837], in *Hegel's Werke. Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, I-III, ed. Karl Ludwig Michelet, vols. 13-15 [1833-36], in *Hegel's Werke*.

*Lectures on Aesthetics*,<sup>21</sup> and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.<sup>22</sup> These were works collated from both student notes taken during Hegel's various lectures in Berlin and, where possible, from Hegel's own notes. Although these were not texts, strictly speaking, finished works from Hegel's own hand, Hegel's students believed that they nonetheless rightly belonged to his philosophical corpus.

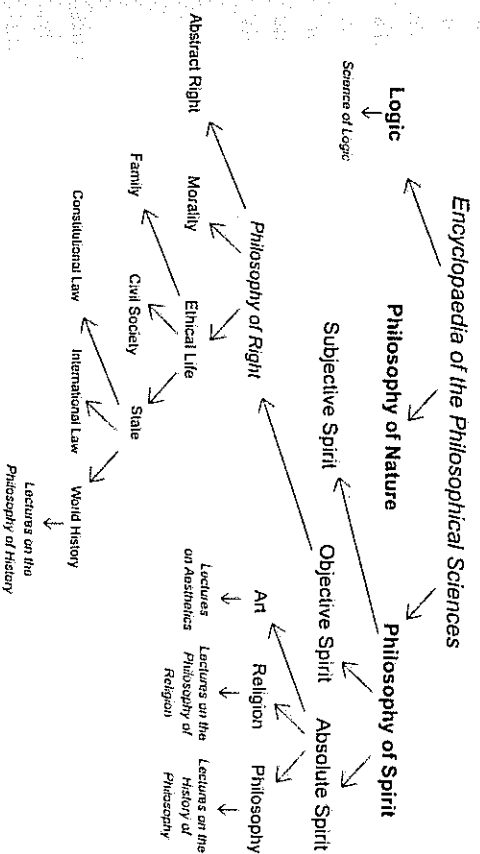
Each of these lectures can also be seen as an elaboration of some part of the *Encyclopaedia*. As is well known, the *Encyclopaedia* ends with the third and final section of the "Philosophy of Spirit," namely, "Absolute Spirit."<sup>23</sup> This culminating triad of Hegel's system consists of three parts: "Art," "Revealed Religion" and "Philosophy," which correspond to the highest forms of human knowing. The first part, "Art,"<sup>24</sup> straightforwardly corresponds to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*. The second part, "Revealed Religion,"<sup>25</sup> clearly corresponds to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Finally, the third part, "Philosophy,"<sup>26</sup> corresponds to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.

The most difficult lecture series to place is the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. However, a careful examination shows, that this corresponds to the subsection that immediately precedes the section "Absolute Spirit." In the "Objective Spirit" section, which, as noted, corresponds to the material treated in the *Philosophy of Right*, the final section is dedicated to the state. The final subsection of this section is dedicated to the development of states in history. It bears the title, "World History."<sup>27</sup> This is the section from the *Encyclopaedia* that corresponds to the Lectures on the *Philosophy of History*. [Graphic 2: Hegel's System: The Lectures]

The Society appointed three different editors to produce what amounted to a fourth edition of the *Encyclopaedia*. Each editor was responsible for one third of the text: Leopold von Henning took charge of the first part, the "Logic";<sup>28</sup> Karl Ludwig Michelet was appointed to the second

- <sup>21</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, I-III, ed. Heinrich Gustav Hotho, vols. 10.1-3 (1835-38), in *Hegel's Werke*.
- <sup>22</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, I-II, ed. Philipp Marheineke, vols. 11-12 (1832), in *Hegel's Werke*.
- <sup>23</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §§ 553-577 / Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 446-475. Here I modify the translation of "Geist" from *Philosophy of Mind* to "Spirit."
- <sup>24</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §§ 556-563 / Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 447-452.
- <sup>25</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §§ 564-571 / Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 453-476.
- <sup>26</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §§ 572-577 / Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 458-476.
- <sup>27</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, §§ 548-552 / Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 426-445.
- <sup>28</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, *Erster Theil*, *Die Logik*, ed. Leopold von Henning (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1840), vol. 6 in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke*.

Graphic 2: Hegel's System: The Lectures



part, the "Philosophy of Nature";<sup>29</sup> and Ludwig Boumann attended to the third part, the "Philosophy of Spirit."<sup>30</sup> These three texts appeared as individual volumes from 1840-45. Hegel's students saw clearly that his thought continued to develop as he constantly expanded on the basic outline that he had established in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia*. Moreover, by this time the various volumes of Hegel's lectures had already been published in the complete works edition, and this gave the editors of the *Encyclopaedia* the idea that they could also supplement their edition with lecture notes, since Hegel had also lectured on this material. Thus, in their edition they included *Zusätze* or additions to the individual paragraphs. These were snippets excerpted from notes that Hegel's students had taken to the relevant paragraphs during his lectures. Despite all of the admittedly serious philological shortcomings, Hegel's editors were thus able to include a tremendous amount of additional information about the individual points treated by Hegel. Here one can see that in the eyes of the editors the published works and the lectures did not represent two

- <sup>29</sup> Hegel, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Naturphilosophie als der Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, *Zweiter Theil*, ed. Carl Ludwig Michelet (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1842), vol. 7.1 in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke*.
- <sup>30</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, *Dritter Theil*, *Die Philosophie des Geistes*, ed. Ludwig Boumann (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1845), vol. 7.2 in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Werke*.

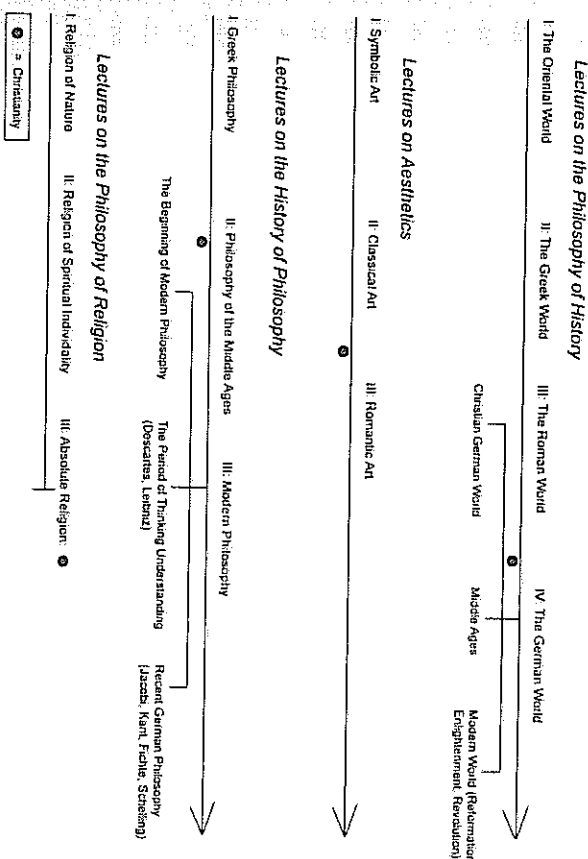
discrete categories. Rather, they had the sense of a single organic system, expressed in different media. This can be seen most clearly in the title that they gave to the second part of the *Encyclopaedia*: *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Naturphilosophie als der Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*. They thus demote Hegel's actual title to a subtitle, and put the designation "Vorlesungen" in its place. Thus, the editors conceived of Hegel's works and lectures to be a seamless whole that one could interchange and mutually supplement as one wished. It should be noted, of course, that this edition was later strongly criticized for its philological shortcomings.<sup>31</sup>

## Section 2

Why are these considerations of Hegel's *corpus* and the nature of his system relevant for a study of his philosophy of religion? Traditionally, studies on Hegel's philosophy of religion have concentrated on individual texts such as the *Early Theological Writings* or the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* or even individual sections or analyses, i.e., Hegel's account of the Incarnation or of non-Western religions, etc. The picture that invariably emerges from these studies is that the historical story that Hegel wants to tell about the development of different conceptions of the divine ends with Christianity. Since this is the final stage presented in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, this is considered to be Hegel's final word on the matter.

However, what these readings fail to see is the major disanalogy between these lectures and Hegel's other lectures, which do not stop at this point but instead continue their story up to Hegel's present day. The *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* do not stop with the Roman world but instead continue on to treat the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Similarly, Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* do not stop with Roman art, but go on to treat the art of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Romanticism. Finally, Hegel's *Lectures*

### Graphic 3: The Disanalogy in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*



on the *History of Philosophy* do not stop with his account of Christianity but instead go on to treat the Scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages, and Modern Philosophy including German idealism, ending with Schelling. [Graphic 3: The Disanalogy in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*]

When one compares the place of Christianity in the whole of these lectures with that in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* the disanalogy is profoundly striking. It is extraordinarily odd that the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* do not progress chronologically any further than they do. When one looks at the specific analyses that Hegel gives in these lectures, one sees that most of them in fact correspond to what he in other lectures designates "The Oriental World." The Greek and Roman religions are also given a significant place in the overall treatment, as in the other lectures. But then Hegel gives his account of Christianity and the lectures abruptly end, while the other series of lectures continue far beyond the historical period in which Christianity arose. This disanalogy seems profoundly problematic given Hegel's systematic pretensions. What can be concluded from this is that while it is natural to make use of

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Christoph Jamme, "Editionspolitik. Zur Freundesvereinsausgabe der Werke G. W. F. Hegels," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 38:1 (1984): 83-99; Annemarie Gehmann-Siefert, "H. G. Hohho: Kunst als Bildungslebens und Kunsthistorie in Systematischer Absicht—oder die entpolitisierte Version der ästhetischen Erziehung der Menschen," *Kunstverfahung und Kulturpolitik im Berlin Hegel* (Hegel-Studien Beiheft 22), ed. Otto Poggele and Annemarie Gehmann-Siefert (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983), 229-262; Walter Jaeschke, "Probleme der Edition der Nachschriften von Hegels Vorlesungen," *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 3 (1980): 51-63.

these lectures in any study of Hegel's thoughts on religion, this cannot be the final word on the matter.

One can well imagine many different reasons to explain this disanalogy. It has been suggested that Hegel was in fear of the Prussian authorities and did not want to get the reputation for holding unorthodox or free-thinking religious views. At the turn of the century, he had seen Fichte lose his position in the so-called "Atheismus Streit." Later in the 1820s when he received the position in Berlin, the political climate was tense due to the rise of the *Burschenschaften* and the calls for German nationalism. Thus, it is argued that Hegel carefully keep secret his true views about religion and cleverly concealed them behind the veil of a difficult philosophy with a specialized language that took years of study to grasp. He never dared to risk publishing a work dedicated exclusively to religion and instead kept to presenting the enormous amount of material that he had on the subject solely in lectures. When I refer to this as "Hegel's secret," I borrow a motif from the pioneering work in Hegel studies in the Anglophone world, namely, *The Secret of Hegel: Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form, and Matter* by James Hutchison Stirling from 1865.<sup>32</sup>

Based on this view, one could argue that Hegel was put in an awkward situation due to his own methodology. According to his account of the dialectical development of history, he seems to be obliged to continue to tell the story of the further development of the world religions up until his own day. However, to do so would lead him to conclude that Christianity is not the highest form of religion, corresponding to Absolute Knowing, but rather merely another sublated religion that world history has passed through at a previous stage. If he had continued his account, he would have been obliged to portray other later religions as conceptually higher than Christianity due to their later appearance in the chronological sequence. In order to avoid this unhappy and potentially very dangerous conclusion, Hegel simply opted to end his lectures with Christianity and to drop the matter there. According to this interpretation, Hegel was thus anxious not to invite further discussion that might potentially expose this methodological inconsistency.

This may well be an avenue worth pursuing, but for my purposes the issue of Hegel's concrete motivation for not continuing the historical sequence or the question of his moral fiber in concealing his true views is

<sup>32</sup> James Hutchison Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel: Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form, and Matter*, vols. 1-2 (London: Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865).

ultimately not of primary interest. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how one could ever definitely resolve the question of Hegel's "secret." Instead, the question concerns the inner logic and structure of Hegel's system as such, and from this perspective it is clear that he is obliged to say more about the historical development of the world religions than he does in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

Indeed, if one looks carefully, one can see that Hegel does in fact do this, but one needs to know where to look for these supplemental analyses. This can perhaps be regarded as another secret of Hegel, namely, that his discussions of the further development of the concept in religion after Christianity are found in his other lectures, i.e., in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, the *Philosophy of History* and the *History of Philosophy*. This is where we must go to supplement and complete his obviously incomplete account in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

It is necessary to follow the structure of the analysis as it is presented in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* since it is there that one receives the most comprehensive statement of Hegel's view on religion. However, since, as we have seen, his thought is conceived of as a system it is possible to supplement this with many of the other texts where he speaks of the same issues in different contexts. Thus, the goal is to conceive of Hegel's philosophy of religion in a sense as a single entity, best represented in his lectures, and to intersperse other analyses into this as needed.

There is a somewhat surprising result that comes from this procedure. As we have seen, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* conclude with Christianity as the highest form of religious knowing. For this reason, Hegel has usually been read as a defender of Christianity to the exclusion of other religions. However, as we have also seen, when one looks at his other series of lectures, these do not stop with his account of the Roman world, i.e., the corresponding stage to where the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* end, but instead continue the narrative up to Hegel's own time. Thus, in these other lectures one can find hints of Hegel's view of the further development of Christianity and of religions such as Islam or deism, which arose historically after Christianity. Here one can see that the story that Hegel began in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is clearly not finished.

By regarding things in this way we are able to open up new perspectives about Hegel's thought about religion and its development, not least of all in the modern world. The goal will thus be to trace this develop-



ment beyond Christianity and up to Hegel's own day. While his treatments of religion are, of course, not as elaborate in these other lectures as they are in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, nonetheless they do provide clear hints that allow us to reconstruct his position. Thus the key is to regard all of Hegel's mature work as part of a single, more or less coherent, unified system in the spirit of Hegel's early editors.

Although Hegel gave his various lectures over an extended period of time, there is nonetheless an amazing consistency that runs through them. The more serious variations can almost always be seen as his attempt to make his thought more clear or more precise and not as a substantial change or straightforward contradiction. When he speaks of different historical peoples, for example, the Chinese, the Jews, the Greeks or the Arabs, although he treats different aspects of their culture in the different lectures, he is profoundly consistent in his views about the general principles guiding the development of spirit in these peoples.

### Section 3: Methodological Objections

Some will object that the view presented here fails to take into account the development of Hegel's religious thought. By contrast, however, I would argue that this approach is more in harmony with Hegel's explicit statements about the nature of his philosophy being systematic. One can imagine a number of further objections to this admittedly controversial methodology. In what follows I will attempt to address a couple of the main ones.

(1) One such objection is the claim that systematic philosophy has long since been demonstrated to be implausible. Thus, one does Hegel no favors by trying to understand his thought through the light reflected by this prism. This objection fails to appreciate the degree to which Hegel himself insisted on philosophy as systematic. In order to accept this objection, one would have to read Hegel in a way that is entirely contrary to his stated intentions merely in order to make him more palatable to philosophers of a certain tradition today.

But even here there are a number of misunderstandings of what Hegel actually meant by "systematic philosophy." Indeed, this is hardly surprising given the rabid criticisms of this notion in so many subsequent thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. However, when one looks at the actual nature of Hegel's thought, one finds that it is not so far away from any number of theories today which enjoy the reputation of respect-

ability in mainstream postanalytic philosophy. What Hegel understands by "system" is not so different from what has been understood as a scientific paradigm, a holism, a network theory of meaning, a coherence theory of truth, etc. Thus, there is no reason in principle to dismiss Hegel's commitment to systematic philosophy, and there are, on the contrary, many good reasons for taking it seriously.

(2) Another objection will come from the philological side. According to this view, the original collected works edition was, quite frankly, a philological travesty. It combined Hegel's texts with student notes in a wholly irresponsible manner. It mixed together Hegel's lectures from different semesters and different years. It allowed individual editors a tremendous amount of latitude in reshaping those texts in accordance with their own ideological investments. Only now are we finally beginning to come out from under the pernicious shadow cast by that influential edition. Only recently have we had newly edited texts that reflect in a philologically responsible manner Hegel's own manuscripts and those of individual students from individual lecture courses. Only in this way can we appreciate the differences and get to the bottom of Hegel's actual ideas. I speak here, of course, of the new edition produced by the Hegel Archiv in Bochum: *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (Hamburg: Meiner 1983-). This edition publishes the individual *Nachschriften* of individual students separately, thus treating each as an independent text. Seen philologically, this is of course a radical departure from the practice of combining and thus mixing together the different texts as the original editors did. Given this recent positive development in Hegel philology, why on earth would one want to go back to the old days and mix all of the texts together again!

My thesis does not contradict the new philological approach. We can use all of these materials and still follow a systematic approach. We need to reconcile the systematic with the philological approach. The fundamental intuition that guided the original editors was not mistaken, namely, that Hegel's philosophy was a system and should thus be presented as one. It might seem that the new edition undermines this intuition by taking different sets of lecture notes and manuscripts in a piecemeal fashion. But this is in fact not the case. A careful study of these materials reveals a profound amount of homogeneity and indeed repetition among the different sets of notes. While, to be sure, they are all different, as one would expect given the idiosyncrasies of the individual students who wrote them, nonetheless the guiding Hegelian ideas shine through them all.



Thus, while these two philological approaches are, of course, quite different in principle, with respect to their methodological approach, they can both be drawn upon in a fruitful manner.

(3) Another objection comes from the side of academic specialization. According to this view, one does well to concentrate on individual texts or indeed individual analyses, one at a time. Thus, there has arisen a body of literature on, for example, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or the *Philosophy of Right* that is more or less autonomous, having little contact with the rest of the corpus. So also the studies on Hegel's *philosophy of religion* have tended to constitute their own independent body of literature. Moreover, within this body of literature there are individual studies dedicated to specific works, e.g. the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* or the *Early Theological Writings*. Rarely does one see any synoptic approach to the material.

This procedure may well have its benefits if one is interested in a specific text or a specific period in Hegel's development. However, if one wishes to obtain a general overview of his thought, this is somewhat problematic and indeed even counterproductive. As we have seen, there are many points of contact and overlap in his different works and lectures. By comparing these with one another, one can use them to develop and supplement the individual analyses. This can be profoundly insightful in particular when one is dealing with some of Hegel's early texts where the ideas are not well developed or with some of his more difficult texts such as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* where the complexity of the language often stands in the way of understanding. Given this, it would seem absurd for the interpreters to deprive themselves of the opportunity of using other sources to understand the specific passages and issues that they are interested in. This is of course not to say that by appealing to these texts, one will immediately find the key to the given passage that one is puzzling over in a way that immediately resolves the difficulty and renders an ultimately satisfying reading. This would, of course, be too much to expect. But it would be absurd to rule out such a comparison from the start as simply not useful or productive.

Today we tend to regard politics, anthropology, art, religion, history and philosophy as independent specialized fields. While they may overlap here and there in some incidental way, there is no real reason to explore them together. On the contrary, each of these fields operates with its own specific set of categories, methodologies, etc. Hegel's insight is just the opposite of this intuition. He claims that these fields are all re-

lated and indeed necessarily so. All of these fields explore some element of the complex phenomenon that he designates as "spirit." What constitutes spirit is the manifold of products of the human mind as they develop through time.

Even if one does not accept the arguments for a systematic interpretation of Hegel's *corpus* in the manner outlined here, it should nevertheless be obvious that Hegel has much more to say about religion than what is found in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Thus it would not make sense that we deprive ourselves of the use of these resources in our attempt to understand his views. In this way we can expand enormously the body of material that can be drawn upon in order to articulate an interpretation. Moreover, what will come out of an analysis that draws on these supplemental textual resources will be a view of Hegel's understanding of religion that is quite new and that calls into question a number of standard interpretations. Hegel's early editors were perhaps not great philologists, but they were hardly fools. Indeed, they had a profound insight into the systematic nature of Hegel's philosophy that they were at pains to present. It is my claim that we can today make use of this insight to gain a better understanding of Hegel's philosophy of religion.