Taking the System Seriously:

On the Importance of "Objective Spirit" for Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

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Abstract. In his *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel's section "Objective Spirit" is crucial for our understanding his more elaborated ethical and political philosophy in the *Philosophy of Right*. The latter assumes a familiarity with key ideas found only in the *Encyclopaedia*, including (a) a proof of the free will and the need to develop a philosophical account for distinguishing between a free will and an arbitrary will, (b) the wider context of how ethical and political philosophy sits within his philosophical system and (c) its link beyond itself to other parts of Hegel's philosophy. Unlike other philosophers, Hegel's work is systematic and a deeper appreciation of Objective Spirit and its place within the system - made clear in the *Encyclopaedia* - illuminates crucial ideas in his *Philosophy of Right*.

Introduction

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing Hegel scholars is not grappling with his complex, technical vocabulary, but rather understanding the relevance of the systematic nature of his philosophy. With most philosophers – from Plato to Rawls and beyond – we might find commonalities or changes in view across texts, such as between the earlier or later Platonic writings of the *Crito* versus the *Laws* or Rawls's change of mind about the fact of pluralism leading him to recast *A Theory of Justice* in publishing *Political Liberalism* (see Plato 1997; Rawls 1971, 1993, 2001; Brooks and Nussbaum 2015). In contrast, the lecture outlines that make up Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* were published throughout his academic career from beginning to end unfolding a single presentation of his systematic philosophy with each part a representation of the same, mature overall picture.

This makes the task of interpreting any part of Hegel's philosophy different from other non-systematic philosophers. Each of Hegel's texts making up his *Encyclopaedia* are not intended to be understood separately from this wider philosophical system. This is no less true with Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which is explicitly clear from numerous reminders throughout this work (1991: §§2R, 3R, 4R, 7R, 8R, 26R, 31, 31R, 33R, 34R, 48R, 57R, 78, 88, 95, 148R, 161, 163R, 181, 256R, 258R, 270R, 278, 279R, 280R, 281R, 302R, 324R).[1] The frequent mentions of how the system is important for understanding the *Philosophy of Right* in 'Remarks' published in the final edition of this text underscore Hegel's commitment to how his views should be comprehended. Hegel clearly intended his work – including the *Philosophy of Right* – to have a systematic reading where each part took seriously its place within the larger philosophical system (Brooks 2007, 2012, 2013).

Yet, there has been a temptation to interpret Hegel's work non-systematically – in other words, reading a text independently of any connection to Hegel's other texts – like we might for most other philosophers. These roots can be found more than half a century ago in the highly influential work of Z. A. Pelczynski. He was central in popularizing the study of Hegel's political thought, and who was a founder of the Hegel Society of Great Britain, which originally met at his institutional home of Pembroke College, Oxford. In his preface to the first collection in English of Hegel's political essays, Pelcynski notes these writings "are a most valuable supplement to the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Philosophy of History* . . . being relatively free from speculative elements and philosophical jargon they provide in some ways a clearer insight into Hegel's basic political ideas than the major works" (1964: 1). The elements and jargon dismissively characterized refer to Hegel's philosophical system beyond

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[1] I shall use the conventional abbreviations of "R" for "Remarks" and "A" for "Additions." Remarks refer to comments added in a later edition of both his *Philosophy of Right* and *Philosophy of Mind*. Additions refer to the lecture notes of Hotho and Gans that were inserted by T. M. Knox to different sections of the *Philosophy of Right* and *Philosophy of Mind*.

his political treatise the *Philosophy of Right*. Pelcynzski says: "Apparently, Hegel thought that only by transposing politics to the metaphysical plane and giving his concerns a speculative underpinning could he establish their validity" (1964: 136). This "speculative underpinning" is the *Encyclopaedia*, including its logic, which Hegel intended to provide a foundation for the unfolding of his philosophical system. For Pelczynski, the *Encyclopaedia* system and metaphysics were essentially synonymous and irrelevant for understanding Hegel's political ideas:

> Hegel's political thought can be read, understood and appreciated without having to come to terms with his metaphysics. Some of his assertions may seem less well-grounded than they might otherwise have been; some of his statements and beliefs may puzzle one; some intellectual curiosity may be unsatisfied when metaphysics is left out; a solid volume of political theory and political thinking will still remain (1961:136—137).

The position is clear. Whatever Hegel's self-understanding or presentation of his project, the wider philosophical system of the *Encyclopaedia* is of no more philosophical interest than "some intellectual curiosity." To understand political writings like the *Philosophy of Right*, we need only go to that text itself. Doing otherwise and engaging with Hegel's metaphysics is unnecessary and unhelpful.

This non-metaphysical perspective has its roots in a non-systematic reading of Hegel's texts, where works like the *Philosophy of Right* are thought best understood separately from the *Encyclopaedia* system of which Hegel claimed it was a part. The influential position of Pelczynski highlighted above is reproduced by many of the best-known

commentators that have followed. In his *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, which popularized Hegel's work for a new generation of scholars (including me), Allen Wood says:

> By "philosophical foundations" I do not mean Hegel's speculative metaphysics . . . If you decide to examine *those* foundations more closely, you know before long that you are in for a difficult and generally unrewarding time of it, at least from the standpoint of social and political theory. If you are sensible, you will try to avoid that. If you are not so sensible, you will humbug yourself into thinking there is some esoteric truth in Hegelian dialectical logic, which provides a hidden key to his social thought (1990:xii).

While he concedes that Hegel "is the most methodologically self-conscious of all philosophers in the Western tradition," Wood claims there is "nothing" of philosophical interest for the study of his political ideas to be found in his wider system and Hegel's "great positive achievements as a philosopher do not lie where he thought they did, in his system of speculative logic" (Wood 1990:5).

This chapter focuses on the specific link of the *Philosophy of Right* as an elaboration of the "Objective Spirit" section in the final part ("Philosophy of Spirit") in Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* philosophical system. The aim is to make clear the place of Objective Spirit within the system and how the *Philosophy of Right* further fleshes out this section of the *Encyclopaedia* and, in turn, cements their relation. Moreover, in demonstrating the concrete interconnection between Objective Spirit and the *Philosophy of Right*, it will be shown how the former helps us to better understand the latter. This will demonstrate that the study of Hegel's system – and our approach to a *systematic reading* of Hegel's texts – is neither

"some intellectual curiosity" or "humbug," but rather a more accurate and insightful interpretation of Hegel's political and social thought.

Where to begin?

The first place to examine is the beginning of the *Philosophy of Right.* Its first section is a single sentence: "The subject-matter of *the philosophical science of right* is the *Idea of right* – the concept of right and its actualization" (1991: §1). The second section clarifies this sentence by adding that "the science of right is *a part of philosophy"* where "its deduction is presupposed here and is to be taken as given (1991: §2).

These first comments from the *Philosophy of Right*'s Introduction make clear that this text is not a stand-alone work. It should be understood in light of a larger body of work – the *Encyclopaedia* – that it is a component part and from which its "deduction" is presupposed. This is explicit in the first line that opens the book's Preface:

> 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* (1991: 9).

Both the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Encyclopaedia* are lecture outlines that Hegel would flesh out live in lectures (Pinkard 2001). In short, the *Philosophy of Right* is essentially a more elaborately detailed outline of a briefer outline found in the relevant section ("Objective Spirit") of the *Encyclopaedia* (see Hegel 1971: §§483—552). Hegel notes that it is from the

"point of view" of the *Encyclopaedia* that he wishes the *Philosophy of Right* "to be *understood and judged*" (1991: 10). As a more elaborate outline of an outline, Hegel is also clear that it is a sketch that could be spelled out more than he has done. In his *Science of Logic*, he says: "I could not pretend that the method which I follow in this system of logic . . . is not capable of greater completeness, of much elaboration in detail" (1969:54). A more elaborate outline should be expected to provide additional, not less, development of the briefer outline it fleshed out – and potentially open to further specification and "greater completeness" itself.

In his Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel next clarifies that the idea of right is focused on the "Idea" of right which he explains is a "realm of actualized freedom" (1991: §4). The focus for the *Philosophy of Right* is in freedom in its fullest expression. The next few sections claim that freedom is a freedom of the will developing from a "universal" and "particular" to a will that is "free in itself" (1991: §10). But he also makes clear such a progression only captures the development of freedom "in its concept" but not in actuality (1991: §10). What is meant is that we need some means of discerning where the exercise of our free will is an expression of our freedom and not an arbitrary impulse (1991: §15). So our aim is to grasp "the free will which wills the free will" (1991: §27). When we can understand this, we gain an understanding of something more concrete – and, for Hegel, more philosophically valuable – which is "right [*Recht*]" (1991: §29).

In turning to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the first point we should notice is that while the *Philosophy of Right* presupposes there is a free will but seeks to establish how it can be free in "actuality" rather than an expression of animal-like impulse, or slave to one's passions, the section "Subjective Spirit" immediately preceding "Objective Spirit" is where Hegel establishes the arguments for why there is a free will in concept to later be examined in actuality. Hegel summarizes "Subjective Spirit" and its discussion of the free will in both the

introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* and to "Objective Spirit" – making explicit the

systematic connections (Hegel 1971: §483; 1991: §§4-28; 1995: §§3-10). To understand why

Hegel sets himself the task at hand requires coming to grips with his arguments in the

Philosophy of Spirit.[2]

Why this form – and content?

After explaining that the aim of the *Philosophy of Right* is to understand "the free will which

wills the free will," Hegel proceeds to next outline the rest of the *Philosophy of Right* in three

sections – Abstract Right, Morality, Ethical Life – saying little more in the Introduction than

that this is a part of "the development of the Idea of the will in and for itself" that is

"presupposed from speculative logic" (1991: §33, 33R).

Hegel presupposes a wide range of knowledge about other parts of his philosophical

system that he treats at greater length elsewhere. This is especially the case with the content

of his logic, which is the first part of his system and elaborated substantively in the *Science of

Logic*. One aspect easy to overlook is that Hegel assumes his readers are already familiar with

a large range of conceptual terminology that is presented and defined *before* the *Philosophy

of Right* (and often not defined within the *Philosophy of Right* either). This terminology

includes: "universal" (Hegel 1969: 600—5, 612—18; 1991b: §§163, R, A1), "particular"

(Hegel 1969: 600—1, 605—18; 1991b: §§163, R, A1), "individual" (Hegel 1969: 600—1,

612—22; 1991b: 163, R, A1), "actuality" (Hegel 1969: 529—71; 1991b: §§142—59), "the

Idea" (Hegel 1969: 755—844; 1991b: §§213—44) and what has been translated into English

as "sublation" [*Aufheben*] (Hegel 1969: 106—8; 1991b: §§96A) among very many others.

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[2] It should be noted that Hegel's lectures on the *Philosophy of Spirit* did not always include discussion of
"Objective Mind" and material appearing later in that published outline, as evidenced in his lectures of 1827—
28 (Hegel 2007).

This fact raises a crucial point. Any proper grasp of the *Philosophy of Right* (or its outline in "Objective Spirit") simply must take the wider philosophical system seriously if only as a philosophical dictionary presenting and explaining Hegel's technical vocabulary. If Hegel had not intended progress in the system to have an explanatory role as it develops, we would expect him to deduce concepts and define terms for each part of his system. Yet, he explicitly does not and, instead, presupposes readers are familiar with earlier deductions and discussions which inform later parts of his system – supported by frequent reminders across his texts like the *Philosophy of Right*. To read the *Philosophy of Right* completely independently of Hegel's system and its logic leaves any interpreter having to work with incomplete definitions and presentations of complex terms from, in the words of Bertrand Russell, "the hardest to understand of all the great philosophers" (Russell 1945: 730). A systematic reading of Hegel's work is indispensable for this reason alone.

In fact, every substantive section raises new terminology. "Objective Spirit" (and the *Philosophy of Right*") is no different. This is where the concept of "right [*Recht*]" is first presented, defined and explained. Later discussions about right post-"Objective Spirit" and the *Philosophy of Right*, such as in the following section on the *Philosophy of History*, assume the reader will be familiar with concepts like universal, particular, the Idea and now right among others. And so on as we proceed to the final substantive sections of the *Encyclopaedia*'s philosophical system. Each part presupposes a familiarity with the terminology and claims made in every preceding part. Diving in and out of one part to the exclusion of others risks any interpretation being mischaracterized.

Examples abound. For instance, many commentators have treated Hegel's sections entitled "Property," "Punishment" or "Morality" – to take but three – as encompassing his complete views on each. Let me take each in turn briefly to illustrate this point.

Hegel's section on property has been thought to show property "is freedom" and requires no functional justification (Berry 1980: 97). Yet, Hegel's discussion is notoriously unlike most other defences of a right to property. This point is captured well by John Rawls, who notes correctly that Hegel's treatment is unusual as he "leaves aside any appeal to the advantages of private property . . . Nor does he appeal to what people might want to do with their property . . . Less obviously, Hegel doesn't appeal to a psychological need of persons for private property" – nor does Hegel talk about material needs, the economy or poverty (Rawls 2000: 343).

The reason is that the section "Property" simply introduces the concept; it does not exhaust its treatment. It is introduced as a means of showing the first steps toward our grounding a free will in the free will of another – through a mutual recognition of property – as an initial step towards showing how a free will might will the free will. Later discussions about material needs and a market economy presuppose this treatment, but they come later and are too often overlooked (Brooks 2013: 29—38).

The section "Objective Spirit" that the *Philosophy of Right* elaborates makes this point clear. It starts by noting its aim of realizing freedom "at home with itself . . . shaped into the actuality of a world" (Hegel 1971: §484). Hegel argues that property "is a means" to an end (Hegel 1971: §489). In trying to grasp the existence and exercise of my freedom in the world, my appropriation of possessions external to me are a first, basic step. But this analysis is limited to understanding "the realization of liberty" in the world "intrinsically" (Hegel 1971: §§496—97). The discussion remains at too early a stage for considering issues of needs, wants and labor because we must first develop an understanding of the individuals in their immediate context as part of a family (see Hegel 1971: §322—24). The section "Property" is fundamentally about freedom, not possessions or earning a livelihood. A

systematic reading of Hegel's arguments makes this clear by showing how different parts of Hegel's texts are systematically interlinked.

Hegel's theory of punishment is an even clearer example. The most influential interpretation is by David Cooper, which is explicit about how one can grasp Hegel's theory of punishment entirely without going any further than the section "Wrong [*Unrecht*]" in the *Philosophy of Right*'s first section (Cooper 1971). Much of the argument for seeing Hegel as a traditional retributivist is for using his own words – but incorrectly thinking that Hegel's use of philosophical concepts and meanings is no different from everyday commonplace usage by everybody else. For example, Hegel does say that punishments are a "negation of a negation" whose end is "the restoration of right" (1991: §§97A, 99). This cancellation of crime is called "retribution" (Hegel 1991: §101).

There are several reasons to believe Hegel's use of "retribution" is not traditional – aside from the fact his technical philosophical vocabulary is rarely orthodox. The first reason is retribution is traditionally about punishing criminals for their wrongdoing to the degree it is deserved. The more evil the act, the greater the severity of punishment (Brooks 2012b). Yet Hegel's discussion here (in the section "Abstract Right") is logically prior to the state. It is a hypothetical sphere where there are no laws, no police, no courts and no prisons.

A second reason to doubt Hegel's use of the term "retribution" is traditional is exposed by what hesays of his theory that "it is not the crime or punishments which change, but the relation between the two" (Hegel 1991: §96A). This is an especially significant departure from mainstream retributivism. Following Kant, most are opposed to consequentialism: the social context is not a factor impacting on an individual's moral responsibility for what is deserved. Telling a lie is wrong whether or not it might save an innocent man's life.

This raises the question of how context matters. It is a point frequently missed as so few writing about Hegel on punishment look beyond that first section on "Wrong;" such is the lasting influence of Cooper's essay. When we look beyond this section, we see Hegel supporting an elaboration on how the relation between crime and punishment might change that is antithetical to retributivism:

> The fact that an injury to *one* member of society is an injury to *all* the others does not alter the nature of crime in terms of its concept, but in terms of its outward existence . . . its *danger to civil society* is a determination of its magnitude . . . This quality or magnitude varies, however, according to the *condition* of civil society (Hegel 1991: §218R).

Hegel goes on to explain that where the state is in a time of peace or civil war matters to how crimes will be punished. A crime will receive a greater punishment relative to civil war because the right violated by the crime poses a more serious threat to the overall system of rights a legal order upholds than it would during peacetime. So an offender could receive greater or less punishment based not on his or her desert alone, but a social context beyond his or her control. This is not retributivism in any conventional, or unconventional, sense.

Hegel's system and logic help us understand this better. In "Objective Spirit," Hegel is clear in discussing "Wrong" that in this hypothetical sphere without laws, police, courts or prisons, there is no punishment established – any action taken by a wronged individual is no more than "revenge" (1971: §500). The law – and setting punishments for its violation – has its "actuality" only in "the social state" which is to be developed later (1971: §§502, 531).

Hegel makes clear here, too, that "the greater stability of the legal state . . . gives rise to greater and more stable liberty" supporting more lenient punishments (1971: §539).

But if this is no conventional retributivism, what kind of punishment might it be? Hegel's logic clarifies this point in a rarely cited passage:

> *Punishment*, for instance, has a variety of determinations: that it is retribution; and also a deterrent example, a deterring threat made by the law; and also a contribution to the self-awareness and betterment of the culprit. Each of these different determinations has been regarded as the *ground of punishment*, on the ground that it is the essential determination, and by default the others, since they are different from it, have been regarded as only accidental. But the one determination which is assumed as ground does not amount to the whole punishment (1969:405—6).

These comments make clear that Hegel did not believe we must choose between defending retributivism, deterrence or rehabilitation. Instead, each is a part of what a full theory of punishment should be about. The ground of punishment is retributivist insofar as an offender must deserve punishment for it to be justified. But punishment can take different forms, including as a deterrent or rehabilitative project, if this serves a wider aim of protecting and maintaining the wider system of rights (Brooks 2017: 468). This more accurate, complex and potentially illuminating example of what we might call a "unified theory" of punishment – and not retributivism – is best uncovered through a systematic reading (Brooks 2012b, 2016, 2017b).

Finally, much ink is spilled trying to unpick Hegel's theory of morality – and, most especially, its famous (and famously brief) critique of Kant's theory of morality. A large part

of the problem is scholars viewing Hegel's use of the term "morality" like anybody else. But this is far from true. The key distinction is that Hegel sees "morality" as a kind of artificial realm where we consider our relations to others abstractly and not in their concrete reality. Morality is at risk of being "without content" because of its nature (Hegel 1991: §135).

In essence, his criticism – brief as it is – of Kant's moral law as "empty" singles Kant's moral theory out, but he could have made this criticism against about almost anybody else – this is because Hegel does not just have a different view of which moral theory is best, but a different conception of what morality is about that is genuinely unique to him. And it is hardly fair to say that because Kant sees himself as engaged in moral theorizing that therefore it is by nature inadequate – whereas if Kant had seen the same principled project as a kind of theorizing about "ethical life" (where we conceive of morality in the real world) that this would somehow make it less objectionable. And yet that Hegel's project is different, in part, because he understands the entire sphere of morality in a technical, unique way tied to his philosophical system is a point gone missing from virtually every scholar touching on this much discussed topic. Hegel's understanding of "the moral point of view" is unique to him (Hegel 1991: §105; Brooks 2013: 52—61).

"Objective Spirit" helps shed further light on this. Hegel notes there that, in his understanding, morality is a reflection "into itself" (1971: §§408A, 503). Moral thinking is an individual intellectual exercise we engage with in isolation from the world. Hegel describes the situation like this: "the good is thus reduced to the level of a mere 'may happen' for the agent, who can therefore decide on something opposite to the good, can be wicked" (1971: §509). Without any mention of Kant directly or indirectly, Hegel says the "utterly abstract semblances" of morality must pass over into a new sphere where an individual's "identity with the good . . . actualizes and develops it" (1971: §512). The problem with morality is mostly down to the very specific and unique way Hegel characterizes it as a total intellectual

endeavour apart from the world – and as a very different enterprise from "Ethical Life" where we weigh up what might happen from our free choices, but in the knowledge we do so from within a specific context of actuality (Hegel 1971: §514). While Hegel's views on morality might be best known for its brief critique of Kant's empty formalism, it is a critique he might have essentially made of about any other moral theory *qua* moral theory – and "Objective Spirit" helps us see this point more clearly. There is a systematic connection between logic, morality and ethical life.

All three examples have a common core. They each highlight illustrations where our reading of Hegel in a traditional way – either taking a section out of context or only considering the *Philosophy of Right* to the exclusion of its place in the system – leads us to interpretations that fail to acknowledge the meaning that Hegel gives the terms he uses, the structure of his philosophical argumentation and the richness of his thought as he takes concepts like "property," "punishment," "morality" and others considering and reconsidering them from new perspectives and vantage points. Hegel is a complex philosopher and this interlocking, dialectical nature of his thought is everywhere acknowledged but all too rarely taken to heart.[3] Only a systematic reading of Hegel's work can bring out the full set of conceptions and connections that help us to proper grasp his arguments in their true light. Anything less does an incomplete job. A non-systematic reading goes not only against Hegel's self-understanding, but also fails to grasp the substantive content – not only interpretive nuances – of his philosophical positions.

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[3] As a graduate student attending an author meets critics session at the American Philosophical Association's Eastern Division conference several years ago, I challenged one leading commentator on why he had chosen to interpret Hegel's political thought not only non-metaphysically, but non-systematically. He replied that all we had to do was take seriously Hegel's starting point and go from there following a dialectical structure. I retorted that Hegel isn't like a bus driver letting you off at your stop to just dialectically advance, but that you start with a toolbox of terms from the system and a compass with map that assumes a familiarity with their use. If we did not know the terms or the how and why Hegel's dialectic works in a particular way, then we could never move from our starting point. To be fair to the author, whose book I hugely admire, agreed but said to do any of this would be to write a book about Hegel's metaphysics or system instead of his political thought. This was part of my inspiration for writing a book to show that this was not necessary.

What must come next?

A significant issue remaining is what is to come afterwards. If "Objective Spirit" (and the *Philosophy of Right*) are part of a wider system (and they are), then there will be a starting point we have already considered but they should then also point towards the next step. And they do. This is important to understand as well: not only the need for "Objective Spirit," the terminology and argumentative structure it presupposes, but what it turns our focus to next.

There is perhaps no part of Hegel's philosophy as poorly misunderstood as his views on history, which he believes follows "Objective Spirit." Hegel is widely understood to defend what Francis Fukuyama called "the end of history" thesis that the world has reached the end of ideological evolution (Fukuyama 1992). Hegel does give comments that appear to support such a reading, such as "world history travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of world history, Asia the beginning" (1956: 103). Scholars like Joseph McCarney observe that, for Hegel, history reaches a point "beyond which there can be no progress" (McCarney 2009: 192).

Some of the clues to correcting this error confront us at the start of the *Philosophy of Right*. Every individual is a "child of his time" and "thus philosophy, too, is its own time comprehended in thoughts" (1991: 21). Philosophy looks to what has happened before and attempts to make the best sense of its rationality. Our perspective is historicized: "it is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as that an individual can overleap his time" (1991: 21—2). Thus, philosophy "always comes too late" and "the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk" (1991: 23).

The reason why philosophy always comes too late is because it is, as Hegel conceives it, fundamentally "a thinking consideration" of that which appears before thought (1991b:

§2). It is a "thinking-over" (1991b: §5). We might see historical developments as leading to a final, higher stage from our present standpoint. But we lack any philosophical crystal ball to peer into the future – and any judgement tomorrow might lead to very different interpretations of our past and present as time unfolds. Of course, America is a land of the future pointing beyond the present, as Hegel saw it in his time, which should give us reason enough to dismiss the idea that he held to any fixed end of history view. This is further reinforced when we consider that it runs counter to his entire project to make future predictions, as he is limited in rational construction of the present in light of the past – and no more.

Besides, if Hegel believed the end of history was the epitome of civilization, this view fails to account for the fact that the end of Hegel's discussion of history might end "Objective Spirit" and the *Philosophy of Right*/ However, the further development of his philosophical system is far from over – including Hegel's views on the progress of civilizations. This analysis extends into art and music, religion and philosophy itself – all presented in outline within the *Philosophy of Spirit*, as anyone reading "Objective Spirit" or taking his system seriously would know.

To be fair, Hegel says little about the transition from politics to history within "Objective Spirit" – and little more in the *Philosophy of Right* (1971: §§548-52; 1991 §§341—60). After completing his discussion of how we should conceive the ideal, or "Idea," of the state, Hegel proceeds to consider the interrelation of states across the world and over time. This leads Hegel to draw conclusions – given his views on how we should understand the past – about the relative merits and demerits of different civilizations. The discussion is key to understanding his position on war and other matters, best understood through a systematic reading.

Conclusion

Hegel intended his *Philosophy of Right* to serve as an elaboration of the outline for "Objective Spirit" within his *Encyclopaedia* philosophical system. This is important because understanding the need for "Objective Spirit" within the system helps us better grasp the starting point for the *Philosophy of Right*, such as why the challenge of how the free will can will the free will is the central question. It does not come from nowhere and it serves a purpose. Likewise, the dialectical structure of the *Philosophy of Right* is imported from the system and it is only in the latter that its full justification can be found – in addition to key terminology used throughout the *Philosophy of Right*. The core problem, the structure of the arguments used to grapple with it and the language employed to make the case are largely presupposed and imported from outside the *Philosophy of Right.* Hegel offers only brief summaries with frequent reminders to look back at the system for his complete and substantive account. The system plays an explanatory role in understanding Hegel's political and social ideas: it is not mere "intellectual curiosity" or "humbug" as some have claimed.

When I first argued for a systematic reading of Hegel's philosophy as more accurate and illuminating nearly twenty years ago, it was a relatively lone voice amidst the then raging debate between the so-called metaphysical and non-metaphysical approaches (Brooks 2004). Two decades later there is a new orthodoxy among Hegel scholars where the system is now widely accepted to have an explanatory importance (Brooks and Stein 2017). Recently, Wood has made clear he too accepts this perspective:

To appropriate Hegel, you have to understand *Hegel*: that means, *of course*, understanding the system and method through which he thought . . . There is no

choice between reading Hegel "systematically" and reading him in response to our questions. There are only different ways of doing both at once (2017:83).

This puts things right. Hegel's philosophy is no less controversial, including what importance the system has for our understanding any part of his philosophy as developed in the *Philosophy of Right* or elsewhere. But progress has been made in this now more firmly established position that there is no choice but to adopt a systematic reading of Hegel's texts even if how such an approach might be employed will still be subject to debate.

Reading the *Philosophy of Right* as an elaboration of" Objective Spirit" is both more in keeping with Hegel's explicit intentions but also helps explain the need for the *Philosophy of Right*, its unique structure of its arguments and how it fits within Hegel's works. A systematic reading of these texts achieves this best – and this chapter has been an attempt to show why and how.

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